

HANDOUT 3.3 D - KINDERTRANSPORT EXCERPT

By 1939, many Jews were trying desperately to leave Germany and Austria. One such effort was the *Kindertransport*, or “Children’s Transport”— convoys of children from Germany and German-occupied territories who were able to leave the European continent for temporary or permanent shelter.

Ellen Alexander was one of these children.

“At the age of nine—maybe before then, I became very much aware of what was going on in the world, in Berlin, actually, because we were not allowed to play with the Aryan children. And people would call their children away from us because we were Jews and therefore not clean, not fit to be played with. We had to leave our school. We had to go to Jewish schools. The school that I went to with my older sister was in Berlin. I don’t know exactly which school it was, but it was attached to a synagogue. And the day that—on November 10, 1938 [Kristallnacht], we came to the school, and it was in flames. And I do remember seeing people standing around and laughing and having a wonderful time watching these flames. And that I think was probably the end of our schooling. I didn’t understand the import of all this, but it certainly made an impression on me.

How my parents got us to go on the *Kindertransport* I don’t know, but on May 3, 1939, my sister and I were sent to England. And my parents were not overly emotional, although they may have been, especially my mother, but she didn’t show it. And we were able to leave with a lot of other children to go to an unknown place, a place where we didn’t know the language. But that didn’t bother me much. I was young and everything was an adventure.

After we left—after the children, my sister and I left—my father was not able to work for himself or for his father-in-law anymore and was eventually made to sweep the street under some young little Nazi boy who he had to help. He had to carry the bricks and he had to sweep the streets and do very menial work. My sister and I were in England and had a pretty happy life, all in all. I couldn’t complain about our foster parents. But our parents were sent to Theresienstadt [a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia] in 1943, and I never saw my father again.”

Source: Shulman, William L., ed., (1998). *Voices and Visions: A Collection of Primary Sources*. Woodbridge, CT: Blackbirch Press, 27–28.