



Operation Pied Piper: The Evacuation of English Children In World War II

Summary of an article written by Dwight Jon Zimmerman

One of the most difficult decisions made by the British government during World War II was the decision to relocate its children out of urban centres to locations where the risk of bombing attacks by the Nazi forces was low or non-existent.

Called *Operation Pied Piper*, almost three million children were evacuated. The majority were sent to rural areas in Britain. But other countries also accepted children. For example, Canada took in 1,532. Corporations and private relief organizations in the United States also helped. Employees of the Hoover vacuum cleaner company in Canton, Ohio, and Eastman Kodak in Rochester, N.Y., volunteered to take children of employees from their British subsidiaries.

In London and other major cities, adults saw long files of children led by teachers or other officials walk toward bus or railroad stations for their journey to different parts of the country. All children carried a small square cardboard box containing a gas mask. Their names were pinned onto their coats.

Being chosen to live with a family was often traumatic for the children. As a rule, billeting officials would line the newly arrived children up against a wall or on a stage in the village hall, and invite potential hosts to take their pick.

Given the large numbers and different social classes involved, individual experiences ran the gamut from excellent to terrible. On Dec. 6, 1941, Anna Freud, the daughter of Sigmund Freud, reported the results of a 12-month study she had authorized. Its conclusion was that "separation from their parents is a worse shock for children than a bombing."

The return of evacuees to London was approved on June 1945.

Source and author: Dwight Jon Zimmerman, December 31, 2011.

<http://www.defensemедianetwork.com/stories/operation-pied-piper-the-evacuation-of-english-children-during-world-war-ii/>