Trauma and Attachment in the Kindertransport Context

Trauma and Attachment in the Kindertransport Context: German-Jewish Child Refugees' Accounts of Displacement and Acculturation in Britain

By

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FÜR

NIKLAS, LUKAS UND JÖRG

IN LIEBE UND DANKBARKEIT

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No matter how I try to turn the phrases around in my head, it always sounds strangely inappropriate to thank all the many Kindertransportees who have been involved in this project for their participation. After all, if their lives had not been blighted by their traumatic experiences during the Third Reich and their enforced exiles, they would have had no Kindertransport stories to tell. But the sad fact remains that it is the very traumata they suffered that are at the heart of this study, so I sincerely hope that it will do some of the good envisioned by the participants.

Given the nature of the topic and methodology chosen, as well as, apparently, many Kinder's and my own nature, this has been much more than a research project. Instead it has been a four-year journey through life for all of us concerned, during which we shared far more than Kindertransport-related memories and stories. Grandchildren and even great-grandchildren were born, started school or graduated from university; children got married, lost their jobs and started new businesses; illness and death struck randomly and hit us hard, with supportive networks all the more appreciated; golden wedding anniversaries were celebrated as were 70th and 80th birthdays, an MBE and even an OBE. Accordingly, the completion of this book will, I hope, also be just one more happy milestone on this journey, and not the end of it.

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A note on a linguistic issue:

As its cross-cultural nature is a defining element of the present study, passages which were spoken or written in German are rendered accordingly. Where their meaning is not clear from the context in which they appear, the gist of the respective statement is either translated or explained in a paragraph preceding or following it.

CHAPTER ONE

DISPLACED CHILDREN IN THE 20TH CENTURY

PART ONE

THE KINDERTRANSPORT RESCUE OPERATION: THE LARGEST CHILD MIGRATION EVER?

1. CHILD REFUGEES FROM LEFT- AND RIGHT-WING DICTATORSHIPS

"A volunteer approached a little girl (…) and noticed a sign pinned to her dress. It read, 'My name is (…). I am five years old. Please be good to me.'" (Conde 1999, back flap)

"Dear parents,
(…) Come anyway that you can, we are doing very badly here. The food is very bad and we don't want to be here anymore. We are asking you to please come. We are waiting for you.

Your (…) children who love you." (Conde, 101/102)

"Where is Home?
Home is where it is warm inside and warm outside too
Home is where I feel good about myself
Home is where I always want to be
Home is where I don't wake up afraid at night
Home is where my mother and father are never scared
Home is not where I am always crying
Home is not where I don't understand other people
Home is not where other people don't understand me
Home is not where my parents are
Home is … where is home?" [slightly abridged] (Where is Home?)

"Eighteen months after my departure my mother arrived. I was for sure not the same and she told me. The wound has not healed, it can bleed any time I remember, especially [when] I remember you dad, I remember your face smiling at me with a smile of 'I am glad you will be free … don't know if I

> will see you again', his eyes told me. I never saw him again." (Bohorques de Carames, 1998)

The above are accounts of and by children who were part of what has been called "the largest migration of unaccompanied minors in the hemisphere" (Pedro Pan Exiles Finding their Past). The faces evoked by the voices above are most likely to be those of the approximately 10,000 predominantly Jewish children brought to safety in England in the nine months between the November Pogrom in Germany in 1938 and the outbreak of World War II. Yet, one little word does not quite fit in with our background knowledge of that particular rescue operation: the Kindertransportees originated mainly from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia—all three definitely not countries which anybody would readily characterise as places "where it is warm outside".

So, the exodus which the above quotes give testimony of must have brought children from warmer climes to colder shores, and we find that a good twenty years after the Kindertransports some 14,000 Cuban children also lost what "home is", when "Operation Pedro Pan" separated them from their parents.

Between December 1960 and October 1962, 14,048 children aged six to eighteen left Cuba for the US in an initially clandestine rescue operation organised by James Baker, the headmaster of an American school in Havana, Rev. Bryan Walsh, Director of the Catholic Welfare Bureau in Miami, the U.S. State Department, and a network of Castro-opponents in Cuba. At great personal risk and cost they provided Cuban parents with "visa waivers" which were issued by the State Department and enabled their children to travel to Miami on commercial flights.[1]

Named after the first unaccompanied boy to arrive in America and alluding to the story of Peter Pan, Operation Pedro Pan was launched, among other things, as a reaction to rumours – made up, or at least fuelled by the CIA—that Cuban parents might have to cede legal authority over their children to the Government, which intended to have them indoctrinated from a very young age in government-run camps or the Soviet Union.

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[1] It is interesting to note in this context that a British nurse, Miss Penny Powers, who had been instrumental in the escape of Kindertransportees, became the head of "Pedro Pan" in Cuba when Mr Baker left the island after the closure of the American embassy. Apparently she stayed on in Cuba after the Operation was terminated and became a teacher at Ruston Academy in Havana. In 1999 Miss Powers, then in her eighties, was reported as still living in Cuba and having been made a dame by Queen Elizabeth. (Source: Blázquez 1999)

On arrival in the US, roughly half of the children was claimed by relatives, while the other half was initially cared for by the Catholic Church in Miami and then distributed among orphanages and foster homes throughout the country.

When the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 terminated all flights between Cuba and America, this not only ended Operation Pedro Pan, but also dashed the hopes of many parents of seeing their children again in the foreseeable future. Unless they managed to flee to the US via a third country or by risking their lives at sea, families were separated for at least the next three years, when the so-called "Freedom Flights" started in December 1965. They had been agreed on by both governments for humanitarian reasons and reunited approximately 5,000 children with their parents within the next six months.

While resuming a normal family life in the US after several years of separation often proved to be difficult, the majority of Pedro Pan children can be presumed to have been reunited with at least one parent, although in many cases internment or familial obligations of their mothers or fathers in Cuba thwarted any such hopes, as did Cuban emigration regulations against members of the professions. Owing to the low-profile nature of the operation, only 3,000 Pedro Pan children have been found so far, so numbers given of children not reunited with family members vary considerably, i.e. from "7,000" as maintained by Flora Gonzalez (2000) to the "relatively few" claimed by Monsignor Walsh (2001).

In 1991 the Operation Pedro Pan Group was founded with the aim of locating former child refugees, allowing them to share their memories, of documenting their history for future generations, and of supporting programs for present-day unaccompanied or needy children of any race, creed, colour or religion.

With more and more information thus brought to light, it has in the meantime become a matter of debate among Pedro Pan children whether they were beneficiaries of truly humanitarian efforts or rather victims of a CIA propaganda ploy, who were subsequently used as political pawns by two nations which thought nothing of putting their "ideological and security interests" above children's needs and rights (Torres 2000, 3).[2]

While the Kindertransports and Pedro Pan are geographically, historically, and politically remote rescue operations, if it were not for the clue about the climate, we would hardly be able to tell a Kindertransportee's voice from that of a Peter Pan child.

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[2] For more comprehensive accounts, see: Rodriguez 1999; Torres 2003; Triay 1998.

Here we have Continental Jewish children in the late 1930s who had seen their families' lives severely encroached upon by Hitler's antisemitic legislation, which was ruthlessly enforced under the *Führer's* right-wing dictatorship and reached a preliminary climax in the November Pogrom. When Reichskristallnacht left no doubt any more about the existential threat under which they were living, and emigration of the whole family was not an option, Jewish parents saw no way out but to send their children to Great Britain in order to ensure their survival.

And there, some twenty years later, we have Cuban boys and girls who had seen *El Máximo Líder* establish and subsequently tighten the grip of his communist dictatorship on their island, which culminated in the "The Year of Education". When the "funneling of all learning through the hands of government" had been accomplished, Cuban parents saw no way out but to send their children to the United States in order to pre-empt Castro's alleged plans to have them re-educated in yet-to-be-founded Schools of Revolutionary Instruction (Conde 1999, 42).

Yet, looking at the children's testimonies by comparing just the few statements above with such collective accounts of Kindertransport experiences as published by Gershon (1969), Leverton and Lowensohn (1990), or Turner (1990), we will find that the sequelae of trauma they experienced are almost identical: repression and existential fear suffered in their home countries; the pain of parting and leaving relatives to an unknown fate; potentially adverse socio-economic conditions and acculturative stress suffered in their host countries; and finally the difficulties of making reunification with their parents work after years of separation, or the grief of mourning loved ones.

The way they all look back on their lives now, some forty or sixty years on, will follow similar patterns, too, as "remembering is always embedded in a developmental history" (Robinson 1996, 203). Memories of how they experienced the succession of traumatic events will mingle with musings of what might have been, as developing a narrative of the self is a vital task in the process of identity formation (Fitzgerald 1996, 369). Hence, acts of autobiographic remembering and their narrative representations will be a function of an ongoing reconciliation of self-perception with present-day values, ideals, and beliefs. Since they are firmly grounded in time and in space and are thus reflective of the relational and culturally determined properties of remembering, autobiographical memories constitute remembered selves incorporating to a large extent collective experiences (Barclay 1994, 65).

To evaluate the extent to which that is true, it will be helpful to narrow down the fate of displaced children in the 20th century to those organised

mass exoduses or evacuations directly caused by Nazi Germany's virulent antisemitism, the war begun and fought during the Third Reich, and the end of the Thousand Year Reich, on the one hand. On the other hand, two unrelated, but not unconnected waves of child refugees will be included, which marked the beginning and end of the above period of massive dislocation of children in Europe, on the other.

2. Child Refugees from Civil Wars

2.1 The Basque Children

Following the heavy bombardment by Franco's troops as well as Italian and German forces of Basque towns culminating in the incendiary saturation bombing of the non-military Guernica in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), the newly-founded Basque Republic began the mass evacuation of some 20,000-25,000 children between the ages of three and fifteen to France, England, Belgium, Russia and Mexico in May 1937.[3]

Accompanied by teachers, priests and other helpers, they found refuge in host families, institutions or camps, where they enjoyed varying degrees of integration into their host communities, but were also actively encouraged to keep alive their Basque culture, language, and traditions.

Although repatriation efforts from England started as soon as the Basque Republic had been occupied and ceased to exist in October 1937, fewer than 1,000 children had come back by February 1938, owing to the fact that many of their families had had to flee to France as a first place of refuge themselves in the meantime before moving on and trying to settle in, e.g. Latin America. It was just as likely, however, that the livelihood of

[3] England took in 3,826 children, who arrived in Southampton in May 1937 together with 95 teachers, 120 female helpers, and 15 priests. Although the majority had left again by the end of 1939, some stayed on and formed the "Basque Children of '37 Association: UK". Its aim was to keep their memories alive for future generations, and to honour, among other things, the memory of Leah Manning at the British end, who had played a pivotal role in arranging their evacuation. In recognition of the fact that the former children owed their rescue to the goodwill and generosity of the British people, a commemorative plaque was given to the Speaker of the House of Commons in 2002.
(Source: Basque Children of '37 Association: UK)
Interestingly, the efforts to save Basque children on the one hand, and Continental European children, on the other, overlapped in 1939, so that in England especially the Society of Friends and the Catholic Church were called upon twice and were accordingly hard put to find suitable homes for their charges.

the children in northern Spain could not be guaranteed, with their fathers dead or in prison. Accordingly, most refugees stayed for almost two years and some 500 never went back at all.

Those who did, though, returned to a region reeling under extreme poverty and high unemployment, where they were moreover "treated as politically suspect and subjected to 'fascist re-education'", so that reunification, when it did take place in Spain, frequently turned out to be a mixed blessing at best (Basque Children of '37 Association: UK).

Yet, this is what Legarreta (1980) found when interviewing some 100 Basques who had been child refugees or teachers, priests or cooks:

> Almost without exception, those sent to England, Belgium, and Russia describe their refugee experience as having had mostly positive effects: learning another culture and language, helping them become self-reliant and mature. (6-7)

Strictly speaking, however, the Basque children were not unaccompanied and were politically aware and mature beyond their years due to the immediate experience of a war violently fought. So they had brought with them "distinctive forms of cultural capital", a term coined by Bourdieu (1977) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), which provided them with a set of beliefs and values, i.e. common frames of reference, that helped them to make meaning of their enforced exile (Meyers 2000, 264/265). With the benefit of hindsight, the acculturative processes undergone by Macedonian child refugees years later, which were likewise negotiated with the support of Greek carers and teachers on the basis of a strong ideology, similarly came to be seen in a partially positive light.

2.2 The Macedonian Children

During the Greek Civil War (1946-49) thousands of Macedonians, who had fought alongside Greek partisans against the Axis powers, supported the Communist guerrilla forces hoping they would be granted autonomy and self-determination in exchange.

In 1947, the Greek government not only increased its war efforts in western Aegean Macedonia, thus causing a heavy toll among the civilian population, but also started to forcibly remove children from their homes in captured villages, making them wards of the state, allegedly trying to protect them.

In 1948 the leftist guerrilla forces finally acted on plans first proposed at a Conference in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, a year earlier, to stop the government troops from further abducting children and Hellenising them

on the island of Laros. Apparently this happened to some 14,000 Macedonian and Greek boys and girls, of whom only a small number were reunited with their families after the Civil War, since their parents had often been killed or fled the country.

Thus the "Save the Children" programme was born and the mass evacuation of Macedonian and Partisan children between two and fourteen years of age to Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia was carried out with the help of the Red Cross. Beginning in March 1948, "surrogate mothers" were recruited among Macedonian women over the age of 18 and Partisan widows to accompany the children on their flight and supervise the younger ones in their host communities later on.

Making their way towards the borders on foot, travelling mostly at night and away from the main roads, crossing high mountains in freezing temperatures with little food to sustain them, approximately 30,000 children arrived in Yugoslavia within the next few months, from where they were sent on to live in camps or communities in their eastern Bloc host countries, often to be relocated from one place to the next, even from one country to the next, several times over. [4]

Toward the end of the Civil War, bombings, and hence casualties, were mounting in western Aegean Macedonia, causing Macedonians and Partisans alike to seek refuge in neighbouring Albania before settling in one of the eastern Bloc countries and re-establishing contact with their children, or migrating to Canada, the USA and Australia before trying to locate them behind the then tightly-shut Iron Curtain. Through Red Cross intervention and cooperation tracing the children became easier after 1953, but even then families could often not be reunited due to Greece's strict

[4] By 1950 the German Democratic Republic had taken in some 1,000 Macedonian children and adolescents from Albania and Bulgaria. As many of them could still remember life under the German occupation between 1941 and 1944 and the atrocities committed by the Wehrmacht and SS, they had frequently been shocked to learn that they would be relocated to Saxony. The classes and paramilitary training they had to attend in the *Heimkombinat "Freies Griechenland"* were held in Greek and German and were geared towards the goal of turning the children into determined patriots and freedom fighters: "Die Kinder sind zu bewußten und entschlossenen und disziplinierten Patrioten und Kämpfern für die Befreiung ihres Vaterlandes vom monarcho-faschistischen Joch zu erziehen (…)." While ideologically close to the Socialist Union Party, the refugees increasingly tried to force their repatriation from the mid-70s onward, but it took some ten years before most of them had been granted repatriation permission, and legal matters, such as pension rights, had been settled between East Germany and Greece. (Source: Troebst 2004)

travel restrictions on the one hand, and the ban which the government had issued in 1949, on the other. This decree ruled that anybody who had fled Greece, including the children, would never be allowed to return home, not even for a visit. While repatriation of "ethnic Greeks" was permitted from 1982, the ban has not been revoked for Macedonians to this day.[5]

With most former child refugees accordingly scattered across the world and living in the diaspora, the following statement ending an article by Risto (2003) seems a fitting tribute to all their various host countries:

> The Macedonian Refugee Children wish to express their gratitude to the countries and people who opened their doors to them at a time of their greatest need. They treated them not as strangers or immigrants, but as equals. They also wish to express many thanks to the countries and people for giving them the opportunity of free education in their institutions. (…) Free from Greek oppression, they excelled in education and talent becoming professors, doctors, engineers, poets, playwrights, composers, economists, etc.

Being taken in and supported by host communities, experiencing (largely) unprejudiced generosity, and acquiring competencies to function in different cultures were viewed as personality-enhancing growth factors by Macedonian, Basque and Cuban children alike, any hard feelings associated with flight and separation notwithstanding.

In line with that observation, research on refugee children and/or Holocaust survivors has been found wanting for one-sidedly focusing on psychopathology. While posttraumatic illness has been dealt with extensively, posttraumatic health and adjustment have received comparatively scant attention so far (Trang and Lau 2002, Lomranz 2000). Accordingly, studies researching processes of positive socio-psychological adaptation have recently started addressing the question of resilience more closely, i.e. how children develop or maintain coping skills in the face of major disruptions and continue to function well later in life (Greene 2002).

Research on displaced children will thus have to reflect the whole continuum of survivor experiences, ranging from severe clinical pathologies to successful integration of negative life events. The approach followed in this study will accordingly echo Erikson's, who showed no particular interest in "pathologizing" (Cooper 1994, footnote 3). Instead, he set out to define growth-enhancing as well as growth-stunting developmental contexts, which will be our main focus, too.

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[5] For comprehensive accounts, see: Macedonian Welfare Workers' Network of Victoria 1999; Marinov 2004; Risto 2003.

3. Enforced Emigration and Mass Evacuations of Children Caused by Nazi Germany

So far, we have been given the impression that the repercussions of their refugee existences differed between individual groups largely as a variable of the presence or absence of protective factors, such as support provided by adult carers from their countries of origin, or a common ideology investing their lives with a sense of meaning. In this section, we shall look at similarities and dissimilarities between four rescue operations that are linked more closely in geopolitical terms, as they occurred within a time span of just over ten years, and were directly caused by the antisemitism and the war that Nazi Germany brought upon Europe and the world. In order to identify factors mediating individual children's experiences, our focus will thereby gradually shift from the collective to the individual level.

Frequently referred to in the superlative, each operation's uniqueness—in terms of logistics, risks, or numbers—is meant to be brought to our attention. But this is precisely what makes them almost indistinguishable:

- *"one of the most spectacular rescue operations"* [6]
- *"the most extensive movement of people in the history of the country"*[7]
- *"the largest inland migration in human history to date"*[8]
- *"this rescue operation came as a last chance for survival"*[9]

At first glance at least, it seems as if each of the following terms denoting one of the above rescue operations could match any of the preceding descriptions:

- *Kindertransport*
- *Wartime Evacuation*
- *Kinderlandverschickung (The Expanded German Evacuation Scheme)*
- *Operation Shamrock*

In fact, in two cases, the first and last of the above, the names would—

[6] Göpfert 1999 [my translation]
[7] Historical Boys' Clothing 2002
[8] Historisches Centrum Hagen
[9] Deckert Distribution

albeit in retrospect only—actually be interchangeable: roughly speaking, the Kindertransport, a pre-war operation, could also be described as the children's "last chance for survival". Strictly speaking, however, this caption was used to denote a post-war relief-programme organised by the Irish Red Cross Society.

3.1 Operation Shamrock

"Operation Shamrock", the rescue of approximately 1,000 starving French, English and German children between the ages of five and ten, who were billeted with Irish families between 1946 and 1949, marked the end of the period under review. It was largely unknown until German filmmaker Anna Schmidt (2002) started researching the topic in the late 1990s. Her documentary, "Irish Oranges", not only captures the former children's gratitude towards the Irish people,[10] but also follows their careers or voluntary work. These are revelatory in that a great many of them felt the need to give something back to society, either in Germany or in Ireland, where some stayed on after the official termination of the programme, or returned to after they had not been able to successfully reclaim their German roots.[11]

Reclaiming their roots after separation was not a pre-eminent problem confronting the children sent to safety from targeted cities in Germany or England during the war, since most of them stayed within the borders of their country of origin. However, readjustment to post-war family life often proved to be difficult, too. For although we are dealing with various waves of evacuations in the two countries, the children concerned often spent several years away from home in socio-economic circumstances widely different from their own backgrounds.

Moving back in time, as it were, from the post-war period to the war years and finally to the nine months between Kristallnacht and the outbreak of World War II, "the largest inland migration in human history to date", i.e. the German programme called "Erweiterte Kinderlandverschickung", will be the first under review.

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[10] On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of "Operation Shamrock" the Irish Minister for Justice, Nora Owen, accepted a commemorative plaque from the former children thanking the Irish Government and people for their generosity.

[11] For brief accounts, see: The Irish Red Cross Society; Irische Orangen 2003; Hickey 1999.

3.2 Erweiterte Kinderlandverschickung – The Expanded German Evacuation Scheme

This rescue operation, which was carried out on Hitler's orders of September 1940, saw the evacuation of children and teenagers from air-raided German cities and likely future targets of bombings. It was partly initiated as a reaction to parents' worries that their children were suffering psychological damage, and regular classes could not be kept up in schools.

Mothers with little children as well as school children under the age of ten were usually assigned to host families in rural regions, where the latter would attend local schools. Those older than ten were normally sent away together with their classmates to government-run KLV camps, mostly in eastern Germany, Upper Silesia, Bohemia and Moravia, where they continued to be taught by their own teachers and indoctrinated along party lines with the help of the Hitler Youth.

Thus the KLV cannot be seen as a humanitarian effort alone, although it certainly did save a great many lives. Thus, for example, a Dortmund party official writing in 1943 made it quite clear that völkisch, i.e. ethnic-national, ideology was to prevail in the camps. "Mädchen und Jungen [sollten] (…) die ganze 'Schönheit der Volksgemeinschaft' erleben sowie ohne die 'Einflüsse der bisherigen Umgebung' lernen, sich in die 'größere Ordnung unseres völkischen Lebens einzufügen.'" (Sollbach 2001, 60)[12]

The second wave of evacuations followed the Allied air offensive in the Rhine-Ruhr region—the Battle of the Ruhr—in the spring of 1943, and brought the total number of child evacuees to approximately 3.75 million. Whereas during the first stage it was, in principle, up to the parents to decide whether or not to send their children, the evacuation of whole schools in 1943 often left them with no choice, even if they were reluctant to have their children exposed to unfettered Nazi ideology and paramilitary field exercises. After all, they were obliged by law to send their children to school, and were not allowed to enrol them in schools further away from home than their original ones, so schools on the outskirts of the big cities were no option. However, with the war entering its final phase in 1944, more and more mothers—in defiance of official orders—decided to simply go for their children and bring them back home.

The vast majority of children, though, did not return until well after the end of World War II, often under threat, from the east, where teachers had to obtain the Allies' permission for evacuating the camps, or simply left

[12] Having realised the potential benefits of those 9,000 camps for their own political purposes, the Nazis had apparently intended to make them a permanent feature after the war.

them to their own devices to find their way home. Thus, for example, by July 1945, only two thirds of the children originating from the city of Duisburg had been reunited with their parents (WDR 2001).

Only recently has the question of individual rather than collective experience among perpetrators as well as among victims, i.e. "wer die Menschen hinter dem Schatten der Geschichte, dem Schatten der Täter- und Opferforschung [sind]", become a major concern for research and the medical professions, when their well-established vulnerabilities were finally manifested by the disproportionately high rates of old-age suicides among this generation of war children (Weber 2003). As common consent had it, the children had survived after all—"die Kinder waren schließlich davongekommen"—and they had learned to live uncomplainingly in the shadows of those who had had suffered much more, as they were perpetually made to feel (Bode 2000). Moreover, as children of the perpetrators they generally complied with the unspoken taboo, only recently broken,[13] of claiming the status of traumatised victims alongside those perceived to be the "real" victims of a war brought upon the world by the generation of their parents.[14]

3.3 Wartime Evacuation in Britain

Even before Britain declared war on Germany, however, the "most extensive movement of people in the history of the country" had been set in motion on August 31, 1939, in anticipation of immediate reprisal bombardment of major cities. As this did not materialise over the next few months, most of the approximately 1.5 million people evacuated to the countryside—two thirds of them unaccompanied children—returned home in this phase known as the "Phoney War" or "Bore War".

When, after the German victory in France, the Battle of Britain began in earnest in August 1940, culminating in the blitz on British cities between September and November, roughly 1.25 million children and

[13] Around the beginning of the 21st century, a powerful new trend manifested itself in Germany in the form of several publications and events, which were accompanied by much heated discussion here and abroad, and have since given shape to what has become known as the new "Opferdiskurs" (the debate about German victimisation). The dilemma, which has thus presented itself, is how to acknowledge individual victimhood, while at the same time avoiding the danger of rewriting history in the process by reversing the roles of perpetrators and victims in an improper effort to set "the suffering of one against that of the other and to neglect the differing causes and contexts of expulsion." (Source: Cleaver 2003)

[14] For more comprehensive accounts, see: Kock 1997 and Sollbach 2002.

mothers were relocated, many of them for the second time. This so-called "trickle evacuation" which was no longer overseen centrally but only government-assisted, lasted until the end of 1941, when Germany deflected her attention from England to Russia.

The final mass evacuation of a total of 1 million people, again mostly children, began in June 1944, when the Germans started deploying their Vengeance Weapons, V-1 flying buzz bombs and V-2 rockets, over the Southeast of England and London. Once more, many children returned after a relatively short time, often within a few weeks of their arrival. Thus, when the war on the Continent entered its final phase in the spring of 1945, all but 400,000 children, mostly from London, had already left their rural host communities for home again.

For the evacuation programme, which was run under the codename "Operation Pied Piper", the help of teachers was enlisted, who accompanied whole school units to their destinations in the countryside and tried to facilitate the transition to living and learning in new surroundings and environments. These often turned out to be radically different from anything the evacuees were used to from home. Not only did attitudes and habits of urban and rural populations clash, but for the first time in modern times the better-off classes were directly confronted with the plight of the poor, whose eyes in turn were opened to the social injustice at the heart of their abject living conditions. It has been claimed that this was to have far-reaching repercussions on the welfare of future British generations as evidenced by the extensive post-war Labour reforms (Werner 2001, 70).

The social divide people thus became aware of could not be bridged by the teachers travelling with the evacuees, nor could they do anything to alleviate what often turned out to become a major trauma for many children, viz. the way in which they were "distributed" among the local population. In what came to be known as "slave auctions", the children were looked up and down in the reception areas and often chosen for their supposed capabilities as farmhands or domestics, so that in the end those deemed "unfit for service" were the only ones left, unwanted. They were then assigned to a billeting officer who made the rounds of the respective village with them, trying to talk potential foster families into taking them, only to find their charges rejected again and again or passed on from one family to the next in a matter of days or weeks, which often left them stigmatised for life.[15]

[15] In October 2003 the Guardian Weekly reported that scientists of the University of California had concluded that "to the brain, a social snub is just like stubbing a toe" when finding that the brain's pain centre became more active the more a