

## What was the Kindertransport ?

The Kindertransport was the British government's endeavour to provide approximately 10,00 children with a safe environment and protect them from the ongoing crisis that created a lot of political and social turmoil. It was specifically designed for children belonging to minorities, with ages ranging from 4 to 17. The plan was implemented nine months prior to the commencement of the second world war. This initiative was implemented right after kristallnacht, in which several jews were threatened, abused , arrested and even murdered. All jews wanted to flee, but parents wanted to ensure the safety of their children. It was their only chance at a normal life, where the didn't have to witness unbelievable brutality everyday, hide and feel neglected, live in fear of being killed and instead be able to unlock their full potential and attain happiness. The independent describes it as a 'passage from hell to freedom'.

Britain directed their efforts to relieve the plight of jewish children from Germany, Austria and the Czech lands. They eased the immigration processes and issued temporary passports. They were funded by affluent British families, Jewish and British organisations such as the Brits quakers. Britain hoped that other countries would also emulate their actions, just for the sake of humanity, and cooperate with them.

This entire process prove to be very difficult, as most countries had closed their borders and would not allow or accommodate jewish refugees, even if they were children.

Despite of the obstacles, Britain was able to successful transport over 10,00 children between December 1938, and September 1939.

These children were then taken in by foster families. Some of these children were the only sole survivors of they families and were even separated from their siblings.

‘The first ever children to step foot into England arrived at the English port of Harwich, and took a train to London's Liverpool Street station on the second of December, 1938 .’



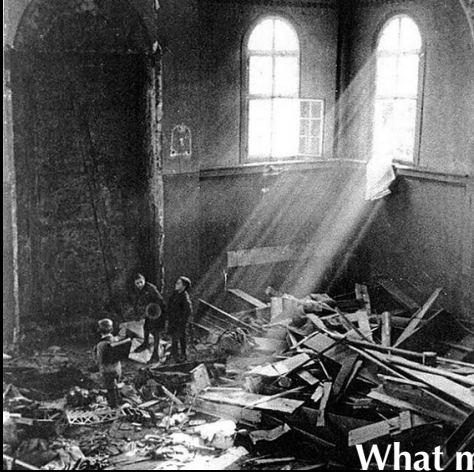


## What were the events after world war 1 that led to the kindertransport?

Germany showed utter chaos after it had lost world war (1914-1918). Versailles that Germany had to make land concessions to the victors weren't in agreement with this and felt that their country's honesty dishonoured and tarnished. The new president, who also disliked that the best choice was to sign the treaty as denouncement of the war, was signed on 28 June 1919. However the signing of the treaty worsened the economic situation. The New York stock exchange plummeted already suffering, with reduced military power and loss of surge of unemployment wiped people of their jobs and entered poverty overnight. With so many debts, and an emperor who was led by Hitler, decided they would shift the blame on Jews and extermination of the Jews in Europe in order to mitigate the economic situation of the German population. This would facilitate them to return to equilibrium. And since Jews were a minority, they targeted them. When the party rose to popularity and became elected, they promised Germany with a golden future, a future excluding Jews. They had a private army and spread hateful propaganda. Eventually, this massively endangered the lives of Jewish children and threatened their future.

To restore peace, it had been decided in the peace treaty of Versailles and pay considerable reparations to other countries. Germans were being questioned and their country's reputation was being damaged by the idea of treaty, kept an open mind and logically concluded that the treaty may result in recommence of the war. Finally the treaty was signed, completely transformed and exacerbated Germany's economic situation causing an economic crisis and hyperinflation. Germany was out of resources. But now stocks became completely worthless. A staggering amount of German citizens had no money and an appalling economic situation, the NSDAP, a political party created a horrid plan. They decided to organise the financial strain caused by the war for the benefit of the German people in obtaining an economic and demographic balance. They targeted the group and began to slowly tyrannise them. When the party became elected, they promised Germany with a private army called the SA, that wore brown uniforms and hate radicalised into violence, mob attacks and murder and





### **What major event translates to night of the broken glass that caused the kindertransport?**

The social and political situation worsened as Germans were convinced by the hateful anti jew propaganda being spread. On the night of 9th and 10th September, the Nazis burnt thousands of synagogues (religious place of worship for jews) and set fire to shops belonging to jews. More than 100 jews were mercilessly killed under the period of one night and 30,000 male jews were arrested, most of them were sent away to concentration camps. This night was titled 'kristallnacht' (translating to night of broken glass) due to broken glass from window panes that flooded the streets. The streets were filled with blood, sirens, terror and red lights. In desperation, several people tried to escape and felt such extreme hopelessness, helplessness and pain that they took their own lives. Children were usually not exposed to such brutal violence but on this day, even they had to endure a tragedy and watch their own parents get beaten up or arrested. The cruelty of the nazis was unmasked in front of little children and these incidents left a lasting impact on them and left them deeply disturbed. This sudden outburst of violence against the jews evoked the conscience and social responsibility of several countries and compelled them to take action.

### **What is a pogrom?**


The pogroms were responsible for the murder of dozens of Jews, and demolished hundreds of synagogues. They imprisoned tens of thousands of 'undesirables' or minorities, particularly jews. They set up the concentration camps and caused all the holocaust horror.

A Pogrom would also be defined as any action of violence or organised effort against the jews such as the kristallnacht. This was caused due to anti-semitic propaganda that led to an incitement to commit murder and commit violence against the oppressed jews.






## What does anti semitic mean ?



Hitler wasn't the only leader to hate, target and discriminate against Jews. This heinous practice of victimising and showing intolerance against Jews simply due to their religion is known as anti-Semitism. Since they were a minority, it was easy for the Nazis to operate them and blame problems on them. As a young man, Hitler lived in Vienna where he adopted the anti-Semitic ideas of those around him. During World War I, Hitler fought and participated in the war as an Austria. He inculcated the Jews for Germany's vanquishment. As he became the leader of the Nazi party in 1920, he imposed and encouraged these anti-Semitic doctrine amongst Germans. He believed the Aryan race held a higher status, and concluded that Germany would be free of problems if the Jews were gone.

The extremity of anti-Semitism is clearly seen in the strictly enforced anti-Jewish policies and worse, plans of extermination of Jews through murder or means of concentration camps.

## What is propaganda ?



In simple words, propaganda is advertising. It is a form of persuasion, employed to govern and sway the beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and views, and/or manipulate a certain targeted group into adopting your opinions. It is achieved by the 'dissemination of information', whether that be truth or lies. The Nazis were efficacious propaganda machines, and as propagandists, used Jews as scapegoats and distorted information to achieve their goals. The Nazis clearly misused propaganda to create a division between the Jews and Germans and practiced extreme propaganda, always keeping their paramount goal in mind, which was to obliterate the Jewish population, or 'enemies of the Aryan Volk'.

**'Propaganda tries to force a doctrine on the whole people... Propaganda works on the general public from the standpoint of an idea and makes them ripe for the victory of this idea.'**

—Adolph Hitler in *Mein Kampf*



## How did the nazi regime use propaganda to dehumanise the jewish people ?

Volk, the nazi term for the German population, began to be perceived as a word that distinguished the Germans from the Jews. A word that enabled the Germans to establish their supremacy, and outcast the Jewish people. This divided the two main groups that lived in Germany at the time, the Germans and Jews. The Jews were transformed into villains of the German society, and were considered the obverse of the Volk race and presented as possessing values completely opposite to those of the Volk race. Just this word, became one of the most powerful instrument of propaganda that encouraged bigotry and prejudiced thinking, and shifted the word's previous meaning "national" to "ethnic". It caused Germans to feel superior to and popularised anti-Semitic remarks. This illiberal environment made it acceptable and morally correct for Germans to display hostility to all outsiders (in this case Jews). These stereotypes, and anti-Semitic values lasted through World War I.

The Jews were forced to live restricted lives. Lives shaped and bound by countless rules and regulations. Bold signs restraining Jews from participating in several activities or prohibiting them from going places were put up in conspicuous spots and at access roads. This sense of inferiority was constantly reinforced through the laws that were established and directed only towards Jews. Hitler devalued Jews even further on September 15, 1935 by establishing the Nuremberg Laws. Jews were deprived of rights as basic as marrying someone of their choice. Interracial marriages were banned and marriage between a Jew and German was labelled as a crime. Jews were denied of their German citizenships, and even individuals with a suspicion of Jewish roots were recognised as Jews, even if they didn't practice the religion, belong to the ethnicity or culturally identify themselves as Jews.

They felt like an outcast and the posters against them made it extremely difficult for them to build relationships with Germans and Austrians. Jewish people who volunteered for civil services or who were teaching were fired from their jobs. Every public hotspot was covered with signs saying 'prohibited for Jews'. The Jews felt as if they were entrapped in a degrading and vicious cycle of life. Jewish businesses were required to register with the occupying forces, and their profits dramatically decreased as they had just enough money to sustain the businesses. Eventually, Jewish people were disallowed from owning businesses.

Anti-Semitic propaganda was omnipresent and was incorporated into speeches, actions, music, theatre, radio, publications, education, film, books and art. National Socialist German Workers Party established a film department, so that films could express the political views that they wanted the public to support. The movie *Jud Süs* for example, was inspired by a real life story about a morally corrupt and greedy Jewish banker called Joseph Oppenheimer. However, they used his example to misrepresent the entire of the Jewish population, creating a negative stereotype of Jews. The ultimate dialogue of the movie told the audience to never trust Jews otherwise something horrible will happen to them like it did with the people victimised by Oppenheimer.

The Nazi propaganda didn't even spare children as Hitler believed it best to infiltrate the minds of the young since they are easy to manipulate. Children would be completely unaware of the swastika symbol on their clothes in fancy dress competitions. Even toys glorified the 'Aryan Volk' race as masters of the world and put down the Jews.

Posters were the most popular form of propaganda, employing graphic and oppressive images, portraying Jews as enemies and alienating them from the rest of the population. They conveyed racial messages crudely and undiplomatically.

In comic book, Jewish characters would be shown as dangerous

'Essays like Kurt Hilmar Eitzen's 1936 piece 'Ten Responses to Jewish Lackeys' were hardly subtle or philosophical, but they provided all manner of reasons to mistrust and hate the Jew, from economic and religious arguments to appeals for national pride.'





**Emotive response**  
**You're put on a train to another country.**  
**How would you feel ?**

I'm a very family-oriented person and could never imagine a life without my parents. I would feel a diverse range of emotions. The idea of being able to exercise my rights and independence and live an unrestricted life would sound very appealing in comparison to a life in which I faced the difficulties of prejudice and bigotry every single day. However, hard times bring families together and strengthens their bond. After all that I would have endured with my family, it would be extremely hard to say goodbye to them and the possibility of never seeing them again would devastate me. The idea of moving to a foreign country can be exciting and frightening at the same time. I wouldn't have spoken English, and would never have been exposed to their culture and have no idea who my new family would be. I would undergo a rollercoaster of emotions, and anticipation would be increasing my pulse. Communication at the time wasn't reliable and fast as it is in today's world of technology, and not being able to talk to my family, to suddenly leave them, leave my country, leave my house, is incredibly hard.

Travelling overseas alone, at that time, unable to comprehend the chaos around you, requires lots of courage and tenacity. I would be extremely concerned about my parent's safety from all the violence and intolerance. Going away meant freedom from the constant fears that haunted me, but it would also mean losing the sense of belonging that family and home offers. And there are several cultural shocks and changes you experience when you move to a new country. I know since I shifted from India to Britain which are two culturally contrasting countries. However to not have any support systems to help you overcome these kind of obstacles is tough and emotionally challenging. And that uncertainty, that I might not fit in can be very intimidating. Even if my parents reassured me and promised me that we would be reunited, I would still be incredibly nervous. It would be a complex range of emotions to feel and cope with, fear, nostalgia, excitement, fascination and apprehension.

## A SEPARATION

**Find an example of an account of a young Jewish child who went on the Kindertransport**  
**How did their life change ?**

While researching, I came across various stories but what I found interesting was the diversity of experiences. Some of these children settled in well, were able to move on and adopted British values and went on to build a future for themselves. Others faced several obstacles in their journey, and were psychologically affected from the scornful behaviour towards them. Some children changed families and had to transfer between foster homes, and were unable to find a 'home' and lived an unstable life.

Oscar's dad was arrested by the Gestapo the night before Kristallnacht. He was never reunited with his father and to ensure his safety, his mother enrolled him in the Kindertransport. He spent several years serving the British army. It was decades later he was informed that both his parents died in the gas chambers. Ruth's parents had an interracial marriage. Her father was a Jew and he was persecuted. Along with her brother, she arrived in Britain in 1939. She now pursues a career as a psychotherapist and visits many schools and institutions talking about the Holocaust and her personal experiences.



