

The Last Farewells

On 2nd December 1938 the first Kindertransport of 206 children escaped from Germany.

The parents faced a terrible moment when the time came to say goodbye to their children.

They did not know when they would be reunited or how the children would manage on the long journey to a foreign and very different country.

The children were often confused and afraid. Only the older ones knew exactly why they were parting, and feared the fate of the parents they were leaving behind. Younger children were sometimes comforted by being told that they were going on a brief holiday.

Comments from the children:

“When I came home my mother said I must go to England on Monday 26th January... The train arrived. I said goodbye quickly to my parents and to my sister and brothers and relatives. It was very hard and we cried. Then the train puffed out.”

“The desperate hopelessness of the people left behind was not really grasped by us. “

“My mother packed one little suitcase for me. We were lucky to have one change of clothes and a Shabbat dress. That’s what I had. My mother took me to the station...I didn’t realise I would never see her again. They must have had such courage to send us away. I don’t think I could have done it. “

“One mother was in a terrible state. She just couldn’t bear to part with her child and at the last moment held her back. My mother took her chance and literally threw me on to the train. The doors slammed and off I went. I remember holding the doll and crying all the time. I wanted my mother but of course she wasn’t there anymore.”

“My parents followed us through Berlin from station to station, just to get a few glimpses of our faces. I was 14 and my brother was 7 years old.”

I remember that some children had to travel on Shabbat and some Orthodox children cried bitterly. It was explained that these were not normal times. It was to save our lives.”