

# MEMORY OF THE KINDERTRANSPORT

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*Myths*



# TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY

- Understood the broader transnational character of the Kindertransport and how complex and problematic the history of rescue is...
- A movement from threat to safety
- But new threats arrived in the Kinder's host nations – internment – domestic service – abuse – bullying – antisemitism – evacuation – relocation to other host nations – displacement countries as the Kinder are moving around Britain during and after the war.
- Kinder were prepared or were even made to make yet further journeys from one host nation to another.
- We explored the Kindertransport in relation to other rescue schemes - stories of the La Hille Children, the Deckston Children and postwar rescue - and how these other rescue schemes relate to the Kindertransports to Britain.
- Kinder moved to many different host nations to find refuge.



# FROM AN INSTITUTIONAL TO A NATIONAL NARRATIVE

- The positive British narrative focuses on the arrival of Kinder to Britain prior to, during and after the Second World War. As a result, the traumatic story of deportation to Canada and Australia, for instance, is usually omitted.
- The RCM narrative is very British focussed.



# THE FIRST TESTIMONIES

- The Kinder's memories which result from their transnational experiences are presented as shifting in this first collection of testimonies because often the Kinder were caught between several worlds: while the old home gave way to new home, this was not always the end of the journey, as then came internment and movement to other lands. This volume did not place Kindertransport testimony within a progressive narrative of the Kindertransport. To a certain extent, this is also true of collective testimonies published in the 1990s and 2000s.
- The narrative of the Kindertransport in Britain emerges in the 1940s and re-emerges in the 1960s and then is again forgotten about until the first reunions in the late 1980s.
- Testimony is used within British museums in a manner which lends support to a positive national image.



# INSTITUTIONS AGAIN

- When museums and institutions collect and present testimony, they do so in various positive ways.
- They use different techniques to present the positive narrative – ask leading questions – focus on the positives – emphasis on successful careers
- Museums – presents the positives and negatives in an unbalanced way – downplay the negatives – highlight the positives – aesthetics to shed light on a particular view



# DEVELOPMENTS IN BRITISH MEMORY

- Why, then, did memory of the Kindertransport re-enter public consciousness?
- Had to record stories before it was too late
- Increased interest in Kindertransport testimony was ultimately the result of the first reunions Kinder reunions in the late 1980s and early 1990s
- In recent years, Kindertransport testimony has highlighted the incompleteness of Britain's history of the Kindertransport, because while some Kinder have discussed their successful adaptation to life in their new homeland, others express frustration and longing as they are unable to return to their former lives: it is not possible to reconnect to these any more. However, the Kinder have not always been the driving force behind Kindertransport memory in Britain.



# MYTHS

- Only Britain rescued Kinder
- We did enough to help refugees
- A great achievement – yes it was but it was a chaotic process, and we see how the Kinder experienced one loss after another
- Only positive – memory of the Kinder is not uniform – it is complex
- The Kindertransport did take place
- Do we remember all the facts?
- Or do we have a selective memory?



# DEVELOPMENT

- Positive – 40s
- More critical – 60s
- Positive – 80s/90s
- More critical – last 5 years
  
- Why?

