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Humanities

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*Kindertransport*

On November 11, 1938, Olga Levy Drucker's life changed. In her auto-biography, *Kindertransport*, a book set in Nazi-era Germany, Olga struggles with leaving her family and living with strangers as she escapes the horrors of the Holocaust. Despite these challenges, Olga achieves a meaningful life. In fact, *Kindertransport*, a program operated by RCM (Refugee Children's Movements), not only kept her safe, it may have even saved her life.

One way that *Kindertransport* kept Olga safe was by allowing her to leave Germany, which was becoming more and more dangerous for Jews. Describing Kristallnacht, also known as the Night of the Broken Glass, she wrote, "The Nazis had burnt down the synagogue, leaving only a charred shell. All the other buildings on the same street were left unharmed. The windows of all the Jewish-owned shops had been smashed" (p.25). Also on that night, her father and other Jewish men

were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Things were getting worse and Olga's mom arranged for Olga to be on the *Kindertransport*, which was bringing Jewish children to England. Through the *Kindertransport*, Olga was able to escape the growing violence in Germany, and this was her first step toward safety.

A second way that the *Kindertransport* protected Olga, was by giving her a place to live. Looking back on her time in England, she wrote, "The English families who took care of me did the very best they could. Under trying circumstances, they were enormously kind to me" (p.145). RCM placed her in many homes and schools and some of them were not the greatest, for example her first family was very poor and one school was close to air raids. Even though Olga moved a lot, the *Kindertransport* organization was always making sure she had a safe place to live. She was very grateful for these families who took her in because she knew that without them she would not have survived.

The final way that *Kindertransport* came to her rescue was by keeping her safe until her parents could leave Germany and send for her to join them in New York. Her mother wrote to her once they get to New York saying, "From the first day of our arrival, we have started proceedings to get you...Then we will all be together again" (p.113). When her parents got to New York they started the process immediately to get Olga back to them. This was their plan to keep her safe and to give her the best childhood even though the war was going on. RCM provided as much communication as possible between Olga and her parents even though they moved her around a lot to keep her secure during wartime. While her parents were trying to get to New York, *Kindertransport* was looking after Olga's safety.

All these aspects of keeping Olga secure, from leaving Germany, to giving her a place to live and keeping her out of harm's way until her parents were safe, were made possible by the *Kindertransport*. Olga Levy Drucker, now married with a family of her own, felt very grateful and realized that she may even owe her life to *Kindertransport*. She hopes that

refugee children today will be as lucky as she was to have people look after them the way *Kindertransport* did.