

AN ENGLISH JOURNAL

By Karl Löwit



INTRODUCTION

For nearly 80 years, four exercise books have been kept in the family. Inside in a clear hand are a diary and essays written in English between January 1940 and January 1941 by a 52-year-old political refugee from Central Europe. They cover the period from November 1938 when he was forced to flee his home country of Czechoslovakia; his life in the refugee camp in Albury, Surrey and afterwards in private houses in the Guildford area; and the experience of living through Britain's "darkest hour", the air raids and the bombs over London.

Inspired by Trevor Brook of the Albury History Society – who has started to research the refugee camps that have almost been forgotten in this quiet Home Counties village – I have at last got round to typing up the exercise books so that they can be shared more widely. I have kept to the original text as far as possible, including spellings and punctuation, and have ignored the teachers' corrections unless needed to clarify the meaning. I have slightly altered a few headings and paragraph breaks; divided into chapters; added some notes with information from family stories and records, as well as internet research; and inserted some photographs from the family albums. These were put together in the 1960s by my mother Theresie Schneider who was herself a child refugee and attended Brook Lodge School which is mentioned in her future father-in-law's Journal.

Although the Journal does not record my grandfather's private thoughts – it was written to be read and marked by English teachers – I believe that it does express the sincere gratitude of my grandfather and all my family to the Reverend Philip Gray and the people of Albury for taking in these refugees who were the victims of "a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing", and for showing in action the best of English values: kindness and tolerance.

Sylvia Daintrey née Lowit

September 2018 (revised notes and photographs September 2021)

From A Spectator's Notebook 25 November 1938:

so far been satisfactorily free.

★ ★ ★ ★

I have an appeal to make to readers (if any) of this column. I drove last Sunday to see a party of Sudeten German refugees (Social Democrats) for whom temporary quarters have been found in a remote corner of Surrey. They had escaped from their homes as the German armies entered; otherwise they would be in concentration camps. They could not go out, for it was pouring with rain, and they have no mackintoshes. They could not read, for they have no German books and only one or two understand English. They have only the clothes they stand up in; most of them have not even pyjamas; and they have, of course, no money. In this party there were nineteen; not far off there is a larger party, of professional men mainly, also temporarily installed in makeshift quarters; others will be quartered near as accommodation can be found; they are all men. Many of us in this country felt that Munich had brought us peace at other people's expense; these are some of the other people, and here is an opportunity of a small practical expression of gratitude for our own immunity. These refugees are having their bare board and lodging paid by the Czech Refugee Committee in London, but they want waterproofs, gum boots (and other boots or shoes), German books, German-English dictionaries, pyjamas, and old suits (for rough work, since most of them came in their best clothes). I hope someone who reads this may be moved to supply some of this need. Any of the things I have mentioned (or for that matter money to buy them with) may be sent to the Rev. Philip Gray, The Rectory, Albury, Guildford, who has undertaken to receive them and distribute them equitably. I think I can feel confidence that *Spectator* readers will lend a hand.

★ ★ ★ ★

Here is a story told by a soldier in General Franco's army

With acknowledgements to Trevor Brook of the Albury History Society who found this article when researching the history of his village and its pre-war holiday camps

17th February, 1940.

An English Journal.

1. My journey from Czechoslovakia.

After having been living and working in the so-called "Sudeten" area of Cz. for all my lifetime, I was compelled to flee into the interior of the country when the Cz. government was forced to cede the Sudeten districts to Nazi Germany by the Munich agreement at the end of September, 1938. Very soon we could not help realising that there would not be any possibility of finding adequate means or jobs for starting a new life in the state made smaller and deprived of the very foundations of its economic structure. We also saw clearer than the creators of the Munich dictate that this "settlement" was not ^{definite} a resolution but merely a postponement of the European war, and that the reduced Cz. ^{as a whole} would fall victim to Hitler's drive towards his dominance over Central and Eastern Europe unless he would be stopped by force and power.

1. My journey from Czechoslovakia.

After having been living and working in the so-called “Sudeten” area of Cz. for all my lifetime¹, I was compelled to flee into the interior of the country when the Cz. Government was forced to cede the Sudeten districts to Nazi Germany by the Munich agreement at the end of September, 1938. Very soon we could not help realising that there would not be any possibility of finding adequate means or jobs for starting a new life in the state made smaller and deprived of the very foundations of its economic structure. We also saw clearer than the creators of the Munich dictate that this “settlement” was not a definite solution but merely a postponement of the European war, and that the reduced Cz. as a whole would fall victim to Hitler’s drive towards his dominance over Central and Eastern Europe unless he could be stopped by force and power.

Our political and Trades Unions representatives, therefore, endeavoured to win friends in other countries for organising some help for us, at least in the form of a temporary refuge and of regular allowances, until a definite settlement would become possible. I myself attended a number of meetings and conferences with English and French representatives in Prague partly acting as an interpreter. Thus, our emigration was arranged, and on 2nd November, 1938, it was my turn to leave Prague for Great Britain.

Together with 12 friends, I left Prague by train; our group was accompanied by Miss Tessa Rowntree² of the “Society of Friends”. We travelled via Brünn (Moravia)³ through Slovakia, and this voyage through one of the most beautiful regions of Cz. was showing us a marvellous scenery: lovely valleys, streams, scattered villages and hamlets; hills and mountains crowned with chapels, churches, castles, and widespread fields, lawns etc.; people in picturesque native costumes everywhere.

When our express train arrived at its terminus in Slovakia, it was late for more than two hours owing to the irregular traffic which has been brought out of order by many special military and refugee trains, the difficulties made greater yet by the one-track system in that country. The next normal train to the frontier station at the Polish border was due at night, and in order not to have to wait all day and so miss the steamer in Gdynia, we were permitted to continue our travel by a goods train leaving in two hours. It then brought us very slowly but safely to the frontier station. There we had our last glimpse of the “High Tatra”, a magnificent group of snow-covered mountains glittering in the beams of the afternoon sun. It was the last glimpse of our native country.

A special “train” consisting of an engine and one single coach, ordered for us by telephone, then carried us to the first Polish town called Novy targ, i.e. Newmarket. There we were told that the train on which we ought to have continued on our travel to Cracow did not go because it was a special train for winter sport, and going from 1st December only. We were to arrive in Cracow before 10 o’clock p.m. in order to catch the express train to Gdynia where we had to embark next morning at 11. After a long talk to the station master we finally won him, for procuring a special bus to carry us to Cracow. To cover the costs we had to sacrifice half our tiny cash – each of us had been allowed only 200 Czech Kronen to take out of Cz., i.e. about 30 shillings’ worth at that time⁴ – and off we went, at 6 p.m.

The chauffeur apparently did his best to bring us to Cracow station in time. On the way, however, there was part of the road being "in repair", so that some delay was unavoidable, in spite of the bus driver's adventurous and plucky haste – he even drove our gigantic bus over "Stop" signs, facing the danger of being overturned! At one of these "obstacles" our bus was nearly thrown over a wooden bar, and the driver was able to stop it suddenly at the last second; nearly all our suitcases fell from the racks but so "luckily" that nobody was hurt.

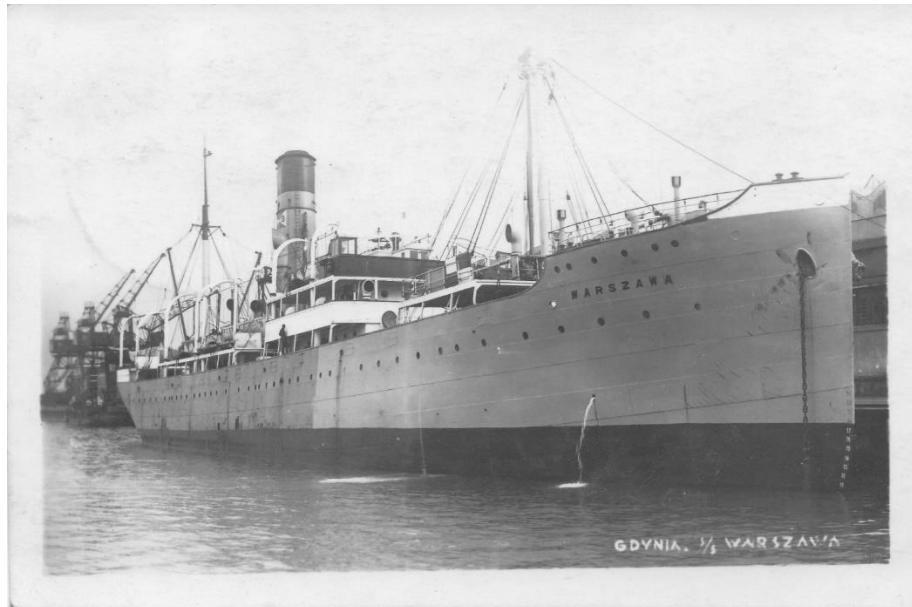
When we arrived at the station, some of our group hurried to the platform in order to ask the station master and the guard to wait for us. The rest of our group meanwhile was carrying the luggage to the platform and throwing it into the last coach of the train where some of our group were busying themselves to bring it into the compartments. Suddenly the train started – and 6 of us, together with Miss Rowntree, on it, with part of our luggage, whereas 7 were left behind in Cracow; among them the group leader with all the tickets and documents. I myself was among the "Cracow group". At first we noticed that we had with us nearly all the luggage of those who gone off, whereas our own luggage was on the way with them.

While we were discussing our situation, the bus driver came to us, running along the platform, and shouting in broken German: "Haven't you taken with you my service overcoat?" Really, we soon had to state that, in our great hurry to bring the luggage out of the bus, we also had taken, by error, the driver's overcoat which had been lying on one of our suitcases. To show the amount of our bad luck, just this overcoat had been thrown into the train so that it now was on way to Gdynia – and the poor driver had in its pocket his documents, tickets, and accounting bills. What to do now? He gave us his private address, and we promised him to send him his coat from Gdynia.

Then we learned that the next train to Gdynia was due next morning at 6 o'clock; we, however, had already boarded another train before, and alighted just before its start when being told that it did not go directly to G. The night had to be spent in the refreshment room of the station. We wired to our friends in the express train asking them to stop the steamer in G. till our arrival there by the next possible train. Next morning we got into the express train, and left Cracow.

A little later the guard entered our compartment to control our tickets. He informed us that we were in a wrong train, and had either to pay the fare or to get out at the next stop, and to wait there for our right train that had to go several hours later. After having explained him our situation and shown him our documents, accompanied by a modest tip, he agreed to "keep" us in the train – provided that no controller would come . . . So, after all, we reached Gdynia late in the evening. There our friends awaited us at the station to tell us that the ship had postponed her sailing, and that they had travelled without tickets but without having been demanded to pay the railway fare.

A bus carried us to the customs house, all was done in a great hurry, and soon we were on board the "Warszawa" waving "Good-bye" to Miss Rowntree who returned to Prague to arrange other transports. Suddenly, on the last minute, I remembered the Cracow bus driver's overcoat. Very quickly a blue overcoat with brass buttons was brought out of a cabin and thrown over the water to Miss Rowntree asking her to send it at once to the address we had hastily fixed on it. Then the ship left harbour, we went inside, and were called to supper.



After all the adventures we felt very happy, indeed, to have successfully overwhelmed all the obstacles, and we were cheerfully chatting about – when one of our friends who had gone down into his cabin to put his luggage in order entered the dining room, in a somewhat excited manner, shouting: “Who has taken my blue overcoat?” This was the climax: instead of the bus driver’s overcoat it was his which had been thrown to Miss Rowntree! And he himself had helped to throw it over the water! The captain promised to take the coat back to Gdynia and to get it returned to the bus-driver.

The “Warszawa” sailed across the Baltic, through the Kiel Canal, then crossed the North Sea, and landed at Harwich, on 8th November⁵. By train we went to London, where we stayed in a Youth Hostel. On 9th November, when going into a Bank to get our Czech money changed, I saw the picturesque “Lord Mayor’s Show”, thus gaining a very interesting impression of English tradition and custom. In the afternoon, we went by bus to Waterloo, and from there by train to Surrey Hills Guest House – our refuge for the time being. As we had to go to Guildford to get registered at the County Police on 11th November, we could just see there the impressive celebration of the Remembrance Day. The lady who had accompanied us was surprised to notice that I sung the National Anthem together with the crowd; and I myself was surprised how the words were coming back to my mind after 33 years gone since my schooldays when I had learnt them.

In remembrance, I add a list of my fellow-travellers from Cz. to Great Britain⁶:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Sigmund, Rudolf; | Christ, Ernst; |
| Haberkorn, Thomas; | Aron, ; |
| Novy, Wilhelm; | Kern, Franz; |
| Dr, Kolisch, Ernst; | Wilhelm, Josef; |
| Klein, Emil; | Kralert, Erich; |
| Storch, Rudolf; | (To Gdynia only:) |
| Schröpfer, Josef | Miss Tessa Rowntree |

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

¹ Karl was born on 6th November 1887 in Bohemia which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After the first world war, Bohemia became part of the new country of Czechoslovakia (which Karl abbreviates to Cz. here, or Č.S.R. in a later homework essay). "Sudeten" was the name given to the German-speaking districts of Czechoslovakia.

² Tessa Rowntree (1909-1999, a Quaker and cousin of Jean Rowntree) was one of several volunteers who helped Doreen Warriner and others in the task of getting the 250 Sudeten German Social Democratic Party men who were officially recognised as "persons in great personal danger" out of Czechoslovakia as quickly as possible. The first organised transports of endangered heads of families had been flown from Prague to London at prohibitive costs. Tessa Rowntree's group was the third attempt to explore the possibility of an overland route avoiding German or German-occupied territory. Others involved in this initial rescue of political refugees were David Grenfell and William Gillies of the British Labour Party; Alec Dickson of The News Chronicle; and John Ingman of the Workers' Travel Association. By the end of November, Doreen Warriner turned her attention to getting the men's wives and children out of Czechoslovakia which was broadly completed by Christmas 1938, although further transports continued until July 1939. Meanwhile, in the New Year 1939, Nicholas Winton and Trevor Chadwick came to her in Prague and began the Czech "Kindertransport", the evacuation of Jewish children without their parents which continued until the beginning of September 1939 when Britain declared war on Germany.

³ now Brno in the Czech Republic.

⁴ About £95 now.

⁵ Karl must have 'celebrated' his 51st birthday on board the ship taking him into exile.

⁶ See Appendix 1 for information on what happened to these men after their arrival in England.

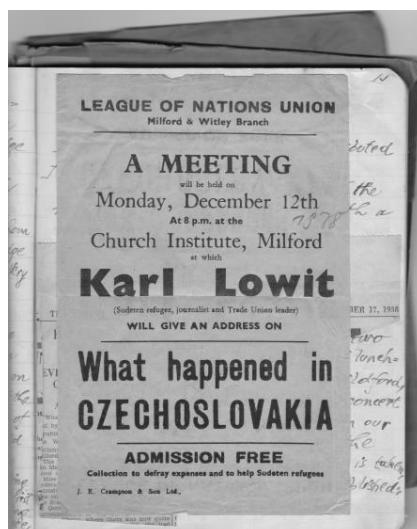


2. My first steps into public life in Great Britain

When I had learnt English at the Commercial Academy at Aussig, Bohemia¹ where I was studying from 1901 to 1905, I thought chiefly to use it for business purposes in my career later on. Employed then as a correspondence clerk for the German, French and English languages with Messrs. Josef Rindskopf's Söhne, Glass Works in Dux, Kosten, and Tischau, Head Office at Teplitz-Schönau (Bohemia)² from 1905 to 1920 – interrupted by military service as a conscripted soldier in the former Austria-Hungarian forces from 1915 to 1918 – I saw the high value of the knowledge of foreign languages, all the more so as I always have been keenly interested in literature, especially poetry, theatre, and all kinds of writing. No wonder, therefore, that I always endeavoured to use and accomplish my knowledge, missing no opportunity to improve it. I always also had desired to go abroad, first of all to France, Great Britain, and America – but, alas! never was able to see this wish fulfilled.

Everything has two sides: and, so great and deeply depressing as our misfortune was, to be forced to suffer our unjustified expulsion and depredation by the Nazis in consequence of the Munich agreement saving peace for France and Great Britain at that time, so brought it, after all, fulfilment of my old ardent desire – to come to England! The circumstances, it is true, were quite different from my previous longing, but – well, I was in England at last. And from my very first step on British soil I have been able to appreciate the value of knowing how to speak, understand, and read English. A great help for me and my friends, this knowledge may be called one of the greatest and most important assets for such cases of need.

As soon as the Englishmen with whom we came in touch noticed my knowledge they tried to use it in various ways. Very soon, Miss Butler, a representative of the British Committee in charge of our camp, in her position as Hon. Secretary of the League of Nations Union (Surrey County Federation), invited me to lecture on my experiences in the fateful days of the Czechoslovakian crisis in a meeting of this Union's Milford branch, to be held on 12th December, 1938. Though being an experienced speaker, I could not help feeling a little "stage-fright" – to appear for the first time in British public life without having attended a meeting here before! For remembrance I attach one of the bills distributed for this meeting:



Instead of describing the course of the meeting, I paste in a cutting with a report on it:

THE SURREY ADVERTISER AND COUNTY TIMES, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1938

A REFUGEE TELLS HIS STORY

REVIEW OF EVENTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

A RESULT OF MUNICH

"What happened in Czechoslovakia" was told by Karl Lowit, a Sudeten refugee, at a public meeting arranged by the Milford and Witley branch of the League of Nations Union at the Church Institute, Milford, on Monday.

The Vicar of Milford (the Rev. J. Crichton Melville), chairman of the branch, presided over an attendance of about 120.

Miss Butler, hon. secretary of the Surrey Federation of the League of Nations Union, introduced the speaker, who, she explained, was one of the first of the refugees from the Sudeten areas of Czechoslovakia taken by Germany, and was at present being accommodated at the Surrey Hills Guest House where there was now quite a

colony of such refugees who, to come to feel, were honoured guests in their midst. Had they remained in their own land they would have been imprisoned simply because they did not hold the Nazi creed. These refugees, added Miss Butler, were now hoping to become subjects of the British Empire.

AFTER AUSTRIAN OCCUPATION

In a simple and dispassionate way Karl Lowit told his story in very good English. He explained that during the past ten years he had been chairman of the Social Democratic Group in Reichenberg, where he was a member of the Town Council and of several other bodies. Born in a small village, he had always lived in the Sudeten areas except during the Great War. After the German occupation of Austria big differences arose in Czechoslovakia between the democratic Germans and the Henleinists. The democratic Germans were in favour of a peaceful settlement of differences by way of negotiation; the Henleinists were guided by advice of German Nazis. The Czechoslovak Government gave a promise to endeavour to arrive at a settlement of the grievances of German inhabitants in that country, but in May Czechoslovakia was compelled to mobilise against the Germans because the latter had mobilised against Czechoslovakia.

Then followed the dramatic climax last summer. The Henleinists and Nazis finally unmasked themselves, and everyone in Europe could see that what they were out for was not merely self-administration on a democratic basis in Czechoslovakia, but the dismemberment of that country.

Referring to German propaganda in Czechoslovakia, the speaker instanced a story which, he said, he himself heard broadcast in Reichenberg from Berlin that Czechoslovakian soldiers were shooting down Germans in the streets of Reichenberg. Even Nazis in that town were amazed that such news could be broadcast when there was no foundation for it. This was part of the German propaganda.

LEFT THEIR HOMES

When, in September, the news was received that the Czechoslovak Government had accepted the English-French appeal to cede the Sudeten areas to Germany, the speaker and many others realised that they could not remain in their homes any longer; otherwise they would be put on the "black list." They left their homes before the German occupation began, but they could take with them only what they could carry, and had to leave all their other belongings behind.

The speaker declared that the heaviest blow, as a result of the Munich agreement, was the destruction of democracy in Central Europe. Deprived of its fortifications, Czechoslovakia was no longer able to give support to France and Great Britain against Nazi influence.

"We cannot believe," he said, "that the present settlement is the end of the Munich agreement. We are prepared to fight to regain our freedom and the freedom of our people. We are quite sure that the bulk of the people in the Sudeten areas are not satisfied with the present regime."

The speaker concluded by expressing the gratitude of the refugees for the kindness of those good English friends who had housed them and their families.

Miss Butler, appealing for sympathy and support for the refugees, emphasised that if Czechoslovakia had not accepted the Munich agreement and sacrificed so much it would have meant a world war.

Mr. H. G. Corner, acting hon. secretary and treasurer of the local branch of the League of Nations Union, thanked the speaker, and said they had got to look forward to a regeneration of the League. A great factor in this would be the League of Nations Union, which could have a very strong effect in moulding public opinion. Therefore he appealed for more hearty support than ever before of the League of Nations Union.

The Vicar said he was sure that the sympathies of the large majority of the people in this country were with Czechoslovakia, because if there was anything the people of England hated it was to see a bully kick a small boy, which was really what had happened to Czechoslovakia. The reason why he was an out-and-out supporter of the League of Nations was that the Covenant enshrined and embodied, in a political form at any rate, that sort of Christian feeling nations ought to have towards one another.

It happened that in the same week I had to act as speaker at two other occasions, too: on the 12th, at lunch time, with the "Rotary Club" in Guildford, and on the 15th, at night, at a concert of the Guildford "Dennis Choir" in our own camp. In the same issue of the Surrey Advertiser of which the cutting above is taken, the following two reports were published:



So I had rather successfully made my "maiden-speeches" (so to speak) in the English language in England – my name had gained publicity here in print – and soon I was invited to deliver more addresses on the same subject. I add a list of my later lectures:

a) League of Nations Union:

| | | |
|------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Haslemere, | 10 th March, 1939; | 120 present. |
| Albury, | 20 th March, 1939 | 80 present. |
| Wonersh, | 23 rd March, 1939; | 60 present. |
| Peaslake, | 24 th March, 1939; | 85 present. |

b) International Friendship League:

Guildford, 9th February, 1939; 30 present.

c) Women's Guilds of the Guildford Co-operative Society:

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|---|------------|
| Bookham, | 23 rd March, 1939; | } | at an |
| Horsham, | 17 th April, 1939; | } | average, |
| Leatherhead, | 11 th May, 1939; | } | 30 present |
| Dorking, | 21 st July, 1939; | } | in each. |

20th March, 1940.

3. Our first Christmas Abroad

On Xmas Eve – even if not observed as a religious holiday³ – all members of our family used to gather at home. There was always a certain festive, solemn mood, special meals were served, and the climax of the evening was the “presents table”, standing in a locked-up room. Gifts for each member of the family had been prepared in the afternoon by father and mother; those for them themselves – given by the children and friends had been added in the last moment only, in order not to spoil the surprising effect which was to be one of the most important features of the festivity. Just before the meal – a much more opulent supper than usual on other days – was served, father rung a little bell, the door was opened, and the whole family rushed into the drawing room to inspect the “presents table”. Everyone took his gifts, there were exclamations of joy and gratitude, then all the gifts were put back on the table, and all went into the dining room to have supper. The rooms were beautifully decorated, there was music from the wireless or from the gramophone – and from the piano played by the youngest of the family, Herbert, as well as his knowledge allowed it.

Christmas Day used to be a day of rest, or we went into a café in the afternoon, to the theatre in the evening or at night, and afterwards into another café. On St. Stephen's Day⁴, if the weather was not too bad, we used to walk up to the mountains in the magnificent surroundings of Reichenberg⁵.

In 1937 we had especially happy Xmas holidays, in peace and quietness, as joyful and pleasant as rarely before. On 12th August, 1937, I had celebrated, with my wife, our silver wedding; on 6th November, 1937, I had had my 50th birthday. Both these days had been celebrated in a splendid way, we had been covered with all kinds of congratulations, valuable and beautiful gifts from our children, friends, relatives etc., the newspapers had published flattering essays on my activities – it was like a dream



Silver Wedding Anniversary August 1937 – Ludwig, Charlotte (Lotte), Johanna (Hanni), Karl, Herbert

Our daughter, Lotte, had stayed in London for six months – from February to August, 1937 – to improve her knowledge of English, and when she returned home she brought with her a lady-friend from London, a teacher at an Art-School for designing and drawing. Miss Irene Pothus⁶ stayed with us for four weeks in August, 1937, and was so delighted with the beauties of our regions that she came again to see us at Christmas, 1937, for three weeks, in order to have some Winter sport there. Fortunately, there was exceptionally much snow just at that time so that she was very pleased and happy. She had brought a number of genuine English crackers so that our Christmas got a bit of English customs unknown in our own country.



Lotte with English friend Rene August 1937 – see also Journal entry for 10th June 1940

Our elder son, Ludwig, had joined the army, as a conscripted soldier, on October 1st, 1937, and he had his first leave of absence at Xmas, for a week. So he also was at home, and had invited his girlfriend to spend Xmas with us. As a surprise, a school-fellow of his arrived in the afternoon to stay with us some days, and a friend of our daughter came to join us. Thus, we had a big Xmas party just this year – and nothing at all made us apprehend a fateful year that 1938 should really become . . .

Christmas 1938: what a difference from the foregoing year! Deprived of our home, bereft of our belongings, thrown out of the basis of our working and living, strained and excited, turbulent and bad days behind us, an uncertain future before us, the only consoling thought just to be safely sheltered for the time being: such was the first Xmas abroad. Like a Xmas present, my wife and Herbert had just arrived here on 22nd December, 1938, after weeks of unceasing endeavours and sorrows. Our gladness was only dimmed by the fact that our son Ludwig and our daughter Lotte had been still left in Czechoslovakia; they indeed were able to come over to England only much later. Ludwig arrived here on the 15th March, 1939 – the very day of Hitler's seizure of Prague, and Lotte even was compelled to spend two weeks under the Nazi régime in Prague, which she was able to leave, after overwhelming awful difficulties, only at the end of March, 1939. Her experiences at that time are a story for itself . . .⁷

But at Xmas 1938 at Surrey Hills there was a big and happy party. The dining room and the lounge were packed, several of our English friends joined our party. The rooms were decorated, a high and beautifully glittering Xmas-tree stood in a corner. The supper was unusually rich, many Xmas presents from English benefactors showed again their kindness and understanding, and it looked as if there was really a new home for us, prepared by good people in a country we had known before by books only in a vague manner. It was not least this Christmas and all its accessories which made me love England and the English more and more.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

¹ Now Ústí nad Labem in the Czech Republic.

² These towns in the Czech Republic are now Duchcov, Košťany, Mstišov and Teplice.

³ Karl was born a Jew of Jewish parents and married in a synagogue. He left the religion when he became politically active and brought up his 3 children as “free thinkers”. They did not practise any religion at home. Karl’s wife Johanna, however, more or less retained her Jewish faith and used to go to the synagogue on high holidays.

⁴ Boxing Day in Britain.

⁵ Now Liberec, the fifth-largest city in the Czech Republic; this was the family’s home town from 1927 to 1938.

⁶ Lotte had met Irene whilst working as an au pair for the Helman family in London; Irene was engaged to one of the Helman boys.

⁷ Ludwig came out on the penultimate transport before the occupation: Doreen Warriner and Tessa Rowntree saw off this train from Prague on 9th March, knowing that invasion was imminent. He arrived in London on 14th March 1939. Lotte, who witnessed their arrival from a vantage point on Wenceslas Square, managed to get an exit visa based on the fact that she had worked in England the previous year. She then travelled through the German Reich to the Hook of Holland on an ordinary train, not as a refugee, but at considerable risk of discovery that she was in fact a social democrat, a trade union employee and Jewish. As she said herself: “I looked quite pretty and innocent” . . . She arrived at Harwich on 29th March 1939.



Christmas 1938 at Surrey Hills - Karl in middle of photo looking at camera

4. Some important events during my stay in ENGLAND

I (Invitation to Tea)

The most remarkable impression of our life in this country from the very beginning was, has been, and still is the atmosphere of general sympathy, kindness and friendliness shown towards us always and everywhere, and by people of all classes – if this word is properly used here. A vital part of this surprisingly good impression was the many-sided effort to make us acquainted with various sides of life in England, as well as with noteworthy things, etc.

So all of us refugees were invited to tea, lunch or supper, by families in and around Albury-Chilworth, in every week, from our arrival here, till about New Year, 1939. My own first invitation to tea was on 17th November, 1938, when Mrs Howard White of Whitley, nr. Godalming, came by car and asked our hostel warden Mr Weaver to “give” her three “Sudetens” for the afternoon. It happened that already all the inmates of “Surrey Hills” had been “sold out” for that day, and only my friends Thomas Haberkorn of Eger¹ (now back again in Eger), and Wilhelm Novy of Eger (now in Farnham), and I had been left. So we three got into the car, and Mrs White drove us to her home – but not directly. She made a large round-about way in order to show us a number of beauties in this region. We saw for example Hindhead, Haslemere, the Devil’s Punch Bowl, Godalming, and many other spots and views. As Mrs White had been educated in Baden near Vienna as a young girl for five or seven years, she speaks German fluently, and my English knowledge was not necessary for managing my friends’ conversation.

Mrs White’s husband, Major Howard White, was a very interesting acquaintance. He is a retired major, saw service in India as well as in Germany and France during the Great War, and is especially interested in all things connected with Napoleon I. He showed us with pride his collection of such things, among them a genuine hair-lock of his favourite hero, and was evidently utmost glad to notice my good knowledge of Napoleon’s life and many events regarding him. He was so impressed by my knowledge and interest that he lent me a book, “Napoleon, the last Phase”, by Lord Roseberry. It was a hard job to read this large and not too easily readable book – but I managed it in several months, and surprised Major White by adding a number of newspaper cuttings to his own ones attached to that book.

Our acquaintance, started in this manner, has proved to be a very good and hearty one. Mrs White later on invited us several times to tea, she thought of us at Xmas 1938 by means of several useful presents, and in autumn 1939 my wife stayed with her for a week, helping her in her household. Unfortunately, the war has hit very hard just these good people. Major White was connected with the wood trade, as an employee (or partner?) of a London business house; there have been heavy losses, and things have grown so bad that Mrs White saw herself compelled to take up a job in a private household, as a “working companion” or so, in order to find by her own earnings adequate means for maintaining their living. It is a great pity, indeed, that we ourselves are unable to help this good couple in such a situation. We would really be eager to show our gratitude for all their kindness to us, and should feel only too glad if we could come into a possibility to help them in a practical way. Let us hope for the best!

II (English Lessons)

English lessons are one of the principal features of our camp life here. I really must greatly admire the unceasing and untiring endeavours of quite a large number of ladies and gentlemen from near and far who have been doing their utmost to teach English in our community². It is a very hard task, indeed, in view of the fact that so many of the refugees are elderly people, never before had had any opportunity to learn a foreign language, most of them only having an elementary school education, besides nearly all rather nervous, tired, partly ill, in constant uneasiness and sorrows. Taking into consideration all these circumstances, and adding the many changes within the camp community, the results achieved – though not complete – must be considered admirable after all. Heartiest thanks, therefore, are due to all the brave ladies and gentlemen who never were discouraged by all the big difficulties and obstacles to be met in such a situation. Their names may be noted here – in their turn as it was arranged by them themselves:

| | |
|--|--|
| Miss Flood, Bramley; | Miss D King, Church, Albury; |
| Mrs Begbie, Shalford; | Mrs Stewart-Fairfield, Shalford; |
| Sir Gilbert Walker, Ewhurst ³ ; | Miss Groom, Bramley; |
| Miss Bernard, Clandon; | Miss Lejeune, Peaslake, |
| Mrs Stedman, Guildford; | Miss Godden, Guildford; |
| Mrs Armstrong, Ewhurst; | Mrs Evershade [<i>sic, should be Evershed</i>], Ewhurst; |
| Miss Hess, Bramley; | Miss Watson, Albury; |
| Miss L Hyde, Shere. | |

The war has interrupted the course of our lessons in their previous way. At present our only teachers are Miss Hyde (Monday, Tuesday, and Friday, 2 – 4 o'clock p.m.) and Mrs Stedman (Thursday, 11 – 12 a.m.). Before the war, and before the school holidays that just had ended at the outbreak of war, we used to have lessons nearly every morning and afternoon, from Monday to Friday inclusive. If there had been always the same "pupils", the results could have been even better than reached with "pupils" who so often changed.

III (Trips to Windsor Castle)

For 21st November, 1938, our great friend and benefactor, the Reverend Philip Gray, Rector of Albury, had arranged a trip to Windsor. In two motor coaches all the refugees then living here were taken there. Windsor Castle and its rooms filled with unconceivable treasures of every description was like a dream. It was here that I could usefully act as an interpreter again, translating the explanations of the official guide who led the visitors through the vast rooms. What a splendour everywhere! And what a lot of reminders of important historical events! By the way, I was really glad to find in some of the voluptuous state apartments magnificent big lamps made in my home country of Bohemia. And then the interior of St George's Chapel, and the marvellous choir who sung there the Evensong! Words are not sufficient to describe all these deep and powerful impressions. All this is unforgettable.

The trip to Windsor was later repeated, on May 15th, thanks to Mr Gray's renewed endeavours and to Mrs Cook's – another great benefactress towards us refugees – far reaching kindness and readiness to spend money for such purposes. Thus, also our wives and children had the opportunity to see these marvels and wonders unique in the world.



Windsor Castle May 1939 – Anton Seifert, Josef and Adele Eger, Anna Seifert, Hedwig Gerberich, Willi Werner, Anna Schneider on right (my maternal grandmother)

10th April, 1940.

IV (Social Life and Trip to London)

A special feature of social life in our former home country were concerts and dancing parties at night. From my schooldays and from books on English customs I thought to know that social life in England must be different from ours in many a point. I, therefore, was very glad when we were told that the Albury branch of the “British Legion” – the existence of which had for the first time gained my knowledge when I heard, still in Cz., that this body had offered itself as a sort of police guard for the plebiscite planned for certain Sudeten districts – was going to arrange a special entertainment for the Sudeten refugees staying in “Surrey Hills” and in “Tree Tops”.

This big party took place on Saturday, 26th November, 1938, and the Village Hall at Albury was really packed on that evening. It is not exaggerated to state that we were entertained in a splendid manner surpassing all our expectations. English ladies especially are said, in our country, to be reserved or even prudish, and in our continental novels, plays, films, etc. such a characterisation of the English may be almost regarded as a rule. Well, the real experience here has been a disillusion just as pleasant and agreeable with regard to the general prejudice spread in our former country of the alleged “unmusicality” of the average Englishman. Not only a number of the parties with English families, but also a large number of dancing parties, concerts, and such like to which we were invited or admitted in the course of our stay here, gave us ample opportunities to become acquainted with this side of social life here, rectifying very agreeably much of the ideas of “England and the English” originally borne in our minds in consequence of the mostly incorrect descriptions already mentioned.

The next day – Sunday, 27th November, 1938 – was another day of learning: Miss Achermann, a Swiss citizen and secretary of the Workers Educational Association in London, had invited 6 of the refugees to spend a day “in Town”. I was among those six; the other 5 were: Lorenz (still here),

Nitsch (still here), Dittrich (in Canada now), Weisbach (in Canada now)⁴, and Haberkorn (back in Eger again now). Two cars took us to London where we arrived at lunch time, and had a very nice lunch with Miss Achermann and her friends. After lunch they guided us “through London” – i.e. only a small part of it of course. We saw St Paul’s Cathedral, Westminster Abbey (both inside), the Cenotaph, the Houses of Parliament, Whitehall, Trafalgar Square (there was just a demonstration for Spain there), and walked along the Embankment. Meanwhile supper time had approached, we returned by bus to our friend’s home to have supper there, and afterwards the 2 cars brought us back to Surrey Hills. This time we passed Croydon and had an interesting impression of the large airport in full light of “magic” lamps.⁵

V (Christmas Concerts and School Play)

Looking back to the most outstanding events of my stay in England, I must not fail to remember a special musical delight: the concert or recital of the “Fleet Street Choir” held in “St Martha’s on the Hill”⁶ on Sunday, 18th December, 1938, at 3 o’clock p.m. They sang a number of beautiful Xmas carols, among them one of our home country, i.e. a Czech song translated into English.

The Rev. Mr Gray had invited us also to attend an intimate recital of the Choir in his own home (the Rectory) on the same evening. So I went there, together with Dr Fischer (living in Shalford now)⁴. When we walked up the rather steep road to the rectory in the early darkness of that Sunday before Xmas – as there was just New Moon it was pitch dark – a gentleman nearly knocked against me, and then asked me for the way to the rectory. In the course of the conversation it appeared that he was the conductor of the “Fleet Street Choir”, trying to inform Mr Gray the choir would be a little late, owing to some difficulties with their motor coach. He was grateful when I undertook to inform Mr Gray, who then heartily laughed when just I, as a refugee arrived here a few weeks before from abroad, brought him this message after having shown the right way to the conductor.

It was a wonderful evening in the rectory. Dr Fischer and I joined a merry party there, the conductor of the choir and the Rector delivered witty speeches, and finally there was a funny celebration of Mrs Gray’s birthday. Thus, I could watch another feature of English social life, and gather some more nice impressions apart from the “big” tea with various kinds of very nice cakes, buns etc., and the crackers.

When then the tables had been cleared, we enjoyed a number of recitals by the Fleet Street Choir, and in order to show us their interest in our fate, they repeated the Czech carol of the afternoon. The conductor told me that the choir had visited Prague in Summer, 1937, and held a very successful recital there, in one of the largest halls which was crowded. He loved our Bohemian music and was delighted with the beauties of our “Golden Prague” (Czech: “Zlatá Praha”, German: “Goldenes Prag”).

Like a reminiscence of Christmas, a group of Albury school children, led by Mr Tupper and Mrs Tupper⁷, delighted our camp by a performance of a play on “The Story of Bethlehem”, i.e. a series of living pictures, posed after verses of the Bible. Mrs Tupper read them in English, and I once more acted my part as interpreter. It was a beautiful evening, that Tuesday, 3rd January, 1939. The children’s endeavours were really moving our hearts.

VI (Lantern Talks and Second Trip to London)

On Thursday, 5th January, 1939, we had in our camp the first Lantern Talk on “England and the English”, the first lecture of a series of at first six talks, followed later by six more lantern talks. The lecturer was Mr Sallmann of London, an employee of Messrs. T. Cook & Sons, and all was arranged and paid for by our great benefactress Mrs Cook of Wonersh, thanks to Mr Gray’s suggestions.⁸ These 12 talks on London, The Empire, The United Kingdom, the Universities and Educational institutions, English literature and art life, English hospitality, Sport and Plays, Economics, English homes, Shakespeare’s Landscape, etc. were a marvellous and utterly valuable introduction into this country and its customs, history, and special features. They were held every fortnight, in the German language, and especially the hundreds of carefully selected lantern slides enriched, together with the skilful and wise manner of Mr Sallmann’s talks, our knowledge on a quite extraordinary scale. It was, so to speak, a perfect and complete survey of England, the English, and the British Empire, as seen from various points of view.

In the frame of these lectures, Mrs Cook also arranged a trip to London for our camp. It took place on Monday, 25th January, 1939, and Mr Sallmann acted as our guide. This time it was, of course, quite a different way “to see London” from that on Sunday, 27th November, 1938. Mr Sallmann guided and explained, and as he had already lectured on London and shown us a number of lantern slides before, we could enjoy and understand better than previously everything, apart from the possibility to see far more noteworthy points, when being led by such an expert. We inspected the Guildhall, the Tower, St Paul’s, Westminster Abbey, the Wallace Museum, Kensington Museum; we were driven through the principal streets and places, the big motor coach went slowly so that we could see the views which were well explained by Mr Sallmann; part of the way we went on foot and thus that day was fully exploited.

I should like to have more opportunities to be guided though London in such a skilful way, in order to see at least a part of the many, many things noteworthy in this centre of the civilised world - - I don’t think a normal lifetime would be sufficient to see all London’s sights.



Surrey Hills February 1939 – Karl Lowit 2nd from left, likely Rev. Philip Gray 3rd from left

24th April, 1940.

VII (Theatre)

On Saturday, 11th March, 1939, I had the first opportunity to attend a performance in an English theatre. Having been a keen theatre-lover since my boyhood, my usual regular theatre-visits – as a rule, three or four times a week, or even more often if possible, during every season – are one of those necessities of cultural life I miss very deeply. So I was really glad when I was invited to see “The Merchant of Venice”, presented by the Repertory Company in Guildford. It was the first time I saw this play in English, after having seen it several times in German. What a difference between a translation and the original!

Later on, I saw two more plays: “Outward Bound”, a modern drama, in Guildford on Friday, 23rd June, 1939, and another one, the name of which I cannot remember at this moment, in the “Barn Theatre” at Shere, on Saturday, 22nd July, 1939. “Outward Bound” was very interesting, a mysterious story of several people – various social types – travelling on board a ship from life to death.⁹ The play of the “Barn Theatre” consisted of a series of, so to speak, “living pictures”, and seemed to be the dramatization of a novel – too much speaking, too little acting; a work better to read than to watch as a performance.¹⁰

VIII (Boy Scouts)

On Sunday, 12th March, 1939, our Herbert was enrolled as a member of the “Boy Scouts”, and appointed the Patrol Leader of the Brook Lodge Patrol founded on that day as a branch of the Guildford Group. It was an impressive festivity which marked an important step in Herbert’s life.



Brook Lodge “Red Falcons” Scout Group:

Walter Luft, Gerhart (later Gerald) Beck, Heinz Storch, Rudi Schor, Gerhard Höfner, Hans Türk (later Ian Turk), Herbert Löwit, with the adult leaders on right

IX (A Week in Worthing)

A special happiness was granted us when very good friends of ours – I suppose the Rev. Mr Gray and Mrs and Mr Stedman¹¹ – enabled us to stay at Worthing for a week. It was a somewhat strange sort of holiday, a complete change, very agreeable and highly appreciated, a real gift of inestimable value. Mr Stedman took my wife and me by car to Worthing on Thursday, 27th April, 1939. There we found a beautiful lodging and excellent boarding provided for us, and we were able to play our part as noble guests like some wealthy distinguished foreigners forgetting our state as refugees maintained by relief works. Although Worthing just at that time did not prove its advertisement slogan “Sunny Worthing” – indeed, we had only two days without rain during our stay there – we felt really happy. Every morning and afternoon saw us promenading or sitting (“under cover” if necessary) on the beach, watching the tide and all the many manifold things and happenings “at the seaside”.¹² Sometimes we went to a concert at the Pier Pavilion, or inspected the Museum, or walked along the streets and places, or up and down the large embanked promenade, the so-called “Parade”. It was wonderful.

On Wednesday, 3rd May, 1939, we joined an excursion to Arundel and the Swan Lake. It was like a dream or a fairy tale, and enriched us by unforgettable impressions.

On Thursday we paid a visit to a poor crippled lady-friend of Mrs Stedman, called Miss Davis, who stayed in a hospital “The Holy Rood” at Findon near Worthing. She had just been informed by Mrs Stedman of our planned visit, and was evidently utmost glad to see us at her bedside. Poor woman – she will scarcely be able to leave her bed again!

Friday, 5th May, 1939, was our last day in Worthing. On the foregoing evening we had watched a vast display of Worthing’s ARP¹³ – very impressive and reassuring, indeed. Friday afternoon Mr Stedman came by car; to our joyous surprise, he brought our two boys Herbert and Ludwig so that they also could see Worthing’s beauties as far as possible in their two hours’ stay.¹⁴

When we returned to “Surrey Hills” towards evening, we had behind us a week of exceptionally happy experiences, a beautiful remembrance for ever, and our hearts were full of gratitude to those who had made possible such a change for us.



NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

¹Now Cheb in the Karlovy Vary region of the Czech Republic. See Appendix 1 for a photo of the table that Thomas Haberkorn built at Surrey Hills with two other refugees.

² A reminder that Karl’s Journal was written in exercise books and read and corrected by English teachers.

³ Sir Gilbert Thomas Walker (1868 – 1958), Fellow of the Royal Society in 1904 for his work in applied mathematics and applications to electromagnetism, President of the Royal Meteorological Society from 1926 to 1927, also awarded for his work in India. He died in Coulsdon, Surrey, 25 miles from Ewhurst. Karl writes about him in a later section XVII.

⁴ Further information about Lorenz, Nitsch, Dittrich, Weisbach, Haberkorn and Dr Fischer in Appendix 1.

⁵ Croydon Airport, also known as London Terminal Aerodrome or London Airport, was Britain's major international airport during the interwar period. After the war, it was replaced by Northolt Aerodrome, London Heathrow Airport and Gatwick Airport.

⁶ A tiny, traditional English church in Chilworth, on an isolated hill up a steep track, which still hosts world-class musicians.

⁷ Mr Tupper was presumably Rev Martin Evelyn Tupper (1908-1989), the Assistant Curate of Albury Church. His wife was Phyllis Margaret Tupper née Lacey from Epping (1914-2004).

⁸ Mrs Beatrice Cook (1875-1953) was born in the USA and was the widow of Frank Henry Cook, the grandson of Thomas Cook, the travel agent. They built their home at Barnett Hill, Wonersh as a Queen Anne-style mansion around 1905. In 1940 Mrs Cook offered Barnett Hill to the Red Cross and Order of St John War Committee for use as a convalescent hospital and she moved to a house in Wonersh Village. After the war, the British Red Cross converted the house into its National Training Centre. It is now a Grade II listed country house hotel retaining many of its original features.

⁹ A 1923 play written by Sutton Vane. Very popular in the interwar years, it was performed in the West End and Broadway; there were also several film adaptations. Last revived in 2012.

¹⁰ The Spectator Archive 28 July 1939: "The Barn Theatre at Shere, that gallant venture floated seven or eight years ago by Cambridge undergraduates of histrionic inclinations, may now be regarded as an established institution. One evidence of that was that last week, for the first performance in England (or anywhere else) of a dramatised version of Mary Webb's *The House in Dormer Forest*, the house was filled to capacity not only on Saturday evening, which is usual, but on every other evening, which is not. The play, as the programme indicated, is rather a series of episodes than a close-knit drama, but it never lost its hold on the audience, and much of the acting was admirable, particularly Isolde Denham as Amber Darke."

¹¹ Mrs Grace Stedman née Archer (1870-1961) had married Charles Barton Stedman (1860-1945), a clerk/tea merchant, in 1895 in Kobe Japan. In 1939 they were living at Tyting Corner, White Lane, Guildford. Karl's son Herbert was in touch with Mrs Stedman after she was widowed.

¹² Karl came from a land-locked country; the only time he and his family had visited the seaside was the Baltic coast in Germany where they would not have experienced the tide.

¹³ Air Raid Precautions (ARP) was set up in 1937 dedicated to the protection of civilians from the danger of air raids.

¹⁴ A couple of months later, Karl's daughter Lotte was in Worthing, as the Helman family resided there in the summer, and met her future (English) husband who came from the town . . .

X (A Wedding and an Emigration)

Our son Ludwig had made the acquaintance of a German girl at Easter 1939 when she happened to come into our camp, together with a few girl-friends, to watch a football-match. She was employed as a housemaid by Mrs Hutton at Merrow. Soon the two young people fell in love with each other, and on Saturday, 1st July, 1939, we celebrated their wedding at the register office at Guildford. So we had gained a daughter-in-law! Good English friends of ours had arranged a reception so that the wedding was one of our happiest days. Also the "Surrey Advertiser Times"¹ published a large picture of the wedding party, and a report on that important event: "Cupido among Refugees". On Monday evening, Rev. Gray² granted a special blessing to the young couple in Albury Church; this simple ceremony was very impressive.



Alas! already on Friday, 14th July, 1939, Ludwig and Anneliese left us for Canada under the auspices of the emigration scheme for Sudeten refugees, to found a new future as settlers and pioneers in the Province of Saskatchewan, full of best hopes and accompanied by our heartiest wishes, they went away, far from us but always united with us in our mind. Hard work and difficult times awaited them – may they master all their responsible tasks and become as happy as we want them to be and as they fully deserve!³

XI (A New Swimming Pool)

Sunday, 2nd July, 1939, saw the opening of the newly-erected Swimming Pool at Surrey Hills. For a number of weeks a score of our refugees had been busy in planning, constructing and building this swimming pool, and its opening took place as a great festivity. Speeches were delivered, songs were sung, a little sketch was played, and a large audience witnessed that "historic" happening. By the swimming pool a valuable improvement was added for "Surrey Hills" and it will certainly remain for ever an appreciated remembrance of the Sudeten refugees' stay in this guest house.⁴



Opening of Surrey Hills swimming pool, Sunday 2nd July 1939. Karl is on left of man with white shirt who is Josef Nitsch. The speaker is Wenzel Jaksch, the leader of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party in exile. The man on the right may be Richard Lorenz, the camp chairman.

With thanks to Trevor Brook of Albury History Society and Graham Hieke for this photograph

XII (School for Domestic Science)

In such a chronicle must also be noted what had especially been done for our wives. Mr Gray had arranged a "School for Domestic Science" which was held in the Albury Village Hall during the Spring months, 1939. For six weeks there were lessons of English cooking, household, etc. twice a week; and then, for another six weeks, once a week, there were lessons of dress-making. These instructions were of special value and our wives could learn very much of greatest interest and use for them. Our good friend Mrs Stedman contributed a great deal to their success: so, for example, she bought aprons⁵ for all the women, and I am sure she did still more than I am aware. Mrs Stedman has always been in specially close relations to "her" "Women Class", apart from her English lessons; she never failed to send them view-cards from trips and travels, even sent them some special native dishes from various districts of England and Wales, etc. She has certainly a monument in the heart of every one of our wives.

26th April, 1940.

XIII (Declaration of War)

A milestone in our refugee-life in England was the 3rd September, 1939 – the day when Great Britain and France declared war on Germany! At once we all felt world history taking a decisive step forwards – towards overthrowing Nazism, and towards securing freedom also for our former home country again.

In 1914, as a new married young man, I had witnessed the outbreak of war in Austria-Hungaria. Till May, 1915, I watched the Great War at home; then I was called up as a conscripted soldier, and served until the end of November, 1918.⁶



What a contrast between the English and our people regarding the attitude to the war! With us, in 1914, jubilation everywhere, parades with music, banners and colours on every house, triumphant march songs to be heard day and night, sneers and scorn towards the “enemies”, flowers and bouquets for the soldiers, a kind of drunken confidence in a very quick victory as a matter of course. In England, however, nothing at all of that kind: only sober and quiet resolution, no excitement, the matter being treated with, so to speak, a sportive spirit. We noticed all this with admiration, and our confidence in the British victory became the greater.⁷

It is a great pity that we are not (or at least not yet) allowed to do something more useful for helping this country to win the war than to be maintained here by the Czech Refugee Trust Fund⁸, and be kept watching the events without being able to play our part. Let us hope for the best! –

It has been interesting to watch the influence of the war events on English life, in many aspects. The development also showed again, and perhaps more deeply than before, the enormous importance of maintaining the principles of free speech, free opinion, free reading, and all the other previous liberties which distinguish English public and private life, as compared with our former country. Should we ever come “home” again, and should we have the task to work in public life again there – then I should greatly hope to be able and allowed to teach my fellow-countrymen at least a bit of the real democratic spirit which fills every vein of English life, and is the indispensable basis of human liberty. Above all: tolerance!

XIV (Schooling)



Herbert on right: Head Boy at Brook Lodge School

At back: Hans Türk (b.1925 to Australia) and Georg Weiss (b.1924 to?). At front: Walter Moc b.(1924 to USA), Rudi Schor (b.1928 to Bolivia), Hans Sommer (b.1925 to?).

After having attended the Brook Lodge School for Sudeten refugee children – a creation of Mr Gray, the value of which is the higher as it was a sort of experiment and venture from the beginning – for a year (1939)⁹, our Herbert was sent to the “Kingston Day Commercial School” at Kingston-on-Thames where he entered on 2nd January, 1940.¹⁰ It is a great thing that the Trust Fund and all our various good friends here enable Herbert to get this education; he will surely show his gratitude by the results of his studies as well as by his later achievements, and eventually, after leaving school, by his own work founded on such a sound basis. Also that he was again appointed a patrol leader with the Boy Scouts there may be a valuable asset for his future. I am glad to note that his school report for the 1st term was an excellent one; with 81.3% he is – in his form master’s own written words – “easily the head of his form”. So his way into a good and secure future seems to be paved – thanks to the great aid and interest of our English benefactors, and thanks to his abilities and true ambitions.

2nd May, 1940.

XV (Hampton Court)

Passing the time between November 1938 and now in review, there are still more events appearing in mind. So for instance a trip to Hampton Court. It was on Friday, 18th August, 1939, when Mrs Hutton of Merrow – with whom our daughter-in-law Anneliese had been occupied, and after the latter’s marriage to our son Ludwig, my wife had been helping in her household for a short time¹¹ – took my wife, Herbert and me by car to Hampton Court. The interior of this famous castle, the beautiful park and gardens surrounding it, the centuries old vine, and other remarkable things were very impressive – not to forget the funny maze about which I had read long ago in Jerome’s “Three

men in a boat"! It is a strange feeling indeed, if one sees or enters the real scene of happenings once read about in poems or novels – thus realising that it was not only the writer's fancy . . .

Such, by the way, was also my feeling when in London, during my first stay there, I passed Scotland Yard, the scene of so many detective stories and thrillers . . . It reminds me of the story of the villager who, when a casual acquaintance told him he came from Jerusalem, utterly astonished asked him "Where do you say you are coming from? From Je – ru – sa – lem?? Is it possible? Is this a real place? I believed it was only something in the Scriptures??"

XVI (A Girls' School and more Concerts)

One of our most devoted teachers was Miss Groom of St Catherine's School at Bramley.¹² From the very beginning of our stay in Surrey Hills, i.e. from November 1938, up to the school holidays before the outbreak of war, i.e. until the end of July, 1939, she came, regularly and untiring, at least twice a week to teach us English. All our refugees liked her very much, and regretted it deeply when she, after the 1939 school holidays, was unable to resume her lessons owing to her many-sided duties in consequence of the war situation.

In May 1939, Miss Groom asked me whether I could help prepare some pupils at St Catherine's for their German examination. With greatest pleasure I agreed, and went twice a week "to school". Four young girls were the pupils in question, and their text book was a short story by Theodor Storm, "Immensee". I tried to do my best for their preparation, and hope all their and my endeavours were not in vain.

This "job" – quite an interesting one – gave me the opportunity to see an English school "inside". I also met the staff, having been invited to tea in the staff room. I could gain a lot of interesting impressions, and draw comparison between such a school and our own ones at home. It is to be noted, of many apparent "trifles", that English children certainly are educated in a freer and more self-governing manner than ours. Perhaps, our teaching and learning is more thorough and more specialised, and more theoretical than it seems to be here.

On Saturday, 15th July, 1939, Miss Groom took two of our friends (Graiževsky, in London now, and Prosche, in Kidderminster now)¹³ and me to a School Concert at St Catherine's – another interesting feature of English girls' school life.

Mentioning concerts, I remember a lot of good concerts here: not only some concerts of the Guildford Dennis Choir given in our camp here, but also two series of concerts of the Guildford Symphony Orchestra, in the seasons of 1939 and 1940. Thanks to Mr Coe's kindness, we had free admittance, and I did not miss one of these musical enjoyments. One of the most impressive ones was "St Matthew's Passion", by Joh. Seb. Bach, on Sunday, 21st April, 1940, in the big hall of the Technical Institute at Guildford.

XVII (Some Acquaintances)

Miss Godden of Guildford may also be specially mentioned as one of our most faithful teachers. She used to give us her lessons twice or three times a week, alternatively with Miss Groom. She was a favourite teacher of the refugees here, and it is a great pity that her many war duties, in connection with the evacuated children's education, compelled her to abandon her lessons with us. Miss

Godden also has been sending me regularly the “New Statesman & Nation”¹⁴ and the “K.H. News Letter”¹⁵, thus providing me with an interesting and instructive reading material – useful not only for practising the English language and improving my knowledge, but also for learning and understanding English viewpoints on actual affairs of highest importance.

An interesting personality among our teachers is also Sir Gilbert Walker of Ewhurst. He is about 65, was a civil servant in British India for about 25 years, and is a special expert on weather questions. He also used to lecture on such meteorological problems in the London University, and was knighted as a reward for his valuable services to the British Navy (Merchant Navy I suppose) in finding out new ways for weather forecasting in the East Indian waters. We were twice in his home to tea.

Sir Gilbert also brought us in touch with his neighbour, Mr Evershed, an astronomer of note, who showed us his private observatory and a vast collection of self-made lantern-slides in natural colours – pictures of the sky, sun, moon, planets, etc., as well as of various landscapes. He was very interested to hear that the first war minister of Cz., General Stefanik, was an astronomer, and was grateful for the Czech postal stamps of 50^h bearing Stefanik’s portrait I could hand him. Mrs Evershed later on took charge of several lessons for beginners in our camp.

Another interesting acquaintance was Mr Bevan, an author of many books, living at Betchworth. When I was invited there to Lunch and Tea for the first time on Wednesday, 18th January, 1939, together with Dr. Fischer, we met there an Australian bishop, and Miss (Fräulein) von Unruh, a sister of the famous German poet and playwright Fritz von Unruh. The latter had been a Prussian officer during the Great War, and his experiences in the battlefields induced him to write poems and dramas bearing tendencies against war, militarism, nobility, reactionaries, etc. He became very strongly “left-minded”, his plays caused theatrical scandals, and after the Nazis seized power in Germany, he was forced to flee to France or Switzerland¹⁶. Last year he was deprived, by the Nazi régime, of his German citizenship – an honour and distinction he shares with the greatest German scientists, poets, authors, etc.

Mr Bevan was, during the Great War, a reader and translator of German newspapers, books and other publications, and compiled extracts for the use of the British Government. He showed me a book he had then written on the German Social Democrats’ attitude towards the war of 1914-1918, based on their own war-time publications. For the second time I was with Mr Bevan on Thursday, 25th January, 1940, when he had invited my wife and me for luncheon and tea again. Fräulein von Unruh was not there – she had returned to Germany just a few weeks before the present war, to join her mother; nothing had been heard about her brother Fritz von Unruh.

After the League of Nations Union meeting at Womersley on 23rd March, 1939, where I had spoken on my experiences in Cz., I obtained an invitation to tea from Mr Keeble, a retired minister of the Wesleyan Church, who, owing to his great age (88) was unable to come to the meeting, but after having heard, from Mrs Keeble, a short report on my lecture, wished to have a conversation with me. It was a very interesting afternoon, that Friday, 31st March, 1939, when my wife, our son Ludwig, and I followed this invitation. Mr Keeble is a man with deepest social understanding. In his younger years he wrote (for instance) a book on Marxism. He was one of the first Englishmen to read and study Karl Marx’s chief work “Capital”, and he used to lecture on social questions in Labour circles, clubs etc. Philip Snowden¹⁷ was one of his pupils, and Mr Keeble showed me a book of Snowden’s personally dedicated to him as “from a grateful pupil to his beloved master”. A large

library, containing books of inestimable value – and partly reminding me of my library kept back by the Nazis¹⁸ – was a point of special attraction for me. We saw Mr Keeble several times since that first meeting; he and Mrs Keeble may be called good friends to us.

It is nearly impossible to record all acquaintances we have been able to make in the course of our stay here. All are engraved in our hearts and minds, with gratitude and appreciation; we shall never forget our good experiences in this country, a true and real consolation in bad times.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

¹ Karl corrected the title from Advertiser to Times. The newspaper that he took cuttings from was “The Surrey Advertiser and County Times” which was founded in 1864 and still exists in modern formats. A copy of the cutting (but not the photograph) is in the Ladwig/Wade Family Collection donated to Western Illinois University and can be seen [online](#). In the article headed “Cupid Among the Refugees” Anneliese is described as Austrian but she was in fact German, born in Essen in September 1914 to a Lutheran father and a Jewish mother. Most of the family were outspoken against Hitler and his regime. Anneliese’s older brother Heinz Karl Ladwig had emigrated to the United States in 1936 and was arranging through his contacts in Germany for his 3 sisters to join him via London. Anneliese left Germany for England in 1937 and was followed a year later by her sister Margot. Her youngest sister Ursel did not arrive until 21st June 1939.

² The teacher corrected Rev. Gray to the Rev. Mr Gray. Later references to his name in this Journal use Rev. or Mr. Maybe these forms of address for a Rector are interchangeable?

³ The newly-weds sailed on the “Andania” from Liverpool to Montreal, 14th - 24th July 1939. The ship did not survive the war. After a tough winter on an abandoned farm in rural Canada, Ludwig and Anneliese moved to Winnipeg and later settled in Toronto. They followed the Jewish faith of their mothers, and Ludwig became a leading light in the Sudeten German community of Canada.

⁴ It appears that Surrey Hills fizzled out as a guest house by the mid 1960s; it is now a private house but the swimming pool no longer exists.

⁵ “Apron” was the first English word my mother learnt, age 15, when she entered domestic service as a refugee in the Eustace house “Stoodwell” (The Old Rectory) in Merrow.

⁶ Fortunately, Karl wasn’t fit enough to be at the Front. In the end he landed up with the Austrian Army of Occupation in Bucharest, in Romania. When the war ended he just went home to his wife and daughter (Lotte) and resumed his job at the glass factory.

⁷ Karl was not to know that the attitude to war in England in 1914 was not so dissimilar to that in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

⁸ The Czech Refugee Trust Fund had been set up with money from the Lord Mayor’s Fund for Czech Refugees and other appeals such as the News Chronicle and Manchester Guardian newspapers, as well as contributions from the British and Czech governments. It continued after the war to support refugees from the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia.

⁹ Eight boys from ten to sixteen years of age were educated at Brook Lodge School, a German-English boarding school set up by the middle of January 1939 under the charge of a former English

preparatory school headmaster Mr F C Cobbold. As well as English and German, the boys were taught mathematics, geography, physical education and drawing. They were housed in a cottage adjoining the main guest house where a group of Sudeten refugees lived in similar circumstances to the Surrey Hills group. Girls joined the school in September 1939 for its final term.

¹⁰ Kingston Day Commercial School was the first commercial school in England, opening in 1910. In January 1940, the school moved to a new site in Hinchley Wood, sharing it with Hinchley Wood Secondary School. In 1947 Hinchley Wood school took over the commercial courses until these were transferred back to Kingston Technical College, as part of Kingston College.

¹¹ It appears that after Anneliese and Johanna, it was the turn of Karl's daughter Lotte to work for Rev and Mrs Hutton at their house "Squintz", 40 The Fairway, Merrow. Charlotte Löwit is listed in the 1939 National Register (a special census taken on 29th September) as living there, with her occupation shown as "gardening, cooking etc."



Estate in Merrow believed to be "Squintz"

¹²This independent all-girls' school was founded in 1885 and is still going strong.

¹³ Further information about Graiževsky and Prosche in Appendix 1.

¹⁴ This was the name of the current "New Statesman" between 1931 and 1964.

¹⁵ A series of newsletters edited by Stephen King-Hall - a navy man, playwright and MP from 1939 to 1945 - which covered the political machinations and situation immediately prior to the outbreak of the second world war.

¹⁶ According to Wikipedia, Fritz von Unruh left Germany for France in 1932, later emigrating to the United States. He returned to Germany in 1962 and died there in 1970 aged 85.

¹⁷ According to Wikipedia, Philip Snowden was a strong speaker, and became popular in trade union circles for his denunciation of capitalism as unethical and his promise of a socialist utopia. He was the first Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, a position he held in 1924 and again between 1929 and 1931. He died in Tilford, Surrey in 1937.

¹⁸ See homework essay 14th April, 1940.

CHAPTER 5

5. Current Entries

4th May, 1940.

Farewell, Surrey Hills!

To-day we bid farewell to S.H. though for the moment we are still uncertain about our future home – our good and kind friends Rev. Gray and Mr Coe have promised to get us settled in Albury itself, but it may take them another few weeks to succeed in finding something suitable. It is sure, at any rate, that our stay at S.H. has come now to a definite end. For eighteen months, from the 9th November, 1938, up to to-day, S.H. was my home, and when we left to-day, it was just like taking leave of a dear friend. When I arrived here as an exile, driven out of my home town and native country by the most cruel enemy mankind has ever known, this lovely spot with its peaceful surroundings was a friendly refuge, bringing recreation, enjoyment, and quietness into my excited and deeply moved heart and soul, calm instead of unrest – balm for the wounds caused by the terrifying experiences of the foregoing weeks and months. Many changes happened during our stay here, I saw a lot of people come in and out; only very few of the first inmates of our hostel stayed here from the beginning to the end of the camp: Lorenz, Nitsch and I.

The name “Surrey Hills” contains something for me which is not easy to express in words: I have become rooted here in a certain sense, it is now an indispensable part of my life, a place connected with fateful and decisive events, filled with remembrances of various kinds, an uninterrupted chain of more or less happy days. I am sure I shall always think of S.H. with gratitude, and I do not take leave of it for ever, but should like to say,

“Au revoir!”

And now we are beginning a new life. For the time being, we are sheltered at Guildford, with our good old friends, the Lufts¹ (from Reichenberg, where I had lived for ten years), the Löbls (from Teplitz-Schonau where I had lived for twenty-three years before I moved to Reichenberg), and the Becks (from Brůx, a town situated an hour’s distance from my birthplace at Langugest²). It is a temporary stay, until Rev. Gray and Mr Coe have secured a home for us in Albury or nearby. Of course also we ourselves are endeavouring to find something in order to be able to remain in Albury where I am feeling myself already as a citizen, where we have found many good friends, and where I should like to work for the community, as a real citizen. Life must have a content – and this country ought to make better use of our willingness and abilities than only to house and feed us by the financial means and disposal of the Czech Refugee Trust Fund. We must not lose our patience . . . though this may sometimes be very difficult.

When I landed at Harwich on 8th November, 1938, permission to land and to stay in Great Britain was granted only for a month, and under the condition that I do not enter any employment whether paid or unpaid. The permission to stay here has been prolonged for an unlimited period, but the prohibition to work was never altered.³ Immediately when the war broke out I offered my services to any branch of any work in connection with the many-sided possibilities to do something useful in such a time – but in vain. In December 1939 we “friendly aliens”⁴ were at last allowed to register ourselves with the Labour Exchange – no positive result, however, could be arrived at hitherto.

When the R.A.S.C.⁵ announced, in March 1940, that they wanted men between 35 and 55 as clerks, I went to the Recruiting Centre, but after inquiries held at the headquarters in London, was refused – because only real British citizens are taken for the time being, whereas “friendly aliens” are eligible for the “Pioneer Corps” only, and up to 50; I am 52.

On 18th April, 1940, I was at the medical examination for the Czechoslovakian Army, but the commission found me “unfit” for military army service.

What next?

“... ‘tis easy enough to be pleasant

When life flows along like a song;

But the man worth while

Is the one who will smile

When everything goes dead wrong . . .”⁶

Guildford, 9th May, 1940.

Last night I saw the film “Ninotschka”; stars – Greta Garbo, Felix Bressant, and others; stage manager: Ernst Lubitsch⁷. One of the best films I ever saw. It is with pleasure and delight that I remember many creations of Lubitsch, many films featuring Greta Garbo. Both are real artists in their fields, and have greatly improved the art of the screen.

10th May.

Last night my wife and I attended a social evening at the Refugee Club (High School). It is significant for the English style of life that amidst a terrible war being fought for “to be or not to be” of the British Empire and of the whole human civilisation, people speaking the enemy’s language – even though being this enemy’s most hated opponents and longing most ardently for his complete defeat – are allowed to gather in musical entertainment, dance and playing, enjoying a nice evening. This is the spirit of this nation, and we cannot but admire its greatness. Victory is bound to be theirs.

Just now I heard the radio news of the Nazis having invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg – thus adding another ruthless crime to their record. More than ever the fate of human civilisation lies in the hands of Great Britain and France, and the hopes of every decent man and woman throughout the world must cling to the Allies.⁸

14th May.

This afternoon Miss Hyde, our successful teacher at Surrey Hills for the last few months, resumed her lessons at 4, York Road⁹. May success reward her untiring endeavours!

19th May.

Herbert came yesterday to see us here. He is getting on very well with his studies at Kingston.¹⁰ Last night I went with him to the pictures. After an entertaining detective story of “Charley Chan”, we saw the British propagand film, “For Freedom”. Well done, indeed! All the snapshots taken from previously shown newsreels – even before the war 1914-1918 – demonstrated the course of events

leading to the present struggle for freedom and civilisation. After this “introduction” followed the epic story of the defeat of the German battle-ship “Admiral Graf Spee”, and of the prisoners’ rescue from the “Altmark”. It was splendid.

Heart-breaking were the newsreels showing pictures of the Nazi invasion in Holland and Belgium. Seeing the unceasing and endless stream of helpless refugees, carrying their small belongings and leaving behind them their homes, going into an uncertain future, I could not help being reminded of our own fate, our own experiences of September 1938, when we had to leave our homes, as victims of just the same Nazi-aggression and ruthless persecution which now threatens to approach also the British Isles – our sanctuary and refuge, the last hope of democracy and humanity. It is a pity that our voices were not heard by the leading statesmen then when we endeavoured to explain to them the real dangers and menace of Nazism against all human decency, liberty, justice, religion, morals, welfare – in one word, against everything which is dear and precious to civilized mankind! Very high, extremely high, is the price to be paid now for having hesitated far too long to destroy the brute monster in time. Now all must be united in one aim: to smash the “mechanized Attila” as Léon Blum¹² called him some days ago.

In to-day’s sermon in the “Christ Church” here, Rev. Buchanan¹² drew a comparison between the Jewish and the Christian conception of GOD. It was interesting and deeply impressive. In my mind I remembered the old Jewish tale, saying that there are seventeen gates leading to Heaven: each of them is different, but they all lead at last to the same one and only single goal – the eternal creator of all living and dead. What profound wisdom and superiority of thinking!

20th May, 1940.

Life is full of surprises, and the unexpected is often the best experience.

When I came home from shopping this morning, a car was waiting in front of our house, and Frau Luft told me that I had to accompany her to an English family, instead of her husband who had to stay at home because of an inspection by a representative of the Czech Trust Fund. So I went as a “substitute” or “Ersatz” – and it became one of my finest days in England.

The hosts were Mr S.C. Moss and his sister Miss Moss, living at St. Augusta’s, S. Munstead, near Godalming.¹³ Their cottage stands on top of a hill, amidst a large wild garden, and the view out of the dining room window is one of the most wonderful ones imaginable. It almost reminds me of the view from a mountain tower in our home country.¹⁴

Mr Moss took me for two long walks through the surroundings of his cottage, each of which lasted for about 1½ hours. The first walk started after lunch, and led down a hill into a valley with two ponds. The owner of this estate had planted various kinds of trees, flowers, and other plants, they are all labelled and specially protected by wire fences. It was like a world in itself, and the view was the more impressive as the valley suddenly and unexpectedly opened itself when we had crossed a wood.

After tea, Mr Moss took me in his car a few miles down into a hidden hamlet, and then we walked up another hill. The most impressive view there was of some groups of beautiful but giant beech trees, the biggest ones I ever saw. The powerful tops of these gigantic trees, with their widespread

branches and boughs, formed a natural cathedral of marvellous splendour. Such must be the impressions which compelled the primitive man to fall to his knees and rest in awful silence

Then we walked round the hill, and each turning of the path granted us another grandiose view far over the country. The weather was the best possible, bright sunshine and a cloudless dark blue sky trimmed a landscape like a panorama spread at our feet. How beautiful is England! How magnificent is nature in springtime! And how quiet and peaceful – nothing reminds of the war being waged at the same time across the Channel . . . Is it possible that, while we enjoy here all the indescribable beauties of a glorious spring day, listen to the singing birds, and admire the lively colours of all those trees, flowers, grass etc. forming a natural carpet as far as our eyes can look, at the same time, a few hundred miles away from here, human beings are killed in thousands by a restless and ruthless machinery let loose by cruel criminals, that death-spreading aeroplanes are roaring there instead of the larks and blackbirds filling here the air with their lovely songs?¹⁵

My conversation with Mr and Miss Moss was very interesting. It appeared that they are members of “The International Hebrew-Christian Alliance”, and followers of the idea of the lost ten tribes of Israel. They lent me a book and several numbers of a magazine so that I can study these ideas of which I already had heard some time ago. Last year, when staying at Worthing, I read a book by “Roadbuilder”, dealing with the matter of the lost ten tribes.

It was already rather late when we returned home – by bus from Godalming, owing to the scarcity of petrol for private cars.

27th May.

Yesterday we went to see Herbert in his present home at Tolworth. We are very glad to have convinced ourselves how nice the Guy family are, and what a charming small house they live in. They all seem to be really proud of him. It is a consolation in such a time to know that at least Herbert’s future appears as secured – as far as it is possible to see any security for a future under the present circumstances.¹⁶

Peasmarsh, 3rd June, 1940

Another change has taken place in our life: After several conversations with Lotte, Mr and Mrs Vicars, and Mr and Mrs Coe during the last few days, we have gone to-day into Mr Vicars’ house, “Unstead Cottage”, Mill Lane, Peasmarsh, to stay here for an “unlimited” period. At our deep regret, Mr Gray and Mr Coe have not been able to find suitable accommodation for us at Albury; all the rooms or houses they had had in mind as being or becoming vacant were meanwhile occupied – mostly in consequence of the further development of the war, especially of the evacuation of London. Also Mrs Stedman and Miss Hyde only could tell us that at Chilworth and at Shere no houses or suitable rooms were vacant at present.

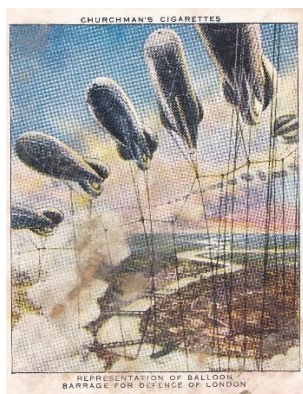
Therefore, and in view of the temporary manner of our accommodation at 26, York Road, Guildford, we are glad that certain changes in Mr and Mrs Vicars’ household have opened the opportunity and possibility of our accommodation here. Mrs Vicars is leaving tomorrow, with her little boy and their “Nanny”, for Cornwall; Lotte is joining the Women’s Land Army and going to work on a farm at Milford (not too far from here), so that Mr Vicars is left alone in his house, and we are asked to stay here, in order that the house may not be entirely empty. Mr Vicars will mostly be absent, and

probably be here only for the weekends or on one or two days weekly. Our only duty is to stay here, my wife has to look after the house, to keep it clean etc. – an easy task, the more so as most of the rooms are shut – and on the few days when Mr Vicars is in she has to prepare his meals. These are very simple since Mr Vicars is a vegetarian, and his only “vice” is tea . . .

Even if we were living quite alone in a house of our own, we would have almost the same to do as here in such circumstances. Our bedroom is valued at 10/- a week¹⁷, and is granted for our work which we do instead of paying cash. We hope it will be possible to cover our expenses for food, clothing etc. by the maintenance allowances to be paid to us by the Czech Refugee Trust Fund. At any rate we seem now to have found an “independent” home of our own, a bit of privacy, after 20 months of the loss of our home, 19 months of camp life, and we hope it will last for at least some months.

7th June.

This night we experienced our first real air raid warning in this country. Though there was no actual air raid then and no bombs were dropped, it was a kind of “rehearsal” for the events we may expect to happen in a short time. How helpless we are against the ruthless cruelty of such beasts who fly high above in the clouds and drop their death and destruction spreading missiles aimlessly and at random! Just to sit and wait for what is going to happen or not to happen – what a thought! Is this the peak of civilisation? And is there no means yet to stop that machinery?



Balloon Barrage for the Defence of London (on a Cigarette Card)

10th June.

On Saturday – 8th – Lotte came to see us with a lady-friend of hers. She looks very well and seems to be very happy at her new job. Yesterday our old friend Miss Irene Pothus paid us a visit, and later in the afternoon Lotte and her friend came again. So we had a nice party with us.

Just now I have heard on the wireless, in the 6 o'clock news, that Mussolini has announced, some minutes ago, his declaration of war in the name of Italy on France and Great Britain. It is a real stab in the back. There can be no doubt whatsoever that this latest crime will not pay, and that now both the tyrannic dictators of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy will find their end. It is only a pity that they will bring more disaster to so many innocent people, and that the already immense number of their victims will be yet enlarged. But in each case, Masaryk's motto remains unshaken, “TRUTH PREVAILS!”¹⁸

12th June.

This afternoon we were agreeably surprised by an unexpected visit by Mrs Stedman. What a good friend she is to us!

14th June.

“La Ville Lumière” – PARIS – In Nazi hands! It’s hardly possible to imagine such a happening. And it is impossible that such an occupation could be of a long duration. These are dark hours, indeed. The greater is the task of all freedom loving people: to restore liberty and right to all so violently oppressed nations.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

¹ Karl’s son Herbert remained in touch with the Lufts’ son Walter and his wife Hannelore (Lore) for the rest of his life. Further information about the Lufts, Löbls and Becks in Appendix 1.

² This village was renamed Jenišův Újezd after the war but was removed in the 1970s to make way for the expansion of open-cast mines.

³ Letter to The Spectator 14th April 1939 from Philip Gray, Albury Rectory: “Under the Home Office Regulations, no paid work which might interfere with local employment is sanctioned. For highly industrious men, many of whom have held responsible professional and industrial positions, the complete aimlessness of their existence is an intolerable strain. . . . The men have been granted permission to do a certain amount of manual work in the grounds of the guest houses. . . The younger women and elder girls, under the Home Office sanction, have been placed in domestic service.”

⁴ As “friendly aliens”, the Czech refugees were not affected by Churchill’s order after the fall of France in May/June 1940 to “collar the lot” - i.e. send all German, Austrian and Italian nationals, pro and anti Nazi alike, to internment camps such as the Isle of Man, or shipped overseas to Canada or Australia.

⁵ Royal Army Service Corps – based at Aldershot and responsible for land, coastal and lake transport, supplies, air despatch, barracks administration, the Army Fire Service and staffing headquarters’ units.

⁶ Quote by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, an American writer 1850 – 1919. She also wrote the lines "Laugh, and the world laughs with you; weep, and you weep alone".

⁷ Ernst Lubitsch was born in Berlin and left for Hollywood in 1922. Felix Bressart was also German and Jewish: he left Germany in 1933 when the Nazis seized power and continued his career in Austria, where Jewish artists were still relatively safe, until emigrating to the United States.

⁸ This was the end of the “Phoney War” and the start of the invasion of France. It was also the day that Neville Chamberlain resigned as Prime Minister and advised King George VI to send for Winston Churchill.

⁹ This house was now occupied by the Wunderlich family from Graslitz (now Kraslice, north-west Bohemia). Emil Wunderlich (1897-1985), as a leading member of his local Social Democratic Party, was on the 1940 Gestapo Address List for Britain (Hitler's Black Book). In September 1939 he had been living with his wife Anna and two children Walter and Ingeborg in a rural community in Nottinghamshire. The family lived at 4 York Road, Guildford until at least 1961, and Emil remained in Guildford for the rest of his life. Wilhelm Novy (who was on the same transport as Karl and also on the Gestapo Address List) lived for some years on the top floor at 4 York Road with his wife Klara and daughter Irmgard. The house was not only the venue for English lessons but also for other refugee meetings – see the Journal entry for 28th January 1941.

¹⁰ Herbert, now aged 17, spent most of 1940 at Kingston Day Commercial School, lodging with an English family in the town, all paid for by the Czech Refugee Trust Fund.

¹¹ Léon Blum was a French politician, identified with the moderate left, and three times Prime Minister of France. Once out of office in 1938, he denounced the appeasement of Germany. When Germany defeated France in 1940, he became a staunch opponent of Vichy France.

¹² Reverend Louis George Buchanan (1871-1952) was the vicar of Christ Church in Guildford.

¹³ St. Augustas, South Munstead – opposite Winkworth Arboretum, the destination of the first walk described in this paragraph, now managed by the National Trust.

¹⁴ Karl may be referring to this tower on the Jeschken (Czech: Ještěd), a mountain just outside Reichenberg/Liberec with views into Germany and Poland:



¹⁵ The day after this Journal entry, German forces trapped the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), the remains of the Belgian forces, and three French field armies along the northern coast of France, and plans began for the BEF to withdraw to Dunkirk and prepare for evacuation.

¹⁶ Herbert kept in touch with the younger daughter of the Guy family for the rest of his life.

¹⁷ 10 shillings – before decimalisation there were 20 shillings in a pound. 10/- is worth about £20 today.

¹⁸ Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk founded the newly-independent state of Czechoslovakia in 1918 and was its first President. He was re-elected three times until resigning in 1935 due to old age and ill health. He died in 1937 age 87 so did not live to see his state dismembered. "Truth prevails" (Czech: Pravda Vítězí) was and is the national motto of Czechoslovakia, now the Czech Republic.

CHAPTER 6

15th October, 1940.

At long last I can resume my entries, after an interruption caused by a long “absence” of this Journal.

Our former teacher, Miss Rowena Groom, and her fellow teacher, Miss Nicholls, had invited us to supper for Wednesday, 3rd July. It was a very pleasant evening and a nice genuine English supper in a public house in Bramley. At this occasion, supposing Miss Groom’s interest in my written exercises, I lent her this Journal and my two exercise books containing my home works for Miss Hyde’s lessons¹. About four weeks later, when Herbert had come to spend his school holidays with us, we went all together to Bramley to see Miss Groom – but alas! both she and Miss Nicholls had just gone for their own holidays. I left a letter at St Catherine’s School in which I also asked for my books. It took several more weeks until, at long last, the books were returned to me, by way of our friend Dr Fischer of Shalford – after more than three months And so I have to start again with recording past events.

Many occurrences have happened since I noted down, on June 14th, the occupation of Paris by the Nazis.

16th January, 1941.

Another three months have passed since I was about to resume my entries. This interruption had several reasons. Just on October 15th, when I had renewed my “journalising”, Miss Godden paid us a visit, and I lent her my exercise books and this Journal. When the books came back after a week, an injury of my right hand’s forefinger had developed so badly that I was unable to write. As there was no sign of improvement to be felt for several weeks, I consulted a doctor and was told that it was an inflammation of the tendons, the healing process would take at least 2-3 months, and no complete healing would be possible any more, the tendons being cut. A certain improvement only was to be expected. For some weeks I had to support the finger by a splint fixed to it by a padded bandage, and to wear the arm in a sling. Since a short time only I have been able to use my right first finger again, for writing especially, and so it is that three more months have elapsed since my last entry.

Here we are again, with retrospective reports, and I think it is best to write down in a short chronological manner what ought to be registered in this Journal. Not the great events making world history in our time, but our own experiences in our personal life, observations etc.

Several times our good friend Mrs G. Coe of Albury came to see us here, and several times we were invited to her for tea. What a heartening and most agreeable fact is it to have made so good and well-meaning friends in this country!

On July 20th Herbert arrived to spend his school holidays with us. Again he had brought an excellent school report, keeping on top of his form, and even improving in some subjects. When I sent a copy of his report to the educational secretary of the Czech Refugee Trust Fund, supposing they too would be pleased to see such achievements by a student sponsored by them, it hit me like a jet of icy water when their reply consisted of a few dry lines demanding of Herbert to leave his school and to start agricultural training instead. Now I have no objections whatsoever to agricultural work, I myself like it and should feel only too happy if I only were able to do it. My father and my grandfather as well as a number of my and my wife’s relations were or are farmers or peasants; our daughter Lotte who attended a Commercial Academy with distinction and passed with honours a

special state examination for teaching English at secondary schools (in Czechoslovakia) is working now, as a member of the Women's Land Army, on a farm; our son Ludwig, a former clerk in a wool factory in Czechoslovakia, is now a farmer in Canada. But why should Herbert so abruptly interrupt so promising and successful studies without waiting whether he would find, after finishing them, suitable possibilities for making proper use of his abilities? I protested most energetically, and after having assured the help of our friend and benefactor Rev. Gray of Albury, succeeded in getting Herbert allowed a third term.²

On July 24th we – my wife, Herbert, and I – were invited to tea to Mrs Howard White at Wormley, another of our good English friends, one of our most faithful and kind ones.

On July 26th I went to Redhill to see my old friend Josef Zinner, the last chairman of the Coal Miners' Trade Union in Czechoslovakia – Sudeten Districts.³

On July 30th Herbert started to work, during part of his school holidays, on Mr Secrett's Farm at Milford (where Lotte is working), in order to do his bit for the nation's war effort.⁴ The Trust Fund at once deducted his maintenance allowance from his earnings.

On August 4th, Joan and Barbara, the daughters of Herbert's Landlord and Landlady Mr and Mrs Guy at Tolworth, came to see us, and enjoyed their "day off" at Unstead Cottage very much. They are nice girls.

On August 20th, Herbert finished his agricultural work which had chiefly consisted in lifting potatoes. His hard working in the open air obviously improved his health, the more so as at Tolworth, owing to the air-raids, he very often has to sleep in an Anderson shelter.

On August 24th Herbert left us for Tolworth as his Autumn Term at Kingston Day Commercial School was due to commence on August 26th.

August 31st (Saturday) was another day of special importance to us: we had to leave Unstead Cottage because Mr and Mrs Vicars had offered it for sale or lease, and it had therefore to be empty.

17th January, 1941.

Fortunately, by means of our thorough enquiries throughout the village and kindly help by some nice people here, we succeeded in finding a very nice accommodation in a bungalow a few steps from Unstead Cottage. This bungalow called "Winslow" is owned by Mr Harris, a bricklayer at present serving in the Army as a private. Mrs Harris is working at Warren Road Hospital, Guildford, as a Red Cross Nurse. Their little boy Richard is staying with his grandmother - Mrs Harris' mother – who lives at Peasmarsh, too. Thus, Mrs Harris wants only a bedroom for herself whereas she has let us the rest of the bungalow, i.e. a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bath. We also have the use of the garden which, though small, will certainly be of appreciable use and advantage for us, not only because of the vegetables to be grown here but also as a nice opportunity for healthy bodily work. Well, we certainly will do our best to "dig for victory". The rooms are comfortable and sufficiently furnished. The rent of 10/- per week is reasonable, and – "last, not least" – our children may now enjoy a kind of real "home" where they can come and stay without any difficulties.

So we moved to “Winslow” on Saturday, 31st August, 1940, thus beginning another new chapter in our refugee life in England. Honestly, we slowly lose the feeling of being “strangers” here – especially because we have made so many good and kind friends among the English with whom we have come in touch during our stay in this country. If only the barriers preventing us from entering an appropriate employment could and would be removed at last! It is really most depressing to live on a maintenance allowance granted by a relief organisation which, by the way, proves as not sufficient for defraying all expenses unavoidable in our household. But what to do?

On Tuesday, September 17, we had a most agreeable and joyful surprise: Rev. Gray, the Rector of Albury, this great friend and benefactor to all our refugees and especially to us, came to see us. And still another surprise he brought with him. He had got a letter, addressed “To the Clergyman at Albury”, from a friend of ours who originally had lived at Reichenberg, then moved to Prague, managed to escape from there several months after the Nazi occupation and shortly after the outbreak of the present war. Leo Holub, a school fellow of our Ludwig. After many adventures he had reached Rumania by way of Hungary, and he was on board the ill-fated steamer “Sulina” which was held up for a long time in the mouth of the Danube⁵. The newspapers published terrible particulars about this ship and her unhappy, stricken passengers at that time. Finally, after surmounting unimaginable difficulties, they could sail, and later were taken on Land at Tel Aviv, Palestine. From there, Leo who had our address “Surrey Hills, Albury”, wrote “to the Clergyman at Albury”, asking him to let him know whether we were still staying there, or to give him our address. Mr Gray praised Leo’s intelligence shown by his addressing himself to the local clergyman. We, of course, in replying to Leo did not fail telling him what a good friend of ours he had happened to write to.

Mr Gray lent me a voluminous book on gardening which will be a great help to me when I can start my “digging for victory”.⁶

18th January.

On Miss Butler’s (of Wonersh) recommendation, the Godalming branch of the League of Nations Union, through its hon. Secretary Miss Sibyl Cropper, invited me to address one of its meetings on the subject of the Future of Central Europe. After an exchange of letters this lecture was fixed for Wednesday, the 2nd October, at 3p.m. I was a little surprised when – as a confirmation of this date – I got a printed postcard reading as follows:

League of Nations Union. Godalming Branch
Weekly Public Discussions on
PROBLEMS OF THE DAY
At the Friends’ Meeting House (Mill Lane)

| | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Thursday Sept. 19 th 6 p.m. | The Very Rev. The Dean of Chichester | What we are Fighting for |
| Thursday Sept. 26 th 6 p.m. | Commander Edgar Young, R.N. (Rtd.) China Campaign Committee | The Burmah Road |
| Wednesday Oct. 2 nd 3 p.m. | K. Löwit, Esq. (Czechoslovakia) | The Future of Central Europe |

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| Wednesday Oct. 9 th 3 p.m. | Carl Heath, Esq. (Fellowship of Reconciliation) | The Indian Situation |
|---|--|-------------------------|

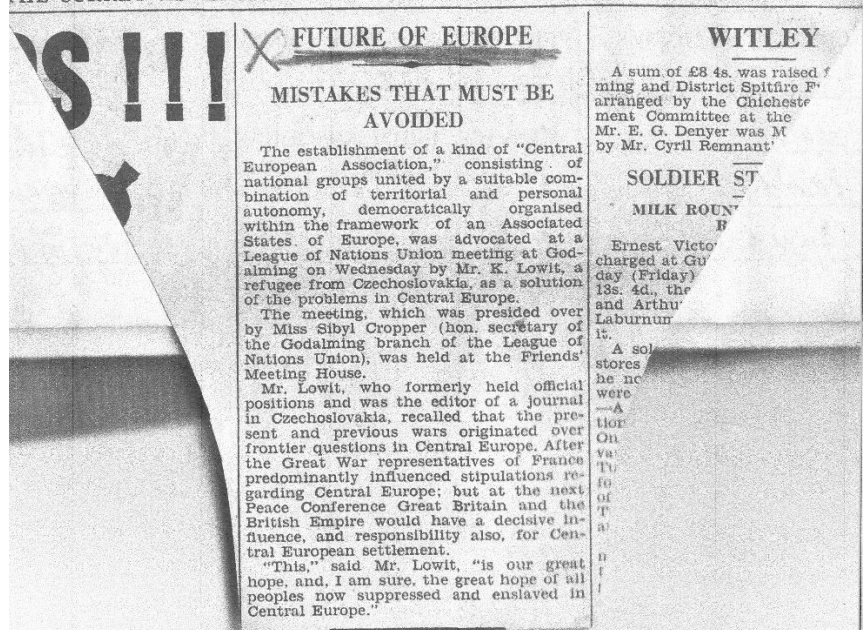
It was only from this card that I learned that my lecture was planned as part of a series of discussions, and of course I felt flattered to be grouped together with so illustrious and distinguished speakers. The Dean of Chichester has for a long time been known to me, from newspaper articles and books, as a staunch fighter for justice and freedom. Lt.-Cmdr. Edgar P. Young had visited Reichenberg twice before Munich, and had spoken to me there on our then most vital "Sudeten" questions etc. I had sent him from Reichenberg a lot of statistical materials etc. for his information, and he later published a book, "Czechoslovakia, the corner stone of European Democracy". I had ordered this book still from Reichenberg, but unfortunately it had not yet arrived when we were compelled to flee from Reichenberg as a result of Munich.

On 19th September I listened very attentively to the Dean of Chichester. He is an excellent speaker, and his lecture was of utmost interest to me. He dealt principally with the great spiritual aims the present war ought to achieve. Of special interest to me was his remark that in his opinion it is not sufficient that the British Government promises to the peoples temporarily subdued by the Nazis liberation and restitution of their independence, but ought to assure them that after this war they would be brought together in a kind of federation or union, under the auspices and with the help of the British Empire. This outline was the more interesting to me as I had advocated the same idea on several occasions already, and intended to plead for it emphatically in my own lecture.

Deeply moved was I by an incident in the discussion following the Dean's address. A member of the audience who introduced himself as a compromiseless [*sic*] follower of Christian peace apostles (or a similar term, I cannot remember the exact words) asked the Dean whether he could imagine Jesus in a warplane throwing bombs on human beings? The Dean replied that his task had not been to discuss what Jesus would do in the present situation and circumstances but that at any rate the evil must be fought against by all appropriate means. He hoped that after the war it may be possible to welcome the German nation, purified from the Nazi spirit, as brothers again in the human family. When the questioner asked whether the Dean finds it justified to throw bombs on and to kill German people whom he himself hoped to welcome as brothers and sisters again in a near future, the Dean answered, "Yes – if it is unavoidable in order to crush the evil once and for all".

On September 26, Lt.-Cmdr. Young and his wife – born at Prague and of Czech nationality – were agreeably surprised to meet us in this country. Mrs Young told me that, after reading my lecture announcement on the card, they just could not remember who of their many acquaintances in Cz. I may be, but when seeing me now they remember our discussions at Reichenberg. Mrs Young was especially delighted to talk with my wife in her Czech mother tongue, and they had a real woman-like chat.⁷ The lecture itself as well as the discussion was lively and instructive. It happened that just on the same day the British Government had announced the reopening of the Burma Road.

As regards my own address on Oct. 2nd, I paste in the report published in the local paper:



The reporter afterwards apologised for the shortness of this report. His original report had been longer, but was shortened by the editor owing to the limited space caused by the paper restrictions. I consoled him, assuring him that I am well aware of the various difficulties in the making of a newspaper nowadays. For remembrance, I add a copy of my notes used for my address: [See Appendix 2]

A number of questions were asked after my speech, and they all showed a remarkable interest in and good understanding of the really intricate problems of the Central European present and future.

Mr Heath's lecture on India on Oct. 9th was filled with love for India and its teeming millions of inhabitants. His explanations of the various problems forming the "Indian Question" brought enlightenment and opened my eyes to the many aspects of one of the most highly important matters which the British people will have to solve for the best of progress, civilisation, and humanity. Again the discussion was informative.

As a whole, this series of 4 lectures and discussions on burning questions of to-day was very instructive, particularly for me, and I may feel honoured by having been enabled to take an active share in it.

20th January, 1941.

Since the middle of September, 1940, the air raid warnings had become so frequent that I started to note, in my pocket diary, those days in which no siren sounded. Up till to-day, the following days were "free of warnings":

Sept. 20; Oct. 3, 6, 24; Nov. 25, 26, 30; Dec 7, 10, 13, 16, 18, 24, 25, 26, 28 30; Jan. 1, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18.

Nothing serious has happened here and in our neighbourhood or in the immediate surroundings on all the days which had warnings.

September 22nd was the second anniversary of the day when we had to leave Reichenberg (Sudeten border of Cz.) for Budyně nad Ohří (interior of Bohemia, Cz.) as a temporary refuge. At that time my political party and trades union representatives always and untiringly had endeavoured to demonstrate for the world outside our home country that every concession to the Nazis would only postpone a war which they wanted to wage at any rate, and that the democratic powers had not to choose between war and peace, but between a war now or then Alas! History has proved us only too right. May mankind at least have learned a belated lesson now, and for times to come!

On Saturday, September 28th, we had our first – and hitherto only – real immediate experience of warfare against the civilian population of this island: at about eleven o'clock at night, when we were just about to go to bed after having been sitting by the fireplace from the sounding of the air raid warning at about nine, we heard some weak thuds outside, I rushed to the front door, and when I opened it I saw a lively glow of flames everywhere round our bungalow. I hurried to take a shovel and a bucket, filled the latter with soil and gravel from our garden, and together with Mrs Harris who also came out of her bedroom, covered the fires in front and back of our bungalow with soil, gravel, mud, etc. We succeeded in quickly putting out all "our" fires. The explosive bombs which we thought had to be expected did not come – fortunately.

Opposite our bungalow, a timber yard caught fire which looked more terrible than it was, and was completely extinguished in two hours' time. We made tea for the firemen and voluntary helpers. The whole village seemed to burn, and people were busy everywhere fighting the fires. Soon we learned that, except the timber yard, not a single fire had started, all the incendiaries had fallen on open ground, gardens, etc., one of them only had pierced a roof and fallen into a bedroom which was partly burnt out. Three or four minor injuries had to be dealt with at the first aid post. It was a lucky escape, indeed, in view of the experience of thousands of people in the London area and elsewhere! At any rate, however, it was a kind of taste of the Nazis' ruthless and senseless "war" against civilians and the peaceful English countryside. What a seed of hatred do they sow by their inhumane, beastly methods!

23rd January.

On October 1st Miss Godden had again invited us to tea. It was a delightful afternoon.

On October 3rd, the Jewish New Year's Day, 5701, we had the first opportunity, since we had to leave our home country two years ago, to attend a Jewish Service, at Guildford, in St Nicholas Church Hall, where a service was arranged by Jewish refugees (or evacuees) from London. In 1938 we attended the Jewish New Years Day Service at Budyně, where we had fled from Reichenberg. And now, two years later, English refugees in their own country made it possible for us to attend another service here in this country! What a strange world, indeed, and what an interesting experience to hear the same Hebrew words spoken by Englishmen as they had been spoken by Czechs two years ago!

And on October 11th – the highest Jewish festival, the Day of Atonement was being observed; this time we attended a special service arranged by German refugees and a former Berlin rabbi, Mr Warschauer, spoke a moving German sermon based on the story of Joseph who went out to look for his brothers. So the Jews driven out from so many countries are looking for their brothers elsewhere in the wide world . . .

An interesting fact: the room for the English Jewish service had been given by an English Church, and for the German Jewish service by the Quakers. What a proof of English tolerance – and what a contrast to Continental customs!

On October 15th, Mrs and Miss Godden came for tea with us, and it happened that just also our friends Löbl as well as our daughter-in-law's sister Margot [*Ladwig*] had come to see us. So we were having a great party, and it was very nice.

Margot then stayed with us from the 17th till the 23rd October because she had lost her job at Shalford by her employers' removal to Shropshire and then had another job at Guildford.

On October 26th, Herbert arrived to spend his autumn holidays with us, and to be able to sleep in a real bed and bedroom again, after his many nights spent in an Anderson shelter. But already on October 29th he got a telegram from the Kingston Labour Exchange calling him back in order to enter a job. Some days later we learned from him that he had been accepted as a junior clerk, at 25/- weekly to begin with, with Caters Footwear Ltd. at Kingston. Soon we heard from him that he liked his work very much, and the fact that his wage was increased to 30/- from the first week in January proves that his employers are satisfied with him and his work. He seems to have made a good start for his further career, and it was no mere accident that he passed his school examinations with honours and distinction. He is of course happy and proud of his achievements.

On November 1st, when we once more were invited to tea with Mrs Coe at Albury, we enjoyed a beautiful walk with her to St Martha's on the Hill. The weather was splendid, the view marvellous, and the landscape looked so peaceful that no thought of a war had been able to disturb one's mind – if not a squadron of aeroplanes had not come roaring overhead, and trenches, pill boxes, and gun emplacements not dotted the ground. What a shame that such a quiet and lovely countryside should have to be spoiled by those marks of war A short visit to the beautiful small church itself renewed our remembrance of many a happy time spent there previously.

And at the same time it came back to my memory that just two years had passed since my departure from Prague on the evening of 1st November, 1938. Two eventful years have gone since that journey into uncertainty, and no certainty is here yet. How will it be next year?

On 8th November it was two years since my landing at Harwich and arrival at LONDON. Memory goes back, and recalls the first impressions. Gratitude for rescue from persecution and granting of a refuge is the uppermost feeling.

24th January.

On November 9th, 1940, Mr Neville Chamberlain died. It is the historians' task to pass judgement on this great man's life and work. It would be unjust and not appropriate to judge his life's work exclusively from one's own personal experience. For us, "Sudeten refugees from Czechoslovakia", his name will for ever be connected with the victimisation of our dear beloved home country, in the vain attempt to induce murderers and gangsters to abstain from further crimes. History later on may see in the bringing about of Munich the last and strongest step in the endeavours to save peace, or at least to win time for sufficient preparations to meet the unavoidable onslaught of the Nazi and Fascist criminals on civilisation and world peace.

This reminds me of an anecdote by my favourite author, the Dutch philosopher and staunch fighter for truth and freedom, Multatuli (pen name) or Edward Douwes-Dekker (real name). None of his works, alas, was published in an English translation, and the German translations of all his works which were the greatest treasure of my library sacrificed as part of "appeasement" to the Nazis, are irreplaceably lost for ever. In the anecdote coming back into my mind in this connection, Multatuli speaks of a father who shows, walking about in the countryside, his little son a bird's nest in a tree, saying to him: "Do you notice how the father-bird is taking worms to his baby-birds to feed them? They are very happy and grateful to be fed in this way, and all together then will sing a song to praise providence for caring so well for them." Whereupon the son asks: "Will the worms join in the singing?"

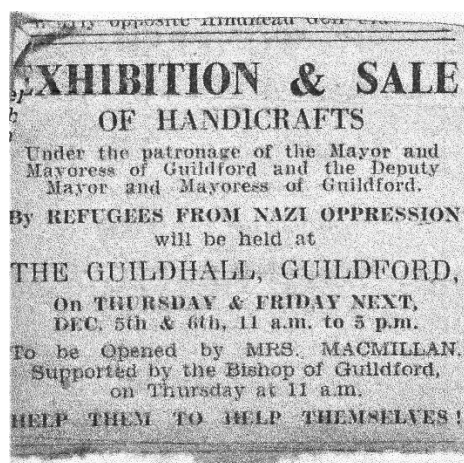
At any rate Chamberlain still had to see the complete smashing of his peace policy, and it is a great pity, indeed, that he passed away before the definite defeat of Nazism and Fascism.

On November 17th Mrs White of Wormley came to see us here. It was just exactly two years since she had come to "Surrey Hills" to fetch "3 Sudetens" for a tea-party with her, and I had been one of those three. I reminded her of this "jubilee", and she enjoyed it very much.

On November 20th, I attended a meeting of the Guildford branch of the League of Nations Union, at the High School. The Mayor of Guildford took the chair, and a lady representative of the Union's executive spoke on "Preparations for a constructive Peace". The hall was packed. Particularly interesting was a schoolgirl's questions in question time, "How it would be possible to uproot in the German youth the seed of hatred and cruelty now planted into them by the Nazi educational system?" It is a heartening promise for future developments if, at such a time of Nazi barbarism raging against English civilians, a schoolgirl's mind is directed towards annihilation of hatred, and not towards vengeance. An exhibition of drawings by schoolgirls showing how they imagine the League of Nations' tasks and deeds was another proof of this spirit.

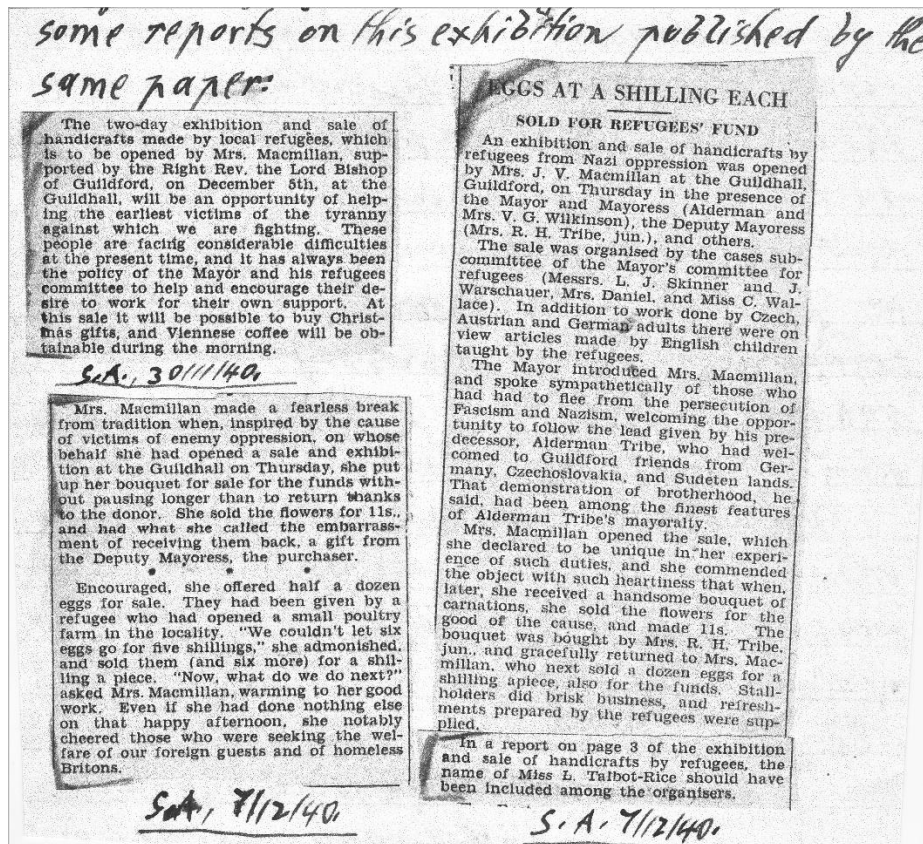
On November 28th, the Mayor of Guildford, Mr Wilkinson, a Labour Man, came to the "Refugees' Club" at the High School to introduce himself as the new chairman of the Mayor of Guildford's Fund for German Refugees (Jewish, Non-Aryan, & Sudeten). His address was heartily friendly and showing the best understanding of the refugees' problems and situation.

On December 5th & 6th, an Exhibition of handicrafts by refugees was held at Guildford. For remembrance I paste in the advertisement published in the "Surrey Advertiser":



My wife had contributed a knitted frock, and two knitted cardigans: they met universal approval.

As a sign of the spirit prevailing here, amidst a cruel war, even forwards people "juridically" [sic] belonging to the enemy nation, I add some reports on this exhibition, published by the same paper:



Such a spirit, manifesting itself in such a splendid manner, cannot be destroyed. It is at once the best guarantee for a good future of mankind.

28th January.

On Sunday, the 15th December, 1940, my old friend Wenzel Jaksch, the leader (chairman) of our Party, came to Guildford, and we met him at 4, York Road, with a great number of our friends from near and far. Jaksch reported on the latest developments with regard to the position of our Czechoslovak "Exile" Government, etc. He brought us news also about our friends in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and elsewhere. Homeless everywhere – and yet at home everywhere. The hour of our reunion will certainly strike sooner or later. We have to do our best preparing for it. And, after all, it is good to know that we and our cause have made friends everywhere, throughout the civilised world. That is hope and guarantee at once.

On December 17th, I had to go to LONDON, by arrangement of the Czech Refugee Trust Fund, who wanted me to see a specialist, at the National Orthopaedic Hospital, for the treatment of my feet. I went by bus which took me to Cavendish Square, near Oxford Circus. The Hospital is situated at Great Portland Street. I walked, and so had opportunity to see many signs of the wanton destruction brought about by the Nazis' ruthless bombing attacks. Pathetic sights – and yet how senseless!

On December 19th Ursel [*Ladwig*], our daughter-in-law's youngest sister, came to stay with us, after having finished her studies at the Shropshire College of Domestic Science and Dairy Work, for the time until she would be able to find a suitable accommodation, pending her departure for U.S.A. where her brother Heinz is living at Chicago, as a parson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Family life in our time! Father dead; widowed mother living at Essen, Germany; brother in U.S.A.; one sister in Canada [*Anneliese*]; other sister in England [*Margot*]. This is the manner in which the Nazis have "rescued the traditional homely German family life from its destruction by the Liberals and Socialists" . . .

And Ursel herself: She was brought over from Germany by a "movement" for rescuing children from Nazi oppression (Society of Friends etc.). Her landing in England was allowed for a temporary stay only, provided that, after being trained, she would emigrate to America. Her brother had to guarantee for her. The British Committee for Children from Germany sent her to the Shropshire College. When, after France's collapse, the great aliens' internment drive swept the country, this girl of not yet 17 was taken out of her school and escorted to the Isle of Man. As soon as I had learnt of it – several weeks afterwards because the correspondence was terribly delayed, I did my utmost to secure her release. After various steps, I addressed to the Undersecretary of State, Home Office, a detailed petition pleading for her release. After a reasonably short time already I was glad to get a favourable answer, and a few weeks later, Ursel was back again at her College where she was allowed to finish her autumn term. "Little man, what now?"⁸

In spite of all my endeavours, the American Consulate has not yet granted her a visa, and it seems that there is no chance to bring her over to America shortly. Fortunately, our good friend, Mrs White of Wormley, to whom we had told Ursel's story when she came to see us on December 18th to invite us to tea for Xmas Eve, promised to take her in hospitality for the month of January, and then to try to place her with one of her acquaintances if Ursel would prove herself to be well trained and willing for housework. Thus we could hope to see Ursel's life settled for the time to elapse till her departure to America.

On December 24th, Christmas Eve, we were invited to Tea, by Mrs Howard White, at Wormley. It was a most delightful afternoon. A nice and beautifully decorated Christmas tree adorned the table, there was a big party, and Mrs White's so often demonstrated hospitality and kindness shone once again in its brightest colours.

When we came back to our home later in the early evening, Lotte and Margot were already waiting for us to spend Christmas Eve with us. Our memory went back to 1937, our last Christmas at home, had been a specially happy festival: after our silver wedding and my 50th birthday in the same year, with all their honours and festivities, we were having a splendid party, and – like a prediction – a lady visitor from England. 1938 – our first Christmas in England, at "Surrey Hills", exciting and magnificent; 1939 – our second Christmas in England, in its joyfulness limited by the war; and now, 1940 – a real war Christmas, but full of hope, and brightened by quite a number of valuable gifts from our good English friends and from our children. Next Christmas, 1941 - ? Who knows?⁹

Lotte stayed with us overnight, and on Christmas Day Herbert arrived. He had to return to Kingston on the next day (afternoon). In any case, we were thus having a Christmas festival on similar lines to our native customs, a reunion of the family – and only our Canadians were missing whom we remembered in our thoughts and talks.

On Sunday 29th, we joined a Jewish Children Party at Guildford, High School – the Feast of “Chanukah” or the Candlelights.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

¹ These 2 homework exercise books have survived along with the 2 exercise books in which the Journal is written.

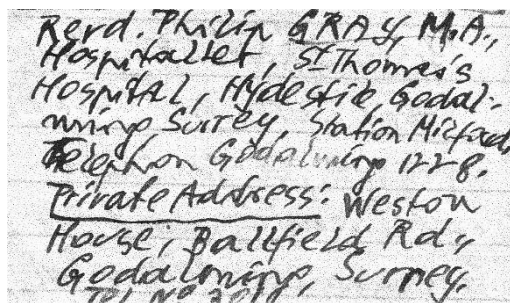
² The governors of Kingston Day Commercial School allowed Herbert to complete the two-year course in one year and so he was able to pass the final exam before the end of 1940.

³ Josef Zinner later in 1940 became leader of a splinter group from the main Sudeten German Social Democratic Party. Karl did not join the “Zinnergruppe”.

⁴ Frederick August Secrett was recognized early in his career for his ability to understand and develop sound horticultural practices. In 1937 he moved to Hurst Farm in Milford near Godalming and through his pioneering growing methods it was feted as one of the most productive farms before and during WW2. This was immensely important as imports had stopped and there was a nation at war to be fed. The farm is still a family-run business today.

⁵ Was this in fact the steamboat “Erzsébet Kiraly” (Queen Elizabeth) which left Bratislava in July 1939 with some 1200 Jewish refugees on board and made it down the Danube river to the Romanian Black Sea port at Sulina? One contemporary newspaper report says that 1600 refugees from Central Europe eventually arrived in Haifa in March 1940 on the Turkish freighter “Sakarya”.

⁶ This is the last mention of Rev. Gray in the exercise books. A little later during the war, Philip Gray was appointed to the chaplaincy (Hospitaller) of the evacuated St Thomas's hospital in Milford. Karl remained in touch with him at his private address in Godalming until Rev Gray died in 1963.



Rev. Philip GRAY, M.A.,
Hospitaller, St Thomas's
Hospital, Mildfield, Godal-
ming, Surrey, Station Mildfield,
Telephone Godalming 1228.
Private Address: Weston
House, Balfield Rd,
Godalming, Surrey.
TEL NO 2011

⁷ Karl's wife Johanna came from a family of farmers in north-west Bohemia where Czech and German speakers intermingled, but their first language was Czech.

⁸ “Little Man, What Now?” (German title “Kleiner Mann – was nun?”) was a best-selling novel written in 1932 by German author Hans Fallada (real name Rudolf Ditzen). It is the story of a young couple trying to stay afloat in the years after the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the first years of the Great Depression, i.e. the last days of the Weimar Republic. It was made into a film in Germany in 1933 under Nazi censorship and into a Hollywood film closer to the novel in 1934.

⁹ 1941 and all Karl's remaining Christmases were spent in Mirfield, Yorkshire. See next page for what happened to Margot and Ursel Ladwig, Karl's daughter-in-law's German sisters.



*Margot Ladwig in the Land Army in Milford
(Hurst/Secrett's Farm?) February 1944*



*Ursel Ladwig – undated – possibly 1944 in
Mirfield, Yorkshire*

Margot (born September 1917) and Ursel (born May 1924) spent the war and immediate post-war years 1941 – 1946 in the Women's Land Army, working at various local farms, including Hurst Farm in Milford. They lived in a hostel and enjoyed their days off. Their war work was many years later recognised by Queen Elizabeth II and the British Prime Minister. In March 1947, having spent time with Karl and Johanna Löwit in Mirfield, Ursel was at last able to fly to New York to join her brother Heinz Karl Ladwig, who had married Evelyn Johnson from Monmouth, Illinois in May 1941. Ursel went to work on Evelyn's father's farm in Little York, Warren County. Margot left England on 16th July 1948, sailing to New York from Liverpool on "Britannic". She had numerous jobs in Chicago where her brother was a Lutheran minister.

In January 1953 Heinz Karl became pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Boise, Idaho and served that congregation until January 1973 when he retired. He died in December 1982 just short of his 70th birthday. Meanwhile Ursel had married Gene David Wade in October 1954 and the couple operated several businesses in Monmouth including Western Stoneware. Margot relocated to Monmouth in 1961 and worked in the family and other businesses until her 80s. Both sisters were active members of the First Lutheran Church of Monmouth and lived into their 90s: Margot died in January 2014 and Ursel in November 2014.

With thanks and acknowledgements to Ursel's son David and daughter-in-law Linda who have donated their collection of family photographs and memorabilia to the Western Illinois University where it can be viewed [online](#). They also researched what happened to the Ladwig sisters' Jewish mother and grandmother who had refused to leave Germany. Grandmother Sophie Ruhr died one month after arriving at the Terezín concentration camp (in occupied Czechoslovakia) in August 1942. Mother Betty Ruhr Ladwig was missing and presumed dead after being picked up by the Gestapo at her home in Essen and deported to Auschwitz on 1st March 1943.

28th January, 1941

On Sunday, December 29th, 1940, our dear little pet, our kitten “Uri”, was suddenly and cruelly taken from us. A mere six months her life had lasted; but she was our joy, and the first and only grief she had caused to us was by her so early and abrupt passing away. She was everybody’s darling; and when she was sitting on the cornerstone of the bridge crossing the stream in front of our bungalow, or strolling about there, no passer-by, child or adult, failed to stop, exclaiming: “What a lovely kitten!”

And indeed, she was a real beauty: her coat was shining silky black, only a breast shield, symmetrically shaped, and her paws were purely snow-white. A red ribbon round her neck looked very smart. Her head was small, and her face looked intelligent. Especially her big bright eyes were beautiful. She was extremely clean, well educated, and – of course! – absolutely spoiled. Well fed and groomed, she was generally admired. And how happy was she, and what a good, cheering companion! And how faithful and attached to us! As a baby kitten she had come to us – from Mr Coe’s Weston farm at Albury – to “Unstead Cottage”, and then accompanied us to “Winslow”.

When Ursel had come to us, we had to find an accommodation for her in the village. We secured a bedroom for her a few minutes from our bungalow, and every evening, when I accompanied Ursel to that house in the darkness, Uri used to join us. Often on the way back she was so tired that I had to carry her home.

On the fateful Sunday, when we left our bungalow, we did not notice Uri who a short time before had gone out of it. It was pitch dark, and the sirens had sounded, heavy gun fire could be heard, and suddenly far out on the horizon a vast red glow could be seen, gradually covering the sky high above. (The next day we learned that it was the criminal terrific “Fire Blitz” on the City of LONDON.)¹ I looked for Uri everywhere, called for her here and there, but she did not turn up, quite in contrast to her habits.

Several times later at night I looked for her in our back and front garden – but in vain. After midnight, I was awakened by the noise of storm and rain, and looked once again out of the front and back doors – no trace, however, of Uri.

Monday morning and throughout the day I kept searching for Uri everywhere in the village, but nobody had seen her. I promised an award to some boys for tracing her. All, however, without success. On Tuesday, 31st December, Mrs White had invited us to supper. When we were walking to the bus stop in the late afternoon, one of our neighbours stopped us and told us that her sister had seen a killed kitten this morning when cycling to Godalming. Hoping against hope that it may not be our Uri, and that she might have taken refuge anywhere during that terrible night of Sunday to Monday, someone keeping her, I walked along the road to Godalming on Wednesday morning, attentively looking out. And suddenly I noticed a small carcass lying stretched out and flatly squashed on to the road surface, just across the road, at the white middle line. The red neck ribbon – a new one for Xmas – and the four white little paws betrayed that it was our poor pet, our so grievously missed Uri.

Sad and depressed I slowly walked back home to break the bad news to my wife. In the afternoon we fetched the remains of our little darling and buried them in a corner of our garden. We cannot imagine any other explanation of her having been such a considerable distance away from our home – never before she had been so far away – than that some urchin may have tried to carry her away, that she then succeeded in escaping him, and hastily endeavouring to find her way home crossed the road and was caught by a lorry which ran over her. She must have been killed immediately and may have had no pains at all.

It may look somewhat frivolous to make so much ado about a cat's death in a time when hundreds and hundreds of innocent men, women and children are wantonly killed day and night by the most brutal and ruthless assaults ever made on mankind. But also a cat is a living being, a creature entitled to live its life – and he whose pet and joy this particular cat used to be is certainly justified to feel and express his grief on this cat's loss.

My dear little Uri, be most kindly thanked, from all our heart, for all the joy, pleasure, delight, and gladness you were presenting us during your far too short and so cruelly and abruptly ended lifetime! If there is something like a heaven for cats, you undoubtedly were given there a triumphal entrance and distinguished welcome, and allotted a special place of honour – a place of honour that you so richly deserve, and have secured for ever in our hearts.



Karl and Johanna with cats after the war in Mirfield (November 1946)

30th January, 1941.

On Monday, 30th December, 1940, Ursel moved to Mrs White, and on the next day we came there for supper, thus celebrating the New Year by the kindness of Mrs and Major White.

May 1941 be the year of complete victory over Nazi and Fascist barbarity and cruelty, the year of restored peace, the year of secured freedom, justice and social security for mankind!

On January 3rd, the first snow of this year's winter had fallen— very little, it is true, but real snow. The first heavy snow, and lasting for a certain time, came on 7th January. The snow-covered landscape reminded of our home country – deeply snowclad at this time of the year.

On Sunday 19th I was once more in London, attending a meeting with several of my old Trade Union and political friends. Again I had the shocking views of the results of the Nazis' so-called warfare.

On January 21st, Ursel came back to us from Mrs White. Through Lotte's endeavours we later on succeeded in placing her with the Holy Cross Convent at Woking where she will have to help in the kitchen, and at the same time to be allowed to attend a course for nursing. She went there on January 29th (yesterday) and we hope that at last she may have found there a home for the next future.

Yesterday morning, I was introduced to the Mayor of Guildford, Mr Wilkinson, and this may open the way to come in touch with the Guildford local administration, and so learn more and get more intimate knowledge of British self-government.

Since January 20th, there was no "Alert" on the following days: January 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29. In fact, only one day with a short warning – 28th.

31st January.

Again no "Alert" yesterday.

And now a supplementary entry:

On Thursday, 9th January, the "Mayor of Guildford's Fund for German Refugees (Jewish, Non-Aryan and Sudeten)" arranged a grand "New Year's Party". It took place at the High School. Tea & cakes were provided. The hall was crowded, and we met there a number of old friends whom we had not seen for a long time. Also a number of our best English friends had come to join this party: among others, Mrs and Mr Coe, Miss Godden, Miss Wallace, Miss Daniels, Mrs Skinner, and many others.

Mr Skinner² addressed the refugees, then the Mayor, Mr Wilkinson, delivered a speech in which he stressed his willingness to do his best to facilitate the refugees' situation as much as possible. Then followed fun and entertainment. A number of refugee children played a "drama", "The Princess and the Woodcutter", and a conjuror showed his magic tricks. It was a charming party.

In this connection, I want to keep in memory another demonstration of the spirit kept alive in this country during this terrible war – the real human attitude towards the people called at present "the enemy". I found it in the "Surrey Advertiser" of December 14th, 1940, in a report on "Guildford Girls' High School – Bishop distributes Awards". The Bishop of Guildford, Dr. J. Y. Macmillan, whom I know

personally and who does not let pass any opportunity without saying or writing something in favour of the refugees from Nazi persecution, distributed prizes and certificates at the annual speech day at the High School on Monday, the 9th December. And now this report, which speaks for itself: [A]

In the same issue of the "S.A." I found another interesting article – on the "Carollers" – speaking of our Bohemian king Wenceslas (Czech: Václav; German: Wenzel). In the weeks before Xmas, several times boys came at night to our door and sang carols. Once, when they sang "Good King Wenceslas", I asked them whether they knew who this king was and when and where he had lived? Alas! none of those boys had the faintest idea, and they were obviously surprised to be told by me that he was a real king who had lived in my home country more than a thousand years ago . . . The more interested I was in reading this article: [B]

There is to be a rectification: Wenceslas was actually killed by his brother himself (not on his instigation), on the doorstep of the church (still standing) at Stará Boleslav (Alt-Burnzlav) near Prague, on September 28th, 929.

[A]

At the end of the summer Mlle. Chapman and Miss Cole, who were visiting members of the staff for some years, left. Miss Hyde, an old girl of the school, was appointed to succeed Miss Cole and help in the junior school. The headmistress thanked the members of the staff for loyal co-operation, and the Church Schools Company and the local committee for their interest and support.

In his address, after distributing the awards, the Bishop remarked that it had been said that in England they were getting a repetition of the spirit of Elizabethan days, of whose sailors Kipling wrote "they did not stay to ask what prize would crown their task." They saw it in the spirit of the girl who, a few days ago, offered to drive the leading lorry of A.R.P. reliefs proceeding in the dark to a heavily bombed centre, because she knew the road. It was exemplified in the exploits of the airmen. That spirit was something which must be conserved and carried into life after the war.

In the school they had kept the spirit of friendship burning in their hearts towards the young people of other nations. They were quite right in keeping alive their branch of the League of Nations Union. While the war lasted they had to pray for the men who were working to destroy evil things, but they must steadily refuse to let themselves think in any bitter or uncomprising way of the young girls in Germany and Italy. Those girls had a harder road than we, and would have to get back to better ways of living in the future. We had got to be ready to hold out our hand to them just as soon as we could.

The Mayor, referring to the headmistress's remarks about the difficulties of the civics class, offered to do all he could to encourage the teaching of civics to the younger people of the borough.

"S.A.", 14/12/40.

[B]

THE CAROLLERS

Those who hoped that blitz possibilities and blackness realities would save them from more or less musical performances on their doorstep are already suffering disappointment. Boys of all sizes are already groping from door to door in some districts wholly indifferent to Hitler and his evil ways. They are probably finding that those within are making full use of the protective black-out devices and the financial harvest is bound to suffer. Taken all round these days are not encouraging to carol singers, and consequently we shall hear less than usual of that "Good King Wenceslas," whose charitable mission has so often been the theme of youthful songsters. No doubt, however, the good king's memory will be kept alive in those churches where carols form a part of the Christmas services, and it may occur to some who listen to the story to ask "Who was King Wenceslas, anyway?" Actually he was a tenth century ruler of Bohemia, part of what is now known all too well as Czechoslovakia, who was distinguished for his piety and charity. We are told that "he showed hospitality to strangers, and was full of tenderness for all, great and humble, and cared for the welfare of all," and that he built churches in every city of his realm. Unfortunately, many of his people had but little appreciation for such Christian qualities in a ruler, and Wenceslas was ultimately murdered at the instance of his brother Boleslas. There is probably a good deal of the legendary in the accounts concerning him which have come down to us, but it may be safely affirmed that he need fear no comparison with the present-day rulers of the country whose destinies he once guided!

"S.A.", 14/12/40.

KINGSWAY

EXERCISE BOOK

NAME Karl Löwit YEAR 1940

SCHOOL Surrey Hills, Albury-CHILWORTH

2^D

W H S. & S LTD.

31st January, 1940.

Surrey Hills and its Surroundings

Surrey Hills Guest House has now been our refuge for more than one year. It is situated in a county usually called one of the most beautiful regions in this country. Having seen some of the view-points, we can understand this statement. The guesthouse itself stands amidst a lovely landscape adorned by hills, ponds, valleys, woods, bushes, fields, streams etc. The most remarkable landmark is the old chapel, "St Martha's on the Hill", a beautiful small church built very long ago, looking down on the Pilgrim's Way. From St Martha's is a short walk to "Newland's Corner", another viewpoint, and from there our way leads us to "Silent Pool" with its fishes and nightingales.

Surrey Hills Guest House is a bus stop of the Green Line Guildford-Dorking, the Tillingbourne Valley Line Guildford-Farley Green, and the Brown Motor Coaches. The road passing the guest house goes to Guildford one way, and to Dorking the other way. Quite a nice walk to Guildford is either over the hill behind the guesthouse to White Lane, or past Lockner's Farm and Great Halfpenny Farm across the meadows to Pewley Road. Our next railway station is Chilworth, but for the main line the station is Guildford. This town is the county town of Surrey, standing on the river Wey, with an old castle, an ancient town hall, a very old Grammar School, an Old Hospital, but also modern streets with many large shops of every kind, several cinemas, two modern hospitals, a number of churches for various denominations, and other important buildings and institutes.

Surrey Hills used to be a holiday resort before it was changed into a refugee camp. Therefore, there are here a number of chalets, a tennis court and playgrounds, and we have added a swimming pool last summer. Close to the house are two mill ponds which belong to the flour mills beyond them. A stream passes the meadow behind the house. Ducks and swans have there their home. Nice walks from our guest house are also to Albury Heath, to Black Heath, to Wonersh, to Shere, and to Merrow.

Very Good



Surrey Hills Guest House 25th June 1939

24th February, 1940.

A Journey by Train

The other day my wife and I had to go to London in order to settle some matters for our son and daughter-in-law living in Canada. It was a nice, clear day, only a little too cold. After having breakfasted about an hour earlier than usual, we went by bus to Guildford. I was glad to find on the timetable in Guildford Station that we could catch an express train in about five minutes' time, i.e. 25 minutes earlier than I had been told by a friend who had been in London a week before. So it was to our advantage that we had taken an earlier bus; it seems that some more trains had just been introduced. The exceptional conditions of wartime and of this year's extraordinarily strong and long winter must have severely affected the railway traffic.

While my wife sat down on a bank [*bench*] in the porch, I hurried to the booking-office opposite this bank. Fortunately, there were only a few people there so that it was my turn very soon. I asked the booking-clerk for "two monthly Waterloo please"; he put the two tickets on the counter, saying: "10/6, please", whereupon I handed him the money I had prepared, namely a 10 shilling note and a half-crown. He gave me change, i.e. a florin³. I took my tickets, saying "thank you", and he also said, "thank you". Looking round in the porch, I noticed a nice flower-and-fruit-stall, a tobacco-kiosk, a slot-machine selling platform-tickets, a very large time-table showing all train arrivals and departures, and several doors with various signs, such as "Public Telephone", "Cloak Room", etc. Posters, notices, advertisements, and pictures of all kinds hang on the walls.

We went to the ticket collector who marked our tickets advising us: "Platform 6, 9.05!" Thus we had to walk down into the subway, passing the entrance to an air raid shelter, then through the subway on to the third staircase leading up to our platform. As we had a few minutes' time we put our handbag and suitcase on a bank beside the staircase entrance, and spent our time in looking round. It is always interesting to see what is going on in a railway-station. On the left-hand platform, an electric train had just arrived, a number of passengers alighted, some of whom shouted, "porter!" whereupon a porter rushed to them to collect their luggage. At the same time, other passengers boarded the train, the guard walked up and down along the train shouting where the train would go, several porters and railwaymen were busy in loading the luggage into the luggage-van – and soon the coach doors were shut, and the train started.

To the right, there was a large book-stall full of books, newspapers, useful things for a railway voyage, view cards, ink bottles, pens, pencils, and a lot of other things. The waiting room nearby looked very comfortable but we had not the time to go inside because our train was due in a few minutes. In a very short time our platform was crowded, and then we saw our train approaching the platform. It was an electric train consisting of a number of coaches. We got in and found an empty compartment all seats of which were vacant; so we could both sit down at the window. Before the train started, however, so many passengers had joined us that all seats were engaged.

The equipment of the railway coaches in this country is much more comfortable than it used to be in our former home country; the third class compartments here are like the first class ones there. It is also remarkable that all is so quiet here whereas in our former country there is always a din in a railway station.

The train went through a beautiful landscape. In Woking we saw the picturesque mosque not far from the railway⁴, then a kind of airport or aerodrome, probably a military one, with a large number of various 'planes lined up on the ground. Two of them were just going to take the air.⁵

Though our compartment was packed, almost all people kept silent, only a few had a short conversation – also a striking difference from our previous country where you always will hear chatting in a railway compartment even if only a few passengers are travelling. Here, however, most passengers keep stiff and silent, or, at the best, read a newspaper or a book. As regards ourselves, we enjoyed the ever changing views through the window. It is rather interesting to see how the big town is stretching its tentacles farther and farther into the countryside. To the left and to the right – houses everywhere; factories, new-built cottages, garages, petrol-pumps, and other proofs of spreading town-life.

The first and only stop of our train was at Surbiton. Also this station looked very busy, indeed. Approaching our destination, the traffic became more and more intensive; trains rushing to and fro could be seen on either side. Soon we noticed the well-known silhouettes of the towers, spires and roofs of Westminster, the Houses of Parliament and other famous buildings. Our train entered the gigantic hall of Waterloo Station, we took our luggage from the rack and got out. A big staircase led us directly from the platform to the Tube Station.

After having bought two tickets at 4d each at a slot-machine which not only sells tickets but also returns change, we went by an escalator farther down to the underground platform of the Bakerloo Line, and in a few minutes got into a tube train which took us to Paddington. There we had to go upstairs again by an escalator to the street level. Leaving the tube station, we turned to the left, crossed the street at the next corner, then walked straight on past the G.W.R. Station⁶ at the end of which we crossed to the left, then walked through Chilworth Street to Westbourne Terrace, and farther on to the Czechoslovakian Hostel at No 128 where our friends were waiting for us. Here we talked to each other, everyone had a lot to tell to the others, we settled the matters in question, and packed a big case for our young people in Canada.

An excellent piece of descriptive writing

2nd March, 1940.

My daily Programme,
In my former Position.⁷
(Written in Simple Present, for practice.)

It is very difficult, indeed, to lay down a "Daily Programme" for a Trade Union's secretary with his many-sided activities, in connection with his political and many other functions. In the morning he does not know yet how his diary will pass beside the various previous appointments.

As a rule, I wake at about six, and read a newspaper or book for about quarter of an hour. Then I get up, carry out some simple but very useful gymnastics for a few minutes, and hurry into the bathroom to wash myself thoroughly with cold water; only for mouthwash and tooth brushing I use hot water. After having dressed, I settle down for breakfast. This meal usually consists of rather a large cup of coffee with plenty of milk and three lumps of sugar, and a crisp roll or slice of buttered brown bread. Then I glance at the newspaper; but I have already been listening to the 7 o'clock

news on the wireless so that I know the most important events reported in the paper. My wife hands me a sandwich or a ham-roll or two slices of buttered bread, I put them into my bag, and leave my home at about half past seven.

Though there is a fifteen minutes' walk to my office, it mostly takes me much longer to arrive there because I nearly always meet some friends on the way with whom I discuss actualities or certain news from the radio or the morning papers. Besides, there is a large newspaper stall at the corner of the street where my office is situated, and my friends and I do not miss looking at the posters, papers, and pamphlets displayed in the windows there to see whether there is something to be seen there of interest for us. If so, we remain standing for a certain time there, debating and discussing, and very often also passers-by join our deliberations so that it sometimes looks like a meeting. The sound of the church-bells ringing eight o'clock stops the debates reminding us of our real duties, and so I enter my office a few minutes later.



The building where Karl worked – photo taken in August 2002

After having unlocked my desk and taken out my correspondence, books, and other things necessary for my work, I call a girl-typist to whom I dictate outgoing letters and answers to received letters for about two hours – if there is no interruption. Very seldom, however, this work can be done steadily; not only the telephone – this very useful but also heavily molesting invention of our modern times – causes unforeseen interruptions, but also visitors, asking for information on various matters, compel me to make pauses or even to send my typist to her typewriter so that she may not lose too much time. In this manner, my letters are generally dictated, so to speak, in several “instalments”, or

some of them are even to be postponed to the following day. People complaining of delayed replies are not aware of the many obstacles growing in an ordinary work-day.

In the rare case of a quieter day, after having finished my dictations, I eat my sandwich etc. with an apple or a pear or a glass of milk, reading letters etc. at the same time. Meanwhile the postman has brought new letters in such a large number that it becomes twelve o'clock before I can finish reading them. If possible, I hurry home some minutes past twelve to have my dinner at half past twelve. A concert and the news on the wireless are a welcome accompaniment to my meal.

At a quarter past one or so I am back again in my office. My first job is to sign the letters my typist has finished in the meantime; part of them are from the foregoing day. "To sign" the letters does not mean simply to put my signature under them but to read them very carefully and attentively in order to avoid any mistakes which could easily have bad consequences. This work requires about two hours; then all the correspondence is handed to the clerk in charge of posting them.

The official closing hour of my office being four p.m., I use the rest of the time for dictating some more letters or for preparing some letters for next day's dictations. The fewest of the pretty large number of letters can be dictated "out of hand", "at sight"; most of them require a lot of preparation, consulting laws, reading of previous letters or of various publications, sometimes asking a lawyer for information by telephone, speaking to employers on questions of wages or conditions, etc. Therefore I often remain in my office after the closing-hour in order to be able to prepare my dictations in quietness and undisturbed.

If not engaged, when leaving my office, I go for a walk into the so-called "People's Garden", a municipal park with a band-stand where our theatre-orchestra gives concerts on several afternoons each week in the summer-months when the weather is not too bad. Also without a concert a walk in the park is one of my habits for my health's sake. From the park I take a beautiful way along an artificial lake leading to my home in half an hour. Here I lie down on a couch to have a little rest, listening to soft music on the radio or reading a newspaper or a booklet. Sometimes I cannot prevent slumbering.

At seven p.m. all our family members are meeting for supper, generally the only meal gathering us all at the same time. After summer, if I have no other engagement, I like to go to the theatre with or without my wife. Unfortunately, our theatre season lasts only seven months, i.e. from 1st October to 30th April. After the theatre, we return home at about eleven; but if one of Wagner's operas was played, it becomes midnight or even later. Sometimes we go together with good friends, into a café before returning home.⁸

Sometimes I have to go to Prague or to another town for settling there various matters of our Trade Union or of some of its members. In such cases I have to get up at half past four in order to catch the first morning train leaving at six; I have half an hour's walk to the station, or I can catch a tram at half past five taking me to the station in ten minutes; the tram stop is five minutes' walk from my home. Such a day is of course entirely different from the "normal" one. Often I can be back only late at night.

There are other days on which I have to go to meetings in outside branches of our Union to speak or lecture there, or on which I am engaged in various committees, political meetings, meetings of the

Town Council or its sub committees, occupying the afternoon or evening hours or sometimes lasting till midnight. Being the chairman of the Social Democratic Party Group in my home town and their representative on the Town Council and several other bodies, really all my time is fully engaged by public duties requiring heart and soul.

A day different from all other days is also that one when our Trade Union's monthly journal is going into print. Being its acting editor, I then have a specially busy day: I have to read and correct the proofs, to group the articles, to revise all the contents etc. Of course I am the author of part of the articles, and am responsible for having examined and made ready for print all articles sent in from other people.

There is no day equal to the other one – but every day is a day spent in work done for our community.

A most interesting account: what a disgrace that such a daily programme has been thus interrupted.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

¹ On the night of 29th-30th December 1940, approximately 100,000 bombs fell on the city of London dispatched by 136 German bombers. The Luftwaffe raid was focused on a part of the city that contained many non-residential buildings, such as churches, offices, and warehouses. The raid caused a firestorm over a greater area than the Great Fire of London in 1666, and was dubbed “the Second Great Fire of London” by an American correspondent. 160 people died, including 12 fire-fighters, and 250 were injured. The famous photograph “St Paul’s Survives” was taken that night.

² Leslie J Skinner was honorary secretary of the Mayor of Guildford’s Committee for Refugees.

³ A half-crown was a coin representing 2 shillings and 6 pence. A florin was a coin representing two shillings. 4d referred to later on was 4 (old) pence – there were 12 pence in a shilling.

⁴ The Shah Jahan Mosque is the first purpose-built mosque in the United Kingdom, built in 1889.

⁵ Fair Oaks Airport? Fair Oaks opened as a private airstrip in 1931, but was signed up for military use in 1936 and became RAF Fair Oaks during World War II. It was used as a training airfield, with No. 18 Elementary & Reserve Flying School being formed on 1st October 1937 equipped with De Havilland Tiger Moths. 6,000 pilots were trained at the airfield, mostly in Tiger Moths.

⁶ Great Western Railway station at Paddington. Unlike British coins, the names of some British train companies have returned in the twenty-first century.

⁷ Karl was head of the legal department of the Clerical Union “Allgemeiner Angestellten Verband” (General Employees’ Association). This was a very powerful and prosperous union, affiliated to the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party. Karl was involved with that organisation too, starting from before the first world war when Bohemia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

⁸ Karl’s son Herbert many years later said of his father: “That was his love in life, the opera and the theatre. He was on the board of the theatre, through the Town Council, and he had his own seat at the theatre and could come and go whenever he liked.’

Some Differences which I have noted between life in Č.S.R. and in England

Having come to England from a country the inhabitants of which have just been going through months of unceasing excitement, ruthless instigation, uninterrupted threats launched by all means of modern “warfare in peace-time” by a neighbour of unprecedented will-power and ruthlessness and unlimited ambition, my first impressions of life in England could not fail to be of such of a peaceful and really pleasant well-being and quietness missed for years. Already the disembarkment [*sic*] at Harwich with the first contact with British authorities and officials showed a striking difference from our experiences at home. Whereas the officials “over there”, as a rule, are harsh, rather arrogant, and very reserved – of course, there are or were praiseworthy exceptions – here they proved to be friendly, polite and of an unaccustomed kindness. Such was the impression not only of the immigration officers but also of the customs officers when they examined our luggage. My first attempts to make practical use of my English knowledge were surprisingly successful; a fellow-refugee had brought with him a pretty valuable camera, and by my explanations I succeeded in persuading the customs officer and his chief to release it duty free, whereas another member of our group who had not informed me was unable to avoid confiscation of his similar camera by another customs officer.

The next difference from our conditions at home was to be noticed in the railway-train from Harwich to London. Whereas in our former country the 3rd class compartments are fitted only with hard wooden benches, and rather narrowly set, here they have beautifully cushioned and comfortable benches like those in our 1st class compartments. This difference was so surprising at first that almost everyone looked at the sign outside the coach to assure himself of the truth of really sitting in a 3rd class compartment.

The journey itself showed another difference from our home country: vast fields framed by hedges and shrubs situated in a flat landscape, instead of the mountainous regions I had come from. And the peaceful impressions after all the troublesome, turbulent days spent in Czechoslovakia.

And then LONDON: the bus taking us to Liverpool Street Station carried us rather slowly, and several times stopped by traffic lights, through mostly narrow but densely crowded streets to a Youth Hostel in London North. There are many differences to be noticed comparing for instance Prague streets and buildings with London ones. And the famous London fog caught us immediately on our first day in England – another difference from our life at home! Through that fog we could see only the silhouettes of farther buildings, but nevertheless we noticed whole streets consisting of uniformly looking houses – a specially striking difference from the picturesque outside and front views of the houses in Prague.

Later on a lot of other differences showed themselves. In public gardens and parks, for instance, it is allowed to walk across the lawns whereas in our country this is strictly forbidden, and special watchmen see that everybody keeps on the paths. The practical use of free speech and free press is surprising after having experienced censored writing and speaking for years – and at first one has to learn to get accustomed to this strangely seeming freedom before taking it as a matter of fact. And the tradition kept alive in so many things! There are the wigs worn by public functionaries, the old

fashioned parades of the Lord Mayor's Show and of Remembrance Day, the precious antiquities in English homes, and above all – quietness everywhere.

The day's work seems to start here an hour later than with us. The "weekend" is much more in practical use here than there. People here live more in their own houses instead of in flats as is usual in our country. Our houses are better built for cold weather: we have double windows and stoves in the rooms; the fireplaces, of course, make a more romantic or homely impression, and may be part of the beloved tradition. Our beds have feather beds, feather pillows, quilts. There are certain differences, of course, in the meals: our breakfast is simpler, but we have a second one; our dinner is unthinkable without soup; our meat used to be cooked in a different manner; we prefer more dishes of flour, more sausages, cucumbers, and a lot of special "national" dishes. Not to forget our "real" coffee and crisp rolls!

Religious life plays a greater part in public life than with us. And there is this pleasant tolerance here unknown to us! Only he who has experienced the hatred and bitter antagonism in our former country can fully understand and appreciate especially this great difference felt by a refugee brought over as a victim of political persecution, driven out of his home and deprived of all his belongings and living possibilities only on account of his political views not corresponding with those of a gang of adventurers. This inconceivable intolerance there – and the really blessed tolerance here: that is THE difference which I feel to be the most important, most striking, and most welcome of all the differences existing between our former and our present life.

I am very glad to read your last passage. Your analysis of the differences between the two countries is very interesting indeed.

13th March, 1940.

My Functions in Reichenberg

1) Paid position:

Secretary of "Allgemeiner Angestellten Verband" = Trade Union of Technical, Commercial, and Clerical Employees, at the Head Office; departments:

- a) Juridical information;
- b) Representation of members against their employers, at law-courts, etc.;
- c) Editorship of the Union's newspaper published twice a month, and of other publications, such as year-books, pamphlets, booklets, etc.;
- d) Lectures on various subjects.

2) Honorary functions:

A) Trades Unions Movement:

- a) Controller of Trades Unions Congress;
- b) Controller of the Joint Voluntary Benevolent Fund of the Trades Unions and Social Democratic Party;
- c) Member of the District Arbitration Court for Labour Lawsuits;

- d) Member of the Country (Provincial) Arbitration Court for Lawsuits regarding Old Age and Invalid Pensions;
- e) Representative of the Employees' Union in various local and district bodies.

B) Social Democratic Party:

- a) Chairman of Local Branch Reichenberg;
- b) Member of District Party Council;
- c) Member of County Party Council;
- d) Member of Town Council and Chairman of the Party's members there;
- e) Member of following Town Council Committees:
 - 1) Financial Committee,
 - 2) Municipal Theatre Committee,
 - 3) Municipal Education Committee,
 - 4) Committee for municipal Electricity Works.
- f) Member of the administrative board of the Municipal and District Savings Bank.

C) Other Bodies:

- a) Deputy Chairman of the Local Branch of the "Ramblers' Union, Friends of Nature" ;¹
- b) Authorised inspector of the Local Cinemas (5), in the name of the Municipal Education Committee;
- c) Reviewer and Reporter for Labour Press about Theatre, Cinema, Lectures, etc.

As it never was my habit to have only "formal" functions, but I always made it my rule to fill my place everywhere with heart and soul, each one of these functions meant real hard work – work for the community.

And now?

"Tempora mutantur" –

and

"Sic transit gloria mundi"!²

But I cannot regret anything I have ever done – and in each case it was (or is?) a life worth to be lived!

14th April, 1940.

Our Home in Czechoslovakia

For the last ten years of our life in Czechoslovakia we had lived in Reichenberg. This beautifully situated town was one of the most important industrial centres in the former Austria-Hungarian Monarchy, maintained its position also in the Czechoslovakian Republic, and is now the capital ("Gauhauptstadt") of the Province of Sudetenland attached to Nazi Germany. With regard to the large number of world-known textile mills it used to be called the "Austrian" or "Bohemian Manchester". In consequence of its industrial importance and many factories, Reichenberg developed a highly [evolved] labour movement already in early times. It was, so to speak, the cradle

of the Bohemian labour movement, and many an important or decisive event in our labour's history is recorded in the chronicle of Reichenberg.

The town proper has about 40,000 inhabitants; together with the suburbs – counting only those with the town as if they would be quarters of the town itself – the population numbers about 80,000. It consists of ancient and more modern parts. Our home was situated in one of the modern parts, near a dam built across a valley, creating an artificial lake which formed a nice bathing place in summer. The house we lived in was part of a huge bloc of houses belonging to a co-operative building society whose member I was. Our house consisted of cellars (basement), the ground floor, the first floor, the second floor, and the garrets. Each floor contained two flats; a smaller one and a larger one, the difference being one room and the size of the rooms. The house had been built in 1924. Towards the street (Robert-Blum-Straße) it only showed the windows, whereas the entrance faced a lawn lying between our house and the neighbouring houses belonging to the same bloc. A wooden fence, rather low, surrounded the bloc, and behind the fence there was a thick hedge. A gravel path led through a gate and round the corner, to the entrance – a high door.

Our flat was in the ground floor on the right. From the vestibule three doors – apart from the lavatory and a built-in wardrobe – led into the kitchen, into the drawing room, and into the sitting room; from the latter a door led into our bedroom. From the kitchen a door led into our daughter's bedroom. Between the two bedrooms was the bathroom, to be entered from either bedroom by separate doors. A larder was attached to the kitchen. To each flat in the house belonged a coal and firewood store room in the basement, a store room for washing utensils also in the basement, and a garret, whereas there were two common washing rooms in the basement, and two common rooms underneath the roof, for drying linen in winter and in times of bad weather. For summer and fine weather, the large lawns were used for hanging out the washing.

Our drawing room was at the same time my study. It contained, among other things, Herbert's piano – a valuable "Förster" instrument - , our wireless set ("Telefunken Choral"), my desk – and, above all, my dear beloved books! More than 2000 books, collected in about 35 years, among them very valuable ones, filled two big locked-up book cases and a big open book case. The books were my most precious treasure, and nobody can replace them or compensate this loss. Better not to think of them – or to imagine that an earthquake destroyed them . . .

Our sitting room was also a combined room: it used to be our dining room, too, and was used, besides, as Herbert's bedroom.

When we had to leave our home, we thought we should soon be able to return home, either after a war [being] avoided by the Great Powers' intervention, or after a short war followed by the Nazis' defeat. The development, however, was different. So we had to flee to England, leaving our things behind. Our furniture than was sold by public auction, the money used, by the Nazis, to cover the storage; we only got our bedding, part of our kitchen things, plates, etc., our clothing, and very few of my books. Many of our belongings were simply stolen . . . ³

Shall we ever see our home again?

Books always come to those who really want them; so I hope when you collect your library again it will contain many English ones.



*The family home in Robert-Blum Straße, Reichenberg August 1933:
Karl's son Herbert on right; boy on left is Otfried Preußler
who became a famous children's author in Germany after the war*

NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

¹ Friends of Nature (Naturfreunde) is an international movement which began in Austria in 1895 among people associated with the emerging Social Democratic movement who enjoyed outdoor activities. It still exists today and aims to make the enjoyment of nature accessible to the wider community by providing appropriate recreational and travel facilities.

² "Times change" and "Thus passes the glory of the world".

³ Herbert always said that his father, as a young man before getting married, would rather go without food so that he could afford to buy a special book for his collection. According to Herbert's account, Karl had instructed from England a German international forwarding company to collect the contents of the Reichenberg flat and forward them to Budyně nad Ohří, the Czech town where Johanna and her children had taken refuge from September 1938 onwards. Lotte and Ludwig were still there when a whole rail wagon brought chests full of books and other things. They crated what they considered important and sold the rest. The crates arrived in London docks just before the outbreak of war; there they miraculously survived the Blitz and were eventually delivered to Mirfield once Karl had space to unpack the contents. Three of his books, and other papers, are part of the Herbert Löwit archive donated to the Institute of Germanic Studies in 2009 and now one of the Exile Studies collections held by The Institute of Modern Languages Research, University of London.

POSTSCRIPT

In the summer of 1940, an old school-friend of Karl's called Rudolf Winter with experience in the Czech glass trade, was allowed to recruit some of the Albury refugees to work in a glass factory being revived in Roberttown, Liversedge, West Yorkshire. The firm was called Fountain Glass Works Ltd. and in May 1941 Karl at last got a job there as wages clerk. He and his wife moved to Mirfield.

In August 1945, after the end of the war in Europe, Karl and Johanna travelled down to Southsea, Portsmouth to visit their daughter Lotte who had married a navy man Arthur "Joe" Silsby from Worthing in June 1942 and given birth to a son in May 1943.



By a wonderful coincidence, both of Karl's sons were on leave at the same time and they all met in Southsea as recorded in this photograph. Ludwig was serving in the Royal Winnipeg Rifles which he had joined the previous year; he was working in Aurich, north-west Germany, as interpreter to the battalion staff. Herbert had joined the Free Czech Army at Leamington Spa on his 18th birthday, served at the siege and liberation of Dunkirk 1944-45, and returned to Czechoslovakia as part of the liberating armies after VE Day.

Karl and his wife did not return to Czechoslovakia. The new Czech government expelled the vast majority (3 million) of German-speaking Czechs from their country. Some proven anti-fascists were exempt from the "Beneš decrees" but most realised that they would not really have a place in the new country especially as it became increasingly under the influence of the communists. Karl and Johanna became British citizens in March 1950.

Karl continued to work at Fountain Glass Works Ltd. until beyond his 70th birthday. He had joined the Mirfield branch of the Labour Party soon after arriving in Yorkshire, and after the war became

branch Treasurer and later President. He was also a committee member of the local trades union and of the local branch of the United Nations Association.

Johanna died in November 1951 age 63. Karl married again in April 1953: to (Johanna) Frieda Sponer, a widow and family friend from Reichenberg days who had come to England in 1946 to join her son Rudi who had served in the Czech and British forces throughout the war. Karl died in April 1965 age 77 in Mirfield; his ashes are at Lawns Wood Crematorium, Leeds.

Three years before his death, Karl and Frieda had sailed on the R.M.S. Carinthia to Canada to visit Ludwig and Anneliese in Toronto, and their daughter Judith who had been born in April 1943. The Canadian family had visited England a couple of times after the war. Anneliese died in February 1980 aged 65 and Ludwig in April 2002 aged 86.

Karl's daughter Lotte retrained later in life as a social worker and continued to live in Southsea for many years before joining her son Peter in the Forest of Dean. She died in March 2011 aged 96.

Herbert left Czechoslovakia as the communists started taking over and in May 1948 married Theresie Schneider (1923-2020) in Yorkshire, where both their parents lived. The couple moved to Ilford, Essex when Rudolf Winter took on another glass works in Edmonton, London N18 and offered them both jobs. Their daughters Sylvia and Diane were born in the early 1950s. Herbert continued to work for émigré-run companies until his retirement; he also taught German to adults in evening classes for many years. He died in January 2012 aged 88.

After the Velvet Revolution, when Czechoslovakia ended one-party rule and became a parliamentary democracy again, Lotte and Herbert separately took their very grown-up children to see the places in the new Czech Republic where they had grown up, and to meet the relatives who had survived the Nazi occupation, the Holocaust, the expulsions and the communist years. They made sure that we visited the tiny farming village in Bohemia where our grandmother's family came from and we all had the opportunity at last to sit on the bench in front of our modest ancestral home.



APPENDIX 1

Here is what I have been able to find out about some of the Sudeten German refugees from Czechoslovakia who are mentioned in Karl's English Journal.

Sources: Czech And Slovak Things (CAST) website; Find My Past; Discovery National Archives; London Gazette; Albury History Society; Graves websites; Wikipedia; Family address books and documents; Contacts made following original publication of "An English Journal". [September 2021]

A. Transport to England led by Tessa Rowntree, 2nd- 8th November 1938

ERICH ARON (1906-?), like all the men on the transport, is on the British Committee of Refugees from Czechoslovakia (BCRC) list that can be found on the Czech And Slovak Things (CAST) website. In September 1939, when a national register was taken of every civilian living in Britain, he was resident in a household of 19 people at Newnhams Rough, Horsted Keynes, Cuckfield district, Sussex. With him was his wife **Gertrud** (1912-1992) who, like most of the men's wives and children, had been able to follow him on one of the BCRC's later transports. Also in the household were the KERN family (see below) and two other refugees. Erich's former occupation was listed as Financial Secretary. He, his wife and daughter **Inge** (1935-?) became British citizens in September 1947 when Erich was a Temporary Civil Servant.

ERNST CHRIST (1911-2006) came from Zwittau (now Svitavy) on the borders of Bohemia and Moravia. He was followed to England by his wife **Emma** (1914-2008) who gave birth to their daughter **Edeltraut** Mary at Surrey Hills in March 1939. The refugee baby was baptised at Albury Parish Church by Rev. Philip Gray. The family then moved to the Old Vicarage, Wrecclesham, joining Wilhelm NOVY and Josef WILHELM and their families (see below). Ernst's former occupation is listed in the September 1939 Register as Metal & Iron Turner. The family next moved to Cardiff where twin sons were born in 1945 and another son in 1948. Ernst and Emma became British citizens in June 1947 when Ernst was Technical Manager and the couple changed their surname to "Christopher". The family of six emigrated to Melbourne, Australia in May 1954, with Ernest's occupation listed as Toolroom Operator.

THOMAS HABERKORN (1891-?) came from Eger (now Cheb) in north-west Bohemia and was a toolmaker and trade union secretary, known to the Gestapo. At Surrey Hills refugee camp, he built a table along with two other refugees:



The inscription underneath the table reads “Sudeten German Refugees works for the comrades [*sic*] in Surrey Hills - Thomas Haberkorn - Heinrich Wirnitzer - Henry Weisbach - 17th March 1939”. The table was discovered 80 years later in outbuildings in rural Hampshire. On 23rd August 1939, (Georg) Thomas Haberkorn and Heinrich Wirnitzer returned to Eger with their families. After the war, Karl Löwit had an address for Thomas Haberkorn in the US Zone of Germany (Erbach in Hesse?). So Thomas seems to have somehow survived the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia only to be (presumably) expelled to Germany along with 3 million German-speaking Czechs.

FRANZ A KERN (1903-1981) was living in September 1939 in the same household as Erich and Gertrud ARON in Horsted Keynes, Sussex. His occupation is listed as Locksmith (as were many refugees, probably because the German for locksmith is Schlosser which can also mean fitter or metalworker). Franz had been joined by his wife **Anna** (1907-2002?) and daughter **Edith** (1932-?). In 1942 the couple had a son who was born in Wycombe. Franz became a British citizen in November 1950 when he was resident in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire and his occupation was Engineer. Karl Löwit remained in touch with him.

EMIL KLEIN (1878-1943) was living in September 1939 only four miles away from Franz KERN and Erich ARON: at Old House Bungalows, West Hoathly, Cuckfield district, Sussex. He had been joined by his wife **Irma** (1900-1975); also in the small household was Fanni Blatny (1873-1949), a former member of the Czechoslovak national parliament and a leading figure in the exiles’ Social Democratic Party. Emil died in 1943 in Hammersmith, London. His widow became a British citizen in December 1949, occupation Embroiderer.

DR ERNST KOLISCH (1907-1970) came from Saaz (now Žatec) in north Bohemia. In September 1939 he was living with his wife **Emilie**/Emily (1910-1993) in Farnham, Surrey (not far from the Old Vicarage in Wrecclesham) in the house of a widow of private means. His occupation is listed as Student. The couple had a son in 1944, born in Warwickshire, and became British citizens in July 1947 when they were resident in Coventry. Ernest’s occupation was Teacher; newspaper cuttings reveal that he taught at the King Henry VIII School in Coventry for a quarter of a century.

ERICH KRALERT (1896-?) was living in September 1939 at Empshott Grange Cottage, Hawkley, Petersfield district, Hampshire with his wife **Antonia** (1900-?) and three others. Erich is listed as Book-keeper and his wife as Typist. According to Karl Löwit’s address books, Erich moved to Wales and then had many different addresses in Surrey and London, but finally settled in Bamberg, West Germany.

WILHELM NOVY (1892-1978) was probably the most prominent member of the group which Tessa Rowntree led to the rescue ship at Gdynia. He may have been born in Germany but he came from Zuckmantel (now Zlaté Hory) in north-east Bohemia where he worked as a full-time district secretary of the German Social Democratic Workers’ Party in the Czechoslovak Republic (DSAP) and city councillor. His name appears in “Hitler’s Black Book”, the ‘special wanted arrest list’ drawn up in 1940 in expectation of a successful Nazi invasion of Britain. In September 1939 he was living with his wife **Klara** (1907-?) and his daughter **Irmgard** (1934-?) at the Old Vicarage, Wrecclesham, Farnham, Surrey, along with Ernst CHRIST, Josef WILHELM and Max Schmid and their families. Wilhelm Novy is listed as being a Clerk/District Secretary, Refugee Seeking Work. Some time after that, the Novy family moved to the top floor of 4 York Road, Guildford, where Wilhelm was living when he became a British citizen in September 1949; his occupation then was Porter (British Railways). In 1964

Wilhelm and Klara moved to Landshut in Bavaria, West Germany where he and Karl Löwit remained in touch until Karl died in 1965.

JOSEF SCHRÖPFER (1893-1968) was one of the many refugees, like Karl Löwit's son Ludwig, who took up the offer of emigration to Canada to become a farmer. He sailed from Liverpool in May 1939 with his wife **Růžena**/Rosa (1903-1966) and teenage son **Kurt**. Their last address in England had been Barry Island in Wales. They lived the rest of their lives in Saskatchewan.

RUDOLF SIGMUND (1902-1947) came from Drahowitz, a suburb of Karlsbad (now Karlovy Vary) in north-west Bohemia. He is listed in Hitler's Black Book of 1940 as living at Surrey Hills "Albury Chilworth". However by September 1939, like many 'Surrey Hillser', he had had to move out of the refugee camp and was living at Warren Farm, Friday Street, a hamlet in Dorking & Horley district, Surrey, with nine other refugees. He is listed as married but was not with his wife and any child; his occupation was Varnisher and Painter. Like some other refugees, he registered with the Czechoslovak Military in the UK but it is not clear if he saw active service. In 1945 he asked the Foreign Office for 'bag facilities' in order to communicate with his wife in Czechoslovakia. He must have been one of those who were separated from their wives throughout the war, perhaps because she had caring responsibilities, and in his case it appears he died (age 45 in London) before they could be reunited.

RUDOLF STORCH (1900-1983) came from Algersdorf (now Valkeřice) in north Bohemia where he was town clerk and prominent in ATUS, the international workers' sports movement. In September 1939, he was living at Brook Lodge – the other main refugee hostel in the Albury area, a few miles from Surrey Hills – with his wife **Anna** Victoria (1901-1983) and son **Heinz** (1927-?) who was at Brook Lodge School and the Boy Scouts with Karl Löwit's son Herbert. Rudolf remained active in the politics of the exiled party and became president of the Anglo-Sudeten Club. He and his family became British citizens in January 1948 when they were resident in Guildford and Rudolf's occupation was Clerk. The family later moved to Barnet in North London; Karl Löwit remained in touch over the years.

JOSEF WILHELM (1898-1948) was the third man from the Tessa Rowntree transport who found himself at the Old Vicarage, Wrecclesham in September 1939. He had been joined by his wife **Emma** (1899-1987) and daughter **Herta** (1923-2016). His former occupation was listed as Managing Clerk Health Insurance. He later moved to Reading in Berkshire where he died aged only 49 when his occupation was Fitter. His widow became a British citizen later that year; her occupation was Machinist. Their daughter had married a serviceman of the United States Army in 1945 in Reading and emigrated the following year to join him in Indiana.

B. Families living at 26 York Road, Guildford in May 1940

BECKS - In September 1939, **Karl Beck** (1884-1942), a lawyer, and his wife **Anna** (1886-1959), listed as a farmer, were living as anti-Hitler refugees at Clifton House, Castle Hill, Guildford with 7 other residents including 3 evacuated children. Their son **Gerhart** (1926-2005) had been born in Brůx (now Most) in north Bohemia and was living at Brook Lodge – presumably attending the refugee school and definitely taking part in the Red Falcons Scouts. He went on to study at the Central High School, Guildford and served in the Czechoslovak Army towards the end of the war. In March 1948, Gerhart

and his widowed mother were still living at 26 York Road and became British citizens, he a Clerk, she a Needlewoman. Gerhart was later known as Gerald Edward Beck.

LÖBLS (also known as LOBEL, LOEBL, LOBL) - **Hans Löbl** (1890-1959) and his wife **Margarethe** / Grete (1894-1966) came from Teplitz-Schönau (now Teplice) in north Bohemia. They were living at Surrey Hills at the time of the September 1939 Register and are listed as Bookbinder & Chauffeur and Milliner respectively. They had 2 children: Bedrich/**Frederick** (1929-1992) and **Gerda** Johanna (!931-?). They had moved to 26 York Road, Guildford by May 1940. The whole family became British citizens in June 1948 when they were living in Kings Heath, Birmingham and Hans was a Book Binder. However, Hans and Margarete must have returned to Guildford as they were resident at 26 York Road when each of them died.

LUFTS - **Gustav Luft** (1901-1948), according to a memoir by his son, had remained in Reichenberg (now Liberec) in north Bohemia to conduct the business of the Regional Social Security Office which he directed. He was there when the Nazis took over but managed to escape to Prague and join his wife **Anna Marie** née Roscher (1906-1985) and twin children. They then escaped to England and Surrey Hills on separate organised transports. After war broke out Gustav found employment in a photo finishing plant and moved to the 3-storey town house in Guildford. He then retrained as a mechanic/toolmaker which took him from Purley to South Croydon to a Czech plastic injection moulding factory in South Wales. In 1947 Gustav and Anna moved to Germany where their children **Walter** (1927-2015) and **Inge**/borg (1927-?) were working for the United States Army of Occupation. Both children emigrated to the United States, Walter to Alabama and Inge to Nebraska where there is a memorial to their parents.

C. Other refugees mentioned in "An English Journal"

VALENTIN DITTRICH (1898-1967) had been active in the ATUS movement and a small farmers' organisation. He emigrated to Canada in April 1939, with his wife **Barbara** (1896-1988) and two daughters, to be a farmer. He spent the rest of his life in the Sudeten German community which settled in the Tupper/Tomslake/Dawson Creek area of British Columbia.

DR RUDOLF FISCHER (1887-1972?) was a former headmaster of a state training college in Aussig (now Ústí nad Labem) in north Bohemia. He was joined in England by his wife **Hedwig** (1890-1956) who came on the same transport as Karl Löwit's son Herbert: she remembered the teenage boy always being hungry! During 1939 – while living in Broadford, Shalford, Surrey – Dr Fischer taught German and Geography to the refugee children at Brook Lodge School. The couple later moved to Onslow Village, Guildford and then Cheadle in Cheshire, becoming British citizens in February 1948 when Dr Fischer's occupation was listed as Teacher of Languages. They emigrated to Western Australia in November 1949, along with their daughter **Friedl** (1920-?) and her family, leaving another daughter **Lotte** (1916-1985) in London.

BERNHARD GRAIŽEVSKY (1904-1970) was born in Slonim, Poland (now Belarus) but his last address before emigration was Falknov nad Ohří (now Sokolov) in north-west Bohemia. He had been a manager of a drapery shop. In October 1939 he was exempted from internment because he was guaranteed by the Czech Refugee Trust Fund for whom he was doing voluntary work. At the end of the war, he married **Hilda** Junger (1915-?), a refugee from Vienna, and they lived for a while in Guildford. By the end of the 1940s the couple were living in London with two young sons.

RICHARD LORENZ (1888-1959) was the (presumably elected) Surrey Hills camp chairman and remained there until the camp closed in May. He had been a very active DSAP party official in northern Bohemia. He was joined in England by his wife **Marie** (1886-?). In the September 1939 Register, his former occupation is listed as Porcelain Painter. He moved to Godalming, Surrey before emigrating to Stuttgart, West Germany in 1947 and became the first director of the Seliger-Gemeinde Archive, the library collection held by the successor organisation to the DSAP.

JOSEF NITSCH (1910-?) was born in Probstau (now Proboštov, Teplice district) in north Bohemia. He was a textile workers' trade union secretary and DSAP secretary. He was joined in England by his wife **Anna** (1910-?). In the September 1939 register his former occupations are listed as Motor Mechanic, Tailor. He registered with the Czechoslovak Military in London in April 1940 and became an active soldier shortly afterwards: Karl Löwit's last address for him is "2nd Czechoslovak Battalion, Walton Hall, Warwickshire". (See photo on page 23.)

JOHANN PROSCHE (1905-?) is listed in the September 1939 national register as living at Charlton House, Cleobury Mortimer, near Ludlow. He was single and his previous occupation was Machine Knitter. Charlton House was actually an old workhouse which was housing 100 Czech refugees. The National Archives at Kew holds a record of him in the war-time personnel files of the Special Operations Executive.

HEINRICH/HENRY WEISBACH (1910-1985) was on one of the first two transports of refugees that arrived in England by air at the end of October 1938. He had been a leading figure in the socialist movement of north Bohemia. His wife **Hermine** (1912-1998) and daughter **Inge** (1933-?) came to England at the end of November but lived in Woking Surrey, while he stayed on at Surrey Hills and made the table with Thomas HABERKORN and Heinrich Wurnitzer (see above). He and his family emigrated to Tupper, British Columbia, Canada in April 1939 on the same ship as the DITTRICH family, but soon moved to Toronto where he became an important figure in the Seliger-Gemeinde community of Canada. Karl Löwit remained in touch throughout his life.



Refugees at Surrey Hills 1939

Karl Löwit 2nd from right at back, wife Johanna seated in front of him, teenage son Herbert next to him

With thanks to Trevor Brook of Albury History Society and Graham Hieke for this photograph

1919: Representatives of France predominantly influenced stipulations regarding C.E.

At next peace conference, Representatives of Gr.Br. and Br.Emp. decisive influence and responsibility also for C.E.settlement.

This is our great hope - and I'm sure, the great hope of all peoples now suppressed and enslaved in C.E.

Of course, I know that problems of C.E. only very small part of vital issues at stake in this war not only for Gr.Br.& Br.Emp. but for whole mankind and modern human civilisation;

But - as f.i. the familiar announcements of Air Ministry and Min.f. Home Security: "Few bombs - few casualties - damage negligible -", correct from general military point of view and war situation - - ; but victims' opinion - ?

Thus also problems of C.E. of vital importance for people living there - though, perhaps, not decisive factor of war.

However, of vital importance also for Gr.Br. and Emp. to create best possible solution of all C.E.problems so that C.E. may cease to be the witches' cauldron of Europe and the whole world.

C.E. not an independent body for itself - part of Europe as a whole.
C.E. questions cannot be solved in isolation.

The intermingling of various peoples or nationalities in C.E. makes it impossible to draw clean frontiers. May these be drawn as carefully as imaginable - there will always be "minorities" in each of the states.

Therefore, peace treaties of 1919 tried to combine the right of small nations to independent existence, freedom and equality, with the right of national groups and individuals (= "minorities") to a certain standard of internationally guaranteed treatment. (Defects, criticism.)

Coming solution must try to solve these questions on the basis of freely negotiated agreements.

History of last 20 years has shown that forming of states consisting of various nationalities by dictate, without hearing the "minorities", is bound to fail.

Decisions regarding the frontier questions should be reached with the free co-operation of all the nationalities involved, in the spirit of European solidarity, taking into account the economic and geographical links between the various areas in question. (Contrast: 1919 two camps, sharply distinguished from each other. Examples.)

The system of small individual states with so-called full sovereignty has proved to be a fiction and disastrous:
Overburdened by the immense costs of individual administrative machinery, armaments, expensive attempts at industrial self sufficiency, the economic basis was far too small, the population,

as a whole, too poor; difficulties increased by problem of market for agricultural production, and over population.

Forcible exchange of populations an utterly undemocratic and barbarous method to be strongly rejected as criminal madness - the more so as such an uprooting of local populations does not touch or solve at all the decisive and vital economic questions.

T h e r e f o r e :

Our aim should be a kind of

Central European Association,

consisting of national groups united by a suitable combination of territorial and personal autonomy, democratically organised within the framework of an

Associated States of Europe.

ECONOMIC HELP should come from Gr.Br. & Br. Emp.: trade facilities, emigration possibilities, reconstruction loans and investments -

MORAL SUPPORT for democratic feeling and acting -

in order to regain C.E. for European western and human civilisation.

After this war, we shall be faced with vital needs, such as:

("Declaration", page 10; 6 points.)

We know, the passionate desire of the

British people for peace,

French people for security,

German people for equal rights,

C.E. peoples for national independence, cultural security, economic living possibility,

can be fulfilled in the framework of a democratically organised Europe. British offer to France of a full Union as an example.

The future of C.E. lies in this future Europe - which, we hope, will assure peace and work, bread and freedom, to all -

and have as sound foundation the

solidarity of free peoples.