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Child Survivors and Displaced Children in the Aftermath Studies

An Overview

Der Beitrag gibt eine kurze, überblicksartige Einführung in die Geschichte der *Child Survivors* und reflektiert den aktuellen Forschungsstand zum Thema *Displaced Children* in den *Aftermath Studies*. Ausgehend von den historischen Akten des *Child Search Branch* (Kindersuchabteilung) des *International Tracing Service* werden Aktivitäten und Hilfsmaßnahmen der größten transnational operierenden Hilfsorganisation (UNRRA) für Kinder und Jugendliche nach Kriegsende untersucht. Am Ende steht die Frage: Können die Methoden und Instrumente von damals als *Best-Practice-Modell* für heute dienen?

After entering the ITS archive for the first time in 2007 and while analyzing files, it was most astonishing to the author that the first and largest aid organization that entered liberated Germany – the *United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration* (UNRRA) – had no elaborated master plan to deal with those whom we call today naturally *Child Survivors*, apart from the general plan to repatriate them into their home country, resettle them and to reunite them with their relatives.¹ Both allied military forces and social welfare staff of UNRRA in the field were at first not sufficiently prepared for the confrontation with massive devastations and unprecedented atrocities conducted by National Socialist Germany. Guidelines, appropriate strategies and principles had to be developed on the basis of *learning by doing*. UNRRA's care for the DP children in general, and for the *unaccompanied children* in particular, was therefore a historical process, combined with the formulation and application of tailored methods, with recurring failures.²

Among the challenges UNRRA explicitly met regarding minors after liberation was mass displacement, questions of establishing a child's identity, the problem of statelessness, separation of a child from its relatives, and children on

1 In the files the term *unaccompanied children* was used for those without legal guardians or separated from families and relatives. For all other minors UNRRA used generally the term / expression *children* (who were regarded as minors until their 18th birthday) or Displaced Children.

2 Verena Buser: »Die Child Search and Registration Teams der UNRRA«, *Nurinst* 2015, *Jahrbuch des Nürnberger Instituts für NS-Forschung und jüdische Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Nürnberg 2016, pp. 75-88.

the run without relatives (called *unaccompanied children* then). Among them were Jewish minors, condemned to death under an anti-Semitic policy,³ which resulted in the murder of at least six million European Jews, 1.5 million of them children. They survived the widespread Nazi concentration camp system, round-ups, or mass killings all over Europe, in hiding, such as with foreign families, in monasteries, in partisan units⁴ or in the Soviet Union.⁵ Moreover, children of Sinti and Roma, then classified as »Gypsies«, and children of forced laborers were persecuted, imprisoned, and murdered. Minors from Poland, the Soviet Union, the Netherlands, and Yugoslavia⁶ were deported for *Germanization* reasons. Between 1933 and 1945 all of these children had been victims of a unique atrocity against »non-Aryan« children and teenagers in general, and against Jewish children and teenagers in particular.

Generally speaking, under the auspices of military governments in the Western occupation zones the care and repatriation preparation for Displaced Persons and Displaced Children – both used in the following as a legal term – then was a transnational project, first and foremost initiated by the then world's largest transnational operating relief organization, the UNRRA, already founded in 1943 in the United States. New and innovative post-conflict instruments, principles and methodologies regarding interviews with genocide survivors for several reasons and aims⁷ were developed in the immediate post-war years, which are in the author's eyes even relevant for today.⁸

Soon after starting its work in Europe, UNRRA established in January 1946 with the *Child Tracing Division* a separate unit in its *Central Tracing Bureau*,

3 Fundamental on children during the Shoah: Deborah Dwork: *Children with a Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe*, New Haven 1991; Noa Barbara Nussbaum (Noa McKayton): *Für uns kein Ausweg. Jüdische Kinder und Jugendliche in ihren Schrift- und Bildzeugnissen aus der Zeit der Shoah*, Heidelberg 2004; Patricia Heberer: *Children during the Holocaust Documenting Life and Destruction*. Holocaust Sources in Context, Series published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC 2011.

4 One example: Berl Finkel and Yehuda Melamedik, who survived with the *Battalion Max* in Belo Russia: http://www.infocenters.co.il/gfh/notebook_ext.asp?book=39221&lang=eng (accessed 20.12.2013).

5 An impressive example is the *Children's Collection* in the Yad Vashem Archives (copies in the author's possession). The majority of the children who were interviewed in DP centers survived in the Soviet Union.

6 UNRRA did not exactly distinguish between the concrete countries while ascertaining a child's nationality. Thus, in the historical sources most often »Yug.« was used for children of Croatian or Bosnian origin for example.

7 Laura Jockusch: *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe*, Oxford 2012

8 Verena Buser: »No Stone is Left Unturned. Die Entwicklung neuartiger Instrumentarien zur Kindersuche und -fürsorge nach dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs«, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 12, 2016, pp. 1059-1076.

acknowledging the fact that the Second World War and the Holocaust were atrocities against the civil populations of Europe which targeted directly both Jewish and non-Jewish minors, and resulted in child-specific persecution reasons – the murder and »hunt« for Jewish children in concentration camps or in ghettos within the »final solution« (called *Kinderaktionen*), the deportation of Polish and other nationalities for *Germanization* reasons, the recruitment of forced laborers of minor age⁹ – which had an impact on children as such. Even though the *Child Tracing Division*, which changed its name several times and is known today as the *Child Search Branch* (Kindersuchdienst), was mainly responsible for searching and tracing issues with the overall goal of family reunion, its implementation as such proved that the UN stakeholders responded to the child-specific persecution by the National Socialist regime and gave child protection issues a central position in their everyday work.¹⁰ Thus, the erection of the *Child Tracing Division* was a response to the historical circumstances¹¹ even though it was originally not part of the overall conceptual considerations of the UNRRA founders.¹² Also its successor – the *International Refugee Organization* (IRO) – having continued the work since summer 1947,¹³ additionally refined and elaborated existing child protection methodologies. Cornerstones of both, which included registration and ascertainment of age and nationality and the transfer of (temporarily) unaccompanied minors to United Nations Children's Centers, were crucial for further steps regarding a child's future. With a view on aspects related to Displaced Children in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the Second World War, the paper will address the number of Displaced Children, give an introduction to the topic of *Child Survivors*, discuss the state of historical research, and look at the historical situation of Child Survivors and the tremendous challenges with which UNRRA was confronted after liberation.¹⁴ Finally the author will raise the question, of whether there are

- 9 Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Deportation und Zwangsarbeit. Polnische und sowjetische Kinder im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland und im besetzten Osteuropa 1939-1945*, Essen 2013. Steinert illuminates also the complexities between forced labor and Germanization.
- 10 Due to a gap in the history of the UN it is not yet clear how the 1951 decision and the exclusion of children occurred, but one could assume that today in 2017, when the largest number of human beings is uprooted since that time, the United Nations is aware of its refugee history.
- 11 Buser: »Child Search and Registration Teams der UNRRA«.
- 12 George Woodbridge: *The History of United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*, 3 Vol., New York 1950.
- 13 Christian Höschler, *The IRO Children's Village Bad Aibling. A Refuge in the American Zone of Germany, 1948-1951*, Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der Philosophie an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Oktober 2016.
- 14 The term *Child Survivor* comprises those children and teenagers who were not older than sixteen years of age at the end of the Second World War. Sharon Kangisser Cohen:

conclusions from the past which can serve as a model for today's challenges regarding child refugees, using the potential of the historical *Child Search Branch* files. Never have more children and teenagers been on the run and lived displaced than like in 2017.

The Number of Displaced Children

How many children and young people fell under UNRRA care after the end of the war? The definition provided that a child up to 17 years of age and being the national of a country belonging to the United Nations was eligible. Valid figures for the first few months after the liberation, which could provide information on the number of children on German soil, hardly exist, which is not least due to the fact that the Western occupiers practiced a heterogeneous policy with regard to the search and care for children. As a matter of fact, the US and British welfare policies for minors were relatively uniform. The search for children and young people in the French zone was in the hands of military authorities, the Department for Prisonniers, Déportés et Réfugiés.¹⁵ In the Soviet zone, UNRRA had no mandate, even if there was a search office controlled by the occupying power in Berlin-Mitte. Zorach Wahrhaftig, who wrote a report on the situation of the Jewish DPs in 1946, estimated that in July 1945 only 3.5 per cent of the 22,400 Jewish survivors were under 16 years of age (784 children and young people).¹⁶ In February 1946 the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) recorded around 360 children aged between one and five years.¹⁷ By February 1946, 4,843 children had been registered as *unaccompanied* in the US zone: 3,463 of them were Jewish children, 1,174 Polish children (586 of whom were Jewish), 450 were considered »Baltic« (among them 60 Jewish), and 269 came from Yugoslavia (88 of them Jewish children). In regular DP camps— where the youngsters were living among adult DPs – 51,387 children were younger than 14; of these, 27,185 were under six years of age.¹⁸ At the

Child Survivors of the Holocaust in Israel. Social Dynamics and Post-War Experiences: Finding Their Voice, Sussex 2005.

15 Inter-Zone Child Welfare Conference, UNRRA Central Headquarters, Hoechst, January 3-4, 1946, 6.1.2/82489079#1, ITS Digital Archives, Bad Arolsen (ITSA).

16 Zorach Wahrhaftig: *Uprooted: Jewish Refugees and Displaced Persons after Liberation*, New York 1946, p. 53.

17 Jewish Population in U. S. Zone of Germany effective December 31, 1946, Wiener Library, HA5-3/4. Table. 30 Dec 1946.

18 Monthly Report – Child Welfare, February 1946, United Nations Archive (UNA), S-0437-0016-07. I wish to thank Dr. Boaz Cohen, Western Galilee College/Akko, for sending these documents.

beginning of January 1946, 90,000 Polish children were said to have resided in Germany.¹⁹ At the beginning of March 1946, at least 6,000 children and young people without relatives were living in assembly centers or special interceptions, the Children's Centers, 4,900 of them in the US zone alone in the western occupation zones.²⁰ From the statistics for the date of handing over the welfare care tasks for the DP population of UNRRA to the IRO in Europe on July 1, 1947, 4,090 children were registered as *unaccompanied*;²¹ 728 of them lived in the US, and 633 in the British zone. 1,417 were Polish children.

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ons?

Child Survivors – An Introduction

Today scholarly research on the aftermath of the Shoah and World War II without age – related questions is barely imaginable anymore. Meanwhile there now exists a widespread scholarly interest in the history of Displaced Children and *Child Survivors* in the wider field of *Aftermath Studies*.²² However, this was not true for many years; the experiences of non-Jewish children and Jewish *Child Survivors* have been underrepresented for decades after the time of liberation. Even though, in the immediate post-war period, Jewish survivors who were active in *Jewish Historical Commissions* throughout Europe proved to be keen observers of child-related topics²³ as early as 1944/45 and documented

19 Inter-Zone Child Welfare Conference, UNRRA Central Headquarters, Hoechst, January 3-4, 1946, 6.1.2/82489109#1/ ITSA. It is unclear whether the figures count for liberated Germans only or if Austrian numbers are included. Moreover, it is not said whether Jewish minors are included.

20 Miss M. Liebeskind, Child Tracing Section, to Colonel J.R. Bowring, 4.3.1946, in: 6.1.2/ 82485875/ ITSA.

21 Louise Wilhelmine Holborn: *The International Refugee Organization: A Specialized Agency of the United Nations. Its History and Work 1946-1952*, Oxford 1956, p. 495.

22 The topic's inclusion into pedagogy is quite new; see learning materials of the ITS: International Tracing Service (ed.): *Child Search Branch. »Im Ganzen erholen sich die Kinder gut [...] Sie wünschen sich einen Neuanfang.«* (Displaced Persons-Pädagogische Handreichung, Nr. 3), Bad Arolsen, 2014, 30 p. (https://www.its-arolsen.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Infothek/Paedagogik/Paedagogische_Handreicherung_Displaced_Persons_3.pdf, last accessed 1. 4. 2017); International Tracing Service (ed.): *Ich bin alleine, zwischen fremden Menschen. Kinder und Jugendliche als Verfolgte und Opfer des nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, Bad Arolsen 2012.

23 Boaz Cohen, »The Children's Voice: Postwar Collection of Testimonies from Child Survivors of the Holocaust«, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 21, 2007, pp. 73-95; Boaz Cohen and Beate Müller: »The 1945 Bytom Notebook: Searching for the Lost Voices of Child Holocaust Survivors«, *Jahrbuch des International Tracing Service*, 2, 2013, pp. 122-137; Joanna B. Michlic: »Jewish Children in Nazi-occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations during the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections«, *Search and Research. Lectures and Papers*, Jerusalem 2008; Joanna B. Michlic: »The Raw

experiences which were raised in historical scholarship only decades later.²⁴ Step by step, since the 1980s, child-specific questions have been incorporated into academic research. Several interrelated developments of the last few years led to the fact that today a broad research about children exists:

1. The self-perception of those who are called *Child Survivors* as survivors of the Holocaust.²⁵ As they grew older, they started to reflect more closely their past. Reasons include the desire to pass on the own experiences to the next generation, and search for relief before one's life comes to a close. Many of the *Child Survivors* have published their memoirs in the past years, or have come to the public telling their life stories.
2. For about twenty years, both the academic and the non-academic public have repeatedly been reminded that the last witnesses of the Holocaust will soon be unable to bear witness, which means that their authentic and personal voice will be missing. This raised a focused awareness of the experiences of those still living today and who were children then.²⁶
3. Over the past few years questions of (Jewish) Social History – in Israel and the United States since decades naturally part of research – have got more and more in the focus of historiographical works, just recently also in Germany; especially gender-specific research questions are now considered self-evident. In the course of the expansion of Social History, age-specific questions also became part of the experienced history (*Erlebnisgeschichte*) during the Holocaust.

Memory of War: the Reading of Early Postwar Testimonies of Children in Dom Dziecka in Otwock«, *Yad Vashem Studies*, 37, 2009, pp. 11-52; Joanna B. Michlic: »Rebuilding Shattered Lives: Some Vignettes of Jewish Children's Lives in Early Postwar Poland«, in: Dalia Ofer/Françoise S. Ouzan/Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz (eds.), *Holocaust Survivors: Resettlement, Memories, Identities*, New York 2012, pp. 46-78.

²⁴ Laura Jockusch: *Collect and Record!*

²⁵ More generally on the questions »Who is a Survivor?«: Alina Bothe and Markus Nesselrodt: »Survivors: Politics and Semantics of a Concept«, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 61, New York, 2016, pp. 57-82.

²⁶ There is no valid information about the number of survivors of the Shoah worldwide still living today. At least for Israel it is estimated that in 2015 there were some 143,900 survivors alive, for 2025 approximately 46,900 survivors. Jenny Brodsky/Assaf Sharon/Yaron King/Shmuel Be'er/Yitschak Shnoor: *Holocaust Survivors in Israel: Population Estimates, Demographic, Health and Social Characteristics, and Needs*, Jerusalem 2010 (<http://brookdale.jdc.org.il/?CategoryID=192&ArticleID=161>) (accessed 4. 1. 2017). Additionally, there is a higher awareness for those who were born in camps and who yet cannot speak about concrete events but about the long-term consequences for their individual development. See for children born in a subcamp of Dachau: Eva Gruberová/Helmut Zeller: *Geboren im KZ. Sieben Mütter, sieben Kinder und das Wunder von Kaufering I*, München 2011.

Germany acknowledged Jewish *Child Survivors* as such on a political level only in 2014 with the erection of the *Child Survivor Fund*, after years of negotiations between the *Jewish Claims Conference*, Child Survivor organizations and the government of the Federal Republic.²⁷ But even this fund has its limits, as only the date of birth appears relevant and not the beginning of the persecution or the internment in a ghetto or camp. That led to the fact that some survivors who were »already« 18 or 19 in 1945 are not eligible for the fund today.

State of Historical Research Regarding Childhood in the *Aftermath Studies*

In the field of *Refugee* or *Aftermath Studies* it has become apparent that children were a distinct group among the survivors and liberated civilians in Europe. One of the first publications to address the specific situation of children as survivors was Dorothy Macardle's *Children of Europe* which was published as early as 1949 and provides an overview of Jewish and kidnapped (Polish and Czech) children after the Holocaust.²⁸ By 1947 three anthologies had been published, as members of the Jewish Historical Commissions had a specific interest in children's murder, persecution and survival, as Boaz Cohen could show.²⁹ Kirył Sosnowski's synthesis of children's and teenagers' experiences after the rise of the National Socialist regime was published in Poland in 1962 and focused on several aspects, such as the education of German children, and provided an extensive overview of measures against minors, and the extermination of Jewish children and those who were murdered in the »Euthanasia« program.³⁰ Additionally, he published transcripts of German perpetrator sources which targeted specifically children. According to Israeli historian Rakefet Zalashik it has only been since the 1970s that *Child Survivors*, at least in Israel and in the USA, have been regarded as a group with specific persecution experiences – around the same time when the *Second Generation* in scholarly literature was already perceived as a distinct group which suffered from a trans-generational trauma.³¹

27 <http://www.claimscon.org/what-we-do/compensation/background/child-survivor-fund/> (accessed 1. 4. 2017).

28 Dorothy Macardle: *Children of Europe. A Study of Liberated Countries: Their War-time Experiences, their Reactions, and their Needs, with a Note on Germany*, London 1949.

29 Boaz Cohen, »Representing the Experiences of Children in the Holocaust: Children's Survivor Testimonies Published in Fun Letsten Hurbn, Munich, 1946-49«, in: Avinoam J. Patt/Michael Berkowitz, »*We Are Here*«: *New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*, Detroit 2010, pp. 74-97, here p. 75

30 Kirył Sosnowski: *Dziecko w systemie hitlerowskim*, Warszawa 1962.

31 Rakefet Zalashik: Differenziertes Trauma: Die (Wieder)Entdeckung der Child Survivor-Kategorie, *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, 39, 2011, pp. 116-133.

Historians and scholars of related disciplines have come more or less since the 1980s to reconstruct the experiences of children during the Nazi regime. Deborah Dwórk's research as of 1991 is still fundamental. One of her research focuses was the question about the (self-)identity of Jewish children who had survived in hiding across Europe. Only after their liberation did a great number learn that they were of Jewish origin or had lost their whole families.³² Joanna B. Michlic could show that especially toddlers – whose survival has been rare during the Holocaust – were faced with a great confusion about their Jewish identity.³³ In recent years, especially since the commemoration events in 2005, historians have come to reconstruct in monographs foremost the experiences of surviving Jewish children in the aftermath of the Holocaust.³⁴ One crucial reason for the late attention might be the lack of accessibility of sources from Eastern or Southeastern Europe before the fall of the wall and related to that a lack of needed language skills.³⁵ In 2007 the careful examination of Polish-Jewish children's experiences after the war and problems in regaining their Jewish identity was examined by Joanna B. Michlic through the analysis of Polish child survivors' testimonies. In the same year Israeli historian Boaz Cohen contributed to this field with his examination of the collection of children's testimonies in liberated Bergen-Belsen. In analyzing testimonies collected immediately after liberation, both studies are most impressive works, reflecting the situation and experiences of children during and after liberation.³⁶ With a focus on Eastern and Central Europe Joanna Michlic just recently edited a volume on the history

32 Dwórk, *Children with A Star*.

33 Joanna B. Michlic: »Who Am I? The Identity of Jewish Children in Poland, 1945-1949,« *Polin*, 20 (Making Holocaust History), 2007, pp. 98-121.

34 To list all the existing scholarly literature would exceed the scope of this paper. The author is aware of the fact that there is a broad academic literature on Jewish children during and after the Holocaust. Most of it was written during the last two decades. Examples include Avinoam Patt, Margarete Myers Feinstein, Ada B. Schein, Beth B. Cohen, and Susanne Urban.

35 For the reconstruction of the childhood experiences during the Holocaust, testimonies are crucial, since children are only rarely found in the sources of the perpetrators. Relevant sources – the majority in English – are found in Oral History archives such as the Shoah Foundation and the Fortunoff video archives, but also in Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC – an estimated total of 150,000 reports. The method of oral history is often critically examined especially in Germany. The book by the historian Christopher Browning on the forced labor camp, Starachowice, which is almost exclusively based on the survivors' testimony, now alters this situation gradually in Germany. Christopher Browning: *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp*, New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010. See also: Jürgen Matthäus (ed.), *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor: Holocaust Testimony and its Transformations*, Oxford 2009.

36 Michlic: *Jewish Children in Nazi-occupied Poland*; Cohen: *The Children's Voice*.

of Jewish families since 1939 which demonstrates how the war and the Holocaust, and their aftermath, affected Jewish families and communities. Meanwhile, the 2011 book by Tara Zahra *The Lost Children* became standard for a profound insight into child history, specifically the social history of childhood after the Second World War. Zahra convincingly argues in her impressive research on the reconstruction of European families after the war that although children were a minority among the millions of Displaced Persons in Europe, the attention they received by national governments, relief organizations and the allies outpaced their numbers by far. She focuses on the massive political, ethical and cultural conflicts regarding children after the Holocaust and gives a glimpse on the »struggles« between the UNRRA and the *International Refugee Organization* (IRO) on one side, and Jewish organizations on the other side concerning Jewish children and their future ways.³⁷ A great overview of the experiences of both Jewish and non-Jewish, and additionally minors from the German side, is given by Patricia Heberer in her book *Children during the Holocaust*.³⁸ Other researchers like Margarete Myers-Feinstein and Atina Grossmann discuss children in the context of their primary research on Displaced Persons in general.³⁹ More recent research on child-related aspects in the aftermath are the studies of Daniella Doron on Jewish families in France and Mary Fraser Kirsh about child care efforts after the war in Great Britain.⁴⁰

Until recently little attention only has been given to the Children's Centers of the UNRRA in the Western occupation zones. Most often they are mentioned in historical scholarship as a side aspect within the broader frame of the history of children after or within the wider history of Jewish life in liberated Germany. One of the few exceptions is Jim G. Tobias' »*Heimat auf Zeit – Jüdische Kinder in Rosenheim 1946-47*«⁴¹ which is a study of one of the largest Jewish Children's

37 Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II*, Cambridge 2011. Tara Zahra: »Lost Children: Displacement, Family and Nation in Postwar Europe«, in: *Journal of Modern History* 81, 2009, pp. 45-86, here p. 82

38 Patricia Heberer: *Children during the Holocaust*.

39 Margarete Myers Feinstein: *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany*, Cambridge 2014; Atina Grossmann: *Jews, Germans and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany*, Princeton 2007.

40 Daniella Doron: *Jewish Youth and Identity in Postwar France: Rebuilding Family and Nation*, Bloomington 2015. Daniella Doron: »A Drama of Faith and Family«: Familialism, Nationalism, and Ethnicity among Jews in Postwar France,« *Journal of Jewish Identities* 4, 2, 2011, pp. 1-27. Other researchers include: Jessica Lenz (University of Heidelberg) on the question of Displaced Unaccompanied Children in Germany after Second World War: How was UNRRA to Deal with? and Anke Kalkbrenner's (Center for Jewish Studies Berlin-Brandenburg) work Jewish Childhood in Eastern Germany after 1945. See also the paper by Mary Fraser Kirsh in this book.

41 Jim G. Tobias and Nicola Schlichting, *Heimat auf Zeit. Jüdische Kinder in Rosenheim 1946-47*, Nürnberg 2006.

Centers in Bavaria. He was not only the first to publish on that subject but also developed a webpage with a differentiated picture of all DP camps which existed for surviving Jews in liberated Germany.⁴² In 2011, Anna Andlauer's book *Zurück ins Leben – Das internationale Kinderzentrum Kloster Indersdorf 1944-1946* provided a detailed study of the first Children's Center that was established in Germany.⁴³ It is based mainly on the memories of Greta Fischer, an UNRRA field worker who was born in Bohemia to a Jewish family, and testimonies given by former DP children, who used to stay there.⁴⁴ Especially the current research of German historian Ina Schulz will add to our knowledge on this topic as she conducts research in US-American, Israeli, and German archives to give a broad overview of the Jewish Children's Centers in occupied Germany. Focusing on the IRO, German historian Christian Höschler⁴⁵ will publish soon his research on the Children's Village in Bad Aibling, which existed between 1948 and 1951 in Bavaria. The overwhelming response to the *Call for Papers* for the joint workshop of the ITS and the Max Mannheimer Studienzentrum in 2016 showed that in the forthcoming years a broad research literature on child-related studies after the Holocaust can be expected to be published.

The Historical Situation: Child Survivors after Liberation

The founding of UNRRA in 1943 in the USA was equivalent to the implementation of the largest international welfare program with the aim of its long-term stabilization.⁴⁶ With the establishment of the UNRRA, responsibilities for Displaced Persons – using the term DP as a legal status – were separated from the cognizance for the German population. Thus, UNRRA was exclusively responsible for the former persecuted adults and minors, the German Red Cross for the search for and supply of German expellees and refugees.⁴⁷ This distinction was fundamental, but especially with children not always tenable in reality. Everyday fieldwork confronted relief workers with unprecedented questions and challenges, aggravated especially by questions regarding the future

42 www.aftertheshoah.org (accessed 4. I. 2017)

43 Anna Andlauer, *Zurück ins Leben. Das internationale Kinderzentrum Kloster Indersdorf 1945-46*, Nürnberg 2011.

44 Greta Fischer Papers, in: USHMM Archives, RG-19.034.

45 See the paper of Christian Höschler in this book.

46 Philipp Weintraub: »UNRRA: An Experiment in International Welfare Planning«, *The Journal of Politics*, 7, 1945, pp. 1-24.

47 Rainer Schulze, Pertti Ahonen, Gustavo Corni, Jerzy Kochanowski, Tamás Stark and Barbara Stelzl-Marx (eds.), *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and its Aftermath*, London/Oxford 2008.

plans for minors. They found survivors of the Holocaust and the genocide on Sinti and Roma, forced laborers, who defended themselves – sometimes with force – against their repatriation; they had to deal with shifting borders which made repatriation almost impossible, and closed resettlement countries, among other issues. Additionally, a persistent anti-Semitism and resulting violent attacks against surviving Jews in Poland⁴⁸ and Eastern Europe led to a mass immigration of Jewish *infiltrees* into the US zone, which included many pregnant women and children, the *infiltrree children*. Moreover, caretakers found bi-national children, some of whom had German nationality (for example those whose fathers had been SS men), or minors who had been given to German families due to the death of one or both parents who were forced laborers.⁴⁹ Only months after liberation, UNRRA first noticed that children from Poland, Yugoslavia, Belgium or the Netherlands had forcibly been taken from their families and deprived of their identity.⁵⁰ They still were living among the German population even after liberation. How could they be found, and what had happened to them as they had been living in German families for many years and had often forgotten their origin? And where was the/a home for those who had been voluntarily given up for adoption in German families due to the death of their parents or for unknown reasons? Where was the (a?) home for those who had never been there? Only in the course of the first post-war months did activities of UNRRA become more coordinated, and cooperation, such as with the AJDC or other welfare organizations, took a more organized character. Finally, the activities of UNRRA resulted – among other initiatives – in the founding of the *Child Tracing Section* in 1946. In this way, a series of methods and instruments were applied, some of which are still being used today in a modified form by relief organizations⁵¹ regarding children who were found uprooted because of war and genocide. Especially the AJDC already had a comprehensive knowledge and widespread network for a fast and effective humanitarian assistance both to Jewish adult and *Child Survivors*.⁵²

48 See the paper of Karolina Panz in this book.

49 See the paper of Olga Gnydiuk in this book.

50 Verena Buser, »Mass detective operation« im befreiten Deutschland: UNRRA und die Suche nach den eingedeutschten Kindern nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg«, *HISTORIE. Jahrbuch des Zentrums für Historische Forschung Berlin der Polnischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 8, 2015, pp. 347-360.

51 Verena Buser, »Displaced Children 1945 and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration,« *The Holocaust in History and Memory*, 7, 2014, pp. 109-123.

52 This part of my research is currently supported with a generous research grant of the Hadassah Brandeis Institute in Waltham/USA.

According to a report from the AJDC as of November 1945 there was no Jewish child younger than six years of age among the survivors.⁵³ Obviously small children were a specific target within the »final solution«. Thus, the majority of minor survivors were in their teens. Since fall 1945 the number of Jewish children increased because of the rapid infiltration of the *infiltrees* from Eastern Europe. Both the UNRRA and the AJDC now started to cooperate intensively regarding child rehabilitation issues and established so-called United Nations Jewish Children's Centers as the capacities of the already established Jewish DP camps were exhausted. Overall, at least 14 Children's Centers for the reception of Jewish children and adolescents were built in the USzone.

Displacement Then and Today in Europe and the Potential of the Historical *Child Search Branch* files

In 1944/45 alone in Europe some estimated 25,000,000 Europeans were Displaced Persons or refugees on the move. These numbers outreach by far the current refugee movement with more than 21.3 million people worldwide registered as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). At least 51 percent of them are under the age of 18 years.⁵⁴ Today in Europe fewer than 4 million refugees live here, among them approximately 90,000 unaccompanied minors.⁵⁵ As children they are regarded as a group with specific needs.

Why were these specificities only acknowledged in 2007? The *Allied High Commission for Germany* (HICOG)⁵⁶ in 1951 took over the mandate for the *International Tracing Service*, which was the successor of the UNRRA and IRO. Theoretically, in 1951 the HICOG was able to look back on eight years of experience working on DP-related issues, including the situation of Displaced

53 Jewish Population in U. S. Zone of Germany effective December 31, 1946, in: Wiener Library, HA5-3/4, Table, 30 December 1946. Of course, in reality there were Jewish children of that age but not all of them were registered. Others were born in concentration camps immediately before liberation like in Kaufering I. In Buchenwald several hundred male children and youths were found; others already had temporarily left Germany for Great Britain or Switzerland for rehabilitation reasons.

54 <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html> (accessed 10.1.2017). Five million among them are Palestinians registered by UNRWA; 16.1 million are registered by the UNHCR. In total the UNHCR estimates that worldwide there are 65.3 million people forcibly displaced of which six percent live in Europe (3,918,000 million).

55 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/nearly-90000-unaccompanied-minors-sought-asylum-in-eu-in-2015-a7010976.html> (accessed 10.1.2017).

56 The HICOG was founded by the United States, United Kingdom and France.

Children and their specific needs. Back then, it would have been self-evident to tie these experiences up to the UN refugee policy and implement instruments and methods regarding the location and reunification of minors with family members, the cooperation with non-governmental agencies and other aspects into the new childhood refugee policy of the UN. Moreover, it should have been obvious to acknowledge UNRRA's and IRO's approach of children's rights and awareness of child-specific persecution reasons. However, neither has ever happened. Surprisingly, the UNHCR's *1951 Refugee Convention* and its *1967 Protocol* did not even distinguish between children and adults; children were not even mentioned at all. Only since 2007 has the Executive Committee of the UNHCR – among other topics – regarded children as »active subjects of rights«,⁵⁷ and recognized that »child-specific forms« of persecution do exist,⁵⁸ among which are mentioned under-age recruitment as soldiers, child trafficking and female genital mutilation. Apparently, the stakeholders were for decades not aware of the child-centered refugee policy and experiences of UNRRA and IRO.

The specific care for Displaced Children mentioned above and many more related issues are documented in the historical UNRRA and IRO files, with regard to children especially in those of the *Child Search Branch*.⁵⁹ The inscription of the files and collections of the *International Tracing Service* into the *Memory of the World Program* of the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* in 2013 reflects the acknowledgement of its importance for further generations. While their significance for an overall study of the Holocaust is self-explanatory, it is far from being widely acknowledged to use these documents for a wider understanding of the responses of the international community to war and genocide in the aftermath of human catastrophes in general. In response to discussions about referring to the experiences of the *Child Search Branch* for dealing with the present refugee situation, doubts and questions are often raised. »Is it possible at all to compare the European refugee crisis in the past with the situation today?« is only one of many other reservations which are raised not only in the scientific community, but also in the public, when it comes to discussing parallels between history and today. Ob-

57 This aspect is related to the »United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child«.

58 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, Children on the Move, Background Paper, 28 November 2016, p. 7 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5846cffb4.html>, accessed 4. 1. 2017), p. 7.

59 For their content see Ina Schulz: »Der Child Search Branch und das Problem der vermissten und »unbegleiteten« Kinder Europas nach dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges. Der Bestand ITS 1 – Child Search Branch – im Internationalen Suchdienst erschlossen«, *Archivnachrichten*, 12/2, 2012, pp. 28-30.

viously, there is no need for a comparison, and the historical contexts are much different between then and today. However, a look into past relief efforts may help to trigger a historical awareness in dealing with the current number of refugees in Europe. In any case, within a reflected analysis one could ask which strategies from then could be helpful for today. Other considerations may include: Which instruments could serve as a best practice model in today's refugee efforts? And which questions regarding family reunification, resettlement practices, or adoptions from the time after liberation are »modern« questions and still relevant today?

What is similar to the present situation regarding *Unaccompanied and Separated Children* (UASC) is that the historical sources mirror the obvious, that children are the »most vulnerable victims« who need »special care«. From the perspective of a historian the *Child Search Branch* files not only provide a political history of the aftermath of the Holocaust and the war regarding minors, but also show how their best interest was cared for through the caretakers' eyes. Moreover, they are a contemporary description of the impact which war and genocide had on minors, illustrate children's psychological and physiological responses, illuminate the efforts of caregivers for their rehabilitation, repatriation or resettlement, and answer questions regarding the adoptions of orphans and Jewish children. There are many more angles from which to analyze the files, which are not mentioned here, and it is up to researchers to use the unique opportunity of the files to demonstrate their critical use and show their relevance for today. Why not take the expanding research literature which exists about the *refugee crisis* today on one hand, and the heterogeneous groups of DPs on the other hand, and elaborate both the similarities and differences? Questions and problems from then are not only or still vibrant today but are universal and arise repeatedly in (refugee) history. By studying topics related to it, becomes clear that humanitarian aid work is not automatically sustained, but needs to be further developed, and protected and modified according to a current situation.