

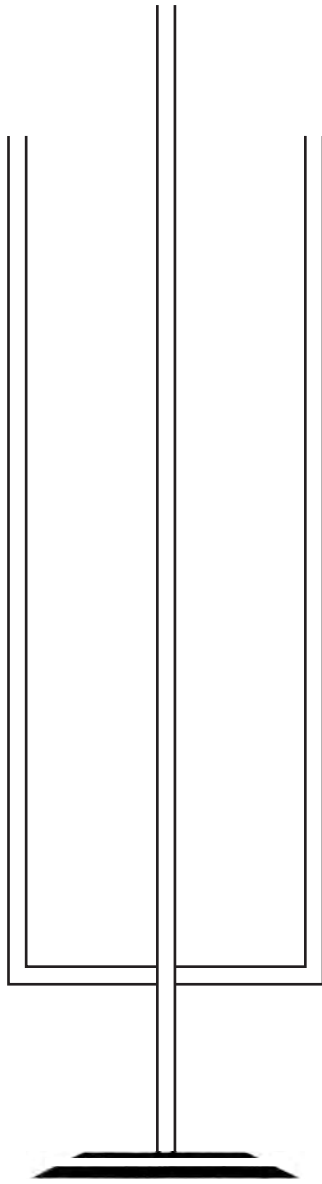
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATORS • A ROTHMAN FOUNDATION PUBLICATION

# PRISM

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In memory of  
**Henry I. Rothman ז"ל**  
and  
**Bertha G. Rothman ע"ה**  
לחמו מלחמות ה'  
*"who lived and fought  
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## Call for Manuscripts



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EDUCATORS, HISTORIANS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, THEOLOGAINS, ARTISTS, WRITERS, POETS, AND OTHER INTERESTED AUTHORS ARE INVITED TO SUBMIT MANUSCRIPTS OR ART WORK ON THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

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- All submissions must be sent as e-mailed attachments in Microsoft Word, using Times New Roman 12 font type.
- All text should be double spaced, justified, and paginated.
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- The American Psychological Association (APA) *Publication Manual* (6th Ed.) is Yeshiva University's required reference guide for publications.
- Length of manuscript may vary; we seek essays from 4 to 14 double-spaced pages.
- Each issue, including all photos, will be available as a PDF on our Web site, [yu.edu/azrieli/research/prism-journal/](http://yu.edu/azrieli/research/prism-journal/), so permissions must include online as well as print version.

#### GUIDELINES FOR POETRY SUBMISSIONS:

- Poems should relate to the announced theme of the issue and be of interest to Holocaust educators, especially to those who teach middle and high school students.
- E-mail all submissions, with your name and e-mail address on each poem (up to 6), in a single Word document, Times New Roman, 12 point font. Include your name and full mailing address in a brief cover letter to Dr. Charles Adès Fishman, [carolus@optimum.net](mailto:carolus@optimum.net)

CONTACT THE EDITOR WITH QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, AND/OR QUERIES ABOUT SPECIFIC THEMES FOR FUTURE ISSUES:

Dr. Karen Shawn at [shawn@yu.edu](mailto:shawn@yu.edu)

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The content of *PRISM* reflects the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the Azrieli Graduate School and Yeshiva University.

# Contents

- 1 Introduction  
KAREN SHAWN  
JEFFREY GLANZ
- 3 The Leather Suitcase (poetry)  
TOM BERMAN
- 5 My *Kindertransport* Experience  
(personal narrative)  
RALPH W. MOLLERICK
- 11 The Chance to Live:  
The *Kinder* and the Rescuers  
(historical research)  
BRANA GUREWITSCH
- 17 Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld:  
The Singular British Rabbi  
Who Saved Jewish Children  
(historical research)  
ROCHEL LICHT
- 24 *Auld Lang Syne*:  
The Experiences of the *Kinder*  
in Scotland (historical research)  
PAULA COWAN
- 30 Detour to Palestine:  
Youth Aliyah in Denmark,  
1939–1945 (historical research)  
LONE RÜNITZ
- 36 Hanna's Journey (poetry)  
CHARLES ADÈS FISHMAN
- 40 From Dependence to  
Autonomy: *Kinder*, Refugee  
Organizations, and  
the Struggle for Agency  
(historical research)  
JENNIFER CRAIG-NORTON
- 52 Killing the Wagner-Rogers Bill  
(poetry)  
DAVI WALDERS
- 54 The British Government  
and the *Kindertransport*:  
Moving Away from the  
Redemptive Story (historical  
research and pedagogy)  
KAY ANDREWS
- 61 The End of Innocence:  
*Kindertransport* Children  
(history)  
MARYANN MCLOUGHLIN
- 67 I Was Not There (poetry)  
KAREN GERSHON
- 68 When Private Became Public:  
The *Für das Kind* Memorial  
Series (art history)  
PNINA ROSENBERG
- 75 *Suitcase*: Creating a Theatre  
Performance About the  
*Kindertransport* (theater arts)  
ROS MERKIN
- 78 Script: *Suitcase* (theater arts)  
ROS MERKIN
- 91 Footsteps of Memory:  
Frank Meisler's *Kindertransport*  
Memorials (art history)  
PNINA ROSENBERG
- 97 A Suitcase Full of Memories:  
The Unfinished Journey  
of Lilli Tauber (pedagogy)  
DAVID LINDQUIST
- 104 Examining Jewish Values  
In *Kindertransport* Narratives  
(pedagogy)  
HANA N. BOR AND KAREN SHAWN
- 111 *Into the Arms of Strangers*:  
*Stories of the Kindertransport*:  
A Film for Holocaust Education  
(film review)  
MARGARET WEISS CROUCH
- 115 The Gift (personal narrative)  
RENATA LAXOVA
- 119 Winton Train (poetry)  
TOM BERMAN
- 120 Facing the Past,  
Healing the Future (art)  
SHOSHANA R. SPIEGEL
- 122 Exodus (poetry)  
LOTTE KRAMER
- 123 Magie and Me  
(personal narrative)  
FLORIAN KUBSCH
- 128 The Puzzle (poetry)  
THILDE FOX
- 130 Tribute to Vladka Meed:  
In Memoriam  
ELAINE CULBERSTON AND  
STEPHEN FEINBERG
- 132 About the Contributors
- 135 Copyrights & Permissions

## Introduction

“And then my other life began.”

These words, written by the Israeli sculptor Frank Meisler, a child (*Kind*) of the *Kindertransport* whose memorials are described by our art editor, Pnina Rosenberg, personify the entirety of the works in this issue, which examine the *Kindertransport* and other large-scale efforts to rescue Jewish children from the Nazi assault on the Jews. From personal narratives by *Kinder* Ralph W. Mollerick and Renata Laxova to testimonies reported in essays by Rochel Licht, Paula Cowan, Jennifer Craig-Norton, Maryann McLoughlin, Pnina Rosenberg, and Florian Kubsch, and in a poem by our poetry editor, Charles Adès Fishman, we hear the plaintive stories of children whose lives were saved by the *Kindertransport* but who, torn from parents, homes, and heritage, would never be the same.

We are delighted to welcome 13 new authors, three new poets, and one new artist to our family of contributors! Our expanding *PRISM* family includes writers from England, Scotland, Germany, and Denmark. While we admit to Americanizing their spellings and punctuation, we trust you will hear their authentic voices and perspectives.

The essays, poetry, art, photography, and sculpture within are intriguing both for their specificity and focus on the individual and for their unusual interconnectedness. Tom Berman, who writes of being on the Winton Train, both the original and the replica in 2009, shares both of those experiences with Renata Laxova and is also profiled in the history of four Scottish *Kinder* by Paula Cowan; none of the three authors knew the others would be published here.

Brana Gurewitsch brings to light the heroic deeds of Norbert Wollheim, who is mentioned in the film review by Margaret Crouch and who was one of my beloved teachers. Norbert's work was with the Youth Aliyah, the organization responsible for overseeing the safety and education of the Jewish *Kinder* in Denmark; its role in providing aid is explored in the fascinating history, contributed by Lone Rünitz, of the little-known participation of Danish women in the rescue and care of the Jewish children who were brought to safety there. Kay Andrews draws on cabinet papers and Hansard, the verbatim record of parliamentary debate; her historical analysis moves us away from the redemptive story too often taught as the only truth. Maryann McLoughlin examines oral histories and written testimonies and concludes that they, too, represent “the end of innocence.” Like Margaret Crouch, David Lindquist helps us see the potential in using filmed oral history in our classrooms, while Hana N. Bor and I tease out from three oral



histories the *middot*, ways of acting morally, exhibited by the Jews and Christians who worked tirelessly to rescue and shelter Jewish children.

The dramatist Ros Merkin has graciously allowed us to publish her extraordinary script for a theater performance designed around London's Liverpool Street Station, where so many *Kinder* arrived, along with a contextualized account of its genesis and design. Pnina Rosenberg provides us with research on both the original and the current

*Kindertransport* memorials that grace the very spot on which Merkin's play was first performed.

Shana R. Spiegel, through the art of quilting, and Karen Gershon, Lotte Kramer, and Thilde Fox, through poetry, share their attempts to heal the scars they carry. The poet Davi Walders immortalizes the killing of the Wagner-Rogers Bill in her poem so titled, while McLoughlin's essay begins with a stanza from another poem by Walders, “Born in Safety”: “In the beginning was the end of innocence / When goose steps clicked / And evil licked the world with violence”: an epigraph that serves equally well as an epigraph for the history and testimony examined in this issue.

We welcome our new associate editor, Dr. Moshe Sokolow, professor of Jewish education at the Azrieli Graduate School (AGS). He has served graciously in this capacity for some months without acknowledgement; this is the public recognition he deserves. We also welcome our newest advisory board member, Dr. Marlene W. Yahalom, Director of Education for the American Society for Yad Vashem, and we bid historian Simcha Stein farewell with many thanks as his term on our board expires.

I also must bid farewell to my good friend and esteemed co-editor, Dr. Jeffrey Glanz. He and I worked for our editorial board member Dr. Dennis Klein on ADL's *Dimensions*, and that experience led us to begin *PRISM* as a joint venture. The loss I feel, though, is mitigated by the delight I take in the knowledge that Jeffrey and his wife are making aliyah and will be with their children and grandchildren.

*PRISM* is available online at [yu.edu/azrieli/research/prism-journal/](http://yu.edu/azrieli/research/prism-journal/) as a fully downloadable PDF and, yes, there's an app for that on your iPhone! We thank Dr. Judy Cahn of the AGS for her assistance in setting up and maintaining this site. Dr. David Schnall, our Dean; and our benefactor, Henry Rothman and the Rothman Foundation, continue to make this publication possible by their full and generous educational and financial support and encouragement. As always, we are grateful to them.

—Karen Shawn

Becoming a grandparent has changed my reading of the accounts of children during the Shoah. Though I felt pathos when I studied the topic previously, this issue of *PRISM* stirs my emotions in new and deeper ways. As I look into the eyes of my children's children after reading the narratives and confronting the photos of children just like my own, for one somber moment I have a fresh window into the unbearable experiences of those who parted with children and grandchildren with the knowledge that they would be separated for many months or years, or, even more difficult, with the dreadful premonition that they would never see them again. This issue has also helped me to focus on the critical importance that Judaism attaches to educating children as the means of our continuity. Children occupy center stage in Judaism. We are to teach them our history and answer their questions; we are to instruct them in Torah observance.



• In Shemot (Exodus) 13:8, it says, והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר: בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים. "And you shall explain to your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went out from Egypt.'"

God commands us to tell our children the story of how He took us out of bondage in Egypt. We are exhorted to answer our children's questions and tell them of His miraculous ways.

• In Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:9, we are reminded: רק השמר לך ושמר נפשך מאד פן-תשכח את-הדברים אשר-ראו עיניך ופן-יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חיך והודעתם לבניך ולבני בניך

"But take the utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes and so that they do not fade from your mind as long as you live. And make them known to your children and to your children's children."

Here, we are exhorted to remember *Matan Torah* (The Giving of the Torah), the covenant of Sinai. God redeemed us from Egypt in order for us to receive and keep the Torah and its commandments. It is this experience and purpose that we are to tell and transmit to our children.

• In the Shema prayer in Devarim (Deuteronomy) 6:7, we recite twice daily:

ושננתם לבניך ודברת בם בשבתך בביתך ובלכתך בדרך ובשכבך ובקומך.

"Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up."

Culturally, Jews have valued education above almost anything else. Our passion for education is reflected by our

astounding representation in the fields of law, medicine, the sciences, mathematics, education, and technology; our success is greatly disproportionate to the percentage of Jews in the population as a whole.

One cannot say that the intent of placing children on the *Kindertransport* was to safeguard their education, although the converse was surely true: They could not be educated properly—if at all—under Nazi rule. By making the profoundly difficult and wrenching decision to send their children

away to safety in England, these parents, intentionally or not, followed the mandates of Torah to teach their children to the best of their ability. Attempting to save their children's lives became, as well, an attempt to ensure and safeguard their education and, through them, Jewish continuity.

I realize that many of the parents who sent their children to safety were not religious and had neither the expectation of nor the desire for a religious Jewish education, although the essay by Rochel Licht (pp. 17–23), which discusses Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld and his work with Orthodox children, highlights those who were. Nevertheless, a little-discussed and painful outcome of the *Kindertransport* experience is that many Jewish children, through no fault or choice of their own or their parents, received a distinctly non-Jewish or even an anti-Jewish education, with some forgetting or rejecting their Jewish heritage as they were encouraged to adopt the beliefs and customs of their foster families.

Please allow me to close on a personal note. My wife and I are making aliyah (becoming Israeli citizens) this summer, *iy"h* (God willing). It's been a dream of ours for some time. All of our children and grandchildren now live there, so our decision is relatively easy. Although I could certainly continue my work with *PRISM* from there, I have decided that this will be my last issue as co-editor. The journal remains in the wonderful hands of Dr. Karen Shawn, with whom I've had the honor to work during these past six years. *PRISM* was our mutual brainchild, and I am very proud of the work we have accomplished. With our new associate editor, Dr. Moshe Sokolow, and our stellar editorial and advisory boards, *PRISM* will continue to enrich Holocaust education.

As a child of a Holocaust survivor, I believe the Shoah has defined my life in profound ways. My work in this field has been personally gratifying and, more importantly, a way for me to cherish and honor the memory of my father and all the others whose lives were defined by this cataclysmic event.

—Jeffrey Glanz

"This poem," writes Tom Berman, "is dedicated to Nicky Winton and his courageous colleagues and helpers who organized the Czech *Kindertransport* in 1939 and thereby gave us the gift of life." Of the photograph [Fig. 1], Berman tells us that "it is, indeed, the suitcase with which I came to Scotland as a 5-year-old child in June 1939. The two labels on it cover the departure from Prague and the trip from London to Glasgow, Scotland, where I grew up. It now sits in our bedroom at Kibbutz Amiad" [Israel]. See the essay by Paula Cowan (pp. 24–29) for more about Tom's life.

*Tom Berman*

## *The Leather Suitcase*

They don't  
make suitcases  
like that  
any more.

Time was,  
when this case  
was made  
solid, leather,  
heavy stitching  
with protective edges  
at the corners

Time was,  
when voyage meant  
train, steamship  
distances unbridgeable  
waiting for a thinning mail  
weeks, then months,  
then nothing

Children's train,  
across the Reich  
stops  
and starts again . . .



FIG. 1: Tom Berman's suitcase.

Holland  
a lighted gangplank,  
night ferry to gray-misted  
sea-gulled Harwich  
again the rails  
reaching flat across  
East Anglia,  
to London

in my bedroom  
the suitcase,  
a silent witness  
with two labels

“Masaryk Station, Praha”  
“Royal Scot, London-Glasgow”

Leather suitcase  
from a far-off country,  
Czechoslovakia,  
containing all the love  
parents could pack  
for a five year old  
off on a journey  
for life.



"Early one morning in December 1938," recalls Ralph W. Mollerick, "when my sister, Edith, was 17 and I was 8 years old, my father told us that my sister and I would soon be taking a trip to England alone, and that in a few months we would be reunited with him and my mother and would sail together to the United States. I wondered: Why the sudden change in our life? What was happening, and why this trip to England? Why can't we all go together to America now?" This narrative, which vividly details the experiences of a child of the *Kindertransport*, can be read with the reminiscences of Renata Laxova (pp. 115–118) to illustrate the necessity of enhancing Holocaust history with testimony and memoir.

*Ralph W. Mollerick*

## My *Kindertransport* Experience

We lived in the small town of Wolfhagen near the city of Kassel in central Germany. My parents, Selma and Josef, were of sound financial means and had an established family business, The Wolf Möllerich Firm, founded in the 19th century. Named after my paternal grandfather, the firm carried the most complete assortment of hardware in the area and stocked the best appliances of the times [Fig. 1].

In 1933, Hitler came to power, and Germany became a Fascist society that fashioned its political party to rules of strict obedience to its leader and practiced strong and categorical antisemitism. I was three years old. The next five years became difficult times for Jews, leading to our complete economic and social upheaval.

In 1935, the infamous Nuremberg Laws stripped Jews of their citizenship. In the years that followed, Jews were ousted, by force, if necessary, from high-level positions in government and courts, forced to give up ownership of businesses and land, and urged to leave the country. My father, though, had earned the Iron Cross for his services during WWI and felt that he was safe. "After all," he would say, "we are good Germans and are of prominent standing in society!"

My mother, not as confident, asked, "Have you not overworked that statement long enough? Do you not notice what is happening all around us?" I found out later, from neighbors and from records that I located when I searched the files in the Hamburg archives two years ago, that my father was very philanthropic, giving and lending money to those in need. However, that would not ultimately make a difference in our fate.

In first grade, I was humiliated by my hunch-backed teacher who, on a regular basis, made me stand in the classroom corner as he made fun of "the Jew" in a sneering



**FIG. 1.** The Möllerichs's home and business. The white façade building is the business; the half-timber building on the left is the family home; the half-timber building on the right is my Uncle Moritz's home and hardware business. Wolfhagen 2011.

voice. It was more than I could bear and frequently I had to face the class crying. Being the only Jewish student in the school, I felt traumatized and was harassed by the others. From time to time, a confrontation led to a chase; I could run faster than the other children and that provoked them

even more. Conditions became so bad that my parents had to take me out of school and I was given a private tutor, a cousin who was a Hebrew teacher.

By 1937, Jewish families were readily identified by neighbors who reported them to the Gestapo (the secret state police); these innocent families became the target of systematic arrests. I can recall looking out of the upstairs family room window as Hitler's Brown-Shirt Youth, wearing swastika arm bands, came marching past our house at *Schützebergerstrasse 37* on their way to the town square [Fig. 2]. The square, a short distance from our house, was frequently filled with kids waiting for soldiers who, mounted on horseback, carried bags of pennies that they threw to the children, who raced to pick up the coins. Jewish kids were not allowed to participate.

Fearing imminent arrest, my parents planned on leaving the town. During the night—and I remember this episode well, exciting as it was to me at the time—we snuck out of town by car without goodbyes to anyone. We moved from our small town to a large city, Hamburg, where it would be harder, we thought, for people to identify us as Jews. Life, however, became fraught with danger and anxiety as members of our family were arrested for no reason except

that they were Jews. The concern for the safety of children grew to be of monumental importance to the Jewish community.

In 1938, Josef Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister, organized a nationwide pogrom against the Jews in response to the fatal shooting of Ernst vom Rath, a diplomat, by a 17-year-old Jew named Herschel Grynszpan, whose parents had been deported. On November 9th, 1938, SS men intensified their persecution throughout Germany by setting fire to synagogues, smashing windows of Jewish businesses, breaking into and ransacking homes where Jews resided, and taking Jewish men by trucks to concentration camps. This torturous and violent night, "*Kristallnacht*," was an event of epic proportions for us.

Immediately, laws were passed that eliminated all Jewish economic activity. We were taxed on our capital and our savings, and we students were banned from public schools. Conditions for Jewish life became totally unsustainable. Small Jewish businesses were boycotted, food became difficult to obtain, and we were not allowed in parks, theaters, cafés, libraries, and swimming pools. I was told that my dog had been taken and slaughtered for meat. These were the conditions that lead my parents to make the heartbreaking decision to send us on the newly created "*Kindertransport des Hilfsvereins der Juden in Deutschland*," known simply as the Jewish *Kindertransport*.

**FIG. 2.** Hitler's Brown Shirts marching in front of our house. My father and I are in the left window and my mother, the right. Wolfhagen, 1935.



### NO TIME FOR QUESTIONS

There was no time for questions and no answers were offered. Two days later, with little notification, our parents hurriedly took us to the main train station, the largest of three in Hamburg. We were restricted to one small suitcase each, which could contain only basic needs. My mother did not give me much of a choice about what to take with me; she packed what was intended to last for up to two weeks, including underwear, socks, shirts, pants, an extra hat, a pair of shoes, toiletry items, and, at my insistence, one book and one toy. We were not permitted to take more than one Reich mark out of the country.

It was December 14th, 1938. Strange and unsettling new feelings churned my stomach. I was scared of not knowing more about where we were going and, at the same time, I was excited by my expectations of a journey to another country. The station was large and crowded with many people waiting with their children, who ranged in ages from 5 to 17. The *Kindertransport* had been in operation for two weeks and my parents had not heard a word from any of the parents who sent their children on the earlier transports. Parents huddled in clusters, embracing the young travelers. I recall a cacophony of wailing, of parents sobbing, chanting prayers, and crying uncontrollably, giving last instructions and goodbyes to their children as we walked to a clear space to stand together. It was a moment for last bits of advice, wishes for good health, and last farewells. My mother, with tears in her eyes, spoke to my sister, urging her to take good care of me. We were not a religious family, although we did observe the laws of *kashrut* and Shabbat, and yet the memento my mother chose to give Edith was a prayer book. She handed it to her and asked her to remember her parents and grandparents in her prayers. (I have retained this prayer book with heart-wrenching memories, recalling that Edith kept this treasure until she passed away from multiple sclerosis in 1987.)

My father pulled me to his side and said that I should get an education because that is one thing no one can take away from me. The thought of being with my sister and not my parents, even for three months, did not strike me immediately, and the promise that we would meet again soon and sail to America did not enter my thoughts. I was more concerned with the many fights my sister and I had at home and worried about how things would be with her in charge. In her charming way, though, Edith assured me that nothing would come between us and that she would take care of me. She gave me a photo of us taken only three weeks earlier [Fig. 3].

I was to learn only later that Jewish families all over Germany were losing their right to live in freedom, to own businesses, to be public school teachers, and to work for the government. Many would lose their homes and possessions as well. Jews were frantic to find a country that would

allow them entry, but the war started on September 1st, 1939, effectively sealing all borders and preventing Jews from leaving Germany, even if there had been countries willing to take them in.

At the shrill of a whistle, an announcement was made instructing all children to leave the station and go to the tracks immediately. Our parents were not allowed to take us to the side tracks where transport trains No. 14a and 14b were standing. These were special trains dedicated to predominantly Jewish children's transports. I have no recollection of the train numbers, although I believe that these numbers may have been associated with the gate numbers from where we passed to the trains; nor did I find any further identification in the archives describing the trains and how these trains received special consideration. As we turned to leave, I could see our parents, with outstretched arms, crying; no doubt they were wondering if they would ever see us again. My thoughts, though, were on my collection of building-block toys and colorful books that I had left behind, and I asked my sister if there might be time for our parents to bring them to the train. My sister, a stern expression on her face, ignored my question and instead held my hand with a firm grip, pulling me along to get seated on the train.



**FIG. 3.** Edith and Ralph under stark conditions—no smiles. Hamburg, 1938.

As we passed through the gate, a uniformed, armed officer gave each of us an identification tag with a three-digit number identifying the seat we are to occupy in the coaches; I have long forgotten my number, but I remember that the next officer recorded it on a list next to our name. The tag was attached to a string that we hung around our

neck. My sister and I were two of a group of several hundred children; we were told to walk in a line of twos to the next officer, who checked each name and directed us to the train. I felt as if I were on an assembly line, being processed by strangers without any kind, comforting words for the journey.

We seemed to enter the train in numerical order by the seat number listed on our tag. I had a seat next to a window and my sister was next to me. As soon as we were all settled, a guard on the train shouted, in a bellicose voice, that all window shades must be pulled down. We soon learned from the older kids that we had to travel on this special train without being noticed from the outside, that it was a train with only children, and that no one's parents were on board. I peeked under the shade to see if I could spot our parents, but, unfortunately, no such luck.

A guard came toward me with a thick picture book in his hand, and I jumped up with joy, thinking that my parents had delivered the book I had wanted. When the guard passed by me and delivered the book to another child, I was sorely disappointed, and the first tears of sadness rolled down my cheeks.

### THE JOURNEY BEGINS

When the train finally departed, we did not know where we were going. Asking a question of the guards only annoyed them; they told us, angrily, to remain quiet. I was scared and found breathing hard. As the train picked up speed, the rhythm of the wheels on the tracks, sounded in ever-rapid clickety-clicks, matched that of my heart. There was no food on the train, sleep didn't seem appropriate, and the seats were hard and uncomfortable; but the trip went on for several hours and, in spite of the unfamiliar terrain and our worries, we nevertheless managed to doze. We were all sad and worried, and gloom settled heavily upon us as we journeyed without our parents. I was fortunate to have my sister, who comforted me by saying that all that was happening would pass and that things would turn out all right. With sudden brightness, I felt excited to be with her, and I began to look at this trip as an adventure.

Someone informed us that we were approaching Holland and that we could open the shades. I could see meadows with grazing cows and fields with yellow flowers and windmills in the distance, a welcome change of scenery. The train slowed and eventually came to a brief stop. Outside, tables had been set up along the track, and Dutch women reached up to hand us paper cups filled with juice, orange and delicious, a treat I had never had. I reached out to get a second cup, but the train started to move again and my sister pulled me back in and closed the window.

The train took us to a ferryboat in Holland and, once again, the train guards issued orders. We were to take our suitcases and continue walking in twos to the waiting boat.

The line was long; perhaps 200 or 300 children walked, unescorted, toward the ferry. I recall two little girls, perhaps sisters, in front of us on the gangway. The older sister was carrying a doll, and the younger one had a night potty hanging over her shoulder. As we boarded, we each received a box lunch containing a sandwich, some raw vegetables, and an apple, along with a small drink. We found a wooden seat inside the ferry and satisfied our hunger. I don't remember anything else about the boat ride to England, but I do recall feeling thankful and relieved that we were out of the clutches of Nazi Germany.

### ARRIVAL IN HARWICH

It was a very cold day in mid-December of 1938 when we arrived in Harwich, London. We were taken by bus to a complex of buildings in Dovercourt, a small seaside town, where English children went to summer camp. The grounds were well maintained but the bunk houses were stark and uninviting. Some six buses arrived and unloaded *Kinder* at each run-down building. Inside were single and bunk beds for about 20 of us. It was the middle of winter, and the bunks had no heat. We had to huddle together to keep warm. By early nighttime, the temperature had fallen to -12 degrees C (10 degrees F), the coldest night of the year. I recall cuddling up to my sister and falling asleep. She woke me as trays of food were delivered. Starving, we rushed to the trays, not very concerned what was on them, and in a short time we had depleted the assortment of sandwiches on white bread and small containers of fruit. I was thirsty and took two half-pints of milk. Edith insisted that I try something more substantial and pointed to the thin slices of bread with peanut butter and jam. While it looked unappealing to me, I nibbled on the bread until it was gone. I returned to my position next to Edith and fell asleep.

In the morning, we were awakened by the bunk leader, a heavy-set woman wearing what looked like a Girl Scout uniform; she was blowing a whistle. "Rise and shine," she shouted and continued giving instructions as we began the day. In the dining area, the administrator explained how the camp operated, but the language was strange to my ears and I looked to Edith for help. The administrators were from the heart of London and were observing that some of us were struggling with their rapid flurry of Cockney (a dialect used in the East End of London) words. Time was not an issue here, and the staff repeated procedures until they were assured, by a nod of the head, that we had understood their information. The scary part came when we were told in an uncaring, stern tone of voice that the only way out of this camp was to learn the customs and language of England. My sister, fortunately, knew some English and drilled me all day until I could speak English in three weeks. Even though there were teachers to help with the language, I preferred to adopt Edith's way of spoken English.

My sister and I were eager to get out of the camp; having gotten what we could from being there, Edith looked at me with a sigh of relief and said, "Life will go forward for us." She called her friend, Lotte, in London and went to live with her. Lotte had been sent on an earlier *Kindertransport*, and she had stayed in contact with my sister with the intention of renting a place with her. Lotte had found a flat with two other women; that precluded my living there.

Communication between us soon became a challenge when I was placed in an Orthodox Jewish boys' hostel in Clapton, on the other side of London, too far to see Edith on a regular basis. I was not fond of my accommodations because we held prayer services several times during the day and Hebrew classes were mandatory. The staff, including the rabbi in the hostel, treated us with firmness, leaving little flexibility for our own desires. However, we did have better and warmer accommodations there than in the camp, and life eventually became livable.

I was only eight years old and, at the time, my focus of longing centered on my parents. I missed them terribly and cried nightly. Staff members comforted me and tried to meet my needs, but I wanted my sister. I was not always able to contact her and thought of my parents and her all the time. Edith seemed to be the only one showing true interest in my comfort and welfare, and she kept in as constant contact as possible. She even arranged for a social worker to see me periodically, and according to the archive records, she was apprised of my behavioral progress. Many years later, I located files held by custodians<sup>1</sup> in England who had kept, in locked storage files, the social service records of refugee children during WWII [See Craig-Norton, pp. 40–51—Eds.]. For a fee, they reproduced Edith's and my files and mailed both to me. The records showed that my sister maintained oversight over my health throughout the war years. I gleaned from the reports that I was a troubled and difficult child.

During those years, I was relocated from hostel to hostel, each time further north, where the bombings were less severe. The hostels were "home" for me until relocation became necessary. With each move, my education was disrupted and learning became a challenge. My sister became concerned and felt that I may require professional help. Help never came and I depended on older hostel kids to offer help with schoolwork. While the help was not professional, it must have made a difference, because my learning skills improved.

### THE END OF MY CHILDHOOD

I often thought of my parents, who had promised to join us, but they never did. I felt abandoned. In 1942, my sister and I each received a postcard from the International Red Cross notifying us that our parents had been taken to Lodz, Poland, a holding ghetto for Jews prior to their deportation

to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where they were subsequently murdered. We were told that we would never see our parents again. I frequently had flashbacks of my father's promise for all of us to sail to America, but that was not to be. My feeling of being abandoned ended as I realized that our parents could not have overcome the Nazi regime that was in control. I was not a letter writer and telephone privileges were not at my disposal. Edith came to visit on regular designated times and I looked forward to her visits. She was attractive and I discovered that some of the older boys admired her, too. On many of her visits, she argued with the rabbi over the need for family-structured life for me and urged that I be placed into a family setting to at least reconnect with family-like experiences. Each time the social worker came to see me, I complained that I wanted to leave. My complaints were met with, "You must accept the circumstances, have patience, keep a stiff upper lip, and act like an adult." These typically British phrases troubled me; I believe that they took their toll, stealing from me the little childhood I had left.

Edith's pleadings yielded results. The next move was to a Christian home—the Jenkinsons in Peterborough, England—where two other young boys lived as well. The younger was Ronald, age 10; Harold was 11, and I was 12. I learned that Harold was from a Jewish family living in London, where the daily bombings were most severe. People of all religions and socio-economic backgrounds stepped forward to help during the war, as did the Jenkinson family, by taking in refugee children in need of home life. The government provided a monthly stipend for each such child and a ration book of stamps to buy limited groceries. This became a help and incentive for many families who needed the money and eagerly wanted the extra rationed food items.

The Jenkinsons were a church-going family. On Saturdays, I voluntarily attended services at a local synagogue and, on Sundays, we all went to church. I learned that Mrs. Jenkinson had contacted Rabbi Greenberg to make arrangements for my confirmation. The following year, my bar mitzvah took place; my sister was my only relative in attendance.

The Sunday dinners following church services remain quite vivid in my mind. Each of the boys had to prepare some part of the meal. I became a specialist in making Yorkshire pudding, a baked batter pudding typically served with roast meat. The secret, I learned, is to add to the prepared batter the very hot juices from the roast until it rises and becomes slightly brown. It came out perfectly each time and tasted wonderful. This experience became the start of several exotic culinary endeavors.

Edith and I lived in England during the entire time of the war years. She lived in London throughout the war; I moved to various cities where air raids were less severe. In

May 1946, our cousins in New York sent us the required visas to emigrate to the United States. The timing was good; I had finished high school in Birmingham, England, the year before, at age 15, and started college at the Polytechnic Institute of London, where I studied engineering. In England, every student is required to have a free high school education. My college, albeit only for one year, was paid for by the firm where I took my tool and die apprenticeship training. Unfortunately, there was no time for further Hebrew education at the hostel.

### **VISAS FOR AMERICA**

I did not want to leave the work and my college, but I had no choice. Edith had completed her nurse's training at the St. James Hospital in London and we left for New York. When we arrived on May 27, 1946, I discovered that I had to start high school all over again, as my school records from England could not be transferred because they had been destroyed during the bombings. Edith, ever caring, enrolled me at the Straubenmüller Textile High School in lower Manhattan. I excelled in an engineering curriculum and graduated with academic and engineering diplomas.

Life for both of us worked out. Edith married a doctor she had met in a London hospital; together they settled in New York. I graduated high school a second time and went on to the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, New York, earning my BME. I became a mechanical engineer and had a fabulous career working for NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, in Greenbelt, Maryland. I retired from the space program in 2001.

A transformation of my mother tongue has run its course: I find myself at a loss in German and speak only English. Edith, though, continued to speak fluent German. Coming out of Germany, pain and the fear that I would experience persecution again in a new country blocked my German speech; further, it was demanded of me to speak English. I believe that having been the target of persecution during those impressionable pre-teen years became the focus of anti-German sentiment for me, including the loss of my mother tongue.

A thought that often streams through my mind and haunts me still today is knowing that my parents sent us away on a journey of life. I ask myself what I would have done as a parent if confronted with the frightening truth that my children's lives were in danger. Could I find the strength and courage to send my children out of harm's way to another part of the world? I find myself hard-pressed to answer. My parents' sacrifice reflected the ultimate gift of love; they unselfishly gave up their children to save our lives. For this, I have ever been grateful to them, for the *Kindertransport* journey, and to the British government that made it possible.

### **MIXED EMOTIONS**

It often takes considerable concentration to overcome the mixed emotions I feel when I am faced with telling my story of a one-way journey on the *Kindertransport*. The *Kindertransport* can be viewed as a mission of humanitarian kindness by the British government in saving some 10,000 Jewish children during the nine months before WWII broke out, at which point the mission was abruptly stopped by the Nazis; or, it can be viewed as yet another cruel and inhumane act committed by the Nazis against Jewish parents who were forced to make an impossible decision: to keep their children with them and risk their safety, or to send them away, unescorted, to a strange land, and *there* risk their safety. Both situations are true; both result in debates that have no reasonable and defensible resolution for any parent who confronted the circumstances surrounding and leading to the *Kindertransport* experiences.

### **EPILOGUE:**

In the aftermath of what was to be Hitler's "Final Solution," one may ponder Elie Wiesel's (1990) essay "Pilgrimage to the Kingdom of Night": "The beginning, the end: all the world's roads, all the outcries of mankind, lead to this accursed place. Here is the kingdom of night, where God's face is hidden and a flaming sky becomes a graveyard for a vanished people" (p. 105). There, in Auschwitz, my parents, along with so many others, were brutally murdered.

### **NOTE**

The custody agency for these files is World Jewish Relief, The Forum, 74/80 Camden Street, London NW1 OEG, England. The letter from the Jewish Refugee Committee is dated June 19, 2001, and noted that, owing to the age of the documents, they were hard to read. The fee for the documents was £30 in Sterling currency.

### **REFERENCE**

Wiesel, E. (1990). *From the kingdom of memories—Reminiscences*. New York: Summit Books.

Along with a historical overview of the formation of the *Kindertransport* and vivid testimony from a number of *Kinder*, Brana Gurewitsch introduces us to Norbert Wollheim, a member of the German-Jewish Youth Movement who became a leader in the effort to organize the transports in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*. In addition to mastering the technical aspects of the undertaking, Gurewitsch explains, he coordinated “all the documentation and arrangements at the German-Dutch border, the ferry ride across the Channel to England, customs and immigration checks in England, train travel, and the reception of each transport at Liverpool Station in London.”

Brana Gurewitsch

## The Chance to Live: The *Kinder* and the Rescuers

In spite of an undercurrent of antisemitic attitudes in England, there was sympathy and support for refugees from Nazism. After the *Anschluss* [annexation of Austria by Germany, March 1938], England liberalized its immigration policies somewhat and allowed refugees in transit and children under the age of 17, whose care and maintenance could be guaranteed by private sources, to enter the country, albeit temporarily. This was both a humanitarian gesture and a political move designed to lessen the pressure being exerted by the Yishuv and the Zionist movement to allow the immigration of large numbers of children to Palestine (Shepherd, 1984, p. 149). Jewish leaders in Britain had already created organizations and mechanisms to facilitate the immigration and absorption of refugees and had raised funds for their maintenance. However, the large numbers of refugees seeking entry after *Kristallnacht* severely strained the capacity of these organizations, who then implemented very strict criteria for the selection of those who would be allowed to enter.

British organizations worked closely with Jewish organizations in Germany and Austria to ensure that Jewish children, who were most at risk, would be given priority. Among the German Jews who worked in leadership capacities was young Norbert Wollheim, who grew up in a secular German-Jewish youth movement, *Deutsch-Jüdische Jugendgemeinschaft* [German-Jewish Youth Association] and had been involved with organizing transports of Jewish children out of the country [Fig. 1]. Wollheim (1991) says,

In the youth movement, we were educated in the belief that you have to try to do something for people who are less lucky than you are or need your help and support. In 1935 and 1936 we slowly but surely came to under-

stand that the Nazi regime was there to stay, that it was not a transitory thing, and that there was no future, especially for young people. (Oral history, p. 4)

Jewish camps were no longer an option in Germany, Wollheim explains, so the Jewish communities in Sweden and Denmark set up “special summer camps for hundreds of Jewish children from Germany . . . and I was able to accompany [them]. That was my first experience in handling these kinds of transports” (p. 8) [see Rünitz, pp. 30–35—Eds.].

After the deportation of thousands of Jews into Zbaszyń, an area of no-man’s land on the Polish-German border, in late October 1938, Wollheim was sent by his youth



**FIG. 1:** Norbert Wollheim sits on deck of a ship while accompanying German-Jewish children to a summer camp (*Kinderlager*) in Horserod, Denmark, c. 1935–1937. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Courtesy of Norbert Wollheim.

organization to do relief work among the deportees and to help some return to Germany or Austria. He returned to Berlin a week later, in time for *Kristallnacht*. Warned by his wife not to come home, he avoided arrest, but his paid employment ended, and he could no longer attend university.

The mechanism for sending German-Jewish children to England was set into motion by Wilfrid Israel, head of the N. Israel department store, the largest in Berlin, who held both German and British passports. Israel had an extensive network of personal contacts in England, with the Council for German Jewry and with government officials both in England and in Germany. On November 15, 1938, a few days after *Kristallnacht*, Israel cabled the Council the details of the newest problems facing German Jewry and proposed the immediate rescue of children and young people (Shepherd, 1984, p. 149). Prominent British Jewish leaders, including Chaim Weizmann and Chief Rabbi Joseph Herz, quickly drafted a petition and met with Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, who brought the proposals in the petition to a cabinet meeting the next day. Meanwhile, Weizmann and Herz appealed to the Quakers for help, because it was too dangerous for British Jews to go to Germany. A delegation of British Quakers met with Israel in Berlin, and, following his instructions, they traveled to Jewish communities throughout Germany, making contact with Jewish women leaders of the *Frauenbund* (the male leadership was imprisoned) and explaining the proposed plan to rescue Jewish children. By the time they returned to England on November 21, they were able to report to the British Home Secretary that German Jewish parents were ready to send their children to England.

That evening, the Home Secretary reported to the House of Commons that the British government would facilitate expedited immigration procedures for the children, waiving passport and visa requirements. By then, 1,000 applications a day for the *Kindertransports* were already reaching the home office. The first transport of 200 children, organized by Israel and a representative of the Council for German Jewry, arrived in England on December 2, 1938.

The deluge of applications overwhelmed the small staff of the emigration department of the *Reichsvertretung*, the officially constituted representative organization of the Jews in Germany. Otto Hirsch, the head of the *Reichsvertretung*, called on Wollheim to help. "We have terrific social workers," Hirsch said, "but . . . they have no experience in technical matters." When Wollheim protested, saying that he was preparing to emigrate, Hirsch assured him "that when this will be done successfully, it will be our commitment and our obligation to help you and your family to get out of Germany" (Wollheim, 1991, pp. 15–16).<sup>1</sup>

Wollheim went to the department for children's immigration, "and when I saw what was going on," he says, "I

almost died. There was . . . a table covered with heaps of cards and a desk covered with papers and the telephone was constantly ringing." Wollheim enlisted his friends from the youth movement, all currently unemployed, and they organized the office and alphabetized "the permits, which had come in already from England to give children permission to [go without] . . . passports" (p. 16). Parents applied to the local Jewish communities; each community and its welfare agencies selected the children; and local social workers ensured that the conditions were met and forwarded the applications to Berlin. Wollheim mastered the technicalities of the transports. He explains:

To prepare a transport, you had to prepare the proper lists. One copy had to go to the Gestapo. One . . . had to advise the people in London that the children were coming and the prospective foster parents or the hostels . . . had to be made ready. . . The parents had to be advised when to bring their children to Berlin, the departure point. (p. 17)

Wollheim had to request from the railway authorities reserved coach cars, because the children had to be separated on the journey from the general public. "A special room had to be made available as an assembly point in a railway station. The local police had to be advised, because all this was done under the supervision of the police authorities" (p. 17). Because children were traveling without their parents, "we had to find escorts to take these children. We used the young people of the various youth movements. . . . We found wonderful people, teachers and youth leaders who volunteered for that service" (p. 17).

At first, though, even the escorts were not allowed to accompany the children to England. After some time, however, the German authorities realized that the presence of Jewish escorts would minimize the children's trauma. They issued special letters of protection to the Jewish escorts so they would not be arrested when they returned to Germany, which was the condition of the arrangement.

Wollheim was also responsible for coordinating all the documentation and arrangements at the German-Dutch border, the ferry ride across the Channel to England, customs and immigration checks in England, train travel, and the reception of each transport at Liverpool Station in London, where the Jewish Committee of London assumed responsibility for the children. He recalls:

The first transport is still very vivid in my memory, because when we came to the border [in Holland], the SS guards . . . behaved like vandals. They did not attack the children but . . . completely vandalized luggage. . . . tearing it apart looking for jewels and for foreign currency. (p. 18)



## SENDING THE KINDERTRANSPORTS

Efforts to rescue the children could not be advertised widely because only a limited number would be permitted to go to England. Orphans, children who had been deported to Zbaszyna, and others who were particularly threatened by the Nazi regime were given priority. Because she had no parents, Margot Czarlinski, for example, was chosen. A Jewish orphan who had been living with various foster families in Danzig, Margot [Fig. 2] describes a childhood of abandonment and neglect, remembering “bad things about my childhood. I went to school and I was running around in the street” (Oral history of Margot Czarlinski Labret, 1983, pp. 5–6).



**FIG. 2:** Margot Czarlinski (Labret) in Bournemouth, England, 1939. Yaffa Eliach Collection, donated by the Center for Holocaust Studies, Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York.

I remember all the excitement about the *Kindertransport* at school. There were huddles in the classroom, and it was done in secret. People from the Jewish *Gemeinde* [*kehillah*, Jewish community organization] made arrangements for the *Kindertransport*. They made the arrangements all hush-hush, maybe two or three days before the actual departure. I was never asked if I wanted to go.

The secrecy of the planning reflected the need for discretion about sending Jewish children out of Germany, and the lack of communication with the children was typical of attitudes of the time. Labret’s feelings, that the *Kindertrans-*

*port* was a convenient way for the Jewish community to get rid of a problem child, were not unique. Even children from stable, loving homes sometimes thought they were being punished for some misdeed and expressed their distress in anger at their parents. Hedy Epstein for instance, didn’t know how she was selected for the *Kindertransport*. Her parents

tried to make it exciting for me. . . . They painted a wonderful, beautiful picture, and added, again and again, “And we’ll follow soon.” However, a few days or so before I was to leave, I accused my parents of trying to get rid of me. . . . Though I was glad to get out of Germany, at the same time I also felt a great deal of fear that I wasn’t totally capable of talking about or dealing with, so I lashed out at them. I must have really, deeply, deeply hurt my parents. (Harris & Oppenheim, 2000, p. 91)

Like Hedy, Margot Labret was told that the transport was like a vacation, although she wonders

how children could think it’s a vacation if they’re being taken away from their life in their school, and hearing a strange language. . . . I didn’t know where I was going. I had nothing with me; I couldn’t have taken anything because I had nothing. It was dark and we went by train to Berlin. I remember the crying when the children went down to the *Banhof* [train station]. I was only ten. (Labret, 1983, p. 8)

She remembers the kindness of the reception in Holland and her reaction to it.

They gave us a dinner that was laid out on the shore, and they gave the boys toys and the girls dolls. That was the first doll I ever had. . . . I remember I came back on the ship and I threw the doll overboard, I and many other children. I said, “I don’t want the doll.” . . . I was one of the first children who said that, and then other children followed me and threw all the dolls in the ocean. I wish I had that doll today. I wish I had it. (p. 9)

Throwing away the doll was Margot’s first act of defiance. Although her past was unhappy, she resented being sent away. Her pleasure in owning a doll could not compensate for what seemed to her to be the injustice of tearing children away from all that was familiar. Despite her wild childhood, she had developed a moral sense that was deeply offended by the gift of the doll.

## ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND

Some children were met at the train station by the relatives

or foster families who had agreed to take them. Children who were not met were taken to improvised, unheated summer camps, opened to accommodate them until foster families were found. Those who were there all describe the bone-chilling cold, water freezing in the sinks, and a feeling of being in limbo, waiting for an unknown fate. Meanwhile, they were served strange, English food, like kippers, or what Americans call “Jell-O” and the British, “Jelly” [Fig. 3].



**FIG. 3:** Refugee children eat a meal at a camp in Suffolk, England, Dec. 1938. *Instytut Pamięci Narodowe*, courtesy of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum..

Lore Segal writes that while she and the others would sit close to the stoves, bundled in their coats and gloves against the cold, people would come, look at the children, and choose some to go home with them.

I remember sitting there, writing a letter to my parents, and one of these ladies in a fur coat bent down to me and asked me if I would like to come to Liverpool. I said, “Yes, I would like to come to Liverpool.” She said to the other woman with her, “Oh, she speaks English.” Then they said to me, “Are you Orthodox?” and I said “Yes.” They wrote that down. It was understood that I was going to go to Liverpool the next day. When the ladies had gone, I wrote in my letter to my parents, “By the way, what is ‘Orthodox?’” (Harris & Oppenheim, 2000, p. 143)

Lore’s mother was grateful that a family had agreed to take her daughter, but the language barrier caused problems. The foster mother wrote that Lore was “miserable.” The dictionary her mother consulted defined it as “terrible,” an indictment of her child’s character; she didn’t know that “miserable” also meant “unhappy.”

Older children, like Bertha Leverton, found it more difficult to find foster parents.

There weren’t enough Jewish people coming forward to take us in. A lot of us had to go to non-Jewish homes. It was very, very difficult. On the one hand, you couldn’t speak a word, you couldn’t express yourself. On the other hand, you also realized that those people took you in out of the kindness of their heart, and how dare you say you would rather be in a Jewish home when there wasn’t a Jewish home for you to go to? (p. 145)

Bertha, who turned 16 in the Dovercourt camp, was eventually chosen by a family who needed a maid. “Only I didn’t know I was supposed to be a maid. That was a shock. . . . I think they took me to show off in front of the neighbors because they were only working class people” (p. 145).

### THE KINDER AND THEIR FOSTER FAMILIES

Sometimes the cultural disparities were so great that there was total incompatibility. Even Margot Labret (1983), who had lived in foster homes in Germany, had adjustment problems in England.

The Marriotts were not Jewish. I had a very big reaction to that. In Danzig, when I lived with Rabbi Spector, we turned the lights off for Shabbat. There was no cooking on Shabbat. The rabbi taught me never to carry money on Shabbat. In England I went to the public school. . . . I went to Sunday School, to church. (Oral history, p. 15)

Labret was placed with different families for between six months and two years. “Either the family moved,” she explains, “or the woman gave birth to her own child. There was always some reason.” Labret had a difficult time with them all, becoming “more violent with each change. I was . . . naughty; I was very unreasonable. I was rebellious, a misfit . . . in the family, with the people, with accepting new ideas, with adjusting and settling down, uncooperative” (pp. 15–16).

The arrangement for all of the children was thought to be temporary, which tested the relationships and emotions of all involved. Many Jewish parents told their children either that the parents would soon follow them to England or that they would be reunited after the war. Some parents even instructed the children to make every effort to help them get to England, a task that was certainly beyond the capabilities of children. When siblings were sent together, the older sibling was charged with taking care of the younger child, another new, grave responsibility. However, siblings were usually separated, an added emotional burden for both children, because it was very difficult to place them together. If the foster parents were sympathetic, and cir-

cumstances allowed, they arranged occasional visits for the siblings. Eva and Vera Gissing, sisters placed separately, were reunited briefly when Vera visited her older sister for the winter holidays. In her diary, Vera describes Eva's new maturity as "a little mother."

Eva is always staring into the fire. When I asked her why, she said, "Just look at the fire: One moment the flame is shooting up high, the next it dies down, but a spark always remains. Hope is like that flame—one moment it is strong, the next it nearly dies. But there is always a spark left. One must never give up hope. Freedom will come in the end." (Emanuel & Gissing, 2002, p. 66)

Foster parents were faced with the challenge of caring for a stranger, a child whose background was different, who had experienced the terror of *Kristallnacht* and then suffered the shock of separation from family and all that was familiar and safe. They confronted dilemmas: What were the boundaries of their relationship with the children? To be called "mother and father" would suggest that they were replacing the child's parents. Yet some insisted on this, thinking that it would define their relationship more normally. Some childless couples wanted to adopt *Kinder*, which was also problematic. Children objected, knowing that they already had parents, with whom they hoped to be reunited. Other foster parents settled for "aunt and uncle," first names, or some other title, not wanting to suggest that they were replacing parents. Foster parents had to find a comfortable mean between the emotional closeness of

parents and the distance of professional caretakers. If the foster parents were kind, fair, and demonstrated affection in some way, children adapted better, but some children never lost the feeling of being outsiders [Fig. 4]

When English children were evacuated to rural areas to shield them from the bombings in London and other areas, the *Kinder*, many of whom were classified as "enemy aliens" [see McLoughlin, pp. 61–66—Eds.], were also evacuated and experienced yet another dislocation. Just two months after her arrival in England, Vera Gissing "was evacuated to a little town outside Southport. I was placed with. . . another strange family with a very different lifestyle" (Harris & Oppenheim, 2000, p. 202). The family was very kind but took pleasure in telling "the ladies of the church" what they had done. The foster mother would say, "This little Czech refugee, if it wasn't for me, she'd stand here naked. If it wasn't for me, she'd go hungry" (p. 202). Vera, though, had her revenge.

One day, Aunty Margery said, "Vera, why don't you say a prayer in Czech?" Without a moment's hesitation, I said in Czech, "Dear God, please, can't you stop this woman from being so bossy and such a show-off? Amen." I said this prayer day in and day out for the rest of the year that I was there, and it made me feel much better. (p. 202)

Being on their own, without the support of their families or familiar cultural context, forced the children to rely on their inner resources for comfort and support. Some found it in asserting their Jewish identity. Labret, who had never fit in anywhere, was sent to live with Tessa Hornik, a doctor



FIG. 4: British Quaker women with their Jewish foster children, c. 1939–1940, Bristol, England. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Peter Kollisch.

who had converted from Judaism, who treated her kindly and with understanding, but who sent Margaret

to religious instruction with the priest, and I had an argument with him. I said, "You know, I'm a Jewish child." . . . So the priest sent a note home with me. . . . He said, "Do not send her to instruction any more. Try to recognize that she wants to go back to the Jewish people." . . . Tessa . . . said . . . "Margot, if your heart tells you what you are, go back to the Jewish people and always be Jewish." (Labret, 1983, p. 21)

As soon as she was of age to leave her foster home, after the war, Labret went to London and trained first as a nanny and then as a dental assistant. She sought out Jewish social outlets. After she came to the United States, she married a Jewish man and gave their son a Jewish education.

Some *Kinder* were fortunate to have foster families or schools that recognized and encouraged their special talents. Lisa Jura, a 14-year-old from Vienna, was a child prodigy pianist (Golabek & Cohen, 2002). In London, at the Willesden Lane hostel for refugee children, her talent was recognized and nurtured, and she became a renowned concert pianist. Most children, though, were encouraged to learn a trade and become self-supporting as quickly as possible after leaving school. Many regretted not having the opportunity for higher education, but most wanted to be independent. Some joined the British armed forces.

Most *Kinder* never saw their parents again. For the few whose parents survived, reunions and life with survivor parents were often difficult. Parents were changed by their experiences; children had matured and become English, often forgetting how to speak German, growing far from their cultural roots. Children and parents protected each other from the pain of their respective experiences, not sharing their emotional burdens.

### COMING TO TERMS WITH THE EXPERIENCE

In their memoirs and oral histories, the children describe their experiences from the perspectives of maturity and life experiences as adults. Most are realistic, balancing the fact of their survival against what their fate would have been had their parents not sent them to England. They have more insight into what their foster parents experienced. Inge Sadan writes,

The families who took me were not particularly warm. They did not love me. I did not love them. Nevertheless, they did what most of us don't do, which is to burden the household . . . with this little foreigner. (Harris & Oppenheim, 2000, p. 212)

Like other Holocaust survivors, the *Kinder* had much to

overcome when they were able to start normal lives. Thea Feliks Eden describes how each had internalized the experiences in his or her own way.

We detached our heads from our hearts. There was this outer persona, who functioned well and efficiently. But there was also this hurt child who[m] you never talked about, kept hidden. I don't think these things ever heal. How could they heal, if they're never dealt with? It's a buried thing. It's just like an ache, or a pain, or a sore that doesn't go away, but that you accept. (Reti & Chase, 1995, p. 59)

### NOTES

1. Otto Hirsch was deported to his death in Mauthausen in 1941. Norbert Wollheim's work with *Kindertransport* stopped after the outbreak of war, and by September 1941, he could no longer pursue emigration options. After doing forced labor in Germany, he was deported to Auschwitz with his wife and son in March 1943. Only he survived.

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"He was the rabbi of a congregation, an educator and founder of Jewish schools," writes historian Rochel Licht. "The head of a Jewish organization, he was an author with a doctorate from the University of Konigsberg. He was six feet tall, handsome and charismatic, aggressive, fearless, and charming, and he told white lies. Most notably, he single-handedly saved thousands of Jews, many of them children, from the Holocaust that would soon engulf much of Europe. His name is Solomon Schonfeld, a name that, regrettably, along with his remarkable actions, is unknown to the vast majority of people today." With the publication of this essay, that oversight will be remedied.

Rochel Licht

## Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld: The Singular British Rabbi Who Saved Jewish Children

Solomon Schonfeld [Fig. 1] was born in London on February 21, 1912 (4th of Adar), the second son of the seven children born to Rabbi Dr. Avigdor and Miriam Leah (née Sternberg) Schonfeld. Rabbi Schonfeld, a native of Vienna and a disciple of the Hirschean doctrine (named for Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), a German rabbi who espoused strict adherence to *halakha* and promoted the philosophy of "Torah *im Derekh Eretz*": (Torah and secular skills), was rabbi of the Orthodox synagogue Adas Yisroel in London.



FIG. 1: Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld.

He also founded the Union of Orthodox Synagogues of England and, in 1929, established the Jewish Secondary School in London. In January 1930, Rabbi Schonfeld died at the tragically young age of 49.

The Hirschean ideology imbued in Solomon Schonfeld by his father and by his studies at both the Lithuanian yeshiva in Slobodka and the Nitra Yeshiva in Slovakia (where his study partner was Rabbi Michael Ber Wiessmandl<sup>1</sup>) shaped his fundamental religious beliefs and worldviews. In 1933, the young Schonfeld returned from Europe with both rabbinic ordination and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Konigsberg, and he stepped in to fill

his father's place as rabbi of Adas Yisroel and president of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues. He was 21 years old and single.

### PREWAR RESCUE ACTIVITIES

The year 1938 was momentous for the Jews in Europe. Hitler had been in power in Germany for 5 years. The *Anschluss* (annexation of Austria) in March brought some 200,000 Austrian Jews under Nazi rule; the 32 countries at the July Evian Conference in France declined to admit Jewish refugees; and the November *Reichspogromnacht* (known as *Kristallnacht*) foreshadowed the future for European Jewry. The British government, to its credit, in reaction to the *Reichspogromnacht*, permitted unaccompanied Jewish children ages 3–16 from the Nazi Reich to enter England on condition that private individuals or organizations guaranteed the children's care.<sup>2</sup> These life-saving *Kindertransports* (children's transports) were the only manifestation of hope in that and the next hopeless year.

Immediately, the *Reichsvertretung* (Reich representation of Jews) in Berlin, as well as the *Kultusgemeinde* (Jewish community organization) of Vienna, organized transports of children whose parents or caretakers made the impossible decision to put them on trains and send them to unknown homes in England accompanied by volunteers who had to return home after leaving their charges. The first transport arrived in England on December 2, 1938, bringing some 200 Jewish children, most from a Berlin Jewish orphanage that had been destroyed on *Kristallnacht*.

Although there is evidence that a small number of Orthodox children were part of the general transports, according to Kranzler (2004), the *Kultusgemeinde* was ex-

cluding the Orthodox. In both Germany and Austria, those who maintained their Orthodox traditions had, historically, maintained a separatist community; thus, many did not turn to the official Jewish organizations for aid. Moreover, applications for a place on the *Kindertransports* required parents to agree to have their child placed with any available family, even a non-religious or a non-Jewish one, so many Orthodox families did not apply [see McLoughlin, pp. 61–66—Eds.] (Fast, 2011).

It was at this crucial time that Schonfeld stepped in to begin his rescue activities.

Responding to appeals by his former study partner, Rabbi Wiessmandl, and from Jules Steinfeld, head of the *Agudah*<sup>3</sup> community in Vienna, Schonfeld organized his own *Kindertransport* of some 300 religious Jewish children from Germany in December 1938. In January and March of 1939 he organized additional transports from Vienna, each with some 250–300 religious children. At the time, Solomon Schonfeld was just 26 years old.

Max Eisman, an Englishman who lived at that time near the Jewish Secondary School in London, recalled the arrival of the first Schonfeld *Kindertransport* in December 1938. He and other classmates cleared out the school of desks and chairs and converted it to a hostel.

“I waited at the school until the first refugee children and staff walked in with their knapsacks. Since it was Hanukkah, I lit the candles for them. Afterwards, many of these children became my very good friends” (Kranzler, 2004, p. 57).

Although two schools were turned into dormitories for the refugee children, there were not enough beds; inspecting officials noted that the schools could not accommodate all the children. Schonfeld took the officials to his home, which was now also filled with cots, to show them that he had room for the additional children there. He had moved his own sleeping quarters to the attic.<sup>4</sup>

In 1939, Schonfeld was even able to place a group of 10 deaf Jewish children from Germany, some from the Berlin Jewish School for Deaf and Dumb, on a *Kindertransport* and arrange in advance for them to be enrolled in a Jewish school for the deaf in London and in other British institutions.<sup>5</sup>

Schonfeld’s commitment to rescuing children also extended to the teenagers above the age of 16, who were not eligible for placement on the *Kindertransports*. When possible, he doctored records, making 17-year-olds a year younger. He felt the anguish of parents, many of them religious functionaries who desperately wanted to flee the Nazi Reich along with their children. In response, Schonfeld established a yeshiva in Stamford Hill, England, called Yeshiva Ohr Yisroel (Light of Israel) as a means of providing teaching positions for German and Viennese rabbis and an additional school for the influx of Jewish students. He

also arranged for jobs in the various local day schools and *yeshivot* already established. These jobs guaranteed that the refugees wouldn’t be a financial burden to the British government. Schonfeld was able to convince the Home Office and Ministry of Labor to issue visas to clergymen and their families by telling them that there was a shortage of Jewish clergy in England and therefore their admission was no threat to the British labor market. It is estimated that by September 1939, some 1,500 rabbis, teachers, cantors, and yeshiva students, including 750 children, were permitted entry into England due to Schonfeld’s efforts (Taylor, 2009, p. 59). Among those for whom Schonfeld arranged entry into England was the young Immanuel Jakobovits from Germany, future chief rabbi and honorary lord of Great Britain.

It was a struggle to find religious homes for all the children, but the greater struggle was financial. Schonfeld dipped into his own accounts and still had to plead for help. He realized that an official sponsorship would help open doors and garner funds, so in December 1938, he approached Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz with the suggestion to form the Chief Rabbi’s Religious Emergency Council (CRREC). Though Schonfeld’s title was executive director, the Council was, in essence, a one-man operation run by Schonfeld with the help of Harry Goodman, an *Agudah* leader, and a young Jewish Austrian refugee, Harry Retter. This auspicious arrangement with the chief rabbi had an impact on Schonfeld’s personal life. On January 16, 1940, Solomon Schonfeld married Judith Hertz, the daughter of the rabbi.

## OPPOSITION

It is not surprising that Schonfeld’s activities were met with opposition within the Jewish community. The Anglo-Jewish establishment, represented by the Board of Jewish Deputies<sup>6</sup>, viewed themselves as the official organization that should deal with the issues of Jewish refugees. Schonfeld was seen as an arrogant fanatic, an independent operator, a rule-breaker, and a competitor in fund-raising. Also, many secular board members, worried about inflaming existing antisemitism, were probably not comfortable with the influx of Orthodox rabbis and students Schonfeld brought into England. The placement of children in non-Jewish homes was an especially major point of contention between Schonfeld and other rescue groups.

The rabbi was guilty of all their accusations. A man of action who preferred working alone, he abhorred time-wasting meetings and committees. He could not tolerate organizational politics and had no desire for power or position. Not having to answer or explain to boards and superiors gave him the freedom to use various means—pragmatic, innovative, clever—in the most expeditious way to help Jews.

Moreover, Selig Brodetsky<sup>7</sup>, an ardent Zionist and president of the board, focused on Palestine as the haven for refugees in his dealings with the British government. Schonfeld recognized that Palestine was a contentious issue for the British and that it would be imprudent to make that country the linchpin in the effort to save Jews. He felt strongly that Brodetsky's linking of Zionist goals to rescue work was detrimental to Jews. For Schonfeld, helping Jews was a Torah obligation; his rescue activities were anchored in his faith and religious beliefs. For him, the Torah's halakhic (legal in terms of Jewish law) obligation of *pikuach nefesh* (saving of life) took precedence over virtually all other matters, and the laws of *pidyon shevium* (redemption of captives) were the basis of his activities. The principle of the sanctity of life guided Schonfeld in his work and in his relationship with people. He valued every Jew and felt profoundly responsible for their physical and spiritual welfare.

A most compelling example that reflects Schonfeld's beliefs and behavior involved his refusing to allow a *Kindertransport* to leave Germany on the Sabbath. He declared (and interestingly, Rabbi Leo Baeck, Germany's Reform leader, agreed) that the delay of one day was not an issue of *pikuach nefesh* and thus it was not necessary to violate the Sabbath with train travel. Yet, once, when it was necessary to provide documents for the British Home Office for entry of a group of children into England and time was of the essence, Schonfeld (with the help of others) not only filled out the forms on the Sabbath but also drove to deliver them, leaving his car afterwards and walking home. (Jewish law allows for the violation of Sabbath to save life but driving home, when no life was at stake, would be a desecration (Fast, 2011, pp. 99–100; Taylor, 2009, p. 60).

### THE EXTRAORDINARY RESCUER

It was in this way that he distinguished himself. In reality, the Board of Jewish Deputies was responsible for rescuing more children than was Schonfeld. Yet the children Schonfeld saved identified themselves as the Schonfeld-*kinder* because he not only rescued them but also took a personal interest in them. He provided for their education, both secular and religious; their livelihoods; and their general welfare. In essence, Schonfeld became their substitute parent [Fig. 2].

Jerusalemite Rabbi Emanuel Fischer, a native of Vienna, recently recounted, at a gathering of Schonfeld-*kinder* in Yad Vashem, "I arrived in London on a Friday and we had our first English class on Sunday. The first thing we learned in English was 'In the beginning G-d created the heaven and earth.' I'll never forget that."<sup>8</sup>

Felicia Druckman, a refugee child from Vienna, recalled the loneliness of that January 1939 in Northfield.

"*Hast du Taschengeld?*" ("Have you got pocket money?") asked the tall man with the red beard and incredible blue eyes that were fixed on my face as if he really wanted to know the answer. For days, no one looked at me as an individual—I was just one among many. . . here was someone actually asking me a question, wanting to know and waiting for an answer. I shook my head . . . whereupon Rabbi Schonfeld handed me a half-crown, which became my first English *Taschengeld*. (Kranzler, 2004, p. 132)

"*Hast du Taschengeld?*" became the customary greeting that many refugees recall from their first encounter with Schonfeld. Tovia Preschel, a rescued child from Vienna, related a story about Schonfeld's devotion to the children.

He cleared his house to make room for the refugee children. Once it happened that a little refugee girl could not fall asleep. The Rav took her and another little girl into his big black car and drove them around the city until both of them had dozed off. (Kranzler, 2004, p. 151)

The Anglo-Jewish establishment's concerns about religious children and their ability to adapt to British culture were quickly eliminated by Schonfeld's educational program for the children. Samuel Schick, a young refugee teenager, recalled,



FIG. 2: Rabbi Schonfeld with some of the Schonfeld-*kinder*.

Our schooling was very good. As soon as the term started, a special class was organized at the Jewish Secondary School to teach the refugee children English so that we might be able to join the rest of the classes. (Kranzler & Hirschler, 1982, p. 66–67)

### THE WAR YEARS: EVACUEE CHILDREN IN SHEFFORD, ENGLAND

With the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, the British government, fearful of German air attacks, ordered the evacuation of children from London to the countryside. Schonfeld transferred some 500 of the children in his care to Bedfordshire, where they were placed in homes in Shefford village. Schonfeld and his staff spent time with the foster families, almost all who had never had any contact with Jews, explaining Jewish laws and traditions. Schonfeld's charm and warmth won over the reluctant and suspicious villagers. Within a very short time, these families not only treated the children with affection but respected and took personal pride in the religious observances of their charges. Judith Grunfeld<sup>9</sup> recalls that

the Rector and his wife, Reverend and Mrs. A. McGhee, took their seven evacuees for a trip to Wipsnade Zoo. . . . While they treated them to toast and lemonade . . . they encouraged them not to be shy and put on their “ceremonial skull caps.” It is a fact, too, that not long afterwards, freshly-washed “*Arba Kanfos*” (fringed garments) were seen dangling from the washing lines. (Grunfeld, 1980, p. 66)

A foster mother who was accustomed to meeting her friends for a weekly gathering told them one day that she would be unable to join them, explaining

that on the particular day of their gathering was the festival of Lag b'Omer [the 33rd day of the counting of the *omer*, a festive day], which was the only day between the holidays of Passover and Shavout when Jews are permitted to have hair cuts. Therefore, she had to take her Jewish charge to have his hair cut and [would] not be available for their gathering. (Taylor, 2009, p. 68)

Yitzhak (Arnold) Loewe, a British native and former pupil of the Jewish Secondary School who joined in the evacuation to Shefford, recalls the celebration of the holiday of Sukkot.

Together with six other boys, I was billeted at the imposing mansion of the Rector of Campton. We explained to this clergyman the nature and purpose of a *sukkah*. . . . He immediately instructed his head

gardener to cut down branches of some trees. . . . He permitted us to open his garage doors . . . so we could use them as two walls for the *sukkah*. The villagers of Campton had never seen anything like this before. (Kranzler & Hirschler, 1982, pp. 77–78)

The rabbi made arrangements for the children to be provided with kosher provisions, religious articles such as *tefillin*, and prayer books. Most importantly, he set up school for the children with religious and secular instruction. Under the guidance of Grunfeld, the children received a first-rate education. Ruth Hochberg Simons, a German refugee, described her time in the school in Shefford:

We had pretty good teachers. . . . There was English, English history, mathematics, French and *Ivrit*, *Chumash* and Jewish history. There also were many lessons on the Bible, the Prophets and topics of general Jewish interest. Dr. Grunfeld gave these classes . . . [and] was most inspiring. I believe we got far more than any child has here in the United States today. (Kranzler, 2004, p. 170)

The children and their teachers remained in Shefford for the duration of the war. During those almost six years, Schonfeld visited regularly, brought provisions, supplied financial upkeep, and gave personal attention to the children.

### INTERNMENT OF JEWISH REFUGEES

Because of fear of a “fifth column” (a group of people who sympathize with the enemy), in 1939 the British government ordered the internment of “enemy aliens” [see McLoughlin, pp. 61–66—Eds.]. Some 30,000 Jewish-German refugees over the age of 16 were designated as enemy aliens and interned, many of them on the Isle of Man. Unlike others, Schonfeld did not publicly criticize the government's internment policy. Instead, he used his War Office connections and obtained a visiting pass to the Isle of Man. There he worked to improve the conditions in the internment camps, arranged a kosher kitchen and a synagogue, and served as a conduit of messages and information between the interned and their families who were still free. Moreover, he was successful in gaining the release of several refugees by pleading their cases to the authorities. Trude Weiner, a refugee from Nuremberg, Germany, recalls her internment.

Rabbi Schonfeld came to visit us there. He wanted to know if there was anything he could do for us and to find out whether we had kosher meat. He sent us *seforim* [religious books] and kosher packages. He treated us as equals. So many of the English Jews in those days



looked down upon us refugees, but Dr. Schonfeld made us feel worthwhile. (Kranzler, 2004, p. 199)

## RESCUE STRATEGIES

Once war started, all *Kindertransports* ceased; getting Jews out of Nazi-occupied Europe to England became impossible. Yet Schonfeld could not sit idly by as Jews were being annihilated. Through out the war, he searched for havens for European Jews. He devised several rescue plans, but, unfortunately, none came to fruition.

In 1942, for example, Schonfeld and his father-in-law, the Chief Rabbi, convinced the British Colonial Office to approve some 1,000 visas for prominent rabbis and their families trapped in Nazi Europe. These visas, relayed through a neutral country, would give entry to the Mauritius Islands, a British colony in the Indian Ocean. Although much effort was exerted to implement this rescue scheme, neutral countries, such as Turkey, refused to cooperate. The governor of Mauritius would allow only some 300 Jews to enter, and there was opposition by the Board of Jewish Deputies, who supported only Palestine as the place of refuge for Jews. Schonfeld hoped that even if no Jew ever reached Mauritius Islands, the mere possession of foreign papers would save the holder from deportation.

Throughout the war, Schonfeld was informed about the Jewish situation in Europe. He was in constant contact with Yitzchak and Recha Sternbuch, the remarkable leaders in rescue work in Switzerland. He also received messages smuggled through the Sternbuchs from his former study partner and mentor, Rabbi Wiessmandl. In response to the joint declaration on December 17, 1942 by London, Washington, and Moscow that officially confirmed the systematic mass murder of European Jews by the Nazis, Schonfeld saw an opportunity for a rescue plan. He lobbied the British Parliament, with the support of Lady Eleanor Rathbone PM and the Archbishop of Canterbury, to issue a proclamation "that in view of the massacres and starvation of Jews. . . this house asks HM Government to declare its readiness to find temporary refuge in its own territories. . . for endangered persons." Although some 177 members of Parliament supported this motion, in March 1943, the House of Lords shelved it. The British government looked instead to the Bermuda Conference to deal with rescue plans (Kranzler, 2004, pp. 95–96; Sompolsnky, 1999, p. 98).

In May 1943, Schonfeld met with the Ethiopian envoy, Ayala Gabra, in London to ask for help in opening Ethiopia as a place for refuge. Schonfeld's plan was unrealistic in that it involved visas issued by Ethiopia, which was liberated from its Italian ally. Ethiopia rejected Schonfeld's proposal. Gabra explained that the Ethiopians' recent experience of Italian occupation made them wary of foreigners. Ethiopia, like so many other countries, did not want Jews (Sompolsnky, 1999, p. 159).

In the midst of war, Schonfeld planned for the future. He began focusing on the challenges that would face Jewish survivors after liberation. Starting in 1943, during a time of rationing and with some opposition by the Jewish establishment, who believed Schonfeld's food collection activities was not only bad for the war effort but also singled out only Jews for post-war relief, he called for the collecting of canned kosher food so he could be prepared to distribute it to the survivors immediately after the war.

In the spring of 1944, as the deportation of Hungarian Jews began, the Allied governments were well aware of the murders of vast numbers of Jews and of the gas chambers in Auschwitz. Hoping to save the last Jewish community in Nazi-occupied Europe, Schonfeld relayed Wiessmandl's desperate plea to the British government to bomb the tracks to Auschwitz, but to no avail.

## POST WAR

The war, and with it, the Holocaust, was over in Europe in May 1945, and thousands of Jewish survivors were placed in Displaced Persons (DP) camps, where they tried to recover from the devastation wrought by the Nazis and their collaborators. Schonfeld obtained ambulance-trucks and turned them into "mobile synagogues" filled with kosher food, medical supplies, and religious articles. Wearing a fake British uniform, Schonfeld, assisted by Rabbi Eli Munk of The Golders Green Beth Hamedrash Congregation, and by Rabbi Joseph Baumgarten, a Viennese refugee saved by Schonfeld, went to the DP camps, along with the mobile synagogues, to provide for the needs of the religious survivors.



Rabbi Schonfeld. December 18, 1955.

However, the rescue work that most concerned Schonfeld was with that of the surviving children. Once more Schonfeld implemented *Kindertransports*.

By now, almost all of the Jewish children left alive were orphans. Many of these children had been hidden with non-Jewish families by their parents who never returned to retrieve them. Schonfeld's primary goal was to find the children and bring them back to the Jewish community and their Jewish heritage.

Schonfeld's first trip to Poland was in November 1945. He faced a dangerous and difficult task in locating hidden Jewish children. Polish antisemitism was rampant and often resulted in the murder of Jews.<sup>10</sup> Many times, Schonfeld paid a "ransom" to regain a Jewish child from the family who had hidden her. In monasteries, Schonfeld would recite the Jewish prayer "Shema," familiar to even young Jewish children, and when voices joined his, Schonfeld knew he had found them.

Between 1946 and 1947, Schonfeld organized several transports from Poland to London with hundreds of orphan children and youngsters. Henya Mintz, a survivor living in Cracow after the war, where she met Schonfeld in 1946, recalls,

I told Rabbi Schonfeld that I heard he was taking orphans to London . . . and I would like to go. He told us to make ourselves a year younger. Two weeks later . . . I received a telegram to report to the British consulate in Warsaw. We only had to mention the name of Rabbi Schonfeld and all doors opened for us. From Cracow we were taken to Gdansk by small planes. . . . Rabbi Schonfeld was waiting for us. . . . We boarded the boat just before Shabbos. He was the only adult on the boat. He took care of every child. (Kranzler, 2004, p. 205)

Ruben Katz, an adolescent at the time, describes his rescue out of Poland.

Dr. Schonfeld chartered a ship. The journey took one week. During that time, Schonfeld instructed the youngsters in Judaism. He also taught them several English phrases such as "thank you" and "please" and songs such as "Daisy, Daisy" and "G-d Save the Queen." (Fast, 2011, p. 153)

Most of all, Katz says, "Rabbi Schonfeld taught us to sing and laugh and tried to restore our faith in humanity" (Fast, p. 153).

As late as 1948, three years after the Holocaust had ended, Schonfeld went to Czechoslovakia, where many survivors had gathered after the war, to organize what would be his last *Kindertransport*. Among the 150 children placed on the transport was a very young 11-year-old Judith

Mannheimer. In her book, *A Candle in the Heart* (2011), she shares her impression of Schonfeld.

He always asked me how I was doing, always acknowledged my presence and was attentive to what I said. He was a savior sent at just the right time. . . . He saved my life and my Judaism. Many years later, after my marriage, I saw him by happenstance on a street in London. He looked at me. . . . I was certain he did not recognize me. . . . "It's Judith Mannheimer, isn't it?" he said. (pp. 190–191)

Once again, Schonfeld faced financial difficulties and had to resort to pleading for money from the Jewish community for his rescue work and care for the child survivors. Yet this time he found more Orthodox homes available for the youngsters. Many former refugees who were rescued by Schonfeld had already established households and willingly opened them to the survivors. Some youngsters were placed in youth hostels; some were sent to Ireland, where food was more readily available because there was no rationing, and were housed in Clonyn Castle near the village of Devlin. Education for many child survivors in London was again provided by Schonfeld's Jewish Secondary School.

#### WHO WAS SOLOMON SCHONFELD?

Schonfeld was a man committed to Torah Judaism, a man of action and courage. He cared about people, believing that one man with enough determination could make a difference. Indeed, he did; he was responsible for saving some 4,000 Jews, more than 1,000 of them children, if one includes those he rescued after the war. Yet, when he was asked how many people he saved, he once replied, "How many didn't I save?"

In February 1982, the rabbi was honored with a celebration for his 70th birthday at Hendon Synagogue. Sadly, he was already very ill and, although he attended the event, it was evident to all that his condition was dire.<sup>11</sup>

Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld was *niftar* [passed away] February 6, 1984, the 4th of Adar, the day of his birth. As it is written, "The Almighty fulfills the years of the righteous from day to day" (Tractate Rosh Hashanah 11:1).

#### NOTES

1. Rabbi Michael Dov Wiessmandl (1903–1957), a leading member of the "Working Group" in Slovakia, was responsible for saving thousands of Jews during the war.
2. Along with Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Denmark also fostered *Kindertransport* children.

3. *Agudah*: an organization established by Orthodox European rabbis in 1912.
4. According to Vera K. Fast's (2011) *Children's Exodus*, (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. LTD) p. 98, "There is no record of these children living in Schonfeld's residence. So their stay must have been short."
5. See Fast, V. K. (2011). p. 22.
6. Board of Jewish Deputies founded in 1760 as the main representative body of British Jews.
7. Selig Brodetsky (1888–1954): Professor of mathematics, leading member of the World Zionist Organization and president of the Board of Jewish Deputies.
8. jpost.com, *A Hero Remembered*, retrieved March 20, 2012
9. Judith Grunfeld (1902–1995), native of Germany, colleague of Sara Schenirer, headmistress of the Hasmonean Girls' School in London.
10. On July 4, 1946, in the city of Kielce, the Poles initiated a pogrom against Jewish survivors. Thirty-nine Jews including children were killed and dozens were injured.
11. In February 2012, a Schonfeld memorial event was organized in Yad Vashem and was attended by some 300 people.

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Four *Kinder* in Scotland are the focus of this essay by Paula Cowan, who notes that their experiences provide us with an understanding of “both the events leading up to the Holocaust and refugee life in Scotland in the late 1930s and 1940s.” Read it in conjunction with Jennifer Craig-Norton’s examination of the records kept by the organizations that were responsible for these children (pp. 40–51) to compare personal testimony with documentary evidence.

Paula Cowan

## Auld Lang Syne: The Experiences of the *Kinder* in Scotland

Scotland is a multicultural country with a population of five million, one of the four nations that make up the United Kingdom (UK). Although the impact of the Holocaust on Scotland was not as great as elsewhere in Europe, or indeed in the UK, one of the many historical connections that Scotland has with the Holocaust is that it was “home” to young children and teenagers who arrived on the *Kindertransports* [Fig.1].



**FIG. 1:** Originally published in *The Scotsman* newspaper. Jewish children from Germany and Austria arrived in Scotland via the first *Kindertransport*. They were welcomed at the train station by members of the Edinburgh Jewish community. Rosa Sacharin (back, second on the right) remembers being hungry after the long journey. Reprinted with permission from Kerry Black, Scotsman Publication Library and Syndication Executive.

Since 1999, the Scottish Parliament has had primary legislative powers over a wide range of local concerns in Scotland, such as education, while the UK Parliament remains responsible for matters such as foreign policy. The Deputy Presiding Officer stated at a debate in the Scottish Parliament in 2012 “that Scotland celebrates the Holocaust survivors who have enriched Scotland as a nation” (Scottish Parliament, 2011). In fact, the Scottish *Kinder* have continued to enrich Scotland in diverse ways. Among them are four professors, respectively in architecture, physiology, chemistry, and virology; a research chemist, and several authors. Three have been awarded Queen’s honors in recognition of their achievements in their field of work or community.

Following the formation of the Reunion of *Kinder* (ROK) in London in 1988, the Scottish Annual Reunion of *Kinder* (SAROK) was formed in 1990. Though the majority of its members were initially *Kinder*, its membership has extended to other refugees, including some who came to the UK as early as 1935, and concentration camp survivors who came after 1945. The majority of Scottish *Kinder* were either Jewish or had one Jewish parent (SAROK, 2008). There is no official record of the number of *Kinder* who came to Scotland. SAROK (1999) compiled a book of 30 recollections by its members before disbanding in 2007; however, this number does not accurately reflect the numbers who lived in Scotland because many died before the formation of SAROK, while others did not contribute to this publication.

A website called “Gathering the Voices,” launched in 2012 and partially funded by the Scottish Government, aims “to gather, contextualize, and digitize oral testimony from men and women who came to Scotland to escape the racism of Nazi-dominated Europe” (2012). Their goal is to collect 40 testimonies, with the *Kinder* representing the

largest group, that focus on these children's—now adults—experiences and contributions. One additional purpose of this project is to encourage asylum seekers currently living in poor circumstances in Scotland and assure them that it is possible to make a life in Scotland (*Jewish Chronicle*, 2012).

Together with the messages endorsed by Members of the Scottish Parliament, this supports today's young people in Scotland in their quest to learn *about* and *from* the Holocaust. Although the subject of the Holocaust is not compulsory in the Scottish curriculum, schools are required to encourage informed and responsible citizenship (Scottish Executive, 2004). "The omission of the Holocaust in the Scottish curriculum has inevitably led to a limited amount of Holocaust teaching, but it has not prevented teachers who wish to teach the topic from doing so, or head teachers from encouraging its teaching in their schools" (Cowan & Maitles, 2010, p. 260). The Scottish Parliament has demonstrated commitment to supporting Holocaust Memorial Day since its introduction in 2000 by providing teaching resources for schools and hosting an annual national commemorative event. This, too, has led young people in schools and in the community to learn about the Holocaust. While some may view the *Kinder* experiences as contributing more to one's understanding of World War II than of the Holocaust, it is important to remember that it was because of Nazi antisemitic ideology, and not the War, that the *Kinder* operation was set up. This operation succeeded in saving Jewish lives at a time when the actual events of the Holocaust were unforeseen.

## SCOTLAND

In the 1930s, Glasgow's Jewish population of 15,000 made it the fourth-largest Jewish community in the UK with a thriving Jewish culture. Records from the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre indicate that there were 20 Orthodox synagogues and one Progressive synagogue in Glasgow, and one "Jewish" newspaper, the *Jewish Echo* (written in English). According to the Scottish historian Tom Devine (1999), Jewish refugees to Scotland in the 1930s were different from established Scottish Jews; they were poor and spoke little English. While true, the above statement implies that all the Scottish Jews were affluent, which was not the case; many lived in poverty and relied on charity. Jewish charities at this time included the Glasgow Jewish Council for German Refugees and the German-Jewish Aid Committee.

One commonly held view is that Jewish refugees and immigrants to Scotland in the 1930s were warmly welcomed. This positive image of Scottish people is emphasized in a more contemporary context; the First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond (2011), has stated, "Our new Scotland is built on the old custom of hospitality. We offer a hand that is open to all, whether they hail from England,

Ireland, Pakistan, or Poland" (Scottish Government publication). Yet the British Union of Fascists was active in Scotland's major cities (Cowan, 2013); there were instances of prejudice and discrimination against German Jews; the national sentiment against German National Socialism and socialists extended to everyone of German extraction. Furthermore, Kushner (2006) asserts that stereotypes of Jews as "financially dubious, disloyal, and subversive" were not uncommon in the UK at that time.

A home to accommodate young refugees until they could be placed with foster parents was established in Glasgow in 1939 (Kölmel, 1987). Indeed, a number of refugee hostels in and around the Glasgow area sheltered children, teenagers, and local evacuees. One of these, Garnethill Refugee Hostel, registered more than 175 individuals between 1939–1948. Of the 75% who listed their country of origin, 42% were from Germany; 14% were from Austria; and the rest were from Poland, Russia, Rumania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia<sup>1</sup>. Established in 1941, the Glasgow Refugee Centre, affectionately known as the "House on the Hill," provided a hostel, restaurant, and social club and was distinctive in that it was attended by both European refugees and "ordinary" Scottish people (Sacharin, 2007). There, refugees were made to feel welcome and could meet people who shared their background. Its cultural activities ranged from political meetings, sing-alongs, and trips around Scotland to fund-raising for the Aid to Russia Fund [Fig.2].

## THOMAS BERMAN

The SAROK recollections publication (1999) clearly shows that the *Kinder* had a wide range of experiences in Scotland. The publication opens with a short piece by Czechoslovakian-born Thomas (Tommy) Berman, an only child who was 5 years old when he traveled first to London and later on the



**FIG. 2:** *Kinder* experiences in Scotland included field trips. Henry Wuga is standing on the left. Reprinted with permission from Henry Wuga.

train alone to Glasgow, Scotland. There he met his sponsors, a young, childless Jewish couple who had responded to an ad in the Jewish press asking for people to take in child refugees. On arrival in their house, Tommy refused to come out from under a table for days (SCoJeC, 2009).

Tommy's eventual integration into the Glasgow Jewish community was natural and relatively easy because he became part of an established Jewish family, lived in a Jewish community with Jewish peers in his school, and attended Habonim, the youth Zionist movement. Tommy has written poems of his childhood and of a 2009 journey that reenacted the original journey of the Czech *Kindertransport* (*Voices of the Kinder*, n.d.). In his poem, titled "The Leather Suitcase," he writes of a suitcase "containing all the love parents could pack" [see Berman, p. 3—Eds.]. When he learned that his parents had not survived the Holocaust, he remained with his foster parents until he immigrated to Israel in 1952. Tommy earned a doctorate in microbiology and was an aquatic microbiologist until his retirement. His Scottish foster parents were, essentially, the only parents he ever knew, and he maintained close contact with them until their deaths.

#### **DORRITH SIM**

Seven-year-old Dorrith Sim (née Oppenheim) from Kassel in Germany was also an only child. She remembered that parents were not allowed on the platform at Hamburg and were forced to wait behind the barriers away from their children. She also recalled an older girl telling her that "the British ate soapflakes for breakfast" and so refused to eat her morning meal! Dorrith's non-Jewish Edinburgh foster parents came to meet her at Liverpool Street Station, London. She lived with them until 1940, when she was evacuated to a small village in the Scottish Borders. She remembered:

I made friends with the local children but wanted to hide the fact that I was a refugee. At the school the teacher asked me my name. "Oppenheim, that is a very funny name. Where do you come from?" she asked. I whispered, "Germany." She yelled out, "Germany!" and going home that afternoon the boys rolled rocks down the hill towards me. That was the only bad time I had there. (SAROK, 1999, p. 62)

Dorrith returned to Edinburgh a year later, where she stayed until the end of the war. In contrast to Tommy's experience of Jewish life in Scotland, Dorrith went to a Christian Sunday school and was later baptized. As a young woman, she met a Church of Scotland Christian, and they married and raised their family of five children in Scotland. The SAROK publication shows that it was not uncommon for Scottish *Kinder* to either marry out of the Jewish faith

and/or convert to Christianity. One possible explanation is that young children who had no memory of their early Jewish life, especially those who were brought up in a Christian environment where they could not live as Jews, lost their Jewish heritage. If so, it follows that older *Kinder*, who remembered their lives as Jews and had some awareness of Jewish identity, were more likely to retain their Jewish heritage. Dorrith referred to herself as a Jewish-Christian, but her participation in SAROK and the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) provided opportunities for her to meet Jewish people in Scotland until her death in 2012.<sup>2</sup>

#### **ROSA SACHARIN**

*Kinder* teenagers have memories of their hometown or city before Hitler came into power and were old enough to know the seriousness of their situation. Rosa Sacharin (née Goldschal) was 13 when she left Berlin on the first transport and has regularly spoken of her experiences of antisemitism and of *Kristallnacht* as well as her *Kinder* experiences.

She speaks about the immediate impact of Hitler coming to power and remembers that the day following his success, she, at 8 years old, and her schoolmates assembled in the school yard, where they were taught how to salute the flag; introduced to the newly appointed headmaster, a member of the Nazi Party; and witnessed the janitor being taken out of the school on a stretcher and replaced by a party member. Rosa describes the antisemitism in this school:

The music teacher was particularly nasty to me because I happened to be quite good at music—and that couldn't be because the Nazi philosophy was that the Jews were inferior. How was it that a Jewish child was good at music? So I had a difficult time. . . . For example, we had music dictation every week, which meant that we had to write the correct notes and the correct rhythm that were played to us, which I managed to do. Every time he marked my paper, he accused me of cheating. He could not even address me by my first name and I was humiliated in front of the whole class. (East Renfrewshire, 2000)

Rosa describes one incident at this state school that highlights the indoctrination process and will help students understand why she and her Jewish peers were so vulnerable.

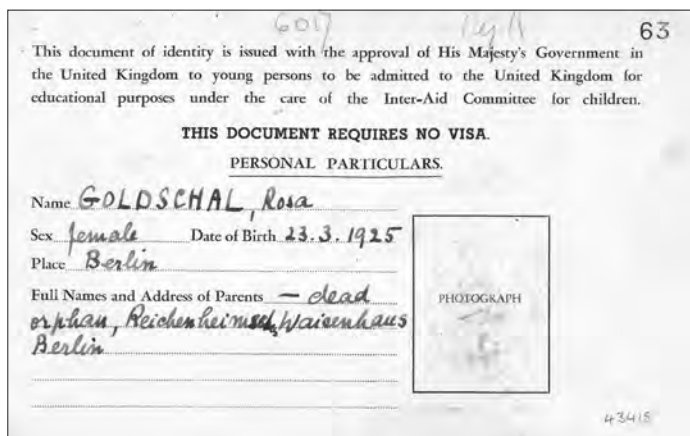
We, as a class, were taken in the evening to have a lesson on the stars in the sky. The teacher told us about the Great Bear, etc., and then pointed to one bright star and said, "See that star in the sky? That is the Jew star. That is the star that causes all our problems." (East Renfrewshire, 2000)

Rosa's father was arrested and imprisoned in 1935; her

older brother was sent to a labor camp prior to her joining the *Kindertransport*. Rosa did not have a sponsor when she came to the UK and had no idea what was going to happen to her upon her arrival. She was bussed to Dovercourt Bay Holiday Camp, where people came to pick a child to foster or adopt. She believes that the youngest children were chosen, but the older children, like her, were not. She remembers:

One man came and said, "Stand up, little girl," and when I stood up, he said, "Are you Jewish?" And when I said, "Yes," he said, "What a pity." That was that. I felt terrible. I was not upset at being asked whether I was Jewish, but the fact that people came and looked me up and down. . . . It felt like a cattle market. (SAROK, 1999, p. 51)

After refusing the Refugee Committee's suggestions of traveling to Ireland, Australia, and Palestine, Rosa was part of a small *Kinder* group taken to Edinburgh, Scotland, where the Jewish community was willing to take them [Fig. 3]. Once there, her first foster family found her crying too upsetting; the second family wanted an older teenager to work around the house, and so she became a maid. While Rosa's "older" age may have been a liability in adapting to Scottish life and in finding a suitable home, it was an advantage in that she had a strong sense of who she was. When Rosa learned that her older sister had managed to leave Germany and had arrived in Scotland, she conscientiously wrote her thoughts and feelings in German so she would not forget her first language. Rosa explained that the minister's wife "was very kind and her help was tremendous. However, throughout my contact with her from 1941-1946,



**FIG. 3:** Identity papers allowed Rosa to enter the UK for educational purposes. This ID card never had a picture of Rosa and contained incorrect details, as Rosa's mother was alive in Berlin and survived the Holocaust. Rosa is unsure why these details were inserted and considers that her "orphaned" status made her more vulnerable. Reprinted with permission from Rosa Sacharin.

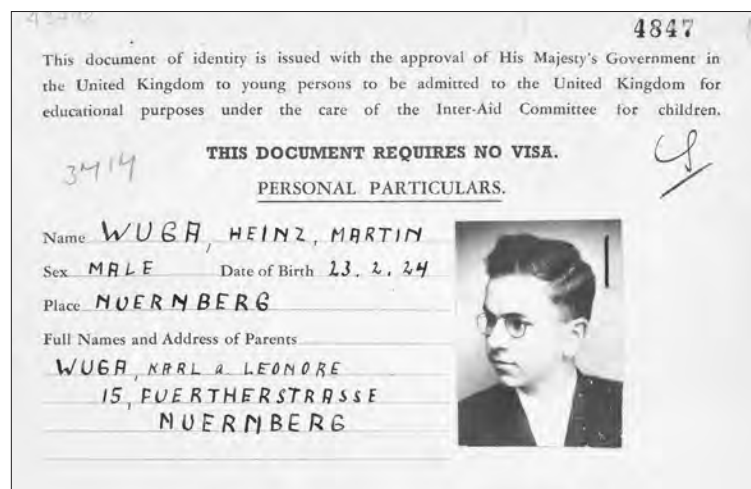
she made every effort to convert me [to Christianity]" (SAROK, 1999, p. 53). Despite attending church and having little contact with Jewish people, Rosa did not convert.

Rosa wanted to continue her education, but "the Refugee Children's Committee wanted to send me back to domestic service, and I was given the impression that I was not considered suitable for anything else" (p. 52). Her opportunities were limited and, but for the assistance of the wife of the headmaster of the local high school, she would have had to return to domestic service. Her difficulties in finding accommodations persisted, but when her older sister joined her in Glasgow, they bought a flat with a loan from the Jewish Board of Guardians charity.

Rosa studied nursing and midwifery and was joined by her mother in 1947. Although she worked in Israel for a short time, she returned to Glasgow, Scotland, where she married a Jewish man and raised two children. Now a retired nurse, tutor in pediatric nursing, and author of nursing textbooks, Rosa remained Jewish.

#### HENRY WUGA

Like Tommy and Dorrit, 15-year-old Nuremberg-born Henry (Heinz) Wuga was an only child who arrived in the UK on May 3, 1939, and traveled on the train to Glasgow to meet his Jewish sponsor [Fig. 4].



**FIG. 4:** Henry's identity papers granted him permission to enter the UK under the auspices of the Inter-Aid Committee for refugee children. Reprinted with permission from Henry Wuga.

Henry considers himself particularly lucky; his sponsor was a widow who treated him like a son (*Jewish Chronicle*, 2009). He learned English at a school attended by other Jewish students, but was soon evacuated to a farm in Perth, Scotland, where he was required to register as an enemy alien and was interned for committing the offense of corresponding with the enemy: writing a letter to his parents in Germany! Henry writes:

I was relegated to being a dangerous enemy alien and was put in a locked compartment on a train to Glasgow. I was collected by the police and given a half hour to pack and was taken to the police station, but they could not lock me up, because in Scotland, children under 17 could not be put in a cell. So I was sent to a remand home where I was with German sailors. . . . We were transported to various other camps and then, eventually, to the Isle of Man. . . . After 10 months the commander said to me, "Since you are under 18, you are under the age for internment." (SAROK, 1999, p. 95)

After a third tribunal, Henry was cleared of corresponding with the enemy and allowed to return to Glasgow. At the Refugee Center there, he met Ingrid, a fellow teenage *Kinder* from Dortmund, Germany. He said, "It was love at first sight. We were both far away from home but had a shared love of Scotland. We were so lucky to be safe" (*Daily Record*, 2012).<sup>3</sup>

After working as a chef, Henry started a kosher catering business in Glasgow with Ingrid, where they worked until their retirement. Henry's mother had been hidden by a Catholic family in Germany and survived the war; she joined them in Glasgow. As a boy in Germany, Henry had been an enthusiastic skier; he continued to ski in the Scottish mountains and learned to skibob. Working with the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association, he took its members on rehabilitation courses and trained them as skibob instructors. Henry received an MBE (Member of the British Empire) in 1999 for his services to this organization.

Henry and Ingrid frequently talk to prison groups as part of the Anne Frank (Scotland) Prison Project. One aim of this project is to educate prisoners of the dangers of racism, prejudice, and discrimination, and about the history of the Holocaust. When asked by a prisoner if he felt hatred towards Germans after the war, Henry replied, "You cannot carry hatred with you, as it will destroy you" (Cowan, 2009).

### USING KINDER TESTIMONY IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

In the context of the Holocaust, the *Kinder* are often considered to be the "lucky" ones, survivors who were spared the experiences of the ghettos and camps. These testimonies highlight the harsh realities of the *Kinder*. Lessons that use these testimonies should aim to develop students' awareness of the complexities of this aspect of Holocaust history. Students can investigate Rosa's experiences in Berlin and in the UK in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). Rosa's school experiences in Berlin in the 1930s show that she did not have the right to a fair education that developed her talents and abilities because she was Jewish (Article

29). In England, she was not treated with respect by adults who were looking for a child to foster or adopt because, although she was still a child in the eyes of the law, she was considered too old (Article 12); and in Scotland, her right to maintain her Judaism was challenged (Articles 14 and 30). Rosa's testimony comprises humiliating experiences carried out by so-called "responsible" adults. In contrast, Dorrieth's painful after-school experience was caused by children. Students can discuss whether this was due to xenophobia, anti-German feeling, antisemitism, or other factors, and teachers can reflect on what they might do today to encourage positive attitudes among their students. Students can question the role of the Jewish community in the context of Dorrieth's conversion to Christianity and discuss issues faced by those whose identities are compromised as they try to survive without their parents and their culture. Henry's testimony is placed firmly in the context of WWII and is a reminder that the integration of the *Kinder* into Scotland took place when the country was vulnerable, at war, and protection of its citizens was paramount. Indeed, the words of the Scottish traditional poem and song *Auld Lang Syne*,<sup>4</sup> "We'll tak (take) a cup o' (of) kindness yet, For Auld Lang Syne," resonates with the *Kinder* experience because it values friendship and human kindness. Students should reflect on the extent to which the *Kinder* were "lucky" and received "kindness" in Scotland.

### CONCLUSIONS

The ages of the *Kinder* and the nature of their sponsorship affected their experiences. Their sponsors did not have the support of psychological or social services to assist their charges; the war raged and took precedence over their needs and concerns. While the *Kinder* survived the Holocaust, many lost their first language, culture, religion, and ambitions, as well as their parents, grandparents, relatives, and childhood friends. Yet they persevered and succeeded. The four *Kinder* highlighted here all became highly productive Scottish citizens and are now proud grandparents and/or great-grandparents. It is clear that as Scotland became their home and they became Scots, the *Kinder* built their lives and enriched Scotland and its people.

### NOTES

1. From the Scottish Jewish Archive Centre collection.
2. Dorrieth is the author of a picture book for young readers entitled *In My Pocket* (1996). Told in a child's voice, this autobiographical account tells of her experience as a German child refugee during WWII.
3. A play based on Henry and Ingrid's lives, *Henry and Ingrid: Some Words for Home*, was performed in Glasgow in 2011 as part of Scottish Refugee Week.



4. *For Auld Lang Syne* is the Scots language title of the song. It can be translated as "For the sake of days gone by."

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Three hundred and twenty children were sent to safety in Denmark, whose citizens opened their homes to Jewish refugee children. Lone Rünitz gives us an overview of this little-known history: "Thanks to the efforts of strong-willed women, and in spite of a rather negative attitude from the authorities, Jewish children found refuge in Denmark under the Youth Aliyah program during World War II.<sup>1</sup> A small group of 25 Polish and stateless children from Germany, whose families had been deported to Poland in 1938 but were refused entry and left stranded at the border, came to Denmark in June 1939, while 295 youngsters from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia arrived in the period between the outbreak of the war and the German occupation of Denmark on April 9th, 1940."

Lone Rünitz

## Detour to Palestine: Youth Aliyah in Denmark, 1939–1945

At the time of *Kristallnacht* on November 9, 1938, the Danish borders were closed to Jewish persons trying to escape the Nazis unless they had already obtained a visa to a third country. If a Jewish refugee from Germany or Austria succeeded in crossing the border into Denmark, he was given a very short respite before he had to leave under threat of expulsion. At their general meeting a few days after the pogrom, the Danish Women's National Council, appalled by the atrocities in Germany and Austria, their compassion prompted especially by the plight of the Jewish children, expressed regret about this very strict policy. Following the meeting, the chair of the Council, Kirsten Gloerfelt-Tarp, and the chair of the Danish branch of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Thora Daugaard, approached K. K. Steincke, the Minister of Justice, and asked for permission to bring 1,000 children to Denmark to await immigration to Palestine. The children were to be chosen by *Jugend Aliyah* in Germany.

The women's application was presented by Steincke at a government meeting on December 7, and the answer was no. The government did not want to provoke antisemitic sentiments in Denmark by allowing such a large number of Jewish children into the country. However, the authorities were willing to accept a small group, provided that they were guaranteed entry into another country within three years. The Women's Council immediately forwarded a new application asking for permission to accept 25 children, whose re-immigration to Palestine the Jewish Agency in London had promised to secure. The Jewish Women's Organization in Denmark and its chair, Melanie Oppenheim, who worked closely with the Women's National Council and the Women's League for Peace and Freedom (the League)

to bring the children to Denmark, secured foster homes among Jewish families in Copenhagen. On January 9, 1939, the Ministry of Justice granted the permission the women sought: 25 children between 13 and 16 years of age would be granted haven, provided they left Denmark before their 17th birthday.

This limited number was a great disappointment to the League, which had hoped to bring 1,000 children into the country, but the women did not give up their plan. First, they had to convince the government and the Minister of Justice that the Danish public was willing to help. Second, more foster homes had to be found. Third, guarantees for final settlement in Palestine had to be obtained from the British Mandate for Palestine, and, finally, sufficient means to pay for the required Palestine certificates and the passage to Haifa had to be collected. The women got to work. Shortly, several Danish newspapers initiated collections among their readers to pay for the emigration of Jewish children directly from Germany and Austria to Palestine. No mention was made about the efforts to bring children to Denmark because the government's approval had not yet been obtained.

The rescue operation garnered much energy and enthusiasm within the women's organizations and the entire Jewish community, and many prominent non-Jewish Danes, in the papers and on the radio, urged their fellow countrymen to contribute to the collection. Representatives from Youth Aliyah in London visited and sparked public interest as they described the work they were doing to save the children from the Nazis. Women from local divisions of the League were busy recruiting Danish families willing to shelter a Jewish child.

In April 1939, the League informed the Minister of Justice that they had found foster homes for 182 children, had received guarantees from Youth Aliyah in London that the British Mandate would shortly issue Palestine certificates for children permitted to go to Denmark, and that the money the Danes and international relief organizations had collected would be available as needed. By May, the women had secured foster homes for 274 children; certain that still more would be found, they sent another application to the Ministry, requesting entry for 500 Jewish children. Again the authorities hesitated.

War was threatening, time was running out, and the women, especially Thora Daugaard, the chair of the League and prime mover of the operation, were impatient. Once again, she and Melanie Oppenheim approached Justice Steincke and the Foreign Office; again, they got no answer. Half a year had now elapsed, and the foster homes were waiting. To further pressure the government, the League urged potential foster parents to contact the Ministry themselves, individually, and ask for a decision.

#### A WARM DANISH WELCOME

In the meantime, the small group of 25 Jewish Polish and stateless children from Berlin and Leipzig, who had arrived by train and ferryboat, were warmly welcomed by the Council and the Jewish community in Copenhagen, and newspapers such as *Politiken* wrote compassionately about the children's fate and their poor parents, forced to send their beloved children to live among strangers in a foreign country with, as one journalist correctly predicted, a final farewell [Fig. 1].

Because large groups of Jewish persons in one place were thought to give rise to antisemitic feelings and thus give the Danish Nazis cause for their malicious propaganda against Danish Jews, the Ministry stated that the children must be settled individually across the country in private homes. However, Max Rothenborg, a leading member of the Jewish community, got permission to gather the group at his summer house so they could enjoy each other's companionship; a month later, they were moved to a summer camp in the village of Ramlöse in North Zealand, where they were to stay until they were to leave for Palestine in the fall of 1939. That time was like a fairy tale, one of the boys remembered many years later, with plenty of food and ample opportunities to swim and play, just like ordinary children.

Daugaard and Oppenheim finally received permission, on July 25, to bring 300 youngsters between 13 and 16 years old to Denmark under the same conditions as before: They were to be spread across the country, placed in private homes, and sent to Palestine before their 17th birthdays. This group did not arrive, however, until September 3, 1939, because of bureaucratic obstacles in Germany as well as in

Denmark. Yet, despite the war and Denmark's neutrality, the rescue operation continued until the German occupation of Denmark in April 1940.

For this group, there was neither official welcome nor any publicity when they arrived by train in Copenhagen; to avoid provoking Germany and threaten Denmark's neutrality, it was necessary to keep a low profile. One of the leading papers, *Berlingske Tidende* (October 30, 1939), however, carried a small notice, emphasizing the almost secretive operation:

In silence, 300 Jewish children are settling in Denmark. . . . Half of the children, who are being housed by kind people, have arrived in a quiet way. . . . In groups they have quietly come by train from the south.



FIG. 1: Stateless children from Berlin and Leipzig arriving in Denmark in June 1939. Lone Rünitz and University Press Southern Denmark.

After a night in a Copenhagen boarding house, the children were hurriedly put on trains or busses and taken to their foster homes in the countryside.

The League had taken legal responsibility for the children during their stay, so the authorities named them the *League Children*, a name that stuck even after the war, when the children had long ago grown up. Of those who found refuge in Denmark, 196 were boys and 124, girls; 106 were from Germany, 80 from Austria, and 73 were refugees from Czechoslovakia. Forty-four were stateless, and 12 were Polish nationals; the rest were from other East European countries. (Tragically, five children never arrived, victims of the changed circumstances and the closed borders.)

Coming from Berlin, Vienna, and Prague, the children were completely unfamiliar with rural life and the routines and hard work on a farm. However, to prepare the children

for the pioneer life in Palestine they were expected to have when they left Denmark, the foster parents had been told that the boys had to have training in farming, while the girls should learn gardening and housekeeping. Of course, it was also expected that the children would take part in the daily farm work as payment for food and lodging. It was a cultural shock for these young refugees, of course, and the beginning was very hard. The children were lonely and homesick, unable to understand the language, and totally unaccustomed to work. One of the boys from Vienna, Kurt Piczenik, tells about his first day at the farm:

I did not have any work clothes, and I did not know how to behave as a farm laborer. After arrival, I washed and carefully shined my shoes. Then I was shown the cow barn. It was an experience. I had never been on a farm. I got scared when I saw all the cows in their stalls. It got even worse when I noticed their filthy behinds. It was problematic that the farmer and I were unable to communicate. He did not understand German, and I only knew a few words in Danish. I wanted to know where the toilet was. It turned out to be an old-fashioned outhouse, which I was allowed to use only in the beginning, since it was meant for women and small children. The rest of the household had to relieve themselves in the barn. (Letter to historian Jørgen Hästrup, 1981, Danish State Archives)

Some children found caring and loving foster homes where the new parents tried their best to replace the children's own families left behind. One former League Child remembers:

My foster parents were only a few years older than I. They were just married. They treated me almost like their son. It is really fantastic to recall that they had such energy and strength to take in a foreign child. . . . I was supposed to take part in all the farm work. It was a little hard, but I did learn to work, which did me much good later in life. . . . I also participated on equal footing in my foster parents' social life. Thus, I went to all the birthday parties in the family and at the neighbors. (Letter to historian Jørgen Hästrup, 1981, Danish State Archives)

Not all foster parents, however, were kind or acted out of charity. Some were tempted by the idea of cheap labor. They treated the Jewish children as hired help, and quite a few of the youngsters felt exploited. Their complaints, though, were seldom heard, despite the good will of the women who had helped to sponsor them; the League members felt that the children had to be grateful and adapt themselves to their new farm life whatever the difficulties.

Complaints from the foster parents, however, were taken seriously, and the children were often reprimanded and reminded that they were guests in Denmark. As their stay in Denmark was prolonged, contrary to expectations, very few children remained with their original foster family, and some changed homes several times.

The Youth Aliyah organization<sup>2</sup> in Germany and Palestine was actively involved in the welfare of the children and ensured their education, cut short under the Nazis. Since 1932, Denmark had received young Jews from the *Hechalutz* movement, where the pioneers-to-be were trained in agriculture before their final immigration to Palestine. Thus, the leaders of the Youth Aliyah naturally looked for teachers among these young Zionists, who, like the League Children, had only a preliminary residence permit in Denmark. The trainees gathered groups of children within a radius of 5 to 10 miles once or twice a week, in club houses or private homes, where they were taught Hebrew, Zionism, and Jewish history to prepare them for their future life in the *Yishuv* [Fig. 2].



**FIG. 2:** Young Jews from Vienna with their teachers Miriam and Ernst Laske, 1942, Lokalhistorisk Arkiv Nyborg. Lone Rünitz and University Press Southern Denmark.

The school was extremely important to the children. Here, they could share experiences, positive and negative, about their respective foster families. Here, they were able to socialize with *chaverim* (friends) from home, which was essential for their well-being; speak their own language, and communicate news from their parents. The worst thing that could happen to the young ones was to be moved to a different part of the country and lose contact with *chaverim*. This happened to 14-year-old Eli from Prague. His first foster parents treated him rather badly, and a new place was found in another part of the island of Zealand, even though he begged the League ladies to find a new placement near

his friends. In 1941, he told his friends about the loneliness he experienced at the time:

I missed all of you. The contact between us was lost. Sometimes I could not stand it any longer, and I got on my bike and drove over to Robert's place (one of the nearest *chaverim*). It took three hours to get to him and three hours to get back, just to see him and speak to him for 10 minutes. (Rünitz, p. 92)

Friends were the only link to the former lives of the refugees and, after the war, these close friendships resulted in several marriages between the former League Children and between *Hechalutz* trainees and the League Children.

In October 1939, the first certificates to Palestine were issued to 50 children, who were to leave Denmark and travel through Germany to Italy by train and then to Haifa by ship. Because the decision was made outside of Denmark in the children's home countries, in Britain, and in Palestine, it is unclear how these 50 children were chosen; it was understood by the Jewish community and the League that the eldest had to go first, although this was not always the case.

Now suitcases were packed, farewell parties held, and the children were eager to start their new life—and then the difficulties began. At the last moment, the Germans refused transit. Once Jews had left the Third Reich, they were not allowed to return, because the aim of the Nazis at that time was to drive all Jews away. Members of the Youth Aliyah then tried to get the children out via France, but the French, at war with Germany, would not allow passage to German nationals. After prolonged negotiations and use of diplomacy, the French authorities granted passage on the condition that the group went directly to Marseilles and, furthermore, were in possession of travel documents that would allow them to return to Denmark if they, contrary to expectations, were refused entry into Palestine. Thus, although one boy, stricken with scarlet fever, had to remain, 49 children were able to leave Denmark, flying in two planes to Rotterdam on January 19, 1940.

### THE OCCUPATION OF DENMARK

On April 9, 1940, the Germans occupied Denmark, and their presence made the responsibility for the young Jews remaining quite burdensome to all involved. The occupation severely restricted the children's freedom of movement. The Jewish leadership in Copenhagen was worried that groups of young foreign Jews would draw the Germans' attention to the Danish Jews. On the day of the occupation, Thora Daugaard and Melanie Oppenheim, on behalf of the Jewish leadership, sent letters to the foster homes, the teachers, and the children, explaining the situation, instructing the refugee children not to gather in groups, and telling them that attendance at school was suspended for

the time being. The youngsters had to limit all visits, cancel all outings, and forego telephoning, which was prohibited. Finally, Oppenheim stressed that any discussion of the occupation and the new situation was strictly forbidden.

How strictly those rules were enforced depended entirely on the local League chairwomen. Some were more lenient than others, which, of course, gave way to a great deal of frustration among the children, who tried to keep in close contact with one another. For instance, some local League chairwomen never contacted the women in Copenhagen before they arranged outings and summer camps for the League Children in their district, while other chairwomen always asked for permission and blindly obeyed orders, denying the children the opportunity to meet and have fun.

The children, of course, were upset by the occupation. Some of them experienced the Nazi invasion for the second time, and they all feared persecution and discrimination. The children were unaware of the German promise that Danish sovereignty was to be respected because the government had chosen a policy of cooperation with the occupying power. Both parties had an interest in that arrangement. The Danish government, the courts, and the police were allowed to function, and the Germans were able to get ample provisions to their armies and their population. As part of the deal, the Danish government had stressed that there was no *Jewish problem* in Denmark. Thus, anti-Jewish legislation passed by the occupying power would not be tolerated by the Danes. Fortunately as well, very few foster families let the changed circumstances affect their relationship with the children they were sheltering.

Nerves were fraying, though, and the League, the Jewish community, and the families were greatly relieved when the promised certificates to Palestine for the refugees were issued shortly after the occupation. The certificates, however, were only the first step. Those involved in the rescue operation had to find safe travel routes both inside and outside Denmark. Most European countries, whether at war or not, had closed their borders to travelers in transit and, fearing antisemitism, especially to Jews. The only possibility, a long and risky detour, was to send the children through Sweden, Finland, Russia, Turkey, and Syria on their way to Palestine.

In July 1940, the plan was completed and the foster families were told to prepare their children for departure at the end of the month; but then the Turkish government refused to issue transit visas because a large number of Jewish refugees were already stranded in the country with no valid travel documents. The cancellation was unbearable. Some foster parents felt that their hospitality had been stretched to the limit. The children themselves had once more said good-bye to friends and packed their belongings and were, emotionally, ready and eager to leave.

Once again, Thora Daugaard and Melanie Oppenheim appealed to the Foreign Office for help, and the Danish diplomats in Turkey approached the government and offered guarantees: The transit would take only a few days, the children would be accompanied by adults, members of *Hechalutz* in Sweden who had obtained certificates to Palestine; the Danish government would take the group back if difficulties should occur, and the train wagons would be sealed during their passage through Turkey.

After four months of discussion and diplomacy, the Turkish government finally gave in and, in November, allowed passage for 44 children. After a long journey, they arrived safely in Palestine on December 24, 1940. An additional 41 youngsters left on what was to be the last transport to Palestine, on March 4, 1941. The Turkish authorities promised they would shortly issue transit visas to the children remaining, but the German attack on Soviet Union on June 22 put a stop to the last travel route to Palestine and stranded 184 young Jews in occupied Denmark.

### STRANDED IN DENMARK

By now, although the remaining youngsters had adapted to their rural existence, picking up the language amazingly fast, finding friends among the Danes, and getting used to the strenuous work in the fields and the kitchens, as time dragged on and departure was put off again and again, they became increasingly restless and impatient to get on with their lives. Growing up, tired of being treated as children by the League ladies and the Jewish community, they found the necessary restrictions of their movement intolerable; they longed for proper education, and they wanted payment for their work. Some farmers acknowledged that the children did a good job and were willing to pay them; the authorities, however, had expressly forbidden the League Children to replace Danish labor. They were only to do light work to help in the household and in no circumstances were they to receive payment. This was frequently controlled by the police, and, in several cases, the authorities demanded that the youngsters be removed from their foster families because they were suspected of taking jobs from Danish workers.

Some of the League Children wanted to learn a craft and, with the help of foster parents and other networks, a lucky few were able to find apprenticeships. However, if discovered by the police, they had to stop. All apprenticeships were reserved for Danish youngsters. A few children found benefactors who undertook to pay for their higher education. Others were fortunate to get scholarships to agricultural colleges or home economics courses.

Until late 1941 and the beginning of 1942, the youngsters kept in close contact with their families at home. The letters the children received were a joy, but they also gave cause for concern and fear when they learned about the

sufferings of their dear ones. The last letters from home told about deportations to unknown places. Some letters were sent from ghettos and spoke of hunger and disease. This horrifying news resulted in several breakdowns and depression among the children, but there was nothing anyone could do. Even though foster parents were willing to help, the authorities would not allow food packages or money to be sent from Denmark to the parents of the League Children.

### A FRAGILE SAFETY

It was a fragile safety the League Children found in Denmark. On August 29, 1943, the policy of cooperation between the Danes and the Nazis collapsed, and the Danish government resigned. On the night between October 1 and 2, 1943, the Nazis launched an attack on the Jews of Denmark, rounding up and deporting 474 Jews to the Theresienstadt ghetto in the protectorate of *Böhmen-Mähren*; more than 6,000, though, having been warned by fellow Danes, were able to escape across the Sound to neutral Sweden, a rescue well known and widely praised.

Most of the League Children, warned by members of *Hechalutz*, by foster parents, or by neighbors, escaped as well, hidden in summer houses, in barns, or at hospitals until connections were made with the resistance, fishermen or others who undertook to sail them to Sweden. Some tried to make it on their own. Among them were two 19-year-old boys, Sigi Zoltan and Günther Nussbaum, who, tragically, drowned trying to swim across the Sound [Fig. 3.]

The majority, who made it to Sweden in October 1943,



FIG. 3: Passport for Siegfried Zoltan from Prague. Note the infamous red "J" for Jew. Lone Rünitz and University Press Southern Denmark.

experienced a whole new life. With no more restrictions of movement, they were free to gather, party, go to the movies, and fall in love and marry. Because of the conscription, there was a strong need for labor, and the young Jews easily found paid work on farms, in the forests, or in factories. Some of the Czech males went to Britain in 1944 and joined the Czechoslovakian army in order to regain their nationality.

The minority, some 45, almost a fourth of the Jewish youngsters still in Denmark, did not get to Sweden; they had not gotten any warning of the impending raid and were simply picked up by the Gestapo at their foster homes. In late 1941, the Germans had demanded information and addresses for all stateless Jews in Denmark, among them the League Children, who, like other refugees, had by then been stripped of their nationality. The Danish state police were unwilling to hand over this information but, in the end, had to obey. Shortly after, the League was informed that the children were no longer to change their addresses unless permitted by the police. Consequently, they were sitting ducks. Two boys succeeded in escaping their captors, but 43 of them, 13 girls and 30 boys, were deported to Theresienstadt, most of them from the island of Funen. It was rumored that there was at least one Nazi sympathizer in the local police force, and the district chairwoman of the League had been warned against him. One former League Child told this author that he had been warned and was packing his belongings when he received a telephone call from the policeman in question, telling him that there was no danger and that he should stay put at his foster home. The boy was captured during the night.

Even though the conditions were horrendous in the ghetto, and hunger, winter cold, summer heat, dirt, lice, and fear were constant factors, the young stateless Jews from Denmark were much more fortunate than their relatives interned in the “model ghetto” or who previously had passed through it before they were deported to the death camps in Poland. Like the Danish Jewish citizens, the Jewish League Children began to receive food packages during 1944. Furthermore, they, like the Danish Jewish citizens, were to remain in Theresienstadt, according to an agreement between *SS-Obersturmbahnführer* Adolf Eichmann and the Danish authorities. Thus, they were not subject to further deportation because that would endanger the relatively peaceful occupation of Denmark and the regular supplies of foodstuff to Germany.

In April 1945, all the League Children were transported from the camp to safety in Sweden by the famous Swedish “White Busses” (organized by the Red Cross under the leadership of Count Bernadotte of Sweden), which brought back Nordic prisoners from the German concentration camps during the last days of the war, among them the Danes from Theresienstadt. The League Children were thin and marked by their grim stay in Theresienstadt, but they had

all survived the ordeal and looked towards a better future.

## ONCE UPON A TIME IN DENMARK

After the war, the former League Children were spread all over the world. They had lost all or most of their relatives in the Holocaust and were now on their own. Some remained in Sweden, but a large number decided to make Denmark their new home country. Others finally fulfilled their dream of going to Palestine, where they assisted in building the Jewish state. Eight League Children were killed in the Israeli War of Independence in 1948. Those who went back to Czechoslovakia got caught behind the Iron Curtain after the Communist takeover. Some immigrated to the United States, Canada, Australia, and other countries. Wherever they went, they did well. Many of them got a higher education and achieved good positions in Denmark and elsewhere. Some made brilliant careers in agriculture, others started their own business, and still others became excellent craftsmen. They maintained close ties to Denmark and to their former foster families and frequent visits between Denmark and Israel were common.

Although the League Children had not always been met with understanding and patience, they were sheltered, and all felt a deep gratitude towards the women who had made their rescue possible and the families who, once upon a time in Denmark, opened their doors to Jewish children in need.<sup>3</sup>

## NOTES

1. This essay is based on my book *Diskret ophold, Jødiske flygtningebørn under besættelsen* (2010) Syddansk Universitetsforlag. My narrative is mainly based upon the following unpublished material at the Danish State Archives: The Ministry of Justice, the Foreign Office, Police records, (Aliens' Division), The Jewish Community (Mosaik Troessamfund), The Danish Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Danish Women's National Council, narratives from some of the former League Children, and interviews I conducted.
2. The *Alijah* organization, a branch of the Zionist Movement under the aegis of the Jewish Agency, had a mission to save children between 14 and 16 years of age from persecution in Nazi-occupied Europe by sending them to countries willing to offer temporary asylum while also preparing them for their ultimate work as pioneers in Palestine. It was, in effect, a version of the allied *Hechalutz* organization, but for younger children.
3. *Once Upon a Time in Denmark* (Dengang i Danmark) is the name of the organization in Israel of former *chalutzim* in Denmark. The historian Jørgen Hästrup used this name as the Danish title in his narrative of the *Hechalutz* youth and the *Alijah* children in Denmark, 1982, Odense. (In English: *Passage to Palestine: Young Jews in Denmark 1932–1945*. (1983). Translated with support of Thanks to Scandinavia, Odense University Press.)

Charles Adès Fishman tells the story of Hanna (Hannelore) Peiser, whose journey with her sister from Danzig to London concludes with a rare moment of grace. Hanna became an artist whose sculpture stands at Yad Vashem.

*Charles Adès Fishman*

## *Hanna's Journey*

*For Hanna Peiser*

I.

In 1939, you were living in the Free City of Danzig.  
Your name was Hannelore.

Your parents had a plan. They were going to build  
a house in Herzliya. They were going to live  
in Palestine.

On May 5th, you and your sister Ellen left  
on the first leg of your *Kindertransport* journeys.

Your mother and father had been there to comfort you,  
but few other parents could come, and some  
of the children, especially the youngest,

were confused. When the bus wheels began turning,  
a cold wind blew through their hearts.

But you had a small button accordion and played  
a familiar tune. The slight music you made  
soothed them a little.



II.

The trip to Marienburg took all day, then you and Ellen were put on a train that traveled all night in darkness.

You reached Holland safely but crossed on a night-boat to England. Your stomachs churned as the dark sea swelled.

•

In London, at Liverpool Street, Lady Diana Cooper welcomed you, but soon you were on a train to Worthing, where a horse's head could be seen through the station door.

In that elegant seashore town, a woman who wore boots and trousers waited for you and took you and Ellen home.

•

Ellen stayed with the woman who had taken you in, but you were moved to a barely lit house where an elderly couple lived.

The man tried to be nice to you and walked you to a park and a village church, and he sat with you at a piano, so the two of you could play waltzes for four hands,

but you ached to see your parents and could not warm to him or his nearly silent wife. Still, you stayed with them and dreamt of Palestine.

•

In the school nearby, you learned English and recited the “Our Father . . .” and, occasionally, a postcard arrived. The old man tried to be nice, but he tried even harder to make you a Christian, and in that he did not succeed.

III.

Before war broke out, you were sent inland, where you lived with six other *Kinder* and grew close to them. With them, you created a play for your foster parents—a gift for Christmas—

but when the new year came, you were sailing to Haifa: two weeks of blackouts and canon fire and German torpedo boats on the blue-green Mediterranean.

•

When your parents reached Palestine, they had almost nothing, but you and your sister had found each other.

In Haifa, you walked to the harbor, where Ellen was chatting with *Halutzim*—young women who had come to live and work in the Holy Land—and with a few older women

who helped you and Ellen locate a spare room in a dormitory for newcomers.

•

Three days later, the news came: your mother and father had been found. You and Ellen—*now Elisheva*—left on a bus with the pioneers.

There was a stop in Hadera and another in Tel Aviv where, finally, you saw your parents, and the four of you held each other tight.

IV.

Somehow, Hanna, you and your family were reunited, but that coming together was incredibly rare; that healing, among children of the *Kindertransport*, rarer still.

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Lady Diana Cooper, Viscountess Norwich (August 29, 1892–June 16, 1986), was a prominent social figure in London and Paris, widely acknowledged as “the beauty of the century.”

The little-known archival records excerpted in this essay by Jennifer Craig-Norton, including letters (reproduced here exactly as they were written) from the *Kinder* to the agencies responsible for their needs, “provide a unique lens” writes Craig-Norton, “through which to view the *Kindertransport*, offering clear evidence of the children’s deliberative moves towards autonomy and independence and also their continued dependence upon the agencies that sponsored, maintained, and cared for them.”

Jennifer Craig-Norton

## From Dependence to Autonomy: *Kinder*, Refugee Organizations, and the Struggle for Agency

I came over to this country . . . with the children transport from Poland. I would like to ask your advice what I have to do as I would like some family to adopt me. My father is dead and I have tried to communicate with my mother via the red cross but they could not identify her so I must believe that she is not alive either. I would be glad to hear your advice.<sup>1</sup>

This touching plea to a British refugee organization in 1940 from 15-year-old Karl Treuer,<sup>2</sup> an unaccompanied child refugee who came as part of the *Kindertransport*s to Great Britain in 1939, underscores the dependence of such children on the organizations and institutions that had undertaken responsibility for their maintenance and welfare. Separation from their parents in their formative years deprived most of these children of the support and guidance of their families, while their status as refugees circumscribed their choices in every aspect of life. Cash-strapped voluntary refugee organizations had a great deal of control over the lives of the *Kinder*, and their decisions were often based upon cost-benefit calculations and informed by specific socio-cultural attitudes and beliefs. However, the interactions between the children and these guardian organizations and the attempts of the *Kinder* to establish agency and autonomy in their lives are subjects that have never been fully explored in the literature of the *Kindertransport*. Newly discovered case files of *Kinder* from Poland help fill this gap in the historiography and afford new perspectives on the lives of the child refugees in the years after their arrival in Great Britain.

*Kinder* testimonies often provide a narrative of hardship and trauma, recalling years of lonely struggle to achieve independent lives of fulfillment and happiness, worthy of the sacrifices their parents made in relinquishing them. In their recollections, the agencies responsible for the children’s financial maintenance and welfare are rarely mentioned. Imprecise memories of refugee agencies tend to characterize them as remote actors in the children’s lives, deserving of gratitude for their salvation but not to be turned to or relied upon for material or emotional guidance or help. In the words of Thea Feliks Eden, a *Kind* who arrived from Poland in August 1939,

They were pretty good people . . . even when we were being kind of neglected, it was benign neglect, it was not deliberate. . . . Certainly they did the best they knew how to do as far as we were concerned. (Reti & Chase, 1995, p. 52)

Like most other *Kinder* who have left written accounts of their lives, Eden recorded almost nothing about the agency that organized her rescue. She retained no memories about its principals and was likely unaware of its influence over her life. With the exception of the few children who were independently supported by their foster families, however, Thea and the rest of the *Kinder* were dependent upon these organizations to provide for them until they were old enough to become self-supporting. The refugee committees were the ultimate arbiters of where the children lived and with whom, where and for how long they attended school, what

training and jobs they received, and the extent of their religious education. These same organizations made welfare visits, dealt with internment, health, and legal crises, granted permission to marry, and oversaw re-emigration plans. Though largely operating in the background, their influence over the lives of the refugee children was enormous.

Until recently, few records documenting the decision-making processes of the relief agencies have been available for scrutiny by researchers. The records of the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund (PJRF or Fund), a small Anglo-Jewish relief organization formed in 1938, fill this void in the *Kindertransport* archival record. Included in these files is extensive correspondence between the Fund and other refugee organizations as well as between the PJRF and the caregivers who had daily contact with the children. This correspondence offers important insights into the attitudes and philosophies of the agencies and their agents and surrogates who were responsible for the *Kinder*, as well as the challenges they encountered in guiding the material, spiritual, and emotional lives of the child refugees in their care.

Another piece missing from the *Kindertransport* narrative is a corpus of contemporaneous writings by the *Kinder* that articulate their experiences while still child refugees. The documentation of the PJRF offers a rich trove of letters from the children and provides new understandings of their movement from dependent refugee wards to independent, autonomous young adults. The letters demonstrate a range of responses to their status as refugees and their dependence on often remote institutions for every necessity of daily life. These responses include direct requests for help as well as acts of rebellion and misbehavior, and the records also document the reactions of the guardian organizations to these various appeals.

### THE POLISH JEWISH REFUGEE FUND

The Polish Jewish Refugee Fund was formed in response to the expulsion of Polish Jews from Germany in late 1938. The Polish *Sejm* had passed an act in April 1938 annulling the citizenship of those who had lived abroad for more than five years, igniting suspicion in Germany that Poland intended to “toss” Polish Jews to the countries in which they now resided (Tomaszewski, 2012, p. 73). Recognizing that this would effectively render Polish Jews stateless, the German government acted pre-emptively and deported 17,000 Jewish families on October 28, just before the revocation deadline was due to take effect. At several border zones, deportees were allowed to enter Poland, but at the border town of Zbaszyń, where most were sent, 8,000 to 9,000 Jews were forced to establish a refugee camp in an abandoned flour mill and adjacent stables.

This refugee crisis attracted international relief efforts, and it was in this context that the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund began to bring children to the United Kingdom under

the *Kindertransport* plan. Although public statements by the Fund indicated a goal of bringing at least 500 children from Poland, in total the Fund brought out only 154 before the war put an end to the transports (No-Man's-Land Children in London, 1939) [Fig 1 and cover].



**FIG. 1:** A group photo of the Zbaszyń children taken in Jewish children's camp in Otwock near Warsaw just prior to departure from Poland, July or August 1939. Private collection of SH.

Its day-to-day operations were carried on by a small committee of men who represented well-established, Orthodox Anglo-Jewry. At the head was Elsley Zeitlyn, a strongly opinionated man of some self-importance, whose personality and values would have a profound impact upon many of the children in the Fund's care.

The Polish Jewish Refugee Fund operated semi-independently but cooperatively with the group of relief organizations collectively known as “Bloomsbury House.” These included the Movement for the Care of Children in Germany (later renamed the Refugee Children's Movement or RCM), the body responsible for caring for the majority of unaccompanied children who were brought to Great Britain; and the Jewish Refugees Committee (JRC), out of which the RCM had evolved. The Fund also worked closely with the Board of Guardians and Trustees for the Jewish Poor (JBoG), which helped oversee the children's welfare. The records show that the experiences of the “Zbaszyń children” closely mirror those of refugee children from other parts of Europe, but in one respect they were unusual. Coming to England as “double refugees,” having undergone the trauma of deportation, they arrived as true charity cases, with few possessions and almost no documents. Expelled in haste from their homes in Germany, they were utterly dependent upon the refugee agencies.

## THE KINDER AND THEIR FAMILIES: EARLY ATTEMPTS AT AGENCY

The earliest letters in the files of the Polish *Kinder* emphasize their powerlessness and dependence. Almost all written in German, these letters overwhelmingly concern the children's families left behind in uncertain circumstances in Poland. These first attempts at establishing agency were largely fruitless, as the children had no means with which to secure the guarantees necessary to bring their families to safety. Karl, whose appeal for an adoptive family is quoted at the beginning of this essay, had just turned 14 when he wrote for help in getting both his widowed mother and sister to England. Zeitlyn's reply was anything but encouraging:

I am sorry to say that it is difficult beyond words to do what you are asking. There are no guarantors to be found. . . . Please note I am not hopeful, owing to the very large number who are similarly waiting. (Zeitlyn, 1939)

Demonstrating both desperation and initiative, Karl wrote again a few days later, including in his letter the contact information of several potential guarantors, but apparently in vain. Karl, the youngest of five children, lacked agency to effect the outcome he desired, and his sad appeal for an adoptive home expressed his anguish as he came to terms with the disappearance of his loved ones. Karl was billeted in a refugee hostel but clearly longed for the security and love of a family, something he was never again to experience in his teens. His sister Ruth and brother Herman were murdered in the Holocaust (Yad Vashem, 2012). The fate of his sister Hanni, his brother Hans, and his mother, Chaja, remains unknown.

Many of the children brought from Poland came from large families, and while the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund seems to have made concerted efforts to bring siblings, there were numerous instances of children left behind. Simon, 16 when he arrived, came from one of these families and wrote to the Fund soon after arrival.

I want to thank you for all what you have done for me. . . . One thought but keeps me in affliction, the thought of my parents and brothers, who have come, by unfortunate circumstances, undeserved into poverty and despair. . . . I know you are deciding the boys who will come to England. You would do a great deed if you would take over one or two of my brothers, to relieve them their struggle for return to an ordinary life and a useful job for the future. They are unable to speak the Polish language and so they have no future there at all. (Markel, 1939)

Simon wrote at least four more letters to the Fund over the next few weeks, hopeful that at least the younger of his two brothers might be brought over. Tragically, the fate of Simon's family is known. His three brothers, Richard, David, and Willy, whose photos as infants and young men rest in Simon's file, were murdered in the Holocaust, along with their parents Chana and Feiwei (Yad Vashem) [Figs. 2 and 3].



**FIG. 2:** From left to right: Wolfgang (Willie), Simon, David, and Richard Markel circa 1927. On the reverse, in Chana Markel's handwriting, "As little boys." Permission granted by the University of Southampton Library.



**FIG. 3:** From left to right: Richard, David, Willie, and Simon Markel. Taken in Chemnitz, Germany, 1938, just prior to the family's deportation to Poland. Permission granted by the University of Southampton Library.

In the end, Simon lacked the agency to change even his own fate. He was one of the few Polish boys to be interned as an enemy alien and was sent as a “prisoner of war” to Canada. Reclassified as a refugee, he stayed in Canada for the rest of his life. He died in 2008, aged 86, leaving no children (Markel Obituary, 2008)

Siblings who were able to immigrate together were often separated once they arrived in England. The files contain many examples of children attempting to maintain contact with one another, although they depended upon the Fund to provide fares and permission for such reunions. Thea Felix's older brother Karol made such an appeal:

I hereby make an application for a grant of £2 to cover the cost of visiting my sister Thea which has undergone a severe operation. My present wages are 34 shillings a week of which I pay 30/- [the shorthand notation for 30 shillings no pence] for Food-Lodging. This leaves me with just over 4 shillings a week, of which I cannot afford to spend this sum. (Feliks, K., 1941)

Karol's request met with mixed results. He was able to visit his ailing sister, but the Fund granted him only half the amount requested to defray his costs. Ida, 14, made a request of a more permanent nature:

I was brought over by your Fund from Poland. . . . I am now doing Millinary, I am earning 13/9 in apprentice. I have a brother who is living in Leeds, who, though happy, would be happier still if I would be with him. I am therefore asking you to transfer me to Leeds in order that I should be with him. (Najman, 1941)

Within a month she was billeted in a Harrogate hostel only a short distance from her brother.

These exchanges demonstrate interesting dynamics in the relationship between the PJRF and the children. The appeals reveal that the children understood the role the Fund played in their lives, and that they looked to the organization as a body willing and able to grant their requests. Nevertheless, the formality of the children's letters, the fact that they often felt the need to “introduce” themselves, and their imperative to give extended descriptions of their financial circumstances connote the aloof, remote, and hierarchical nature of their interactions. The “Sir” of the children's letters was clearly not someone with whom they had developed a warm, parental relationship.

Some children were simply too young to advocate for themselves, and in these cases, the record of the Fund in keeping siblings together is less auspicious. As Grete Dukat explained, “My sister and I came together but unfortunately parted on arrival and I was not told where she was going. Luckily I managed to write to my mother in Poland and

she sent me a card with her [Johanna's] address” (personal communication, 2012). At 10, Grete was too young to know where to appeal for information about her sister, and apparently her foster family was not apprised of the separation. Remarkably, she had to find out her sister's whereabouts in England from their mother in Poland. Grete and Johanna re-established contact, but they never again heard from their parents, who, along with their two brothers, died in Nazi-occupied Poland.

Some siblings refused to be separated regardless of the consequences. Sara and Yehudit Hochman,\* who had been guaranteed by different families, were among the few who insisted on staying together. Yehudit remembers that their mother's parting words in Poland were to “hold one another's hands and never let go” (personal communication, 2012). For the Hochman girls, this meant accepting a place with a foster mother who was interested primarily in obtaining a maid and child minder (Y. H., personal communication, 2012). Yehudit carries no fond memories of the foster mother, who resented her and took little interest in her well-being. From the files, a picture emerges of Sara as determined and resourceful, imbued with a strong sense of responsibility for her sister and a willingness to seek assistance whenever and from whomever she could. When the foster parents withheld the girls' pocket money, Sara wrote to the Fund seeking help. “Till now I didn't trabble you But now the people wher we are staying are not doing to well. Please would you be so kind to help my sister and myself with some mony” (S. H., 1940). Later letters from the archives show growing confidence in both mastery of English and determination of purpose. At 16, she wrote to the Fund, spelling out for the first time the true situation in the foster home. Declaring her intention to seek independence, she also demonstrated a continued sense of responsibility for her younger sister.

I must tell you that we have always been unhappy with Mrs Bernstein. I was just good enough to do all the housework and look after her children. Now that I am 16 ½ years old, I have registered for work and if I get permission I hope to be working here in Aylesbury for the Government . . . and I would be very thankful if you could find out if there are any Jewish people in Aylesbury who would have my sister Yehudit she is 11 years old now. I am shure that you will help us out. In the hope to here very soon of you. (S. H., 1941)

Within a few months, the Fund moved the girls. Sara was boarded in Leeds and her sister in a hostel in Harrogate, which Sara was assured “was only a bus ride from Leeds” (Kaizer, 1941). Sara Hochman secured the girls' removal from an unhappy foster placement largely through her own efforts and agency. That she appreciated the Fund's sup-

port is perhaps indicated by an engraved wedding invitation made out to the Executive of the PJRF that remains in her file. Though Fund representatives were unable to attend, they did send Sara £25 as a wedding gift (Gorowitz, 1945). The invitation appended after her parents' names the words "late of Poland." The Holocaust robbed the Hochmans not only of their parents but their older sister as well (daughters of S. H., personal communication, 2012).

#### **KINDER LETTERS: DIRECT APPEALS AND AGENCY**

The files highlight how absolutely dependent upon the Fund most Polish children were for everyday necessities. Much of the PJRF case files' correspondence concerns the acquisition of clothing for the refugee children, most of whom had arrived with very little, and whose guarantors were not well-off. The PJRF kept a large clothing depot, which those children close to London could visit. Problems arose for those who were too far away to come and try things on; more than one file contains the tracing of a child's foot sent in to help workers choose the proper size shoes.

Virtually all of the Polish children or their caregivers petitioned the PJRF at one time or another for clothing or shoes, and the delays, mistakes in sizing, and clumsy logistics of sending clothing from a central storehouse to children scattered all over Great Britain caused untold aggravation to children and caregivers alike. Often, older children made their own appeals, and these demonstrate a developing confidence and self-assurance. Several boys who had recently been placed in jobs in London wrote asking for clothing and incidentals:

It has not been possible for us on the various occasions on which we have been at our offices to tell you . . . our requests. . . . We...had to buy today Toothpaste . . . Soap . . . Bootpolish . . . Writing pad . . . Envelopes . . . We are in urgent need of . . . suits and pocket money and we would appreciate a quick settlement. (Klarmann, Ohringer, & Klarmann, 1940)

Even when forced to appeal for trifling sums and second-hand clothing, these refugee boys were asserting their importance as men "in their offices" and demonstrating a sense of themselves as something more than charity cases.

The same inefficiencies that plagued clothing distribution applied to other things the children needed and could not afford. One prolonged episode involved training costs and materials for the Nussbaum brothers, who desired to become architects. Bruno, who was working in an architect's office, nurtured lofty dreams.

I am not learning as much as I am shure you would wish me to. . . . Of course it is one of my greatest dreams to go to college and to achieve the R.I.B.A. [Royal Insti-

tute of British Architects] in five years. After the war, architects will be needed, not only in England, but all over the universe, and I will get many chances to prove myself worthy of the letters behind my name. I would then be able to prove my gratitude to the Polish Committee which have [done] many good things for us. . . . I would be very grateful if you would consider of my going to any college of architecture for it is on this my position of the future depends. (Nussbaum, 1941)

Despite his charmingly worded and persuasive arguments, architecture school was ruled out as too expensive, and both he and his brother were enrolled in night school and correspondence courses. In November 1941, 15-year-old Josef requested some necessary supplies. Getting no reply, he wrote again a month later, this time helpfully providing information on two sets of materials and prices:

The set marked number 1 is the material I would like as it is just the sort suitable for my work, but as I think that it is a bit too much money I have put another set in, marked number 2 which I could probable make do. I would be so grateful to you if you would let me have the first set. (Nussbaum, 1941)

Still waiting nearly a year later, Nussbaum wrote in desperation:

It is about one half years that I am writing every month to you, for payment of some materials, on which I did not receive any final reply. Will you be so kind and reply me so quick as possible, because I need these materials very urgently. (Nussbaum, 1942)

The request made its way through three different refugee organizations and was finally fulfilled by the JRC almost two years after Josef's first letter.

Undeterred by such setbacks, both Josef and Bruno persevered in their quest to become architects. Bruno completed his study and training through an army scheme, although in late 1945 he was still applying to the Fund for money to purchase architectural drawing tools. Josef's file reveals that in 1946 he was studying with the Royal Institute of British Architects and working as an architectural technician. The Fund was paying for Josef's schooling, supplies, and exam fees and supplementing his living expenses. The grants did not cease until 1948 when Josef was close to becoming a qualified architect, which both he and his brother eventually achieved. The Nussbaum boys' stories illustrate a lasting bond between the PJRF and many of its wards, who chafed at times against their dependence on the Fund but continued to call on the refugee agency for help in achieving their goals. In turn, the Fund, despite



its infuriating inefficiencies, made a marked effort to help them succeed in their desired calling.

### REBELLION, MISBEHAVIOR, AND ACTING OUT AS FORMS OF AGENCY

Given the frustration and aggravation of dealing with the relief organizations, it is not surprising that some children chose to establish agency by acting out. Working *Kinder* were expected to hand their wages back to their hostel or boarding house, retaining only a small amount for themselves, so the temptation to keep as much of it as possible must have been great. The Leeds Refugee Committee reported that Rudi Kleinbrodt had been “systematically keeping back money belonging to the hostel and bringing false envelopes containing wages to the secretary” (Minsk, 1941). They advised the Fund to take the boy back “and punish him by sending him to a camp or similar place at your discretion,” extracting a signed confession from the boy.

As you have heard I have done a big offence, I have kept from my weekly wages sometimes few shillings without permission. Unfortunately I cant tell you the sum which I kept back but I think it must be about £5. I feel that I made a big mistake and I beg your pardon and my guardian for all my offences. I hope you will give me a chance. I put my fate in your hands and I hope for vergivemness. (Kleinbrodt, 1941)

Fortunately, the Fund did forgive Rudi and he was allowed to finish his training in Leeds. Rudi’s attempt to appropriate some of his own hard-earned money may not have been the most ethical way of asserting his independence, but it demonstrates the lengths to which these children would go to ameliorate their sense of powerlessness.

Some boys developed a sense of righteous indignation with regard to their treatment and refused to be cowed into abject apologies or expressions of repentance. One of the most outspoken was Mendel Salomon, who wrote in exasperation after waiting six weeks for a new pair of shoes.

I received a note . . . informing that that I will soon receive my shoes. I answered this note and a week afterwards I sent yet another letter. Both of the letters were not answered. I think it disgraceful!! . . . If I don’t get the promised shoes and other clothing before Passover I will have to report the matter to Lieutenant Colonel Levey (Salomon, 1941).

Quite surprisingly, Mendel’s intemperate outburst and threat to report the Fund to the head of the ORT-OSE Training School elicited no rebuke from London. However, when he helped a friend escape the ORT, he incurred a serious punishment from those same Leeds authorities. Appealing

to Sidney Gerrard, who ran the PJRF Children’s Department and whom the children treated as a confidante, Mendel wrote:

I knew before that Bergmann will go to London and I helped him to the station. Therefore Colonel Levey stopped my pocket money and gave me penalty duty and reported me to the police. I refused of course to do the penalty work. Yesterday I had to go to the C.I.D. [Crime Investigation Department]. Besides this Colonel Levey wants to send me on a farm without my agreement. . . . Please get in touch with Levey as soon as possible. I expect an answer soon. (Salomon, 1941)

Mendel did not hide the injustice he felt at being turned into the police and punished and, like a child playing one parent against the other, hoped that the Fund would see things from his perspective. It appears as if Sidney interceded on Mendel’s behalf, for a week later the colonel’s secretary wrote that Mendel “has some good in him and should make a success of his training if he will be amenable to discipline” (Anderson, 1941). Mendel was allowed to continue with his training, and no more mention was made of police or penalty work.

These episodes confirm that those who interacted with the boys on a daily basis were apt to take a much dimmer view of behavior that they considered outrageous than the agencies whose involvement with the boys was more remote. Karl Treuer\* who also “escaped” Leeds, fled to the PJRF offices on Soho Square in London and “complained to us about the treatment meted out to him at the hostel, where he said the food is bad and he has no friends and where he said he felt as though he were in a prison” (Kaizer, 1941). Karl also lobbied the Fund to support his becoming a waiter because “his father had started as a waiter and had become the owner of many restaurants in Leipzig and he would like to do the same.” Apprised of Treuer’s charges, J. A. Barrett, the Leeds refugee hostel manager, fired off an affronted reply:

There can be no doubt that he is the worst boy we have. . . . Personally I disagree with him learning to be a waiter at a non-Kosher hostel. Can you imagine the mentality of a person who boasts of eating Traife [non-Kosher] food? I personally think . . . it is mainly the fact that he gets “tips” that holds him to the waiter’s job. You yourself have visited “our prison” and I only wish all the Jewish children in the world were fed as good as our children at the hostel are fed. Treuer has been nothing but trouble to me. On three occasions I have received complaints from Gentile neighbours because he has stood in the window shouting “Heil Hitler.” On questioning he admitted it and said he was only joking.

. . . I am of the opinion that he . . . is not fit to stay in the Hostel as he is a bad influence towards the other boys. (Barrett, 1941).

Six weeks later, the situation had not improved and the Leeds Committee wrote again:

Treuer . . . must definitely be sent away from our Hostel . . . he has a tendency to mix with non-Jewish elements, and openly confesses to enjoying and eating traife food. He is obstinate and stupid. We are prepared to send him to any address you give us. (Minsk, 1941)

Two weeks later, they put Karl on a train to London where he was found a waiter's job, but within a year he was in the custody of the London Police Court Probation Service for failing to register with the Labor Exchange. The probation officer was sufficiently impressed with the boy to help him prepare for a Royal Air Force entrance exam, which he subsequently failed (Baumguard, 1943). Karl's file ends with a record of his having entered military service in the Polish Army (PJRF Report, 1944).

Karl's behavior was an obvious cry for help from a youth deeply troubled by the break with his family. This was the same boy who had written so plaintively to the Fund years earlier in an attempt to save his mother and sister and asking them to find a family to adopt him. Wanting to replicate the career of an absent father fits the profile of a child longing for connection with his shattered past. This lonely boy complained about not having any friends and was castigated for "mixing with non-Jewish types," perhaps his only companions. Unfortunately, the people in charge of his welfare could not get past his boastful rejection of kosher food to view it as desperate attention-getting behavior. Karl was instead labelled "obstinate and stupid" by the Leeds refugee workers and sent away. Even his admittedly outrageous "Heil Hitler" stunt can be seen as an attempt by a deeply troubled boy to garner attention. These children, with no parents and in most cases no viable substitutes, had to negotiate the difficult passage to young adulthood on their own, and some were more successful than others in making that transition gracefully and successfully.

Other boys sent to Leeds were unhappy with their training. Several wrote to Sydney Gerrard about their "engineering" training. "We have fortunately a very good master and made already a switchboard and other experiments. I am also trained already in another kind of engineering which forms a good professional training, i.e., domestical work!" (Freund, 1941)

While Isi Freund made light of the matter, Oskar Bergmann expressed bitterness: "I am now here seven weeks and the only thing what I learned was housecleaning. I knew this trade already before . . . please try to get me

out of here" (Bergmann, 1941). Not surprisingly, these were some of the boys who eventually "broke out" of the ORT and the Leeds Hostel. Disappointed with their limited opportunities, they became their own agents, even if rebellion and rule-breaking were necessary to achieve their objectives. Perceiving Leeds as a stifling and uncaring environment, they turned to the London officials for help. The Fund and their partners the Jewish Board of Guardians were not averse to using guilt, stern reprimands, and even threats to try to turn recalcitrant troublemakers around but did not often implement the harsh measures recommended by their regional advisors. Young men whose defiance earned the ire and condemnation of Leeds officials continued to enjoy the PJRF's support, despite their transgressions.

On a couple of occasions, the refugee children staged group uprisings in attempts to get the Fund to respond to their needs. One of these occurred on Mutford's Farm, Hertfordshire, where about a dozen teenage boys had been sent from London in the first few days after war was declared. They were given no schooling, training or proper clothing for the work they were required. Herbert Haberberg remembers harvesting potatoes in the late fall in the only clothes he had—a suit of "plus-fours" his uncle had bought for him in Poland in a well-meaning attempt to dress his nephew as a proper English boy (personal communication, January, 2012).

After a few months, the boys, fed up with the work and desperate to learn English, staged a "strike," which apparently achieved the desired result. Soon after this incident, Elsley Zeitlyn wrote the RCM asking for helping in finding new homes for the boys: "I have had all of them at a Farm in Buntingford for the past seven months with a view to their being trained in agriculture, but I regret to say that it has turned out a hopeless task" (Zeitlyn, 1940) [Fig 4].

Zeitlyn undoubtedly had dreams of training these boys for Palestine, in addition to wanting to keep them away from London's temptations. The boys were sent to Leeds and Ely, where they finally learned English, although some continued to rebel.

Individual acts of defiance also signalled a growing sense of independence and assertiveness. Herbert Haberberg and Jacques Reich, placed in a strictly Orthodox hostel at Ely, rebelled in the same way: They sneaked off to the pictures on Saturday afternoons, when they were expected to be engrossed in Sabbath religious study and observation (Haberberg, personal communication, 2012; Rich, 1997). As Jacques Reich, who earned his pocket money with a paper route he started on his own, stated rather proudly,

I went to the pictures in Saturday afternoon and it only cost four pence . . . if I didn't go on Saturday afternoon I have to pay eight pence and [the hostel managers] were not going to pay the difference for me so I decided to go Saturday afternoon. (Rich, 1997)

7795

Polish Refugee Fund. No. 99-

LIST OF 100 REFUGEE CHILDREN TO BE BROUGHT OUT TO ENGLAND.

1. Name (Surname first): PAGHEWANI, Ischak Edward. ✓

2. Present address: PREMISL

3. Date and Place of Birth: Leipzig. 4th April 1925.  
Age: 14 yrs 4 mths.

4. Previous residence: -

5. Parents: Father: Meyer Leo. Mother: Pessel.  
Address: Paris. 4 rue de Rosseurs 25. - Father  
Przemysl. Pilsudskiego 5. - Mother.


6. Documents: Pass of mother.

7. Education: Class 4. Elementary School.

8. Relatives Abroad or other Remarks:

9. Guaranteed in England by:

NEWCASTLE JEWISH CHILDRENS  
REFUGEE COMMITTEE.  
Hon. Sec. Miss S.E. Rothfield  
15 Larkspur Terrace,  
Newcastle on Tyne.  
Tel. Jesmond 2062.



**FIG. 4:** An example of the form created by the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund for the children, recording family information and details of guarantors and placements. This boy was sent to Mutford's Farm (crossed out), Ely, and, eventually, Leeds. Permission granted by the University of Southampton Library.

The potency of these memories proves how significant these actions were for boys trying to wrest some control over their own lives.

It is clear from the archival record that refugee girls very infrequently acted out or rebelled in the way the boys regularly did. One exception was a group of girls at a refugee hostel in Middlesbrough. Enjoined by their parents not to be turned into maids, the girls had refused to do the household chores required of all the hostel girls. The Middlesbrough Refugee Committee, threatening to send the girls back to the Fund in London, received carte blanche to "exercise the sternest disciplinary measure against the refractory girls" (Zeitlyn, 1939). Like the boys, many of these teenage girls wanted to find jobs in London, and Zeitlyn requested the Middlesbrough Committee not allow them to leave the hostel, no doubt hoping they would stay safely in the provinces. Though most of them eventually did make their way to the big city, the Fund was vigilant in monitoring their accommodations, jobs, and even boyfriends.

The very youngest children lacked the means to act independently and resorted to the few methods available to them to express their needs. These behaviors were often

interpreted as troublesome and perverse and the children labelled as "nervous" and difficult to place. Manfred Lindenbaum was a child who fit into this category according to a report by the RCM Regional Committee chairman in Cambridgeshire:

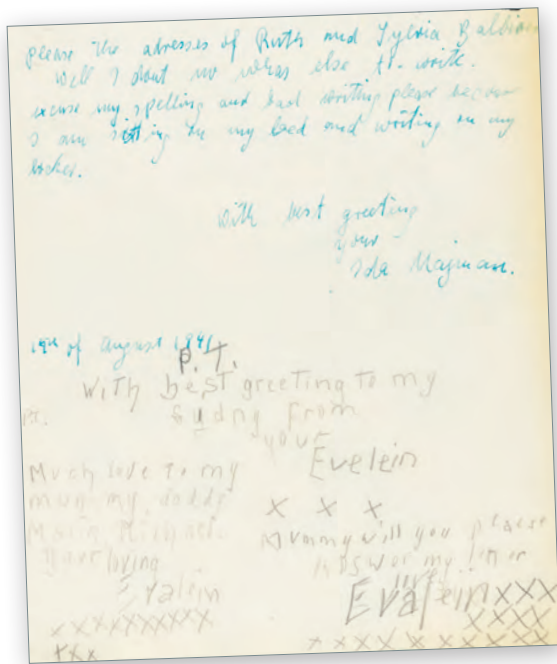
Manfred. . . . is not quite a normal child. He is very backward and has suffered very much from the separation from his brother and from the other members of his family when he first came over to this country. (RCM Regional Secretary, 1942)

Manfred, only six when he was taken from his parents, suffered deep emotional trauma as a result of the separation, which he perceived at the time as abandonment and rejection. He describes himself as a challenging child full of anger and sorrow and difficult to get along with (Lindenbaum, personal communication, 2012). His primary reaction was a refusal to learn, which is what had earned him the labels of "backward" and "not quite normal" from an otherwise perceptive refugee agency worker. Fortunately for the boy, a nurturing teacher taught him to read at the age of 10, and he eventually shed the damaging epithets applied to him as a child. The pain of losing his parents and sister in the Holocaust, however, was never assuaged.

The youngest children could only express their anger, insecurity, and sense of abandonment in behaviors that were destined to alienate the very caregivers whose love and affection they craved. Such a child was Ewa Mohr, who was only 4 years old when she arrived in England, and who changed addresses an astonishing 17 times, living with five different families and in three hostels in the space of a little over two years. Ewa, who was also hospitalized three times for infectious skin diseases, wet the bed and was consistently described as "nervous" and sometimes labelled "dirty." A foster mother reported that she "will not listen . . . and she kicked . . . Mr Dennis where we are staying so hard and is so cheeky to them that they have threatened to turn us out . . . Mrs Dennis cannot have Evelyn's nonsense anymore" (Nykerk, 1941). Each foster mother had initially been very fond of the girl but soon found her too difficult to keep. Judith Gruenfeld (1941), the headmistress of the Jewish school to which Ewa had been sent, wrote that even one described as "the best foster mother we could wish for" could not cope with the girl.

She really took the child to her heart and she and her husband have been wonderful to her but little Ewa is an irresponsible child, too small and undisciplined to put in an ordinary home. Mrs Stephens declares now that the child makes her life a misery and that although she feels sorry for the kid she cannot put up with her any longer. (Gruenfeld, 1941)

It is hardly surprising that Ewa, who had been buffeted about for over two years, acted out in attempts to secure the nurturing home she hungered for. These counterproductive and desperate acts of agency were all that were available to an emotionally bruised little girl [Fig. 5].



**FIG. 5:** The last page of a letter from Ida Najman to the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund from the Harrogate Hostel that included a note written by 6-year-old Ewa Mohr to one of her sets of foster parents, 1941. Permission granted by the University of Southampton Library.

The Fund finally placed Ewa in the home of a childless couple in North London, who seemed patient enough to deal with her behavior. When the PJRF considered sending Ewa back to one of her previous hostels, the foster father responded with an impassioned plea:

You informed us that she was quite homeless and alone in the world. The fact was indeed apparent. . . . We were shocked to see . . . the constant nervous shivers and trembling of the hands and body. She was unkempt, her clothes were torn and dirty. . . . She came to us a wild, uncared for little child speaking the language of the gutter. . . . It is clear that she has been bundled about from place to place with no one to take a sufficient interest in her. . . . She often says pathetically, "Nobody ever wanted me." . . . She is still suffering . . . from enuresis nocturna, and we have to attend to her regularly twice a night. . . . She is quite an intelligent child, but . . . backward because of neglect. . . . We . . . are very glad to say that since she has been with us . . . she speaks better, behaves better, and her nerves are steadier. . . . It would, in our opinion, be outrageous . . .

to wrench her away from her first and only happy environment. . . . I am resolved to continue as guardian of this unfortunate and defenceless girl. (Goder, 1942)

Happily for Ewa, the Fund relented and left her with the family. When her file ends, 12-year-old Ewa was attending boarding school in Oxford and still living with the couple, whose forbearance may have helped the child experience a semblance of normality for the remainder of her childhood.

#### REFUGEE ORGANIZATIONS' RESPONSES TO KINDER ACTS OF AGENCY

The organizations' responses to the children's appeals, misbehavior, and defiance reveal a number of attitudes that informed their decision-making as they guided and shaped these children's lives. Elsley Zeitlyn's reaction to the refractory Middlesbrough girls emphasized the Fund's expectation that the children be grateful and did not hesitate to shame its wards into compliance.

Regina should be reminded that she was taken from Zbaszyn, and be told it is most ungrateful as well as disgusting indeed for a person who is cared for as she is, not to do the work that you put her to do. (Zeitlyn, 1939)

In a similar vein, the Fund admonished a recalcitrant young man by reminding him that the *Kinder* owed their lives to their rescuers. "I wish to remind you that our Committee has brought you over from Poland, and you can imagine your position if you still would have been there" (Gorowitz, 1941). Ingratitude trumped almost all other transgressions, as Salomon Lassman, who wanted help in finding a job, was reminded:

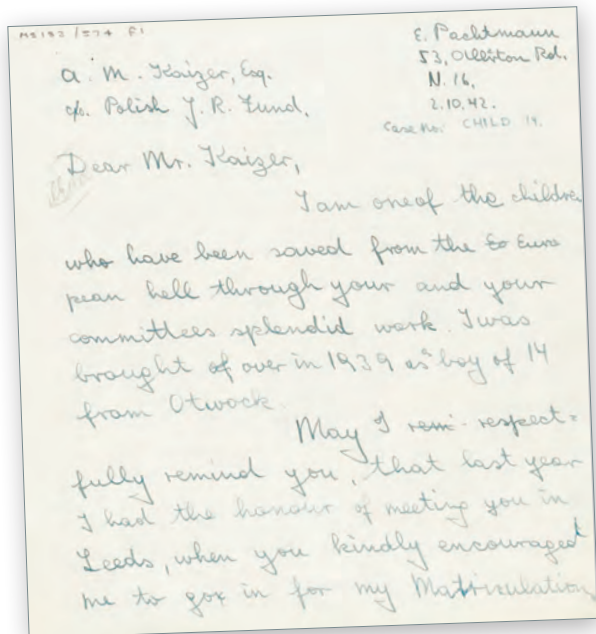
Boys who came into this country under special conditions . . . are subject to the regulations made by the Government. . . . This seems a matter which has not yet been appreciated by you and I am sorry to say that your letter does not contain a solitary word of appreciation for what has been done on your behalf. (Zeitlyn, 1939)

Such reproaches can only have reminded these children of their humble status as refugees and their dependence upon the agencies that controlled so many aspects of their lives.

Some of the refugee children internalized the lessons of gratitude and incorporated them into their letters of self-advocacy, perhaps garnering more positive responses from the refugee agencies holding the purse strings.

I am one of the children who has been saved from the European hell through your and your committees splendid work. I was brought over . . . as a boy of 14 from

Ottock. . . . Last year you kindly encouraged me to go in for my Matriculation and promised me that your committee would pay the necessary expenses. May I inform you that I have . . . gone in for my matric . . . . May I ask you to grant me my expenses, amount £5.10.6 for the course, and two and a half guineas for my examination. (Pachtmann, 1942) [Fig. 6]



**FIG. 6:** A letter written by Eduard Pachtmann to the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund requesting reimbursement for educational expenses, 1942. Permission granted by the University of Southampton Library.

The Fund was well disposed to offer Pachtmann what encouragement it could, for they had received numerous reports of his academic promise. His teacher at Ely described him as “a most keen and able scholar . . . top of the form and . . . brilliant in all subjects.” (Pachtmann, 1942). The headmaster of the Ely hostel wrote:

He is a very superior type of boy—quite the outstanding boy in the Home in character and intelligence. . . . ideally suited to . . . law or medicine—in the circumstances he would have to be satisfied with technical training. He is a boy of rare ability and will undoubtedly do well. (Bernstein, 1940)

Pachtmann did do well, and passed his Matric, but even this brilliant boy later succumbed to temptation and ran afoul of the refugee agencies. In 1942, the JBoG had to “severely admonish this boy who has been deceiving us about the amount of his wages” (Gee, 1942). For seven weeks, Eduard had been pocketing an unreported five-shilling raise, and, after being caught, was subject to reproach and censure. Nevertheless, the Fund continued to support him at least

for another year while he pursued yeshiva studies in Gateshead (Laulicht & Pachtmann, 1943).

The Ely headmaster's letter above bluntly articulates the diminished prospects that their refugee status conferred upon most of these children, a theme echoed throughout the Fund's files. Zeitlyn had expressed the same thought in regard to the Middlesbrough girls. “I would . . . insist that your Committee must exercise all the discipline possible. I am afraid that we are inclined to spoil the children instead of preparing them to see life as it is” (Zeitlyn, 1939). “Life as it is” meant accepting the role of refugee and adjusting one's ambitions accordingly. Considering the financial obstacles and restrictive attitudes arrayed against them, the fortitude that many of these refugee children displayed in persevering through night and correspondence courses to achieve matriculation and other qualifications is remarkable. It is through these endeavors, perhaps, that the *Kinder* most resolutely exhibited their agency and determination.

### FINDING THEIR VOICES

The case files of the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund provide detailed records of the complex interactions among refugee children, their caregivers, and the agencies responsible for their maintenance and welfare. When combined with *Kinder* testimony, a multilayered account of their lives as unaccompanied child refugees emerges. Contrary to the impression that these children were helpless and voiceless, it is clear that if they knew to whom they should apply for help, the children were eager and willing to advocate for themselves, their siblings, and even their threatened families back in Poland. The children's correspondence is especially important in identifying their emerging confidence and assertiveness in seeking reunions with siblings, better living conditions, more suitable jobs, and further educational opportunities. Far from being passive actors whose lives were wholly shaped by the decisions of remote and hegemonic organizations, these children were actively engaged in establishing agency in their own lives, whether it was through direct appeal, or less positively, through misbehavior and rebellion.

Nevertheless, the refugee organizations' correspondence demonstrates clearly the constraints that circumscribed the *Kinder's* lives and limited their autonomy. Most obviously, when it came to rescuing their own families trapped in Poland, the children were completely helpless; and, similarly, they had little success in appealing for money for advanced education. The files confirm that the Fund was most responsive to requests they could grant with minimal expenditure, such as moving children from unsuitable placements or nearer their siblings. The children's letters also demonstrate continued dependence on relief organizations for basic necessities such as clothing and spending money. Commentary on and reactions to the children's

entreaties and actions from the principals and agents of the Fund contribute significantly to our understanding of the decision-making processes of the welfare agencies. These documents underscore the degree to which the children were expected to be mindful of their refugee status and grateful for their salvation. They highlight the importance of both finances and relief workers' attitudes about the refugee children in their care. In total, these archival records, and especially the children's letters, provide a unique lens through which to view the *Kindertransport*, offering clear evidence of the children's deliberative moves towards autonomy and independence and also their continued dependence upon the agencies that sponsored, maintained, and cared for them.

#### NOTES

1. All quotes are transcribed as exactly as written.
2. Names with an asterisk are pseudonyms.

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"The admission of a handful of unfortunate people means little in the economic life of 120 million people, but it means a great deal for us and the world as a symbol of the strength of democratic convictions and our common faith," stated New York's then-Democratic Senator Robert F. Wagner (1939), when he testified before a Senate–House immigration subcommittee on the subject of rescuing Jewish children from Germany (*Jewish Telegraphic Agency*). In absolute opposition were 42 Allied Patriotic Societies, represented by Mrs. Edward B. Huling, who "said she did not want 'this country to play Santa Claus when our own people are starving'" (*JTA*). The poetry of Davi Walders renders this painful episode unforgettable. For further information about the Wagner-Rogers Refugee Bill, go to [archive.jta.org/article/1939/04/21/2846226/wagnerrogers-refugee-bill-backed-at-hearing-1400-adoption-offers-reported](http://archive.jta.org/article/1939/04/21/2846226/wagnerrogers-refugee-bill-backed-at-hearing-1400-adoption-offers-reported).

*Davi Walders*

## *Killing the Wagner–Rogers Bill*

There are so many ways to let things die:  
committee recesses, members taken ill,  
called away moments before a vote, closed-  
door actions or just not showing up.

Most things don't even require  
a filibuster. There are quieter ways —  
argue wording, delete, tack on, amend  
the bill to death so that even sponsors

can't stomach the language they wrought.  
They tried, oh, they tried, Mr. Wagner  
and Mrs. Rogers, the senior Dingell, too,  
that spring and summer of 1940,



but the Capitol was hot and sweating  
with America-Firsters and superpatriots  
who did not want those children, not  
those odd children, not children with

dark hair and dark eyes, not those Jewish  
children from Germany. Later, children  
from Britain would be all right, a country's  
duty even, but not yet, not for those

twenty thousand children with terrified  
eyes, whose parents had already disappeared,  
not that summer when it was so hot that  
things just died quietly behind closed doors.

“The challenge for teachers,” posits Kay Andrews, “is how to turn this complex history into classroom material that both engages and aids students in understanding the events relating to the Kindertransport” and to consider the confusion that may arise if it is taught as another event in the Holocaust. Pair this essay with Maryann McLoughlin’s (pp. 61–66) for additional examples of truths often ignored in teaching this history.

Kay Andrews

## The British Government and the *Kindertransport*: Moving Away from the Redemptive Story

Every day, hundreds of commuters and visitors travel through Liverpool Street Station in the heart of London, passing a bronze statue of a group of five children with their luggage. Two boys wearing knee-length shorts, long socks, and caps; a little girl seated on her suitcase, clutching a teddy bear; and two older girls carrying suitcases and looking into the distance are gathered at the end of a piece of railway track [Fig. 1].

The memorial, one of four found across Europe created by the Israeli sculptor Frank Meisler [See Rosenberg, pp. 91–96—Eds.] commemorates the approximately 10,000 mainly Jewish children who arrived in the United Kingdom as part of the *Kindertransport*, an effort by private individuals and charities, aided by less restrictive government legislation towards Jewish refugee children, that aimed to remove—temporarily—Jewish children from continental Europe after the events of the November Pogrom (euphemistically called *Kristallnacht*) in 1938. The transports arrived in the UK between December 1938 and September 1939, coming to an end with the outbreak of war.

As passersby glance at the statue, upon what elements of the *Kindertransport* do they reflect? Perhaps they consider the horror of children leaving behind their families and being taken to a different country. Perhaps they reflect that this rescue prevented these children from being caught up in the later events of the Holocaust. Do they ponder the role of individuals who carried out this humanitarian work? Do they question why 65 years had to pass before a memorial was created? This memorial may symbolize many of the issues surrounding popular understanding of the *Kindertransport* in the UK and how the British, as a nation, understand these events [Fig. 2].



FIG. 1: A close-up of the *Kindertransport* memorial at Liverpool Station in London. Photograph by Kay Andrews.



**FIG. 2:** Descriptive plate on the *Kindertransport* memorial at Liverpool Street Station in London. Photograph by Kay Andrews.

The purpose of this essay is not to focus on the individual childhood or family experiences of the *Kinder*, many of whom have written and spoken about their experiences in this issue and elsewhere; nor is the aim to focus on those individuals and organizations who acted to help the children leave behind state-orchestrated persecution; again, many of these individuals and organizations have been researched and studied. Rather, my purpose is to reflect on issues of historical understanding and memorialization and to consider how these affect teaching and learning about the *Kindertransport* today. As part of this reflection, I examine the British government's role in allowing child refugees to enter the UK during the period 1938–1939, using cabinet papers and Hansard, the verbatim record of parliamentary debate. Although these papers do not give a full report,<sup>1</sup> they give a sample of the views at the time and are accessible to all online. Teachers might recognize this as one authentic way to allow students to access historical material in the classroom and to elicit questions of the motivations and actions of the time.

How we understand the past is complex. For teachers, there is the added challenge of communicating the events of history to young people. No matter where in the world we live, history is seen through the lens of one's nation, and here in the UK, we are no exception. Our view of our country's past is shaped by many different facets, including personal and community memory, political motivation, and representation through popular culture and the media. As individuals, we might want to take the representation we see at face value, or we may wish to challenge the portrayal we face and unravel these influences to try and gain a deeper insight into the complexity of history. Teachers often have to challenge their students to deconstruct the knowledge with which they have arrived and allow their

students to reconstruct the story of the past by using the skills of a historian. Added to this, how do teachers ensure that events are understood within the context of the time when they happened, rather than through the perspective of hindsight, where later events might be used as a way to shape understanding of earlier times? How is the historiography of events portrayed and understood by young people, if at all?

### **MOVING BEYOND THE POPULAR NARRATIVE**

Perhaps to gain a deeper historical understanding of the events surrounding the *Kindertransport*, we need to go further than the public memorial and challenge the popular narrative that is presented. As historians and educators, our responsibility is to move beyond a representation of the past that might be seen as a moral crusade of good over evil and grapple with the views and pragmatics of the time, which might be seen as including antisemitism within the UK and a British government concerned with maintaining a controlled immigration policy. Equally important is how we see the events of the *Kindertransport* within the context of 1938, without superimposing our own knowledge of later events. In other words, how do we see this event in the context of 1938 without coloring it with the later events of the Holocaust? This is a difficult task but essential if we are to consider these events in their historical context.

### **REMEMBERING THE KINDERTRANSPORT**

Although today the term "*Kindertransport*" is commonly used to describe the numerous transports of children who arrived in the UK, the term itself did not enter into common usage in the UK until the late 1980s. The first time the term was used in Parliament came in December 1988; prior to this, parliamentarians referred to "child refugees" or "children's transports." In the late 1980s, two events took place; first, in 1988, the popular Sunday night BBC TV program *That's Life* revealed the story of Nicholas Winton, who had been responsible for organizing the transport of 669 children from Czechoslovakia as part of the government-backed scheme.<sup>2</sup> Earlier that year, Winton's wife had found various scrapbooks and materials in the family home and, from them and from her husband, gleaned the full story that was later featured on TV. The following year, in 1989, the first large-scale reunion of more than 1,200 *Kinder* took place in the UK, marking the 50th anniversary of their arrival. Organized by Bertha Leverton, herself a *Kind*, the gathering allowed many *Kinder* to recognize for the first time that they had been part of a large, wide-scale undertaking. Some commented that, at the time of their journey, they had thought of it only in terms of themselves and those children closest to them, rather than whole trainloads of children or multiple trains from across central Europe, very much a child's view and understanding of events.

For British society, the reunion and the revelation of the involvement of Nicholas Winton led to press interest and the initial introduction of the *Kindertransport* into the popular historical narrative. In subsequent years, the events have been further researched and raised in the popular consciousness with TV programs and Oscar-winning films. In 1991, the Holocaust became a mandatory part of the National Curriculum in England, and the creation of national Holocaust Memorial Day (2000) has added to public awareness.

The focus of much of the press and media has been on the experiences of the children who were brought to Britain and on those individuals involved in the rescue efforts. In many instances, the former *Kinder* have been interviewed and shared their memories of the experiences of the last time they saw their family members or of their expectations and experiences on arrival in the UK. These personal reflections and insights are powerful and often moving and provide the listener with a unique firsthand experience on which a fuller historical understanding can be built. These personal stories are essential to our understanding, but how can we ensure that we understand as well the popular mood of the public at the time or the complexity of the political impetus behind the scheme? At times, the latter is represented in simplistic terms, and the role of the government is portrayed in heroic terms, a misrepresentation of the actual events. Although the government reformatted its stringent immigration policy to allow the children into the UK, it was on the basis that all the children had a sponsor and that the visas were issued only on a temporary basis. Parents were forced to make the agonizing decision of sending their children to a foreign country for an indeterminable length of time. These issues are nuanced but essential to our understanding of the events, though often not considered.

An example of this can be seen in 1989 when then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sent a letter to the *Kindertransport* reunion:

I am pleased and proud that the Government of the time offered you refuge and help, following the dreadful persecution you suffered in Germany and Central Europe. You came to us as homeless children and grew up to enrich the life of this country with your courage and fortitude.<sup>3</sup>

It could be argued that, on the surface, Thatcher's comments are accurate; however, by failing to recognize the crucial roles of individuals and charities in raising the necessary funds to sponsor the children and in finding host families, her words give a skewed view of events.

Political interpretation has continued to be inaccurate but in a different way from that of Mrs. Thatcher's. In 2010,

the government here in the UK created the British Holocaust Heroes Award to be given to those who "have been recognized by the state for their contribution in saving lives during the Holocaust."<sup>4</sup> A number of award recipients helped to bring the *Kinder* to the UK before the war began. These individuals undoubtedly behaved in a humane manner; indeed, it can be argued that to take the lead and help children before the war, let alone before a genocidal policy was implemented, should be seen as the most generous of gestures and they should be recognized for their compassion and philanthropic acts, but these people cannot accurately be considered "Holocaust Heroes." The genocidal events of the "Final Solution," the attempt to annihilate Jewry perpetrated between 1941–1945, began in the context of the Nazi expansionist policy that was in effect during the Second World War; in 1938 it was not inevitable that the events of the November Pogrom would lead to genocide.<sup>5</sup> To connect events through the benefit of hindsight is, of course, tempting, and in some ways makes our understanding of history easier, but by doing so, we fail to recognize the events and people in the context of their time. None of this reflection aims to diminish the efforts of those who worked hard to help as many children as possible but rather to recognize their efforts in the pre-war UK context of an anti-refugee, anti-Jewish sentiment and the difficult task they embarked upon with limited means and support.

### READING HISTORY BACKWARDS

Some might argue that it is right for these individuals to be considered heroes of the Holocaust; after all, they brought to the UK children who, had they remained where they were, would later have been caught up in the cataclysm. Making sense of a messy and complex past is difficult, and one way to negotiate this is by looking back and making connections that may not have been present at the time. Some of the *Kinder* themselves speak of their parents and families "knowing" what the future would hold and hence sending their children to the UK. However, although they may have recognized an increasingly dangerous situation, they could not know or understand the extent to which the Nazi regime would go. In fact, at this time, the Nazis themselves had no plan to murder all of European Jewry; rather, the policy in the late 1930s was to ostracize and possibly to resettle the Jewish people. The name of the award, which might be considered flawed in light of these issues, can be seen as a demonstration of how a series of related but different historical events are, with the benefit of hindsight, seen as equating to the same thing, when actually the circumstances at different moments in time are very different. It might be argued that this is a pedantic reflection on the use of words, but if terms are used inaccurately, we limit our understanding of historical events. If we label all events as the Holocaust, we fail to distinguish the various Nazi poli-

cies and the motivations of those who acted against them.

## BACKGROUND TO KINDERTRANSPORT AND GOVERNMENT

To thoroughly understand the complexity of the events surrounding the *Kindertransport*, it is necessary to understand the British situation in 1938 and return to government papers. It is not possible here to reflect on all the materials available; instead, I will focus on a small number of documents, all of which are available online ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) and [www.hansard.millbanksystems.com](http://www.hansard.millbanksystems.com)) for teachers and students to consider. The Cabinet minutes reveal the day-to-day issues with which the government was grappling, while the parliamentary debates provide a broader range of opinions.

The British government's response to refugees from the Nazi regime had been an ongoing concern since Hitler came to power in 1933. As early as April 6, 1933, a report was produced by the Cabinet Committee on Alien Restrictions regarding the potential numbers of refugees who might arrive in the UK.<sup>6</sup> The committee was made up of members of the Cabinet and chaired by John Gilmour, Home Secretary and Member of Parliament (MP) for Glasgow. Throughout the period, the discussions reflect a palpable tension between the perception of a sense of right (seen by some as a British sense of fair play) and the practical issues of the potential cost and difficulties of accepting large numbers of unsupported individuals and families arriving from the continent. The April 1933 report reflects both of these points, on the one hand suggesting "that this country should not deny a temporary right of asylum to the inoffensive refugee" but at the same time "that there can be no question at the present time of relaxing the restriction on the entry of aliens to the United Kingdom for the benefit of German Jewish refugees" (Cabinet Committee on Aliens Restrictions. Report. 6th April 1933, National Archives CAB/24/239, p. 8). The use of the term "inoffensive refugee" reflects the time and refers specifically to German Jews, who were perceived as being mainly professional, secular, non-Orthodox Jews who would blend into British society, rather than Jewish refugees from eastern Europe, who were perceived as potentially problematic. Refugees were expected to be able to support themselves, an idea that might challenge our contemporary view of those who seek refuge from persecution. The financial issues were raised by representatives from the Jewish community, led by Otto M. Schiff. Schiff, born in Frankfurt, was a partner in a city merchant bank and had first become involved in aiding refugees during the First World War. When Hitler came to power, Schiff founded the German Jewish Refugees Committee, later to be renamed the German Jewish Aid Committee. Schiff made clear that the Jewish community would cover all costs of any arriving refugees, though

this was to be seen as "at best only temporary and negotiations are in progress with a view to the ultimate transmission of the refugees to countries other than England" (p. 6). This idea of relocation comes up repeatedly in later government documents, which illustrate the prevailing view that any refugee who landed in the UK was not allowed to work and should only be considered as in-transit before taking refuge elsewhere.

The 1933 Cabinet committee report was produced days after the "April Boycott," the Nazi-instigated national boycott of Jewish businesses on April 1, 1933. The boycott led to an immediate rise in the number of German Jews who were visiting England: "150 arrived on April 1st, 2nd and 3rd; this number being much in excess of normal traffic" (p. 2). The report records that these individuals did not arrive as refugees but as having "been allowed to land as visitors" (p. 2). Nevertheless, the view of those on the Cabinet committee was that these individuals would seek to stay in the UK as refugees. At the same time, Jewish businesses in London called for a boycott of all German goods, with some east London businesses displaying posters calling for a German boycott. Those businesses were brought to the attention of the House of Commons on April 10, when Clement Attlee, MP for the constituency of Stepney Limehouse, in the east end of London (Attlee became prime minister in 1945) asked the Home Secretary why the Metropolitan Police "advised the removal of the notices as a precautionary measure and in the interests of the shopkeepers themselves."<sup>7</sup> Attlee went on to ask whether the Jewish shopkeepers were "being threatened by antisemitic organizations of this country" (Attlee, House of Commons Debate, 10th April 1933, vol. 276 cc 2168–2170), providing insight into the public opinion of the time and challenging the popular motif of a welcoming and open Britain, where actually there were ongoing issues of antisemitism.

The ensuing five years brought further refugee issues for the government, but, notably, the situation facing European Jews was not the central concern; rather, it was those fleeing the Spanish Civil War and Assyrians fleeing persecution and murder in Iraq. Questions were raised in Parliament throughout the period regarding the plight of these numerous people. Until the November Pogrom in 1938, the situation facing the Jewish people of Germany was seen by the British government as just another group needing aid; after all, at this point there was no suggestion or foreshadowing of the future genocide. It is also interesting to reflect that the *Kindertransport* was not the first group of temporary child refugees that the government had accepted; in May 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, 4,000 Basque child refugees from Bilbao, Spain, were allowed into the UK. The Spanish child refugees have not entered the popular imagination in the same way as the later *Kindertransport* has, but questions arise about the relationship between the two dif-

ferent rescues and how both were viewed at the time. One reason the Basque children are not well known is that most were repatriated before the Second World War began; although this was the intention with the *Kinder*, the outbreak of the Second World War prevented this. By 1945, only 250 of the Basque children remained in Britain, taking with them their memories, unlike the *Kinder*, whose experiences have become part of the British historical narrative. Added to this, the Spanish Civil War has not maintained its place in British history, unlike the Second World War, which had a direct impact on the majority of British citizens. Finally, the *Kindertransport* is often seen in the context of the later events of the Holocaust, which has entered the national and international historical narrative. The Spanish children returned to their homes (although it should be noted that many of these children struggled to readjust to life in Spain).<sup>8</sup>

As the Spanish Civil War continued, events in 1938 on the other side of Europe began to come to the fore: the *Anschluss* in March, the Evian Conference in July, the Munich crisis at the end of September, and the November Pogrom. On November 16, 1938, the first Cabinet meeting after the pogrom was held, and time was spent discussing “the Jewish problem.”<sup>9</sup>

The use of this term in British Cabinet papers should be considered with students, because the idea of a “Jewish problem” or “Jewish question” could be seen as using Nazi antisemitic language. The Nazi regime had a skewed perception of the “problem” of Jewish people as manifested through their antisemitic rhetoric. The Cabinet was using the term to refer to the British issue of dealing with Jewish refugees created by the Nazis. This is an issue of terminology and is an important element to raise with young people, allowing students to recognize that there was no Jewish problem in Germany, only the problem of a racist and flawed ideology being implemented by an equally flawed dictatorship.

The Cabinet meeting of November 16 gives an insight into both personal opinions and national policy; comments that follow are taken from the minutes of that meeting, unless otherwise noted. Only one member of the Cabinet, the Minister for Health, the Right Honorable Walter Elliott, expressed the need to alleviate “the terrible suffering and humiliation that had been inflicted on many Jews” (p. 12). The other Cabinet members were more concerned with public opinion and applied political pressure on other governments around the world to take refugees. An overriding concern seems to have been public opinion, notably in the USA, where “action taken in Germany had been to produce a strong anti-British atmosphere in the USA” (Viscount Halifax, p. 5) and how this public opinion could be appeased. The ensuing debate among the Cabinet members focused on offering “fairly wide promises of help to the Jews” (p.

5), though it should be noted that no firm offer to take in Jewish individuals or families was expressed, either for settling in the UK or in various parts of the then-British Empire. One place the government would consider was the South American colony of British Guiana (now the independent country Guyana). The suggestion that British Guiana, an inaccessible area largely covered with tropical forest, would probably “take a larger number of Jews, since Jews, judging on experience elsewhere, were capable of closer settlement than other nations” (Malcolm MacDonald, p. 7) might further reflect antisemitism of the time. The perception that Jewish people would live closer together than others seems flawed and may play into the stereotypes of the traditional Jewish communities in Eastern Europe at that time, rather than reflecting the largely secular, assimilated Jewish people in Germany and Austria. It is interesting to reflect that at a time when Nazi Germany wanted its Jewish people to be removed to other territories, notably with the formulation of the Madagascar plan in 1938, the British government seeks to find promises of land in its colonies.

The growing anguish of those Jews trying to leave continental Europe and the challenge faced by the Jewish community in the UK are alluded to at this Cabinet meeting and later in the House of Commons on November 21. During the Cabinet meeting, Secretary of State for Home Affairs Sir Samuel Hoare mentioned the 1,000 letters a day being sent to “a co-ordinating committee which included representative societies” (p. 11). Hoare also speaks of the concern among the British Jewish community that allowing further Jewish refugees into the UK might create “anti-Jewish agitation in this country” (p. 11); and of their disinclination to be exact about the number of refugees arriving, as it “may be attacked from both sides as being too big or too little” (p. 11). It might be perceived as unfair that the Cabinet failed to question or challenge a suggested rise in antisemitism; however, on November 21, when speaking in the House of Commons, Hoare does address the issue of fascism and antisemitism in the UK<sup>10</sup> and states, “I do my best as Home Secretary to stamp upon an evil of that kind.” On that date, the following motion was proposed by MP Philip Noel-Baker in the House of Commons:

That this House notes with profound concern the deplorable treatment suffered by certain racial, religious, and political minorities in Europe, and, in view of the growing gravity of the refugee problem, would welcome an immediate concerted effort amongst the nations, including the United States of America, to secure a common policy.

Reflecting the issues presented in the previous Cabinet meeting and allowing a wider discussion among MPs, the four-hour debate that followed addressed suggestions for

allowing German Jews into Palestine, the need for the responsibility to help not falling just on the British, and the issue of large numbers of refugees not requiring work or financial support. Perhaps the most reflective part of the debate is delivered by Hoare where he reflects on the plan to bring children to Britain:

I could not help thinking what a terrible dilemma it was to the Jewish parents in Germany to have to choose between sending their children to a foreign country, into the unknown, and continuing to live in the terrible conditions to which they are now reduced in Germany.

That debate is one of many that took place from 1933 onwards. A search of Hansard shows that questions were often posed regarding policy and that two key MPs led this questioning: Colonel Josiah Wedgwood and Eleanor Rathbone. Both of these individuals demonstrated a commitment to supporting not only Jewish refugees but others as well.

#### WHY WE TEACH ABOUT THE *KINDER*

The challenge for teachers is how to turn this complex history into classroom material that both engages and aids students in understanding the events relating to the *Kindertransport* and whether including this in a study about the events of the Holocaust might prove useful or problematic.

In England, teaching about the Holocaust is a mandatory part of the secondary school history curriculum.<sup>11</sup> (This does not apply in the devolved regions of Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland.) Although a named element of the curriculum, there is no compulsory syllabus, general content, or time recommendations. We know from research undertaken here at the Institute of Education, University of London, that teaching about the Holocaust<sup>12</sup> also takes place in religious education, English, and other school subjects, and, anecdotally, we know that a number of primary schools teach about the events of the Holocaust or elements of Nazi persecution prior to the Second World War, including the *Kindertransport*. This is borne out by the numbers of primary school groups visiting the Holocaust Centre, a privately run museum containing the first dedicated primary exhibition in the UK<sup>13</sup> relating to both the *Kindertransport* and the events of the Holocaust.

Teaching about the *Kindertransport* has become increasingly popular, in part because of the number of *Kinder* who visit schools and speak of their experiences. In the UK, as in many countries, we have a number of survivors and refugees who now give of their time and energy sharing their personal experiences with pupils. As a result, many young people do hear the oral history of former child refugees, often in the context of Holocaust education. If we consider those who tell their story, we must reflect on the age they were when they arrived in the UK and on the trauma

they endured. Some of the children may have understood the changing political environment they inhabited, perhaps because of changes in their schooling or former friends renouncing their friendships; but, as children, we rarely understand the wider ramification of events. Today, of course, these former child refugees give their accounts as adults with the benefit of hindsight and a lifetime of experience, adding a further layer of complexity to how young people hear and understand the speaker's personal experiences of Nazi persecution as a child. In the case of *Kinder* speakers, some thank the British government for its policy toward them as children, which is undoubtedly heartfelt and should be respected as a personal view of the speaker. For teachers, the challenge is how to ensure this personal voice is understood in the context of the events in the late 1930s and of the political climate of the time that allowed only the children to come, rather than entire families.

As the events of the *Kindertransport* do not necessarily have to be taught within the context of the Holocaust, this might allow teachers opportunities to develop student understanding through other subjects. By using Hansard and Cabinet papers, teachers of citizenship can build a series of lessons that examine refugee policy from the 1930s onwards. Such a plan might also allow consideration of the work of the UN and the UNHCR, which can be seen as being part of the legacy of the events of the Second World War.

Although in the UK—and England, specifically—teaching about the Jewish experience under the Nazi regime is not part of the primary school curriculum, anecdotal evidence suggests that some teachers choose to teach about the experiences of the *Kinder* as a less graphic introduction to learning about the Nazi genocides [See Bor & Shawn, pp. 104–110—Eds.]. Although the merit of this can be seen, the political issues surrounding the entry of Jewish child refugees and the enforced familial breakup does call into question its suitability as a subject matter for children as young as 9 or 10. Of course, the learning that takes place when children are at primary school is often added to later in their school careers; even with this in mind, it is important that primary school teachers recognize the issues and complexities of teaching this and ensure that such learning does not traumatize or negatively affect younger children. At the same time, the events must not be oversimplified to such a level that state persecution as perpetrated by the Nazis is represented as a simplistic message of “be nice to people.” To equate unpleasant schoolyard behavior with the state-instigated and managed persecution of an entire group of people reflects poorly on how we perceive the children we teach. Are we suggesting they might ultimately become genocidal killers? This detracts from an authentic understanding of the persecution that led to the need for the *Kindertransport*.

## FINAL REFLECTION

As we approach the 75th anniversary of 10,000 unaccompanied children arriving in the UK and leaving behind home and all that it represented, the experiences and memories of many of the *Kinder* have entered the historical narrative both here and across the globe. Not only do these personal memories reflect the traumatic events of the *Kindertransport*, but they also provide us with a child's insight and a later adult's perspective into Jewish family life in central Europe before the Second World War that was largely destroyed by the later events of the Holocaust. As educators, we face the ongoing challenges of teaching about events in history; ensuring that historical understanding is recognized as different from memorialization; ensuring that events are seen in the political context of their time while avoiding simplistic links to events that may be seen as similar; allowing our students to engage with the personal experiences of the *Kinder* themselves; and recognizing that, ultimately, the motivations and decisions of politicians resulted in the *Kindertransport*.

## NOTES

1. For a full account of government refugee policy throughout the period, see London L. (2000), *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948—British immigration policy and the Holocaust*.

2. A short excerpt from the 1988 *That's Life* TV programme featuring Nicholas Winton can be found on YouTube. Retrieved April 24, 2012, from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6\\_nFuJAF5F0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_nFuJAF5F0).

3. Retrieved February 9, 2012, from [http://www.kindertransport.org/history06\\_London.htm](http://www.kindertransport.org/history06_London.htm).

4. Retrieved April 24, 2012, from [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/N11/Newsroom/DG\\_186184](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/N11/Newsroom/DG_186184).

5. For detailed reflection on the issue of defining and understanding the term and events of the Holocaust, see Y. Bauer (2001), *Rethinking the Holocaust*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

6. Cabinet Committee on Aliens Restrictions. Report. 6th April 1933, National Archives CAB/24/239.

7. Hansard, House of Commons Debate 10th April 1933, vol. 276 cc 2168–2170. Retrieved April 24, 2012, from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1933/apr/10/posters-london>.

8. For a detailed history of the Basque child refugees, see [www.basquechildren.org](http://www.basquechildren.org). Retrieved April 24, 2012.

9. Cabinet minutes: 16th November 1938 National Archives CAB23/96.

10. Sir Samuel Hoare, Racial, Religious and Political Minorities, House of Commons Debate 21st November 1938, vol. 341, cc 1428–1483. Retrieved April 24, 2012, from [http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1938/nov/21/racial-religious-and-political-minorities#S5CV0341P0\\_19381121\\_HOC\\_436](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1938/nov/21/racial-religious-and-political-minorities#S5CV0341P0_19381121_HOC_436).

11. History Programme of study for key stage 3. Retrieved February 20, 2012, from <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/h/history%202007%20programme%20of%20study%20for%20key%20stage%203.pdf>. Details of teaching about the Holocaust are on p. 7 of this program of study. It should be noted that the curriculum in England is currently under review.

12. Pettigrew, A. (2009). *Teaching about the Holocaust in English secondary schools. An empirical study of national trends, perspectives and practice*. London: Institute of Education. Available online. Retrieved March 22, 2012, from [http://www.hedp.org.uk/\\_files/Documents/Research/hedp\\_research\\_report.pdf](http://www.hedp.org.uk/_files/Documents/Research/hedp_research_report.pdf).

13. Retrieved April 24, 2012, from <http://holocaustcentre.net/the-journey/>.



"As a staff member of The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey's Sara and Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center, the best part of my job is interviewing survivors and helping them to write their memoirs," Maryann McLoughlin writes. "While working with testimonies of former *Kindertransport* children, I realized that three aspects of their experiences were not commonly brought into the classroom: issues surrounding the placements of religious Jewish children with families in England and the outcomes of these placements; the fact that *Kinder* were numbered among England's enemy aliens; and their relationships with their families after the war."

Maryann McLoughlin

## The End of Innocence: *Kindertransport* Children

In the beginning was the end of innocence  
When goose steps clicked  
And evil licked the world with violence.  
—Davi Walders, "Born in Safety"

Today's students often come to the study of the *Kindertransport* with the belief that this is a simple tale of rescue with a happy ending. Research shows, though, that matters were not so simple. Details from the testimonies that I reviewed led me to focus this essay on three aspects of the *Kindertransport* experience that, added to a unit of study, will complicate students' comfortable but erroneous assumptions. First, the wishes of Jewish parents for Orthodox placements for their children were not always honored; institutional staff and foster families were not always tolerant of the Jewish religious practices the children tried to maintain. Next, many *Kinder* were counted as England's "enemy aliens," removed from their foster families, and sent to internment camps. Finally, even for those few lucky enough to be reunited with one or more parents, leaving the foster family was frequently very difficult and reunions with the birth parent(s) were often troubled. A detailed oral testimony from our center and numerous brief excerpts from published interviews, below, illustrate the nuanced complexities of this study.

### THE TESTIMONY OF RUTH FISCH KESSLER

Ruth Fisch [Fig.1] was born in 1933 in Vienna, Austria, to an Orthodox Jewish family; Erika, her sister, was four years older. Their parents and grandparents, maternal and paternal, had lived in Vienna, comfortably middle-class, all their lives. Ruth, small, with ginger curls and blue eyes, loved

to dance in the sunshine that dappled the apartment floor. Her world was small, bounded by a few streets that she would cross to visit her grandparents. Ruth was unaware of the historical events that would drastically change her life and her life's journey.



FIG. 1: Ruth Fisch in Vienna, 1938, five years old. Photograph used with permission of Ruth Fisch Kessler.

After the November Pogrom of 1938 (*Kristallnacht*), when her father's haberdashery was vandalized and their synagogue looted, her parents considered emigrating, as did many other Viennese Jews. Indeed, by the spring of 1939, only 115,000 out of 200,000 Jews remained in Vienna. Ruth's parents heard from the Jewish Community Organization (*Kultusgemeinde*) about the opportunities for children under the age of 17 to travel to England, where they would be placed with families, in youth hostels, or with organizations that guaranteed their care and education. Ruth's safety was most important, the parents agreed, but they also wanted to ensure that Ruth was placed with a religious family. The Fischs were able to connect with the Webbers, a religious British family who wanted to sponsor Ruth.

In the spring of 1939, Ruth's parents tried to prepare her for the separation and journey. They told her she would be traveling on a train to England and they would later join her. Ruth, only five, did not comprehend the reason for the journey, but on May 12, 1939, she obediently boarded the train with other children, leaving her parents and sister on the platform. Repeatedly Ruth asked, "Are you coming soon?" "We'll see you soon," they cried in return, tears flowing.

To Ruth, one of the youngest children, the train was like a cave. She remembers little of the trip. Most convoys of children traveled by train to ports in Belgium and the Netherlands and from there crossed the Channel to Harwich, a seaside town. From Harwich they traveled by train to Liverpool Street Station in London, where they were met by their foster parents or the organizations that had sponsored them. Ruth does remember the station, another huge, dark cave crowded with children. There she waited with her little suitcase until she was gathered up by the Webbers—a father, mother, and two daughters older than Ruth.

Ruth was asked to call her British parents "Mommy" and "Daddy." She settled in, adapting to the rhythm of this new family and new country. The girls were kind to her; the parents, even kinder, although "Mommy" was a bit strict. Like Ruth's family, they celebrated the Jewish holidays and made sure that Ruth continued her Jewish studies.

In Vienna, Ruth's father was desperately trying to get U.S. visas; finally, he found a New York cousin who could sponsor one person, so in 1940 he emigrated, planning to bring the rest of the family over as soon as he was settled. In 1941, though, Mrs. Fisch [Fig. 2] and Erika [Fig. 3] were deported to Opole, Poland. Their letters to Mr. Fisch revealed the terrible situation. Ruth's mother was scared and heartbroken; Erika tried to help, but she was only 12. In 1942, the letters stopped.

In London, the bombings worsened; parents were encouraged by posters and radio broadcasts to send their children to the safety of the countryside. The Webber family and Ruth evacuated to Taunton, a county town in Somerset, southwest of London, that had been designated a protected



**FIG. 2:** Charlotte (Lotte) Fisch, Ruth's mother, in Vienna, 1938. Photograph used with permission of Ruth Fisch Kessler.

area. The next year, the Webbers told Ruth that, for her own safety, she had to leave the family and go to the north of England to a hostel in Windermere, in Britain's Lake District. No one told her that she was classified as an "enemy alien" who represented a danger if she lived near a coastal area, where there were possibilities for espionage and sabotage. There Ruth, an Orthodox Jew, attended St. Mary's



**FIG. 3:** Erika Fisch in Vienna, 1938, nine years old. Photograph used with permission of Ruth Fisch Kessler.

Girls, a Church of England elementary school linked to St. Mary's parish. Ruth does not remember anything about the school, except singing. "I could sing," she explains, "so they would ask me to sing *Ave Maria*."

On May 8, 1945, when the war in Europe ended—VE day (Victory in Europe), Ruth, now 12, was happily reunited with the Webbers. They returned to London, and Ruth resumed school and her Jewish life. When she heard from her father, who finally had a visa for her and could now get her to America, Ruth and the Webbers did not want to part; she considered them her parents. In many ways, Ruth lost both her foster and her birth parents. She had to leave the Webbers, her birth mother had been murdered, and the beloved father she had known in Vienna was a stranger; their only communication for six years had been through letters. However, he was her father, and he was alone.

Ruth traveled to New York and then to Boston, where her father lived. Ironically, although he loved her and wanted her close, he couldn't afford to keep her with him. In Boston, she began a four-year placement, arranged by Jewish Family Service (JFS), in three different foster homes. She cried every night.

In time, Ruth and her father grew close again and her situation improved. She kept the bond with the Webbers as well, talking with them by telephone, and in the 1950s Ruth was reunited with Stella Webber, who visited her and her family in the United States. In 1952, Ruth married and had three children, two sons and a daughter. Ruth's father visited often and lived to see his grandsons' bar mitzvahs and granddaughter's bat mitzvah. Ruth says that her father's heart would burst with joy to see his family's deep connection to their Jewish faith today.

### RELIGIOUS REFUGEES OR ENEMY ALIENS?

Ruth's experiences evoke questions about the placement of religious children in English homes, their status as enemy aliens after the outbreak of war, and their life in the aftermath. Had all religious children been settled in Jewish homes? If not, were they able to practice their religion in their non-Jewish placements? Were efforts made to convert them to the religion of their foster families? Were all Jewish refugees classified as enemy aliens? How did they respond to this charge? If they were reunited with family at the end of the war, how did they balance the relationships between their birth parent and their foster parent? Such specifics, while not commonly available in history texts, are revealed both in essays in this issue [see Gurewitsch, pp. 11–16; Licht, pp. 17–23; and Craig-Norton, pp. 40–51, among others—Eds.] and in interviews in two of the best-known collections of *Kindertransport* stories, *I Came Alone* (1990) and *Into the Arms of Strangers* (2000).

It is important to contextualize these issues in history; students should remember that the *Kindertransport* opera-

tion was hastily conceived after the November Pogrom, with the first transport from Germany arriving in England on December 2, 1938, and the last leaving on September 1, 1939.<sup>1</sup> Although many organizations and individuals assisted in settling the *Kinder* in the United Kingdom, including the Refugee Children's Movement, B'nai B'rith, the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council, the Y.M.C.A., Quakers, and many other Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, when the children first arrived, according to the *Kindertransport* Association article "*Kindertransport* History" (n.d.), many were unsponsored and had to wait at Dovercourt, a kind of transit facility, until families agreed to take them or hostels were "readied for groups of children." The children were "dispersed" all over the British Isles—England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Today, we may be more sensitive to the cultural and psychological needs of refugee children, but at that time the first needs met were primarily physical—shelter and food—and educational.<sup>2</sup>

### THE KINDER AND RELIGION

Some foster families respected and encouraged the children's religious observance. For example, Paul Kohn, a *Kind* from Vienna, was placed with a Rev. Morton and his wife. On his first day, Paul explained to the Mortons that he would not eat meat. Paul says that from that time on, Rev. Morton studied the "intricacies" of Orthodox Judaism (p. 170). He never asked Paul to go to chapel but expected him to attend Jewish services. When Paul had his bar mitzvah, the Rev. Morton attended the service for the first and only time.

Chava Markowitz describes living near the Cathedral at Durham where she attended services. Canon Ramsey advised her not to attend because she was Jewish, explaining that she was at an "impressionable age," and he didn't want her influenced by Christian rites and religion (p. 210). Lilyan Rosenberg was placed in a convent high school where each week she met with a priest who read the *Chumash* with her, "translating from Hebrew to English, from where she had left off at the Jewish school in Germany" (p. 267). Sonja Pach was welcomed by a Protestant family who respected her Jewish background and told her that she would "not be given any meat, let alone bacon" (p. 236). Another *Kind*, Vera Reichman, after a third placement, was sent to the Rowledge hostel, where she spent happy years in a Jewish environment. Vera explains:

Their . . . care and their efforts to instill in us . . . moral and ethical values appropriate to our ages and an appreciation of our Jewish culture and religious heritage . . . gave me firm roots in a turbulent post-war world. (p. 255)

Ya'acov Friedler came to England on the May 1940 transport from Amsterdam. He had won a scholarship and

had boarded with a non-Jewish couple, but when the rabbi “discovered” him and his brother, they had them transferred to a kosher boarding house. When he was evacuated, he attended a Jewish secondary school. Ya’acov and his brother later immigrated to Israel. Ya’acov’s experiences strengthened his bond to Judaism. This, too, was Marga Goren-Gothelf’s experience. She remembers Rabbi Louis Yitzchak Rabinovitz of Walm Lane Synagogue in Cricklewood, London, and the Shabbat services they attended, as well as the Sunday morning lessons at the *Talmud Torah*. Marga stresses the “great part” that Rabbi Rabinovitz played in their lives, saying that he was aware of the problems they faced and talked to them about being separated from their parents at a young age. He also conducted seder nights and often spent a Friday night or Shabbat lunch with them. Through Judaism, Rabbi Rabinovitz recreated the bond with their families.

Sessi Jakobovits, an Orthodox *Kind* from Leipzig, relates her experiences with a group of 65 Orthodox children during her first days in England:

Although the primary purpose had been to save our lives . . . the 14- and 15-year-olds [had] to save our traditions. A few boys . . . organized prayer meetings. . . . Soon it was Friday night, and we . . . sang *zmirot* [traditional Sabbath melodies]. (p. 157)

Their attempts at keeping their traditions were recognized by the Jewish organizations that came to visit them, bearing prayer books and a small Torah (p. 157).

Other *Kinder* had both good and bad experiences in their attempts to observe Judaism. Bernd Koschland first had problems practicing *kashrut* and observing holidays such as Rosh HaShanah, when he was expected to attend school. Moved later to a hostel organized by Rabbi Munk, he writes, “I would guess that the majority who passed through have remained firmly Orthodox” (p. 175). Steffi Schwarcz was initially placed with a Protestant couple who encouraged her and her sister to say the *berachot* (blessings). Unfortunately, the girls were then sent to a boarding school where the education was excellent but the headmistress tried to convert the refugees by enforced attendance at church. They were rescued by a family who invited all the Jewish girls to their home for holidays and began correspondence classes between them and the liberal synagogue in London. Kurt Landes remembers arriving at Dovercourt camp, from where he was sent to a “kind, religious, and childless couple” with whom he stayed throughout the war years and with whom he remains in contact. He writes, “I turned toward the religious side of Jewishness together with the need and duty to live in our Jewish country. My children shout at each other in Hebrew and take it for granted that they belong somewhere” (p. 180).

This respect was not evidenced by all the institutions and foster families, who sometimes disparaged and erased the children’s German-Jewish (or Austrian-Jewish or Czech-Jewish) heritage. A few children, mainly the young ones, were given new names, new identities, and even a new religion. Although the Jewish workers in the Refugee Children’s Movement (RCM) did their best to find Jewish homes for Jewish children, there were not enough offers. In any case, they did not regard this as a priority: few workers were Orthodox or alert to the needs of observant Jews (Oppenheimer, 2000, p. 15).

Günther Abrahamson from Berlin explains that on Sundays he was marched twice a day to the local Church of Scotland. Irene Liron wanted to fit in but wasn’t successful because her school mates considered her a German. Most difficult for her were the weekly visits to the village church: “My parents were traditional but not religious Jews, but all the same I felt that by going to church I was sinning” (p. 198). Hedwig (Gwen) Richards remembers prewar Jewish life in Danzig. Placed with a Christian family who adopted her when they learned that her family had been murdered, they insisted that she become Christian. She married a Christian but says, “Deep down in my heart I am still a Polish Jewess” (p. 257).

Some placements had no idea about the Jewish religion. Margot Wohlman-Wetheim relates a story about an impoverished elderly widow who had asked for foster children to supplement her pension with the few shillings the government provided for their care. On their first evening, she served them fried bacon and bread. Told they couldn’t eat that, she questioned them, and when they said they were Jewish, she replied, “That’s impossible! . . . you haven’t got a tail!” (p. 354).

Herbert Holden, one of Nicholas Winton’s *Kinder*, reports that he was sent to a Christadelphian family and went to church regularly. He looked forward to church because someone would always give him a sixpence or even a shilling. Despite Herbert’s rather cavalier attitude toward religion, and although he did not come from a “particularly religious background,” he became involved with a local synagogue and, at the age of 50, celebrated his bar mitzvah, which he had not celebrated in 1939 (p. 150). This experience of reconnecting with Judaism in later years was true of several *Kinder*. Walter Kammerling writes that in his 50s, he and his wife found their way back to their religion. Walter became chairman of their synagogue; his wife, the chair of the Woman’s Guild and the League of Jewish Women.

Despite conditions often not conducive to Jewish religious observations and, unlike the million and a half children murdered during the Holocaust, these children did survive. Most of them built new Jewish families that will continue for generations, defeating Hitler’s and the Nazis’ goal of the “Final Solution.”

## THE KINDER AND THE DEFENSE ACT

Many *Kinder*, although first viewed as refugees from Nazi oppression, eventually were classified as enemy aliens under the Emerging Powers (Defense) Act. According to Francis Harry Hinsley (1990) in *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, they were required to register with the police and obtain permission to travel more than five miles from their registered place of residence (p. 23). In May 1940, rumors about fifth columnists (those accused of subversion from within) caused the Home Secretary to remove every alien between 16 and 70 from designated protected areas around most of the coastline, and all German and Austrian nationals living there were interned. After France fell on June 25, 1940, and the Channel Islands were occupied, nearly all aliens were interned. The BBC "Civilian Internment, 1939–1945" (2012) reports, "Thousands of Germans, Austrians, and Italians were sent to camps set up at racecourses and incomplete housing estates. . . . The majority were interned on the Isle of Man" (p. 1). The bitter irony, that many Germans, Poles, Austrians, and Czechs, and certainly the *Kindertransport* children, had fled Nazi brutality and the Third Reich's anti-Jewish policies, was not lost in the BBC report:

That many of the "enemy aliens" were Jewish refugees and therefore hardly likely to be sympathetic to the Nazis was a complication no one bothered to try and unravel—they were still treated as German and Austrian nationals. In one Isle of Man camp, over 80% of the internees were Jewish refugees. An outcry in Parliament led to the first releases of internees in August 1940. Many of those released from internment subsequently contributed to the war effort on the Home Front or served in the armed forces. (p. 1)

Kenneth Carey, 18 at the time, recalls that, after Dunkirk, aliens' movements were restricted, and many were interned. His internment ended because he volunteered to join the British Army, first in the Pioneer Corps and later in the Royal Artillery. Herbert Paul Rosinger's case was similar. After September 1939, he was interned on the Isle of Man "with many other Jewish refugees" (p. 270). He was allowed to return to his refugee hostel in Bradford where he served in the Home Guard for two years before joining the British army and, ultimately, the Intelligence Corps.

Paul Cohn relates a different experience as a "friendly alien" (p. 58), providing a footnote about the potential of an individual to make a difference in the life of a Jewish refugee. When it came time to renew "his alien's registration book" at Dorking Police Station, Paul asked the desk sergeant when he would be interned. The desk sergeant "glowered" at him and "growled": "You don't want to be interned, do you?" Paul explains that he "never raised

the topic again" (p. 58) and was never interned. Similarly, Eric Richmond was classified at 16 as an enemy alien and told to report to the police station. Some *Kinder* were sent to internment camps in Canada; however, Eric was not transported. He explains, "I must have presented a sorry sight, for the interviewing officer gave me a sweet and sent me back to the hostel" (p. 259). Ya'acov Friedler recounts that his older sister, who had been interned on the Isle of Man as an enemy alien "like every other refugee we knew, arranged for us [him and his younger brother] to join her" (p. 98). He explains that, after a year, she was called before a tribunal and was declared to be a "friendly alien" (p. 98) and the three were sent back to mainland Britain.

In contrast, Eva Gladdish, on her 16th birthday, went to the police station to get her alien's pass. The constable told her that she could not "spend a few days" at her friend's home "15 miles away." After all, she might be a "spy" (p. 121). Susanne Graham, 11, although not interned, was the only refugee in her town and was considered an enemy there. "Some people were kind and thoughtful; others were not" (p. 128). One day in the school cloakroom, a girl "announced loudly and venomously that I was a Nazi and a Jew." Susanne was "shattered" (p. 128). Another time, when she was playing Monopoly, one of the girls "spat on my money" (p. 128). A prefect "hissed" in her ear, "You know you are not wanted here" (p. 128).

Internment as enemy aliens affected not only the *Kinder* but also the parents they had managed to bring to Great Britain before World War II began. Lore Segal managed to arrange a domestic service visa for her parents. She describes her ill father's internment in 1940 on the Isle of Man where he had a slight stroke. The British then acknowledged that he was not a threat to the British Commonwealth, so he was released but died soon after from a series of strokes.

## BITTERSWEET REUNIONS

Separation and loss were defining themes in the lives of *Kindertransport* children. The dream of a joyous reunion with parents most often failed to materialize, either because their parents had been murdered in the Holocaust or because the few reunions that did occur were complicated by yet another unwilling separation, this time from foster families; and by settings and conditions vastly changed from the ones lovingly remembered by both the *Kinder* and their birth parents, as illustrated in the interview of Ruth Fisch.

Vera Diamant (2000), one of Nicholas Winton's *Kinder*, had two loving foster families but yearned to return to her own. When she received a letter with the sad news that both her parents had been murdered, her dream of a reunion was shattered. Although both foster families wanted to adopt her, Vera returned to Czechoslovakia. There, her

mother's sister told her that the knowledge that Vera was safe in England was "the only consolation, the only happiness" that her mother and father "shared to the end" (p. 225).

Gabrielle Gatzert (1990), from Ulm, Germany, was reunited with her parents in Rochester, New York, but it was a difficult adjustment for all of them; they had been separated for seven years and her parents were "struggling for their existence and extremely poor" (p. 118).

When Kurt Fuchel (2000), who left Austria when he was seven, was told that his parents were alive and that he would have to go back and live with them, he "was horrified by that idea" (p. 233). He returned to his birth parents a 16-year-old but his mother wanted "to carry on where she had left off" with the 7-year-old boy she had sent to England (p. 234). However, Kurt acknowledges his good fortune; most *Kinder* never saw their parents again, and he not only reunited with his but retained "another set of parents as well" (p. 234).

### TEACHING THE COMPLEXITIES

If Great Britain were to be covered in a golden luminosity for organizing the *Kindertransport* and saving almost 10,000 children from certain death in ghettos, concentration camps, and gas chambers—and they surely should be extolled for what they accomplished—their policy towards these Jewish children once the war started and Britain began to intern them as enemy aliens would effectively dull this aura. Yes, the *Kinder* were saved from the murderous Nazis, and that is, above all else, what matters; but what some of those beloved children went through is almost unimaginable—enforced separation from their family, rejection of their language, culture, and religion by those who were to care for them, cold, hunger, abuse of all kinds, evacuation, internment, and then, for a few, bittersweet separation from a loving foster family for a reunion with a parent who had become a stranger. The *Kindertransport* was not the "happy ending" to the first stage of the Holocaust.

Is there a teachable lesson from the *Kindertransport* experience? Perhaps it is to deal more gently and respectfully with refugee children from whatever nation they escape, to learn about the countries and value the cultures from which they come. The stories of the Ruths, Veras, Ya'acovs, and Herberts are crucial and relevant in today's classrooms, offering insights into the needs and concerns of displaced and desperate children and enhancing students' understanding of the *Kindertransport* experience.

### NOTES

1. On May 14, 1940, the SS Bodegraven left the Netherlands with about 40 children from the Amsterdam Municipal Orphanage. They were saved by Gertruida Wijsmuller–Meijer, a Dutch woman who had saved hundreds of children on other transports. [See also Rochel Licht, pp. 17–23, and Lone Rünitz, pp. 30–35—Eds.]

2. Anna Freud, a child psychologist and herself a Jewish refugee from Germany in 1938, worked during WWII with the effects of deprivation on children at Hampstead War Nursery and after the war at Bulldogs Bank Home for children who had survived concentration camps, studying the effects of stress on children's development.

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In this, one of Karen Gershon's best-known poems, the poet states and echoes the stark and simple fact that must have haunted so many other *Kindertransport* children on learning of the murder of their parents by the Nazis: "I was not there to comfort them."

*Karen Gershon*

## *I Was Not There*

The morning they set out from home  
I was not there to comfort them  
the dawn was innocent with snow  
in mockery—it is not true  
the dawn was neutral was immune  
their shadows threaded it too soon  
they were relieved that it had come  
I was not there to comfort them

One told me that my father spent  
a day in prison long ago  
he did not tell me that he went  
what difference does it make now  
when he set out when he came home  
I was not there to comfort him  
and now I have no means to know  
of what I was kept ignorant

Both my parents died in camps  
I was not there to comfort them  
I was not there they were alone  
my mind refuses to conceive  
the life the death they must have known  
I must atone because I live  
I could not have saved them from death  
the ground is neutral underneath

Every child must leave its home  
time gathers life impartially  
I could have spared them nothing since  
I was too young—it is not true  
they might have lived to succour me  
and none shall say in my defense  
had I been there to comfort them  
it would have made no difference

Pnina Rosenberg introduces us to the sculptors and artists Flor Kent, Rosie Potter, and Patricia Ayre, whose “innovative *Für das Kind* (*For the Child*)” memorials graced train stations in London, Vienna, and Prague. Based on thorough, meticulous research, they are private archives in public spheres,” the author writes. Even as memory fades, so, too, do memorials disintegrate; Rosenberg describes this former memorial, its related traveling exhibit, and the issues surrounding its dismantling, and details as well the installation of the new Kent sculpture that replaced it. Pair this essay with that on the Meisler memorials, pp. 91–96, to prompt a lively conversation about the value, meaning, and uses of memorials in public spaces.

Pnina Rosenberg

## When Private Became Public: The *Für das Kind* Memorial Series

“Modern memory is, above all, archival,” Pierre Nora (1989) posits. “It relies entirely on the materiality of the traces, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image” (p. 13). Reflecting Nora’s definition was Flor Kent’s memorial in the Liverpool Street Station in London, the first to commemorate the *Kindertransport*, its children, and those who rescued them [Fig. 1].

The memorial consisted of a huge glass showcase, designed to recall the children’s suitcases that contained their last tangible mementos from their previous life and that represented their most salient liaison with their past, as Karen Gershon (1994) illustrates in her third-person autobiography:



FIG. 1: Flor Kent, *Für das Kind*, Liverpool Street Station, London, 2003.

She valued excessively at that moment her shoddy suitcase with the clothes she would soon wear out and other things—none of them irreplaceable—probably only because they stood for home, the only part of home . . . she was taking away with her. (pp. 197–198)

The glass showcase contained memorabilia from these “shoddy suitcases”: toys, books, clothing, photographs, and documents. Pauline Worner’s (née Makowski) anxious parents packed in their departing daughter’s suitcase a set of coat hangers designed for children’s garments, each bearing a tender inscription: *Dem Braven Kinde* (The Good Child), *Fürs Liebe Kind* (For the Beloved Child), and *Für das Kind* (For the Child) [see Fig. 5, p. 75], (Kent, 2009; Worner, n.d.; British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2008, pp. 28–29), which so appropriately gave the name to Kent’s memorials. Kent explains: “These few words . . . evoke the parents’ love and dreams that went with the children on their journey into the unknown and the force that inspired the rescue” (2009). Beside the showcase stood a bronze statue of a young girl, a rucksack on her back, looking into the distance, oblivious to the hurrying commuters entering and leaving the station.

Kent’s collection and display of the *Kinder*’s mundane objects redeemed them from the abyss of oblivion; they served as a “postmemory” bridge between history as it happened and as it is grasped by the memory of those who did not experience it, as defined by Marianne Hirsch (1997):

Postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal con-



nection. Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. (p. 22)

By exhibiting the mundane objects at the Liverpool Street Station, Kent turned an “archive” into an outdoor *lieu de mémoire*. As Nora (1989) observes, “The less memory is experienced from the inside, the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs” (p. 13). If the “new vocation” of memory “is to record, delegating to the archive the responsibility of remembering” (p. 13), then Kent’s sculpture achieved its goal.

The glass “suitcase,” transparent, exposed intimate personal belongings to the public, evoking a sensation of abandonment and defenselessness, a metaphor of the *Kinder* themselves, who, within a very short time, were forced to replace their parents’ shield with the mercy of strangers. Thus the public became part of the process of past reconstitution and was immersed in the duality of memory and history.

The memorial was unveiled on September 16, 2003, in a moving ceremony attended by about 200 *Kinder* and their families, including the artist herself and the rescuer Sir Nicholas Winton, who had saved 669 children (Harris & Oppenheimer, 2000, pp. 15–16) and who was, in 2003, 94 years old. It was also attended by prominent officials such as the then Home Secretary David Blunkett, as well as the ambassadors of the countries from which the *Kinder* were evacuated. The Austrian ambassador acknowledged, in an official reception, “his country’s slow acceptance of its share of responsibility for the events of the Holocaust” (Rothenberg, 2003, n.p.).

Despite the enthusiastic welcome of the installation and the strong support it garnered from institutions and individuals of all walks of life, who believed that the memorial would “remind travelers and passersby of the anxious beginnings for a generation that has enriched Britain” (Rothenberg, 2003, n.p.), it was gradually disassembled. Leading conservation experts and glass specialists had provided the oxygen-free, humidity-controlled, ultraviolet-filtered atmosphere to prevent—they hoped—the degradation of the precious artifacts and to protect them from vandalism. Even with their meticulous planning, however, some original objects had begun to deteriorate. Much to the dismay of some of those whose artifacts were displayed, the objects were removed and placed at the Imperial War Museum. The glass showcase was eventually destroyed; the girl’s sculpture was removed in 2005. In place of Kent’s glass case, Frank Meisler’s *Liverpool Street Station: The Arrival* was installed (2006) [see Rosenberg, pp. 91–96—Eds.].

## A “LAST MOMENT” OBJECT: DEPARTURE, DISPLACEMENT, LOSS

Although Kent’s original sculpture is no longer there, its pioneering role as the first *Kindertransport* memorial and its innovative concept and unique structure merit discussion. Kent, a Jewish artist born in Venezuela and residing in London, initiated her inventive commemoration in 1998 in the project “Public Art in Site-Specific Sculpture.” She explains, “The concept behind the memorial, i.e., the use of historical documentation, developed against the backdrop of the Holocaust revisionism controversy in the David Irving case” (2012, n.p.). Kent designed her project to be situated at the Liverpool Street Station, “the first encounter most of these children had with England after their long and difficult journey” and one that “remains for them a highly emotional place” (Sebba, 2000, n.p.). To collect the objects to display, Kent advertised in Jewish newspapers and was overwhelmed by the response. “I did not expect much; it had been 60 years and things get lost or thrown away. But the response was incredible. People sent me their most precious possessions” (Sebba, 2000, n.p.).

Many *Kinder* did not hesitate to bequeath to her project these last worldly mementos that linked them to their perished parents and to their past. Ruth Sellers (2000), 16 years old when she left Germany, bequeathed her mother’s wedding veil: “It’s a bit squashed, but I hope it is good enough to go in the case” (Sebba, 2000, n.p.). Josi Knight offered an apron handmade by her mother and packed in her suitcase before she left Slovakia, where she saw, for the last time, her parents, who perished in Auschwitz (Sebba, 2000, n.p.). Wendy Wood finally parted from her blue-eyed doll, given to her as a Chanukah gift by her parents, neither of whom returned from Auschwitz. Handing it over, Wood said, “It was last of the reminders from home. . . . the only thing that links me to the past. Now I feel ready to part with it. It’s almost like giving a thank-you present” (Sebba, 2002, n.p.).

The value of the objects brought, guarded, and finally bequeathed to Kent exceed mere sentiment. These mementos had been carefully chosen by the *Kinder* and their parents, because the baggage had to be quite limited and light. Children were allowed only one suitcase and one piece of hand luggage, the contents of which were supposed to meet their growing needs for an unforeseen time; they were to be carried by the children themselves during their exodus.

Mona Körte (2004), in her illuminating article on the significance embedded in those mundane yet priceless items, wrote that the “last moment” object, a “towel, a bag, a toy, or a book . . . is larger than life in the memory; it reaches back to childhood, traveled with the children, and, torn from its context, comes to resemble a kind of fetish” (p. 111). The object, that made possible living in separation, is charged with multi-layered meaning that changes on the axis of time: if, initially, it represented a bond with the past,

then, with the passage of time, during the exile and later, when the *Kinder* became aware of their loved ones' fates, it gained another, additional significance. As Körte explains,

It no longer embodies childhood, family, and home, but rather loss of the dream of home. The objects are transformed by awareness of the irretrievably lost childhood and the death of parents, becoming a memento *mori*; they replace the gravestone, not least because many *Kinder* never learn when or where their parents died. By preserving and caring for the object, one remains loyal to it, perhaps because there is an intuitive awareness that memory is constantly reshaped by the demands of the present. (pp. 111–112)

Echoing Körte's remarks, Evelyn Kaye (2003), who bequeathed her father's parting gift, a toy dog, which was displayed on the top shelf of the showcase, said that giving it up was "like an amputation. But it was time to do it" (in Rothenberg, n.p.).

#### A TREASURED REPOSITORY

"How is a post-Holocaust generation of artists supposed to 'remember' events they never experienced directly?" asks James Young (2000, p. 1), scholar of the artistic legacy and memorials of the Holocaust. The collective memory of those artists, he argues, "becomes a memory of the witness's memory, a vicarious past" and, as such, they maintain "a distinct boundary between their work and the testimony of their parents' generation" (pp. 1, 2). Kent, however, manages to break this generation gap, tuned and sensitive as she is to the survivors' legacy. Not only did she base and shape her memorial on the *Kinder*'s artifacts, but she also exhibited their treasured memorabilia in a vivid "showcase," thus embedding their past in a vibrant contemporary texture of memory.

The artist conceived of a dynamic memorial, not a static repository, she planned a periodical rotation of the artifacts she collected to be curated by the Imperial War Museum, which would conserve the objects not on display. Her open-air exhibition created a constant, vital dialogue between the intimate souvenirs and the passersby, turning the memorial environment into an extra muros museum, whose exhibits are appreciated by the general public.

The glass suitcase as a see-through object played a dual role: It showed its content and reflected its ambiance—the viewers, the passersby, and the vivid life of a busy train station—present, constant movement confronting itself with past static objects. The simultaneous reflections transfused and intermingled the inner contents with contemporary life. Thus the "last moment objects" may have also symbolized the *Kinder*'s integration in society, despite their trauma and loss.

#### THE GIRL'S STORY

The bronze statue next to the showcase [Fig. 1, p. 68] was of a young girl waiting, looking for someone to fetch her after her tiring, frightening voyage. In the girl's image and posture, Kent captured the feeling of anxiety, tension, and uncertainty felt by the *Kinder* upon their arrival to the new country, alien to their surroundings and to the unknown people who were to foster them:

At Liverpool street we sat . . . for what seemed like many hours. . . . There was no crying and no grief. A disciplined silence prevailed, interrupted only by the calling of our numbers to be collected by our guarantors. There was nothing familiar, nothing reassuring. (Gershon, 1966, p. 47)

To make the bronze memorial as authentic as possible, Kent made a body cast of 6-year-old Naomi Stern, the granddaughter of Ella Eberstark, a *Czech Kindertransport* survivor rescued by Nicolas Winton.<sup>1</sup> Eberstark, evacuated with her two sisters, reported her mother's last directives at their departure, testimony depicting the children's sudden assumed role as responsible adults.

As my mother finished packing my suitcase and was about to close it, she suddenly took off the apron she was wearing, folded it, put it inside and then closed the suitcase. As I was the oldest daughter [15½], my mother implored me to look after my two younger sisters, Alica [14] and Ella [10]. She asked me to take her place. She taught me to sew; she gave me recipes and thought I would be in need of an apron. I think she gave it to me as a symbol of my responsibility. (Eberstark, in Kent, 2009, n.p.)

Eberstark donated this apron to the display.

Helen Stern (2005), the model's mother, unfolded the message of the monument:

Kent felt [making a body cast] would . . . be a "true" representation rather than an interpretation of her. The idea was that she represented the generations that were thriving as a result of saving the original children. . . . [This would be] a sculpture that not only commemorated the past but looked to the future. (n.p.)

The fusion of time and generations, of an individual rescued person and a collective biography, was also attested to by the fact that the girl wore the *Kindertransport* reunion pin "to symbolize all the children rescued" (Kent, 2009, n.p.).

Although the girl is very young, she has lost many of childhood's characteristics; her sad eyes; her empty hands, resting motionless beside her body, revealed her overnight

forced maturity. Worries and the anxiety of separation marked their subtle yet undeniable traces on the girl and stood in contrast to her otherwise childish, coquettish appearance. Kent's statue represented children who were denied childhood. Yet, Kent insists, "The bronze girl is strong and looking forward to the future" (n.d.).

The girl, who, at 127 cm (50 in.) reached about two-thirds of the height of the showcase, was reflected in it, as if she and the memorabilia were one. They are her past and will continuously infiltrate her future. When the glass case was dismantled, the statue, as an integral part of the memorial, had to be removed as well.

### A RENEWED MEMORIAL, MAY 2011

"Flor Kent's much-admired sculpture *Für das Kind* has returned to Liverpool Street Station," wrote an exultant Peter Berthoud (2011), a guide and self-described "London-obsessive," in his blog in May 2011, following its re-inauguration. The new and different version of the acclaimed memorial, which today is situated in the heart of the London Liverpool Street Station concourse, a level below the original placement, with half a million daily passersby, is the fruit of several years of intense negotiations between the artist and various institutions and the enthusiastic support of *Kinder* and donors (Kent, personal communication, March 20, 2012). It was unveiled by the now-102-year-old Sir Nicolas Winton. The event, which coincided with National Refugee Week, was attended by the *Kinder* and members of the Slovakian, Czech, and Austrian diplomatic corps, who paid their homage.

The new memorial consists of three bronze sculptures on a cube-stone pedestal (70 × 90 × 90 cm/19.6 × 27.5 × 35.4 in.): the standing girl from the original version; a suitcase (44 × 74 × 27 cm/17.3 × 29.1 × 10.6 in.), modeled after that of one of the *Kinder*, Max Robinson; and a boy (103 cm/40.5 in.) with a kippah, wearing knee-high trousers, following the fashion of the late 1930s, gazing straight ahead with a somewhat forlorn expression [Fig. 2].

The boy is modeled after Sam Morris, great-grandson of the Viennese *Kind* Sara Schreiber, who was saved by the British rabbi, Dr. Solomon Schonfeld, who personally saved more than 4,000 children [see Licht, pp. 17–23—Eds.]. Morris, at 12, accompanied Schreiber to the ceremony and served as spokesman of the offspring of the *Kinder*:

During the ceremony, Kent (2011) paid tribute to the thousands of anonymous rescuers who turned their houses into new homes for the bewildered displaced children: "We celebrate the greatness of ordinary people during extraordinary times, a rare moment of light at a time of true darkness. . . . I hope the work will stand as an enduring tribute to those ordinary yet heroic people" (n.p.).

FIG. 3: Flor Kent, *Für das Kind*, Westbahnhof Station, Vienna, 2008. ☉



FIG. 2: Flor Kent, *Für das Kind*, Liverpool Street Station, London, 2011.

### WESTBAHNHOF STATION, VIENNA, 2008

In this station, on March 14, 2008, the 70th anniversary of the *Anschluss*,<sup>2</sup> another in the series of Kent's *Für das Kind* memorials was unveiled [Fig. 3]: a bronze sculpture of the same Jewish boy as the one in London, here sitting alone on a huge suitcase.

Werner Faymann, the Austrian Minister of Transport, whose Ministry sponsored the sculpture, acknowledged the dual function of railway stations during the dark Austrian chapter when human beings were often sent from there to their deaths by noting that the *Kindertransport* "succeeded to send people also from this station to life" (Kent, 2008, n.p.).

The placement of the single bronze boy in the middle of the active, noisy rail station that served then and still serves as the departure point to Western European coun-



tries emphasizes the solitude of each *Kind*. He and his huge suitcase sit on top of a rectangular pedestal. The boy's legs hang in the air, too short to reach stable ground. In this minute detail, the artist delicately conveys detachment and displacement and poignantly accentuates the child's sense of abandonment.

#### **FÜR DAS KIND—PRO DÍTĚ [“FOR THE CHILD” IN GERMAN AND CZECH]: A TRIBUTE TO SIR NICHOLAS WINTON**

On the September 1, 1939, when Hitler's armies occupied Poland, a train was due to leave the main Prague rail station. It was the ninth rescue train organized by Nicholas Winton, a London stockbroker of Jewish origin, who, after visiting a friend in Prague, was moved to single-handedly establish an organization that managed to evacuate hundreds of children to London. Winton recalls that day with great regret:

Our biggest transport was due to leave Czechoslovakia at the beginning of September. We had 250 children due to come out from Prague. We had 250 families guarantor, destined to arrive at Liverpool Street Station to collect them. War broke out and the transport was canceled. If the train had been a day earlier, it would have come through. Not a single one of those children was heard of again, which is an awful feeling, isn't it? . . . The war started and the job I was doing bringing over children was finished. (Harris & Oppenheimer, 2000, p. 182)

Seventy years after this generous man was forced to stop his humanitarian rescue, Kent's memorial, depicting him holding a child in his arms, with a refugee girl and a suitcase next to him, was erected on a platform of the Prague rail station from which his rescued children departed [Fig. 4].<sup>3</sup>

Kent based the Prague memorial, like the others in the series, on real people and stories; thus Winton's life-sized figure was made in close cooperation with him as well as with an iconic photograph depicting him holding a child, three year-old Hansi Neumann.<sup>4</sup> Through a meticulous process, the artist managed to convey the likeness of the then-29-year-old man:

For purposes of accuracy, impressions of Sir Nicholas were taken as the basis of the sculpture in 2007. A process of rejuvenation was applied to the resulting life cast using data based on scientific calculations of the human aging process as well as photographic documentation with the aim of achieving a 70-years-younger figure. . . . Incorporated into the work are personal articles donated by Sir Nicholas, including a Rotary International pin denoting his lifelong commitment to charitable work. (Kent, 2011, n.p.)

Kent, though basing Hansi's sculpture on the photograph, did some sensitive modifications, as she explained:

Hansi's face cannot be seen; it is hidden, a metaphor of non-existence, of a cultural and identity death, and, in his particular case, a physical one as well. Most of the children lost their parents and extended families, and with them, also the source to their background. . . . The figure's body language aims to reflect the feelings many of the children experienced. His body is embedded against Winton's, looking for refuge and consolation. (n.p.)

The somber girl, looking toward the train tracks, is again Naomi, the protagonist of the London memorial. Yet, if in Liverpool Station she seemed tired, tense, and uncertain, here, contextualized in the departure station, she conveys deep sadness and loss. Her solitude is accentuated by the unity of adult and child next to her. She is estranged even from those who share her fate, even from her suitcase.

Dedicating the memorial to Sir Winton,<sup>5</sup> Kent (2011) expands its meaning beyond the historical event:

Sir Nicholas's figure represents not only his own persona but also the good will and compassion of . . . people from all walks of life who contributed [to] this



**FIG 4:** Flor Kent, *Für das Kind*, Hlavní Nádraží Station, Prague, 2009.

unique rescue. [The children] are a symbol not only of this story of survival but also of our own survival in a world where constant change and upheaval challenge society's physical and moral fabric. . . . Children the world over are still experiencing displacement and painful separation. We trust that the work of Sir Nicholas Winton, with its universal message of hope, will be a source of continuous inspiration. (n.p.)

**ITINERANT MEMORIES: ROSIE POTTER AND PATRICIA AYRE**

"Last polished by my Mother in 1939" is engraved in Herbert Kay's (né Koniec) contemporary handwriting on the glass cover of a wooden box containing an image of a pair of ice-skates packed in his suitcase upon his departure for England, his last tangible bond with his mother, who, like his father, perished during the Holocaust (Kay, n.d., n.p.). This box is part of Rosie Potter and Patricia Ayre's (2000–2003) *Für das Kind* traveling exhibition inspired by, and created in collaboration with, Kent. This exhibit of 23 prints depicts an original suitcase with memorabilia carried and treasured by the *Kinder* [Fig. 5].

The prints, set in wooden box frames (58 × 46 cm) that deliberately evoke a traditional museum case, create a direct linkage to Kent's Liverpool Street Suitcase memorial (2003); the two projects were simultaneously conceived. Potter and Kent thought that because the *Kinder*

had come from several countries of origin . . . [and] these *Kinder* . . . were living all over the world, it was important to create an element of the work that could travel, perhaps initially back to the countries from which the Jewish absence had left such a cultural void. (Potter, personal communication, April 28, 2012)

The exhibition traveled to venues mainly linked to Kent's series of memorials, such as the Westbahnhof Station in Vienna (2008) and the National Museum in Prague (2009–2012), where it was part of a larger project that paid homage to Nicholas Winton. Yet, the exhibition's most poignant venues were internment camps' memorial museums, such as the Terezin Ghetto Museum (Czech Republic) (2003) and the Memorial Site of Mauthausen (Austria) (2005). Presenting the story of the saved children through their possessions at sites of incarceration *lieux de mémoire* sharpens the tragic fate of those children interned and ultimately murdered. A huge part of the Terezin Memorial's collection are the suitcases of the internees, bearing inscriptions that serve as a source of information about their owners' tragic itineraries. Contrasting those suitcases, which have become historical evidence, with those of the *Kinder* accentuates and highlights the humanitarian acts and courageous people who saved the *Kinder*.



**FIG 5:** Pauline Worner's set of coat hangers, in Rosie Potter and Patricia Ayre, *Für das Kind*, 2000–2003. Copyright/courtesy of Rosie Potter and Patricia Ayre.

These two revolutionary memorials complement each other and forge the *Kindertransport* odyssey in our collective and historical memory. "Opening the archives to the public begins a new phase in which documents containing the national memory will be accessible to the public" wrote the historian Jacques Le Goff (1992, p. 88). This significant manifestation of collective memory depicts the transformation and renovation of the "archive" through the artists' innovating language of memorial. They are, at the same time, monuments and family albums, private yet accessible, and thus open a dialogue and create a new artistic language that suit brilliantly the demands of the overcharged collective memory of the 21st century.

**NOTES**

1. Winton's humanitarian story was, for many years, unknown to the public. In 1998, the president of the Czechoslovakia Republic awarded Winton the Order of T. G. Masaryk. In 2002, he received a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II, and in 2007, the Czech Republic nominated Winton for the Nobel Peace Prize.
2. By March 13, 1938, Hitler's annexation (*Anschluss*) of Austria to Nazi Germany was legalized, which drastically changed the life of its Jewish community as well as the regime's opponents. They were stripped of their civil rights and their property, designated as outcasts, and publicly violated and humiliated; many were subsequently deported to concentration camps.
3. The project was supported by the Portland Sculpture & Quarry Trust and the Winton Train Project, under the patronage of the Czech Railways, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

4. The story of Hansi Neumann, carried so tenderly by Sir Winton in January 1939, had no happy ending. In England, Hansi was sent to a children's home, where he died of an ear infection. His father, the only survivor of the family, learned of Hansi's fate only when he arrived in London after the war hoping to reunite with his son.

5. Following the ceremony, the *Kinder*, with their families, retraced their exodus by departing from the station on the "Winton Train," a vintage train pulled by a steam locomotive. They followed the same itinerary of some 70 years earlier, going from Prague via Nuremberg to Cologne, to the Netherlands, and then by ferry, to England. Upon arriving at the Liverpool Station, they were greeted by their then-100-year-old savior. This was organized by the Winton Train Association in cooperation with the Czech Railway (Winton Train, 2009).

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As a pioneering researcher on these memorials, I would not have been able to work without the generous and ongoing assistance of the artists Flor Kent and Rosie Potter, who furnished me with invaluable information about the project, its rationale, and its various stages and were always ready to reply to my endless queries, for which I thank them enormously. I extend my sincere gratitude to Milli Segal, Vienna, who commissioned the Viennese *Für das Kind* memorial; to Lenka Saldova, theatre department, National Museum Prague; and to Suzanne Bardgett, head of research, Imperial War Museum, London, for their assistance and readiness to share with me their wide-ranging knowledge, giving me a richer understanding of the subject.

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In this brief introduction to the play that follows (pp. 78–90), Ros Merkin provides the background and context of her unique 2008 production at Liverpool Street Station, London. Pair this with Pnina Rosenberg's essay on Frank Meisler (pp. 91–96) and his *Kindertransport* memorials to visualize more clearly the setting described below.

Ros Merkin

## Suitcase: Creating a Theatre Performance About the *Kindertransport*<sup>1</sup>

It's December 2, 2008, nearing 10:30 a.m. at Liverpool Street Station. In Hope Square, just outside the station, a few McDonald's customers perch on the base of a statue eating a late breakfast. Some leave their rubbish on Frank Meisler's statue as they rush off to catch a train or to a meeting in the city.<sup>2</sup> Inside the station, what appears to be a Salvation Army band plays "Silent Night" by a large Christmas tree. Late commuters disembark from trains. Lost travelers ask station staff for directions. People queue for coffee at one of the many kiosks; others wait on the concourse, reading a newspaper, sending a text message. The air is full of sounds; trains leaving and arriving, whistles, announcements about delays, security, departures. It's an ordinary day in the life of a busy London mainline station.

In its midst, occasionally, a few lost children carrying small suitcases, staring in confusion and wonder at the cavernous echoing space, wander down the stairs or up an escalator. They don't quite fit in. They have pigtails and white socks and wear hats. They look old-fashioned. They have numbered labels round their necks. Mostly, no-one takes any notice. Occasionally, someone glances at them or makes a remark to a companion.

The observant bystander notices other differences. Near the entrance from Hope Square, a large trunk serves as a ticket desk. People arrive here and are given labels. They are led to steps on the upper level of the station by volunteers with color-coded clipboards, where they wait in clusters. This is the opening of *Suitcase*, a promenade show created for the station to mark the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the first *Kindertransport* in England. It will be performed three times on this day.

The show begins with actors playing two volunteers working for the Refugee Children's Movement (RCM), the organization established hastily in the wake of *Kristallnacht* to get children out of Europe.<sup>3</sup> One organizer addresses

the audience in school-girl German; the other is brisk, non-nonsense, and very English in her approach. As they explain what will happen and hand out a letter from the Chief Rabbi telling the audience how to behave, a straggle of lost children (actors) arrive. They each tell what is packed in the cases they carry, which treasured possession has been packed and what has been left behind. A father's Iron Cross won in the war, sponge finger biscuits, a mother's pillow, a medallion hidden in a pot of cold cream—all make their way to England. Left at home are a dog, ice skating boots, a stamp collection—and entire families.

On the website of the Jewish Museum, we discovered a list of the possessions a child named Grete Rudkin brought with her: 12 dresses, two aprons, 18 handkerchiefs, a lucky charm bracelet, a photograph album, a puppet (among much else).<sup>4</sup> So we decided to begin with the suitcases. In hindsight, of course, we know that the suitcases themselves came to represent home,<sup>5</sup> as Elaine Blond (1988) makes clear in her description of the moment at Harwich where the children's luggage was searched as they disembarked:

I remember the verdict of a certain man as he went through the suitcase of an eight-year old girl: "There's nothing of value here." He was looking at a doll, a family photograph, a favorite book and a few clothes. It was all she had in the world. (p. 69)

As the children finish their tally, they disappear into the main body of the station. Trying to keep control, the RCM organizer, standing on a balcony above the concourse, blows her whistle. Below, the children look confused or ignore her. Around them and past them, the everyday activity of the station continues.

What follows are a series of eight scenes plus an introduction and conclusion, played in various parts of the

station, from a platform to a narrow walkway that stretches across the upper level; these scenes force the onlookers and passersby to confront the action in close quarters. The scenes are viewed in a random order by the small audience groups (about 15–20 in each one), led through them by their own organizer or chaperone. While different audiences view the individual stories in a different order, during the course of the show, they all see everything. They watch a girl talking to a baby who was pushed onto the train at the last minute. They hear a speech from a railway porter collecting for the Baldwin Fund, and from the RCM organizer explaining the chaos of the arrivals while trying to find the guarantor for a lost child.

Outside one entrance, two women meet for tea and argue about the efficacy of allowing the children into England when the country is only just coming out of a depression. In a doorway, two sisters talk about their journey and their hopes. On a walkway, Stephan tries to find his mother a job and is met by a working-class mother from Manchester; he discovers the “delights” of English bread. Two foster parents greet the audience as fellow guarantors, only to then address them as if they are the *Kinder* and, in particular, one child who is not at all what they were expecting. On a platform, a sister has to leave her brother who is to be sent to a different home [Fig. 1].



**FIG. 1:** Esther (Rosie Selman) and Otto (Ross McCall) being watched by both the theater audience and by two passers-by. Photographed by, and reprinted with permission of, Gary Mitchell.

These characters are composites constructed from facts and stories garnered through research and questionnaires. In this sense, all the information the audience hears is true, although none of the individual characters in the play is a real person. The show drew on a wide range of research that included books written by and about the *Kinder*; DVDs; archive research at the Wiener Library; the articles that appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle* and *The Times*, with their accounts of the Baldwin Fund and the small ads asking for jobs and places for children; and a 1939 radio program titled “Children in Flight.” Barry Turner’s (2003) *One Small*

*Suitcase*, a book for children, for example, provided the story of a medallion that was hidden in a pot of Nivea cream; a father’s toilet case from the First World War included in a suitcase; curiosity (and concern) about English food; and a despairing mother who, upon “spotting a 13-year-old boy seated by an open window” thrust her baby into his arms as the train pulled out of the station.<sup>6</sup> Reactions of foster parents who let their “disappointment show when the flax-haired beauty of their dreams turned out to be a tiny tub with pimples,” as well as many details (and problems) of the work of the RCM organizers at the station were gleaned from Elaine Blond’s (1988) memoirs. Alongside extant accounts, questionnaires that focused specifically on the kinds of issues with which the show was concerned were sent to *Kinder*. Overall, we chose to focus specifically on the journey and the arrival at the station; we wanted to highlight not just the stories of the children but also those of others who found themselves involved in the unfolding drama from varying and lesser-known perspectives.

Throughout, the audience members are never quite sure of their role or where they are going, much like the children when they first arrived [Fig. 2].

They are never allowed to be totally comfortable as they move between the scenes. They have to stay with their organizer to avoid getting lost, because they are never sure where they will be going next. Between scenes, as they move through the station, the present day encroaches, rubbing strangely against the past. Sometimes they are talked to as children who have just arrived; sometimes as potential donors to the Baldwin Fund. This produces a strange tension: Should they put something in the collection tin standing by the radio? Sometimes they are potential foster parents or people who have volunteered to help the RCM. In one scene, they are shown a photograph of a mother and asked to find a job for a parent who cannot come to the country without one. When the audience doesn’t—or can’t—respond, the actor starts to ask passersby if they can help. Throughout the three shows, no one offers assistance.



**FIG. 2:** The actors and the audience mingle. Photographed by, and reprinted with permission of, Gary Mitchell.



Not only were there different roles for the audience throughout the show, there were also different audiences. In the group who chose to come and had booked tickets (which were free), there were some original *Kinder*, some of whom came with their children and grandchildren and shared their own stories, which were played out in a new way. In a few cases, *Kinder* went for coffee after the show with others they met in the audience to talk about their own experiences. Others came not knowing much, but because the show was organized in small groups, they found themselves talking to others as they walked between the scenes.

There was yet another audience, who did not know they were an audience. For some commuters, *Suitcase* was an annoyance, an interference in their everyday lives. Some even walked between actors and audience, staring straight ahead and pretending nothing was happening. Others stopped and asked those organizing the show what was happening (there were leaflets available that explained both the show and the history). Some quietly joined a group and watched a few scenes. For many, their daily journey through this space was changed forever.

After the eight scenes, the audience and the actors, now in the present, are reunited in a final scene around the statue in Hope Square [Fig. 3].

The actors talk about what happens to them in England, placing their suitcases around the statue as they finish, real cases next to the lifeless cases of bronze. They light memorial candles and place them around the statue; it is a moment to reflect on the stories and the losses. Gradually, the solemn, reflective music that accompanies this moment changes (in the original version, as we were approaching Christmas, this was a somber Christmas carol); it mutates into a *klezmer* version of the same tune. The band that we thought at the opening was a Salvation Army band, maybe a part of “real” events at the station, show themselves to be a part of the show and not quite what they seem.<sup>7</sup> The mood changes; the actors dance, inviting the audience to join them. A tray of doughnuts is offered around; it is, after all, nearly Chanukah. The show ends with a celebration: of lives saved, of people helping others, as the audience and actors interact, standing in Hope Square.

#### NOTES

1. For another version of the performance, see Joanne Tompkins, “Theatre’s Heterotopia and the Site-Specific production of *Suitcase*,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 56:2 (T214) Summer 2012. The play is also available (in 6 parts) on YouTube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjMmi\\_f8cfo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjMmi_f8cfo).
2. See <http://www.frank-meisler.com/CitySculpture.html>.
3. For a history of the RCM, see Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), especially chapters 9 and 10.

4. <http://www.jewishmuseum.org.uk/search-our-collections-new?adlibid=4298&offset=0>; accessed June 4, 2012.

5. Karen Gershon; quoted in Mona Korte, “Bracelet, Hand Towel, Pocket Watch: Objects of the Last Moment in Memory and Narration,” *Shofar*, Fall 2004, 23:1.

6. Barry Turner, *One Small Suitcase* (London, Puffin, 2003), pp. 23, 25 & 41. A story of a baby being thrust onto a train at the last minute also appears in Mona Golabek & Lee Cohen’s *The Children of Willesden Lane* (New York: Warner Books, 2002) pp. 36–37. In this version, a wicker laundry basket is pushed into a boy’s arms. He thinks it might contain muffins or be a bomb, but it turns out to be a baby. In both cases, these infants were handed over to the Dutch Red Cross rather than making the trip to London.

7. In the original version, the music was written and played by the Trans-Siberian March Band.



**FIG. 3:** Audience and actors reunite in final scene around the statue in Hope Square. Photographed by, and reprinted with permission of, Gary Mitchell.

#### REFERENCES

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- Tompkins, J. (2012). Theatre’s heterotopia and the site-specific production of *Suitcase*. *TDR: The Drama Review* 56(2) Summer (T214).
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Ros Merkin's script *Suitcase* is a re-enactment of the arrival of a group of *Kinder* at London's Liverpool Street Station and the reactions of the people who came to help them. Created to be performed at this station, the play was designed as a promenade performance where scenes were presented simultaneously to different audience groups. The actors (12 children and 9 adults) can, as in the original, play two parts. The scenes, eight plus an introduction and conclusion, can be performed as in the original, or sequentially, or as short, stand-alone readings. The script will also work well as Readers' Theater in a classroom or on a stage and is appropriate for an eighth-grade-through-adult audience.

Ros Merkin

# Suitcase

## CHARACTERS

### The Children

**Esther**

**Otto**  
her brother

**Ursula**

**Leonie**  
her sister

**Lora**

**Stephan**

**Ilse**

**Eva**

**Fritz**

**Ruth**

**Samuel**

**Gerta**

### The Adults

**Mrs. Hilton**

an organizer in the Refugee Children's Movement (RCM)

**Mrs. Margaret Smith**

another organizer

**Edith**

a well-dressed and well-spoken middle-class woman

**Pearl**

her friend

**Bill Bailey**

a railway porter at Liverpool Street Station

**Edward Garbet**

a well-dressed and well-to-do potential foster parent

**Emma Garbet**

his wife

**Margaret Wilson**

a working-class potential foster parent from Manchester

**Anne Wilson**

her daughter

## ARRIVING

*(As the "audience" arrives, a band is playing hymns. Audience members are given colored tags to identify their groups and are organized by volunteers/chaperones with clipboards. Two volunteers for the Refugee Children's Movement (RCM) orchestrate this, talking to the audience and ensuring they are in the right place. As the show starts, they address the assembled audience.)*

**Mrs. Smith:** *Hallo. Wie Gehts? Gut. Willkommen aus England. Ich heisse Frau Smith. Ich verstehe dass, die Reise sehr lange gehabt werde. Aber, sie haben Glück, weil England ein sicheres un schönes Land ist. Wir haben viele Informationen für sich und meine Kollegiren Frau Hilten wird eklart.* (Hello. How are you? Good. Welcome to England. My name is Mrs. Smith. I understand that the journey has been very long. However, you are fortunate as England is a safe, beautiful country. We have lots of information for you, and my colleague, Mrs. Hilton, will explain further.)

**Mrs. Hilton:** *(standing on a chair)* Hello, hello, children. Gather round, gather round. That's right. My name is Mrs. Hilton, and I'll be looking after you today. Lovely to see so many smiling faces. *(Suddenly)* Stop scuffing your feet. Yes, you at the back, I can see you. Well, it's awful for those new shoes, really.

Well, well, look at you all, utterly confused, bless you. It's okay, my dears. It will be all right *(she's not totally sure that it will be but pulls herself together)*. Right, there are lots of things we're going to talk about today. First of all, you must make sure that you have your tag around your neck with your number on it. These tags are all in different colors, and you must make sure that you keep hold of them as, otherwise, children, you might get lost and you won't find your new families and that would be just terrible. Absolutely terrible . . .

Now, you must all be starving. Margaret, will you get somebody to organize some sandwiches? Jam, Margaret, I think. That should cheer you up.

Now, children, as I am sure you have all been told, Britain is very different from your homes in Europe, and I am certain your mothers and fathers would expect you to be on your best behavior. We do, in fact, have a letter here from your very own Chief Rabbi, which specifies how to behave in England. *(Margaret hands out copies of the letter to the "children.")* It tells you to behave quietly and politely. To be considerate at all times. And remember that it is customary in Britain to give up your seats on trains and buses for elderly people, and always wait your turn. Please make sure you read this letter and keep it safe for later reference. And remember you are all very welcome in this country, your new home. Please, for now stay with your own organizer at all times until we can find your new families for you. *(During this, the actors have assembled behind the audience, carrying suitcases and standing in a rather forlorn group. She sees them.)*

Oh, my . . . Oh, my . . . Margaret, who are these? We haven't organized these. *(She's desperately checking her lists.)* Where have all of you appeared from? This just will not do. One moment, please, I must check my list. *(As they start to move)* No, no. Please stay where you are until . . . *(The children step forward and speak to the audience. Then they go down the escalator to the concourse and scatter, waiting separately or looking through their suitcases. The organizers are desperately checking their lists.)*

**Ilse:** My Aunt Hanni carefully packed a knapsack for my trip. In her ordinary way, she labeled the packages "for lunch today," "breakfast tomorrow." I really hoped there would be Weiner Schnitzel, my favorite, but there wasn't. . . . But she did hide some extra money in one of the sandwiches.

**Eva:** I wore a thin gold Magen David under my dress. It felt so good round my neck. Like God was with us all, no matter what happened.

**Fritz:** I've only got a very small suitcase—two pairs of underwear, two shirts, three or four pairs of socks. I had to leave my stamp collection *(starts to go)*. Oh—and I left the trilby [hat] my mother made me wear on the train. It'll look all wrong in England. I hope no one finds it.

**Esther:** I have with me a photo album. In it, there are many pictures of my family and a few of my house. *(Starts to go.)* Come on, Otto.

**Otto:** My mother and father said I couldn't bring my ice skates. I used to use them every day in the winter in Vienna, until the ice rink was closed to Jews. I didn't . . . *(He would*

*say more, but. . . .)*

**Esther:** Come on. These people don't want to hear about that. Remember what Mother said. . . .

**Otto:** *(reciting, as if trying to remember):* Be polite. Always say please and thank you. Eat whatever you are given, even if it's strange and unlike food at home. Do as you are told. Don't . . . *(He's trying to remember)*

**Esther:** Don't talk back to adults.

**Otto:** I know. Don't talk back to adults. Always be helpful and grateful for all you receive. . . . I thought she really didn't have to tell me all that. She also said . . . brush my teeth, wash behind my ears, and always to hang up my clothes. . . . *(During the last, his sister is taking him down the escalator.)*

**Ruth:** I was given an extra special present of two new dollies tied together. But I had to leave their house at home. And I left my white bear with my cousin. I hope she looks after it.

**Samuel:** My father was taken away before I came, but mother made me bring some of his things with me. I've got the toilet case he took to the war where he won the Iron Cross.

**Ursula:** *(Comes forward with her sister Leonie)* I took my teddy bear. And my mother always slept with a little pillow on top of her big pillow. So I asked her if I could take it and she said yes. It smells of her.

**Leonie:** I brought my favorite sponge finger biscuits, but I had to leave my red scooter behind.

**Gerta:** I'd been given a medallion. The sort you wear on a chain round your neck. It has my initials on one side and some Hebrew letters on the other. *(She confides in the audience.)* It's been hidden all journey in a pot of face cream, and I've been scared out of my wits. . . . *(She starts to go.)* I had to leave my dog at home.

**Lora:** I brought the cards I collected from my Vatti's cigarettes. I have lots of German actresses, oh, and I have Shirley Temple. I started collecting them when they stopped letting me into the cinema at home.

**Stephan:** I brought some photographs of our houses. And I left my grandma, grandpapa, Mama and Papa, my sister, my aunties and uncles, my cousins . . . *(The list goes on as he walks away.)*

*By now, all the actors are on the main concourse, watched by the audience above. One of the organizers has gone down with them and is trying to restore order. We see things happening; a medallion is taken out of its hiding place in a pot of cold cream, a child is given an orange, another comforts her tired and tearful sister. Mrs. Hilton stays on the balcony with the audience. Eventually, she can see no way to restore order but to blow her whistle. The children below scatter.*

**Mrs. Hilton:** Oh, dear, oh, dear. *(To the "chaperones"):* Can you please take these children (indicating the audience) to their meeting places. I'll have to see if I can sort all of this out. . . . *(She goes)*

*(The following scenes are seen in a different order by different sections of the audience.)*

### SCENE 1: AFTERNOON TEA

*(Two well-dressed, well-spoken ladies are taking afternoon tea, as they do every week after shopping in town.)*

**Edith:** Pearl, sugar, milk?

**Pearl:** One, please.

**Edith:** *(seeing audience)* Oh, look over there. . . . More of those Jewish emigrants coming in today.

**Pearl:** All those children, you mean? Poor things, I feel so sorry for them. I've been wondering what I could do to help. I must still have some of Jenny's old clothes put by somewhere.

**Edith:** Oh, no. I can't be worrying myself about them. Alfred and I have enough to worry about ourselves. His business has not been doing so well.

**Pearl:** Edith, think of the worries of those poor, friendless children.

**Edith:** Pearl, I'm not sure they're quite as friendless as you think *(offering her the plate)*. Biscuit?

**Pearl:** Thank you.

**Edith:** Those Jews are always on the news. Every morning when I'm having breakfast with Alfred, we get bombarded with another account of some Jews. They are everywhere, on the wireless, in the newspapers. . . .

**Pearl:** Yes, to try and raise awareness, dear.

**Edith:** And, quite frankly, I am sick of it.

**Pearl:** Of course, they're always in the news, Edith. They're living under the dictatorship of a tyrant.

**Edith:** Yes, but . . .

**Pearl:** Did you not hear what happened last month?

**Edith:** Yes, actually . . .

**Pearl:** Jeffrey read me a shocking report in *The Times*. Hundreds of Jewish businesses and synagogues were destroyed. Burnt to the ground, citizens being beaten in front of their own neighbors. Imagine if that was your Alfred's shop, Edith, imagine.

**Edith:** I am imagining. It must have been terrible, but, to be honest, I can't be worrying about everything.

**Pearl:** But, Edith—

**Edith:** The thing is, Pearl, dear, we have already accepted our full quota of foreign Jews. We can't just let them all in. Alfred was reading me an article in *The Daily Express* only the other day—

**Pearl:** Well, perhaps, in this situation, we need to take more.

**Edith:** Of course, I wouldn't mind so much if we opened the colonies to the Jews. They could all be sent to somewhere far away like Australia or Tanganyika or maybe India. . . . Yes, India—

**Pearl:** But—

**Edith:** But will these Jews go to these outlying countries? Of course not. They will stay here and take our hard-earned money and handouts from the government and the small number of jobs we have left. You need to look at the—

**Pearl:** Do not be ridiculous. The government's not paying for this.

**Edith:** Are you sure?

**Pearl:** Yes. Very sure. Lots of people are collecting money for them. You must have heard about the Lord Baldwin Fund?

**Edith:** I have, actually. Alfred told me about it.

**Pearl:** See? It is charities and individuals helping, not the government. We're showing sympathy and offering a helping British hand.

**Edith:** Yes, Pearl, thousands might have been raised for these

Jewish children, but shouldn't we solve our own problems first? Look after our own.

**Pearl:** I think they are having a harder time than we are, dear.

**Edith:** But unemployment and poverty are rife in our country. You only have to look at . . . More tea?

**Pearl:** I haven't quite finished this cup, thank you.

**Edith:** So why are citizens of our country helping others when people in England are in need?

**Pearl:** Because it is the only humane thing to do.

**Edith:** But we have been suffering here, too, what with the depression. . . . Shouldn't help start at home? I mean if you do have some of Jenny's old clothes, shouldn't you send them to some poor family here who need them? I'm sure a lot of deserving people here are missing out because people are giving all their money to those . . . Jews.

**Pearl:** But they are innocent children, Edith, and Jeffrey says there are actually many benefits for us.

**Edith:** Oh, and what are these "benefits," then?

**Pearl:** (She is trying to remember what Jeffrey said.) Like after the war we lost a nation of young men. . . .

**Edith:** So. . . .

**Pearl:** (She's on more sure ground now.) Well, all of these youths will probably boost our economy, create more of a demand for things, create jobs, and actually improve our lives.

**Edith:** Well, to be honest with you, these children could be a danger to us. We could be murdered in our beds.

**Pearl:** Don't be ridiculous, Edith.

**Edith:** Look at that one (*vaguely waving towards someone in the audience or someone passing*). He must be at least 16. And while we're on the subject, how do we know these stories are real?

**Pearl:** Edith. . . .

**Edith:** All these apparent refugees from poor families are swanning into our city in all these fancy clothes.

**Pearl:** Fancy clothes mean nothing. They are a mother's last

efforts, when she has to say good-bye to her child.

**Edith:** One child had a nicer coat than my Harry—

**Pearl:** Imagine how you'd feel having to send your Harry away! You would want to make a good impression and dress him in nice clothes. No, these stories are only too true.

**Edith:** Pfft, that's your opinion.

**Pearl:** Even more real than I dare to imagine. I'm beginning to think they are not the real danger.

**Edith:** But there is so much fuss being made about it. Anyway, I have my own problems and my own family and my own friends—

**Pearl:** Pfft, typical. You are beginning to sound like that Mr Moseley.

**Edith:** I am not a fascist. I give the odd shilling to charities, but on this subject, I believe the least said, the soonest mended.

**Pearl:** Well, Edith, thank goodness not everybody thinks the same as you.

**Edith:** More tea, dear?

**Pearl:** (*gathering up her possessions*) I think not, dear. I must be going. (*She leaves. Edith is rather taken aback by her friend's sudden departure. She pours herself another cup of tea and sits fanning herself with her gloves as if swatting away a fly or a bad smell. Staring at the audience.*) What are all of you staring at? Didn't anyone in your country tell you it's rude to stare? Go on, go away. . . .

## SCENE 2: COLLECTING FOR BALDWIN

*As audience walk to this section of the play, Lord Baldwin's appeal speech<sup>2</sup> is playing. We hear some of it:*

**Lord Baldwin:** There has seldom been a period of such widespread human misery as has been seen in the last 20 years following the War. Over wide areas in Europe, in Asia, famine, the manifold horrors of modern warfare, the breaking up of homes. And here, in comparative security, we have looked on, often finding it hard to realize far-off events and yet with an uneasy feeling that somehow our Christianity is not worth much if we cannot in some way help in alleviating the mass of suffering. Then again, it all seems so remote and on so vast a scale that we try to kill our conscience by saying, "Oh, nothing can be done" or even that it is no business of ours. And now, suddenly, like a bolt from

the blue, an acute phase of world misery is at our very door. We cannot look away from it, even if we would. And what are we going to do?

*Bill, a Londoner through and through, slowly leans to turn off the recording, looking pleasantly surprised with the numbers of people who have arrived to hear him talk and see the children. He welcomes them and encourages them to come closer.*

**Bill:** Good morning there, Ladies and Gents. I didn't expect to see so many of you. And all looking so very dapper. . . . I feel under-dressed now (*flustered*). I must say I'm very happy to meet you (*shakes a few hands, welcoming people*). My boss said only a few people would show, and look at you all.

Righto. A little about me, then. I'm Bill Bailey, sadly no relation to the chap in the song.<sup>3</sup> Although a man can dream, eh? I'm a humble porter 'ere at our Liverpool Street Station, and I've been 'ere going on 30 years now. I'm starting to feel like part of the furniture. Some of the boys say I'm starting to look like the furniture, too. Old and tattered. Cheeky blighters. I'm not much of a public speaker, as you can probably tell, never 'ad the face for it, but I'll give it a go.

Some of you may have recognized what was playing on me wireless a moment ago. But if you haven't, don't worry. That's what I'm 'ere for. It was, in fact, Lord Baldwin's speech, asking for your aid for the safety of the kiddy-winks suffering in Europe. I won't explain what you already know about the 'orrible things 'appening in Germany. Instead, I would like to tell you what the speech meant for me, and thousands of others like yourselves. As it started, I thought, "Listen to him. Duty this, and greatness that!" I was about to switch it off when something he said really made me sit up and take notice. He said, "I ask you now to come to the aid of the victims, not of any natural catastrophe, not of an earthquake, nor of a flood, nor of a famine, but of an explosion of man's inhumanity to men." Well, it all started to make sense, didn't it, and I began to think how can we, as the brave British that we are, stand idle and just let these people suffer? It's not Christian, is it. And so close to Christmas.

The very next day, the boys and me walk in with the same attitude, the same sense of purpose. We knew that we all had to heed those words. And so we began collecting for the fund in our own little way. As you can see, I've been made the public face of the Railway Union, taking charge of receiving donations from the public. So, if you feel you've enjoyed this little talk, please do drop a few coins, if you can spare 'em, into the collecting tin. I'd be very grateful, and so would the little refugees, as I was 'oping to take some of 'em to see that new Snow White film at the pictures.

I remember working the morning shift when the first lot arrived. I'd been on the night shift, so I was tired and grouchy, and I wanted them off the train and out as soon as possible. So I grabs one of the new boys, and goes marching

over. "Righto, Ed," I says, "Let's get the kids off and outta here, I wanna go home sometime this morning." But as soon as I saw them stepping off the train, the grouchiness disappeared. I suddenly felt guilty. More guilty than I ever felt in my life. How could I worry about getting 'ome to bed, when these little nippers stood there all afraid and alone? Now, I'm not a man who gets emotional. Heaven forbid. Emotions is for women. But standing there looking at their wretched faces, I broke down. Some of them was the same age as my Norman. How could children that age be forced to leave everything they know? Well, me boss tries to send me 'ome, but I says, "No. I want to help these kids as much as I can." And so I worked non-stop till 6 p.m., making sure they found their new 'omes okay.

Since then, I've been doing what I can to help. Our Norman is singing in the choir, Christmas carolling with his school. They've raised a pound 'an a shilling. . . . Not bad for a group of tone-deaf 10-year-olds, eh?

It's not just us getting stuck in. Mrs. Grimes down the street sold the jewelery her husband bought for her, hoping to give to the cause. She wasn't 'appy when she was told it was fake. Neither was 'er husband, he got a thick ear! Our boss, Bernie, said that the toffs were getting involved, selling priceless antiques and the like. The stars of the talkies are even rolling up their sleeves, so to speak, and organizing a special day to raise money and that Miss Myra Hess gave the proceeds of one of her opera concerts to the fund.

My friend Richard was made redundant a few months ago, a lazier bugger you never did meet but an 'eart of gold, and he decided to give half of what he had saved to the fund. Now, I'm not expecting all of you here to give quite that much but I do hope my few words have encouraged you to dig deep to help the poor children. I would like to thank you all so much, for listening to this old fool (*begins to get emotional*). I may not always get my words out right, but I would like to think I did myself, and all of you who have helped these people, justice (*almost entirely breaks down*). Words could never describe how proud and humbled I am to be in the presence of such generous people. Bless you all. (*He shakes hands and passes round the collection tin, encouraging people to contribute.*)

### SCENE 3: THE WRONG CHILD

*(A well-dressed couple approach the audience, talking.)*

**Edward:** I do hope we aren't late.

**Emma:** I don't think we are. Can you see anybody?

**Edward:** Emma, stop fussing. Look over there.

**Emma:** Where? Oh, right, let's go over.

**Edward:** Hello. *(During the following, he shakes hands and introduces himself to some of the audience; Emma follows suit.)* Are you here to collect children, also? I'm Edward Garbet and this is my wife, Emma.

**Emma:** Hello, this is rather exciting, isn't it! I wonder when they will arrive. They're going to be so tired, the poor things. I hope he likes the coat; Edward, do you think he will?

**Edward:** I am sure he'll love it, Emma.

**Emma:** Do you think it will fit? *(She has a small boy's coat.)* I am not convinced. We were not sure what size he would be, so we had to take a guess. I was tempted to wait 'til he arrived, but I am glad I got it in advance now, it's very cold. Do you think it will fit, Edward?

**Edward:** I am sure it'll fit fine, Emma, and if it's too big, it will fit in time. We are expecting a boy, Augustus.

**Emma:** Yes. Do any of you know what child you will be receiving? I know some people have already seen photographs. We haven't, but we know we have child 558. Edward was thrilled when we knew it would be a young boy.

**Edward:** We aren't Jewish, and that, of course, will make it difficult, but we do have a synagogue down the bottom of our road.

**Emma:** And we've researched the Jewish diet. Oh, kosher. . . .

**Edward:** Kosher, dear.

**Emma:** Oh, right, yes! They can eat only certain animals, you see; if it has hooves and chews the cud, it's kosher.

**Edward:** We've looked into Chanukah, too. That's a Jewish holiday that lasts nine days. Or is it eight?

**Emma:** Nine, I think, dear. It's all so fascinating!

**Edward:** We don't want the boy feeling out of place; we really have tried hard to accommodate him.

**Emma:** We have just had an indoor flushing toilet built. There are only five in our street and we have one of them. What time is it? I do hope they arrive soon. Did you remember to pack something to eat?

**Edward:** No, it's okay, I'm not that hungry, dear.

**Emma:** Not for you Edward, for the child! I don't know, I ask one thing from him today. Just one thing.

**Edward:** Not now, dear, let's not argue, not today. I have always wanted a boy so he can help in the family business. And, Emma, that spare room has been empty for too long.

**Emma:** *(An awkward moment)* Yes. I know, Edward. Do you think he'll speak English?

**Edward:** Oh, I'm sure he will, but have you brought the dictionary, just in case?

**Emma:** Yes. It's in your pocket. I didn't want to leave anything to chance. Do any of you speak any German?

**Edward:** We've tried to learn a few simple phrases, nothing fancy. *Guten Tag, Wie gehts? Untig.*

**Emma:** You mean *Unartig!* "Naughty."

**Edward:** Then there's *wie heißt du?* It's quite a queer language, hard to get your mouth around some of the words.

**Emma:** Which is why I really do hope he speaks English. I really did think they would be here by now. I do hope they arrive soon. *(Spotting something in the distance)* Oh, wait, Edward, I think they have arrived. Look over there. Quickly, come on. *(Emma and Edward walk around the audience and address them as children. Emma is checking numbers and is rather alarmed when she finds 558.)*

**Emma:** Oh, er, hello, 558, yes, that's you.

**Edward:** Yes, indeed, hello.

**Emma:** You're not Augustus, are you? Augustine? Oh, gosh.

**Edward:** I'm sorry, but you're not quite what we were expecting.

**Emma:** No, but a surprise, though!

**Edward:** *(aside to Emma)* Surprise is one word. Shock is another! *(To audience: loudly and slightly slowly, as if they don't speak English)* Please do excuse us a moment. *(Aside to Emma)* It's a girl, Emma.

**Emma:** Yes, Edward, I can see it's a girl.

**Edward:** I wanted a boy, dear. I ordered a boy specifically. In all the correspondence, I said I wanted a boy. And this coat will look ridiculous on her.

**Emma:** Would you like to calm down, dear? We need to think about this logically. Where is the last letter?

**Edward:** It's in the bag, dear.

**Emma:** (*Takes letter out of bag*) Right, well, yes, it says here, under gender, *madchen*. See, man! *Madchen*. Man. We definitely ordered a man.

**Edward:** Well, we can't have her. We can get another one.

**Emma:** We can't just leave her here. We could send her to someone else. . . .

**Edward:** I really don't care what we do, I just don't want her. It's not what I wanted. And look at the size of her. She's really big. She must be at least 14.

**Emma:** Edward, just stop it. We cannot just send her back. We wanted a child and we've got one. Let's be grateful.

**Edward:** Yes, but it's not the right one. We wanted a boy. It's the wrong one. Look at her. She doesn't even need looking after. I demand to speak to an official, Emma. I am not happy about this at all. (*He moves off, asking people if they are in charge here.*)

**Emma:** Hello. . . . mmm, I mean, *Guten tag. Wie gehts?* Oh, she can't understand me.

**Edward:** That's just great. Not only is she a girl, she's also stupid.

**Emma:** I don't think she is stupid, Edward. Don't be so rude. She is just scared and your face is doing nothing to help. Try smiling, dear! (*He does, but it's a grimace.*) That's nice, but don't overdo it. *Spreken de English?* (*Very loudly and slowly*) Do . . . You . . . Speak . . . Eng-lish-en?

**Edward:** Oh, this is ludicrous, Emma. Let me try. Hello, Hal-loa, Good day. You . . . are . . . not . . . ours . . . you are a mistake . . . Understand? What did she just say to me? Emma, I do not like her tone.

**Emma:** Oh, look at her, she looks so confused.

**Edward:** Well, I'm bloody confused.

**Emma:** Edward!

**Edward:** Emma, we are leaving the child here. I have had enough of this nonsense. Let's go. Come on, we are going to find the official. She will sort this out.

**Emma:** Edward, please! I will be back, Augustine. Stay there. (*She chases after Edward and they disappear, arguing.*)

#### SCENE 4: A JAM SANDWICH

(*Stephan is sitting rather forlornly on his suitcase. As the audience arrive, he takes out a picture of his mother and starts to ask them—and any passersby—if they can give her a job.*)

**Stephan:** My Mama, she needs job . . . please, she is very hard worker and very clever. . . . She is Dr. Philosophy at . . . at school . . . big school . . . she was Dr. at big school. . . . Hitler, he says no Jewish Dr. in schools. Please, she will do anything . . . she perfect cook . . . and the clean . . . anything . . . please, she not need money . . . please . . . please, she is good housekeeper, you will like. . . . Please save my Mama from Hitler and Nazis . . . and children . . . she can look after children . . . like me.

(*Stephan does not notice as Margaret and Anne enter. Margaret is a working-class widow from Manchester. Anne is her 8-year-old daughter.*)

**Margaret:** Come here. Your face was clean a minute ago. We don't want her thinking she's coming to live with a bunch of scruffy beggars, now, do we?

**Anne:** We are a bunch of scruffy beggars.

**Margaret:** Anne. Don't let me catch you using language like that again! She'll think you're terribly badly brought up.

**Anne:** I don't care.

**Margaret:** Yes, you do. She's to be your new sister!

**Anne:** I've got four sisters already, what do I need another one for?

**Margaret:** Is that them over there?

**Anne:** They don't look German.

**Margaret:** Well, they might think we don't look English.

**Anne:** I do look English.

**Margaret:** (*Going up to Stephan*) Excuse me, love. . . .

**Anne:** Mum, I do look English, don't I?

**Margaret:** (*to Stephan*) I don't suppose you're Stephanie, are you?

**Stephan:** I am Stephan.

**Margaret:** Oh . . . oh, lovely . . . we were expecting . . . a brother.



Anne, isn't he handsome? Stephan, I'm Mrs. Wilson, but you can call me Maggie, and this is one of your sisters, Anne.

**Anne:** Do you think I look English?

**Stephan:** (*Shaking hands*) Hello, nice to meet you.

**Margaret:** Don't you speak marvelous English!

**Stephan:** I speak a little.

**Margaret:** Well, how about that? Now, Stephan, we are a little pushed for space at home—

**Anne:** I'll say. I hate sharing a bed with Jane and Ruth.

**Stephan:** There are three of you in one bed?

**Anne:** Well, we only have two beds between the six of us, see. It's all right in the winter, though, 'cause it keeps you nice and warm, all being together.

**Margaret:** But don't worry, love, because the man came round and he said, "Oh, you can't have them sharing a bed," and I so wanted to take you in—

**Anne:** So she bought you a bed, didn't she.

**Stephan:** A bed for me? Oh I do not want to be a . . . a trouble for you.

**Margaret:** Oh, nonsense.

**Stephan:** You are a very kind lady. My mother says thank you very much.

**Margaret:** Oh, love, I best go and see if there's any forms I need to fill out for you. We've got a train to catch. (*She leaves in search of the form.*)

**Stephan:** A train to where?

**Anne:** Manchester.

**Stephan:** Do you think I will like Manchester?

**Anne:** I'm sure you will.

**Stephan:** Manchester, there will be snow? (*Anne takes out some jam sandwiches and unwraps them.*)

**Anne:** Not at the moment, but there might be at Christmas.

Are you hungry?

**Stephan:** Yes

**Anne:** It's a jam sandwich. It's a little bit squashed.

**Stephan:** Jam sandwich? (*He takes a bite and forces a smile. He is clearly not impressed.*) Mmm. (*To the audience*) What is this white bread? Bread, it is brown. I don't want to stay anywhere the bread tastes so awful.

**Anne:** Nice, isn't it?

**Stephan:** Yes. . . . Thank you. (*Stephan hands it back to her and spits the sandwich into a handkerchief when she isn't looking. He takes out biscuits and offers one to Anne.*) *Leben Kuchen?*

**Anne:** *Leben* what? (*Takes one and bites into it.*) Oh . . . biscuits!

**Stephan:** Bis-cuits.

**Anne:** Oh, I know! (*She switches her sandwiches for his biscuits. Stephan looks surprised and forces a smile.*)

**Stephan:** Thank you. (*Margaret returns.*)

**Margaret:** Right, shall we go home?

**Anne:** Mum, look what he give me.

**Margaret:** Ooh, isn't that nice?

**Stephan:** Mama make them. She is good cook. Please, you need cook?

**Margaret:** Sorry, love, we don't need a cook, but how about we ask some people in the big houses when we're home? Come on, then. (*As they leave*) You take your suitcase and stay close. You don't want to get lost. It's a very big station. (*Stephan hands someone in the audience the remains of the sandwich and follows.*)

## SCENE 5: HOME

*A girl of 15 is holding a baby wrapped tightly in a blanket. She is cooing to it and trying to rock it to sleep, singing a lullaby. She is very young herself but seems to have taken on the responsibility of the baby. Her suitcase stands nearby.*

**Lora:** Shhhh, shhhh, please don't cry. You're okay now, baby. I wonder what your name is. Peter? Michael? No, I don't think you like either of those. I'll call you *mein Liebling* for now. Yes. That's better. You like that? I do won-

der what happened to your real name, the name your parents gave you. You do understand that your Mummy and Papa had to put you on the train, don't you? When that wicker basket was pushed through the carriage door just as the train was pulling away, I never dreamed that I would find you sleeping inside! I don't think any of the children on the train knew what to do. They were all looking at me. I think I was the oldest on the carriage, so I was the one who had to find out what was in the basket. I was relieved to find you inside! I did look out of the window to see if I could see your parents, but there were so many people on that platform I had no idea where to begin. I wonder where they have gone. Maybe to Vienna with mine. Or maybe somewhere else? I don't know, and I guess you don't either. I don't suppose you would even know what they look like; you wouldn't be able to pick them from a crowd. You're too little yet. I'd always be able to recognize my parents. My Mutti has the most shiny, brown hair that curls itself so tightly it looks like a little doll's. And Vatti, well, he has the kindest eyes of grey-blue and the strongest arms, just perfect for picking me up and holding me tight. . . . That's what he did right before I got onto the train. He wrapped me up and whispered to me, "Lora, be good. We will see each other again, I don't know when, but we will. You will have to be a big girl now. I love you." And he looked so sad and there was something missing in his grey-blue eyes. And Mutti's hair, it didn't seem to curl so tightly on that station platform. But as the train pulled away and I watched from the window, it was as if there was no one else there, just my Mutti and Vatti. They were looking only for me, and I was looking only for them.

I'm sure your parents were thinking of you, too. Maybe you'll see them again, when all this is over. That is what all the little children on the train were talking about. Some of them were excited for all the new things they are going to see and do now that we are in England. One of them thought the queen and the two little princesses would be there to meet us with flowers. Isn't that silly?

Things are bad where we are from, little one. I don't understand it all, but I hear conversations and I see things I wish I hadn't, and I know that it isn't safe there now. They made some of the Jewish men in our town scrub the streets, and they beat them while they did it and pulled their beards and hair until they bled. People walked past and shouted insults at them, things I'm not allowed to repeat. We started to see signs put up in cafe windows: "Jews are not welcome here." I don't understand why being Jewish makes us different. Every single person looks and talks and acts differently, but you only have terrible things happen to you if you are Jewish.

It's never like that in the movies, little one. I loved to go to the cinema. Me and the other girls would go and watch a film every other week. Whether it was the same one or

the newest picture showing, it didn't matter, I just loved to go. I can't count how many films I've seen! Austrian, German, English, American, it didn't matter. I just loved to see the places and the costumes, hear the music, watch the dancing. And the women! Greta Garbo, she's my favorite. *Camille*—that's my most favorite film of hers—they were showing it at the cinema so a few of the girls and I went . . . but they wouldn't let me in. They said I was Jewish and because of that I couldn't watch films there anymore. The other girls went in without me. I walked home alone. Vienna had never felt stranger to me. It wasn't my home anymore, I could definitely feel that. I lay awake for so long that night, something serious was happening and, I don't know how, but I knew it wasn't going to be over soon.

And then came that horrible night in November. There was such chaos, I could hear shouting and smashing. I could smell smoke. I could see from my window the glow of flames all around the city. I asked Mutti what was happening, but she was pale. Vatti was out and hadn't come back. The next day we heard from our neighbors that many of the Jewish men in the city had been rounded up and taken away, but we didn't know where. Vienna was a mess. All the Jewish shops—the tailors, the bakers— they had been burned down or broken into and looted.

Vatti finally came home a few weeks later. He had been held in a prison. He wouldn't tell me anything more, but I could see for myself that he wasn't the same. When he came home, he brought talk of England with him, saying I should leave as soon as I could and that he and Mutti would join me soon after. I didn't put up much of a fight. It felt that anywhere would have been better than where we were at that moment. Vatti arranged everything for me, and Mutti packed my case; she even put my special dress in, the one I think makes me look like Greta Garbo in *Camille*. Vatti kept telling me they would come and meet me in England and I smiled and nodded and hugged him back, but I don't think I will see them here. I don't know if I will ever see them again. I have their picture, but I think that's it.

*(The baby is asleep)* Oh dear, I think I've been boring you. But all that crying has stopped. I'm glad, *mein Liebling*, there's no time for tears, we're in England! I think someone will be picking me up soon. Maybe there will be princesses. And maybe I could ask if they will have you, too? I don't want you to go just yet. *(She sings a German lullaby to the child.)*

#### SCENE 6: CHILDREN BY NUMBERS

*(Mrs. Hilton is well meaning but sometimes seems a little thoughtless in her tone. She has a clipboard with a lot of paper.)*

**Mrs. Hilton:** 377, Julia Selo, will now be collected by Mr. and Mrs. Wilson. Julia? Is there a Julia Selo? Oh, my goodness, child, you frightened the life out of me. You must speak up.

There you go. If you would like to make your way to the left, there will be a final form to fill, thank you. (*Notices audience*) Oh, hello, you're early. How lovely, if you would just bear with me one moment, it's a nightmare today. (*Consulting clipboard*) Number 378, Ingrid Jacobi (*she mispronounces this*). Oh, sorry. Ingrid Jacobi will now be collected by Mr. and Mrs. Jacobi. Thank you, please make your way to the left where there is a final form to fill. Do not leave until it has been filled.

Hello again, sorry about that. Excuse me, please. I would like to say a big welcome and to thank you all so much for volunteering. Although, as I am sure you are all aware, being an organizer for the refugee children's movement is no easy job. However, it is extremely worthwhile. Before you start, there will be a short training program that you will be required to undertake; it will last no longer than one hour. Please bear with me.

Number 379, Hans Faith, will now be collected by Mr. and Mrs. Roberts. Hans Faith. . . Will the guarantors for Hans Faith, #379, please step forward. #379. Well, ah, hello, Hans! If you would be a good boy and just take a seat there, I am sure somebody will come and collect you in no time at all.

As you can see, this is no job for the fainthearted. But please don't worry. I assure you that this boy will be collected in no time at all. I am sure there has just been a simple mistake. Although there does seem to be rather a lot of mistakes. Oh, well, one cannot complain, at least we are not at Bloomsbury House. That quite simply was chaos. Trying to sort out all the different applications on a first-come-first-served basis really did stretch my conscience most unimaginably. Reading letters every day from desperate parents. I can even remember them now, I think. Let me see: "This is Heidi, who is 12; she is lame but very cheerful." "Michael is 9, he has a gentle nature, and I know you would like him." (*She is a little emotional.*) Worse still were the piles of unanswered, unopened letters that would lie stacked in the office for weeks. To tell you the truth, there just simply were not enough people to undertake such a mammoth task. But one must not dwell; we are here now, and this operation is in full swing. And thankfully, today we've managed to escape from the dungeon. That's our pet name for the room they let us use here. It is awfully drab, and no amount of decorations can cheer it up.

Ah—one moment. Number 380, Elsa Lawri, will now be collected by Mrs. Dickens. Hans, just wait there, please, my dear, your new parents will be here in no time at all. Be a big boy, don't cry.

I have to pinch myself sometimes to stop myself from becoming mother to all of the children. The crying toddlers and . . . (*trails off slightly*). But you just cannot. We are here to do a job, after all. This is what you must keep reminding yourself. A word of warning. You may appear to some as

insensitive or even rather rude in the way you must address the adults and children. But you must take charge and command authority; otherwise, this station would be in rather more chaos than it is in already. Number 381, George Hacker, will now be collected by a Miss (*checks that this is not a mistake*) . . . yes, Miss Jones. Hello, Miss Jones. If you would like to make your way to the left—no, no, not you, Hans, you just sit tight, that's a good boy. Yes, that's right. Thank you. (*To audience*). Miss Jones? I do hope that boy will be okay. I don't think that woman is even married. Oh, well. This job has taught me to be broad-minded and to be prepared for change at all times. Oh, and the adults must be watched like hawks. Many an hour has been wasted already searching the station for a child presumed lost but who is, in fact, already well on the way to Ruislip. Between you and me, I find using a referee's whistle extremely handy when trying to gain control over rowdy guarantors. One moment, please, I will just try this again. I can't just leave him sitting there. Number 379, Hans Faith. Can the guarantors on number 379 please step forward. No? 379. . . . Number 379? (*Shakes head.*) How do you deal with children left behind? That doesn't get easier, you know. I can't understand it all myself. I am only one woman, after all, not a trained professional. You know what, it's people like you and me that have made this possible. Ordinary people. I must not take all the credit, however; that would be extremely rude. I don't think we could have done this without people like the Quakers and all those others who have done so much.

One more. Number 382, Rosie Medas, will now be collected by Mr. Medas. Oh, her uncle! How nice. Please, could you make your way to the left and sign the form before you both leave? Thank you.

Once again, I must thank you all so very much for volunteering. You will all start on Monday, which gives you time to reflect on the job at hand. If you could all arrive at the station at 9:30 for the training program. I assure you that every child you help is extremely grateful to you, as their parents would be, too. I look forward to seeing you on Monday.

Now, Hans, my poor dear, what are we going to do with you? Don't cry. I know everyone else has gone, but someone will be along for you in no time. Would you like some tea? I wonder if we could find you an orange. (*She leads him away.*)

#### SCENE 7: BEING A GROWN UP

(*Otto is wandering around and eventually goes to sit on his suitcase. Esther, his sister, is reading a book. She looks up and notices him.*)

**Esther:** You will break it. (*Otto stands up and then tries to sit on his sister's suitcase.*)

**Esther:** Don't sit on mine. You'll break that, too.

**Otto:** *(Seeing something behind the audience)* Who's died?

**Esther:** What? What do you mean who's died?

**Otto:** Look at all those undertakers.

**Esther:** They're not undertakers; they're policemen.

**Otto:** They've got the wrong hats on.

**Esther:** No, they haven't. They're the hats that English policemen wear. Mum showed me a picture. *(Noticing his face)* You've got makeup on your face. *(She laughs.)*

**Otto:** No, I haven't.

**Esther:** Yes, you have.

**Otto:** It's from all those ladies kissing me when I got off the train.

*(Esther goes to wipe it off by spitting on her finger. Otto pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and cleans it away himself. He goes to shove it back into his pocket.)*

**Esther:** Don't shove it in like that! Mummy would be very angry. Fold it up. *(Otto does it wrong and Esther helps him.)*

**Otto:** *Danke.*

**Esther:** No, "thank you." Say "thank you." Practice your English.

**Otto:** "The dog is under the table" und "My handkerchief is in my pocket."

**Esther:** Well done.

**Otto:** I can speak English. I can speak English. *(He kicks over a suitcase and then runs around the station making plane noises.)*

**Esther:** Stop doing that! Mummy wouldn't want you to be messing around where people can see us. You won't get chosen. No one is going to want to take you home.

**Otto:** Someone will come for us soon! Now leave me alone. *(He sits, rather sulkily.)*

**Esther:** Are you hungry?

**Otto:** No. When Mummy gets here next week she can cook

us lovely food again.

**Esther:** I don't think they will be here in a week

**Otto:** Yes, they will; Daddy told me so.

**Esther:** Oh, you don't understand.

**Otto:** Don't say that to me. You're not Mum.

**Esther:** I know I'm not, but I am older.

**Otto:** *(Defeated)* Yes. Yes, you are. *(He sits on the suitcase. Then he starts to fidget.)*

**Esther:** What's wrong? *(Otto shakes his head.)* Tell me what's wrong, Otto. *(He shakes his head again.)* Do you need the toilet? *(He nods.)*

**Otto:** Yes, I'm sorry.

**Esther:** Don't be sorry. Let me look for one. *(She goes to leave.)*

**Otto:** Don't leave me.

**Esther:** I have to leave you to look for a toilet. We can't take the suitcases.

**Otto:** NO, NO! Don't leave me! Mummy said you wouldn't leave me at all while she wasn't here! What if I get lost?

**Esther:** Don't worry, I'll look from here. *(Standing on her tiptoes)* I can't see one.

*(Otto stands up slowly. He looks embarrassed and a little nervous. He opens his coat to reveal a wet patch.)*

**Otto:** I'm sorry. *(Esther hears her number.)*

**Esther:** That's my number being called. I've got to go and see what they want. Stay here, Otto. I won't be long. Stay with the suitcases. Be a grown up. *(She leaves. Otto gathers up suitcases and sits on them. He is trying to be a grown up. Esther re-enters. She is upset and unsure but also trying to be grown up.)*

**Esther:** Here's my new address.

**Otto:** *Danke.* No, no, I mean thank you.

**Esther:** Keep it safe. *(She helps him fold it into his handkerchief. She picks up her case. Otto picks up his as if to go with her.)*

**Esther:** No, Otto. It's just for me. You have to wait here. They'll call you soon.

**Otto:** Don't leave me.

**Esther:** I have to. Someone will come for you soon. I promise. *(She hugs him and, with difficulty, leaves. Otto is left on stage clutching his suitcase tightly. He's crying but he is trying to be a grown up.)*

### SCENE 8: WE'LL FOLLOW SOON

*(Two sisters sit by their cases and wait. Leonie is singing a Yiddish song to her doll. Ursula joins her to start with, and then speaks as Leonie carries on singing.)*

**Ursula:** It's just Leonie and me now. *(To someone in the audience)* Did you come with anyone? *(She pauses and thinks.)* Such a long way. The train was humid, children screaming, shouting, crying, and laughing. Even sleeping in the luggage racks. I sat next to my little sister, who was singing. I was not in the mood so I opened the window at the end of the carriage and sat looking out. Such beautiful scenery. But I couldn't forget the vision of our tearful parents. I'd never seen father cry.

**Leonie:** They said: "We'll follow soon." *(Ursula looks at her but says nothing.)*

**Ursula:** Then the train had stopped. Silence.

**Leonie:** We had arrived at the border.

**Ursula:** The guards at the border searched everything. They took anything valuable. And one of them poked his fingers through every chocolate in the box Mother had given us for the family who would be meeting us. And then gave them back to me.

**Leonie:** And then the train was off, and the older children were shouting and singing. It was the best party I'd been to. I was holding a big girl round the waist and dancing, but I didn't know the words to the songs, but I sang la-la. *(She tries to remember the tune; she tries to dance with someone.)* It was so much fun. And then the train stopped again. *(She's scared and retreats to her sister.)*

**Ursula:** It's okay. Then we got to Holland.

**Leonie:** It was as if the whole of Holland was there and they threw food, sweets, toys, and flags in through the window. And there was hot chocolate and . . . smiling faces. It felt like Chanukah.

**Ursula:** A candle lit for each of the eight days of Chanukah. Do you remember last Chanukah? You got your own dreidel made by father, and mother let me help cook all the food, even the latkes. "We'll follow soon," they said. Chanukah was a miracle. We need another one now.

**Leonie:** A pretty woman came on to the train with cakes. They looked so beautiful. And they were so tasty, almost better than my mother's were, but don't tell her I said that. The woman approached us and asked our names. She thought our names were pretty. Then there was the boat. It was the first time I'd seen the sea.

**Ursula:** And she was seasick.

**Leonie:** Only a bit. And another train with huge, big, soft seats and then we were pulling into this huge smoky station. And there are no flags with those black things in the middle.

**Ursula:** Swastikas.

**Leonie:** A nice man gave me these *(she holds up two pennies)*. Look, these are pennies. They are so big. I'm sooo tired, now. And a bit bored. Can I open the case to see if mother remembered to pack my favorite cardigan? *(She struggles to open her case. When she does, she finds a postcard.)* My postcard from Berlin. Home. Look. This is where I come from. *(She shows it to the audience, the other children who are waiting in the station with them. She asks where they are from and then finds sponge biscuits, which she shares.)*

**Ursula:** *(As this is happening)* My postcard from England. London. Our new home. I'll send it to mother. *(Writing)* "Dearest mother and father, we have just arrived in England. Leonie is safe, as am I. We are awaiting the arrival of our new 'family.' We miss you terribly, but you promised you would come soon. So I trust you. Send our love to everyone, and don't forget to stroke Liesel often. All our love, Ursula & . . ." *(looking up)* Leonie, come and sign your name on the card. *(She does)*. I won't cry. "We'll follow soon," they said. *(She finds the leather diary her father has given her to write in. She starts to write.)*

**Leonie:** I am so excited about England. I've heard so much about their "English tea" with milk. *(To Ursula)* Maybe I could send mother some food by post. I want to go and use my first penny. It's such an adventure.

**Ursula:** See that lady over there? She's Gloria. She's come to pick us up and take us home. We need to wait here for Gloria. Put your things away. *(They hug.)*

## THE FINALE: A FUTURE

*(At the end of the 8th scene, the audience moves to a central space for the finale; at Liverpool Street Station, this was Hope Square by the Kindertransport statue. They are helped by organizers or by the actors. In some cases, actors playing adults change back into children in front of the audience. They ask the audience to help them, maybe get them to carry their cases. When the audience is assembled, the children speak to them in turn, placing their cases round the statue as they finish.)*

**Ilse:** My Aunt Hanni survived and moved to New York. When the war ended, she contacted me and asked me to go and live with her. But I had a new life in England.

**Eva:** I still wear my necklace. It helped me through all the good and the bad times. I love my foster family. They are so much fun to be with. My family . . . I don't know what happened. *(She fingers her necklace.)*

**Fritz:** After a while, I found out that mother had survived. When she was well, she came here to see me. I was 16 last time I saw her. Now I am 23. The first thing she said to me was, "You are the only person left in the whole world to make my life right again." *(He shakes his head.)* But I couldn't.

**Esther:** I love my new foster family. They treat me like one of their own children, and I now work in their local business. I still see Otto every Sunday.

**Otto:** I was moved around to several foster families. Nobody seemed to have room for me. And my sister is still trying to teach me English.

**Samuel:** The day I stopped being a refugee was the day I passed my school certificate and got a job. When I had earned enough money, I went home to see my family. But nothing was there anymore. I'm not sure I have anything to go back to.

**Ruth:** My father got my mother a job here before he was killed. She lives just down the street.

**Ursula:** I've been studying medicine at university for two years now. It's how I met my beloved Oscar. He had to go to war, but he came back to me. I miss Leonie. And I miss Berlin.

**Leonie:** I saw Ursula every single week when we first came to England. After a while, though, the visits stopped and I haven't seen her for years.

**Gerta:** I now work in my foster mother's shop in Buxton. I

really enjoy the work and for my birthday, she gave me my first pair of heels. If my mum was here, she would say they were dangerous or unhealthy.

**Lora:** I was right about my Mutti and Vatti never coming to meet me in England. I met my husband while working at the local cinema. We're getting married in the summer, and all my foster family will be there.

**Stephan:** My mother never made it to England before the war broke out. I never spoke to her or any of my family again. So I stayed with my new family in Manchester. I'm studying engineering at University so I can learn to build things.

*Memorial candles are lit and placed around the statue as the band plays a Christmas carol. It is a moment of reflection for those who did not survive. Gradually, the music morphs into a klezmer version of the tune. Children/actors start dancing with each other and with the audience. A tray of doughnuts is shared. It's a moment to celebrate the miracle of survival and new lives.*

## NOTES

1. The script was researched, devised, and written by Ros Merkin and the cast of the original production, December 2, 2008: Suzanne Bayliss, Kyle Blears, Tabitha Burns, Jenny Cullen, Alison Davies, Jennie Khan, Gareth Mitchell, Ross McColl, Jonny O'Connor, Naomi Robinson, Lexie Ryall, Rosie Selman, Helen Webster, and Holly Wilson-Guy.
2. A full text of the speech, which was broadcast on December 8, 1938, can be found in *The Times*, December 9, 1938, p. 16.
3. This is an allusion to the 1902 song "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home" by Hughie Cannon.

In this essay, a combination of art history and biography, Pnina Rosenberg examines the four *Kindertransport* sculptures of the renowned artist Frank Meisler. She explains, “The memorials’ continuous overlapping of past and present create a multilayered time / space discourse that moves between the wish to efface the past traumas and the opposed desire to pay homage to the greatness of ordinary people during extraordinary times and to transmit that legacy to the future.”

Pnina Rosenberg

## Footsteps of Memory: Frank Meisler’s *Kindertransport* Memorials

The poignant (hi)story of separation, loss, and rescue incarnated in the *Kindertransport*s—the evacuation of about 10,000 children from Nazi territories, from December 1938 until the outbreak of WWII—has been publicly commemorated only for the last two decades. This chapter in Holocaust history—involving not only the rescued children but also their parents who gave them up and the rescuers who took them in—remained virtually unknown for several decades. In large part, this was because of the *Kinder*’s feelings of trauma and guilt for having survived while most of their relatives did not (Rabben, 2011; Kushner, 2006). This fact alone may explain the belated public awareness of it.

From 2006 on, the internationally acclaimed Israeli artist Frank Meisler, a *Kind* who was sent from his hometown in Danzig (Gdansk) to London, created bronze memorials in the train stations of Gdansk, Berlin, and London, as well as in the Hook of Rotterdam, each depicting a group of departing/arriving children, thus not only retracing the footsteps of his personal odyssey but also narrating a collective history of the uprooted youngsters.

The memorials are situated in railway stations, the historical sites that mark the *Kinder*’s voyage, and thus they create a close affinity to their real historical sphere, unlike Nora’s affirmation that “contrary to historical objects . . . *lieux de mémoire* have no referent in reality” (Nora, 1989, p. 23). By turning past/present railway stations into realms of memory, they are not only charged with memory but also become its agent.

### CAST MEMORIES: FOUR STATIONS ON THE WAY TO HAVEN

A bronze sculptured group of three girls and two boys [Fig. 1], positioned at the end of a railway line at the Liverpool Station in London, represents the arrival of the *Kindertransport* to London. The five life-sized youngsters and their suitcases, toys, and musical instruments are positioned on a pedestal with 16 bronze milestones, each bearing the name of a city from where the *Kindertransport* departed.



FIG. 1: London, Liverpool Station: *Kindertransport—The Arrival*, 2006. Courtesy of Frank Meisler.

This poignant group, whose stillness stands in sharp contrast to the busy ambiance surrounding them, is the first of four memorials done by Meisler and his long-time associate Arie Ovadia that commemorate the rescue. Meisler recounts the genesis of this project:

It was Prince Charles who, during a lunch offered by him to the London *Kindertransport* “children,” in 2006, attended also by me, expressed his wish to have a monument for the *Kinder*. He planned it to be situated in a little square, outside the Liverpool Station, where passengers arrive from East Europe, as did the *Kinder*, including myself, some 70 years back. The Prince, who studied the history of the *Kinder* . . . stated that their arrival was a mammoth gift to the country, since they turned out to be very productive and creative citizens, who contributed immensely to English society. (Meisler, 2012)

By creating the London memorial, as well as the others that followed, Meisler retraced and recreated his own ordeal. The artist, born in the then-German Free City of Danzig (today Gdansk, Poland), was the only child of a prosperous Jewish family; he experienced extreme hardship, as did all members of the Jewish community, after the Nazis rose to power. His father, who owned the Lloyd Transit shipping company, was forced to leave home for the company's Warsaw branch, because Jews were not allowed to run their own businesses in Nazi Germany. The *Kristallnacht* pogrom convinced his parents to send young Frank on the *Kindertransport* to London, where his maternal grandmother and two aunts lived.

The plan was set in motion, and Frank went to Warsaw to say good-bye to his father. He explains,

The train journey from Danzig to Warsaw and back didn't seem unusual for a 10-year-old; my mother took me to the train in Danzig and my father waited for me in Warsaw. I had made a few similar trips before from Danzig to a small town in Pomerania when I stayed with my aunt for a week or so on a few occasions. The idea of a child being safe on such journeys seemed to be a given in those times. (Personal communication, September 10, 2012)

In what would be their last visit, Frank's father provided him with two new suitcases<sup>1</sup> for his expedition as well as with his last counsel: “Whatever happens, go to study in a university” (Meisler, 2012). Good education was of prime interest to his father, who, as

a real Francophile, was certain that France would defeat Germany, and since he did not want my schooling

interrupted, the plan was that I was to go and stay in England until the French had beaten the Germans and then I could return home. (Meisler, quoted in Frazer, 2006)

Tragically, neither of his parents lived to see their son fulfill this wish. A few days after the 10-year-old Frank said good-bye to his mother at the Danzig rail station in August 1939 to embark on the last of the four *Kindertransport* trains that left the city en route to London, war was declared. The Nazis entered Poland, rounded up its Jewish citizens, and by November of 1940, forced them into ghettos. Frank's parents were interned in the Warsaw Ghetto, from where they were later deported to Auschwitz and murdered. Their fate became known to the artist a few years after the war ended, as was the case with many other *Kinder*.

Meisler and his other transport companions reached Berlin's *Friedrichstrasse* rail station and continued to Holland, accompanied to the Dutch border by the Gestapo.

It took us two nights. We were brought to the Hook of Holland, near Rotterdam, and, by a cross-channel ferry, arrived to the English port, Harwich, from where we took a train to London. We arrived at Liverpool Station where my two aunts awaited for me. . . . And then my other life began. (Meisler, 2012)

Unlike many *Kinder*, Meisler stayed with his family, who provided him with affection and with good schooling. Meisler was sent to the prestigious Harrow boarding school, and, after graduation, he volunteered for the Royal Air Force. Once the war was over, he kept his promise to his father and obtained a degree in architecture from Manchester University. During the early 1960s, Meisler moved to Israel, where he discovered his real vocation as a sculptor, an activity that started as a hobby alongside his architectural career and became his profession; he soon excelled in his new field and gained an international reputation.

Before creating the sculpture that was unveiled on September 2006, under the auspices of Prince Charles and financed by the Association of Jewish Refugees and the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, who administered the *Kindertransport*, Meisler visited the designated place. “I stood there, in one of the busiest railway stations in London, and realized that the only way to ‘stop’ the rushing people was by creating a figurative sculpture, with a plaque that would explain its meaning” (Meisler, 2012).

The five young refugees, with their number labels around their necks, one clutching a teddy bear, all gazing in different directions, mystified and curious by their new home-away-from-home, reflect Meisler's memories of his first encounter with London. Although this new encounter represented, for most of them, a traumatic rupture with their



past, including their family, language, food, and culture, nonetheless, some created a fantasized image of a wonderful, almost fairy-tale life in England:

We thought of England as a land of lords and ladies because of the king and queen, and the two little princesses appealed to us very much. A year or two before we saw pictures in the newspapers of the coronation with their ermine clothes and their crowns on their heads. And we really thought in England that's how people get dressed—perhaps not every day, but sometimes on Sundays. So that was our expectation of England. (Harris & Oppenheimer, 2000, p. 88)

Such an idealized image, as well as Meisler's relatively comfortable arrival might explain the children's inquisitive look, devoid of fear and full of hope.

Once the idea for the memorial was conceived, Meisler consulted various publications on the *Kindertransport* and studied the photographs "to refresh my memory about the clothes, hair styles, accessories, bags, and suitcases of that era" (Meisler, 2012). In detailed work, seen in one of the girl's trimmed lace collar, the beautifully cut boy's jacket with a fountain pen in its upper pocket, and the stylized girl's cuffs, Meisler's memorial vividly recaptures 1930s *Mittleuropa* bourgeois children. Thus, the monument is not only a tribute to the children's saviors but also an homage to their parents, who, although tormented by the idea of a separation and beleaguered by the short time to prepare before the abrupt departure, thought carefully of how to ensure that their offspring would make a good impression in their host country. They bought them new clothes, sometimes beyond their economic means, not wishing to send them "out into the world as if they were beggars, though that was what they were" (Gershon, 1994, p. 191).

Not at random did Meisler incorporate, alongside the bags and suitcases, a violin case. Rather, "in the spirit of Prince Charles's gratitude to the refugees' contribution, I visualized the German cultural loss and Britain's gain" (Meisler, 2012). Indeed, many of those persecuted children "made their way through to colleges and universities" (Cesarni, 2000, p. 17), and, as adults, made considerable contributions to Britain's industries, commerce, education, science, and the arts. Hence, Meisler's London memorial represents a turning point in the children's lives—a new chapter whose pages unfold a history of rescue, gratitude, and hope.

### BERLIN, FREIDRICHSTRASSE STATION

The *Trains to Life—Trains to Death* memorial was unveiled on November 30, 2008, 70 years to the day when the first *Kindertransport* journey to Britain began [Figs. 2a, 2b].

The monument, whose realization was supported and

assisted by Lisa Bechner, a well-known journalist from the Axel Springer Publishing Company, is situated alongside the *Friedrichstrasse* train station in Berlin-Mitte, the station that served as the departure and transfer point for German-Jewish children as well as for the youngsters en route from Austria and Czechoslovakia. There Meisler stopped after leaving Danzig, heading towards London. The life-size bronze memorial, titled *Trains to Life—Trains to Death* (*Zuge in das Leben—Zuge in den Tod*), is divided into two groupings of children back-to-back on one platform. It depicts, on one side, a boy and girl with their luggage, heading toward their savior train, while the other children, facing the opposite direction, are designated to ride the train that will carry them to their tragic, fatal destination. Meisler attests:



FIG. 2A: *Friedrichstrasse* Station, Berlin, *Trains to Life—Trains to Death*, 2008. Courtesy of Frank Meisler.



FIG. 2B: Another view of *Friedrichstrasse* Station, Berlin, *Trains to Life—Trains to Death*, 2008. Courtesy of Frank Meisler.

“I could not create a memorial showing only the departure of the rescued children without acknowledging that 1.5 million children didn’t make it” (Meisler, 2012).

The difference between those groups is accentuated by the vivid, vigorous march forward of the rescued children, cast in brownish-golden hues, in contrast to the almost-black group of desperate and anxious children clinging to each other as they seek comfort. In back is their baggage, reflecting and symbolizing their fate: a violin case and suitcases, one open and displaying its contents; and a broken, mutilated doll, in contrast to the intact toy held by the girl on the other end of the platform. The rescued children bear their *Kindertransport* tags; the deportees, a yellow badge with the inscription *JUDE* (Jew), which marks their future.

By juxtaposing the *Kindertransport* rescue of 1938–1939 and the deportation to concentration camps from 1942 on, Meisler portrays not only the accelerated deterioration of the situation of the Jews but also the fate awaiting the Jewish children who were not saved. By employing an established symbol of the Holocaust, trains and railway stations, the artist alludes to their dual function during this period and may also be implicitly condemning the bystanders from the Free World, who did not change this unfavorable balance between the *Trains to Life* and *Trains to Death*.

The memorial, despite being situated in a busy public sphere, has never been vandalized. It is not for lack of attention; on the contrary, fresh flowers are placed daily on it, as tribute to the rescued/rescuers and as a memento for those who were deported. This monument was chosen to be among the 50 Berlin famous landmarks and spaces illuminated during the Festival of Light, celebrated October 10–21, 2012 (Meisler, 2012). This mingling between history and memory enables the public to engrave the past into their present consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

### GDANSK (DANZIG) MAIN RAILWAY STATION

Meisler erected this life-sized bronze memorial, *Kindertransport, The Departure*, 2009 [Fig. 3] on the spot that not only commemorates the Gdansk children’s transport but also enabled the artist to close the circle that commenced with the London Arrival monument. Meisler (2012) explains that “the Mayor of Gdansk came with a delegation to London and expressed his interest, on behalf of the city, to create a monument for the departed children.”

The monument was unveiled on May 5, 2009, 70 years after the first of four *Kindertransports* (from May 3 to August 25, 1939) left the Free City of Danzig to England, saving the lives of 130 children.

*The Departure* depicts five hopeful children of different ages standing on a platform with suitcases, rucksacks, musical instrument, and toys, preparing to leave. The group resembles the five youngsters portrayed in *Arrival*; yet, while those in London are staring curiously at their new

surroundings, this Gdansk group, except for the young boy who bids his last good-bye to unseen accompanying relatives, is patiently awaiting the train, revealing no anguish or fear. Their attitude reflects various testimonies that both the *Kinder* and their parents tried to conceal their panic and pain, as the adults encouraged their departing offspring to believe that they were headed toward a country that was nothing but liberty and happiness, and children tried to be brave.

I wanted to think I was being brave, but even then I had my doubts. . . . The number I was playing on myself was to say, “This is terrific, I am going to England. What a lark. How exciting!” thereby cutting myself off from the disaster of leaving my parents—that was sent underground. (Harris & Oppenheimer, 2000, p. 101)

“It was a land of freedom, a land of hope and glory. Our parents painted a picture of adventure, how lucky we were to go to England. We really felt that” (Harris & Oppenheimer, 2000, p. 88).

In this memorial, Meisler captures the children’s (pretended or not) bravery and last moments of innocence. Although he portrays only the children, the presence of their parents is almost tangible. They are waved at or are watching their children from a distance. This is the only memorial in the series that evokes parents; consciously or unconsciously, Meisler recalls and revives in it his own final good-bye that took place, on this very spot, seven decades earlier.



FIG. 3: Gdansk, *Kindertransport, The Departure*, 2009. Courtesy of Frank Meisler.

Yet, the absence of the parents is not accidental and does not characterize only these memorials. Kushner (2006) argues that the narrative of the *Kindertransport*, as reflected and transmitted by much of the written and photographed media, excludes them purposely. “We remember the touching photographs of the Jewish children arriving in the *Kindertransport*,” but there are few photographs “of the Jewish parents left behind in Nazi Europe” (London, 2000, quoted in Kushner, 2006, p. 167). Without the parents in the picture, there is no prompt to ask questions about the immigration policy in the UK that excluded them; thus, the good and benevolent image is left intact. Yet the absence of the parents is engraved on the rescued children’s memories and lies heavily on their conscience. Hence, Meisler brings the parents back to the arena, even if elusively. Their phantom-like presence in the *Departure* memorial is an unspoken, unseen, yet existing tribute to their unselfish act of bravery that gave a “second birth” to their offspring.

The proximity of the memorial to a branch of a fast-food chain leaves its mark; cups and other “leftover” items are constantly removed from the sculpture. This urban, consumer-society dialogue seems part of the intimate liaison between the departing *Kinder* and the contemporary population, as the artist intended. Meisler seeks to intertwine eye-level memorials with the vivid, mundane texture of life; he rejected the option of distanced, high-pedestal monuments, which might remain cleaner, yet could not project their affectionate content (Meisler, 2012).

#### HOOK OF HOLLAND, ROTTERDAM

The Hook of Holland, near Rotterdam, was Meisler’s penultimate stop before arriving in England and the place that marked the *Kinder*’s separation from the SS men who accompanied them to the Dutch border and sometimes treated the young immigrants very badly; hence, their first breath of freedom.

You suddenly felt as though you had been clad in a cloak of lead or iron, and it had been taken from you. It was a wonderful feeling of freedom. We all started to smile. I don’t think any of us has smiled for a long time. It was wonderful. (Harris & Oppenheimer, 2000, p. 114)

Following the encouragement of Ahmed Aboutaleb, the Mayor of Rotterdam, Meisler’s last *Kindertransport* memorial was unveiled there in November 2011, marking the 73rd anniversary of the first *Kindertransport* that left Germany. It was an homage to the Dutch people who comforted the young refugees at this (turning) point in their exodus. This memorial depicts six children on a three-layered plinth [a block or slab on which a pedestal, a column, or a statue is placed] with their modest baggage, waiting for the ferry crossing to England [Fig. 4].

Five of them stand and stare at the sea, which, when crossed, will bring them to their envisioned destination. The sixth child, at their backs, is isolated; he is sitting next to his suitcase, his hand on his head, pensive, as if contemplating his past and his future. Underneath, a Dutch newspaper reports current events. Much emotion is in this stilled group: doubtful expectations, fear, and anguish before taking the last step. In a day, the group will be scattered among foster families all over Britain, to places and people still unknown to them; this knowledge haunts the young refugees and makes them vulnerable. This station is meant to represent a new dawn, yet it is obscure and full of unknown obstacles.

*Channel Crossing* brings to mind Moses and the Children of Israel at Mount Nebo, staring at the Promised Land, just before the Israelites’ pilgrimage is over. Moses, like the parents, must remain behind, while the Israelites, like the children, journey to a new land. Intertwining the biblical exodus with that of these unaccompanied minors incorporates the 20th-century *Kinder*’s exodus into the Jews’ ancient chain of persecution, suffering, and hope.

#### A PRIVATE MEMORY IN PUBLIC COMMEMORATIONS

Meisler infiltrates and accompanies the children throughout their whole journey. By recording his personal odyssey, he mingles and is interwoven with them and the other 10,000 saved children. Basing his memorials on similar, almost identical models, he ensures that we gradually become intimate with them, an intimacy that permits us to identify with their fate as individuals, even as they stand as



FIG. 4: Hook of Holland, *Channel Crossing to Life*, 2011. Courtesy of Frank Meisler.

symbolic icons. Their nomadic itinerary leads them toward their temporary refuge, which, in many cases, became permanent. They are accompanied by their meager baggage, whose contents, sometimes symbolizing their last tangible bond with their past, were meticulously measured by the ability of the young passengers to carry their possessions by themselves en route as well as by the directives of the organizers.

Again, the absent parents are undeniably present: It is they who packed the suitcases; it is they to whom the departing voyagers wave their last good-bye; it is they who so courageously sent their *Kinder* off, not knowing whether there would be a reunion. The sculptures, in their implicit recognition of the thousands of helpers who granted the Jewish children asylum, are also a tribute to them. Yet the very fact of the memorials also stands as a criticism of the Nazi regime and the “ordinary people” who stood by and did not oppose or revolt against the brutal machinery of slaughter.

It is not often that an artist depicts and displays his own biography in the public sphere. The *Kindertransport* series, an insider's testimony that familiarizes the public with a private narrative fused into the collective memory, enables this to happen.

Situated in railway stations, one of the Holocaust's iconic dual symbols of salvation vs. annihilation, the emotive role of the train in the *Kinder's* rupture from their past is vivid:

A Train, despite its rather crude function as an early icon of Industrial Revolution, is also a powerful image of transience and tragedy. It connects motion and emotion. It moves through time and space with poignant effort, pulling away gently at first, slowly, and gathering speed with inexorable cruelty as it leaves the known world. (Milton, 2005, p.165)

This observation depicts and corresponds to the atmosphere conveyed in Meisler's memorials, in which he embodies the literal and metaphorical symbol of separation and uprooting: train stations and train ramparts. He is both “freezing” and charging with motion those tense emotions, rendering to the static depictions a sense of continuity, both in the real space and in the realm of memory.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to Mr. Frank Meisler for giving me insight into his biography as well as his ideas and concepts about the creation of his *Kindertransport* memorials. I am in debt to Mrs. Hanita Tovi, Mr. Meisler's personal assistant, for her kindness and invaluable cooperation.

#### NOTES

1. In a personal note to me, Mr. Meisler wrote, “Whatever the German regulations were concerning the number of suitcases departing children were allowed to take didn't seem to apply to regulations in Danzig, and so I left, without trouble, with a larger and a smaller suitcase” (9/10/2012).

2. In official recognition by the German Government of the Berlin *Kindertransport* memorial, Meisler was decorated on March 29, 2012, with the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

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This essay by David Lindquist “presents an approach to teaching about the *Kindertransport* by relating the story of Lilli Tauber (néé Schischa), a young Austrian Jewish girl who was one of the almost 10,000 children sent from Germany, Austria, and the annexed region of Czechoslovakia to England between December 1938 and September 1939.” Lindquist focuses on a film from the Centropa website as he underscores the importance—and the caveats—of using “individual narratives in teaching history.” Pair his essay with the testimonies of Ralph W. Mollerick (pp. 5–10) and Renata Laxova (pp. 115–118) for an evocative and nuanced portrayal of three lives ruptured by the Holocaust.

David Lindquist

## *A Suitcase Full of Memories: The Unfinished Journey of Lilli Tauber*

I couldn't call Austria my home. For a long time, whenever I looked someone on the street in the eye, I asked myself whether or not this person contributed to the destruction of my family.

—Lilli Tauber

**A** *Suitcase Full of Memories* is a 30-minute film posted on the website of Centropa ([www.centropa.org](http://www.centropa.org)),<sup>1</sup> an organization whose goal is to preserve the memory of Jewish life in central and eastern Europe by “ask[ing] elderly Jews still living in this part of the world to paint for us a picture of the entire century—as it happened to them” (E. Soretta, personal communication, April 5, 2012). The film relates the experiences of Lilli Tauber before, during, and after the Holocaust, telling the poignant story of a child whose life was changed forever by the events that overtook her family. It is appropriate for middle and high school students and can be used in history, humanities, and literature-based courses.

This lesson focuses on two sets of letters. The first series, exchanged between Lilli in England and her parents who had remained in Austria, intimates Lilli's growing realization of the possibility that she might never see her loved ones again and her parents' increasing sense of foreboding. This dual perspective provides a personal lens into the circumstances that confronted the refugee children and their families, who faced persecution and an unknown but increasingly bleak future.

The second series of letters is from her parents, after they had been deported to Poland, to family members still living in Austria. These letters describe the growing hope-

lessness of the situation of expatriated Jews along with many thanks for the support of family at home. Lilli was not aware that these letters existed until she returned to Austria after the war.

### **TEACHING A SUITCASE FULL OF MEMORIES**

Barton and Levstik (2009) discuss advantages to be gained from using individual narratives in teaching history, but they also provide an important caution in that regard. They contend that

these students [participants in a research study] were interested in and motivated by learning about people in the past. Yet more disturbingly, they explained all historical events as though they were about individuals; they almost completely ignored the impact of collective action, as well as the role of societal institutions such as political, legal, and economic systems (pp. 155–156).

Given this risk, personal narratives must be utilized carefully and purposefully if they are to have a positive effect on students' understanding of specific events and the historical process in general.

This caution should be observed when *A Suitcase Full of Memories* is incorporated into a study of the *Kindertransport*.

Specifically, Lilli's story should be used to supplement instruction about the topic rather than as an isolated (or even solitary) resource. Before using the film, teachers should present a comprehensive discussion of the *Kindertransport* such as that presented in this issue of *PRISM*, thus informing students of its time frame, locales, processes, development, complications, other families' experiences, and some documented results. Moreover, the context of the general European situation in 1938–1939 must also be considered. As such, historical contextualization should be the starting point of teachers' work with the film. With a solid and accurate background, Lilli's story becomes an important supporting element that extends and intensifies student understanding of the larger events within which it occurs.

Having set the historical context, teachers can use the film to elicit essential questions that lead students to consider Lilli's story in depth. What factors led some parents to send their children to England while others declined to do so? What challenges did the children face while abroad? How were they treated? Who took them in? What motivated those families to do so? How were the matches between the Jewish refugee children and their host families, many of whom were Christian, determined? What did the children expect if and when they returned home? What might be the relationship between those few fortunate children and parents who were reunited after the war? How did the *Kindertransport* experience affect the children's later religious life, as well as their relationships with spouses, their children, and the societies in which they lived?

These questions and similar ones that teachers might develop fulfill the goal of complicating students' thinking, a process that "means assisting students to appreciate the fact that historical situations and people's motives are generally complex and not easily explained or understood" (Totten, 2002, p. 91). In addition, they provide a framework for a scaffolded classroom discussion that involves questioning on several levels (e.g., elicitation, elaboration, clarification, divergence, heuristic, and inventive) (Frey and Fisher, 2010).

Each letter is introduced with a key phrase from its text. These phrases provide subtle hints regarding the thoughts and emotions experienced by Lilli and her parents as events progress.

The photographs that support the film's narrative can be used to enhance students' understanding of what occurred.<sup>2</sup> Through deconstruction, a process that examines visual images for such factors as composition, meaning, and purpose, students extend their appreciation of the complexity of historical events. Who took the photograph? Why was it taken? Was it posed or natural? How would the image be altered if it were taken using a wider or narrower focus or from a different angle? How does the body language of the people being photographed depict feelings, re-

lationships, status, and circumstances? [See *PRISM*, Spring 2010, 1(2), pp. 21–23, for additional examples of ways to teach about documentary photographs—Eds.]

Teachers can also use the film to teach geography. Locations mentioned include Vienna, England, Luxembourg, Opole (Poland<sup>3</sup>), Belzec, and Sobibor. Thus, an instructor might choose to use a geographical backdrop in teaching the evolution of German territorial control (as evidenced by the *Anschluss*), the general course of World War II, why the occupation of Luxembourg occurred when it did, and why the ghettos and killing centers were located where they were.

The film also depicts bystander behavior. Lilli discusses this critical issue on two occasions: First, she says that her friend would not walk with her to school after the *Anschluss*<sup>4</sup> and, after the war, she wonders "whether or not this person contributed to the destruction of my family." [See also *PRISM*, Spring 2010, 1(2), the whole of which is devoted to the examination of the bystander—Eds.] Austrian complicity in the Holocaust, as seen in the rapid escalation of instances of antisemitic behavior after the *Anschluss*, can also be discussed within this context (Bergen, 2009).

#### **A LESSON OBJECTIVE: TRANSLATING STATISTICS INTO PEOPLE**

Personalizing the Shoah should be an integral component of effective Holocaust curricula because that approach allows students to move beyond a focus on the magnitude of the event, a factor that "challenges easy comprehension" (USHMM, 2001, p. 6). As such, studying first-person accounts provides opportunities for students to see victims in the fullness of their lives, thus allowing instruction to "[to] give individual voices to a collective experience" (p. 6). Moreover, this approach prevents the study of the event from becoming mired in "a welter of statistics," a situation that occurs when curricula fail to consider personal stories, as Samuel Totten (1987, p. 63) notes.

Letters written by individuals as they experienced the Holocaust can be especially useful in addressing Totten's caution. In this regard, Susan Prinz Shear (2008) notes that reading her mother's letters about her family's increasingly desperate attempts to leave Berlin during the 1930s and early 1940s provided

information and insights I could never have learned from a history book. I found the immediacy compelling; a conversation between two people, oceans and cultures away from one another, yet as connected as if they were sitting at a kitchen table having coffee (p. 52).

Epistolary literature thus provides both the narrative found in short stories and the authenticity gained from studying primary sources.

Individual stories embedded within the history of the *Kindertransport* provide vivid examples of personal experiences, illustrating the objectives discussed above. The painful decisions reached by parents who had to decide if they should send their children abroad; the impact of separation that occurred at numerous train stations throughout the Reich; the fear and loneliness the children experienced when they arrived in England, unable to speak the language and taken by strangers into strange homes; the trauma they faced living in a foreign land while not knowing their loved ones' fates; and the ebb and flow of emotions caused by letters to and from home add a visceral dimension to this part of the story of the Shoah, thus placing an all-important "human face" on the event (Totten, 2001, p. 119). Consider, too, the humanity of having students actually read the letters in a simple but powerful Reader's Theater performance. Given this focus, we now consider the unfinished journey of Lilli Tauber.

### **ESSENTIAL TOPICS IN EFFECTIVE HOLOCAUST CURRICULA**

*A Suitcase Full of Memories* encompasses many key topics essential to effective sequential Holocaust curricula, including: (1) life before the Holocaust; (2) changes that occurred as the Nazi regime expanded its power; (3) the separation of families; (4) persecution, deportation, ghettoization, and annihilation; and (5) life after the Shoah. The inclusion of these factors, in addition to its ready accessibility and brevity, makes the film an ideal medium for studying the *Kindertransport* on both personal and historical levels. Lilli's story is only one of thousands of stories related to the *Kindertransport*, but it incorporates key elements of that event's history in a way that draws students closer to understanding the human tragedy that is central to the story of the Holocaust.

### **ORGANIZATION AND TIMELINE OF THE FILM**

The film begins with a contemporary look at the *Westbahnhof* (the Vienna West train station). An actress tells Lilli's story through a first-person narrative, in German with English sub-titles that are sometimes difficult to read against the ever-changing background of maps and photos. Lilli talks about the day she was sent to England (July 11, 1939), relating the thoughts she had and imagining how her parents must have felt. Photographs of the modern hustle-bustle of people going about their travels provide a stark juxtaposition to Lilli's unfolding story, and several images of an elderly Lilli add another contrasting element to the scene.

The film presents a short family history and continues with Lilli relating her memories of *Kristallnacht*, her painful leave-taking of her parents (her brother, 13 years her senior, was already in Palestine), and her trip to and arrival in the Liverpool Station in England. It focuses on the letters sent

between Lilli in England and her parents in Austria; these letters connote a growing emotional distance between them and imply an unspoken acknowledgement of the likelihood that the family has been separated forever. After describing her return to Austria at age 19 in 1946 and her emotions when she is given the suitcase that becomes the film's central focus, she discusses the letters that her parents sent from Poland to relatives who remained in Austria.

The film continues with details of her parents' fate and of Lilli's postwar life, before it fades to a photo of Lilli, now an elderly woman standing in the *Westbahnhof*. It ends with a collage of family photographs. (A timeline of the film is on p. 102.)

### **THE FIRST LETTERS: PORTRAITS OF A NARROWING WORLD**

Lilli's narrowing world, a crucial aspect of her *Kindertransport* experience, is evoked vividly in her correspondence with her parents. Each of the six letters discussed is identified by a crucial line that connotes its tone; as such, these lines become metaphors for the evolving situation that affects Lilli and her parents.

#### **"HAPPY AND HEALTHY"**

Written by Lilli's mother, the first letter is superficial in its tone: Mother is happy that her daughter has arrived safely in England and is grateful that she is doing well. She tells her to behave and urges her to eat a lot. No mention is made of conditions in Austria or of the parents' situation. It almost seems as if a mother is writing a note to a daughter at her first summer camp.

#### **"NOW THE MAIN QUESTION"**

Lilli's first letter states that she is doing well, notes that the synagogues in England are not as beautiful as those in Vienna, and describes a wonderful afternoon that she and the other refugee children have spent in London's Victoria Park. She talks about the fancy dress she wore on the outing and asks her parents to write often. Midway in the letter, however, she gives an indication of her as-yet unspoken fears when she says, "Now the main question: How is your attempt to leave the country coming along?" The most interesting aspect of this question is that it seems to be just one line in a string of random, disconnected thoughts, with no sense of urgency or necessity apparent.

#### **"MAYBE YOU COULD TALK WITH MR. WATTS"**

Her father writes the next letter, which includes the pivotal element of the ongoing correspondence. He says that he and his wife thank God that Lilli is safe, adding that they long for her every day and are sure that she shares that sentiment. "Be patient," he says, "there's always calm after the storm." At this point, however, a major transition

occurs. Herr Schischa asks Lilli to determine if Mr. Watts, the man who is in charge of the hostel where she lives, can arrange passage to England for her parents. At age 11, she has become her parents' would-be protector, a role that she cannot fulfill.

### ***"I REALLY HAVE BEEN TRYING"***

The next letter reveals the harsh reality of the situation that is beginning to develop. Lilli writes,

The saddest thing, my dears, is that I can't do anything for you even though I really have been trying. I'm sad to say it's just not possible. Even Mr. Watts can't do anything for you. It would be useless to talk to him about it. . . . If only I could be with you or one of our relatives again. That would be marvelous. Do you really have no chance of leaving the country? It weighs so heavily on my mind that I can't do anything for you.

She continues, "If only you could be here, my dears. I know that time with you *was* priceless?" [italics mine] Does her use of the past tense indicate that she realizes, perhaps subconsciously, that she will never see her parents again? Does her comment "If only I could be with you or one of our relatives again" mean that her best remaining hope is to be reunited with a relative, any relative? Is her admonishment to her parents ("Chin up and keep a stiff upper lip") a tacit acknowledgement that she knows their situation is tenuous, at best?

At this point, Lilli resets the historical context that has developed. She reports that World War II began five days after the "Chin up" letter had been mailed, meaning that future notes would have to be sent via a relative in Luxembourg, which was not yet under German occupation.

### ***"A LITTLE PICTURE OF YOU, MY DEAR"***

Written by Lilli's father, the fifth letter does not mention the events that are engulfing Jews who remain in Austria. Instead, it focuses on photographs: Mother and father don't have any new ones to send to Lilli, but perhaps she can send them a new one of her. Is the discussion sincere, or is the lack of substance in this letter designed to shield Lilli from reality, thus implying that the parents are resigned to their fate and want to spare their daughter from as much despair as is possible? The next letter may provide an answer to this question.

### ***"DON'T THINK ABOUT US OVER AND OVER AGAIN"***

An ominous tone pervades the last letter in this series, which was also written by Lilli's father. He pleads,

Please try to stay calm. We feel it too, you know—the separation—it's really awful, difficult. . . . You most cer-

tainly should not forget us, but please don't think about us over and over again. . . . So we're asking you again, keep calm. Don't get too worked up. Bear everything with the patience of an angel.

While the film does not mention a letter from Lilli that may have preceded this note, we can assume that she has sent a message that has revealed her fears, her growing agitation, and, perhaps, her reaction to news reports about the situation being faced by Jews who remain under German control. In response, her father's only recourse is to tell her to take care of herself. The separation of child from parents is now complete.

### **ALONE IN ENGLAND, RETURN TO AUSTRIA**

Lilli's narrative continues, "In the summer of 1940, my correspondence with my parents suddenly broke off, because now Luxembourg was occupied by Germany. I was terribly afraid for my parents because I stopped hearing any news from them almost overnight." She talks about her work in London as an apprentice tailor and her involvement with Young Austria, a group that would later encourage the refugee children to return home after the war in order to build a democratic nation. She continued to hope that her parents were alive, but she heard nothing from or about them throughout the last several years of the war. Lilli heard about Auschwitz for the first time as the war was coming to an end, and she acknowledged for the first time that her parents might no longer be alive.

Lilli returned to Austria after the war had ended. Arriving at the same train station from which she had departed seven years earlier, she was greeted by her Aunt Berta, whose marriage to a non-Jew had saved her life. Aunt Berta described the difficulties faced by Lilli's parents until February 1941, when they were deported to Opole, Poland. We learn that the liquidation of the Opole ghetto began in early 1942, with deportations to Belzec and Sobibor continuing for several months.

### **RECEIVING THE SUITCASE FULL OF MEMORIES**

Prior to his deportation, Lilli's father had given Aunt Berta a small, black, leather suitcase filled with Lilli's letters along with those sent by her brother, Eduard, from Palestine. Having added to the bag's contents letters and photographs sent from Poland, Aunt Berta now gives it to her niece. Lilli observes, "It must have been very important for my father to document life in the ghetto." At this point, the film turns to the second set of letters.

### **THE SECOND LETTERS: FROM OPOLE TO AUSTRIA**

These letters trace the developing sense of despair that overcame Lilli's parents during the months they spent in Opole. The notes also express thanks to relatives at home



who sent food during that time and provide a vivid picture of ghetto life.

#### **“WE’RE GLAD THAT WE HAVE ENOUGH STRAW”**

The first letter from Opole was written shortly after Lilli’s parents arrived there. The ghetto hadn’t yet been formed, so her father and mother can move freely around the town, although they must wear a Star of David for identification purposes. Her father declines to detail the conditions in Opole but says “we’re glad that we have enough straw” to use as a mattress, an indication of the dire conditions that are present. He adds, “Please don’t give up hope. You know we haven’t. We have to hold on and survive. We owe it to our beloved children.”

#### **“G-D ONLY KNOWS HOW THIS WILL WORK OUT”**

The ghetto was formed a few days before this letter was written, and a sense of isolation and confinement is already being felt by Lilli’s parents. More importantly, the possible outcome of what has developed is on the minds of the Schischas, who realize that they do not control their fate.

#### **“WE’D BE IN A SAD WAY”**

The next letter begins with a practical discussion. Herr Schischa gives thanks for the food that relatives had sent from Austria to Opole and explains the economics of the delivery process, adding, “We baked donuts and buns using the flour, a delight after so long.” The central idea of the letter, however, carries a far more important message: “If we didn’t have you, we’d be in a sad way.” Schischa realizes that conditions are becoming more and more ominous, and that he and his wife are powerless to help themselves. They will survive only as long as the food packages continue to arrive; no doubt they are also aware that the lifeline that is sustaining them can be cut at any time.

#### **“I DON’T THINK IT’S LIKELY WE’LL GET OUT OF HERE”**

This letter opens with a curious comment: Herr Schischa writes, “Today I was able to photograph one of the prettiest parts of Opole with Hantschi.” Have they been able to leave the ghetto? Given their situation, can anything in Opole really be pretty? Why open the letter with such an observation when so many critical issues must be confronted?

Lilli’s father now puts the situation squarely in the open: “We don’t know what’s going to happen to us yet. I don’t think it’s likely that we’ll get out of here.” Her mother adds, “I hope that we’re not taking anything away from you” as she thanks her benefactors. It would seem that the Schischas are aware that their fate is sealed, that it is time to prepare for final good-byes.

#### **“OUR BURNING DESIRE . . . HAS REMAINED UNFULFILLED”**

Lilli introduces this letter, stating that this note was one of

the last messages written by her father. Written with reference to Rosh Hashanah (September 1941), he says,

What we’ve been wishing for this year—our burning desire to see our beloved children again—has remained unfulfilled. What will the New Year bring for us? Will our all-beloved G-d take pity on us and bring us back, bring us together with everyone who is dear to us? Every day, we ask ourselves when the light of day will come, or if we’ll have to spend the whole winter here. We can’t and don’t want to think of it.”

Neither tangible needs nor statements of thanks are included. The letter is filled with sadness and, perhaps, resignation to an eventual fate that is becoming too likely to deny.

#### **A NEW LIFE**

The film now returns to Lilli’s story. She moved back to Prein, her mother’s hometown, the place where Lilli had spent many carefree childhood days. She worked in her family’s shop, which had been reclaimed by Aunt Berta during the postwar process of denazification. The customers referred to her as Fraulein Lilli, an endearing term she enjoyed. She says, “I felt like I was home again, but I couldn’t call Austria my home. For a long time, whenever I looked someone on the street in the eye, I asked myself whether or not this person contributed to the destruction of my family.”

In 1953, Lilli married Max Tauber, who had survived the war in Jerusalem before returning to Austria. Two sons soon arrived, and the Taubers built a happy life; that life, however, was always overshadowed by what had occurred during the war.

#### **THE UNFINISHED JOURNEY**

An elderly Lilli stands in the train station that has defined her life. She muses,

Only after I had children of my own did I realize how brave my parents had been to send me abroad with a *Kindertransport*. It must have been awful for them to stand there and watch the train roll out of the station. Not one day of my life goes by in which I don’t think of my mother, my father, and my brother, Edi. But lately, I’ve been thinking of them even more often. And I’d give anything to be together with them just one more time.

The film ends with a photograph of Lilli holding her “suitcase full of memories” and is followed by a collage of family images. She remains a young girl and an elderly woman, frozen in time in that train station from which she will never really depart. This is Lilli Tauber’s unfinished journey.

## TIMELINE OF THE FILM

00:00	-	00:32	Opening credits
00:33	-	02:21	<i>Westbahnhof</i> today; departure on the <i>Kindertransport</i> ; photographs of an elderly Lilli
02:22	-	04:10	Family biography
04:11	-	05:05	<i>Anschluss</i> and changes in Austria
05:06	-	07:57	<i>Kristallnacht</i> and its aftermath
07:58	-	08:54	On the <i>Kindertransport</i> to England
08:55	-	09:11	Arrival in England
09:12	-	15:44	First set of letters [Description of Mr. Watts; start of World War II; to the countryside; end of correspondence between Lilli and her parents]
15:45	-	16:19	The end of correspondence: Fear and uncertainty
16:20	-	17:15	Plans and hopes for the future
17:16	-	17:35	Learning about Auschwitz
17:36	-	17:56	Return to Austria
17:57	-	18:10	Receiving the suitcase
18:11	-	19:26	Experiences in Opole
19:27	-	25:18	Second set of letters
25:19	-	26:07	Historical context [deportations to killing centers; fate of the Viennese Jews sent to Opole]
26:08	-	27:39	Lilli's life after the Holocaust
27:40	-	28:48	<i>Westbahnhof</i> today; reminiscences; photographs of an elderly Lilli
28:49	-	30:00	Closing credits; collage of family photographs

### THE STORY BEHIND THE FILM: PRODUCING A SUITCASE FULL OF MEMORIES

The compelling experiences related in *A Suitcase Full of Memories* are matched by the fascinating story of how the movie production all began with a chance encounter in Vienna.<sup>5</sup>

Deborah Oppenheimer, who produced the Academy Award-winning film *Into the Arms of Strangers* [see Crouch, pp. 111–114—Eds.], is the daughter of a *Kindertransport* child and a friend of Edward Serotta, the director of Vienna-based Centropa (the Central Europe Center for Research and Documentation). While visiting Vienna, Oppenheimer told Serotta that she was going to visit one of her mother's roommates from the *Kindertransport*: Lilli Tauber.

Having heard about Tauber's story, Serotta arranged a series of interviews with her and Tanja Eckstein, who met with Lilli eight times and compiled an extensive biography. After reading the transcripts, Serotta and Centropa colleagues realized that Lilli's story had to be told. They worked extensively with Lilli's letters, developed an expansive photographic collection that was aligned with her story, and merged these elements to make the film.

With assistance from Tanja and Lilli, Ulrike Ostermann wrote the film's script and hired some of Vienna's best-known actors to speak the words of young Lilli, adult Lilli, and her mother and father. The film has been shown

in Vienna and in such diverse locales as Israel and Hong Kong. Online study guides in German and English are posted on Centropa's website.

The film illustrates Centropa's approach to Holocaust remembrance, which is to ask elderly Jews who still live in central Europe “to paint for us a picture of an entire century—as it happened to them.” In this regard, the use of family photographs as a backdrop to the audio script allows for the confluence of images and the story line in a way that personalizes the larger event (i.e., the *Kindertransport*) being depicted.

An interesting extension of Centropa's work began in 2006 when clubs for Holocaust survivors were opened in Budapest and Vienna. Each month, survivors are invited to the clubs to hear lectures, music, and comedic performances and to be interviewed. Serotta (2012) notes,

Their numbers, as you can imagine, are rapidly shrinking, but Lilli and Max Tauber are still among those who come to us every month, and we are very glad they do. In fact . . . [in mid-April, 2012], Lilli [brought] the British ambassador to Austria to the Centropa office! (Personal correspondence)

As such, the story of Lilli Tauber is truly an unfinished journey.

## NOTES

1. To access the film from Centropa's home page, click on "The Lives of Rescued Memories"; scroll down to "Personal Story Films with English Subtitles"; and click on "Play Movie" below Lilli's picture.
2. Photographs provide a constant background to the flow of the film. These images illustrate the story line as well as the events depicted in the letters that form the film's core.
3. Only 28 of the 2,003 Viennese Jews sent to Opole are known to have survived. Lilli does not know where or when her parents perished.
4. The behavior of Lilli's friend is an example of the thesis that "Sometimes children grasped more quickly than adults how things had changed" in Austria. See Bergen (2009, p. 83).
5. The author is indebted to Edward Serotta, who provided the information contained in this essay (via e-mail: April 5, 2012).

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“Just as the biblical story of baby Moses lends itself to lessons in unconditional parental love, the kindness of strangers, ‘choiceless’ choices, and good and evil,” explain Hana N. Bor and Karen Shawn, “so, too, the stories that emerged from the events of the *Kindertransport* provide an excellent basis for educating young students about selfless acts of loving-kindness, the compassion of strangers, and related moral and ethical values.” This essay, geared for middle school teachers, suggests eliciting the *middot*—positive behaviors—readers can find in survivor testimony even as one teaches the painful truths of the *Kindertransport*.

Hana N. Bor and Karen Shawn

## Examining Jewish Values in *Kindertransport* Narratives

Throughout our years of teaching and supervising in Jewish day schools, we have taught, and observed the teaching of, the biblical story of Moses in a wide array of classrooms. Moses’s story contains all of the elements of a TV drama: An evil ruler declares that all baby boys shall be murdered at birth; two non-Jewish midwives make the decision to defy his orders and save the babies they deliver; one brave Jewish mother courageously casts her baby into a river, from which he is saved by a caring stranger who raises him in a foreign culture.

In our classrooms, the emphasis of this complex and potentially frightening and upsetting story varies to ensure the discussion is age-appropriate: With preschoolers, the focus is on Yocheved’s bravery and her trust in the divine. With primary school students, the discussion centers on Pharaoh’s daughter, who risks her life by sheltering an Israelite child. With middle and high school students and in family education settings, Yocheved’s many virtues, the valor and righteousness of Shifrah and Puah, and the selflessness of Pharaoh’s daughter are highlighted and examined.

These intense stories are teachable to even our youngest students, perhaps because the implied violence is buffered by time, the lack of tangible and immediate physical connection or relation to the persons in the stories, and knowledge that, in the end, the Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture and civilization survive. Perhaps it is because our teachers emphasize the positive aspects inherent in the stories, including the eternal Jewish values shared by the righteous non-Jews who cherished and chose life. The murderous evil is relegated to the background until the children are emotionally equipped to understand the whole truth of Pharaoh’s genocidal plan.

Similarly, in introducing students to the few aspects of the Holocaust that are age-appropriate, we seek to discover the small points of light amidst the darkness of the history; we encourage teachers to leave the evils of the camps and the full story of the destruction until students are in high school. For middle school students, we suggest introducing the Holocaust chronologically, beginning in Germany with events as they unfolded and underscoring the resilience of the Jews as they tried to cope with their changing and threatening circumstances. We move from the rise of Hitler through the Nuremberg Laws and the Jewish response, through the Evian Conference and *Kristallnacht*, continuing with examples of the varied Jewish decisions and actions in light of the worsening crises, including the *Kindertransport*, the focus of this essay. The lessons that may be gleaned from the *Kindertransport* are not typical of those of the Holocaust, though, and this must be noted as the teaching progresses in later grades. While the separation of children from their parents was a trauma for every family involved, most children on the *Kindertransport* had, nevertheless, more positive experiences during and after the war than did other survivors. Many thrived in their foreign surroundings. A few were reunited with their loved ones after the Holocaust; others remained with their loving foster families into adulthood; others went to Palestine or America and succeeded in building a rewarding life with the skills they had been able to acquire in England. The *Kinder* were offered a chance that millions of other children were not; some 10,000 were saved because of the courage of many Yocheveds, Shifrahs, and Puahs of their time while more than 1.5 million children were murdered at the hands of the Nazis.

The stories of the *Kindertransport* and of individual *Kinder*, though detailing the sober reality of family bonds destroyed, also offer examples of life-affirming values and in that way may serve as an accessible and age-appropriate unit of study for students in grades 6 and up from all religious and academic backgrounds. As Abraham Foxman (1993), president of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, notes, in speaking of "hidden children," whose wartime experiences mirrored, in some ways, those of the *Kinder* (Marks, p. x), "Those who survived depended on the goodness and kindness of others . . . it is ironic that the nightmare and horrors of the Holocaust also became a defining moment for courage and decency."

### WHAT WAS THE KINDERTRANSPORT?

The *Kindertransport* is the informal name given to a rescue mission initiated by several European Jewish and secular agencies on the eve of the outbreak of World War II. This project would ultimately become "a shining ray of hope within the dark sea of evil known as the Holocaust" (Minac, 2008, p. 63). Between 1938 and 1939, approximately 10,000 Jewish children were rescued from Nazi Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and arrived in Great Britain on transports made possible through the combined efforts of British government agencies, private Jewish relief organizations (Association of Jewish Refugees, UK), and determined individuals such as Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld and Nicholas Winton [See Licht, pp. 17–23 and Laxova, pp. 115–118—Eds.]. Of particular note were the extraordinary efforts of the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany and the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF).

### USING TEXTS AND TESTIMONY IN THE CLASSROOM

Students need history texts and testimonies to understand the context that forced parents to confront the terrible choice of how best to keep their children safe; both text and testimony will help students examine what happened when these parents took the chance offered and sent their children away to England. Text and testimony will confirm that there were people of all faiths who were socially responsible, willing to protect and safeguard children simply because it was the right thing to do. History provides the necessary facts of this rescue operation; personal accounts of thousands of *Kinder* offer teachers a bridge between the facts and the ethical and moral principles that comprise such essential Jewish values as *pikuach nefesh* (matters of life and death), *hachnasat orchim* (hospitality), and *kol Yisrael areivim zeh bazeh* (All Jews are responsible for one another), values that, along with many others, were evidenced by Jews and non-Jews alike as they sought to rescue and care for endangered Jewish children.

In interviews Hana conducted in 2011, *Kinder* Lore, Werner, and Sid spoke of a normal childhood until it was interrupted by the threat of war. Below are excerpts and redactions from their audio transcripts that illustrate the variety of ethical and moral issues that encompassed everyone touched by this rupture; following their stories are suggestions for using these excerpts and integrating a study of these values into a unit on the *Kindertransport*.

### LORE AND WERNER COHEN: KINDERTRANSPORT SIBLINGS

Lore and her older brother, Werner, were born in Essen, in northwest Germany, where they attended school [Fig. 1] until they were expelled simply for being Jews.



FIG. 1: Lore, with head tilted, fourth from the left in the third row from the back, in her school in Essen before she was expelled.

Their new school, Javne, (pronounced “Yavneh”) would come to be more than just an educational institution to the Cohens; it would be their salvation. “At Javne, the program was oriented towards preparation for a matriculation examination for Cambridge University, so I was taught in English,” Werner explains. “The principal, Eric Klibansky, was a really extraordinary man. He was a hero to us,” recalls Lore. “He established the Jewish school in Cologne, and many of the kids from that school were sent on the *Kindertransport*” after *Kristallnacht*. Werner remembers, “Klibansky had a dream to send all of his students to safety in England,” and he made it his personal mission to evacuate every student in his school [Fig. 2].



**FIG. 2:** Lore Cohen and her brother, Werner Cohen, before they were sent on the *Kindertransport*.

On *Kristallnacht*, Werner was detained, along with hundreds of other Jewish men and boys, in the concentration camp at Dachau. “I remember Dachau,” he says. “I was there for four weeks. We stood at attention for hours, and we marched for hours. I reached the limits of my endurance, but I knew that if I didn’t prevail, I would be shot.” He recalls “wearing only a thin shirt” in the concentration camp and “literally freezing.” A distant cousin of his, also imprisoned, saw how cold he was and gave him an under-shirt, which Werner believes saved his life.

Klibansky, who went to Dachau to rescue Werner, was somehow able to persuade SS officials there to release Werner into his custody and, as soon as possible, he put him on a *Kindertransport*. Arriving in England in late 1939, Werner prevailed upon Rabbi Dr. Louis Rabinovitz, spiritual leader

of the Walm Lane Synagogue in Cricklewood, London, to send for his younger sister. The rabbi had already “entreated his congregation to . . . save children from Germany by taking financial responsibility” (Cohen, 2011), and the members of the shul responded enthusiastically, establishing youth hostels to house and feed youngsters. Rabinovitz contacted Klibansky, who added Lore to a transport of 24 other girls on the fourth and last transport out of Cologne in July 1939.

Werner was settled into a boys’ youth hostel run by an Orthodox couple. Even though Werner did not come from a religious home, the hostel rabbi gave Werner a pair of *tefillin*, which he graciously accepted and continues to wear today.

At 14, though, Lore was not emotionally prepared for the enormity of her forced move. She remembers that she felt excited about going on a train trip with other children and a bit perplexed by her mother’s tears and sadness at her departure. In London, she was sent to a youth hostel; later, she moved in with a woman named Mrs. Cohn and her son, Hans, who was blind. Nearby was Werner’s hostel, so Werner visited Lore every Sunday, and they would walk together around London. Occasionally, they would receive letters from their mother via the Red Cross and read them together. Lore still has those letters.

As the war escalated, London became unsafe, so Lore was evacuated to North Hampton. The move from Essen to London had been terribly disruptive; now she was uprooted again, sent to live on a farm with two old women who “were not Jewish. . . . The old ladies were decent but insisted on taking us to church, and we didn’t want to go.”

Werner rented a room, got a job, and carried on with his studies. His matriculation exam date had come and gone when he was still in Dachau, “but I asked the people [in London if I] could . . . take the exam. Reluctantly they agreed to it, and I passed.”

While Werner and Lore were in England, their mother came to visit them—a tremendously difficult achievement on her part. “Somehow she managed with a certificate that [affirmed that] I was critically ill,” Werner says.

The Nazis let her come to England on a passport with a big “J” on it. The nice people that I befriended gave her a place to stay for a week or two. I tried to persuade her to stay. [I told her,] “Now you are out. All we need to do is get [Father] out.” She wasn’t going to listen to that. So she went back . . . and she had his fate.

Werner’s stay in the youth hostel was a brief one. He explains,

The British had second thoughts about these immigrants; were there, possibly embedded . . . in these who had come as refugees . . . Nazi agents against whom

they needed to defend themselves? The war was raging then. Bombs were raining down on London.

So the British rounded up many German Jewish immigrants on suspicion of espionage [see McLoughlin, pp. 61–66—Eds.], and Werner was sent to an internment camp and later to a camp on the Isle of Man, where conditions were deplorable. Having spent a month in Dachau, though, Werner felt he could manage.

[The Isle of Man] couldn't compare with a concentration camp. There was no chicanery and humiliation. . . . You were left to your own resources. There wasn't anything to do, but there was food and shelter, from the middle to end of 1940.

When Werner was released, he “did demolition work, in London, hard labor. Huge areas of London had been demolished.” He continued his studies at night and eventually earned a bachelor's degree.

#### YITZCHAK IGNAC (SID) HEISLER

Yitzchak, known as Sid, was born to a religious family in Chust, Czechoslovakia, the middle child of three sons. His father, a tailor, died when Sid was about 7 years old. His mother could no longer care for her children, so they were put into an orphanage but were in close contact until Sid was sent on to England [Fig. 3].

Sid recalls, “The entire orphanage was sent on the Kindertransport. . . . I remember the rabbi coming to visit, since the transport was going to leave on a Friday. He told us that we had permission to travel on Shabbos.” He recalls that, once in England,



FIG. 3: Sid Heisler and his mother before he left on the Kindertransport.

I went to a Jewish boys' school. During the summer, the whole school had to be evacuated [because] the war was coming closer. . . . I was with my younger brother. . . . The first family we were sent to were farmers. The day we got there, they were slaughtering pigs. This did not go over well with us, so my brother, Max (Moses), 9, and I, at 12, just walked away. . . . The farmer came after us on his bicycle [and] brought us to the woman who was coordinating [our] placement, Mrs. Gibbs. Not exactly sure what to do with us, she decided to take us home to her own family. She had a boy and girl older than us.

Sid remembers Mrs. Gibbs as being “very special” and recalls that he and his brother “got along well with her children. There was no strife.” He adds, “It was a pretty good life” and recalls that Mrs. Gibbs was sensitive to their religious needs.

She brought us *kipot*. While she didn't keep kosher, she knew enough about Judaism not to serve us un-kosher meat. We ate a lot of fish. [When] it was time for me to become bar mitzvah, she made sure that I had a *tallis* [prayer shawl] and *tefillin* [phylacteries] to add to my only other Jewish possession, the *siddur* [prayer book] my mother had given me years earlier. [Fig. 4]



FIG. 4: A prayer book from Sid's mother.

A family reunion at the end of the war, however, was not to be. Sid says, “We got some letters during the war from my mother. Toward the end of the war . . . the letters stopped coming. We never heard from my mother or brother again.”

Later, Sid managed to immigrate to Palestine, where he fought in the (Israeli) War of Independence. After 12 years, he came to the United States, married, and opened a successful business.

## EXPLORING JEWISH VALUES AND THEIR APPLICATIONS IN SURVIVOR TESTIMONY

In addition to the values of *pikuach nefesh* (matters of life and death), *hachnasat orchim* (hospitality), and *kol Yisrael areivim zeh bazeh* (All Jews are responsible for one another), mentioned above, values that control our daily actions and interactions are also embedded in these brief excerpts. Rav Yisrael Salanter, a 19th-century Lithuanian Orthodox rabbi, compiled a list of 13 *middot*—positive behavioral attributes—that form the basis of healthy interpersonal relationships. These became the basis of the *Mussar* movement, a Jewish ethical, educational, and cultural school of thought that developed in 19th-century Eastern Europe, particularly among Orthodox Lithuanian Jews. *Mussar* is the extensive study of morality and ethics with the goal of self-improvement. Daily *cheshbon hanefesh* (a personal accounting of one's soul), combined with *tikkun hamiddot*—the corrective measure an individual puts in place to make amends and achieve spiritual purity—creates a formative and transformational method of achieving closeness with God, with self, and with others (Etkes, 1993, p. 96).

*Cheshbon hanefesh* and *tikkun hamiddot* are *mussar* tools used for self-reflection. Proponents end their day by reflecting on and reviewing each *middah* and asking themselves such questions as, “Was I truthful today? Did I show proper respect to others? Did I apply myself diligently to good things at my job and at home?” If a shortcoming is perceived—for example, if the individual believes that he

may have behaved disrespectfully to a classmate—he seeks to address this failing by implementing a *tikkun hamiddah* plan, perhaps interacting again promptly with the classmate, creating a new opportunity to be properly respectful.

*Middot* can be experienced internally and externally. For example, the *middah* of *savlanut* (patience) can be experienced internally, as when one sits quietly even in the stress of a traffic jam, or externally, when, for instance, one waits quietly while a slow cashier counts out change.

The benefits of *mussar* education extend to both schoolchildren and their instructors, who, as role models for good *middot*, can seize the opportunity to convey these attributes and values through creating a positive classroom environment based on openness, active listening, critical thinking, sharing, and reflection. We add a new dimension to these time-tested tools—and to teaching about the Holocaust—when we integrate aspects of *Kindertransport* testimony with *middot* education, challenging students to assess, consider, and evaluate the actions of others. Summarized in alphabetical order according to the Hebrew on the following chart [Fig. 5], Rav Salanter's *middot* cover a range of internal and external behaviors and responses. Each can be applied to actions of those Jews and Christians who participated in this lifesaving rescue effort, helping students to understand more deeply both the necessity and value of living a life grounded in *middot*, or ethical principles, and the complexities of the *Kindertransport*.

FIG 5: RAV YISRAEL SALANTER'S 13 MIDDOT AND OTHER JEWISH VALUES

<i>Middot</i> / Character Traits		
<p><b>אמת</b> / TRUTH Being true to one's self and to others, and speaking honestly and from the heart.</p>	<p><b>נקיין</b> / CLEANLINESS Maintaining good physical hygiene of both our bodies and our clothing; this also relates to the purity of our surroundings.</p>	<p><b>ענוה</b> / HUMILITY Having a modest opinion or estimate of one's own importance, including such things as rank, talents, or standing in the community.</p>
<p><b>זריזות</b> / ALACRITY Moving without hesitation to do the right thing; some would call this “running to do a mitzvah.”</p>	<p><b>סבלנות</b> / PATIENCE Patience is the ability to endure a difficult situation without complaining; showing self-control and staying calm in the face of frustration or boredom. When we are patient, we understand that some things are worth waiting for!</p>	<p><b>צדק</b> / JUSTICE Doing what is fair and right; dealing with others with evenhandedness.</p>
<p><b>כבוד</b> / RESPECT Affording others dignity in the way we interact; it can be conveyed through speech, actions, and body language.</p>	<p><b>סדר</b> / ORDER Recognizing the need for organization, tidiness and structure. Everything has a place. It is about putting things back when we are done with them and working in a logical and sensible way.</p>	<p><b>קמץ</b> / THRIFT Never wasting a single penny!</p>
<p><b>מנוחת הנפש</b> / TRANQUILITY Being calm, peaceful, content at all times, even when under great stress.</p>		<p><b>חריצות</b> / DILIGENCE Putting all of our effort into completing a project in a timely manner, without distraction.</p>
<p><b>נהת</b> / PLEASANTNESS Being gentle and soft speech in tone of voice and manner; working hard at getting along with others, and being so agreeable that others will want to be around us!</p>		<p><b>שתיקה</b> / SILENCE Knowing when to speak, and when not to speak; having peace of mind and being comfortable with who you are.</p>



Although he was not as well known as other Holocaust-era icons, such as Raoul Wallenberg or Oskar Schindler, Dr. Eric Klibansky saved many lives, as we learned from the testimony of *Kinder* Lore and Werner. By looking at his actions through the lens of *middot* [Fig. 6], we can see clearly which traits were necessary to effectuate the lifesaving rescue.

**FIG 6: GROUP DISCUSSION MATRIX**

<i>Middot</i>	Dr. Klibansky's Significant Actions		
	Built a school	Arranged for the KT for his students	Went to Dachau to rescue
נקיון / CLEANLINESS			
סבלנות / PATIENCE		•	
סדר / ORDER	•	•	
ענוה / HUMILITY	•		•
צדק / JUSTICE		•	•
קמץ / THRIFT			
שתיקה / SILENCE			
אמת / TRUTH			•
כבוד / RESPECT	•	•	
זריזות / ALACRITY		•	•
חריצות / DILIGENCE	•		
מנוחת הנפש / TRANQUILITY			
נחת / PLEASANTNESS			

Distribute the chart with the *middot* listed next to the three significant actions of Klibansky and ask the students to read it, decide which *middot* apply to his actions, and check each box where the *middot* and the actions intersect. Discuss the responses, encouraging students to explain their choices. One focus might be, for example, that Klibansky had to put his students on the *Kindertransport* because of his innate sense of justice (*tzedeck*). *Kristallnacht* had been a shockingly unjust and unjustified action against all of the Jews of Germany and Austria; the increasingly restrictive and dangerous policies and acts of discrimination in the days and weeks that followed were simply wrong and represented a grave injustice; Klibansky felt he had to act to restore the balance.

Examine as well why certain *middot* were crucial to Klibansky's success. For example, if he had not acted with *zerizut* (alacrity), Werner might have died in Dachau. If Klibansky had not booked all of his students on the *Kindertransport* at the first possible opportunity to do so, they most likely would have shared the same ultimate murderous fate as their families. If he had not responded immediately to the plea from Rabbi Rabinovitz, Lore would not have been on the last transport out of Cologne.

In Werner's mother's courageous visit to them, we see the *middah* of *חריצות* (diligence); in Werner's response to his incarceration on the Isle of Man, we see the *middah* of

*מנוחת הנפש* (tranquility). Some students might choose the value of *kol Yisrael areivim zeh bazeh* because Werner and Lore were taken in by strangers in a foreign country and survived because their teachers, rabbis, members of a local congregation, and the Orthodox couple in the youth hostel looked out for them: All Jews are responsible for one another.

Sid Heisler's story illustrates different but equally important *middot*, as well as different ways that one might show these values. In Sid's anecdote about leaving the pig farm as soon as he and his brother arrived, we see another way to understand the *middah* of *zerizut* (alacrity): Sometimes, running towards an opportunity was the right choice; sometimes the right choice was running away. In the kind foster mother, Mrs. Gibbs, who took them in on the spot, although she had not planned to do so, we can see the *middah* of *זריזות* (alacrity). She exhibited *סבלנות* (patience) and *נחת* (pleasantness): "There was no strife" in her home," Sid recalls. Furthermore, this Christian woman encouraged the brothers to practice Judaism, giving them the ritual objects they required as *b'nei mitzvah*, showing the *middot* of *כבוד* (respect), *צדק* (justice), and *חריצות* (diligence) in learning about and catering to their religious needs. Students might consider how she performed the mitzvah of *hachnasat orchim* by opening her home to children in need and providing them with everything they needed to live.

Of course, not every *middah* will be relevant to every testimony, but students will have the opportunity to understand each one in context as they consider which ones are illustrative of which narratives. Such consideration will also elicit such essential questions as, "When during the Holocaust might the *middah* of *סבלנות* (patience) or *שתיקה* (silence) have worked *against* the Jews? How do we know when refusing to be patient or silent is the better choice? Is speaking honestly and from the heart (*אמת*) the right thing to do on every occasion?"

### THINK-PAIR-SHARE

Varying pedagogic techniques may enhance this unit of study. In the traditional study environment of the yeshivah, "students sit in pairs or threesomes [*chavruta*], reading and discussing out loud." Jewish learning "is as much talk as it is reading; in fact, the two activities of reading and discussion are virtually indistinguishable" (Holtz, 1984, p. 19). In what Lytle (1982) has called "think-alouds," "the complex thought processes involved in orally exploring meaning" (cited in Beach, 1990, p. 66), students explore their personal responses to a text by "expressing their emotional reactions, sorting out and clarifying their conceptions, or coping with difficulties in understanding meanings" (p. 66). Research concludes that "think-alouds with pairs of students, conducted prior to small- or large-group discussions, may help students articulate their initial responses in preparation for

the discussion" (p. 66). The *chavruta* and the "think-aloud" combine in the "Think-Pair-Share," a method of encouraging active listening and engagement. The method itself involves *middot*. For instance, "thinking to yourself" and "wait time" are required for this activity; in the language of *middot*, these translate to silence (*shtikah*) and patience (*savlanut*). Pairing and sharing in *chavruta* require respect (*kavod*), honesty (*emet*), and humility (*anivah*). Furthermore, there is an overall sense of order (*sefer*) in this ritual. Using *chavruta* and Think-Pair-Share require that students internalize, listen, respect, and reflect on *Kindertransport* stories and the *middot* implicit in each, and then pair off and engage in clarifying dialogue.

Werner's memories, for example, may be examined in a chart shared by each pair of students (*chavruta*) [Fig. 7].

**FIG. 7: THINK-PAIR-SHARE EXERCISE**

Prompt or Question	What I thought
<p>"I remember Dachau . . . I was there for 4 weeks. We stood at attention for hours, and I reached the limits of my endurance, but I knew that if I didn't prevail, I would be shot."</p> <p>Werner recalls "wearing only a thin shirt" in the concentration camp, and "literally freezing." A distant cousin of his, also imprisoned, saw how cold he was, and gave him a undershirt, saving his life.</p>	<p>I thought about the <i>middah</i> of silence, because Werner stayed quiet and took the abuse and he saved his own life.</p>
<p>What my <i>chavruta</i> thought</p>	<p>What we will share with the class</p>
<p>My partner thought that Werner showed amazing tranquility (<i>menuchah hanefesh</i>) by standing at attention for hours.</p>	<p>Werner's <i>middot</i> probably saved his life in Dachau.</p>

### THE KINDERTRANSPORT IMPERATIVE

Regardless of the pedagogical approaches the teacher chooses, the story of the *Kindertransport* can be taught as a unique and defining Jewish historical event that illustrates eternal Jewish values practiced by Jews and Christians who worked together to save Jewish children. The stories of Werner, Lore, and Sid, along with those of other *Kinder*, echo the story of Moses's rescue from the Nile by a compassionate stranger. Incredibly brave and selfless parents, unwittingly cast in the role of modern-day Yocheveds, sent their children away to give them a chance at life; the righteous Gentiles who embraced them ensured their survival.

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"*Into the Arms of Strangers* provides stories of courage and hope, highlighting the strength of children who survived with the help of others," writes Margaret Weiss Crouch about the feature film she discusses in this essay. Pair this film with the personal narratives of *Kinder* Ralph W. Mollerick and Renata Laxova, pp. 5–10 and 115–118 respectively, to provide students with additional first-person testimony.

Margaret Weiss Crouch

## *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport, A Film for Holocaust Education*

The 2001 Academy Award-winning documentary *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (Oppenheimer & Harris, 2000) is a brilliant montage of interviews, archival footage, cinematography, lighting, music, sound, and voices. Deborah Oppenheimer, the producer and daughter of one of the *Kinder* (children), notes that this film is not about the Holocaust. "This film is about love, loss, survival, and memory; it's about parents and children" ("Production Information," n.d., p. 2). I like this film for the classroom because it is historically accurate, nonviolent, and engaging as it moves effortlessly among 16 diverse stories in short bytes, just what most of today's students love. Written and directed by Mark Jonathan Harris, narrated by Dame Judi Dench, and produced in cooperation with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), its 117 minutes tell the stories through the points of view of 11 children who completed the transport and one who was pulled from the train at the last minute by her father, one birth parent of one of the *Kinder*, one foster parent, and two rescuers. The *Kinder* speak of being spoiled, of their reluctance to leave their friends, of their anxiety about never seeing their parents again, and of their fear of the unknown, all likely to find common ground with our own students. The film examines the Jewish parents' agonizing decision to send their children to safety; the children's journey to unknown places; their adjustment, or lack thereof, to their varied placements; and their fears.

The film is divided into five parts for viewing and discussion, each between 20 and 27 minutes long. Scott Chamberlin and Gretchen Skidmore (USHMM, 2001) wrote an excellent accompanying guide for grades 7 to 12 that provides

a brief history of the Holocaust, World War II, and the *Kindertransport*; a map, a timeline, and a glossary; photos; activities; discussion questions; and a bibliography. The guide helps to contextualize the Holocaust in time and place; the film, which provides reference to the twentieth century, European geography, and democracy, cannot be fully understood without a firm grounding in the history that preceded the need for the *Kindertransport*: the religious, political, social, and economic scene in Germany between the wars; the vibrant religious, cultural, and family life of the Jews in Europe before the Holocaust; and the insidious move from religious antisemitism to Nazi racial antisemitism that made the situation in Germany for Jews in 1938 dire enough to force parents to take the heartbreaking step of sending their children—alone—to a foreign country in hopes of saving their lives.

Students *must* understand this social and economic tinderbox in order to understand the *Kindertransport*. When German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder viewed the film in 2000, he remarked that it "recalls a time in Germany when all basic values were brutally rendered invalid. The values most affected were human kindness and human dignity" (Chamberlin & Skidmore, 2001, p. 19).

### **WHY DIDN'T THE JEWS LEAVE?**

Students often ask, "Why didn't the Jews just leave?" First, some did; Jews left Germany each year between 1933 and 1939. Next, many felt they *should* leave, but nothing like this had ever happened before; therefore, they had no way of predicting the outcome. Jews had always overcome persecution and many believed that things would get better.

Third, some *would have* left, but they were fully assimilated into the German culture and didn't want to abandon their country, family, or business. They believed that, as good German citizens, their country would protect them. Leaving would cause them great social, emotional, and economic upheaval. Fourth, as the years passed, few *could* leave. At first, they may have tried but encountered obstacles to emigrate and oppressive red tape to immigrate. Jews now needed a new passport that identified them as Jews and an exit visa, obtained only after they relinquished the titles to their property and most of their bank account and paid heavy emigration taxes. If they *could* find a country willing to take them, they faced lengthy, complicated, and demanding immigration applications requesting information from their banks, doctors, and the German police. Jews faced great competition to acquire an exit number within a quota established for their country of birth. The United States required affidavits from multiple sponsors, guaranteeing that the immigrant would not become a financial burden on the country. It also lowered and then failed to meet its quotas because of our own antisemitism and fear that immigrants would take American jobs.

The attempt to emigrate was itself a full-time job. Even a sponsor and a guarantee of a job were no guarantee of escape. Realizing that the family's emigration was probably not going to happen, thousands of parents opted to take advantage of the chance to get their *children* out on the *Kindertransport*, as the film makes clear.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF KRISTALLNACHT

Because *Kristallnacht* was the catalyst for the *Kindertransport*, teachers may want to emphasize that point when it is examined in the film. Seventeen-year-old Herschel Grynszpan's assassination of a minor German embassy official in Paris in revenge for Grynszpan's Polish Jewish parents' deportation from Germany to Poland, where they were refused entry because they were no longer considered Polish citizens, gave the Nazis the spark they were looking for to ignite a violent attack on German and Austrian Jews. Within 48 hours, more than 1,000 synagogues and their contents were burned, more than 7,000 Jewish businesses were destroyed and looted, Jewish cemeteries were desecrated, and schools and homes were ransacked and ruined. More than 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps, and almost 100 Jews were killed. *Kristallnacht* permitted the Nazi government to explode its smoldering antisemitism and wage a brutal, fiery attack on its own citizens. Almost immediately, Jews were barred from schools and public gathering places, given a curfew, and stripped of their businesses through Aryanization, additional topics of interest that provide extended learning opportunities.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KINDERTRANSPORT

When the violence of *Kristallnacht* left little doubt about the brutal intentions of the Nazi government, the awareness fueled international outrage and created hope that other countries would begin to accept refugees; but most did not. On November 15, 1938, British Jewish leaders appealed to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to admit, temporarily, children and teenagers as refugees who would later re-emigrate under a paid guarantee. The British Cabinet agreed to accept an unrestricted number of unaccompanied children under the age of 17 after denying a request to allow 10,000 children into Palestine (*"Kindertransport History,"* n.d.). Jewish leaders soon went to Germany and Austria to help the local Jewish charitable organizations select names from group lists compiled by word of mouth through the Jewish community culture centers (K. Goldberger, personal communication, May 2, 2012).

In Germany, Jewish and non-Jewish organizers gave preference to teenagers in concentration camps or in danger of being arrested, Polish children facing deportation, children in Jewish orphanages, and those whose impoverished parents couldn't keep them or were themselves in concentration camps (*"Production information,"* n.d., p. 34). Some children featured in the film were from these groups. Conversely, not being under such dire circumstances may have made the parents' decision to send them—and the leaving—all the more heart-wrenching.

Preparation included hurried physical exams; document collection, including certification that the children had no outstanding taxes or loans (*The Kindertransports*, n.d.), and parental consent when possible. Parents dispensed wisdom and guidance they had intended to share over years, not



**FIG. 1:** Members of the first *Kindertransport* arrive in Harwich, England, December 2, 1938. USHMM, courtesy of Frances Rose.

days, and followed the strict instructions for packing: One small suitcase and one backpack; an unbreakable cup; washing supplies; food for a day (“Production Information,” n.d., p. 3); no valuables, especially not gold, and only a small amount of cash; no musical instruments; and a numbered identity card, sometimes with a photo, were all that were allowed.

The first trainload of 196 children from a Berlin Jewish orphanage burned during *Kristallnacht* (“*Kindertransport History*” n.d.) left December 1, 1938, followed by Austrian, Czech, and Polish children [Figs. 1 and 2].



**FIG. 2:** A Jewish girl wearing a numbered tag sits on a staircase in Harwich, England, after her arrival on the second *Kindertransport*, December 12, 1938. USHMM, courtesy of National Archives & Records Adm., College Park, MD.

The trains continued through the Netherlands to the port at the Hook of Holland, where some children remained and were cared for there. The others were ferried to the British ports of Harwich or Southampton. An average of 300 children, 70 per cent of whom were Jewish, arrived in England a week, day and night (K. Goldberger, personal communication, April 19, 2001) [Figs. 3 and 4].

The film makes clear that these children had left their homes with the hope and belief that their parents would soon follow, but they soon were living with the constant fear of what was happening to their families as they struggled to maintain communication with them, often having

no one else to comfort and reassure them. Some felt abandoned but knew somehow they were to feel grateful for this opportunity to escape, recalling the jealousy of those who couldn't. The German government restricted mail delivery once the war began, and many parents were rounded up and sent to ghettos and camps; all communication slowed or ceased. In 1940, when the British government ordered the internment of refugees aged 16 to 70 years old, fearing they could sabotage the war effort, approximately 1,000 *Kinder* were sent to internment camps; 400 were sent to Canada and Australia [See McLoughlin, pp. 61–66—Eds.].

The Czech *Kindertransport* was organized independently of the British *Kindertransport* by Nicholas Winton, a 29-year-old London stockbroker, called by a friend to Prague to see the appalling conditions refugees were living under in December 1938. Winton set up his own rescue effort, working at his job by day and the rescue effort by night, aided by his mother, his secretary, and a few friends. He advertised in newspapers, churches, and synagogues for funds for repatriation, foster homes, and transport by printing pictures of the children needing haven. Unlike the British *Kindertransport*, Winton single-handedly and meticulously matched each child to a foster family. The first transport left Prague on March 14, 1939, by airplane; seven others departed by train. On September 1, 1939, 250 children sat on the largest transport, only to discover that all German borders were closed. None of the children aboard were seen again (“Story,” 2009).

*Into the Arms of Strangers* honors both Winton and Norbert Wollheim for their work as rescuers. Winton never told anyone of his rescue efforts until 1988, when his wife found in their attic his scrapbook, now housed at Yad Vashem, with names, photos, and some letters from parents. Wollheim, a member of a German-Jewish youth movement, was asked to help organize the emigration of the thousands of children just after *Kristallnacht* because he had helped with



**FIG. 3:** A group of boys from Bratislava prepares to leave for England on a *Kindertransport*, May 1, 1939. USHMM, courtesy of Max Stern.



**FIG. 4:** Girls look out a train window as they leave Germany on a *Kindertransport* to England, June 1939. USHMM, courtesy of Bea Stiegel Green.

the organization of summer camps in England, Sweden, and Denmark. [see Gurewitsch, pp. 11–16, and Rünitz, pp. 30–35—Eds.].

#### **POSSIBLE TEACHING APPROACHES**

*Into the Arms of Strangers* provides the historical context to teach chronologically what happened before, during, and after the Holocaust. The film also supplies a wealth of topics and themes for classroom discussion, including choice, responsibility, identity, memory, fitting in, being cast out and isolated, loss, separation, and the significance of an individual's actions as well as the impact of government policies (Chamberlin & Skidmore, 2001, p. 6). These themes provide powerful connections to our students' own time and place and make this film an ideal addition to the study of the *Kindertransport*.

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"I am 78 years old and, just as they were during the night between July 31st and August 1st, 1939, at the departure of that other train, my eyes are full of tears," writes Renata Laxova. In this personal narrative, she reflects on her experiences as a child of the *Kindertransport* as she journeys on the Winton Train to a long-awaited reunion with Sir Nicholas Winton, "who, almost single-handedly, within a few short months in Prague, at the beginning of 1939, initiated, organized, negotiated, and achieved the safe arrival of 669 Czechoslovak children at London's Liverpool Street"—including Renata. Read this memoir with Tom Berman's poem (p. 119) describing his journey on the Winton Train.

Renata Laxova

## The Gift

It is Friday, September 4, 2009, six o'clock in the morning. The British train, named Tornado, its number 60163, is preparing for departure on the platform of the railway station in the British port of Harwich. The Tornado is the fourth of four authentic replicas of historical steam engines, preceded by a Czech/Hungarian, a German, and a Dutch one, used to bring 150 individuals, including 22 survivors of the *Kindertransports*, some of their current family members, and others, from Prague to London. I am 78 years old and, just as they were during the night between July 31st and August 1st, 1939, at the departure of that other train, my eyes are full of tears.

Someone has just attached a large wreath of fresh white flowers (roses?) to the face of the Tornado. A blue metal plate above it announces that this is "THE WINTON TRAIN," its itinerary "Prague—London."

Two small flags on either side of the sign, the one on the right, Czech; the left one, British, are moving gently in the breeze. Steam is spewing noisily from the undercarriage, just as I remember it from the summers when I was three and four, when my mother, father, and I would take the overnight express to visit my grandmother and all the other relatives in Slovakia. The noise of the steam, the shouting, whistling, and general bustle, would excite and frighten me, but in my mother's or father's arms, or holding firmly onto their hands, I knew I was safe.

The engine driver, just as he was then, is laughing at me now, leaning out of his cabin and waving. Tentatively, I wave back with the crumpled, little white handkerchief clutched in my hand. It is the embroidered one, the one that my mother left with me after that last hug, when one of the adult organizers accompanying the transport made her descend from the train. "You know very well that only mothers of very young children, those under six, are allowed to board

the train!" she said sternly, with emphasis on the word "young." It was just 15 days after my eighth birthday that I found myself sitting on the wooden bench of our railway compartment with a numbered label tied around my neck. My parents were waving from the platform below the window, my mother smiling bravely, my father wiping his sparkling glasses—also with a white handkerchief, but a bigger one and not embroidered like my mother's. I was sobbing my heart out, sitting helplessly between two big boys from Brno, my hometown. They were supposed to be taking care of me.

Ours was the last of the children's transports of predominantly Jewish children from Czechoslovakia to arrive safely in Britain prior to the outbreak of World War II in Europe. There were about 68 of us, the remainder of a total of 669 Jewish *Kinder* whose lives were saved in the only country in the world that was willing to accept a larger number of Jewish refugees. According to a decision reached by the British Parliament after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in Germany and Austria, Britain would accept up to 10,000 children, aged three to 17 years, provided that they each had a guarantor (an individual, a family, an institution, or an organization) who would pay and care for them.

Several *Kindertransports* had thus arrived in England from Berlin and Vienna prior to those that departed from Prague after Hitler's occupation of our country on March 15, 1939. An additional final transport carrying 250 children stood, prepared for departure, at the Prague main railway station, on September 1, 1939, the day that Hitler attacked Poland. The train was not permitted to leave the station, and none of those 250 children survived the war. The wreath of white flowers carried on the front of the locomotive Tornado is in their memory and in memory of the one and a half million children who perished during the Holocaust.

## HOW IT BEGAN

In answer to my mother's preliminary inquiries, an organization called the "British Committee for Children from Prague" had informed my parents that a reservation had been made for me on the transport scheduled to depart from Prague's main railway station, the Wilson, at midnight on July 31, 1939. A few days later, another letter arrived, this time from an English family from Manchester. They introduced themselves as Mr. Harry and Mrs. Edna Daniels; they wrote that they had a five-and-a-half-year-old son, Harry, also known as Danny, and that they would be happy to care for me as if I were their own daughter. Little Harry would be pleased to have a big sister. They lived in the suburbs of Manchester, they explained, and they had a garden and a little kitten named Billy.

Throughout my life, I have tried, unsuccessfully, to imagine my parents' reactions to these letters. Here, on the one hand, was a concrete opportunity to save the life of their only child. On the other, its potential presented unimaginably difficult and conflicting choices. I never discovered or even discussed with them how they finally reached a decision. All I remember is that, even as a 7 year old, I became aware that this and subsequent correspondence was followed by a noticeable change in our home atmosphere, from one of underlying nervousness and fear of the future under Hitler's occupation and persecution to some days of overtly happier and busier activities. Perhaps, initially, my parents resolved to do everything in their power to take advantage of the option to send their child to safety, allowing the myriad directions, regulations, and preparations to occupy their minds and thus alleviate some of the doubts and anxiety. After all, I wasn't leaving yet, and who knew what might or might not happen in the meantime? My mother's proactive, lively, and innately optimistic personality together with my father's quiet, wise, and gentle support have always been factors that have helped me imagine the courage, selfless sacrifice, and strength with which they (and other parents) coped with the idea and, eventually, the reality, of sending their child(ren) away to an unknown future in an unknown land.

I am forever grateful to my parents for the honest, open, and truthful manner in which they prepared me for the trip. I began to learn English, and, in contrast to many other parents, they did not promise that they would follow me to England, or that they would come soon to take me home. Nor did they describe holiday camps and seaside resorts as anticipated by some of the bigger boys and girls with whom I traveled. They did promise that they would continue to try as hard as possible to obtain permission to emigrate. I clearly understood that, more than anything else, they wanted me to be safe from Hitler's cruelty, his hatred of Jews. They wanted me to be happy, to be able to go to school (already forbidden at home) to learn, to play;

above all, they were sending me to England because they loved me more than anything or anyone in the world. We hoped that, in the future, we would all be able to live happily together again [Fig. 1].



FIG. 1: My parents and I, July 1939, before my departure.

I had looked forward to the trip with not too unpleasant anticipation, and it was not until that last day in Prague that I felt the sudden shock of realization of what was actually happening to me. I began to cry bitterly, to cling to my parents and to beg them please, please to take me home with them; but, of course, they did not, no matter how much they wished they could.

## THE JOURNEY; MY NEW FAMILY

The journey from Prague through Germany to Holland and from the Hoek van Holland by ferry to the British port of Harwich and then to London lasted two nights and two days. I suppose I slept for much of the time; I do not remember it as a hardship. On the third day, I was met by my new English family at the Manchester train station. Auntie Edna, as I was to call her, splendid in a large hat, stood in front; Uncle Harry, with friendly, twinkling blue eyes, was beside her. He reached back to take the hand of a blond, blue-eyed little boy.

"Come here, Danny," he said, "come and say hello to your big sister and give her a kiss!" Harry immediately took a step backwards, put his little hands behind his back, and refused to have anything to do with me.

I spent seven happy years in England with the Daniels family. I loved school and have always considered my age upon arrival an advantage. I entered third grade and a scholarship I won when I was in fourth grade enabled me to attend an excellent, academically oriented grammar school from the age of 10 to 15; this experience formed the



basis for my post-war education and future academic career. However, school attendance in England at that time was compulsory only up to age 14. Some of the children from the transports who were 12 or older were given jobs at home or even sent to work elsewhere. That, in turn, may have resulted in a less-than-harmonious relationship between them and their host families and also forced them to continue their education much later than under more usual circumstances.

My little “brother” Harry and I, our first encounter notwithstanding, became and remain fast friends [Fig. 2]. Seventy years later, we are still closer and understand each other better than many biological siblings.

It was not until the 1980s that the true identity of the “British Committee for Children from Prague” was revealed. What neither we children nor most of the families we left behind were aware of was that our lives had been saved not by “a committee,” but by a 29-year-old British stockbroker, (now Sir) Nicholas “Nicky” Winton. It was he who, almost single-handedly, within a few (four?) short months in Prague, at the beginning of 1939, initiated, organized, negotiated, and achieved the safe arrival of 669 Czechoslovak children at London’s Liverpool Street.

Much has been written, publicized, and celebrated, including several video documentaries, books, and an award-winning full-length film directed by Matej Minác (2011), about the deeds of this dear, humble, gentle man, who, I hope, will celebrate his 104th birthday on May 19, 2013. He insists that he did “only what had to be done” and calls us “his children.” That, of course, makes him a great-great-grandfather many times over, because his deeds in 1939 were indirectly responsible for the birth and subsequent existence of many future generations.

I know that my parents would also have attributed their own survival to Sir Nicholas. The knowledge that I was safe enabled my mother to take the risk of assuming the identity and documents of a non-Jewish stranger and to work, initially as a nanny, later as an office clerk. My father



FIG. 2: Harry and I at the seaside after my arrival.

spent the war years in hiding, as well as in some of the camps. I was one of a few, perhaps five, of Nicky’s children who were fortunate enough to have found both parents after the war. When I returned home to Brno in 1946, at age 15, the reunion was not easy; I had forgotten completely both of my original languages, Czech and German.

## SEVENTY YEARS LATER

My thoughts traverse these past seven decades once more as I now smile again at Tornado’s engine driver. This, the British leg of the trip from Port Harwich to London, will culminate, today, in a celebratory reunion at Liverpool Street Station with Sir Nicholas Winton himself and a reception at the Czech and Slovak embassies in London.

Apart from the Tornado and its friendly engine driver, the early morning platform at Harwich is still almost empty. A few young men, journalists with photographic equipment and logos from around the UK and elsewhere, are slowly and quietly beginning to join us on the platform. The ferry from Hoek van Holland has landed, and I turn to the large, gleaming, still-empty entrance hall for disembarking passengers. The first few are appearing in the distance and looking around tentatively. To my amazement, I recognize two familiar figures as they enter the hall through the glass door at the opposite end. I drop my suitcase on the spot and run along the length of the hall. A minute later, I am hugging my “little” brother Harry and Els, his wife, my “sister-in-law.” They boarded the ferry in Holland, where they live. We laugh, we cry together, and we hug some more. I step back and, suddenly, the 70-year-old memory resurfaces.

“History repeats itself in reverse!” I exclaim. “Today, it is I who am meeting you and”—putting my hands behind my back—“I won’t give you a kiss either. I want nothing to do with you!”

In the meantime, the entrance hall and the platform are gradually filling with the other passengers from the ferry, with more journalists, photographers, and citizens of Harwich. The train itself, now coupled onto its locomotive Tornado, is the refurbished historic Royal Scot, famous for having transported the royal family to and from Scotland in days gone by.

The three of us, Harry, Els, and I, now comfortably ensconced in the luxuriously upholstered armchair-like seats of the train for this, the last and only leg of the journey that I would experience, chat with some of the journalists. They seem interested in us; the presence of my 75-year-old “little” brother, Harry, provides an added dimension to the event. He is a member of one of the few British host families who, 70 years ago on this date, opened their homes, their lives, and their hearts to so many bewildered, travel-weary, homesick Jewish children escaping from Nazi-occupied Europe. It is my opinion that the closeness of my relationship with Harry represents the other half—the receiving end of,

and complement to, the *Kindertransport* movement.

The 70-mile journey from Harwich to London takes less than one and a half hours. Through the window, we see what, 70 years ago, must have been our first glimpse of England. Alongside the tracks, we are greeted by laughing and cheering children and adults, some with little flags. They have come to see the exotic steam train, whistling and puffing through the countryside. We wave back, surprised and thrilled by their awareness and interest, probably instigated by their local media.

It is a little after 11 a.m. as we approach London's Liverpool Street Station. We are on time, we are told, and scheduled to arrive on platform #10, just as we did 70 years ago, and are to be met, just as we were then, by Sir Nicholas Winton. Apparently, in 1939, he made a point of meeting as many of his transports from Prague as he could, sometimes aided only by his mother, Mrs. Barbara Winton.

Platform #10 was chaotic. Despite what was said to be strict security, I cannot imagine that the pushing, noisy crowds consisted solely of the passengers from the Winton train. Be that as it may, we crane our heads over the sea of humanity and there, in the distance, surrounded by hundreds, I see Nicky, for the first time in real life. He is sitting in a chair, white-haired, short-statured, with black rimmed glasses and—he is 100 years old. He rises, accepts a microphone and, humble as ever, thanks us for coming.

"It seems busier and more confusing now than it was 70 years ago," he comments in a firm, clear voice, "and please do not allow another 70 years to go by before we meet again!"

Nicky's warm words of welcome are followed by other anticlimactic and less audible speeches. The time has come for me to reach him at last, to try to express what I am feeling, but there is no way that Harry, Els, or I can approach any closer to the front of the crowd. However, I am assured by one of the organizers that, once we arrive at the embassy, there will be a formal reception, and everyone will have the opportunity to meet Sir Nicholas officially and personally. As the speeches drone on, I find my mind returning to the past once more.

It was August 2, 1939, and I was sitting on my suitcase with the label still firmly tied around my neck. My English family would meet me tomorrow in Manchester; but here I was, sitting alone, a tiny girl in this very same arrival hall—not in Manchester, but in London—on Platform #10! Some of the children from my transport had already left, and others were surrounded by big people. I watched one or two running straight into the arms of relatives—parents, even? Oh, how I envied those! For a while, I wondered how it might be if my own mother or father suddenly appeared before me and the whole trip had just been a dream!

I was very worried. Despite my English lessons, I could not understand anything anyone was saying to me, nor

could they understand what I was trying to say to them. I knew the Manchester address from memory, but that would not help me in London. What if my parents' friend, Uncle Karl, with whom I was to spend my first night in England, had forgotten about me? What would happen to me, where would I go? I tried hard not to cry.

I was not really alone, nor was I forgotten. Yet, several subsequent as well as current documents and accounts exist by other children who were sent to safety, whether as refugees from other countries or as evacuees from the London bombing during World War II, that attest to similar feelings and perceptions of having been forgotten or abandoned upon arrival at their new destination.

The Czech embassy is, if anything, even more crowded than Liverpool Street Station.

Sir Nicholas, barely visible among the well-wishers, is seated, facing a small stage, with his back to a large table laden with refreshments. Someone with a microphone is mouthing words inaudible to me; others are circulating around the table. There is no indication whatsoever of a formal reception or of an opportunity to meet Nicky "officially and personally." I have waited decades to express my gratitude on behalf of my parents and my family and to express my own thanks to this kind, humble man who "only did what had to be done." How I wish my mother could have met him! She died many years before the world discovered, almost coincidentally, that it was he, a single individual, who had created and then personified the "British Committee for Children from Prague" that she had admired so much.

How, though, do I reach him now? What do I say, which words do I use? Actually, I have no words. Blindly, I push my way forward through the oblivious crowd, frantically clutching the gift I have brought for him. Quite suddenly, and completely unexpectedly, I find myself holding his hand. I kiss it and he sees my tears.

"Do you know what?" he says, "I am hungry. Do you think there is anything at all left on that table behind me? Perhaps some bread and cheese. . . ?" His daughter, Barbara, produces a cheese sandwich. "Thank you; that's better." He nods, turns to me and accepts my gift.

"Now what's this? Sit down and tell me about it." At that moment, the organizers—or perhaps they are journalists—ask me to move away, indicating that Nicky is needed for more interviews and photographs. I leave him examining the handcrafted wooden plaque dedicated to him by my family. It depicts a carving by a Wisconsin artisan of a train steaming and spewing smoke over a faintly outlined map of Europe. It is underscored by the words "THANK YOU."

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Tom Berman writes, "In September 2009, as a tribute to Nicholas Winton and as an educational project 'Inspired by Good,' a replica of the train with steam locomotives and 1930s coaches, with 22 of the original *Kinder* on board, allowed us to reenact the journey from Prague to London." Berman adds, "This time I did not take a suitcase with me; instead, I took one daughter and two granddaughters." Pair this poem with the memoir of another Winton *Kind*, Renata Laxova (pp. 115–118), to prompt a discussion of the unique insights into history offered by poetry and narrative.

*Tom Berman*

## *Winton Train*

*Kindertransport revisited, Sept. 1st–4th, 2009*

We smell again  
the steam train smells  
soot through the window  
crossing the Czech lands,  
woods and rolling fields,  
into Germany  
to Nürnberg  
of dark memories;  
through the Black Forest  
via the banks of the Rhine  
and a choir of elderly *Kinder*  
singing: *Kde domov můj?*  
on to cathedral-spined Cologne;  
and the level plains  
of placid Holland  
night crossing the Channel  
to dawn at Harwich  
with English gulls screeching  
as our train  
pulls from the platform  
London bound  
rushes over fens and fields  
and hauls at last, steam-wreathed,  
into Liverpool St. Station.

*Kde domov můj?* (Czech: *Where is my home?* Czech national anthem)

"Quilting, by its nature, involves planning; the artist needs time to consider the elements of the design and the materials to include," explains Shoshana R. Spiegel. "The creative process and the stitching itself are usually relaxing, one reason I choose this mode of expression. For this project, I struggled to focus on the topic of the *Kindertransport*, my ambivalence reflecting the unspoken importance it had in my life and the buried emotions my mother carried and passed on to me. This particular design germinated in me for months before I could visualize it, just four days before the project deadline. Thus, I rushed to complete the quilt, my anxiety perhaps mirroring the anxious rush of departure felt by my mother over 70 years ago."

*Shoshana R. Spiegel*

## Facing the Past, Healing the Future

The juried "Sacred Threads" exhibit is held every two years and encourages quilt artists to explore spiritual themes. In 2011, I created a piece for the exhibit in the category called "Healing," rather than for any other category, because I wanted my work to help heal my family and me from the trauma of the Holocaust. The making of this quilt was a conscious effort toward that end and is a concrete, visual representation of part of that journey.

At the age of 12, my mother, Thea Lange, had to leave her parents, sisters, and the Free City of Danzig and travel to England, a Jewish child refugee. Although she rarely spoke of it when I was growing up, I have come to realize that this experience shaped her life and has also strongly influenced mine.

In the quilt, my mother stands alone, a small silhouetted figure with her hands on her hips, standing still and facing forward, her single suitcase beside her [Fig. 1].

I imagine her as she prepares to leave behind her Danzig community and the fire and threat of Eastern Europe, symbolized by the bold reds and oranges of the lower left side of the quilt and by the flag colors of her home town in the upper and lower left corners. "Danzig" is embroidered on the left; the month and year of her departure, July 1939, is below. She is leaving for the cooler, calmer, and presumably safer atmosphere of England; the blues and the white of the upper right diagonal, along with the English flag in the upper and lower right corners, express her destination. The word "*Kindertransport*" is stitched across the top border; "England," her



**FIG. 1:** *Facing the Past, Healing the Future*

new country, is stitched on the right side.

Her feet seem firmly planted in her old world and her left arm and her head are very much in the new one; her heart is split between both worlds. The research I did to prepare for this work led to the discovery of the actual number, 5694, assigned to her as she began her journey; the large, bright white tag that hangs from a string around her neck proclaims it boldly. I represent her in stark black.

That is how I understand the trauma my mother must have experienced as she was separated from everything that she had known: the intimacy of her family life, which was never recreated, even among the fortunate few who were able to reunite with their parents; the familiarity of her culture, especially her native language, a crucial avenue of communication; and the comfort and security she had always known.

I consider the *Kindertransport* a blessing because it saved her and so many other children, but as she lived through it, I imagine that my mother suffered as she tried to cope with the sudden changes thrust upon her. Dropped into an unknown world populated with strangers, she did not know the rules or the language with which to engage. Separated from her parents and her sisters, she feared for their safety as well as for her own. What would happen to them? What would happen to her?

During my childhood, my mother occasionally shared the details of her experience but not her feelings about what happened to her during those years. I use an overlay of three panels of translucent white fabric to represent the veil of mystery that separates us and shrouds her *Kindertransport* experiences and those of the Holocaust as well. She, like so many other survivors, was reluctant to share her story because it was too painful and, perhaps, she thought she was protecting me. She did not realize, despite her best intentions, the many ways in which she passed on to me the knowledge, if not the information, through the energy that remained within her from the trauma.

**IN MEMORIAM**

Thea Lange Spiegel passed away on October 20, 2012, just after her daughter completed this essay. May Mrs. Spiegel's memory be for a blessing.



The poet Lotte Kramer escaped from Germany in July 1939 on one of the last *Kindertransports* from Mainz. She left behind a large family, and it was years later before she learned that her parents and 10 other family members had been murdered during the Holocaust. Having suffered a traumatic parting from her mother, Kramer writes "for all mothers in anguish."

*Lotte Kramer*

## *Exodus*

For all mothers in anguish  
Pushing out their babies  
In a small basket  
To let the river cradle them  
And kind hands find  
And nurture them  
Providing safety  
In a hostile world:  
Our constant gratitude.  
As in this last century  
The crowded trains  
Taking us away from home  
Became our baby baskets  
Rattling to foreign parts.  
Our exodus from death.

Florian Kubsch, a young German foreign-exchange student at the University of North Texas, listens to the testimony of a Jewish woman speaking at the Dallas Holocaust Museum. As she tells of life before, during, and after the *Kindertransport* that saved her from the Holocaust, he reflects on his understanding of that same period of time in this thoughtful and very personal narrative.

*Florian Kubsch*

## Magie and Me

The Holocaust survivor who would be speaking to juniors and seniors from Duncanville High School that morning turned out to be a spry lady of 81 years with a white perm. Her black blouse, white cardigan, and red nail polish made her look more elegant than any of the approximately 60 listeners in the theater hall of the Dallas Holocaust Museum. The combination of the speaker's very short posture and strong voice reminded me of my great-aunt. In fact, the two women shared the experience of World War II in Germany. There was a crucial difference between them, though: The lady who was about to speak to the high school students was not only German, like my great-aunt, but also Jewish.

When I came to Texas three months earlier as a foreign exchange student at the University of North Texas, I had no idea that I would not only enhance my academic skills and have a good time with new friends but that also, thousands of miles away from home, I would be faced with the darker chapters of my German homeland at a time when "being German" and "being Jewish" were concepts separated by deep emotional and educational trenches. Now a Jewish woman was sitting in a comfortable chair just six feet across from me. I had come to the museum to write about her Holocaust testimony for my English class, but I soon realized that this was about more than college credit or factual Holocaust education. This was personal.

"My name is Margaret Furst," she began. "I was born in Germany with the name of Margarete Romberg. As a little girl I was called Gretel, and it was my mother who started calling me Magie." Magie looked up from her notes to make sure the students and their teachers were listening.

"In Germany, the Jewish population was well integrated by the end of the 19th century. Jews were part of the mainstream. There were a lot of Jewish professors, doctors, and scientists. Many large department stores had Jewish owners, as did many of the banks. Mixed marriages were common. In general, the Jewish community consisted of

Reform Jews, although there were some Orthodox congregations."

I tried to imagine German society with such a big Jewish influence, but I had a hard time doing that. My Germany at the beginning of the 21st century lacked any proof of thriving Jewish life. How could this be? Magie would tell us.

"My dad fought for the German emperor, the *Kaiser*, in the First World War. He was the first commissioned Jewish officer in the German army. He was wounded and awarded the Iron Cross. When he met my mother, the beautiful youngest daughter of Benjamin Rothschild, he was a handsome young bank officer in Essen. They fell in love and married in 1927. He joined the family business and became the co-owner in 1929. I was born that same year, and my brother, Bert, was born in 1930." Then she added with a smirk: "So now you know how old I am—old!" The teenage students appreciated the joke. Magie had won their hearts from the very beginning.

"In 1933," she continued, "after Hitler came to power, my dad was harassed by the SS, the storm troopers, who marched in front of our house and business day and night, shouting Nazi slogans and causing him great distress, which eventually killed him. He had a fatal heart attack in March 1934. At that time, I was four-and-a-half years old. I found some old newspapers that my mother had apparently saved, which described how, as the general entourage for the burial went through the village, stones and insults were thrown at the mourners. Momma had a very hard time getting by after our father's death. In fact, she never did.

"I started school in Astheim, and as far as I can remember, I was well treated by my schoolmates. We also played behind closed doors with our neighbors' children. Our neighbors supplied us with milk and butter and supported us through many trials. We had a teenaged helper, Elisabeth, who took care of us while our Momma and grandmother were at the stores. Momma struggled a lot to keep the business running.

“After the antisemitic Nuremberg laws were passed, the farmers no longer found it necessary to pay their debts to Jews. Soon my mother was forced to sell the business for very little money.

“We moved to Eschwegen into a good-sized town near Kassel. My Aunt Paula lived there with her family; the year was 1936. We should have left Germany then, but who knew what was going to happen? We hoped for a better quality of life, but in vain. Mum finally had to take in laundry and sewing to support us. One day, she was ordered to go to Gestapo headquarters and hand over all our valuables.”

I listened quietly. From my own family research, I knew that my maternal grandparents had lived only about 100 miles north of Kassel, in the city of Hanover, when the Nazis were in power in Germany. Growing up, I had never pictured them in the context of patrolling antisemitic police units and outbursts of racial hatred at Jewish burials. In the stories my grandparents shared about the war, the victims were usually the German people who had somehow been pulled into Hitler’s war. Why had they kept silent about what happened to the Jews?

Magie went on talking about her experience as a Jewish child at school: “We were forced to leave the secular schools and were obliged to go to the one Jewish school next to the synagogue, where we had all Jewish teachers. The trouble was we were all in one classroom, so you can imagine how much we learned. I remember fooling around a lot, but not learning very much. A few of the original teachers, as well as some of the students, had already emigrated. At this point, it became difficult for the community to support the school. After *Kristallnacht*, the Crystal Night pogrom, on November 9, 1938, there was no more school, nor was there a synagogue to attend. Everything Jewish was burned, destroyed, and in ruins. Jewish homes and apartments were ransacked, especially when Jewish men were found inside.

“The Nazis dragged off Jewish men and teenagers to the previously established concentration camps, of which we were not aware until that point. However, this had all been planned. Our cousin Henry, 14 and a half years old, was dragged across the town square.

“By December 13, 1938, Jewish industries and shops were seized. Living conditions in Eschwegen were going from bad to grave. We could not go out without being beaten up by the *Hitlerjugend*, Hitler’s youth organization, even when we went out to purchase what little food we could get. The kids who deterred us were your age and younger.”

She looked up into her listeners’ faces. “These kids were indoctrinated in the schools, and some of them snitched on their parents; when their parents did not agree with what they were doing, they turned their parents in, and their parents were sent off to jail or a concentration camp.”

At this point, as she paused for a moment, I remem-

bered that my grandparents had also told me about the *Hitlerjugend*. It was quite a different story, though, from the one I was now hearing. They had told me about fun outings they had had with the *Hitlerjugend*. They talked about summer camps and weekend trips. They had not told me about the dark side of it.

Magie sipped water and went on. “Most of the men were finally released from the concentration camps, and they were in terrible physical condition. They and their families tried to leave the country as soon as possible, going to whoever would take them in. But many had no means of support and no guarantor, so they despaired and some committed suicide. We were convinced that Momma made a conscious decision after *Kristallnacht* that she would no longer risk her children’s lives in Nazi Germany.

“The British government agreed to admit up to 10,000 children from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Ten thousand children from three countries—that’s not really a big number. Think about how many children you have in your school district. It was better than nothing, though. These were mostly Jewish children, but there were some non-Aryan Christian children as well.”

I had heard about these *Kindertransports*, or children transports, to England; I had seen a documentary on it. I did not know a great deal, though, and wanted to learn what Magie was explaining.

“The English Parliament passed an emergency measure to permit these children to enter the United Kingdom on a temporary basis. The conditions were that they had to be potty-trained, to travel without parents, and to be under 17 years of age; and only two children per family were allowed to go. This was a terrible dilemma. If you had three or four young children, which ones were you going to send?

“The first transport of 196 children, most from a Jewish orphanage in Berlin that had been torched on *Kristallnacht*, was arranged by Rabbi Solomon Schönfeld on December 2, 1938 [see the story of Rabbi Schönfeld on pp. 17–23—Eds.]. The young men and women who accompanied the children had no papers that would allow them to remain, so they had to return to Germany. They were threatened with the loss of their homes and their families if they did not.

“Momma got her permission from London to work in the household of her cousins who had immigrated to Great Britain in 1934. That permission was instrumental in getting her out of Germany and getting us onto the *Kindertransport*. She would not have left Germany without us, and we were overjoyed that we could all be together in Britain. Of course, saying good-bye to all our relatives was very sad. My grandmother, who had always been proud of our house, as had all our other relatives, went to live in the Jewish old-age home in Frankfurt. It was from there that she was deported.”

In my mind, I counted the death toll in Magie’s family: two so far; her father and grandmother. She continued.



"We were allowed one small suitcase each, 10 *Reichmarks* [about \$5 US] and little pillows. I still have the pillowcase. It is at least 71 years old. I don't know anything—except myself—that is older than that." The students, very attentive, chuckled softly with Magie.

"Anyway, my mother made all the clothes we wore, and we had little else with us. The scene at the railway station was not very happy, as you can imagine. Some parents held on to their children and did not want to let them go. Others ran off right away, not able to bear seeing the train leave. Still others changed their mind. One lady ran onto the train platform and pulled her child out through the train window, unable at the last moment to let her go. I learned later that they both perished.

"Most of the children were not as distressed as the parents; the impact of what was happening probably had not registered yet. Besides that, they believed that they would all be together again very soon—so they thought. For now, it was all a big adventure.

"The train went forward with a lurch, and we couldn't believe we were actually on the way. I can't remember too much about the train ride, except that when we approached the Dutch border, the train suddenly stopped and I heard the Gestapo boots coming into our compartment. Looking into our suitcases, the guards screamed at us, 'You Jewish dogs, do you have any diamonds?' Of course, we did not; can you imagine that parents would put diamonds into a child's suitcase, risking his or her life? Besides that, we were innocent children; we had taken nothing that was forbidden. I mean, these men were unbelievable.

"Finally, we continued on. The next stop we came to was in Holland. Smiling Dutch women—angels—handed us hot chocolate and fruit that I had never seen. I had never seen an orange before that time, and I was almost 10 years old. The train continued on to the port of Rotterdam. We boarded a little raggedy ship. We crossed the English Channel that night and arrived in Harwich on the east coast early in the morning. It was a bright, glorious, sunshiny English day, May 23, 1939.

"We were directed to another train that would take us to Liverpool Street Station in London. Momma's cousins picked us up there in a beautiful new car, in which we sat very comfortably. As soon as we were on our way, my brother, Bert, threw up on the cousin's new shoes. That was our introduction to Great Britain." More chuckles came from the students.

"The next shock came as our uncle announced that he was bankrupt and had sold the house. Luckily, Momma would be able to stay and work for the new owners, who were due to come next week from Vienna. After two weeks, Momma had a nervous breakdown. Strong as she was, she persevered and came through. She really had no choice.

"Another dilemma: Bert and I had no lodgings. Our un-

cle made a call to the Coventry synagogue. Coventry is like Detroit in the United States, a very industrial city. Despite the fact that it is a manufacturing center, it is a beautiful city, and there they found lodgings for 55 children. Our foster parents were not ready to receive us yet, so we were placed temporarily. Bert went to a family in London for four weeks, and I found myself in an orphanage. Then Bert was sent to the Shepherd family. They called him Bertie, the same as Sudeten King George, the father of the present-day queen. So he was treated like a king, which was very nice. The father, whom the children called Pop, was a mailman.

"The Simons, the family with whom I went to live, were better off financially than the Shepherds, but they treated me very shabbily. I became a chief maid. I had to cook the main meal when I came home from school, and at 10 years old, I was not very apt in the kitchen. I remember cooking the meat and burning it.

"Bert and I lived only a few blocks apart and went to the same school, but we saw each other only sometimes during breaks or at Hebrew school once a week. At school, I was not very happy either because my English was not too good as yet. Luckily for me, there was a Jewish teacher, Mrs. Jacobs, who sensed my plight and took me under her wing. It wasn't too long before I adapted to my new surroundings, and by the time the war broke out on September 3, 1939, I spoke no more German. I wouldn't have dared. The English hated the Germans, a hangover from the First World War. I'm sure I had a heavy accent, but I don't remember. I only remember the good things."

Listening to this, I was taken aback. If being uprooted and losing close family relatives was still part of the "good things" for Magie, I wondered what the "bad things" would be. How did she maintain her resilient spirit?

"As the war progressed," she continued to a still-rapt audience, "the English needed workers, so Momma found a factory job. Now she could support herself, and she rented rooms and shared them with three other refugee friends. She still didn't have enough money to support Bert and me, though. She took in housework at night and saved more money and dreamed about going to the United States. Isn't that everybody's dream?"

In the audience, a murmur and nods from a few listeners; perhaps they, too, were immigrants.

"One day, Momma showed me two telegrams she received from the Swiss Red Cross. She had inquired about our relatives, but the letters came back as undeliverable. I knew that she was worried, but in my childish way, I told her everything would work out okay. The British will take care of everybody."

Magie didn't say it, but I knew: another rise in the death toll of her family. With no visible change in emotion, Magie continued.

"Bert and I went to visit Momma whenever we had a school break, despite the fact that the bombing had started. We were so happy when we were together! When time came to go back to Coventry, we did not want to leave; as soon as the train started to move, Bert started to cry, and I, the big shot, tried to comfort him but ended up crying with him all the way back.

"Coventry was a favorite target of the *Luftwaffe*, the German air force. They destroyed the center of the city, including the centuries-old beautiful cathedral. Then they came back a week later, on November 14, 1940, and finished it off." She added, in an aside, "Now they have built a new cathedral around the old one, and it's really unbelievable."

Caught up in her past, I marveled at her ability to integrate it, apparently so smoothly, into her comfortable present. She returned to her tale in the next sentence.

"Our mother was in London and my brother was in a house in Coventry, and I was still staying with the Simons, who were really abusive to me. One day, all my stamps and letters disappeared, and I knew they had taken them. So the next time I went to London to visit my mom, I didn't go back to that family. My mother found me a wonderful boarding school that had been relocated from London to Hertfordshire, not very far from Cambridge. There I finally started to blossom and live like a human being. The teachers were like mothers to us. We had eight teachers, and there were 36 girls. So, as you can imagine, we really started to learn there. And two of us were Jewish! I was well treated and didn't mind doing my share in keeping the house in good shape.

"In the meantime, Bert was sent to a warm and loving family in Hartford, the Pedding family, who took him in and treated him like their own child. They were extraordinary people. Mrs. Pedding slept on the floor so my mother could have a bed when she came to visit.

"Momma had started to inquire if we could make plans to go to the United States. Eventually, we did get our visas, despite the fact that the war was still on. It was a hard decision for Momma to make, leaving the security she knew, and we left Britain with heavy hearts; but we were sure that we all would have a better chance in the United States.

"In the beginning of April 1945, we sailed from Scotland to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Later, we were told we were followed by U-boats. Then we traveled by train to Montreal and finally to New York City. Momma's brother, sister, and their families greeted us very warmly and welcomed us into their homes. It was April 12, 1945, the day President Roosevelt died. The war was in its final stages in Europe.

"The British people had been wonderful to us. We shall always be indebted to them for their spirit, their kindness, and compassion. The *Kindertransport* saved our lives and those of many others. No other country in the world would take in Jewish refugees at that time. Did you know that?"

When it remained silent in the theater hall, Magie told the story about the *S.S. St. Louis*, a German ship carrying Jewish refugees from Germany that set sail on May 13, 1939, for Cuba, where the passengers hoped to find haven. Once they reached Havana, however, they were not allowed to disembark. The ship sailed north to Florida; the passengers hoped that the United States might accept them, but they were denied asylum there as well. Weeks after their departure, they were forced to return to Europe, where they found temporary safety in Belgium, Holland, France, and Great Britain. The war broke out in September 1939, and Hitler's armies eventually occupied almost every European country but England; most of the Jews who had been on that ship, along with the others in the occupied countries, were murdered in the Holocaust.

"Everybody we left behind died in the Holocaust," Magie concluded her speech. "As for us, yes, we were uprooted and transported to a different culture. But we were the lucky ones. The British and the *Kindertransport* saved our lives."

Magie's talk was over, and everybody in the room applauded. Some high school girls came to the front of the room and gave hugs to Magie and took pictures with her before they left with their teachers. The theater hall became quiet. I walked up to Magie, who was gathering her things, and told her that my family is from Germany and that I myself was born and raised in Hanover. Then I took a breath and went on, telling her about my great-grandfathers who had been soldiers in Hitler's army. I told her that I was very happy that she did not keep silent about the past, and then I stopped, unsure of what her response would be.

She looked me straight in the eyes but said nothing at all about what I had just told her. Instead, she said, "You know," she said, "these teenagers today were very good. My own kids aren't very interested in those things from the past. It's because . . . well . . . As everywhere else after the war, we used to not speak about the Holocaust, either. It was just too painful."

Was "too painful" the reason she did not react to me personally? Was it also the reason my grandparents would not speak about the Holocaust and their parents' part in it, or at least the everyday antisemitism going on around them? Or was it, more likely, shame that kept them silent? Maybe they were ashamed that they would go on outings and sit around a campfire with their friends, eating and laughing, while the Jewish kids were sent to ghettos and concentration camps, never to return. Did they feel guilty then? Did they feel guilty in the years afterwards, when the whole truth about the Holocaust was well known? Did they feel guilty even as bystanders? Should they? Should I feel guilty, being their grandson? After all, I had a complete family; when I graduated from high school, I enjoyed a graduation party with all four of my grandparents and my aunt, uncle, and cousins. I remembered the warm cries of

“attaboy!” and the monetary gifts I had received from them. Who, though, had been alive to show up at the graduation party of Magie’s kids? Probably not very many relatives, considering the grim death count in Magie’s story.

I felt strained and uncomfortable, but I managed to return Magie’s look and told her that I did feel ashamed for what my great-grandparents, my grandparents, and the rest of Nazi Germany had done to her and her family. I told her I was very sorry.

“Well, we cannot change the past,” she said calmly, “but we have to make sure that history does not repeat itself. And that’s why we must not stop speaking about it to the next generation.”

Despite her matter-of-fact words and serious manner, I sensed the softness in her voice, and I felt a bond with her, because she had spoken so honestly and directly about her very personal history, and I had just begun to confront and share my own. There were two generations between us; she was an elderly woman, and I was a young man in his mid-twenties. Worlds, histories, and experiences separated us: She was Jewish, a survivor of the Holocaust; I was German, a grandchild of perpetrators. However, at this moment, these differences were what had brought us together and, for the moment, bound us; they did not seem to matter any longer.

As we stood there for a while, together but in silence, lost in our own thoughts, the museum manager came in and said she really had to lock up the museum for the lunch break. I walked Magie out into the Dallas sunshine.

## EPILOGUE

Meeting Magie made a tremendous impact on me [Fig. 1].

Together with like-minded friends, I have been actively involved with the “March of Life” / “March of Remembrance” movement ([www.marchoflife.org](http://www.marchoflife.org)). In August 2012, a group of 250 Germans, many of them the descendants of Nazi perpetrators, went to Poland to commemorate the Holocaust and seek reconciliation; the trip was reported on Israel’s Channel 10 News and is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1q9d-gC91U>.



**FIG. 1:** A picture of Magie and me in her apartment, December 2010.

"I was eight and a half when I left Vienna with my older sister and brother in December 1938," recalls the poet Thilde Fox. "I remember nothing about my life in Vienna or about leaving and arriving in England. The incident about my father raising his hat to my mother is real; it was described in a letter written by my mother to my sister before the war broke out and [while] letters were still possible. My parents both died in Auschwitz. My sister and I came to Israel; my brother, z", stayed in England."

*Thilde Fox*

## *The Puzzle*

1. My mother left me  
a bundle of letters  
and a number on a list.

What can I do with numbers?

I could  
count the stars in the Milky Way,  
the freckles on a child's nose,  
the ways of love,  
stretch them to reach the generations behind me  
and the days before me,  
or set out the puzzle  
that left *Why me?* alive.

2. My father raised his hat to my mother.  
She didn't know this was their last goodbye.  
They had lived many years in quiet propriety;  
when their world tore apart it seemed like a knot  
that the right documents would untangle.  
She stood by his side in a small corridor,  
unaware of the tremblings around them.

A clerk called his number.

My father raised his hat to my mother and went away.

She caught this ritual of their ordered life,  
a strand pulled from another stronger web,  
and wove it with her longings through her letters.

3. The letters in my cupboard  
rattle to be let out.  
I cover them with picture postcards.

The thin lines of the writing  
tug to be heard.

The years have nibbled round the edges  
and blurred the pain.

The courteous gesture reaches out to touch me,  
to solve the puzzle.



Portrait of Benjamin and Vladka Miedzyrzecki (Meed) in Lodz soon after the war, circa 1945. Photo Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Beit Lohamei Haghetat.



Portrait of Vladka Miedzyrzecki (Meed). Courtesy of Steven and Rita Meed.

#### VLADKA MEED: IN MEMORIAM

I was honored to be accepted to Ben and Vladka Meed's Summer Study Fellowship Program in Holocaust and Jewish Resistance in 1986, and for four successive summers, I returned to Israel to sit in on Vladka's classes and continue to learn. In 1991 she invited me to teach, so for an additional decade, I was one of Vladka's lecturers. Her influence on me has been profound. All of my learning in the field since that first summer has been in her honor; now it will be in her memory.

—Karen Shawn

When I think of Vladka, I think of walking behind her at Treblinka. No words were spoken; none were needed. I marvelled at her courage, her strength. We stood in the clearing, and the voices of those who were murdered there, her family among them, seemed to speak to me—and, I expect, to others as well—gently asking that I not forget. We are diminished by the loss of Vladka, but our lives were greatly enriched by knowing her.

—Mary Munson Murphy

Vladka Meed, née Feigele Peltel (1921–2012), *a'h*, was determined that those who perished in the Holocaust be viewed not as faceless victims but as vibrant Jews who lived lives worth remembering. The stories that she told were always precise, detailed, and emotionally gripping because they involved the young men and women with whom she had interacted and whose deaths were, for her, a great personal loss. This impossibly strong woman, all five feet of her, who had endangered her life throughout her years as a weapons smuggler and courier in the Warsaw Ghetto, still wept when she recounted her inability to save the lives of her own family. Though the event had happened more than half a century before, the sadness and the emptiness she endured—"the hole in her heart that never healed" as they said at her funeral—were palpable each time we heard her tell of her arrival at the *Umschlagplatz* too late to persuade her mother and her siblings to come out of the line in which they had stood, not knowing that the bread and jam they were promised would never materialize, that the offer was a ruse to get these starving ghetto residents onto the trains that would take them to Treblinka.

Perhaps it was the loss of her entire family, along with so many others, that prompted her to reframe her teaching of the Holocaust, to explain it not just through the numbers who had died, or through the seeming reluctance or

inability of most of those caught in the Nazi net of death to defend themselves but, rather, through stories of Jewish life and culture before the Holocaust and in examples of Jewish agency during it: through the narrative of the dignity of the lives of these Polish Jews as they struggled to endure, care for one another, and maintain their humanity in unendurable, inhumane conditions.

In the 1980s, Vladka was the first person we had ever heard speak about spiritual resistance, not as an abstract concept but as a concrete and understandable way of defining the day-to-day actions of ordinary people as they tried desperately to survive in the ghetto. She told us about her mother, who starved herself to save a portion of food to pay the rabbi for a bar mitzvah lesson for her son, who would not survive until his 13th birthday. She told us about parents who surrendered their children to strangers in the desperate hope that someone would protect them until the end of the war. She spoke of the young people who taught the children, kept diaries, held concerts and dramatic readings, lit Hanukkah candles, maintained their traditions, and wrote poetry, preserving their rich Yiddish culture, all the while starving to death on the meager rations they were allowed.

Vladka taught us about the resistance of defiance as well. She spoke of the littlest children, ages 4 to 14, who became smugglers, risking death to feed their families. Small enough to crawl out of unnoticed cracks in the ghetto walls to find those Poles on the other side willing to trade a few peas or beans for a bit of clothing or a coin, these children were ghetto heroes. Vladka herself found hiding places for women and children and assisted those already in hiding on the Polish side of the ghetto walls, even moving them to new havens if she found the conditions where they were living too grim. She explained in the Jewish newspaper *Forward* (1995) that “to remain a human being in the ghetto, one had to live in constant defiance, to act illegally. We had illegal synagogues, illegal classes, illegal meetings, and illegal publications.” To hear her tell these stories was to be transported back to that place and time, as she named the inhabitants, described their temperaments and their courage, and made them live again for us.

In the aftermath of the Shoah, some survivors were silent. Vladka, though, was determined that others should hear and know. When she arrived in the United States in 1946, she was invited to speak and agreed to do so, traveling throughout the country, speaking in Yiddish, never softening the truth or hiding her reactions to telling it. Her book, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, published in 1948 and still in print today, was one of the first memoirs of the ghetto to reach a mass audience. Her testimony, recorded by the Shoah Foundation, may be found here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKLeGBfyrJA&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKLeGBfyrJA&feature=player_embedded).

One voice, though, could reach only so many ears. Vladka realized she needed to reach those who could reach

many more, and thus she, with her husband, Ben Meed, ז"ל, also a resistance fighter, decided to begin a fellowship program in Israel that would offer teachers the opportunity to study the Holocaust and Jewish resistance with the best historians in the world, and, accompanied by survivors, to see the camps in Poland. This, we believe, is her greatest achievement. Starting in 1985 and continuing until today, teachers from every state in the nation have attended the Summer Fellowship Program in Holocaust and Jewish Resistance, which emphasizes Jewish life and culture before the Holocaust, the rich legacy of Jewish spiritual and physical defense and defiance during the Holocaust, and the miraculous survival and rebuilding of Jewish life in its aftermath. These teachers, some 1,000 strong, have influenced thousands of students in the last 28 years. For most, their summer with Vladka was the beginning of a lifetime commitment to learning and teaching. Some participants became fellows at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; others became directors of Holocaust centers and members of state Holocaust commissions; still others, writers and researchers. The overwhelming majority of them are still actively teaching the story of the Holocaust and Jewish resistance, just as Vladka and Ben had hoped.

As participants in this program, we came away with a wealth of historical knowledge and a profound understanding of effective ways to make this history meaningful to our students; as the directors of this program, handpicked by Vladka to be her successors, we have proudly accepted the mantle of conveying her message to the teachers with whom we have traveled since she retired several years ago. Now, with her passing, our mission is greater and more pressing. As Vladka's generation of eyewitnesses leaves us, those who have accepted the responsibility of teaching the narrative must ensure that the truths about the daily struggles of the Jews to survive and to retain their heritage are an integral part of the history of the Holocaust.

—Elaine Culbertson and Stephen Feinberg

## Editors

### GLANZ, JEFFREY

Jeffrey Glanz, Ed.D., holds the Raine and Stanley Silverstein Chair in Professional Ethics and Values in the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University, where he is a full professor and senior fellow of the YU Institute-School Partnership. Dr. Glanz served as director of the Holocaust Resource Center at Kean University, NJ, and as education editor for the Anti-Defamation League's publication *Dimensions: A Journal of Holocaust Studies*. His works on Holocaust education have appeared in journals such as *The History Teacher*, *the Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, *Multicultural Education*, and the *Phi Delta Kappan*. His book, *Holocaust Handbook for Teachers: Materials and Strategies for Grades 5–12*, was the principal text in "Teaching the Holocaust," a state-wide in-service course for educators.

### SHAWN, KAREN

Karen Shawn, Ph.D., is visiting associate professor of Jewish education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration of Yeshiva University and senior fellow of the YU Institute-School Partnership. A former public school English teacher, she was middle school assistant principal for secular studies of the Moriah School, a Jewish day school in New Jersey. She taught for a decade at the Yad Vashem Summer Institute for Educators from Abroad and served as the educational consultant for the American Friends of the Ghetto Fighters' House. The founder of the Holocaust Educators' Consortium, an international, interreligious Community of Practice, she has spoken and written extensively on Holocaust education. The author of the widely-used text *The End of Innocence: Anne Frank and the Holocaust* (1992, NY; ADL), she co-edited an anthology of Holocaust narratives and an accompanying teacher's guide titled *The Call of Memory: Learning about the Holocaust Through Narrative* (Shawn & Goldfrad, 2008, Teaneck, NJ: Ben Yehuda Press).

## Contributors

### ANDREWS, KAY

Kay Andrews is a lecturer at the Institute of Education's Centre for Holocaust Education, University of London. The Centre undertakes research into teaching and learning about the Holocaust and provides programs for teachers. She began her career as a high school teacher before joining the Holocaust Educational Trust where she served as Head of Education. Kay has been a member of the UK delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (formerly the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, ITF) since 2005. She currently chairs the communications working group. She is also a trustee for the Holocaust Centre, Newark. To contact the author, e-mail her at [k.andrews@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:k.andrews@ioe.ac.uk).

### BERMAN, TOM

Tom Berman is a scientist and has been a member of Kibbutz Amiad in the Upper Galilee, Israel, for more than 50 years. He grew up in Glasgow, Scotland, after arriving there from Czechoslovakia with the *Kindertransport* in 1939 when he was 5 years old. Two books of his poems have been published: *Shards: A Handful of Verse* (2002) and *Rambles: Outings with a Wayward Muse* (2010), both by IUniverse. To contact the poet, e-mail him at [tomdebberman@gmail.com](mailto:tomdebberman@gmail.com) or [berman@amiad.org.il](mailto:berman@amiad.org.il).

### BOR, HANA N.

Hana N. Bor, Ed.D., is associate professor of education at the Family Studies and Community Development Department and the Program Director of Jewish Education and Jewish Communal Service at Towson University. Dr. Bor has been in teacher education for more than 25 years. She teaches courses in administration, pedagogy, and leadership. Her areas of interest include diversity, professional development, teaching Israel, and Holocaust education. To contact the author, e-mail her at [HBor@towson.edu](mailto:HBor@towson.edu).

### COWAN, PAULA

Paula Cowan is a senior lecturer in education at the University of the West of Scotland. She has conducted research, presented papers at national and international conferences, and published essays on Holocaust education and remembrance. The author of Holocaust curricular materials for primary and secondary teachers and co-editor of *Teaching Controversial Issues in the Classroom: Key Issues and Debates* (Continuum, 2012), Paula is a UK delegate to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (formerly the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, ITF). To contact the author, e-mail her at [paula.cowan@uws.ac.uk](mailto:paula.cowan@uws.ac.uk).

### CRAIG-NORTON, JENNIFER

Jennifer Craig-Norton earned her M.A. from CSU Sacramento in 2010. The title of her thesis was "The *Kindertransport*: History and Memory." She is currently at the University of Southampton, England, pursuing a doctorate on *Kindertransport* children who arrived as refugees from Poland. A secondary social studies teacher in California for 20 years, she has been involved in Holocaust education for more than a decade and serves as an outreach educator with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. To contact the author, e-mail her at [jn1g11@soton.ac.uk](mailto:jn1g11@soton.ac.uk).

### CROUCH, MARGARET WEISS

Margaret Weiss Crouch, Ed.D., a Holocaust education consultant, is the former associate director and education director of the Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches and a former English and humanities professor. She speaks, writes, interviews survivors, and conducts teachers' workshops on the Holocaust and serves as an educator on group trips to the USHMM and study trips abroad. Her dissertation included an undergraduate Holocaust curriculum, requested by the USHMM and advised by her mentor extraordinaire, the late Franklin H. Littell. To contact the author, e-mail her at [margaretmwc@gmail.com](mailto:margaretmwc@gmail.com).



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**FISHMAN, CHARLES ADÈS**

Charles Adès Fishman is poetry editor of *PRISM*. His books include *The Death Mazurka*, an American Library Association Outstanding Book of the Year that was nominated for the 1990 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry; *Chopin's Piano* (2006); and *In the Language of Women* (2011). The revised, second edition of his anthology, *Blood to Remember: American Poets on the Holocaust* (2007), was published by Time Being Books, which released his *Selected Poems, In the Path of Lighting*, in 2012.

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**FOX, THILDE**

Thilde Fox, née Burstyn, was born in Vienna in 1930 and came to Israel in 1953. To contact the poet, e-mail her at [thfox@bezeqint.net](mailto:thfox@bezeqint.net).

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**GERSHON, KAREN**

Karen Gershon, born Kaethe Loewenthal in Bielefeld, Germany, in 1923, arrived in England on a *Kindertransport* when she was 15. The central focus of her early poems was the Holocaust and its impact on her family. By the time of her own death in 1993, she had published six poetry collections, three nonfiction volumes, and three novels. In 2009, Northwestern University Press released the second volume of her autobiography, *A Tempered Wind*.

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**GUREWITSCH, BRANA**

Brana Gurewitsch is an archivist and curator at the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in NY, where she has curated several award-winning exhibitions. A pioneer in the development of Holocaust oral history, her publications include *The Liberators: Eyewitness Accounts of the Liberation of Concentration Camps*, and *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust*. She has served as consultant to several oral history projects and lectures frequently. To contact the author, e-mail her at [bgurewitsch@gmail.com](mailto:bgurewitsch@gmail.com).

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**KRAMER, LOTTE**

Lotte Kramer came to Britain via the *Kindertransport* in 1939, and though her work is not limited to poems on the Holocaust, her memories of that time are reflected in her 15 books. They include, most recently, *Turning the Key* (2009) and *New and Collected Poems* (2011), both from Rockingham Press. Her contact information is unavailable at this time.

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**KUBSCH, FLORIAN**

Florian Kubsch was born in Hannover, Germany. He majored in English and political science with a Spanish minor at the universities of Tübingen and North Texas. An alumnus of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, he took his first teaching state exam in 2012 and is currently writing his Ph.D. thesis in English literature. He has volunteered on the "March of Remembrance," an annual event held on Holocaust Remembrance Day. To contact the author, e-mail him at [florian.kubsch@web.de](mailto:florian.kubsch@web.de).

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**LAXOVA, RENATA**

Renata Laxova, née Polgar, is professor emerita at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Trained in pediatrics and medical genetics, she received her M.D. and Ph.D. degrees from Masaryk University in Brno, Czechoslovakia. She is the author of *Letter to Alexander: A Memoir* (2001, Custom Editorial Productions: Cincinnati, OH); *Dopis Alexandrovi* (2010, Barrister & Principal, Brno, Czech Republic); and more than 130 publications, including articles and chapters in peer-reviewed journals and books. To contact the author, e-mail her at [rlaxova@wisc.edu](mailto:rlaxova@wisc.edu).

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**LICHT, ROCHEL**

Rochel Licht is executive researcher at the Project Witness Holocaust Resource Center in Brooklyn, NY, a contributor to its educational projects, and a teacher of Holocaust studies in Jewish high schools in the New York area. With noted Holocaust scholar Yaffa Eliach, founder and director of the Brooklyn, NY, Center of Holocaust Studies, she interviewed several hundred survivors and verified and catalogued their experiences. She contributed to the research of Eliach's *Tower of Life* in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), and her research has been published in several books, among them *There Once Was a World* (Yaffa Eliach) and *Witness to History* (Ruth Lichtenstein).

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**LINDQUIST, DAVID H.**

David H. Lindquist received his Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from Indiana University—Bloomington, where his dissertation was titled "Toward a Pedagogy of the Holocaust: Perspectives of Exemplary Teachers." He is a Museum Teacher Fellow and regional museum educator for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and has studied the Holocaust in Israel, Germany, and Poland. He has written extensively on Holocaust education. To contact the author, e-mail him at [lindy288@aol.com](mailto:lindy288@aol.com).

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**MCLOUGHLIN, MARYANN**

Maryann McLoughlin, Ph.D., teaches graduate and undergraduate students in the Holocaust and Genocide Studies programs at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. She also directs the "Writing as Witness" program for Holocaust survivors. Dr. McLoughlin has a range of research interests, including music and the Holocaust, Holocaust literature, and the Nanking massacre and other Japanese atrocities, 1931–1945. She is co-authoring a book about children and the Holocaust. To contact the author, e-mail her at [Maryann.McLoughlin@stockton.edu](mailto:Maryann.McLoughlin@stockton.edu).

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**MERKIN, ROS**

Ros Merkin, Ph.D., is the daughter of a *Kind* from Vienna and is a Reader in Drama at Liverpool John Moores University. She also directs and creates theater and is currently working on a show about immigration to and emigration from Liverpool. Her research focuses on local and regional theater; her publications include books on Liverpool theaters and a chapter on the city's theater in the forthcoming *Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*. To contact the author, e-mail her at r.merkin@ljmu.ac.uk.

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**MOLLERICK, RALPH W.**

Ralph W. Mollerick, B.M.E., is a retired systems engineer from NASA at the Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Maryland. A survivor who left Germany in 1938 on the *Kindertransport*, he tells his story to students, social groups, and religious organizations, engaging his audiences by sharing his experiences of persecution under the Nazi regime, explaining their vociferous, virulent, and vitriolic attack against Jews all over Germany. To contact the author, e-mail him at pmollerick@aol.com.

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**ROSENBERG, PNINA**

Dr. Pnina Rosenberg, the art editor of *PRISM*, is an art historian specializing in the art and legacy of the Holocaust. A lecturer in the Department of Arts and Humanities of the Technion, Haifa, and the Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, Israel, she is a contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and the *Jewish Women Historical Encyclopedia* and has presented numerous papers at international conferences. Her publications include books, articles, and exhibition catalogues on various aspects of art/memory of the Holocaust; her latest essay, "From Mice to *Mickey* to *Maus*: The Metaphor of Evil and Its Metamorphosis in the Holocaust," appears in *Critical Insights: Good and Evil* (2013, Salem Press). To contact the author, e-mail her at pninarose@gmail.com.

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**RÜNITZ, LONE**

Lone Rünitz holds an M.A. (1995) from the University of Copenhagen. From 2000–2005, she was a researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies in the Department for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, as she completed a project on Danish refugee policy 1933–1945. Her main publications include *Danmark og de jødiske flygtninge 1933–1940* (Copenhagen 2000); *Af hensyn til konsekvenserne—Danmark og Flygtningespørgsmålet 1933–1940* (Odense 2005); *Udsendt til Tyskland—Dansk flygtningepolitik under besættelsen* with Hans Kirchoff (Odense 2007); and *Diskret ophold—jødiske flygtningebørn under besættelsen* (Odense 2010). To contact the author, e-mail her at lone.frede@mail.dk.

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**SPIEGEL, SHOSHANA R.**

Shoshana R Spiegel, a pediatric occupational therapist and a Healing Touch practitioner, is an artist and singer whose preferred mode of expression is through art quilts. She is the oldest of four children, the only daughter of Thea Lange Spiegel, who left Danzig on the *Kindertransport* in July 1939 and settled in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1946, where Shoshana was born and raised. Her father, Martin Spiegel, left Czechoslovakia for the United States before WWII, but many members of his family perished in the Holocaust, as did Thea's father. Shoshana sings with Mosaic Harmony, a community choir in Northern Virginia that promotes unity within diversity. To contact the artist, e-mail her at shana.spiegel@gmail.com.

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**WALDERS, DAVI**

Davi Walders's poetry and prose has appeared in more than 200 anthologies and journals. Her collection on women's resistance during WWII, *Women Against Tyranny: Poems of Resistance During the Holocaust* (2011), was published by Clemson University Digital Press. Her awards include a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant, a Maryland State Artist Grant in Poetry, and the Myrtle Wreath Award from the Hadassah of Greater Washington. To contact the poet, e-mail her at dwalders@yahoo.com.

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