

<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/12/05/books/the-holocaust-children-who-did-not-grow-up.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

The Holocaust Children Who Did Not Grow Up

It might be a large family album or a school yearbook: snapshots of children, 2,500 of them, in sailor suits and holiday frocks, posing at the beach, in backyards and on playgrounds with parents, brothers and sisters and chums. Clearly, they do not know what awaits them.

But the viewer knows.

The fleeting images of happy days are all that remain of the children, French Jews who were rounded up with their families by the French and German authorities from 1942 to 1944 and deported to Auschwitz and other German killing centers. Now, in an exhaustive feat of research presented as a memorial, their photographs and retrievable biographies, along with a comprehensive history of the death transports, have been assembled in a 1,902-page volume thicker than the Manhattan white pages, "French Children of the Holocaust," published last month by New York University Press.

The cover shows the identity card, stamped "Juive" for Jew, of 7-year-old Anny-Yolande Horowitz, sent to Auschwitz on Sept. 11, 1942.

"Here each child has a story, where he was arrested and what camp he was sent to," said the author, Serge Klarsfeld, himself a childhood survivor of the Nazi occupation and a Paris lawyer who has spent his life documenting French and German war crimes in World War II. But he said: "This is not a book against the killers. This is a book in favor of the victims."

The book, which Mr. Klarsfeld has called "the children's collective gravestones," was published in France two years ago, but since then, he said in an interview, he has added more than 1,000 newly identified photos, and 100 more have turned up since the English edition came out. As it is, he says, the book is far from complete. In all, records show that 11,402 children were deported, of whom perhaps 300 survived. "I would have wanted a book of 11,000 pages, of 11,000 faces," he said.

The pictures are unremarkable -- which is, of course, the secret of their power. Some of the children wear Jewish star patches as if that were nothing unusual. Others are saluting in Scout uniforms, holding schoolbooks, petting dogs, being wheeled in baby carriages. Most captions are brief and straightforward.

Albert Kaczka, posing in a Fauntleroy suit and white knee socks, was 9, it says, when he was arrested in 1942 with his parents and taken to the Velodrome d'Hiver, an indoor bicycle arena converted into a detention area in Paris. Records show the family was separated. The father was deported to Auschwitz on July 31, the mother three days later. Albert went on Aug. 31.

"Adele and Paulette Nitka were born in Paris, where they lived at 102 Rue Oberkampf (11th Arrondissement)," the book says, below a photo of two little girls sitting on a bench with a stuffed bear. "Adele was 9 years old and Paulette, 2. They were deported on Convoy 22 of Aug. 21, 1942."

That train of 17 cars from Drancy, a collection camp on the northeast outskirts of Paris, to Auschwitz in Poland had the largest percentage of children -- 614 of the 1,000 deportees -- in the 85 convoys from France and Belgium listed in German records. That included 10 children under the age of 2 1/2, and 252 under 10. The Nitka sisters were in the second car along with 50 other children. There was no mention of any adults in the car. Upon arrival at Auschwitz, 892 of the 1,000 people were gassed. Others were selected for human guinea pig experiments and slave labor. Only 7 survived until liberation in 1945.

A photo sequence shows 12-year-old Georges-Andre Kohn, festive with neatly combed hair, white shirt and tie, shortly before his arrest and deportation on the last convoy from Drancy to Auschwitz, on Aug. 17, 1944. On the facing page, another photo, taken from captured Nazi archives, shows Georges-Andre as a subject of pseudomedical experimentation at the Neuengamme concentration camp. A day before the camp's liberation, he was hanged in the basement of a Hamburg school.

Georges-Andre and his family, the book says, were seized by Alois Brunner, then the Nazi commandant of the Drancy camp and the Gestapo chief who had arrested Mr. Klarsfeld's father in 1943 in Nice

while young Serge, his mother and sister hid in a secret compartment behind the closet. Mr. Klarsfeld has pursued Brunner ever since, tracing him in recent years to Damascus, Syria, where he was unofficially reported to have died in 1992.

Mr. Klarsfeld said he deliberately kept the book spare and factual. "True emotion comes from precision," he said. "You have not to be guided by hand to the emotion."

Some of the brief biographies are augmented by letters written by the children, including this one by 8-year-old Georges Halpern, one of 44 children who found refuge at a Jewish children's home in Izieu in the Rhone Valley. "Chere Maman," he wrote in early 1944, "I send you 10000000000000000 kisses your son who loves you very much. There are big mountains and the village is very pretty; there are a lot of farms, we sometimes walk to Brenier-Cordon. The house is very beautiful we look for blackberries and raspberries and white mulberries. I hug you with all my heart. Georgy."

He was deported to the Birkenau death camp adjacent to Auschwitz, along with other children from Izieu, on the convoy of April 13, 1944.

The vast documentation project grew out of efforts by Mr. Klarsfeld and his wife, Beate, to track down the former Nazi Gestapo chief in Lyons, Klaus Barbie, who had raided the Izieu refuge and sent the children and seven attendants to their death. The Klarsfelds found Barbie hiding in Bolivia and forced his extradition to France, where he was tried and convicted of crimes against humanity in 1987. He died in prison in 1991.

The search for witnesses and evidence led them to the Germans' lists of deportation convoys, records that the Klarsfelds used to produce a 1978 landmark census, "Memorial to the Jews Deported from France," carrying the identities and deportation particulars of 75,700 victims. In 1984 Mr. Klarsfeld published a picture album documenting the liquidation of the Izieu children's home. And in 1989 he contributed to a detailed history of the construction of the gas chambers of Auschwitz, written by Jean-Claude Pressac, a French pharmacist who had begun as a doubter of the Holocaust.

Mr. Klarsfeld said he assembled the children's photos through 20 years of research and appeals to Jewish publications, synagogues and

survivor groups and the Red Cross, among other sources. Some of the photos are taken from memorial plaques put up after the war. In some cases, Mr. Klarsfeld said, he was forced to take legal action against French Government archivists to gain access to the half-century-old identity cards.

An exhibit based on the book is planned for the Graduate Center of the New School for Social Research in February, after which it is to tour the country. It is also expected to go on exhibit at the Museum of Jewish Heritage being built in lower Manhattan.

The English-language edition was a largely volunteer and philanthropic effort spurred by Peter Hellman, a freelance writer and friend of the Klarsfelds, and Howard M. Epstein, an editor and former president of Facts on File. Mr. Epstein said he was motivated by the discovery that a 13-year-old girl on the list had lived in a Paris apartment where he lived years later. He said the proliferating claims on the Internet that the Holocaust never happened were an added impetus.

He and Mr. Hellman's wife, Susan Cohen, donated their editing and translation skills, working with Mr. Klarsfeld, and the Sons and Daughters of the Jews Deported from France, among other groups. The director of New York University Press, Colin Jones, agreed that the book should be issued without cuts, and \$125,000 was raised from 50 contributors, including the Steven H. and Alida Brill Scheuer Foundation, to subsidize publication. Copies cost \$95 through the publisher, the N.Y.U. bookstore and the Harvard Coop, and a toll-free number, 800-996-6987.

Mr. Klarsfeld said the book, while painful to produce, had brought him much satisfaction. "It's like taking somebody from the night and bringing him to the light," he said. "Some people are paralyzed by pain," he said. "We are not paralyzed."