**Kaspar Hauser Goes West**

**By Richard Steel**

My hope with this article is to show where we are with Kaspar Hauser research today – why it has become a task related to the Karl König Institute – and why I believe that this work will have a much wider signiﬁcance than anything that went before: building on something that has been prepared and “guarded” within Camphill for decades, something Karl König felt deeply.

 Maybe a golden thread of world history is becoming visible in our time that showed itself brieﬂy in 1828 with the appearance of Kaspar Hauser in Nuremberg; a thread however which did not become severed through his murder in 1833, as was probably intended.

This second Kaspar Hauser Goes West Festival in Camphill California was another step forward in the way that this historical thread is emerging as will certainly the second Festival in Columbia County, New York be this October/November. A movement is gaining momentum it seems.

Three talks provided the setting for the festival in Paloma Hall, Soquel, around which conversations, artistic experiences and simple human encounter wove the fabric of this special new step in deepening research.

My task was to show a historical context, putting the reception of Kaspar Hauser through the past two centuries into the perspective of wider world history. And the way history has evolved shows how we today are very much part of it all – living as we are with the consequences of what happened with Kaspar Hauser as well as what did not happen! We ﬁnd ourselves now at a pivotal point of this history, 100 years (or better, 3 x 33.3 years!) after the founding of the ﬁrst Waldorf school – perhaps the only real fruit of Rudolf Steiner’s strong movement for threefold social reform. This lasting effect was indeed the turning to the being of the child: The Child of Europe maybe? One can sense that what grew out of this impulse – the Waldorf Movement, but also particularly healing education as Karl König saw it – as the “antidote” to what became the driving force of society through the spiritual vacuum of the 19th Century: Social Darwinism.

Eckart Böhmer‘s contributions centered around the question of the connection of humanity to the spirit world – where do we stand with this today? And he depicted Plato’s Allegory of the Cave as a true parable of what was to unfold in society right up to our times. It is as though Plato already anticipated what would happen to Kaspar Hauser and how that would form human existence. Karl König wrote in his essay in 1961 already, that Kaspar Hauser, just like the person with special needs, moves our hearts and makes our conscience speak out, reminding us that we are really spiritual beings who need – above all – to tend to our spiritual heritage. Are we content to live in the land of shadows?

**Building a bond**

A big Thank You goes to all who participated in this event – particularly to Penny and John Baring and to Camphill California for hosting it and creating a very special listening and meeting space. All important during the Festival was the opportunity to meet so many people earnestly looking for the continuation of Kaspar Hauser’s life-task; “re-searchers” in a new sense. We met through art – with singing and experiencing eurythmy and drama. There were some people present who had played in the very ﬁrst performance of Carlo Pietzner‘s play “And out of the night….Kaspar” in 1970; this play had been presented last time as “workshop performance.” This time one of the many plays Eckart Böhmer had written for the Ansbach Festivals was done – about Judge Feuerbach who had discovered the identity of Kaspar Hauser and had to pay for that with his life.

In long breaks and in conversations a warm atmosphere of unity arose: No longer do we continue the past 200 years, with lone researchers, each going their own way – and often not agreeing, or even outspokenly disagreeing and at times aggressively so! This has changed and is being changed. For a long time, one had the feeling it was not wise to appear in public with the theme of Kaspar Hauser – yes there was always direct opposition to true Kaspar Hauser research – threats were made and a continuous ﬂow of negative publications seemed to get stronger with the decades! Just one year ago, as we were celebrating the 21st year of Kaspar Hauser Festivals in Ansbach (the tenth Festival, as it is held every two years) again a book was published by a physician who claimed to have “spent his whole life solving the riddle” - and at last (how could it be other?) he came to the conclusion that Kaspar was an impostor; a simple illegitimate boy from Tirol who suffered a speciﬁc form of epilepsy. Not that this solves any of the riddles still waiting; and one does get a strange feeling when something is presented as scientiﬁc research without referring to any of the known facts yet claiming to have ended the conversation! This is so obviously not the way forwards.

Understanding Kaspar Hauser and his task for today and tomorrow now become a community question. What does that mean? Maybe we don’t know that quite yet but certainly it has become a reality for many people and that as far away from central Europe as the West Coast of America! Something is developing that has more to it than just the efforts of a few people. A circle is growing around Kaspar Hauser today; perhaps it has something to do with “the bond” that Karl König wrote about in his “Christmas Story.”

**A House for Kaspar**

Indeed part of that circle is the Kaspar Hauser Research Circle in the Karl König Institute; a growing group of people that may now be spreading to the US! At the Festival in Ansbach last year the Research Circle was very much part of the preparation and was strongly represented with exhibitions, contributions and with a book sale. Ansbach is the town where Kaspar spent the last years of his life and had his decisive experiences with special people, but also with the Christ being itself. This week of events – 185 years after the murder of Kaspar Hauser - was overwhelming, with over 4,000 visitors! And at the end a small meeting, like a little seed, united various initiatives towards a very new step: Eckart Böhmer with members of the Research Circle and the Karl König Institute met with representatives of the Parsifal Schools for traumatized and special needs children and youngsters (Karlsruhe, where Kaspar Hauser was born!) and the Friends of Waldorf Education (also Karlsruhe) that sends over 1,800 volunteer youngsters from Germany all over the world each year. And Peter Selg was also there.

The idea was then born to create a Kaspar Hauser House for Healing Pedagogy right there in Ansbach – and it seems that our dreams could come true to be able to use the house where Kaspar lived and died – what a chance to redeem what had happened there, but also to link on to those enormous powers of love and forgiveness, of true Christianity that was to be experienced in the December of 1833 as Kaspar lay 3 days on his death bed. In that house, we would like to open a conference center with space to train all those volunteers before they go on their journey of social work and bridge building, including hostel and hotel rooms, but also a bio-dynamic restaurant, a center where people with special needs can ﬁnd interesting work-places looking after guests. Then there will be a center for trauma pedagogy. The Karl König Institute will have many contributions to make – establishing a Kaspar Hauser Archive using the legacy of Professor Hermann Pies, the great Kaspar Hauser expert, whose document collection we are already working on. Then also the wonderful artworks of Greg Tricker can ﬁnd a home – the 35 paintings and 3 sculptures of his Kaspar Hauser cycle that we have already looked after for the past 5 years, during which we have organized 25 exhibitions in Germany, Switzerland, and Britain. And of course, Kaspar Hauser’s room will be a place of quiet and inner connection. There is a lot to do because the house has not been lived in for 15 years. Plans are ready and we hope that ﬁnancing will follow! The owner of that house is enthusiastic about it all and sees himself as a partner.

The next Ansbach Festival, July/August 2020, will deﬁnitely be an important time – we hope something can already take place in the house. We hope also that many people will come to see it and help us along. It will only work if we ﬁnd enough friends to support us and be part of this exciting project.

**Quo Vadis Kaspar?**

In the meantime, there is much to do, also in community building. The Bay Area has been home to the Kaspar Hauser Goes West Festivals twice already, so there is plenty of interest in Santa Cruz and Monterey; this time we were also asked to talk in Sebastopol, San Francisco and Portland, Oregon. A request also came from LA and for the next event there was an idea to invite a conference or festival to British Columbia…..we will see. To those who took part now, we will be sending a sort of questionnaire to ﬁnd out where interests and initiatives are. Perhaps a West Coast Division of the Research Circle is evolving? And we will see what evolves through the Festival in Columbia County, NY in October/November. Would you like us to send you our questions? Do let us know. And if you visit the Kaspar Hauser website (http://kaspar-hauser.net/ ) you will see that there is some content there already, but do push us along that more appears in the English language! We do have a ﬁrst volume of research in German – and now the ﬁrst volume will be available in English - we will bring it along in October!

At the moment this is all evolving within the Karl König Institute, in cooperation, particularly with Eckart Böhmer. Both he and I offer events – talks, seminars, exhibitions… but also one could imagine that a new impulse for Kaspar Hauser Festivals could develop in other places – why not in Britain for instance? Or Kaspar Hauser Goes East?

Jakob Wassermann, who wrote the ﬁnest novel about Kaspar Hauser in 1908 already, said something quite remarkable: “He will be as powerful after death as he was powerless in life”. A wonderful expression, but something that begins to show itself more and more. And we need his powers of openness, of love, of conscience for the future!

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