



Kinder Transport

Adolf Hitler's Nazi party rose to power in Germany in 1933. Almost immediately, persecution of German Jews began. Their businesses were ignored until they closed, people were attacked in the streets, and others were taken away to be questioned and tortured for no reason. It reached a climax on the night of the 9th of November, 1938. That night, 267 synagogues were destroyed, 91 Jews were killed, and 30,000 were taken away to concentration camps. Most were never seen again. The night became known as Kristallnacht, which means "The Night of Broken Glass". It was referring to the smashed windows of Jewish homes and businesses.

European leaders had been aware of the Nazi persecution of Jews for a few years, but this took things to a new level. It was one that they couldn't easily ignore. Many Jews were trying to flee Germany, but it was hard for them. They weren't accepted in other countries, and many couldn't even get out of Germany.

British Home Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare stepped in to help. He decided to give out immigration papers to groups of Jews depending on their skills. Before that, each person had to apply individually. However, the government was concerned about children. They worried that Jewish children would enter Britain and then become a financial burden to the state or other families.

Even though the government knew about Hitler's deep-rooted hatred of Jews, they assumed that the threat to German Jews would be short-lived. They created a system that was nicknamed Kindertransport (kinder is German for child). Its formal title was the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany.

To help house the Jewish children, the government appealed to the public to provide homes for them. The appeal went out on the radio on the 25th of November, and there were over 500 offers very quickly.

The first train left Berlin on the 1st of December 1938. Many more trains were put on from other European cities as the German army began to invade other cities once the war



started. For instance, the Germans reached Czechoslovakia in March 1939, and so trains were put on from Prague.

Every child was required to have £50 with them to help pay for their care and to help them return once the threat was over. Unfortunately, the threat to Jews didn't pass until after the war had finished.

During the war, many of their parents and relatives had been captured and killed in concentration camps. Children evacuating on Kindertransport weren't allowed to take parents with them. Instead, the parents stayed at home and tried to escape the Nazi regime. Most didn't make it.

By the end of the war, over 60,000 Jewish refugees had moved to Britain. 50,000 of them stayed and made a permanent home in the country. More joined after the war ended, many of whom had survived the Holocaust.

Just like today, there were sections of the media and society who were opposed to Jewish people moving to Britain. They argued that the Jews would take British jobs. This hatred made it hard for many Jews to feel welcome. Despite this, the Jewish communities built new lives for themselves and contributed significantly to British life.

SUMMARY FOCUS

1. Why did Britain start to allow Jewish refugees into the country?
2. Where did the first Kindertransport train leave from?
3. Why did Jews have to leave Germany?
4. How did the British Government encourage people to help?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- I** What evidence is there that supports the idea that the government didn't want Jewish children to stay for too long?
- I** Why might the government have been reluctant to accept Jewish refugees?
- R** How many Jews moved to Britain during the war?
- R** When did the Germans reach Czechoslovakia?
- I** Why might Jewish children have been upset leaving Germany?