

Kinderstandport – Letter to my parents Frank Baumann

My dear Parents!

On Friday we longingly received your dear letter and I hope you are well. I am well looked after by Opa, Oma, Aunt and Uncles. Now, dear Parents, i will tell you about the journey.

When we left the Leader in charge told us we should go to sleep, we said yes, but as soon as he left we started to sing. After a while the Leader passed by and said what's going on? We said we are not sleepy and continued to sing. Unfortunately I did not sleep but I was not tired. At 4am. I went to look around the train to see what Erika (my sister) was doing. She was fast asleep. I thought it was already very late so I took out my breakfast. Then I asked what the time is and was told it was 4.30 so I packed up the breakfast and went again to see what Erika was doing. I saw she was awake. I asked her had she slept and she said yes. After a while I saw Else walk by.

I opened the door and ran after her. She was very pleased to see me (Else was a distant cousin who was a kindertransport helper. We knew she on the train too). At 12 pm. the Leader came and gave us all a cup of tea. The tea made us all feel good because we had something warm in our stomachs. In the afternoon the Leader brought everybody a cold lemonade. In spite of the lemonade being cold it made us feel good. At 10pm we got off the train and went to the ship. The Captain said he would let us in at 11pm. Suddenly, we started going in and got a bed number. I got 70. Then we had to get undressed and go to sleep. On the ship I slept very well. They even had to wake me up. We went upstairs and got a banana, an apple milk bread and butter and tea. The tea was so bitter that I put in 5 lumps of sugar and it was still too bitter but we had to drink it. We went on the deck garden, the weather was very nice and we were medically examined. We again went to the train, looked for our suitcases and then went to the waiting room where we had to wait 2 hours.

There was some grass nearby and the man said we should go there. We put down all our things. The man had a ball and who ever wanted could join in to play football. I did not join in but we could play whatever we wanted. When the children playing football got tired, the man told us to get dressed and went back to the train. We boarded the train and at 1pm. the Leader gave us all a bar of chocolate. When the train stopped we asked (in English) "if you please is here London?" They answered 'Yes'. We got off the train. We were led to a big hall with benches. Suddenly we saw Uncle Bertschie. The Leader called out Baumann. Uncle Bertschie looked for the suitcases. We went outside and saw Omama. We took a taxi and went as you may say home. When we arrived we of course gave them the greetings from Mutti, Papa, Aunties and Uncles. We are well and hope to see you both here soon. I will finish with many, many kisses Your Otti.

I remember in 1937 we saw Hitler being driven down Thaliastrasse (where my father had his shop) standing in a small car with the roof open and making the Hitler salute, followed by about six military police on motorcycles. Every window had a huge red banner with a black swastika hanging out (the banners were approx 3 metres long x 0.75 metres).

On *Kristallnacht* my father was taken to Dachau. He had a hat and cap shop which the Nazis confiscated together with all the goods. He was allowed to go home after about 6 months because my mother arranged passports etc to leave the country. My sister and I had to change schools in Vienna, and so we moved to our grandparents' home.

This photo of my sister and I was taken by a press photographer when we arrived in London middle of July 1939. My uncle saw it in the newspaper. Unfortunately he did not cut out any wording that went with the photo. We were carrying fur coats and wearing a thin waterproof coat.

Both my parents arrived in England four weeks later (about two weeks before the war started). We stayed with our grandparents and uncle. My uncle fled Vienna soon after *Kristallnacht*, over the Swiss border to London. He had some money there because he used to export ladies frocks to England. He brought his parents (our grandparents) to London a few months before we arrived.

We lived with our parents till the war started about 2 weeks later. When the war started, all school children were evacuated into country areas away from possible bombing. Our school was moved to Royston (in Hertfordshire, approximately 40 miles from London), a country town of about 3,000 people. To our parents' dismay my sister and I were separated and sent to different (but wonderful families). Imagine, I was only 8 and a half years old (without my sister) and could not speak the language apart from 'yes', 'no', 'please' and 'thank you'. The people I stayed with for five years did not know a word of German and they had never met a Jewish person. My sister and I were the only Jewish people in the town.

Interestingly, when my mother came to see us approximately three months later, to bring Christmas presents to the people I stayed with - my mother said we could speak English fluently.

