

Kindertransport, 1938–1940

Kindertransport (Children's Transport) was the name given to a series of rescue efforts to rescue Jewish children from Nazi Germany between 1938 and 1940.

Background

On November 9 and 10, 1938 Nazi authorities staged a violent attack against Jewish people. This occurred throughout Germany, annexed Austria and in some areas of Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia. It was later called *Kristallnacht*, or Night of the Broken Glass because of all of the store windows that were broken.

This event sent a shiver through Europe as it was a clear indication of the Nazi leadership's plans to destroy the Jewish population. British authorities decided to rescue an unspecified number of children under the age of 17 from Germany and German-annexed territories to enter Great Britain.

This mission became a joint effort between government and citizens. Private citizens and organizations promised to be responsible for each child's care, education, and eventual emigration from Britain. In return, the British government agreed to allow unaccompanied refugee children to enter the country on temporary travel visas. Parents or guardians could not accompany the children. The few infants included in the program were cared for by other children on their transport. It was understood that when the "crisis was over," the children would return to their families.

The Transports

Most transports left by train from Berlin, Vienna, Prague, and other major cities in central Europe. Jewish organizations inside the Germany planned the transports. They generally favoured children whose emigration was urgent because their parents were in concentration camps or were no longer able to support them. They also gave priority to homeless children and orphans.

Arrival in Harwich

The first *Kindertransport* arrived in Harwich, Great Britain, on December 2, 1938. It brought approximately 200 children from a Jewish orphanage in Berlin which had been destroyed in the *Kristallnacht* event.

After the transports arrived in Harwich, children with sponsors went to London to meet their foster families. Children without sponsors were housed in a summer camp or other facilities until individual families agreed to care for them or until hostels could be organized.

Many organizations and individuals participated in the rescue operation. Jews, Quakers and Christians worked together. About half of the children lived with

foster families. The others stayed in hostels, schools, or on farms throughout Great Britain.

In all, the rescue operation brought about 9,000-10,000 children from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland to Great Britain. About 7,500 of these children were Jewish.

After the War

Many children from the children's transport program became citizens of Great Britain, or emigrated to Israel, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Most of them never saw their parents again as most of them were killed during the Holocaust.

Source: United States Holocaust Museum:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005260>