Children on the Move: Parallels of British and *Kindertransport* Children during World War II

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At the onset of World War II, millions of British youth set out on an unforgettable journey. With little in their possession other than a small suitcase in hand, a numbered luggage tag worn around their necks, and individually-boxed gas masks, these children only knew that their parents wanted them to be safe. They were to be housed (billeted) in the British countryside or, with a few exceptions, sent to America and the British dominions. However, they were not alone on this journey. In December 1938, during the brief period of British appeasement before the outbreak of the Second World War, the Chamberlain-led government signed a humanitarian agreement that facilitated the emigration of approximately 10,000 children from Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Poland. The emigration program was called the *Kindertransport*. While distinguishable differences occurred in both the British and *Kindertransport* evacuation plans, the goal of each was to move children to safety. While several programs were enacted to persuade British families to evacuate their children to safer places, no persuasion was necessary for the Jewish evacuees and their parents because evacuation was viewed as a matter of survival rather than safety. As the evacuation programs came to a close, distinct differences became evident between the two groups, as most of the British children had family waiting for their return. Conversely, a number of the *Kindertransport* children (*Kinders*) were orphaned. Yet, though from different points of origin and under highly differing circumstances, both sets of children shared similar experiences: they trekked side-by-side into unfamiliar surroundings, learning about the world as the world spun into war. An analysis of recollections in a variety of media help piece together a historical narrative which highlights the parallels of both groups.

As tensions grew in Nazi-aligned areas, many Jewish families with contacts and money escaped before *Kristallnacht*. For families without these means, workhouses and camps became their new homes. When the opportunity arose for Jewish children to evacuate to Britain, parents eagerly stood in lines to start the process for their children. The parents knew this would break the family apart, just as British families were separated by their evacuations. Jewish parents, however, were uncertain if or when their family would be reunited.

After *Kristallnacht* and a series of pogroms, Jewish children became very aware of impending dangers

to their families. Jewish orphanages had been purposely burned, leaving thousands of children without a home.[1] Many Jewish children had already moved several times before the *Kindertransport* as thousands had been marched to camps and a number left homeless. Germans took over Jewish property, including homes. *Kindertransport* participant, Kurt Fuchel of The Kindertransport Association, remembered how an elegant blond lady named Frau Januba appeared on the family doorstep. She handed Fuchel's mother a piece of paper he remembered as having a "silly twisted cross and several stamps with pictures of a big bird, an eagle I think." Januba declared the Fuchel home her new property and threatened to send the family to a concentration camp.[2]

Europe experienced a state of flux in the mid- to late-1930s. Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939. Having experienced the bombings of the First World War, the British government was confident that, given the increase in military technology and Germany's massive rearmament, the inevitable new war would cause an even greater toll on the people and landscape of Britain. The population density of the island country's six largest cities led policy makers to believe that those areas would most likely be targeted once bombing commenced.[3]

The Nazis invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Political tensions had been rising for some time in Eastern Europe—even the children knew it. Despite British families not discussing the war situation, countless testimonies from child survivors stated they could read their parents' faces and realized something bad might happen. In the words of one child, "…my hat and coat and my brother's suit came out of the pawn shop and we knew something was up."[4] Some children had hoped there would be a war, as it seemed exciting. One child had even more reason to want the war to begin: "I remember hoping that war would be declared so that I wouldn't have to go to get my teeth cleaned."[5] At the idea of war, another child recounted: "The dreadful unknown war had just begun. I was desperate. I went out into the street, in search of comfort. I found nothing but the fear on people's faces. Later, I sat alone on the stairs. What did it mean? What would happen to us?" The children's fears

1 "Jack's Kindertransport Story," BBC, http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/11/a3455011.shtml (accessed December 1, 2011).
2 Kurt Fuchel, "Voices of the Kinder, Vienna, 1938: A Child's View," The Kindertransport Association, http://www.kindertransport.org/voices/fuchel_vienna.htm (accessed December 1, 2011).
3 Juliet Gardiner, *The Children's War*: *The Second World War through the eyes of the children of Britain* (London: Piatkus Books Ltd., 2005), 8.
4 Ben Wicks, *No Time to Wave Goodbye* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Limited, 1988), 28.
5 Ibid.

were similar, even across socio-economic class levels. Each child attempted to deal with the looming question of war in his or her own way, often with some explanation from a parent, but regularly through a variety of media. Unspoken messages, similar to an additional sense perhaps, were picked up in a way that perhaps only children can perceive.[6]

A sobering jolt of news appeared daily in radio broadcasts and newspapers. It was inescapable. Journalists and politicians attempted to determine strategic targets and paths of resistance to impending air strikes. A large populace (individuals and families) began leaving centralized cities, eager to move to less dangerous areas. From September 1940 to June 1941, approximately "3,500,000 people had moved from the areas that were felt more likely to be the targets of German bombs."[7] As the Nazis began their Blitzkriegs over England, there were series of safe zones put in place, with the underground tunnels being the largest such zoned structures. On behalf of the urban population, the British government made a grand gesture by providing the city dwellers with truckloads of long metal pieces. These materials became Anderson shelters once the metal pieces were bent to form an arbor. The government sent officials to inspect the structures after completion, as families were expected to take shelter under these arbors when bombings commenced.[8]

Figure 1. Anderson shelter.
Source: © Museum of London.

The propaganda behind these shelters delivered a powerful message to parents: Would their children be safe? Would they all fit in the shelter? More sophisticated means were also made, such as tables with hidden areas underneath for shelter. For those with the money and land to do so, underground shelters were dug. Churchman's Cigarettes illustrated various shelter scenarios on the cards in each pack. These scenes detailed various forms of shelters and how to help one another. It was clear the nation wanted all its citizens to be equipped for the impending military actions. While

6 Robert Westall, *Children of the Blitz*: *Memories of Wartime Childhood* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1987), 34.
7 Wicks, 32.
8 Westall, 81-83.

these shelters were better than going without protection completely, the government's main goal was to remove people, especially the infirm and children, from the cities to more rural areas. [9]

Unlike their British counterparts, the Jewish population in *Kindertransport* areas did not have government shelters. Their bank accounts were seized and mobility became increasingly limited. Even if leaving had been possible, the next city they encountered might have been less hospitable to their plight. In the years leading up to the *Kindertransport*, they had witnessed the rise of the Nazi Reich, Adolf Hitler assuming the position of Chancellor of Germany, and countless speeches about the social Darwinist ideas of the Nazi movement. Jewish children knew that the general population was turning against their families as boycotts of Jewish stores increased. They overheard conversations that altered their senses, alerting them to the fact that a dangerous situation was developing around them. Children became familiar with Hitler either through radio broadcasts or in person, as a Jewish evacuee named Sylvia recalled:

> A figure was standing up in the open car with his arm raised. It was Adolf Hitler. I was terrified. Ruth [sister] tried to keep me calm by squeezing my hand tightly. We felt trapped in the large crowd that gathered… 'Sieg Heil!' they shouted… …raising their arms high to salute their leader… Were we expected to raise our right arm for the hated Hitler salute?

This type of situation clearly encapsulates the caught-between-two-worlds effect the children experienced. While they had been prompted to not stand out or call attention to themselves, they were unsure if their consciences would allow them to go as far as saluting Hitler. Surely they must have wondered what their parents would have thought had they saluted.[10]

Undoubtedly, Jewish children did not feel safe anywhere. According to an interview with "Ruth," one of the Jewish evacuees who grew up on the German-Polish border, "Whenever someone in a Nazi uniform came to the door, we were fearful." Ruth described how it was common for Hitler Youth to vandalize Jewish homes and threaten families. Ruth's mother "received an order to come to the police station… We were allowed to bring only a small bag with a few belongings. It was the last time we saw our home."[11]

Not surprisingly, many Jewish children did not want to leave their homes and families, even as they were

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9 Ibid., 20.

10 Anne L. Fox and Eva Abraham-Podietz, *Ten Thousand Children*: *True stories told by children who escaped the Holocaust on the Kindertransport* (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House Publishers, 1999),15.

11 Ibid., 19.

personally subjected to persecution at school. One survivor stated, "right after 1933 they [classmates] wouldn't talk to me anymore." The survivor recalled pressure from the Hitler Youth and racial politics, which turned her friends against her: "they suddenly changed." Even Jewish students who had excelled in school had to begin sitting on the back row. Many Jewish children stopped attending school altogether.[12]

While both the *Kindertransport* and British evacuation were founded on an element of fear, the British children were more prepared. For months leading up to the evacuation, school children practiced safety measures, such as crouching under their desks. These routines would probably have provided little or no protection in case of a true bomb attack. With repetitive rehearsals, they became well-prepared for the next step in their eventual evacuation. The exporting of children began as an idea from local schoolteachers, who were concerned about classes being interrupted by the ongoing sirens and looming war. These teachers wanted to take their classrooms to safer parts of Britain and continue their studies. The teachers' suggestion was a solid argument for the government-backed transportation program. Parents were notified of the arrangements and, in the weeks that followed, the children practiced evacuation maneuvers at the railroad station. Despite going through these drills, a number of parents did not want to go through with the evacuation if such a circumstance occurred.

Many schools closed immediately after the war started. Though the schools slowly reopened, air raid shelters were erected next to schools for the safety of the children. Some schools relocated near large, sturdy buildings so that shelter could be found nearby. Despite this, several schools were hit in the ensuing weeks.[13] In the words of one British school child, "It was weeks before the start of the war when we were told to bring out gas-masks and some belongings with us to school the next day. When we got to school they attached a label to each of us and then lined us up and off we went down the street to the local railway station. We then turned around and went back to the school."[14]

In most cases, teachers were the chaperones on the transports. A heavy propaganda campaign attempted to recruit women who would help coordinate the evacuation process. British women's mutual aid societies had

12 *My Knees Were Jumping*, Melissa Hacker, director, IFC, 1996.
13 Westall, 34.
14 Wicks, 7.

Figure 2. WAC poster.
Source: © Museum of London.

been established several years prior to the war.[15] Some of these women also became chaperones for the evacuated children. With this need for organization, women (such as the one depicted in the poster from the British National Service) served Britain in a civilian capacity while persuading parents to send their children to less targeted areas. For many parents, this was an extremely difficult decision. Children under the age of five were typically not accepted for the evacuation. However, a number of women with small children, pregnant women, and some elderly citizens were included in more than a few transports.

Due to the British acceptance of child refugees, *Kindertransport* children were included in every aspect of the British evacuee plan, yet Jewish children had a much different experience leading up to their evacuation. From their point of origins, both British evacuees and *Kindertransport* children wore numbered tags strung around their necks. While both sets of children wore these tags in anticipation of their safe passage, only Jewish parents would have a similar experience with this numerical identification in the camps. British social workers chose which children were eligible for the *Kindertransport* according to those most in need, including children who came from camps, infirmed children, and teenagers.

After *Kristallnacht*, Great Britain was one of the only countries accepting refugees from Nazi-leaning areas. Most of the refugees were Jewish… and penniless. After consideration, the British government allowed these refugees to enter despite their lack of funds. The Nazis confiscated the contents of Jewish bank accounts, leaving families without currency. The British government recognized accepting these children would equate to an even more burdened economy. While British Jewish families took in children from the *Kindertransport*, there were not enough Jewish homes to house them all. Other religious denominations welcomed the Jewish evacuees

15 "Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) in World War II," BBC, http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories /71/a3384371.shtml (accessed December 1, 2011).

into their homes. These children (including young teenagers) did not have a trade, and many of them had little or no knowledge of British culture. Their assimilation was uncertain, but as the government viewed the situation, it was a humanitarian necessity. Britain allowed temporary transit visas to accommodate these children and other refugees. Emotional appeals were made by both government officials and clergy to entice families to open their homes to Jewish and Christian children alike. With few exceptions, children were transported by rail and then by ferry to England.

While still in occupied territories, Nazis took advantage of the situation and searched children's luggage and clothing, ensuring no valuables crossed the border. Countless items were seized. *Kindertransport* survivors stated the organization in charge of the evacuation encouraged parents and children to remain calm at the separation. It was believed the Nazis might not go through with the plan if there were major disturbances in transferring children to British custody. Perhaps because children were told not to cry and that their parents would join them soon, the evacuation of 10,000 Jewish children carried out as planned. With much remorse, children later learned their parents would not be following them to their new location: "None of us realized this would be our final goodbye."[16]

Many Jewish children saw their trip to England as an adventure, believing their parents would soon follow. In what might be considered an odd twist of fate, trains were being utilized in England to transport children across the country while at the same time train lines were being laid across Europe and scheduled for the impending mass transportation of their parents. Ninety percent of the parents of the children of the *Kindertransport* were murdered.[17] As highlighted in a collection of stories from *Kindertransport* participants and Holocaust survivors, a *Kinder* named Ilse explained:

> I remember looking out the window and waving [at] my parents and my governess standing there and waving goodbye. And then it dawning on me much later that might be the last time I saw them. And I have this horrible memory of my governess – who was very spiritual –and she used to get her horoscope every year. Her reading my Tarot cards …before I left and being mortified at something she saw. And this has been with me all my life. And I rationalize this to be that she saw that she would never see me again, which is what has happened. She obviously saw something terrible in the cards.[18]

16 *My Knees Were Jumping*.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.

While an older adult at the time of this interview, Isle recalled feelings of both a spiritual and worldly nature while attempting to rationalize her fate. Perhaps she felt survivor's guilt and was able to handle this by remembering the Tarot card story. In any case, it is interesting that her memory about this scene focused more on the governess than her parents. Perhaps she had a privileged background and felt a closeness with her governess.

According to various sources, including the documentary *My Knees Were Jumping*, in the years 1938 and 1939, "nearly 10,000 children were sent, without their parents, to Great Britain from Nazi Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. These children were rescued by the *Kindertransport* movement."[19] A Jewish evacuee named Sara described her early experience in Britain: "I had no relatives or foster parents to meet me when I arrived in England, so I was taken by bus with other children to Dovercourt, a summer camp which was not intended to be lived in during the winter months. I will never forget the cold." Britain seemed ready to help but ill-prepared for the amount of resources needed to provide for these children. While it probably felt cruel to place children in such an environment, they were almost assuredly in a safer place than if they had stayed in their native countries.[20]

By myriad historical accounts, British children seemed to welcome the *Kindertransport* refugees to their country. One girl from Surrey reported in *Children of the Blitz: Memories of Wartime Childhood* (a collection of remembrances) that, "In a bed next to me was a poor Jewish girl who had escaped from Vienna. She was very upset because she didn't know what had happened to her parents."[21] Certainly the language barrier added to both sets of children's discomfort.

Evacuated children, as a general rule, were understandably upset by the constant uncertainty. Upon arrival at their new destinations, a large building was used to begin sorting children (British and *Kindertransport*) into their new homes. Children who did not already have arrangements with distant family members were instructed to line up to be inspected by the locals. The process of sorting the children was much like a slave auction. This was particularly advantageous for middle-class children who looked and dressed well, had proper clothing, and were used to being away from their families for some time. Lower-class British children and some of the unkempt

19 Ibid. The documentary, *My Knees Were Jumping*, was produced by the daughter of a surviving *Kinder*.
20 Fox, 78.
21 Westall, 44.

Kindertransport fared worse. Lower-class British parents seemed to have been more reluctant than middle-class parents in allowing their children to leave the London area. It did not help that the lower/working-class children presented poorly. As the socio-economic backgrounds of the children varied, so too did their personalities and presentation. Some children felt, perhaps for the first time, they were in competition with one another, in what could only be likened to some sort of twisted beauty contest: "When we arrived… we were taken to the Town Hall – where people chose which children they would look after. My sister Pat was very attractive, whereas I was rather plain. An old man noticed Pat and asked a teacher if he could take her."[22] Some children "were appallingly scruffy: some had lice, others relieved themselves in any convenient corner."[23] In general, children either handled the situation well and learned to adjust, or they cried much of their first few months, no matter the assigned house. This was true for British evacuees and *Kindertransport* children alike.

The transition to new homes and families was often seen as an adventure: learning about people, their dialects, schools, foods, and cultures. Most of the evacuated children relocated to the English countryside. While topographically diverse, England remained a small country. Some evacuated children, even those from England,

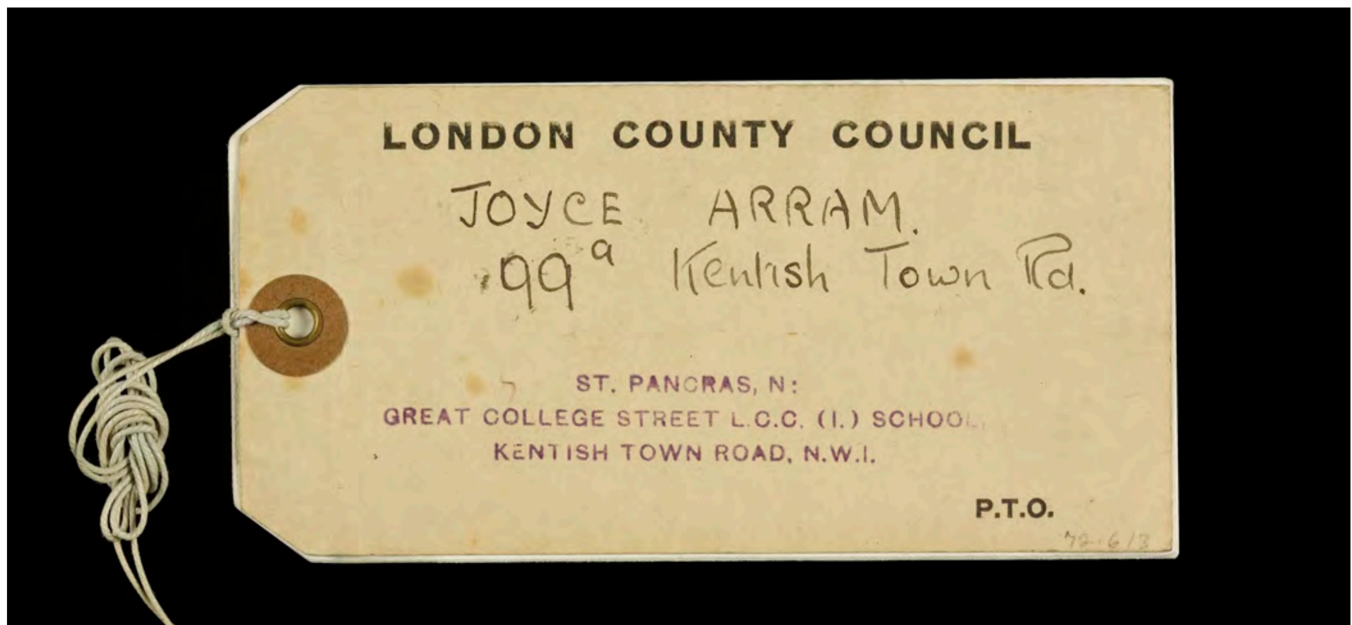

Figure 3. Name tag worn by a child evacuee. Source: © Museum of London.

22 Ibid., 46.
23 Leonard Mosley, *The Battle of Britain* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, Inc., 1997), 102.

had never been in the presence of farm animals and felt astounded by their size and function in a family's everyday life.

In several documented cases, children from both sets of evacuees suffered abuse. One interviewee in the documentary became visibly upset when asked if she had negative experiences in the care of her hosts. The most commonly reported incidents included beatings, malnourishment, and on rare occasions, even sexual abuse. Other researched materials suggested that while these were not uncommon, the acts were also not widely known on either side as many children had no means of recourse while living with their host families.

No matter how patriotic or generous host families were, in times of war they needed financial assistance, and a number of hosts took in children they deemed presentable for work. Fit men were generally involved in a military capacity and work needed to be completed on farms and factories so potential guests in host families were routinely inspected and only the best looking and/or well-fed ones were chosen in the first round. Organizers made efforts to bring out the older evacuees first, as they were typically harder to place than impressionable young children.

There are numerous cases in which evacuated children from both groups described their successful life after the war and attributed their well-being to their time spent with their host families. However, some children were unable to come to terms with their new surroundings. While several British children returned to their families, this was never an option for *Kindertransport* children.

The living conditions varied from house to house. Some were billeted in one home and then moved to another. British children were more fortunate in this regard as numerous families had connections in which to transfer if a situation did not work out. They also had the advantage in that this was their home country. Regardless of their origin or connections, the great cost of housing these children continued throughout the war. The British government paid a small subsidy to host families. The availability of products also decreased at this time. The strain on hosts and their guests became increasingly more palpable.

The local papers were forbidden to publish certain specific activities concerning the war in Britain. However, if publications had been allowed, some Jewish evacuees might have made contact with other friends and family. It is also plausible that they would have been able to keep in touch with each other through articles

written about the Jewish evacuees and the war effort in their countries of origin. This lack of information further isolated Jewish evacuees from one another and the rest of the world.[24]

In some ways, the *Kindertransport* and later evacuation into the country alleviated what some survivors recalled as incredible fears from their previous life. Despite being in a new area, far removed from direct Nazi oppression, Jewish children overcame language and culture barriers. Yet there were still haunting reminders. Something as simple as a doorbell ringing was usually considered a welcome noise in a household. Someone might be coming to visit or bringing a package or letter. However, one survivor vividly recalled an "enormous fear of the doorbell ringing" as she had remembered Nazi Youth entering her home and taking her family valuables, including her mother's jewelry. She also recalled the trucks, which stopped in front of houses and took the people inside away for days. When they returned they had been beaten.[25]

On a psychological note, one can only try to imagine the culture shock these children faced as they ran the gamut of emotions. At times they must have been constantly afraid, reminded of their abandonment; and at other times felt guilty they were alive and well. Intermingled with this were feelings of security and well-being. Because their isolation was more intense and other sociological factors played a role, it would be safe to assume that while similar, the *Kindertransport* children generally suffered greater levels of long-lasting psychological issues.

On the more pleasant side, British Jewish families were particularly welcoming toward these immigrant children. Carrying on the rituals and culture provided many Jewish evacuees a feeling of security and sense of inclusion in their new temporary families. More often than not, British families, no matter the background, felt it was their social responsibility to help those who could not care for themselves in a time of war.

For British children, they were, for the most part, hopeful they would receive small packages and letters from their parents while removed. Jewish children also wished for tokens of remembrance of their life with parents. The Jewish children's expectations were high, and ultimately, save for a few, unmet.

As the war continued, more children evacuated to the British countryside. Increasingly, it was realized that the overall success of the children's transport would be vital for not only children, but as a symbol of

24 Westall, 153.
25 *My Knees Were Jumping.*

England's survival. There was considerable fear that a Nazi invasion was imminent in Britain. The British made an effort to move children as far away from the war as possible. An organization was established called the Children's Overseas Reception Board (CORB or CORB Scheme) in June 1940 to transport children from Britain to mostly Dominion areas (i.e. Canada, South Africa and as far as Australia and New Zealand). CORB seemed to involve British children exclusively.

While many children from Britain and the *Kindertransport* had already been placed in homes and dormitories during the initial waves of evacuation, the CORB Scheme set out to place British children in private homes, occasionally with family or acquaintances. The CORB planners solicited parents to merely *temporarily* give their children exile to a friendly country while they assisted in the war effort. This act appealed to a large segment of the population, especially the wealthier families with relations abroad: "Within two weeks of the CORB scheme being announced over 200,000 applications had been made." While it was natural for parents and children to want to remain with each other, the circumstances were often severe enough to convince parents to make the difficult decision to evacuate their children. This evacuation would be a very long and dangerous journey for most of these children. It was important that parents grasped aspects of their decisions, both in distance and time. There was no turning back after the child set sail. Everyone knew that once the children left Britain, they would not be returning until the war ended, and no one could say when that would be.[26]

As the CORB children arrived at their new home countries for the duration of the war, most governments provided their newest visitors with official welcomes at their port of arrival. New Zealand was particularly aware of the stress and emotions these children experienced in their long journey and provided several days rest and recuperation in a hostel before sending them to their host destinations. The CORB Scheme was particularly successful in the first few months: "Between 21 July and 20 September 1940, 16 voyages were made carrying 2,664 children to new lives in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa."[27]

The CORB Scheme ended in 1944 as the war came to a close and the threat of invasion became less likely. Throughout its tenure, children were shown how to use life jackets and life boats. The intention was that

26 "Children's Overseas Reception Board," The National Archives, http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk /index.php?title=Children (accessed November 9, 2011).
27 Ibid.

this was a formality in case anything happened to the ship. These drills were put to the test several years prior as CORB suffered a terrible loss when a ship setting sail for Canada was attacked by the German U-boat 48. The *SS City of Benares* left Liverpool on September 13, 1940, filled with almost 200 people and supplies on board. Four days later 134 passengers, including 70 CORB children were dead as a result of a torpedo. More died in the days that followed due to the weather, darkness, and place of attack in the Atlantic. As an unmarked ship carrying passengers (i.e. not a supply ship), the Germans had admittedly made a grave error. After they realized the ship they sunk carried evacuated children, the radio operator recalled thinking, "We thought what the hell has happened to do this."[28]

According to one survivor, Derek Bech, who was nine-years-old at the time, the scene was gruesome: "Some of the children were killed in the explosion, some were trapped in their cabins, and the rest died when the lifeboats were launched incorrectly and children were just tipped into the sea. All I can remember were the screams and cries for help." Approximately twenty children survived the journey. As a result of this incident, British parents were reluctant to use this program for the evacuation of their children: "It was one of the worst disasters at sea concerning children, and it should always be remembered."[29]

This incident impacted British citizens' morale as well. The need for victory was continually emphasized in posters, magazines and newspapers, not to mention radio messages. While many of these parents felt they were answering the call to their country, many rethought what it meant to send their children through this program. For some citizens, they used this tragedy to focus on the boundless evils of the Germans. Yet other parents felt it might be safer if their children were at home with them. By January 8, 1940, in all programs of evacuation, "734,883 children evacuated since the start of the war, [and only] 316,192 had returned to their homes."[30]

As the war ended, the British public rejoiced and welcomed their children home from around the globe. The Red Cross tried to match children with names on their lists to reunite both sets of evacuated children with the next closest kin.[31] The *Kindertransport* children were not as fortunate to have homes to which they could return. Most of the Jewish evacuees had lost their parents during the war.

28 "Children of the Doomed Voyage," BBC, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/ timewatch/diary_codv_01.shtml (accessed September 7, 2011).
29 *Liverpool Blitz 70*, http://www.liverpoolblitz70.co.uk/page/4/ (accessed September 9, 2011).
30 Hal Buell, *World War II*: *A Complete Photographic History* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, Inc., 2002), 19.
31 Fox, 108.

As these children grew into adulthood, they scoffed at being called Holocaust survivors as they felt as though they should not truly be called survivors of the Holocaust as "nothing really happened to us…" The same speaker also admitted that "a lot did happen to us," even though it was not in the form of Nazi persecution or living in a concentration camp.[32]

A common thread at *Kindertransport* reunions is that many of the *Kinder*'s children—the second generation who had not experienced World War II—have recurring nightmares about their parents, particularly that they will be taken away from them. These range from stories of Hitler scaling their apartment building to either abduct them or their parent to fearing something—anything—might happen to their parents. Some of this might be explained in that their parents probably did tell their children a version of what happened to them as a child, which directly related to their own childhood fears. One child of a *Kindertransport* and evacuation survivor said she constantly worried something might happen to her mother, which developed into a close bond with her mother throughout their lives. This was a unique experience and one that was not transferred in the British evacuee's children.[33]

In a documentary interview, a *Kindertransport* man, then elderly, was asked if he would send his children on a *Kindertransport* if similar conditions had risen when his children were small. He responded that he would not want to send them away. Perhaps his reaction was due to the fact that he had grown so close to his children as a result of his own disassociated childhood.

In some part, the children were both soldiers as well as victims of World War II. Equipped and ready to travel to unknown lands – they were fighting for survival. However, the experiences the British and *Kindertransport* children faced were dissimilar, despite participating in many of the same activities and living in the same towns. This was, at times, cruel to the Jewish evacuees as British children often received postcards, letters and small packages from their relatives. Jewish evacuees held fast to the hope their relatives were still living. Both groups enjoyed their new environment and learned much about their new surroundings and each other. Both groups noted abuses from their hosts, and it remains unclear whether or not one group suffered more abuse than the other. The British children had a sense of security in their families and government whereas the

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32 *My Knees Were Jumping.*
33 Ibid.

Jewish evacuees were an island to themselves. They were burdened by having little knowledge of their host country, language, food, and daily practices. Once accustomed, though, they fit in well. It might be assumed that some of the Jewish evacuees felt a responsibility to assimilate quicker, so as to assure their place in a country willing to take them in, even on a temporary basis. Both groups had the unmistakable advantage of youth and the hope for a new beginning. ◆◆◆