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Displaced Children 1945 and the Child Tracing Division of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

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With the liberation of Nazi occupied Europe it became obvious that the Nazis had waged an unparalleled war against European civilisation which had also affected the children. Psychologists and social workers encountered children, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who had endured suffering on an unprecedented scale: they were displaced and separated from their families, many of whom had been murdered. According to estimates of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), the largest international aid organisation at the end of the Second World War, there were at least 6,000 children in early March 1946 in the three western zones of occupation who had no relatives and lived in assembly centres or special children's centres.[1]

Who were the Displaced Children?

The term 'displaced children' comprised minors from all population groups persecuted by the Nazis who had survived the war but were found without relatives; most importantly

- Jewish children[2] who had survived in concentration camps, in hiding with non-Jewish families or in monasteries, in partisan units,[3] or in the Soviet Union;[4]

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[1] ITS-Arol, 6.1.1/82485874: letter from Miss M. Liebeskind, Child Tracing Section, 18 February 1946. The actual number was probably far higher.

[2] For more on Jewish children during the Holocaust, see Dwork (1991). On the post-Holocaust period, see for example, Cohen (2007); Nussbaum (Noa Mkayton) (2004); Michlic (2012); Michlic (2008); Michlic (2007); Heberer (2011).

[3] See, for example, 'Three Jewish Youths in Belorussia who joined up with partisan units', Ghetto Fighters House Archives, http://www.infocenters.co.il/gfh/notebook_ext.asp?book=39221&lang=eng (accessed 20 December 2013).

[4] A wide range of testimonies by children who survived in the Soviet Union can be found in the 'Children´s Collection' in the Yad Vashem Archives, copies of which are in my possession.

- Sinti and Roma children, at the time classified as 'Gypsies';
- children of forced labourers as well as minors from Poland and the Soviet Union who had been deported to Germany to do forced labour.[5]

During the Holocaust all these children were forced to take decisions on their own – in many cases, and for Jewish children in particular, these were decisions about life or death – and they had to fend themselves for their daily survival, at an age when this is normally done by parents or close relatives. The necessity of assuming these kinds of responsibilities in an early stage of their childhood is probably one of the key reasons why many of them mourn their 'lost childhood' until today.

As a response to their persecution, many children developed skills or behavioural patterns that would increase their chances of survival. In the camps they learned to organise food, they were hiding during the selections or provided a false date of birth.[6] Many formed groups that could provide protection, mutual support and emotional stabilisation; for example, the bricklayers' schools at Auschwitz concentration camp or the *Theresienstädter Familienlager* (Terezín 'family camp'), which was liquidated in 1944, provided favourable settings for boys in particular to build small groups.[7]

The historical records show that UNRRA became only belatedly aware of two other groups of minors who, if they survived, also fell into the category of 'displaced children':

- children from Nazi occupied Europe, especially Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Netherlands, who had been snatched from their families against their will, stripped of their identity and brutally 'Germanised' in so-called *Heimschulen* (boarding schools), institutions of the *Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* (NSV, National Socialist People´s Welfare) or in homes of the *Lebensborn* society;[8]
- new-born children of female forced labourers who following racial-biological examinations did not match the criteria for 'Germanisation' and were put into *Ausländerkinder-Pflegestätten* (nursing homes for foreign children) with the sole objective to be killed.[9]

There is a consensus among scholars that children experienced the Holocaust and the war 'differently'. What effect did the traumatic events have on children and young people? What kind of psychological symptoms and physical disabilities did they display after their liberation? And what significance did the end of the war have for them?

I will use hitherto unevaluated records from UNRRA's child tracing service (also known as Child Search Branch) held in the Archives of the International Tracing Service (ITS) in Bad Arolsen, Germany to answer these questions.[10] The ITS materials include reports about a wide

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[5] Steinert (2013). It is estimated that around 1.5 million minors were victims of deportions for slave labour.

[6] Walter (2009).

[7] Buser (2011), pp. 107-220. On the formation of such groups see also the arresting discussion with Auschwitz child survivor Yehuda Bacon on 23 June 2014 at the Zeughauskino of the German Historical Museum in Berlin.

[8] Hopfer (2010); see also Heinemann (2003), pp. 508-9; and more generally Wolf (2012).

[9] Reiter (1993); Wächtler/Heike/Anschütz/Fischer (2006).

[10] I went through a large number of these files during my first visit to the ITS Archives in Arolsen in 2007, and saw further files in August 2013 at the Archive of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, which holds copies of all the ITS files.

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range of groups of children and young people in different United Nations Children Centres and contextualise the testimonies of the traumatised children and young adults given in the immediate post-war years.

UNRRA and the Displaced Children in Post-War Germany

At the end of the war more than ten million people were displaced and officially classified as displaced persons (DPs).[11] The history of UNRRA's search activities began in 1943, when the Committee on Displaced Populations of the Allied Post-War Requirements Bureaus made first steps to establish a centralised institution for the tracing of missing prisoners-of-war and civilians.[12] The Central Tracing Bureau for Europe was set up in May 1945 under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It was located at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) in Frankfurt am Main.[13] After years of imprisonment, forced labour and war, finding their children was the main priority for camp survivors, uprooted civilians and deported forced labourers:

> To the UNRRA Welfare Office came many people with diverse problems, requests and sorrows, asking for help and advice. […] Of these many problems, however, there was one that kept raising its hand, repeated often by despairing mothers and fathers requesting help in the location of their children.[14]

The number of Jewish children living in Germany at the end of the war was tiny: in July 1945 only 3.5 per cent of the c.22,400 Jewish Holocaust survivors in the British and American zones of occupation was under the age of 16.[15] The majority of Jewish children had tried to return to their countries of birth, only to learn that their entire families had been murdered, that their pre-war homes had been taken over by new residents, and that anti-Semitism was still rife. Whole groups of Jewish children were, therefore, sent to Switzerland, France, England and Scotland for rehabilitation.[16] Jewish organisations such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JOINT) or the Jewish Relief Unit took care of a large number of Jewish children inside and outside the children's centres.

UNRRA operated on three levels with regard to children and young people:

1. the Headquarters of the Child Tracing Division, located at Arolsen, northern Hesse:
   Its main work was the analysis of historical documents, and it operated as a central clearing point for all information on displaced children, especially those who were (temporarily) unaccompanied.

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[11] See Jacobmeyer (1985), pp. 41-2. Still fundamental for this question is Proudfoot (1957).

[12] ITS-Arol, 6.1.1/82492911: History of the International Tracing Service 1945-1951. On the history of UNRRA, see Woodbridge (1950).

[13] ITS-Arol, 6.1.1/82492925: History of the International Tracing Service 1945-1951.

[14] ITS-Arol, 6.1.2, Folder 1, Document-ID 82486029-82486034: UNRRA Area Team 1048 (Regensburg), The Beginning of Child Search, 12 April 1947.

[15] Wahrhaftig (1946), p. 53.

[16] Gilbert (1996); Moskovitz (1983).

2. the fieldwork:

   The cornerstone of the operations of the Child Tracing Division was the field work: staff of the UNRRA child search teams interviewed and registered unaccompanied or temporarily unaccompanied children and youths by name, age and citizenship or nationality in assembly centres and DP camps, in German child welfare institutions, children's homes and orphanages; in Bavaria, for example, in the sanatorium in Bad Wörishofen, the hospital in St. Ottilien or the 'Jewish farm project' in Reithofen where, based on the principles of *Hachshara*,[17] the youngsters prepared for emigration to what was then Mandatory Palestine under British administration.

3. the children's centres:

   After their localisation in homes, orphanages or German families the unaccompanied minors were placed in children's centres until a decision about their future had been taken. In the American zone of occupation UNRRA established at least 19 different centres for Jewish children and young people (often run in the form of *Kibbutzim* in Europe) and another ten for children and young people of all nationalities who had the legal status of a 'United Nations Displaced Person'.[18]

From January 1946, UNRRA focused its efforts specifically on the search for 'Germanised' children – if the quantity of administrative processes and correspondence can be regarded as a true reflection of the work 'on the ground'. They had to be traced in German families, in a wide range of institutions, monasteries or children's homes, and were often living together with German children convinced that they were 'German'.

Within UNRRA, the Child Tracing Division was responsible for the coordination of localisation and identification of the 'United Nations Displaced Children' all over Europe as well as for the preparation of measures for their repatriation or resettlement in third countries, assisting the military authorities. The Child Tracing Division played a vital role in the reunification of families.[19] Furthermore it was also responsible for the localisation of burial sites of dead children or the issuing of birth certificates for children who were born in DP camps.[20]

The Child Tracing Division was supported by the UNRRA Child Search Teams. The first of these teams started its work in 1946 in Regensburg, with John R. Troniak as director.[21] The main focus of the Child Search Teams was the tracing of 'Germanised' children, and they enlisted the help of German authorities which were obliged to compile lists of children in

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[17] *Hachshara* was the preparation of Jews for their emigration to Palestine, going back to the nineteenth century. The common ideological basis of this programme was Zionism, and it was propagated and supported by the Jewish youth movements.

[18] UNRRA reports show that in reality this classification between Jewish and non-Jewish children could not always be maintained.

[19] From 1947, the Child Search/Tracing Section operated under the umbrella of the International Refugee Organization (IRO). For more on the IRO, see Holborn (1956).

[20] ITS-Arol, 6.1.2/82485927: Summary Statement of United Nations Unaccompanied Children in Germany, 26 June 1946.

[21] In 1962 Troniak, who was born in the Ukraine, took over the UN Social Mission in Haiti and also worked as UN Advisor on Social Development in Tunisia. He died in 1978 in Canada, and family and friends established the John R. Troniak Bursary at the Department of Social Work of the University of Manitoba.

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their administrative region. Based on the Regensburg model, child search teams were also set up in the British Zone, where it seems that the authorities were unaware of the Nazi practice of 'Germanising' children until about March 1946.[22]

'Germanised' children were tracked down in what is called in the records 'a mass detective operation.'[23] By March 1946 ten members of the first child search team in Regensburg – together with a further seven members of a team in Munich – had already traced 1,000 children by 'trawling through' German institutions, analysing historical documents and interviewing children.[24] Whilst the latter was regarded as the most important way of locating 'Germanised' children, whether or not it was successful in every case remains open:

> A German child usually gives glib, assured answers, with no hesitation. The Germanized United Nations Children, who have been indoctrinated by the Nazis, are usually shy, embarrassed and loathe to speak freely. Often they seem stupid at first until questions are directed to them in their native tongue, when they rapidly change to their normal selves again.[25]

By May 1946 six multilingual teams were involved in the search. In June 1946 UNRRA declared that 10,000 children had been tracked in German institutions.[26] All of them were transferred to the children's centres.

In July 1945 the first UN International Children´s Center opened in the monastery in Indersdorf (near Dachau),[27] and in August another opened in Straubing (Lower Bavaria).[28] Other centres in the western zones included the Youth Centre Verden (Lower Saxony), Aglasterhausen (Baden), the Children's Center Wartenberg (Bavaria) where the children were placed who had been deported to concentration camps after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the Elisabethenheim and the 'Polish Children's Centre' in Deggendorf (Bavaria). The children's centre in Strüth (Rheinland-Pfalz) was established for the primary care of 'infiltree children', a direct response to the mass immigration of Jews to occupied Germany from central and eastern Europe.[29]

The main functions of the children's centres were the initial reception and primary care of the children and young people and their preparation for repatriation or emigration. Now it was again the adults who made the fundamental plans and took decisions on the children's future. The centres were important for the youngsters because they constituted a temporary

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[22] ITS-Arol, 6.1.1/82485920–82485921: Letter Cornelia Heise and Dorothy Pearse, 22 May 1946.

[23] ITS-Arol, 6.1.1/82485922: UNRRA finds 10,000 kidnapped children, 27 May 1946. It is estimated that up to 50,000 children had been 'Germanised' during the Nazi period.

[24] ITS-Arol, 6.1.1/82485896: Another thousand DP children found by UNRRA search teams, 30 March 1946.

[25] Ibid.

[26] ITS-Arol, 6.1.2/82485927: Summary Statement of United Nations Unaccompanied Children in Germany, 26 June 1946.

[27] Andlauer (2011).

[28] ITS-Arol, 3.3.2.1/87411602: Convalescent Home for Children in Straubing (Team 550), 17 November 1945.

[29] 'Infiltree' was the term for the more than 100,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors, mainly from eastern Europe, who illegally crossed the border to enter into Germany, Austria and Italy, often with the assistance of Jewish organisations such as the Zionist *Brichah* ((Hebrew: escape or flight), a clandestine organisation, initially set up by the leaders of Polish Zionist fighting groups, which transported Jews, mainly from Poland, either via DP camps or directly to Palestine. See Litvak (1991); Wetzel (2003), pp.75-8.

home – an intermediate stop on the way to *Eretz Israel* or back to the country from where they had been deported or forcibly taken from their families.[30] They were places of a new beginning, but also focal points of political, religious and cultural conflicts.

The centres usually operated under the administration of an UNRRA team; in the *Kibbutzim* centres they cooperated with Jewish organisations as well as with volunteer groups from abroad. In the Jewish Children's Transient Center Rosenheim, for example, several Zionist groups were active: 'Their objective was to keep burning fiercely the determination to get to Palestine, and they continually revived the extreme suffering of the Jews during the past decade.'[31]

UNRRA was also responsible for the 'renationalisation' of children and young people. This meant that they were given language or history tuition appropriate to their age, or taught the cultural traditions of their countries of birth. A report from the International Children's Center Prien/Chiemsee illustrates this occupation with 'renationalisation':

> These influences have had a telling effect regarding the repatriation of children over 12 years old who thus far have been accorded the right of choice. One of our major tasks has been, therefore, a program for renationalizing children. Where we have had adequate D.P. staff from the children´s home country […] we have had outstanding success in awakening the spirit of national pride and feeling.[32]

However, on the occasion of an UNRRA inspection of the Children´s Center Straubing the negative side of renationalisation was also emphasised:

> [T]he children all appeared to be well-fed and, with few exceptions, in good physical health. By far more distressing seemed to be the general atmosphere of tension which had developed as a result of two political currents: the influence of German teachers, German environment and German background on the one side and the pull on the past of the Polish officers [*sic*], trying to 'polonize' the children, on the other. In my opinion, both these influences were equally vicious, for the parties concerned failed to take into account the individual preferences of the children, motivated as they were by their own considerations, personal or political.[33]

Regular DP camps had special facilities for children as well: 'Unaccompanied children are cared for in DP camps with special children's services provided, or in children's centers set up especially for their care.'[34] Examples are the DP camp Amberg, which had a kindergarten,[35] the DP camp Berchtesgarden for Yugoslav children or the DP camp Föhrenwald in Wolfratshausen (Upper Bavaria), which was the largest Jewish DP camp in the American zone of occupation.

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[30] Tobias/Schlichting (2006).

[31] ITS-Arol, 3.3.2.1/87411508: Historical Report: Rosenheim Jewish Children´s Center, c.April 1947.

[32] ITS-Arol, 3.3.2.1/87411157: International Children's Center on Chiemsee, 2 August 1946.

[33] ITS-Arol, 3.3.2.1/87411599: Programme for Unaccompanied Children, Progress Report, 3 September 1945.

[34] ITS-Arol, 6.1.2/82485927: Summary Statement of United Nations Unaccompanied Children in Germany, 26 June 1946.

[35] ITS-USHMM, Folder 33: Kindergarten Report, Team 133, Amberg, 10 April 1946.

UNRRA's concepts and aims faced enormous challenges when it came to children and young people: overcoming the effects of war and persecution posed particular problems when dealing with this age group. Not only was there the unprecedented genocide of Jewish as well as Sinti and Roma children, there were also the issues of the *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic German) children whose nationality was difficult – in many cases impossible – to determine,[36] and questions concerning the repatriation of children from Silesia with its checkered multi-ethnic history. Furthermore, UNRRA staff were confronted with problems for which there was no precedence: bi-national children who had one parent of German descent, and children who after the death of their parents or for other, unknown reasons had been voluntarily given up for adoption by German families.

Experiences of Persecution as reflected in the UNRRA Files

Despite the predominantly 'positive' sentiment which is prevalent in the reports from the UNRRA children's centres, and despite the emphasis which the reports put on the fact that the children, 'for all' their traumatic experiences, displayed a high potential for rehabilitation, it can be read between the lines again and again that the Holocaust and the war had a long-lasting impact on the development of their personality. The reports document impressively the devastating war experiences of the children, and highlight that, by the end of the war, they were traumatised in many different ways. The main themes of these reports were the children's identity,[37] their sense of home, and their feelings towards their country of birth.

A report from Prien/Chiemsee is one of many which highlight that most children suffered from malnutrition and that food played a crucial role for their psychological well-being: 'it is not uncommon to find children with large heads and small bodies who appear at least five years younger than the average for their chronological age.'[38] It is, therefore, not surprising that food had become of existential importance to many of these children, regardless of their nationality:

> A psychological appetite associated with hunger has developed in a large number of children. They suffer chronic hunger even although they have sufficient food. Even small babies wish to eat, eat, eat, and scream furiously when food is not forthcoming.[39]

The reports also draw attention to 'ugly scars' which many children bore and which were testament of the brutal physical treatment which they had suffered, and comment upon the emotional and mental shock which they had experienced: 'Some children have suffered severe personality trauma and many very small children had rooted tics, denoting insecurity, e.g. continuous 'rocking', thumb-sucking, screaming, head-tossing.'[40]

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[36] *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic Germans) in the Nazi terminology were those people of German descent who lived outside the borders of the German Reich and did not have German citizenship.

[37] Michlic (2007).

[38] ITS-Arol: 3.3.2.1/87411158: International Children's Center on Chiemsee, 6 December 1946

[39] ITS-Arol: 3.3.2.1/87411158: International Children's Center on Chiemsee, 2 August 1946.

[40] ITS-Arol: 3.3.2.1/87411158: International Children's Center on Chiemsee, 6 December 1946.

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In the Landsberg DP camp (near Munich) a so-called *Kibbutz* group of unaccompanied juveniles was formed in the autumn of 1945, made up of children and young people who had arrived from Prague.[41] Following a report by Samuel G. Zisman, a former girls' school in the municipality Greifenberg in Landsberg district was set up for the accommodation of these 300 children and young people without relatives.[42] A letter from Child Welfare Officer Susan T. Pettiss illustrates that these youngsters – all of them concentration camp survivors – shared very specific characteristics:

> These kids have decided themselves to tackle dirty jobs, difficult situations so as to prepare for the time when they will go to Palestine and there make a satisfactory life out of the desert [*sic*]. They have accepted the worst barracks at other camps to clean them and bring order to them. They are well organized and want to administer and carry out their own program for living and education. They like to handle their own housekeeping and all phases of management.[43]

The UN International Children's Center Aglasterhausen (about 20 miles east of Heidelberg) officially opened on 11 September 1945 for children of all nationalities under the age of 18, with Rachel Greene, previously deployed at Karlsruhe DP camp, as its director, a Jewish couple as teachers, and a Latvian couple as house parents.[44] On 20 October 1945, the first 25 children and young people arrived, all of them Polish-Jewish concentration camp survivors, between 12 and 17 years old. Five days later, Polish-Catholic children and nine Estonian boys followed.

The UNRRA files demonstrate the ambivalent attitude of the adults towards these children. It seems contradictory that they state that the first group of children displayed hardly any behavioural disorders, but at the same time note that these children regarded the indoor toilet or tables as strange objects. According to the files the children and young people did not talk much about their past but focused on the present and future instead.[45]

From January 1946 the first 'Germanised' toddlers were placed at the Aglasterhausen children's centre. It is pointed out in the files – as in many other sources – that many of these small children had developed an emotional attachment to their German foster parents and regarded Poles as 'inferior'.

By October 1946, 120 children lived at the Aglasterhausen centre, most of them orphans. 50 of these children were Polish, the majority of them had been deported for forced labour or 'Germanisation'. Dr Josef Wielawski, a child psychiatrist sent to Aglasterhausen by the Polish Red Cross, confirmed the positive atmosphere and the good learning and cultural facilities at the centre and concluded:

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[41] ITS-Arol, 3.3.2.1/87410765: 'Kibbutz' Group of Unaccompanied Children at Landsberg, 4 October 1945.

[42] ITS-Arol, 3.3.2.1/87410767: Greifenberg accommodations for children from Landsberg, 24 November 1945. Samuel G. Zisman was director of UNRRA district Bavaria from 1945 to 1947. His papers are held at the USHMM Archives, RG-19.047.

[43] ITS-Arol, 3.3.2.1/87410767: Greifenberg accomodations for children from Landsberg, 24 November 1945. Susan Pettiss's memoirs are published: Pettiss/Taylor (2004).

[44] ITS-USHMM, Folder 33: Aglasterhausen Children´s Center, 2 August 1946.

[45] The author of this report mentions that one girl, who had been held first in a ghetto and then in a concentration camp, only developed nightmares after her emigration to the US.

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> Trying to generalize my observations I can state that although the children´s antagonism toward repatriation is not rooted deeply, still it is quite distinctly marked. […] Speaking generally the children have surrendered to the suggestions of old nationality long before they arrived in this institution. In the Center itself the influence of the Polish teachers from the German territory, hesitating greatly with their own repatriation, could not combat the previously implanted ill feelings toward the system in their country. In other words the children lived constantly in an atmosphere of distrust of and antagonism toward the situation in their homeland. […] In addition to that, the majority of the children spent about five years in Germany, in the most important period of human growth. [A]nd many times, due to an accidental welfare or good treatment, has placed their feelings in a German family [*sic*].

His recommendation was:

> Today this returning child has to be Polonized while still in Germany and has to develop attachment to the little remembered or known country [of his birth].[46]

The Jewish Children´s Transient Center Rosenheim under the administration of UNRRA Area Team 1069 opened in September 1946.[47] At first mainly Polish-Jewish children lived here, amongst them 13-year-old Leib:

> LEIB, age 13 – Family left Warsaw in 1939 for Russia and were sent to Siberia in 1940. 1941 father drafted into Russian Army. In 1942 mother 'just died'. Leib said she was 'sad but not sick'. He was placed in a children's home and his three-year-old brother in another. In the home food, clothing and heat were scarce. He frequently stole food and clothing from others. He cut wood and had to mend his own clothes. Any disobedience was punished by whipping and withdrawal of food. That´s when he stole 'in order to eat'. In 1946 he was repatriated to Poland to a children´s home, where his father found him.[48]

A letter from UNRRA Child Search Team 1006 (Ludwigsburg) to the Dutch liaison officer in Wiesbaden illustrates the coordination of the military administration (Public Welfare Branch) with UNRRA. In agreement with the liaison officers of the different countries UNRRA had the final say about the removal of 'Germanised' children from German families and their placement in the children's centres. The letter also shows the highly political decisions which were taken in accordance with the interests of the victorious powers but which had, on an individual level, a crucial impact on the future lives of these children.

Nine-year-old Edwin Backenstoss had been identified by a Polish liaison officer as a 'Polish' child, and the responsible Child Search team recommended Edwin's removal from his German family. The letter indicates that his accommodation was regarded as inadequate: 'Edwin will undoubtedly get more adequate food and care in an UNRRA Children's Center than in a German home.'[49]

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[46] ITS-USHMM, Folder 33: Report of the visit of Dr. Wielawski in Aglasterhausen Children´s Center, 9 October 1946.

[47] Tobias/Schlichting (2006), p. 49.

[48] ITS-Arol, 3.3.2.1/87411503: Jewish Children´s Transient Center Rosenheim, c.April 1947. Leib was one of the Jewish 'infiltrees' from Poland: UNRRA officials estimated that by June 1946 10,000 Eastern European Jews were arriving in the American zone every month, and that the number of Jews in the American zone had reached 200,000, with over 8,000 of them children.

[49] ITS-Arol, 3.3.2.1/87410857: Recommendation for the Removal of an Allied Nation´s child from a German Home, 5 June 1947.

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A similar case was Angelika Thomassen, daughter of a Norwegian father and a German mother, who had both been killed during an air raid on Frankfurt am Main in 1944.[50] After the death of her parents the girl lived with her German grandmother. UNRRA determined the girl's nationality as Norwegian, but also pointed out:

> The grandmother, Frau Bertha Frauenrieder, does not want to give up Angelika. She is very fond of her and gives her a great deal of affection and care. Angelika attends the local primary school.[51]

However, despite this positive assessment the UNRRA Child Search Team recommended on 29 May 1947 that Angelika be removed from the family on the grounds that

> Angelika's grandmother with whom she is presently living has no legal rights on her. The person who does have these rights is her Norwegian Legal Guardian […]. Although Angelika seems to be quite comfortably situated now, we consider that the child has more to gain and will be more secure living in her own country. The sooner Angelika can be repatriated, the less she will be affected by the change.[52]

This correspondence shows as do many other files that in some cases the interests of nominal countries of origin took priority over the well-being of the child. Angelika's case took a further twist: by 1948 she actually lived in the US, and her UNRRA file closes with this report:

> Angelika is very happy, is doing well, and my husband and I love her. […] We pity the family down in Germany who had to let her go, but as it is in Germany today, we are very glad to have her over here.[53]

The Wartenberg Children´s Center, initially called 'Polish Boys School', run by UNRRA Team 556, opened on 1 November 1945. In early 1946, 55 Polish boys arrived in Wartenberg, all survivors of Mauthausen concentration camp; they had been arrested during the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 and had first been deported to the Mauthausen satellite camp Melk before being transferred to the main camp. A report describes this group:

> A cigarette in the mouth and hands in the pockets – this was the picture of these boys one year ago. […] They were over-nationalized. They remained in an isolated group. Their security lay in that group and they could see no future except as members of that group.[54]

English social workers, who worked with child survivors in Great Britain, also commented upon children who had formed groups to seal themselves off from the adults.[55] In addition others had given false names and false personal details when they were interrogated by UNRAA staff.[56] Social worker Elisabeth Zadek concluded:

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[50] ITS-Arol, 6.3.2.1/84538810: File Angelika Thomassen.

[51] ITS-Arol, 6.3.2.1/87410839: Hans Frauenrieder Home, Langebruecken, Kreis Bruchsal, Badstrasse 19, 29 May 1947.

[52] ITS-Arol, 6.3.2.1/87410840: Hans Frauenrieder Home, Langebruecken, Kreis Bruchsal, Badstrasse 19, 29 May 1947.

[53] ITS-Arol, 6.3.2.1/84538833: Norwegian Unaccompanied Child Angelika Thomassen, 7 January 1948.

[54] ITS-Arol, 3.3.2.1/87411825–87411848: Report on operation of Children's Center Wartenberg, 1 April 1947.

[55] One of the best known examples is the one discussed by Freud/Dann (1951).

[56] Wolffheim (1958), p. 307.

> Perhaps the worst that Belsen and Buchenwald have done to these children is the fact that they have lost their faith in their fellow men and their promises.[57]

She described one particular case:

> A nine-year-old lad, who was known to have been hidden before he was deported to a concentration camp, talks a great deal about death, killing, maltreatments. However, to some extent as if it had been an interesting adventure. [...] Dennie was about 4 years old when he came to Windermere [in Cumbria], now he is 6 years old – a gentle, peculiar child with fair curly hair and a dark lost look in his eyes. [...] On one occasion, when he received a small toy telephone for his birthday, he said: 'Aren't I lucky that I haven't been killed as a baby? Otherwise I would never have got the telephone.' He asks his carer: 'Do you know that my parents were shot dead?'[58]

The majority of the children in the children centres were orphans, and almost all of them had at some point been confronted with death or the parting from a close relative. Rarely was their behaviour how adults expected it of children and young people:

> It was always important to keep in mind that they were not children any longer but not yet fully grown-ups either. They lagged extremely behind in their knowledge of the normal world and in the practice of conventional social relationships. However, they were infinitely better trained than any generation of children before them with regard to craftiness and cleverness, how to take care of themselves and their comrades, and in their knowledge of primitive hunger and ulterior motives and how to take advantage of these.[59]

Loss, Separation, Identity

At the end of the war in 1945 children and young people were traumatised in many different ways and displayed a wide range of behavioural disorders. According to child analyst and therapist Sarah Moskovitz,

> [a]ll were veterans of persecution stress, of tragic sudden separations, and disappearances of loved ones. They had survived starvation, cold, and illness without proper care. [. . .] For them, childish fears of abandonment, annihilation, and hostile adults were reality, not fantasy.[60]

Stealing, feeling forced to give false personal details, living in hiding or under a false identity and experiencing adults as a threat to their existence had a lasting impact on the children. The younger they were the more questions they asked about their identity. For many Jewish children who had survived by living for years in non-Jewish families or monasteries, the answer to the question: 'Who am I?' was their main concern, and the issue of home was central in this respect.[61]

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[57] Ibid.

[58] WL, P. IV. d. No. 866: Elisabeth Zadek, 'About Children who survived the Concentration Camps', 1948, pp. 5-6.

[59] Macardle (1949), p. 246.

[60] Moskovitz (1985), pp. 401-7.

[61] Michlic (2007).

proof

According to psychologist Hans Keilson, who worked with child survivors after the war, the one crucial difference between child and adult survivors is that the Holocaust became an integral part of the children´s individual development.[62] One example is Otto Dov Kulka's *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death*, which goes far beyond the traditional boundaries between memory and reflected memories.[63] Kulka, a child survivor of Auschwitz and a well-known Holocaust historian, reflects on his sensual associations with Auschwitz in short fragments. For example, he describes the intense blue of the sky above the death camp: the feelings he had in 1944 when watching this blue sky above Auschwitz on this particular summer day remained connected with his sense of beauty for the rest of his life. Sensual associations like these are typical phenomena of child survivors. Other episodes in this book show that for Kulka Auschwitz is a repository of images and memories – the *Metropolis of Death* – over which the immutable Law of Death rules.

Witness testimonies reveal that in some cases Jewish and non-Jewish children suffered a second, unintended trauma during liberation. It was only then that many of them realised that they were left on their own, that quite often their whole family had been murdered. Children who had survived in hiding were often not aware that they were Jewish, or that the people they regarded as their parents were not their biological parents, and they now had to cope with the distress of separation and the move to an unfamiliar location.

Jewish child survivor Max A. L. recounts that he lived in a family as a non-Jewish child during the Holocaust. He has positive memories of this time. Only after the liberation did he become aware of the Holocaust in its full dimension. A stranger stood in front of him, his father, of whom he had no memories whatsoever. The boy had to leave the people he regarded as his family. He was also told – as were many others – to count himself lucky: after all, he had survived the Holocaust. Another child survivor states: 'My war began in 1945.'[64]

'Germanised' children who had become part of German adoptive or foster families were returned to Poland. Many of them never felt at home there. 'My personal war lasted longer than until May 1945', emphasises Barbara Paciorkiewicz, 'how often did I asked myself where my place is on this earth, and who I actually am: Pole or German?'

Barbara Paciorkiewicz, who lives in Łódź today, was also told after the war that she was not a child of what for her was her family. In mid-November 1947 the Child Tracing Division received a list of 'Germanised' children, and Barbara's name was among them. Thus a link could be established to a tracing request of Barbara's grandmother, Katarzyna Kossak, who had contacted the Polish Red Cross and the Child Tracing Service. On 8 November 1946 the Child Tracing Division got in touch with Barbara for the first time, and about a year later it had established for sure that Barbara was indeed Katarzyna Kossak's granddaughter. In January 1948 the girl was taken away from the German family in Lemgo and transferred to a DP camp in the south of Germany. The girl, by now ten years old, finally left Germany on 12 June 1948 and arrived in Katowice, in Poland, on 20 June. Barbara remembers about this time:

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[62] Keilson (1999), pp. 132-7.

[63] Kulka (2013).

[64] Dwork (1991).

> I came to Poland in 1948, ten years old. I actually thought it was just a short trip to Poland. I regarded the family I lived with [in Lemgo] as my parents. I did not know that they were not really my parents and they never told me that I was not a child of theirs.[65]

Some of those 'Germanised' children only learn today, with the passing of their 'parent' generation, that their biological relatives are not living in Germany but in Poland or other countries. Therefore, it is not much of a surprise that many children who lived in German families do not regard their liberation by Allied troops as a positive experience in their personal life history.

Most children, who were persecuted during the Holocaust and liberated in 1945, found new homes and families, but their past weighed arguably heavily upon them: none of them ever became 'free' in the sense that they were 'released' from the harrowing past.

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