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Jewish Child Refugees from Central Europe in France and the United States: Transnational Perspectives on their Care, 1938–1945

The pogrom that swept across Germany and Austria on November 9–10, 1938 represented a turning point in the persecution against Jews.[1] Against this backdrop of unprecedented violence, and in continuity with the evacuation of children following the First World War and during the Spanish Civil War, plans emerged to evacuate Jewish and "Non-Aryan" children.[2] In total, 19,149 Jewish children and young people had left Germany without their parents by the end of 1939, 12,395 of whom left in the twelve months following the pogrom of November 1938.[3]

The German word *Kindertransport* is often used in reference to these evacuations. The term has strong associations with the United Kingdom, which played host to some ten thousand Jewish children, entrusting

1 Synagogues were burned, Jewish individuals were assaulted in the streets and in their homes and so-called "Jewish" businesses were looted. In Germany alone, at least one hundred people were killed, and thirty Thousand men were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 122–23.

2 To read more about the evacuation of children following World War I and during the Spanish Civil War, see: Friederike Kind-Kovacs, "*The 'Other' Child Transports: World War I and the Temporary Displacement of Needy Children from Central Europe,*" *RHEI* 15, (2013), accessed February 1, 2023, https://journals.openedition.org/rhei/3474; Célia Keren, "*L'évacuation et l'accueil des enfants espagnols en France : Cartographie d'une mobilisation transnationale (1936–1940)*" (PhD Diss., École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2014).

3 Claudia Curio does not provide an exact age range and does not specify whether this figure includes "non-Aryan" children. Claudia Curio, "Were Unaccompanied Child Refugees a Privileged Class of Refugees in the Liberal States of Europe?," in *Refugees from Nazi Germany and the Liberal European States,* ed. Frank Caestecker and Bob Moore (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 169; Claudia Curio, "'Unsichtbare' Kinder. Emigration und Akkulturation von Kindern und Jugendlichen. Das Beispiel Kindertransporte 1938/39," (PhD diss., Technischen Universität Berlin, 2005), 29.

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them to Jewish and Christian families and foster and children's homes.[4] While the example of the United Kingdom is exceptional in terms of the number of children saved and the widespread mobilization it incited, other countries also welcomed Jewish children fleeing the Third Reich. The Zionist organization Youth Aliyah *(Aliyat Hano'ar)* sent four thousand children to Palestine. Jewish communities in the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, and Belgium also organized small-scale evacuations for these children. The United States attempted to follow in the footsteps of the United Kingdom but ultimately only welcomed one thousand children during the 1933–1945 period.[5] My recent study, "Becoming Refugees: The Migrations of Central European Jewish Children through France to the United States, 1938–42," uncovered a little-known fact: France also accepted approximately three hundred and fifty to four hundred and fifty unaccompanied Jewish children. For some of the children from Germany and Austria, France was only a stepping stone before a second evacuation to the United States in 1941–1942, funded by the United States Committee for the Care of European Children, and organized by the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers), the *Œuvre de secours aux enfants Union* (Children's Aid Society, OSE) and the American Joint Distribution Committee.[6]

This article focuses on a population that has not yet been discussed in the literature on *Kindertransport*: child refugees who migrated multiple times, to different countries, in their attempt to escape Nazi rule. It

4 Maggie Fraser Kirsh, "La politique de placement des enfants en Grande-Bretagne et en Palestine," in *L'Enfant-Shoah*, ed. Ivan Jablonka (Paris: PUF, 2014), 51–66. For more general reading, see: Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back. The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain, 1938–1945* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2012); Vera Fast, *Children's Exodus: A History of the Kindertransport* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2011) and Claudia Curio, "'Unsichtbar'e Kinder. Emigration und Akkulturation von Kindern und Jugendlichen. Das Beispiel Kindertransporte 1938/39" (PhD diss., Technischen Universität Berlin, 2005).

5 Susanne Heim, "Immigration Policy and Forced Emigration from Germany: The Situation of Jewish Children (1933–1945)," in *Children and the Holocaust Symposium Presentations*, ed. Paul Shapiro (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004), 11; on Belgium, see: Walter Reed, *The Children of La Hille: Eluding Nazi Capture during World War II* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011); on the United States: Judith Tydor Baumel, *Unfulfilled Promise: Rescue and Resettlement of Jewish Refugee Children in the United States, 1934–1945* (Juneau: Denali Press, 1990).

6 Laura Hobson Faure, "Becoming Refugees: The Migrations of Central European Children through France to the United States, 1938–42" (Habil. diss., Sciences Po Paris, 2018), to be published as Laura Hobson Faure, *Rescue: The Story of Kindertransport to France and America* (forthcoming).

explores a key challenge for each country that hosted *Kindertransport* children, namely their care. This issue highlights the many stakeholders involved; men, women, children, Jewish, and non-Jewish organizations. It also raises the deeply political dimensions of caring for the children, since no placement decision was inconsequential. Each method was based on a view of what families and children should be like, with the goal of promoting certain values. As underscored by historian Tara Zahra, the challenges of placing these children in Europe and the United States were significantly different, as they drew on differing ideals on children and family life.[7] For historians of Jewish life, this question is particularly interesting as it offers a rare analytic opportunity to grasp to what extent Jewish organizations followed the predominant placement methods in their countries, or whether Jews developed their own model to look after children fleeing Nazism. Furthermore, this article will show that such placement policies had real repercussions on the lives of refugee children.

The historiography of Jewish children who were refugees and survivors before and after the Holocaust particularly favors national, and sometimes comparative, approaches to research documents and demonstrates the extent to which their migrations represented a violent break, both from the original family environment and concerning language and culture.[8] Judith Tydor Baumel's meticulous study, *Unfulfilled Promise*, focuses exclusively on the reception and resettlement of Central European Jewish youth in the United States, representing an important contribution to our understanding of the infrastructure and policies that determined the children's care, as well as the refugee children's experiences in

7 Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children*: *Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 70–8, 99–102.

8 See: Tydor Baumel, *Unfulfilled Promise*; Katy Hazan, *Les orphelins de la Shoah: les maisons de l'espoir, 1944-1960* (Paris: Belles lettres, 2000); Daniella Doron, *Jewish Youth and Identity in Postwar France: Rebuilding Family and Nation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015); Fraser Kirsh, "La politique de placement des enfants en Grande-Bretagne et en Palestine"; Beth Cohen, *Child Survivors of the Holocaust: The Youngest Remnant and the American Experience* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2018); Françoise Ouzan, *How Young Holocaust Survivors Rebuilt Their Lives: France, the United States, and Israel* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2018); for an exception to national case studies, see: Rebecca Clifford, *Survivors: Children's Lives after the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020); for an analysis of the recent historiography, see: Joanna Beata Michlic, "Mapping the History of Child Holocaust Survivors" in *No Small Matter: Features of Jewish Childhood. Studies in Contemporary Jewry. An Annual.* XXXII, ed. Anat Helman (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 79–102.

this country.[9] Likewise, Maggie Fraser Kirsh provides an important comparative framework in her analysis of the care of Jewish child refugees in Great Britain and Mandatory Palestine.[10] Building on this historiography, this article explores the placement policies applied to *Kindertransport* children in the United States and France, and proposes both a comparative and transnational perspective by raising a fact that is often overlooked—displacements are sometimes serial. A child could cross several borders in an attempt to survive the Holocaust or rebuild her life in the post-war period. When the same child emigrated again, she had to adapt to a new language and culture, but also a new social system. This could have a major impact on a child's life, shaping their experiences of exile and reconstruction. This article thus explores the issues related to care in the United States and France but then considers the intersection of the care policies in both countries through the case of two brothers who were first refugees in France and, subsequently, in the United States. These children experienced two placement "systems," which had a zdramatic effect on their lives.

Before addressing these topics, I must first raise the issue of sources. My work is chiefly based on the archives of Jewish, Christian, and secular organizations, but there are major disparities in sources between countries.[11] Turning to oral history with the "children" who were evacuated does not remedy the problem as they have little to say about the policies that dictated their care. However, this does help to gain a better understanding of how the children experienced these evacuations, showing the importance they place on these events with decades of hindsight.[12] Through

9 Tydor Baumel, *Unfulfilled Promise.*

10 Fraser Kirsh, "La politique de placement des enfants en Grande-Bretagne et en Palestine"; "The Lost Children of Europe: Narrating the Rehabilitation of Child Holocaust Survivors in Great Britain and Israel" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2014).

11 The archives of the main French *Kindertransport* organization the *Comité Israélite pour les enfants venant d'Allemagne et d'Europe centrale* were either destroyed or lost. On the pillage and destruction of archives during the Second World War in France, see: Sophie Cœuré, *La Mémoire spoliée. Les Archives des Français, butin de guerre nazi puis soviétique (de 1940 à nos jours)* (Paris: Payot, 2007). It should be noted that the archives of the Jewish community in Vienna on *Kindertransport* (the *Kultusgemeinde*) survived the war and can be used to study departures to France and other countries; see: Hobson Faure, "Becoming Refugees," and Claudia Curio, "'Invisible' Children: The Selection and Integration Strategies of Relief Organizations," *Shofar* 23, 1 (2004): 41–56.

12 I conducted forty oral interviews with fifty-five people and continue to correspond with the individuals in my study as I write this history, seeking their input and consent. One can also understand former children's perspectives through their

the interviews I conducted, I was able to obtain permission from individuals to access their social work files both in France and the United States. The value of this type of source has been well documented by historians.[13] Case files give us a new perspective on the child's experience, as described by the adults in charge of their care and, more rarely, their parents. However, they only provide fragments of insight into the agency of the children themselves. Acknowledging the limitations of these sources, it is nevertheless possible to piece together a picture of the *Kindertransport* and compare the different ways in which adults attempted to care for these children. I will first consider the placement of these children in the United States, one of the first countries to establish a resettlement program.

The United States and Unaccompanied Jewish Children: A Preference for Family Placements

In the fall of 1933, American Jews started to worry about children in Nazi Germany. Three US Jewish organizations within the Joint Council on German-Jewish Persecution created a sub-committee focused solely on children in the autumn of 1933. At the same time, the National Conference of Jewish Social Workers also began to address the problem. In April 1934, these two initiatives merged to establish the German Jewish Children's Aid, which held talks with the United States government to obtain visas for unaccompanied children.[14] This structure coordinated the care of unaccompanied Jewish minors throughout the Second World War and thereafter.

Jewish women played a key role in coordinating the arrival and fostering of Central European Jewish children in the United States, in particular

unpublished and published memoires. See for example: Henry Schuster and Cynthia Orzes, *Abraham's Son: The Making of An American* (Baltimore: PublishAmerica, 2010); Eric Greene (Erich Grünebaum), "The Loneliest Boy" (unpublished manuscript, undated), https://archive.org/details/loneliestboy/page/n141/mode/ 2up; Hanna Papanek, *Elly und Alexander, Elly und Alexander: Revolution, Rotes Berlin, Flucht, Exil; eine sozialistische Familiengeschichte* (Berlin: Vorwärts-Buch Verl.-Ges, 2006).

13 Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston 1880–1960* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989). See also: Antoine Burgard, "Une nouvelle vie dans un nouveau pays: Trajectoires d'orphelins de la Shoah vers le Canada (1947–52)" (PhD diss., Université Lumière Lyon 2/Université du Québec à Montréal, 2017).

14 Tydor Baumel, *Unfulfilled Promise,* 16.

Cecilia Razovsky (1891–1968), an experienced social worker. As a former inspector of the Children's Bureau, the federal agency founded in 1912 to ensure compliance with child labor legislation, she was a member of American child expert networks. Moreover, from 1934 she ran the National Coordinating Committee, the Jewish organization responsible for assisting German Jewish refugees.[15] In this capacity, Razovsky set up the German Jewish Children's Aid (GJCA) and became its executive secretary.

The GJCA followed United States standards for placements, preferring the family-based model. Indeed, while collective facilities, or orphanages, had become more commonplace in the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they were also criticized, with some preferring placement in a family environment. The two systems co-existed, though not without tensions.[16] In 1909, the White House Conference on Children and Youth highlighted a strong preference to avoid any separation between a child and her family and, when necessary, to prefer placement in a family.[17]

While Jewish orphanages continued to operate in the United States in the interwar period, social worker Boris Bogen noted in his 1917 book, *Jewish Philanthropy*, a growing popularity for family placements:

> While the results of the institutional treatment were satisfactory, still the general antagonistic attitude against congregate systems of child caring has also spread among the Jews. An institution necessarily lacks home atmosphere,—the most important adjunct in child life,—it

15 Bat-Ami Zucker, *Cecilia Razovsky and the American-Jewish Women's Rescue Operations in the Second World War* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2008), 2–3.

16 Linda Gordon's important study sheds light on these two competing methods and even family placements organized by orphanages. In the center stands Charles Loring Brace, the Protestant pastor who founded the New York Children's Aid Society in 1850, who recommended family placements; Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). On Brace, see also: Bruce Bellingham, "Institution and Family: An Alternative View of Nineteenth Century Child Saving," *Social Problems* 33, no. 6 (1986): 33–57.

17 Robert Bremner, "Other People's Children," *Journal of Social History* 16, no. 3 (1983): 88; Sean Martin, "How to House a Child: Providing Homes for Jewish Children in Interwar Poland," *East European Jewish Affairs* 45, no. 1 (2015): 29. On Jewish orphanages in the United States, see: Reena Sigman Friedman, "Founders, Teachers, Mothers and Wards: Women's Roles in American Jewish Orphanages, 1850-1925," *Shofar* 15, no. 2 (1997): 21–42, and Friedman, *These are Our Children: Jewish Orphanages in the United States, 1880–1925* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2002). More generally, see: Catherine Rymph, *Raising Government Children: A History of Foster Care and the American Welfare State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

neglects individuality and is detrimental to the free development of character.[18]

This opinion was also expressed among American social workers in the 1930s and 1940s, who looked to Freudian theory to justify their preference for family placement. As historians Tara Zahra and Dagmar Herzog have highlighted, Freud speaks to American individualism and conservatism. According to Zahra, family placements symbolized, "the children's psychological 'best interests' […] and distinctly American values of individualism, self-reliance and family solidarity."[19]

Against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising that the GJCA preferred family placements in 1934. This policy was reinforced in 1941 by the Children's Bureau, which drew up standards for the care of refugee children in wartime, clearly stating in its guidelines that placements with individual families were preferable in light of the "generally recognized values inherent for growing children in home and family life."[20] Furthermore, United States guidelines on the placement of children required unaccompanied children to be fostered according to their religious affiliation, meaning that Jewish children had to be entrusted to a Jewish organization.[21] This gave the GJCA additional legitimacy since it was the only Jewish organization that cared for child refugees from Central Europe. The GJCA hired Lotte Marcuse, a German-trained social worker (presumed to be Jewish), to oversee the placements.[22]

18 Boris Bogin, *Jewish Philanthropy* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1917), 160.

19 Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 72. More generally, Dagmar Herzog, *Cold War Freud: Psychoanalysis in an Age of Catastrophes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

20 Maternal and Child Health Library, Georgetown University, US Department of Labor, 1941. *Children's Bureau, Care of Children Coming to the United States for Safety under Attorney General's Order of July 13, 1940. Standards Prescribed by the Children's Bureau*, Washington, 2.

21 Could this policy be a reflection of the American principle, analyzed by Linda Gordon, of respecting placements with families of the same "race"? While Gordon demonstrates Americans' refusal to foster "white" Catholic children in Mexican Catholic families, the case of Jewish children is ambiguous because Jews were considered and often viewed themselves as a religious group and a race; Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction,* 307–13. On American Jews and the concept of race at this time, see: Eric Goldstein, "Contesting the Categories: Jews and Government Classification in the United States," *Jewish History* 19, no. 1 (2005): 79–107.

22 According to Tydor Baumel, Marcuse arrived in the United States in 1921 with a diploma of social work from the Prussian Interior Ministry, see: Tydor Baumel, *Unfulfilled Promise,* 51.

Jewish organizations had another reason to prefer placements with families: sensitive to American antisemitism which peaked in the 1930s and 1940s, family placements were viewed as the quickest means of assimilating young Jewish refugees, thereby avoiding negative criticism.[23] Marcuse worked with many Jewish organizations to place the children throughout the United States. The GJCA oversaw the placements from afar, leaving the daily work to local Jewish family agencies, who identified families and monitored placements. However, few foster families met the strict criteria of the GJCA and the American State, particularly since the GJCA avoided any press coverage for fear of inciting antisemitism.[24] It was not uncommon for an ill-prepared foster family to change its mind and return the child. Children only exceptionally stayed with the same family until they reached adulthood. In addition, while the GJCA's policy allowed brothers and sisters to stay together, foster families were often only willing to take in one child.[25] This meant that brothers and sisters could be separated. Furthermore, Jewish refugee children were encouraged to assimilate quickly and were therefore dissuaded from maintaining contact with other refugees.

Such observations provide a partial explanation of the GJCA's initial difficulties when it brought its first group of nine children to the United States in November 1934. It should also be stressed that most of the Jewish parents in Nazi Germany were reluctant to be separated from their children. By March 1938, the GJCA was looking after only 351 children.[26] Nonetheless, the unprecedented violence of 1938, including the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in March 1938, followed by the pogrom of November 9 and 10, 1938, represented a turning point. Parents, previously against sending their children abroad, began to view the separation of their families as the lesser of two evils. They often turned to Jewish

23 Zahra, *The Lost Children,* 73; Haim Genizi, "New York Is Big: America Is Bigger: The Resettlement of Refugees from Nazism, 1936–1945," *Jewish Social Studies* 46, no. 1 (1984): 61–72; Laura Hobson Faure, "European Expectations, American Realities: The Immigration of Jewish Children from Occupied France to the United States, 1941–42," in *Gender, Families and Transmission in Contemporary Jewish Context,* ed. Martine Gross, Sophie Nizard, and Yann Scioldo-Zürcher (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 143–57.

24 Bat-Ami Zucker, *Cecilia Razovsky and the American-Jewish Women's Rescue Operations in the Second World War,* 35.

25 Laura Hobson Faure, "Siblings in the Holocaust and its Aftermath in France and the United States: Rethinking the 'Holocaust Orphan'?," in *Jewish and Romani Families in the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, ed. Eliyana Adler and Katerina Capova (Rutgers University Press, 2020), 103–14; Tydor Baumel, *Unfulfilled Promise,* 91.

26 Tydor Baumel, *Unfulfilled Promise,* 18–19.

communal institutions, looking for a solution to take their children to safety. Furthermore, new efforts across Europe emerged to evacuate Jewish or "non-Aryan" children from territories under Nazi control.

France: Placement in Collective Facilities

In France, Jewish organizations (in addition to other religious and nonsectarian organizations) had been addressing the German refugee crisis since 1933. Overstretched, those in charge did not attempt to evacuate more refugees to France.[27] The pogrom of November 9–10, 1938, changed perceptions and inspired new French initiatives to help those considered to be the most vulnerable: the elderly and children.[28] Several committees chaired by Jewish women worked to bring children to France, in particular the *Comité israélite pour les enfants venant d'Allemagne et d'Europe centrale* (Jewish Committee for Children coming from Germany and Central Europe), founded by Baroness Germaine de Rothschild in January 1939.[29] Together, the committees obtained three hundred visas for travel to France. They also helped legalize the status of children who crossed the border alone. It can therefore be estimated that a total of three hundred and fifty to four hundred and fifty arrived in France between December 1938 and September 1939.[30]

Who looked after these children, and how? Little historiographical research has been conducted into the placement practices for Jewish children in France for the period preceding the Holocaust.[31] The existence of Jewish orphanages in Paris, Strasbourg, Haguenau, and La Varenne (to

27 It should be noted that from 1933, Zionists were helping young Germans who had arrived alone to establish *hachsharot* (agricultural training schools) in France; Anne Grynberg, "Un kibboutz en Corrèze", *Les Cahiers Du Judaïsme,* 30 (2011): 89–103. On the social welfare of refugees, see: Catherine Nicault, "L'accueil des Juifs d'Europe centrale par la Communauté juive française," in *De l'exil à la résistance: réfugiés et immigrés d'Europe centrale en France, 1933–1945*, ed. Karel A. Bartosek, Réné Gallissot, and Denis Peschanski (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, Arcantère, 1989), 53–59. And more generally, Vicki Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933–1942* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999).

28 Archives nationales F7/16080, Letter from Amédée Bussière to the Vice-Président du Conseil, March 30, 1939.

29 The *Alliance Israélite Universelle* also took action in late 1938 but quickly stepped aside for Baroness Germaine de Rothschild; Hobson Faure, "Becoming Refugees," 82–85.

30 Hobson Faure, "Becoming Refugees," 95.

31 For an exception, see: Olivier Thiéry, "Entre bienfaisance et politique: l'œuvre des orphelins israélites de la guerre (1915-1932)," *Les Archives juives, Revue d'histoire des Juifs de France* 33 no. 1 (2000): 51–68.

name a few places) suggests the Jewish establishment's preference for collective placements, at a time when care in families was the standard practice in France, as in the United States. Indeed, the State-run *Assistance publique* of the Seine *département* (which included Paris) and other local child welfare services were entrusted with fifteen thousand to twenty thousand children per year during the *Belle Époque*. The State sent the children in its care to foster families in the countryside, a policy designed to help to repopulate rural areas, support smallholder families, and orchestrate an intentional and definitive break between the child and their original family.[32]

Summer camps, which grew in popularity in France at the end of the nineteenth century, also favored stays with families, though collective facilities gradually replaced this system so that young girls could be better protected (or monitored) or for educational reasons.[33] Jews in Paris followed this national trend and organized their own summer camps from the end of the nineteenth century, in particular the *Œuvre israélite de séjours à la campagne*. As demonstrated by historian Erin Corber, this Jewish organization, founded in 1899, preferred collective facilities since it strove to maintain a "Jewish environment" for its charges, even though the organizers remained relatively vague on this matter.[34]

Jews in France may have internalized the values surrounding them concerning children but showed a distinct preference for collective facilities. One can assume that a fear of conversion would be a motivation against placements in non-Jewish families, or simply due to a lack of Jewish foster families in the countryside.[35] At the same time, some

32 Antoine Rivière, "De l'abandon au placement temporaire: la révolution de l'assistance à l'enfance (Paris, 1870-1920)," in *Revue d'histoire de la protection sociale* 9, no. 1 (2016): 29; Ivan Jablonka, *Ni Père, Ni mère. Histoire des enfants de l'Assistance publique (1874-1939)* (Paris: Seuil, 2006).

33 Laura Lee Downs, *Childhood in the Promised Land: Working-Class Movements and the Colonies de Vacances in France, 1880-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 15–67. See also: Samuel Boussion and Mathias Gardet (eds.), *Les châteaux du social, 19-20ème siècles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2010).

34 As Erin Corber demonstrates, the *Œuvre israélite de séjours à la campagne* admitted non-Jewish children in addition to Jewish children and placed little emphasis on Jewish traditions in its program, though the meat was allegedly *kosher* after 1910. There was no Jewish education or practice, and apparently a Christmas tree was installed at the end of the year, implying that this camp also received children during school vacations. See: Erin Corber, "L'Esprit du corps: Bodies, Communities, and the Reconstruction of Jewish Life in France, 1914–1940," (PhD diss., University of Indiana, 2013), 165.

35 This motivated Jews in London to found Jewish schools; see: Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Great Britain, 1656-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 86–87.

first-person accounts also show that Jewish individuals found their own care solutions for their children in foster families. Others turned to non-Jewish organizations, such as the state-run *Assistance publique* even before the round-ups of Jews began during the Second World War.[36]

This overview enables us to place the arrival of the first group of fifty-two German children in Alsace in December 1938 into context. They were looked after by the Jewish community in Strasbourg. While the community placed half of the children in collective structures run by Jewish organizations (*le Nid*, for the younger children, and the Jewish orphanages in Strasbourg and Haguenau), it is interesting to note that it attempted first and foremost to place them with Jewish foster families. This practice required justification in the Jewish press:

> We still believe that the family setting is more beneficial for these children. It is there that they will forget their worries more quickly and most appreciate the Jewish environment they are in that will give them the most steadfast support.[37]

Andrée Salomon, who organized the arrival of the children, remembered later: "We wanted these children to integrate as soon as possible, so that they could have a healthy life with prospects for the future. We did not want to fill the orphanages, arousing the pity of the good ladies of Strasbourg."[38] One might add that the Jews in Eastern France experienced the rise in Nazism at close quarters due to their geographic and emotional proximity to Germany. Since Germany's return of Alsace and Lorraine to France in 1918, entire Jewish families were separated by the border. Furthermore, German Jews sought refuge in the region in increasing numbers after 1933. Family placements therefore played an important role, giving Jews in Alsace an opportunity to respond to Nazism by welcoming the children of friends or relatives in their homes. These placements were

36 Author's interview with René Lichtman, Ann Arbor, July 2015. Antoine Rivière, "Des pupilles ordinaires. Les enfants juifs recueillis par l'Assistance publique de Paris sous l'Occupation, (1940-1944)," *RHEI* 19, 2017, accessed February 9, 2021, https://journals.openedition.org/rhei/4047; E-mail correspondence with Antoine Rivière, February 9, 2021. Antoine Rivière's ongoing research explores the presence of Jewish children under the care of the *Assistance Publique* in the interwar period; Conversation with the author, February 8, 2022.

37 "Nouvelles locales. Nos nouveaux hôtes," *La Tribune Juive*, May 5, 1939, 278.

38 Andrée Salomon, Katy Hazan, Georges Weill, and Jean Salomon, *Andrée Salomon, une femme de lumière* (Paris: Fondation pour la mémoire de la Shoah, Le manuscrit, 2011), 90.

also facilitated by the strong friendship and family ties within the region, which remained intact despite the increasing migrations to cities such as Strasbourg, where ten thousand Jews were living in 1919.[39]

Conversely, in the Paris region, collective facilities remained the standard practice for Jewish organizations welcoming children from the *Kindertransport*. Baroness Germaine de Rothschild, founder of the *Comité israélite pour les enfants venant d'Allemagne et d'Europe centrale*, continued the tradition of Jewish summer camps by converting the Rothschild family's hunting lodge in Villeneuve-Saint-Denis into a children's home, creating the *Œuvre de la Guette* in 1939.

The Russian-Jewish OSE Union (OSE) also favored children's homes, drawing upon the experience of caring for orphans following the First World War in Eastern Europe, where collective facilities were preferred to look after an entire generation of war orphans.[40] With the financial assistance of Baroness Yvonne de Gunzbourg, a cousin of de Rothschild, the OSE opened several homes to look after German and Austrian Jewish children in Montmorency and the surrounding area. The OSE had prepared to welcome traumatized children: "The horrors and the constant fear through which they lived in Germany have left a lasting impression on their physical and mental condition."[41] OSE leaders, themselves foreigners, also anticipated that France would represent a "new and strange environment" for the children, and that their adaptation would not be an easy process. This logic justified the need for collective homes and doc-

39 Meredith Scott Weaver, "Republicanism on the Borders: Jewish Activism and the Refugee Crisis in Strasbourg and Nice," *Urban History* 43, 4 (2015): 599–617; Georges Weill, "Andrée Salomon et le sauvetage des enfants juifs (1933-1947)," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 30, no. 2 (2012): 89–112; Salomon, Hazan, Weill and Salomon, *Andrée Salomon, une femme de lumière,* 77–94.

40 The *Union des sociétés* OSE (OSE), a Jewish organization founded in Saint Petersburg in 1912, arrived in France in 1933 following a period in Berlin. OSE opened a French branch in 1934. On the history of the OSE, see the pioneering studies on France by Sabine Zeitoun, *L'Oeuvre aux Secours aux Enfants (OSE) sous l'Occupation en France* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990); Martine Lemalet, *Au secours des enfants du siècle* (Paris: Diffusion Seuil, 1993); Katy Hazan, *Les orphelins de la Shoah: Les maisons de l'espoir, 1944-1960, Histoire* 46 (Paris: Belles lettres, 2000), and more generally, Hobson Faure, "European Expectations, American Realities." On childcare practices during the First World War. see: Jaclyn Granick, "Humanitarian Responses to Jewish Suffering by American Jewish Organizations," (PhD diss., The Graduate Institute Geneva, 2015), 333–40; Martin, "How to House a Child," 30; Jaclyn Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism in the Age of the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

41 American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, New York Office Archives (JDC-NY), AR 1933-45, France, file 610, "Care for Refugee Children in France," January 3, 1939.

tors, nurses, and teachers "who know the language of the children and intimately understand their mentality."[42]

In these "total institutions," children had very little contact with the outside world, as almost all of their activities took place within them.[43] Under the supervision of educators, many of whom were interested in new pedagogical approaches, these homes became laboratories for utopian experiments. *L'Oeuvre de la Guette* and the OSE sought to recruit German-speaking staff and found themselves with educators marked by left-wing political struggles. Some had just returned from Spain, where they assisted the Republican faction in the Civil War. Baroness de Rothschild hired Ernst and Lida (Hellman) Jablonski (Jouhy), Alfred and Fritzi (Riesel) Brauner, and Harry and Irène Spiegel to work at the *Château de la Guette*. The OSE Union asked Austrian pedagogue Ernst Papanek to manage its homes.[44] While most, if not all, of these people were of Jewish origin, their approach was motivated by left-wing values and not Judaism. An in-depth analysis of their profiles suggests that the social conditions in Central Europe brought about this fruitful encounter between Jewish youth and leftist politics, and along the way, progressive pedagogy.[45]

Ernst Jablonski, Alfred Brauner, and Ernst Papanek were particularly interested in "individual psychology" developed by the Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler, a critic of Sigmund Freud. Adler's focus was the therapeutic power of groups. Following these principles, the educators created "children's republics," allowing the children to co-administer the homes. The children at *La Guette* elected their representatives, wrote a constitution, and even produced their own currency.[46] In this way, they

42 JDC-NY, AR 1933-45, France, file 610, "Care for Refugee Children in France," January 3, 1939.

43 Irving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Random House, 1968). For the use of this notion in children's homes, see: Chloé Maurel, "Yvonne Hagnauer et la Maison d'enfants de Sèvres, 1941-1970," *Revue d'histoire de l'enfance "irrégulière,"* 10 (2008): 161–7, https://journals.openedition.org/rhei/2968.

44 Jean-Christophe Coffin, "Ernst Papanek (1900-1973): Une Pédagogie à l'épreuve de la violence," in *L'Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants par-delà les frontières. Prévenir et Guérir dans un siècle de violences, 1912-1960*, ed. Laura Hobson Faure, Mathias Gardet, Katy Hazan, and Catherine Nicault (Paris: Éditions Armand Colin, 2014), 148–65; Inge Hansen-Schaberg, Hanna Papanek, and Gabriele Rühl-Nawabi, eds, *Ernst Papanek, Pädagogische und therapeutische Arbeit. Kinder mit Verfolgungs-, Flucht- und Exilerfahrungen während der NS-Zeit* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2015).

45 George Mosse, *German Jews beyond Judaism* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1996).

46 USHMM, Eric and Fee Goldfarb Collection, 2004.362, La Guette constitution. See also: The Werner Matzdorff Collection at the Mémorial de la Shoah.

furthered a progressive pedagogical tradition which had proved successful in collective facilities in the United States, the Soviet Union, Poland, and Central Europe. Children's republics were also commonplace in Spain during the Civil War.[47] In France, the *Faucons Rouges* (Red Falcons), a socialist youth group with a membership reaching two thousand during the Popular Front, also organized children's republics in its summer camps.[48]

The accounts of the children idealize their experiences in the homes, which ultimately did not last for long.[49] On September 3, 1939, France declared war against Germany, triggering the drafting and internment of several educators. It put an end to the children's republic of the *Château de la Guette*. The care of children became even more complex following the Nazi invasion of France in May 1940 with children having to be moved quickly to new homes. The children from *Château de la Guette* were moved to *La Bourboule* in Auvergne. Those from OSE homes were scattered across several new facilities in what became, following the Armistice, the unoccupied zone. Papanek was forced to flee France, as was Baroness de Rothschild. On August 26, 1942, French police came to these very homes to arrest children aged over sixteen. Eventually, it became clear that all Jewish children were targeted for deportation. Arrested children were interned, sent to Drancy, and then to the death camps, where they were murdered. The French Jewish model of collective facilities therefore became a target in 1942. To protect the children, the homes had to be closed and the children dispersed to Christian or secular institutions or foster families. These placement methods, in addition to flight to Switzerland or Spain, saved lives.

47 Till Kössler, "Children in the Spanish Civil War," in *"If you tolerate this ..." : The Spanish Civil War in the Age of Total War*, ed. Martin Baumeister and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Frankfurt a. M. and Chicago, 2008), 118–25. On this pedagogy in the post-Second World War era, see: Samuel Boussion, Mathias Gardet, and Martine Ruchat, *L'internationale des républiques d'enfants, 1939-1955* (Paris: Editions Anamosa, 2020).

48 Downs, *Childhood in the Promised Land,* 198.

49 Laura Hobson Faure, "Exploring Political Rupture through Jewish Children's Diaries: Kindertransport Children in France, 1938-42," *Journal of Modern European History,* 19, no. 3 (2021): 258–73.

Figure 1: The Chabannes home on the day of the August 26, 1942 round-up. (USHMM, Photo Archive Number: 37921)

Two Evacuations, Two Placement Approaches: The Gossels Brothers

After France was occupied, Papanek and Baroness de Rothschild found refuge in the United States. There, they reached out to people such as Cecilia Razovsky, who managed the GJCA, and also a new non-sectarian committee: the United States Committee for the Care of European Children (US COMM). After months of insistence from Papanek and the American Joint Distribution Committee, the US COMM decided to fund the evacuation of refugee children from France to the United States. The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization, managed this project in France and selected Spanish and Jewish children for evacuation. The children left France on several transports between June 1941 and July 1942 (following this date, others left directly from Lisbon). A total of 309 children left France through this system, of whom at least 253 were Jewish.[50] A large share of the Jewish children were from Central Europe and had arrived in France via *Kindertransport*.

50 Serge Klarsfeld, *French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 102–4.

These children therefore experienced a second selection and placement process, this time in the United States.

One example is the Gossels brothers, Claus (known as Peter) and Werner, born in 1930 and 1933 respectively, to a liberal, middle-class Jewish family in Berlin.[51] Their parents were divorced. Their father fled Germany and, after being interned in France, obtained a visa for Venezuela. The brothers arrived in France on the last *Kindertransport*, in July 1939. Their mother could not find a way to flee Germany and was deported to Auschwitz in February 1943, where she was murdered.

In France, the brothers remained together in children's homes, first in Quincy-sous-Senart, then in the Jewish orphanage in La Varenne. In late January 1941, most of their group was transferred from the Paris region to the OSE's *Château de Chabannes* in the Creuse *département.* This is where the brothers were selected for evacuation to the United States.[52]

The brothers arrived in New York on September 22, 1941, and were initially separated as Peter, the elder, had broken his leg on the boat and required hospital treatment upon arrival. In one of her last letters to her sons, dated November 1941, their mother wrote:

> I hope […] that you will soon be with your foster parents so that you two will no longer be separated from each other. […] As I heard, you will be placed with a family and not into a home, but I don't know anything exact about it, and I am waiting for your exact answer concerning this. In either case, whatever it may be, whether a home or a family, always be obedient and work hard! And always care for each other because you both always belong together.[53]

51 My observations on the Gossels brothers result from their files and the oral history interviews I conducted with them in July 2015, as well as our later correspondence and interview in December 2023. They provided me access to their joint OSE file, forty-two pages long, and GJCA files, containing 158 and 258 pages, respectively. See also: C. Peter R. Gossels, *Letters from our Mother* (C. Peter R. Gossels, 2019). I am using real names with the family's permission as this was important to them. For ethical reasons, I asked them to read this article before its publication and took their feedback into account. At times, I note our divergent views. This is the imperfect solution I have found to writing a history of children's experiences during the Holocaust while respecting ethical imperatives.

52 C. Peter Gossel's daughter, Lisa Gossels, directed a documentary with Dean Weatherell on this children's home, *The Children of Chabannes*, based on extensive interviews with the former Chabannes children (1999), which won an Emmy Award in 2000.

53 C. Peter Gossels' (CPG) private papers, Letter from C. Lewy to the Gossels brothers, November 10, 1941. Underlined in the original.

As their mother rightly commented, the brothers were set to be placed with a foster family. However, they were not placed together. The brothers were wards of the GJCA, and Lotte Marcuse, placement manager for this organization, was in charge of finding a solution for their care. The boys had a great-aunt and a close friend or aunt in the United States. However, according to Marcuse, these recent refugees had "nothing to offer."[54] Marcuse's goal was to "introduce" the brothers to a Jewish agency outside New York to avoid creating a surplus of refugees in this city. She therefore wrote to the Jewish child welfare association in Boston:

> C.[Peter] is an attractive boy, with light complexion, brown eyes and brown hair; his impression is that of a "light brown" child. He has some freckles, a straight nose and well cut features. He looks quite mature, really, for his 11 years. Werner is a little "imp", charming, bright and appealing. He is most attractive, has fine coloring and dimples. He does not seem worried about what we are going to do about him, but he would like to go into a family and go before his brother will be able to leave the hospital. This plan was most pleasing to Claus [Peter], and he too, was not troubled about our plans. The two boys look out for the other, and Claus [Peter] seems to take responsibility as far as any boy of his age can be expected to. […] It seems to me therefore that you have here two brothers of 11 and 8 from a middle class family in Berlin; parents are divorced, each has poor prospects for a reunion with the children. The boys are "good material" as to background and personality.[55]

The children's files reveal the ambiguous assessment criteria of this Jewish organization. First, the importance of their physical appearance is clear, with emphasis placed on their (straight) nose and the color of their skin, which suggests concerns that some children may look too "Jewish" or have a complexion that is too dark. Second, the children are referred to as "good material" as they were middle-class and had little chance of reuniting with their parents. It is, however, interesting to consider why a "poor chance of reuniting with parents" seems to have been viewed positively.[56] Indeed, the policy of family placements reflected a larger belief in

54 YIVO, German Jewish Children's Aid (GJCA) collection, file of CPG, Letter from L. Marcuse to Mrs. Margaret Esrock, October 15, 1941.

55 YIVO, GJCA collection, file of CPG, Letter from L. Marcuse to Mrs. Maletz, Jewish Child Welfare Association, Boston, October 3, 1941.

56 Werner Gossels and I debated this question during our discussion of this article. He felt it was normal that the agency would view non-unification positively, since

a child's right to *a* family. Nonetheless, *a* family did not necessarily mean *one's* family. Encouraging placements in foster families did not mean that keeping family members together was a priority for the GJCA and its partner agencies.

The Gossels brothers were ultimately placed in two different foster families in a Boston suburb. The younger of the two had a positive experience: his "foster mother" had a PhD in child psychology and he was fully integrated into the family unit. However, when Peter, the elder brother, was discharged from hospital, Werner's host mother found out that she was pregnant. There was no room for them to welcome the older brother into their home. He was sent to a foster family nearby. After three years, it was clear that this placement was not working out. There were discussions about reuniting the brothers. However, in November 1944, Peter was transferred to another placement, this time a home that welcomed three other refugee boys.[57]

The separation resulted in two very different experiences of exile for the two brothers. Only one of them forged strong ties with his foster family, which facilitated his adaptation and encouraged a sense of belonging. The older brother sought out this family connection, but never found it with his first host parents, although they did remain in his life. Instead, he put his energy into his relationship with his younger brother. Despite their situation, the brothers enjoyed a very close bond throughout their adult lives, with Peter acting as the "memorial candle," carrying the grief for their mother.[58] Just before his own death in 2019, he published a collection of letters from their mother and told their story.[59]

children without immediate family would be easier to place. I feel, however, that this attitude points to a contradiction in a social policy that presented itself as "pro-family." Online conversation with the Gossels family, June 13, 2023.

57 YIVO, GJCA collection, file of CPG, Form CC4, United States Committee for the Care of European Children, November 21, 1944; Evaluation for the study of Refugee Adjustment, May 16, 1945.

58 This concept was theorized by Dina Wardi, who suggests that one child in particular carries this burden among siblings. See: Dina Wardi, *Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust* (London and New York: Tavistock/Routledge, 1972). I also explore this issue in Hobson Faure, "Siblings in the Holocaust and its Aftermath in France and the United States," 103–14.

59 Gossels, *Letters from our Mother*.

Conclusion

Studied here through a comparative and transnational perspective, the care policies for unaccompanied Jewish children during the Holocaust demonstrate that there was no single solution in the Jewish diaspora to help these children, despite a shared religious origin. American Jews, following American social work practices, preferred placements with foster families, while Jews in France, drawing on French summer camp traditions, preferred collective facilities. This article suggests that children's migrations do not only entail an encounter with a new language and culture but also with new social systems. The children faced these challenges alone, without the assistance of their parents, only sometimes finding adults they could trust.

Some of the children who were sent to France on a *Kindertransport* were selected for a second evacuation to the United States in 1941–1942 and therefore experienced serial migrations. Many accounts idealize the stay in France in children's homes, compared to the placement conditions in the United States, suggesting that it was better to experience this migration as part of a group, with others who were going through the same situation.[60]

Jewish children continued to migrate alone in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Indeed, a substantial portion of the one hundred and eighty thousand surviving Jewish children in Europe, often orphaned and displaced, looked for a new life in the postwar period, far from the Jewish children's homes of Europe.[61] It is time to adapt our historical approaches to the transnational lives of these children, so we can give nuance to our understanding of the experiences of children during the Holocaust and its aftermath.

Translated from French by Barbara Banks

60 For example, Schuster, with Caroline A. Orzes, *Abraham's Son,* 122–83; 196–98. Werner Gossels, one of the only children in my study to remain in the same foster family until adulthood, emphasizes his positive experiences in foster care; oral history interviews July 2015, December 2023 in Boston, online conversation with the Gossels family, June 13, 2023.

61 Clifford, *Survivors: Children's Lives after the Holocaust,* 62, 89–109, and especially 110–29; Burgard, "Une nouvelle vie dans un nouveau pays."