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**CHILD MIGRATION IN EUROPE SINCE THE 19TH
CENTURY**

Supervisor: Prof. Lorenzo Mechi

Candidate: Marta Carolina Laura Galimberti
Matriculation n. 2015706

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Abstract

“Time and again, migration research and policy have been more likely adult-centric and have continuously neglected children in migratory flows. Nonetheless, minors have always been part of intra- and trans-national movements; being them alone or accompanied by family members or legal guardians. This thesis aims at analyzing the evolution of child migration from the 19th century until nowadays in the European continent. The analysis of past migrations due to persecutions, wars or in search for a new and, perhaps, better life stands alongside the examination of a legal framework which is still in act in recent times. The reader is guided through specific case studies of child migratory movements originating from Europe in the past up to more recent cases of arrivals in Europe.”

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List of Abbreviations

AFSC – American Friends Service Committee
AJWS – Australian Jewish Welfare society
CChARE – Chilean Committee for Aid to Spanish Refugees
CCWC – Catholic Child Welfare Council
CJC – Canadian Jewish Congress
CMT – Child Migration Trust
CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child
DP – Displaced Persons
EC – European Community
EU – European Union
FOARE – Federation of Argentinian Organizations for Spanish Refugees
GJCA – German Jewish Children’s Aid
HCRR – High Commissioner for Russian Refugees
ICCPR – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICEM – Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration
ICESCR – International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICM – Intergovernmental Committee for Migration
ICR – Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees
ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross
ILO – International Labour Organization
IOM – International Organization for Migration
IRO – International Refugee Organization
JDC – American Joint Distribution Committee
LoN – League of Nations
MSF – Medici Senza Frontiere
NJCSR – National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief
OIR – Organisation Internationale pour les Réfugiés
OSE – Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants
PICMME – Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe
PJRF – Polish Jewish Relief Fund

RBD – Rights-Based Programming
SCF – Save the Children Fund
SCIU – Save the Children International Union
SERE – Service for Evacuation of Spanish Refugees
TUC – Trades Union Congress
UAM – Unaccompanied Migrant Children
UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN – United Nations
UNGA – United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRRA – United Nations Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Administration
USC – United States Committee for the Care of European Children

Chapter I: Introduction

In recent times, the topic of children and migration has received increased recognition. Academically, it has produced an inter-disciplinary environment based on a variety of empirical works from all around the globe. Nevertheless, it is a disconnected terrain with studies agglomerated around diverse forms of child migration, usually analysed in isolation from one another. In fact, studies have focused on the plight of unaccompanied, refugee and asylum-seeking children, ignoring the existence of other forms of migration. Moreover, most research addresses more contemporary child migration, disregarding a variety of movements that took place in the past.

Having said that, there are not many sources in the research field of child migration. Principally, that is because scholars have not focused their studies on children specifically, but migration research and policy have been more likely adult-centric and have repeatedly neglected children in migratory flows.¹ It is a likely assumption that children and women have always participated in migratory movements in the same manner of men. Nonetheless, it should be noted that numerous migrants that are considered to be child migrants today were unlikely to be seen as children in the past centuries. Certainly, some information can be drawn from specific case studies or from testimonies. Nonetheless, more investigations need to be done with regards to child migration.

It is important to grasp the meaning of some key definitions before continuing with the thesis. First and foremost, the notion of ‘migration’ must be analysed in depth in order to understand the subject of this topic. According to the European Commission’s Migration and Home Affairs, migration is a “movement of a person either across an international border (international migration), or within a state (internal migration) for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate”.² This category includes: refugee migration, economic migration, as well as migration of individuals who move for further motives or pushed by other factors, such as

¹ Allen White et al., “Children’s Roles in Transnational Migration,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37, no. 8 (September 2011): 1160.

² “Migration,” Migration and Home Affairs, accessed September 12, 2022, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/pages/glossary/migration_en.

family reunification.³ Migration can be both internal and international. On the one hand, internal migration refers to the movement of people from one area (e.g., province or municipality) to another area within the same state. On the other hand, international migration is a relocation of individuals between two or more states.⁴ There are two main types of migration: voluntary and forced. The former category is characterized by the free will of the person and is influenced by a variety of factors, such as economic, political, or social (“pull factors”). The latter type is mainly provoked by harmful factors (“push factors”), such as poor quality of life, hunger, or conflicts. One such example is the Great Potato Famine (1845-1849), which cause thousands of Irish people to relocate to the United States to avoid starvation.⁵ Moreover, as the use of the terms “migrant” and “refugee” has increased in the media and public discourse over the years, a clear distinction between the two terms is required. Thus, a migrant is an individual who “is outside a State of which they are a citizen or national, or, in the case of a stateless person, their State of birth or habitual residence”; while a refugee is strictly defined in international law as “a person who is fleeing persecution or conflict in her or his country of origin”.⁶ According to Article 1 of the 1951 Geneva Convention of the United Nations on the Status of Refugees and the Protocol on the Status of Refugees of 1967,

“the term refugee shall apply to any person who (...) owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it”.⁷

Having analysed the concept of migration, and the difference between a migrant and a refugee, an examination of the term “child” must be undertaken. While all international human rights

³ Georgiana Florentina Tataru, "Migration-An Overview on Terminology, Causes and Effects," *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Law* 7, no.2 (December 2019): 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵ Matt Rosenberg, “Push-Pull Factors in Immigration: How People Are Pushed and Pulled Toward a New Country,” ThoughtCo, February 11, 2020, <https://www.thoughtco.com/push-pull-factors-1434837>.

⁶ “Differentiation between migrants and refugees,” United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner.

⁷ “Convention relating to the Status of Refugees,” United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons convened under General Assembly resolution 429 (V) of 14 December 1950 (28 July 1951).

treaties apply to children, only the Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly elaborates a clear definition of a 'child'. According to the Convention published in 1989, "a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier".⁸

To gain a deeper understanding of child migration, the perceptions of this type of migration that scholars have had throughout history will be hereafter examined. Three forms of child migration can be distinguished as legitimate reasons to move for children. First, migration for "social motivations" is centred around the belief that the needs and rights of children are protected. Within this category, children are conceptualized as "passive followers of adult migrants", which depicts them as being dependent on their families and fragile individuals.⁹ It should be noted that in this context the institution 'family' refers to the Western conception of nuclear family which is limited to close biological or legal links of children with the family head.¹⁰ This category is considered to be in the best interest of the child. Subsequently, children as "political migrants" are believed to be those unaccompanied or separated children who apply for asylum in diverse countries.¹¹ As a matter of fact the UNHCR definition of 'refugee' does not include an age limit and half of the displaced persons worldwide are children or young adults.¹² Finally, the third form identifies children as "economic migrants" deviating from the normative standard of childhood. UNICEF defines 'childhood' as being a "time to grow, learn, play and feel safe" with access to "essential services such as hospitals and schools".¹³ This means that the children have entered an adult labour market leaving consciously and prematurely the safety of their families' wing.

That being said, a complicating factor in the collection of data on international child migration is that agencies tend to focus on specific legal frameworks and policy concerns.¹⁴ Hence, child migrants such as unaccompanied minors or trafficked children spark more interest than others. In fact, research has emphasised the neediness of migrant children denying their agency and subjectivities. For this reason, there is a variety of studies that revolve around vulnerable groups

⁸ "Convention on the Rights of the Child," General Assembly resolution 44/25 (20 November 1989).

⁹ Julia O'Connell Davidson, "Child Migration and 'Trafficking'," in *Children in the Global Sex Trade* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005): 4.

¹⁰ Roy Huijsmans, "Children, childhood and migration," *ISS Working Paper Series/General Series* 427 (2006): 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ UNICEF, *The state of the world's children 2006: excluded and invisible*. Unicef, 2005.

¹⁴ Allen White et al., "Children's Roles in Transnational Migration," 1160.

such as refugees or asylum-seekers.¹⁵ On the other hand, children who move voluntarily as labour-migrants or in search for a better life are much less frequently subject of interest. Moreover, there is a tendency to focus less on their first-hand experiences as transnational migrants as opposed to second or third generation migrant children. Scholars centre their studies on the future of these children as adults rather than their experiences as people who migrate in the present.

1.1 Research Aim

As already mentioned, the already available research is principally centred around migratory flows in general, without drawing a distinction between adult resettlement and child migration. In fact, academics are not bringing to the attention of readers the importance of the movement of minors as a separate entity with their own agency. By addressing this gap, this paper will attempt to analyse the progression of child migration in Europe since the 19th century. Particularly, it will examine the way in which migrant children have been treated throughout time and if the ever-changing legal framework in Europe has affected in any way the movement of minors. The aim of the thesis is to add fundamental insights to the global understanding of child migration. Therefore, it will analyse two principal categories of child emigration between the 19th and the end of the 20th centuries, while considering both the historical context and the first-hand experiences of children. The first will attempt to define the hardships of children who migrated due to wars and persecutions in their home countries. The second category of child migration is centred in the children's quest for a new and perhaps better life. Indeed, numerous child migrants moved to find work in another territory or were sent abroad in light of having a brighter future. Thereafter, the recent developments of child migration will be addressed to underline the peculiarities of child migration nowadays.

1.2 Scope and Limitations

Approaching the research through the analysis of already existing academic studies, reports submitted by international organizations or articles published in newspapers, allows a detailed and comprehensive examination of the case. Thus, investigating this subject through the sources provided allows for a profound understanding of the various cases of child migration in Europe. Nevertheless, certain limiting factors had to be taken into account, which partially

¹⁵ Allen White et al., "Children's Roles in Transnational Migration," 1160.

altered the outcome of the research. In this regard, a number of studies was published in a distant past, thus the analysis of such research was obstructed due to the impossibility of accessing them. Another issue that emerged in the development process of this thesis was the variety languages in which articles on the matter are published. In fact, several papers were written in foreign languages, such as Finnish or Spanish, and some complications were faced in understanding the texts and analyzing them adequately.

1.3 Outline

In Chapter I, the theoretical framework, and the essential historical background of the main topic of the thesis, migrations across the European continent in the 19th and 20th centuries, are being presented. Thereafter, Chapter II examines the first out of the two principal case studies of the thesis, being it child migrations due to war and persecutions. It introduces two diverse events in which children were forced to flee their home countries with the help of humanitarian organizations or voluntary agencies. In particular, the mass exportations and evacuations of children initiated by the Spanish civil war and the Second World War will be examined. Subsequently, Chapter III presents the second case study which is focused on the search for a diverse and, hopefully, better life for children by either their families (i.e., Italian minors sent to foreign states to work in exchange for a financial aid for their parents) or the central authorities of their home country (i.e., British underprivileged youth sent to the State's colonies). Chapter IV analyses the legal framework created on the grounds of past experiences of child migration, focusing on a chronological development of legislations in the various European countries involved in the previously examined case studies. Seeing the full picture, Chapter V discusses the recent advancement of child migration, particularly focusing on the movement of unaccompanied minors from the Global South and third-world countries towards the European Union and the reception of these children in the countries of arrival. Finally, the concluding Chapter provides the significant outcomes of this thesis, giving a few concluding remarks on the matter and leaving some important food for thought.

Chapter II: European migration in the 19th and 20th centuries

There is little or no doubt about the significance of human migrations in our present world. Certainly, political discourses in European countries have been increasingly shaped by the free movement of workers, refugee crises, and anti-migration campaigns.¹⁶ Due to these developments in our past and present, movements of people have become one of the central focuses of historiography. Surely, the exodus of men and women forced to leave their places of origin to seek shelter elsewhere has accompanied the history of mankind since ancient times. There have been periods in which the phenomenon decreased drastically; however, people have consistently escaped from persecutions and wars or searched for new opportunities for a better life. The European territory has always been part of migration and emigration schemes. Indeed, throughout history it progressively transformed itself from being the main supplier of intercontinental migratory flows to being the principal destination for migrants coming from third world countries.¹⁷

2.1 European mass exoduses between the 19th and 20th century

During the 19th century, the pace of movements and migration accelerated: the general rate of change quickened, differences widened, distances became shorter, and connections between diverse realms became acuter.¹⁸ The effortlessness of travelling from one place to another increased, as did the overall number of individuals on the move, whether moving near or distant, for a short time or permanently, by choice or forcibly.¹⁹ The “new worlds” outside of Europe had entered into the European sphere of action and were tied to the continent by institutional, cultural, religious and linguistic rapports. Furthermore, Oceania and sub-Saharan Africa became centres of attraction for European expansion due to their richness in land and natural resources.

¹⁶ Felix Wiedemann, “Migration and Narration: How European Historians in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries Told the History of Human Mass Migrations or *Völkerwanderungen*,” *History and Theory* 59, no.1 (March 2020): 42.

¹⁷ Giulia Bettin and Eralba Cela, “L’evoluzione storica dei flussi migratori in Europa e in Italia,” *Rapporto di Ricerca realizzato nell’ambito del progetto PRIN, Venezia* (2014): 5.

¹⁸ Massimo Livi-Bacci, “A Quickening Pace: 1800-1813,” in *A Short History of Migration* (Polity Press, 2012), 46.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Scholars have made a clear distinction between the first and second waves of migrations to present an overview of transoceanic movements. The main distinction is chronological and geographical. Indeed, the former type, also called ‘*old migration*’, is characterized by the exclusive migration from northern European countries, while the latter, the ‘*new migration*’, is typical of Mediterranean and eastern Europe.²⁰ Additionally, there are also certain qualitative differences between the two waves. For instance, people who migrated during the first wave had urban and artisan backgrounds, while the ‘*new migration*’ had an exclusive rural origin. An exemplar case of new migration is that of the mass emigration from Ireland, which was harshly hit by a disastrous famine between 1845 and 1849.²¹ Indeed, the shortage was one of the major contributors to the impressive numerical scale of migrant outflows from the United Kingdom.

Even though it is difficult to provide a precise quantitative analysis of the mass exoduses throughout the 19th century, it is possible to examine the contribution of the various European countries during the mass exoduses which took place between the 1800s and the first half of the 1900s. Certainly, in this time frame, Great Britain was the leading nation in terms of emigration with 20% of the migrants moving to the Americas.²² Italy followed with 16% and, subsequently, Germany with 13%. Finally, citizens from Austria-Hungary, Spain, Russia, and Scandinavian countries emigrated less, with percentages ranking between 7 and 4%.²³ The largest contingent of European migration was bound for the United States, about 70% of the migrants, compared to the 10% directed to Argentina and the 5% who travelled to Australia, Canada and Brazil. In this first great emigration to the US, two periods characterised by different numbers of arrivals and different forms of settlement were distinguished. The first great transoceanic emigration which happened between 1820 and 1889 had an annual average of less than 400,000 of immigrants and was characterized by the conquest of the frontier and land colonization.²⁴ Moreover, the second important migratory wave between 1890 and 1914 pushed almost 15 million Southern Europeans to the United States to work in construction, mines, and industries.

²⁰ Paola Corti, “Gli esodi di massa tra Ottocento e Novecento,” in *Storia delle migrazioni internazionali* (Edizioni Laterza, Giugno 2015), 23

²¹ William J Collins and Ariell Zimran, "The economic assimilation of Irish Famine migrants to the United States," *Explorations in Economic History* 74 (2019): 1.

²² Amy J. Lloyd, "Emigration, immigration and migration in nineteenth-century Britain," *British Library Newspapers* (2007): 3.

²³ Paola Corti, “Gli esodi di massa tra Ottocento e Novecento,” 23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

Without a doubt, transoceanic movements represented the dominant goal of mass exoduses; nonetheless, internal migrations within Europe were no less significant. In the second half of the 19th century people began to move from economically backward areas towards countries which had already undergone processes of development. Notably, the most active itineraries linked Eastern and Southern European territories with Western countries.²⁵ For instance, Italy was one of the countries with the highest migration rate, as around one million people emigrated to other European countries between 1891 and 1913. The most well-known cases of professional currents which influenced the mobility of people in Europe at the end of the 19th century and the new waves of transoceanic movements were those of the ‘*colporteurs*’. These highlanders had a strong influence on construction-related work, itinerant professions or artisan activities and they engaged in the largest migratory flows of that period.²⁶ In addition to these travellers, migratory flows of maids, nannies and weavers began to increase both within individual states and across national borders. In fact, movements of women going to manufactures abroad created an “informal work culture” very similar to that of male itinerant labour and in construction work.

In contemporary Europe, refugees became a collective subject identified as such and a major international political issue, significantly affecting the relationship between states.²⁷ The 20th century saw an increase in the routes of forced migration as well as a multitude of people forced to traverse the borders of their home country. The beginning of this swelling of the refugee crisis, destined to become disproportionate, was marked by the outbreak of the Balkan wars (1912-1913) and soon exploded with the First World War. The German invasion of Belgium drove 1,400,000 inhabitants out of the country and, in the later stages of the war, the uprooting of millions of civilians followed the territorial conquests of the armies and the shifting of the fronts.²⁸

²⁵ Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, “The Next Waves: The Globalisation of International Migration,” in *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (MacMillan Press, 1993), 103.

²⁶ Paola Corti, “Gli esodi di massa tra Ottocento e Novecento,” 31.

²⁷ Silvia Salvatici, “Introduzione,” in *Senza casa e senza paese: profughi europei nel secondo dopoguerra* (il Mulino, 2008), 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

2.2 Migration during the two world wars

Two of the major contributors to the exacerbation of international relations and the advent of the conflict in 1914-18 were the creation of nation-states and the degeneration of nationalism. In the same years, migration was affected by episodes of xenophobia which culminated in bloodshed and massacres, both within Europe and in the most important overseas countries.²⁹ Moreover, the most significant changes in migratory flows were affected by war and by the consequent peace treaties. The war caused 9 and a half million people to seek refuge in other countries.³⁰ It was calculated that, because of the peace regulations following the Great War, around 5 million people in Europe were forced to abandon their homes. Most of the displacements took place in the central states, which had lost the war.³¹ In particular, Jews became victims of vicious persecutions which gave rise to one of the largest diasporas in their troubled history of oppression. The foundation of totalitarian regimes in Italy and Germany and the Francoist victory in Spain influenced the rise of criminal annihilation plans by Nazis. Therefore, people being part of persecuted ethnic groups and those whose fundamental rights were violated were forced to flee.³² Not even the end of the second world war discontinued mass migrations, as the number of refugees and repatriates in the 1950s surpassed the overall number of migrants in the great migration. Furthermore, following the two World Wars, immigration from other continents began to rise, such as colonial migrants, ‘guest workers’ and refugees, who made up only a quarter of the total cross-cultural migrations.³³

According to Ladame, three diverse phases can be distinguished in the period going from 1920 to 1958 which represent both specific historic eras and an evolution of the issue of refugees.³⁴ During the first (1920-1939) the gravity of the problem became so severe that it was brought to the attention of the League of Nations in 1921. Refugees needed legal protection, proper living conditions and aid to rebuild their lives without interfering with their host countries. The issue was handled by the High Commissioner of the League of Nation Fridtjof Nansen who created a temporary identity for stateless migrants (i.e., the ‘Nansen passport’). Nonetheless, having solved the more formal problem, the issue of accommodating refugees in the receiving

²⁹ Paola Corti, “Profughi, fuoriusciti e deportati tra le due guerre,” 35.

³⁰ Silvia Salvatici, “Introduzione,” 10.

³¹ Paola Corti, “Profughi, fuoriusciti e deportati tra le due guerre,” 36.

³² *Ibid.*, 42.

³³ Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, “European migration history,” in *Routledge International Handbook of Migration Studies*, edited by Steven J. Gold and Stephanie J. Nawyn, (Routledge, 2019), 34.

³⁴ Paul A. Ladame, “Les Réfugiés,” in *Le rôle Des Migrations Dans Le Monde Libre* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1958), 239.

countries had to be addressed. Thus, the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (ICR) was founded in 1938 during the Evian Conference with the aim of improving the conditions of refugees, to encourage a stable place of accommodation of those persecuted for racial, religious, or ideological reasons and to protect them.³⁵ The second phase (1939-1945) began with the outbreak of World War II, which led millions of people to flee and move to different countries. Early studies attempting to reconstruct the “magnitude and complexity” of the phenomenon put the total number of people deported, evacuated, and forced to leave their country during those years at around 50 million, or 10% of the entire European population.³⁶ Finally, the third phase (1945-1958) was characterized by a humanitarian crisis of similar proportions to the preceding two phases. In fact, the expulsions and deportations resulting from the world war had dramatically affected the fate of millions of people. With the treaty of Potsdam 6,7 million Germans were expelled from the regions granted to Poland.³⁷ In addition, 4,5 million Polish people, around 2 million Czechs and Slovaks, 500,000 Russians and Ukrainians and more people were transferred around Europe.³⁸ With the foundation of the United Nations in 1945 and the creation of a new institution, the Organisation Internationale pour les Réfugiés (OIR), the issue seemed to be placated. Its aim was presented in the 1946 resolution where it was issued that “the refugee problem must be dealt with and resolved by the UN in accordance with human rights law and the law of nations”.³⁹ With the Displaced Persons Act passed by the US Congress in 1948, the refugee problem seemed to come to an end, as it established a new immigration plan to the United States. The bill defined displaced persons as “persons who on April 21, 1947... and on the effective date of the bill were resident in Italy, or in the United States, British, or French zones of Germany or Austria, and who during World War II bore arms against the enemies of the United States and were unable or unwilling to return to the country of which they were nationals because of persecution or fear of persecution on account of race, religion, or political opinion”.⁴⁰ Essentially, the US government selected who could be defined as a displaced person and if they were allowed within the country.

³⁵ Paul A. Ladame, “Les Réfugiés,” 244.

³⁶ Silvia Salvatici, “Introduzione,” 10.

³⁷ Bruno Paradisi, “Migrazioni Umane,” in *Enciclopedia Del Novecento* (Treccani, 1979).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Tory Lyn Martin, "Displaced Persons Act of 1948 Literature Review," *US Immigration History* (University of Mary Washington, 2019): 1.

2.2.1 Creation of the United Nations Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Administration (UNRRA)

After World War II, refugees became a responsibility of the United Nations, but still through temporary agencies. The United Nations Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Administration (UNRRA) was formally established on 9 November 1943 to deliver aid to the refugees and, in various cases, to their repatriation.⁴¹ Within less than five years the organization brought relief to sixteen invaded or occupied countries, preventing epidemics and starvation, reconstructing transportation, industry and agriculture, recovering confidence and morale, and empowering the victims of hostilities to start to help themselves.⁴² Indeed, the purposes and functions of UNRRA, specified in an Agreement drafted in 1942, were to

“plan, coordinate, administer or arrange for the administration of measures for the relief of victims of war in any area under the control of any of the United Nations through the provision of food, fuel, clothing, shelter and other basic necessities, medical and other essential services; and to facilitate such areas, so far as necessary to the adequate provision of relief, the production and transportation of these articles and the furnishing of these services”.⁴³

The organization took care of all aspects related to the problem of refugees until 1947, when the International Refugee Organization received the task of finding a permanent solution for those who were removed from their countries of origin during the conflict but were subsequently unable and/or unwilling to return.⁴⁴

2.3 Migration during the second half of the 20th century

Immediate post-war migration was characterized by the repatriation of ethnic citizens and other displaced persons, which were forced to escape their home countries during the conflicts, to their country of origin. Furthermore, transoceanic migrations were revived also due to the increasing economic crises that the defeated countries were facing. On a quantitative level, it was calculated that, between 1947 and 1951, about 2.5 million Europeans left for North

⁴¹ Tory Lyn Martin, "Displaced Persons Act of 1948 Literature Review," 247.

⁴² Grace Fox, "The Origins of UNRRA," *Political Science Quarterly* 65, no.4 (December 1950): 561.

⁴³ G. Bernard Noble and E. R. Perkins, eds., "Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, Draft No. 2, August 13, 1942," in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1942, General; the British Commonwealth; the Far East, Volume I* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1960).

⁴⁴ Silvia Salvatici, "Introduzione," 13.

America, Latin American states, and Oceanian islands (principally Australia). Each year, approximately 460,000 migrants left Europe. Out of these, 218,000 left their countries spontaneously and 242,000 were guided by the International Refugee Organisation.⁴⁵ The newly opened route involved 608,000 British citizens, 300,000 Germans, 206,000 Spanish migrants and 163,000 Portuguese. The largest number of travellers came from Italy comprising around 623,000 people. Nonetheless, during the 1950s the migratory movements were registered to a greater extent within Europe itself. That is because war-affected countries had to promote immigration also from neighbouring states. Western Europe was gradually moving from being departures' origin to a major destination for international labour movements.⁴⁶ The economic boom and the resulting labour shortage led some countries to recruit foreign workforces, the so-called 'guest workers', to provide a temporary resolution to the labour market needs. These large migrations within Europe and from developing countries strengthened the economic development and incomparable growth which occurred in Europe between 1945 and 1975, generally referred to as the "Trente Glorieuses".⁴⁷ For this purpose, France stipulated two agreements with Italy in 1946 and 1947.⁴⁸ Italians were also sent to mining areas in Belgium, Switzerland, Great Britain, and Czechoslovakia; during the Fifties, Italians constituted around 50% of the immigrant present in the European Economic Community, established in 1957.⁴⁹

In the second half of the 20th century, cities around the world began to grow at an alarming rate, especially because of the pressure of migration and demographic expansion. Indeed, the dynamics of urban development, with its immense conglomerations of cities located in several places around the planet, is the phenomenon that probably represents at best the characteristics that migratory phenomena will assume in the globalised world. Moreover, up to the 1960s, the immigration in Europe came principally from politically connected proveniences: from East to West Germany, from Algeria to France and from the West Indies, Pakistan and Malta to Britain.⁵⁰ With the fall of the Wall between the two parts of Germany and the newly supported British-French regulations, a new immigration began to rise from the Mediterranean countries.

⁴⁵ Paola Corti, "Le migrazioni nella seconda metà del Novecento," 51.

⁴⁶ Giulia Bettin and Eralba Cela, "L'evoluzione storica dei flussi migratori in Europa e in Italia," 8.

⁴⁷ Jean-Pierre Garson, "Migration in Europe: Trends and Perspectives," in *International Conference on the Economic and Social Aspects of Migration, jointly organized by the European Commission and OECD 22* (2003), 46.

⁴⁸ Paola Corti, "Le migrazioni nella seconda metà del Novecento," 54.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁰ C.P. Kindleberger, "Mass Migration, Then and Now," *Foreign Affairs* 43, no.4 (July 1965): 648.

Thus, the incentives to mass exoduses found a new acceleration during the last part of the 20th century. In fact, the endemic overpopulation, the increasing poverty rates, and the movements of refugees fleeing from various theatres of war or political repressions are at the grassroots of this new migratory enhancement.⁵¹ Yet, while at the beginning of the century the principal destinations were north-western European countries, the new international migration scheme saw southern Europe as an increasingly desirable target. The Mediterranean territories, mainly Italy and Spain, became the main poles of attraction for migration flows generating from Africa and Asia. In the decade between 1982 and 1993 these countries (i.e., Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece) registered an increase in the percentage of immigrants which went from 4% to around 7%.⁵²

⁵¹ Paola Corti, "Le caratteristiche dei movimenti migratori negli ultimi vent'anni del Novecento," 64.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 72.

Chapter III: Migration due to wars and persecutions

3.1 EVACUATION OF CHILDREN DURING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

It is difficult not to conceive war as an unavoidable part of the human condition. As Albert Einstein put it, “so long as there are men, there will be wars”.⁵³ Wars are increasingly deadly and devastating as technology is in perennial development and the main victims are usually the civilian population, in particular children. At present, there is little knowledge concerning the subject of forced displacements in Spain, and the concept of “refugees” has a minor significance for our collective consciousness.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the civil war which took place in the country between 1936 and 1939, and which is encompassed in what is called the “era of extremes”, is an apparent example of forced displacement of people which destined a whole population to become refugees. Indeed, the Spanish Civil War is considered to be the precursor of the Second World War and, to a certain extent, a “laboratory for experiments” for that warfare, as it was the first explosion of the European crisis of that time.⁵⁵ In fact, it provided Germany with a test theatre for the military techniques it would later use in the World War, especially the bombing of open cities.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the war saw, for the first time in history, the phenomenon of evacuations of children abroad, promoted at government level and with the assistance of several political and humanitarian organizations from diverse countries.⁵⁷

3.1.1 Historical background: the Spanish Civil War

The Spanish Civil War, opposing Nationalists against Republicans, was one of the most important conflicts of the 20th century. Even though the precise numbers are still at debate, it is estimated that as many as 800,000 people died during the conflict, out of which almost 200,00 were civilian victims.⁵⁸ The Civil War, originated following a failed coup d'état in July

⁵³ David Carroll Cochran, "A World without War," *Commonweal* 143, no. 1 (2016): 13.

⁵⁴ Alicia Muñoz Ramírez, "Child Refugees of the Spanish Civil War," *Humanities and Rights Global Network Journal* 3, no. 1 (2021): 52.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵⁶ Alicia Alted Vigil, “Las consecuencias de la Guerra Civil española en los niños de la República: de la dispersión al exilio,” *Espacio Tiempo y Forma. Serie V, Historia Contemporánea* 9 (1996): 208.

⁵⁷ Alicia Alted Vigil, "El «instante congelado» del exilio de los niños de la guerra civil española," *Rivista telematica di studi sulla memoria femminile* 3 (2005): 266.

⁵⁸ Ana Tur-Prats and Felipe Valencia Caicedo, “The long shadow of the Spanish Civil War,” *CEPR Discussion Papers* (July 2020): 1.

1936 against the then government of the Spanish Second Republic which provoked the foundation of a dictatorship under General Francisco Franco between 1939 and 1975, developed into a total war and served as a proving ground for the Second World War. The Nationalists, as the rebels were called, were supported by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. On the other hand, the Republicans received aid from the Soviet Union as well as from the International Brigades, which consisted of volunteers from Europe and the United States.⁵⁹ By July 21, 1936, the rebels had obtained control in Spanish Morocco, the Canary Islands, and the Balearic Islands and the Basque provinces near the north coast.⁶⁰ The captainship of the Nationalists was assumed by General Franco who was named head of state and set up a government in Burgos. Although France, Britain, the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy signed a non-intervention agreement in August 1936, it was immediately ignored by the three governments. Following extended battles between the two factions, in March 1939 the Republican armies surrendered, and the capital of Spain was taken by Nationalist forces. On April 1st, 1939, the rebels emerged victorious from the Civil War marking the beginning of the dictatorship of Franco (1939-1975).⁶¹

The consequences of such war on the Spanish population were unprecedented and outrageous violations of human rights were perpetrated. Spain lost several thousands of citizens and herewith began one of the first and most large-scale refugee crisis of the 20th century.⁶² The rate of forced movements increased drastically in the Republican zone, as the official institutions of the Second Republic arranged several evacuations alongside with the spontaneous mass flight that was taking place at the same time. In fact, it has been estimated that between the people who were forced to leave Spain during war and the individuals who left the country due to the aftereffects of the conflict, a total of approximately 684,000 people were compelled to go into exile.⁶³ As already stated above, in the framework of the Spanish civil war, like in all wars, children were the primary victims. Indeed, given the ideological nature of the war, it is not surprising that children were amongst the first targets of the two factions. For both parties, they were the future generations of the nation called upon to

⁵⁹ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Spanish Civil War - Spanish History," Encyclopædia Britannica (July 10, 2022), <https://www.britannica.com/event/Spanish-Civil-War>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Alicia Muñoz Ramírez, "Child Refugees of the Spanish Civil War," 62.

⁶² Hugh Thomas, "Conclusión," In *La guerra civil española. Tomo V. Conclusión, epílogo, apéndices, bibliografías, cronología e índices*, edited by Hugh Thomas (Madrid, 1979): 17.

⁶³ Alicia Muñoz Ramírez, "Child Refugees of the Spanish Civil War," 55.

“consolidate the triumph of the popular revolution”.⁶⁴ For this reason, as psychologists, educational theorists and legislators were pointing to the vulnerability of children, parents began to feel the need to protect their offspring from a corrupt environment and to preserve their innocence at all costs.⁶⁵

In the moment in which the war began, thousands of families were separated as the head of each household either enlisted and went to the front or, on the other hand, was imprisoned and executed. Moreover, children experienced a strong sense of helplessness particularly in those areas close to the front, as there were numerous aerial bombardments and the scarcity of food and spread of diseases extended expeditiously. Young refugees of the Spanish Civil War were deprived of their childhood, and their story is one of the most unknown and unexplored of that strife. Nonetheless, as noted by the expert historian Alicia Alted, during the Civil War there was seen “for the first time in history, the phenomenon of evacuations of children to foreign countries promoted at the government level and with the help of numerous political organizations, unions, and humanitarian aid from various countries”.⁶⁶ This has to do with the fact that the Spanish Republican government prioritized the separation of children from the sufferings caused by the war. To gain an overview of the ruthless effect the Civil War had on Spanish children we can follow the inquiry led by Ramón Salas Larrazábal who emphasizes that around 138,000 more children died during the war than the estimated number of deaths if they had lived in peacetime. Additionally, it is unavoidable to add to child mortality the psychological trauma and further consequences, such as malnutrition and diseases, which they had to endure.⁶⁷

In August of 1936, solely a month following the outbreak of the war, the government of the Republic began to plan several specific measures in an endeavour to protect the juvenile population of Spain. Moreover, the Battle of Irun, which occurred between August 27th and September 5th of 1936, and the consequent occupation of the border crossing at Irun by the rebels influenced the first mass exodus of the civilian community, mainly women and children,

⁶⁴ Alicia Alted Vigil, “Las consecuencias de la Guerra Civil española en los niños de la República: de la dispersión al exilio,” 208.

⁶⁵ Peter Anderson, “The struggle over the evacuation to the United Kingdom and repatriation of Basque refugee children in the Spanish Civil War: symbols and souls,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 2 (2017): 299.

⁶⁶ Alicia Alted Vigil, “El «instante congelado» del exilio de los niños de la guerra civil española,” 266.

⁶⁷ Ramón Salas Larrazábal, “El mito del millón de muertos. Demografía contra leyenda,” in *La guerra civil española. Tomo VI. Camino para la paz. Los historiadores y la Guerra Civil*, edited by Hugh Thomas (Madrid, 1979): 289.

towards the frontier with France.⁶⁸ Indeed, the process of displacement was accentuated in the Republican zone, as the military offences by the rebels aggravated, forcing the withdrawal of both combatants and civilians to safer areas or even abroad, as mentioned.⁶⁹ In October of 1936, the Committee for Refugees was founded to aid Madrid and its provinces. The first evacuation from Madrid was towards wares in the Levante region. The migration took place on trains and lorries and was particularly long (from 12 to 14 hours), uncomfortable and dangerous due to the continuous bombings.⁷⁰ The First Secretary of the Spanish Embassy in Paris, Victoria Kent, became responsible for the evacuations of children from Spain and promulgated several directions for the creation of nursery-shelters in Madrid.⁷¹ Likewise, the Central Committee for Aid to Refugees in Catalonia was created in Barcelona also in October 1936; in the spring of 1937 it already supervised around 10,000 children placed in colonies or cared for in a home-like manner.⁷² The system of camps set up by the Republican government also in areas far from the fronts, especially in the provinces of Alicante, Valencia and Castellón, in Aragon and Catalonia, as well as abroad, made it possible that by 1937, more than 500 collective colonies and placements with families existed, providing a refuge for a total of 54,284 children.⁷³ Indeed, the final goal was to isolate children from the hardships brought by the war (e.g., bombardments and violence) and move them to safer environments, even though sometimes it had to be in other countries. This situation brought about the mass evacuations of children from Spain.

3.1.2 The mass evacuations of children

Official evacuations of children took place during two main periods of time. The first wave occurred between March and September of 1937, it was followed by a second phase between October of 1938 and early February of 1939.⁷⁴ The former evacuations were carried out principally by sea, several ships transported the children from the Spanish ports to various harbours on the French Atlantic coast (e.g., Bordeaux or Saint-Nazaire), and the latter by bus

⁶⁸ Alicia Muñoz Ramírez, "Child Refugees of the Spanish Civil War," 57.

⁶⁹ Alicia Alted Vigil, "El «instante congelado» del exilio de los niños de la guerra civil española," 265.

⁷⁰ Alicia Alted Vigil, "Las consecuencias de la Guerra Civil española en los niños de la República: de la dispersión al exilio," 212.

⁷¹ Bárbara Ortuño Martínez, "De la memoria histórica a la memoria colectiva: los niños de la Guerra Civil en Argentina," *Ayer* 85 (2012): 181.

⁷² Juan Manuel Fernández Soria, "La asistencia a la infancia en la Guerra Civil: las colonias escolares," *Historia de la Educación: Revista interuniversitaria* (1987): 91.

⁷³ Bárbara Ortuño Martínez, "De la memoria histórica a la memoria colectiva: los niños de la Guerra Civil en Argentina," 181.

⁷⁴ Alicia Alted Vigil, "El «instante congelado» del exilio de los niños de la guerra civil española," 268.

or train leaving from different parts of Catalonia. In addition, a further exodus took place after the fall of the Catalan front at the end of January and the first weeks of February of 1939. This brought half a million Spanish Republicans to the French border, among them some 70,000 children.⁷⁵ This particular mass exodus was different in character from the other official evacuations of children during the Civil War and it has given rise to a comprehensive set of literature on the so-called “border crossing”.⁷⁶



*Figure 1. Women and children on their way to the French border in early 1939.*⁷⁷

Basque children

As a response to the gruesome bombardment in March and April 1937 of the civilian population in the Basque towns of Durango and Guernica by the German Condor Legion and Italian aircrafts several mass evacuations of Basque children were undertaken. Particularly the bombing of Guernica on April 26, 1937, marked the Basque’s collective memory of the Civil War. As Ludger Mees noted: “there is no other place, nor personality, nor symbol in the Basque collective memory that has had or has such an important presence as this small Biscayan town”.⁷⁸ Children stood out as a symbol of the horror against the civil population during the bombardments; one of the children who fled the bombings gave the following testimony:

⁷⁵ Alicia Alted Vigil, "El «instante congelado» del exilio de los niños de la guerra civil española," 268.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ludger Mees, “Guernica/Gernika como símbolo,” *Historia Contemporánea* 35 (2007): 531.

“We saw a family of people we knew from our street run into a wood. There was the mother with two children and the old grandmother. The planes circled about the wood for a long time and at last frightened them out of it. They took shelter in a ditch. We saw the old granny cover up the little boy with her apron. The planes came low and killed them all in the ditch, except the little boy. He soon got up and began to wander across a field, crying. They got him too.”⁷⁹

This was the turning point that led the Basque authorities to evacuate the children abroad or to safer areas to protect them from the threat of further bombings.⁸⁰ It was a daunting task, as those in charge had to select the children, obtain permission from their families, ask for financial support, rent boats, organize the children’s reception in foreign countries, gather people to travel with the children, and obtain all the required authorisations in the host countries.⁸¹ Nonetheless, the Basque government succeeded in housing many child refugees in a network of colonies within the government zone, thereby generating significant public interest also abroad.⁸²

On May 3rd, 1937, the British General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) received a communication from an activist in Bilbao urging him “in the name of civilisation and humanity” to aid in the evacuation of around 4000 children from the city. Leah Manning called on the TUC to emulate the preceding example of the French General Confederation of Labour (CGT) union centre in taking 2000 or 3000 children.⁸³ Thus, on May 5th, at a meeting of the British ‘National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief’ (NJCSR), a special committee was set up composed of two TUC representatives, one each from the Society of Friends, the Save the Children Fund, Spanish Medical Aid and the Catholic Church, and three officials of the NJCSR.⁸⁴ This was later called the Basque Children’s Committee, which united religious, political, and humanitarian agencies.⁸⁵ Thereafter, among the children who departed during the

⁷⁹ Xabier Irujo, *The Bombing of Guernica* (Buenos Aires: Ekin, 2021): 82.

⁸⁰ Virginia López de Maturana, “Exile, Identity, and Education: The Evacuation of Basque Children to the French Basque Country, 1937–1939,” in *War, Exile, Justice, and Everyday Life, 1936–1946*, ed. Sandra Ott (Center for Basque Studies, 2011), 86.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Peter Anderson, “The struggle over the evacuation to the United Kingdom and repatriation of Basque refugee children in the Spanish Civil War: symbols and souls,” 303.

⁸³ Tom Buchanan, “The Role of the British Labour Movement in the Origins and Work of the Basque Children’s Committee, 1937-39,” *European History Quarterly* 18 (1988): 158.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

first stage of Spanish evacuations, 3,826 Basque children left as refugees, on May 21st, 1937, from the harbour of Santurtzi, in the province of Vizcaya, and docked at Southampton in England.⁸⁶ In fact, in Britain the NJCSR had been established at the end of 1936 to coordinate the activities of several voluntary relief organizations for Spanish children.⁸⁷ The “*Expedición a Inglaterra*”, as the evacuation was called, remains to this day one of the least-known episodes of the Spanish Civil War.⁸⁸ The children made the journey on the renowned ship *Correo de Habana*⁸⁹ accompanied by 96 female teachers, 118 young women who had volunteered to accompany them, fifteen Catholic priests, two English doctors and five nurses.⁹⁰ Most of the children were with their brothers and sisters, but 498 were on their own.



Figure 2. Basque refugee children on board the SS Habana about to depart Bilbao for Southampton, 21st May 1937.⁹¹

After thorough medical examinations they were initially taken to a camp at Eastleigh in North Stoneham, while the specially formed Basque Children’s Committee attempted to find homes

⁸⁶ Alicia Muñoz Ramírez, "Child Refugees of the Spanish Civil War," 58.

⁸⁷ Richard Graves, “Leicester’s refuge for Basque children from the Spanish Civil War (Part 1),” *Leicester Historian* 52 (2016): 4

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁹ *The ship Habana was the protagonist of the great official expeditions of children abroad from June to September 1937. It was a cruise ship built in the 1920s (called Alfonso XIII until 1931), 146 metres long and weighing 10,500 tons. After the collapse of the northern front, it became a hospital ship anchored in Bordeaux to provide medical assistance to refugees forced to leave the country. After the war, it was taken to the harbour in Vigo, where it remained until the 1960s, when it was transformed into the first Spanish factory ship.*

⁹⁰ Richard Graves, “Leicester’s refuge for Basque children from the Spanish Civil War (Part 1),” 4-5.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

for them. The site was set up on land provided by a local resident, with volunteers working tirelessly to ensure it was ready for the children's arrival. In this way, plumbing and drainage were installed and five-hundred tents were pitched.⁹² According to some research, only 400 Basque children remain in Great Britain in 1939, and after the Second World War, in 1948, only 280 were still on British soil.⁹³ Until June 1937, eleven convoys of approximately twenty-five thousand children moved from Biscaya to France and several continued to further diverse destinations. For instance, around 400 Basque children arrived in Switzerland in September 1937 and were allocated among Catholic families in Geneva, Lucerne, and Fribourg. The second group of 390 Spanish minors, who arrived at the end of January 1939, was aided by the Spanish Children's Aid Committee, which also distributed them among Catholic and socialist families in different cities.⁹⁴ Additionally, Denmark received about 100 children in August 1937 from northern Spain and sent them to colonies near Copenhagen. Although it is not possible to obtain accurate data on the number of Basque children evacuated, a total of 15,383 minors were documented as having sought shelter in France.⁹⁵ With the advancement of war in Spain, certain areas within the country became safer for children to be repatriated to. Clearly, the project was conceived as being a temporary facility while the war was being fought in northern Spain. The idea was, as already mentioned above, to protect children from the dangers of war and to safeguard for the duration of the conflict. The journey and their welcoming were supervised and organized by the Basque Committee for Children, which had to guarantee at least ten shillings per week per child for their care and education.⁹⁶ Altogether, approximately 38,000 young people from the Basque region were expatriated, principally to France, Mexico, Russia, and Belgium (including the 3,800 who were sent to Britain).⁹⁷

⁹² Alicia Alted Vigil, "El «instante congelado» del exilio de los niños de la guerra civil española," 270.

⁹³ Alicia Muñoz Ramírez, "Child Refugees of the Spanish Civil War," 59.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Virginia López de Maturana, "Exile, Identity, and Education: The Evacuation of Basque Children to the French Basque Country, 1937–1939," 92.

⁹⁶ Richard Graves, "Leicester's refuge for Basque children from the Spanish Civil War (Part 1)," 4.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

CONSEJERIA DE ASISTENCIA SOCIAL
EXPEDICIONES INFANTILES A FRANCIA
SANTANDER 25

Número	214/28	Referencia	A.P.O.Gas
Apellidos	Aleson Ruisoto		
Nombre	Carmen		
Edad	8 años		
Nacido el	15 de Diciembre	de 19 28	
Naturalidad	Santander		
Sexo	femenino		
¿Páber?	Buena		
Salud	Buena		



HUJO DE:
Antonio Aleson Ortiz y de **Encarnación Ruisoto Llata**
 Domicilio habitual **San Pedro 5 - 5 °**
 Domicilio actual **el mismo**
 Profesión **Empleado del Gas**
 Pertenece al Sindicato **Asociación Provincial Empleados del Gas**

HUELLAS DIGITALES DEL NIÑO
 (Foto derecha)

DÍGULOAR	INDICE	MEDIO
		


Encarnación Ruisoto



Figure 3. Evacuated girl's card.⁹⁸

Children de Morelia

From the beginning of the war, the Mexican government presided over by General Lázaro Cárdenas supported the Republic and did not recognize the authority of Franco's dictatorial regime. One expression of this support was the reception of 463 Spanish children who arrived in Mexico in 1937 (Figure 4). This first group of children was called "*Children de Morelia*". They left the port of Bordeaux on May 25th on the transatlantic steamship *Mexique*, and they disembarked in Veracruz on June 7th, 1937.⁹⁹ The Mexican government treated the newly arrived children with particularly special care by also creating the Committee for Aid to the Children of Spanish People in 1937. The minors were warmly received by President Cárdenas and were consequently transferred to Morelia, in the state of Michoacán, where they were housed in a refurbished former seminary that would be called the *Escuela Industrial España-México* (Spain-Mexico Industrial School).¹⁰⁰ In fact, the children lived under a boarding school system and received a "socialist and secular" type of education.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, when the president was replaced by Manuel Ávila Camacho in December 1940, official assistance for the Spanish child refugees drastically decreased. Towards the end of 1943, the lack of support led to the termination of the school-camp in which the children were living. In these circumstances, where financial aid for child refugees was put to a hold and where there was no

⁹⁸ "El Exilio Infantil: Los Niños De La Guerra," Centro de Información Documental de Archivos (CIDA) - Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte, accessed July 13, 2022, <https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/cultura/areas/archivos/mc/centros/cida/4-difusion-cooperacion/4-2-guias-de-lectura/guia-exilio-espanol-1939-archivos-estatales/ninos-guerra.html>.

⁹⁹ Alicia Muñoz Ramírez, "Child Refugees of the Spanish Civil War," 61.

¹⁰⁰ Alicia Alted Vigil, "El «instante congelado» del exilio de los niños de la guerra civil española," 274.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

support for repatriation, children and adolescents found themselves abandoned and alone, many of them without any type of family ties in the country. The case of the “Children of Morelia” was different from those children who arrived in Mexico following the end of the war, generally accompanied by their families, as they had a more uncomplicated process of integration into Mexican society. Surely, they suffered deprivation and had to share with their parents the feeling of forced expatriation, but they lived in a protected environment, where they received a Spanish education in schools created especially for them, as was the case of the *Instituto Hispano-Mexicano Ruiz de Alarcón*.¹⁰²

RELACION DE LOS NIÑOS ESPAÑOLES INTERCRANTES DE LA EXPEDICION
LLEGADA EN EL "MEXIQUE" EL 7 DE JUNIO DE 1937, Y ENTREGADOS A
LA SECRETARIA DE EDUCACION PUBLICA POR EL "COMITE DE AYUDA A
LOS NIÑOS DEL PUEBLO ESPAÑOL".

NOMBRES:	PROCEDENCIA.	EDAD
Niños.		
Acosta Ambrós, Julián.	Galicia	10
Acosta Ambrós, Felipe	Barcelona	6
Acosta Ambrós, Ezequiel	Valencia	12
Alvarez Pozzi, José	Málaga	12
Amorós Castellanos, Julián.	Madrid	13
Alvarez Espinosa, Juan	Granada	12
Aranda Ferrnades, Antonio	Barcelona	10
Arnauda Cardona, Belcario (a)	"	8
Arnauda Cardona, Germán. (a)	"	12
Arnauda Cardona, Ovidio (a)	"	7
Arnauda Cardona, Pedro (a)	"	10
Arnauda Menéndez, Luis. (a)	"	11
Arnauda Menéndez, Santiago (a)	"	12
Artigas Ollés, Joaquín	"	7
Artigas Ollés, Juan	"	11
Artigas Ollés, Miguel	"	9
Ayuso Rivera, José	Madrid	10
Baifa Aucajo, Francisco	Valencia	13
Baiza Fanollar, Francisco	Madrid	12
Baiza Fanollar, Luis	"	10
Baixeras Pugibet, José	Barcelona	10
Baixeras Pugibet, Miguel	"	5
Balaguer Esteves, Bernardo	"	6
Baro Fenón, Antonio	Málaga	10
Baro Fenón, Cecilio	"	12
Barriéndos Barriéndos, Miguel	Zaragoza	7
Barroso Camarena, Diego	Málaga	11
Barroso Camarena, Luis	Barcelona	10
Batánero García, Miguel	Madrid	7
Batánero García, Rogelio	"	12
Bautista Ayuso, Emilio	"	11
Bautista Ayuso, Julián	"	9
Beltrán Pérez, Luis	Valencia	11
Benedet Gironés, Libertario	Barcelona	4
Bravo Pizarro, Fernando	Madrid	12
Calaborra Garrido, Jesús	Barcelona	11
Campe Ocón, Godofredo del	Galicia	10
Canut Molá, José	Valencia	13
Carcedán Belicado, Mariano	Albacete	12
Carrón Posa, Vicente	Valencia	12
Casal Buzafia, Emilio	Madrid	12
Casal Buzafia, Luis	"	7
Casasnovas Lamora, Carlos	Barcelona	12
Casasnovas Díaz, Francisco	Málaga	12
Casasnovas Díaz, Miguel	"	12
Castellón Goni, Pablo	Barcelona	5

Figure 4. Boarding list of the “Children of Morelia”.¹⁰³

Responses of the international community

Following the bombings, the international community, extremely shocked and horrified by these events, propitiated the expansion of the campaign “Help the Children of Spain”, and supported the foundation of Committees for the assistance of Spanish children in various

¹⁰² Alicia Altred Vigil, "El «instante congelado» del exilio de los niños de la guerra civil española," 275.

¹⁰³ “El Exilio Infantil: Los Niños De La Guerra,” Centro de Información Documental de Archivos (CIDA) - Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte, accessed July 13, 2022.

nations.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, countries such as England, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, the Soviet Union, and Mexico, welcomed several child refugees of the Spanish Civil War. According to data collected by Barbara Ortuño Martínez, France took in the largest number of children, approximately 20,000; Belgium received somewhat more than 5,000; England around 4,000; the Soviet Union took in roughly 3,000 children; Switzerland some 800; Mexico more than 450; and nearly 100 boys and girls were sent to Denmark.¹⁰⁵ In total, more than 34,000 children fled the war from the ports of Valencia, Bilbao, and Barcelona, among others. To each of the countries to which the Spanish child refugees were evacuated, they received quite diverse welcomes. For instance, in France there was a great pressure in favour of repatriation of the children, mainly due to the large influx of refugees of that period, although the war had not ended yet. Similarly, Swiss humanitarian organizations made a conscientious attempt at protecting and helping the child refugees; however, the government did everything in its power to facilitate repatriation instead of waiting for the civil war to end. In Belgium, parties and organizations of the left (in particular the Belgian Socialist Party), supported a fierce campaign to raise awareness and shape the public opinion. Together with the Belgian Red Cross, the organizations were responsible for the reception of most of the children. Upon arrival, Spanish minors were welcomed for a few weeks in shelters or colonies before being adopted by Belgian families. Nonetheless, the adopted children, almost all of them Basque, were repatriated after the fall of the northern front in Spain.¹⁰⁶ Finally, in Denmark there was a salient debate on whether it was opportune to repatriate the children. Even though the government sustained the refugees for some time, at the start of 1939 the repatriations commenced. In all these cases, the governments did not want to be involved in the reception of children and even their presence created a climate of secrecy.

On the contrary, the authorities of Mexico and the Soviet Union presented particularities both in terms of the reception and sojourn of the children. The two governments refused to repatriate children before the end of the war and, differently from the other countries, did not recognize the dictatorial regime imposed by Franco in Spain following the end of the Civil War. For example, the child refugees who arrived in the Soviet Union received a warm welcome. The first 72 children set sail from Valencia on March 17th, 1937, on the ship *Cabo de Palos*, and

¹⁰⁴ Alicia Alted Vigil, "Las consecuencias de la Guerra Civil española en los niños de la República: de la dispersión al exilio," 214.

¹⁰⁵ Barbara Ortuño Martínez, "De la memoria histórica a la memoria colectiva: los niños de la Guerra Civil en Argentina," 182.

¹⁰⁶ Alicia Alted Vigil, "El «instante congelado» del exilio de los niños de la guerra civil española," 273.

arrived at Yalta in Crimea on March 28th, 1937. In total, there were four different expeditions which brought Spanish children to the Soviet Union. The second group left the port of Bilbao on June 13th, five days before the troops of Franco conquered the city. Around 4,500 children were sent to Bordeaux on the ship *Habana* and 1,495 Basque children were embarked on the ship *Sontay* for Leningrad. The third evacuation was initiated when the Nationalist offensive reached Asturias and Santander in mid-August 1937. On September 23rd, a French cargo ship left the harbour of El Musel (Gijón) with approximately 1,000 children on board. When they reached the French port of Saint Nazaire, they were transferred on the Soviet ship *Kooperatsiia* bound for the USSR. Finally, the last expedition was organized at the end of 1938, when about 300 children from Catalonia, Aragon and the Mediterranean coast were sent to the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁷ After their arrival in the Union, they were distributed to various children's homes that were set up to accommodate them. In total, there were sixteen residences, eleven in different parts of the Russian Federation and five in Ukraine.¹⁰⁸ All the children's needs were fulfilled, and they received comprehensive schooling in accordance with the Soviet educational plan. Indeed, they were looked after by the Spanish instructors and auxiliary staff who had escorted them during their evacuations, along with Russian teachers and caregivers. However, following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Spanish children were forced to evacuate from the houses in which they were welcomed to move to safer inland regions located thousands of kilometres away from the areas where they were.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, the incursion provoked a period of hunger and cold and of suffering for the Russian population and the Spanish children. Some young men signed up as volunteers in the Red Army and several died in the fighting, while others suffered from diseases such as tuberculosis and starvation. Yet, at no time was there any question of repatriating the children to Spain. Both the Russian government and the leaders of the Spanish Communist Party in Moscow were firmly against it. The case of Spanish children in the Soviet Union is special, as minors were not allowed to leave the country even if it was to reunite with their parents in other countries. Solely after Stalin's death did the negotiations start and in 1956 and 1957 official repatriations took place under the guidance of the Spanish and Soviet governments.

¹⁰⁷ Alicia Altet Vigil, "El «instante congelado» del exilio de los niños de la guerra civil española," 276.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 278.

3.1.3 The end of the Civil War: flights and repatriations

The conflict led 70,000 children to leave Spain either accompanied by their mothers or other relatives or, oftentimes, alone. Predominantly, these children went to France and remained there, while others sought shelter in other countries, such as Argentina, Venezuela, or Chile. In fact, some research shows that about 10,000 Spaniards reached Argentina.¹¹⁰ It has been calculated that approximately 600 of these child refugees currently still reside in the country.¹¹¹ A further group of children departed from the port of Trompeloup in France on August 3rd, 1939, on the ship *Winnipeg* ("Ship of Hope") and arrived at the dock of Valparaíso in Chile on September 2nd, 1939. The journey was financed by the Chilean Committee for Aid to Spanish Refugees (CChARE), the Federation of Argentinian Organizations for Spanish Refugees (FOARE), and the Service for Evacuation of Spanish Refugees (SERE). After all, the number of child refugees who reached Chile, escaping the consequences of the Civil War, comes to some 3,500.¹¹²

On the other hand, the end of the war led to mass repatriations, with the result that around 250,000 people had already returned to Spain by August of 1939, the majority of them were women and children.¹¹³ In fact, the rebels asked the Spanish Children Repatriation Committee to aid them in locating the expatriated children and bringing them back to their homeland even before the Civil War had ended. Moreover, the Extraordinary Delegation for the Repatriation of Minors, subordinate to the Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista, the Traditional Spanish Phalanx and that of the Councils of the National Syndicalist Offensive (FET y de las JONS), was employed to bring the children back. The Franco regime named them "the children recovered for the Fatherland".¹¹⁴ The Duchess of Atholl, a leading member of the Basque Children's Committee, outlined her belief that before the children were repatriated some proof that the parents desired the return of their children and evidence of their capabilities to care for the children had to be analysed first.¹¹⁵ In fact, the initiative faced some resistance from the families, who did all in their powers to reject the

¹¹⁰ Alicia Muñoz Ramírez, "Child Refugees of the Spanish Civil War," 63.

¹¹¹ Gisela Gallego, "Memorias De La Guerra Civil Española, Desde Una Hija Eterna Del Exilio," El Gran Otro, July 19, 2012, <http://elgranotro.com/memorias-de-la-guerra-civil-espanola-desde-una-hija-eterna-del-exilio/>.

¹¹² Encarnación Lemus López, "La investigación de «los refugiados españoles» en Chile: fuentes y hallazgos en un exilio de larga duración," *Exils et migrations ibériques au XXe siècle* 2, no. 5 (1998): 276.

¹¹³ Alicia Alted Vigil, "Las consecuencias de la Guerra Civil española en los niños de la República: de la dispersión al exilio," 217.

¹¹⁴ Alicia Muñoz Ramírez, "Child Refugees of the Spanish Civil War," 64.

¹¹⁵ Peter Anderson, "The struggle over the evacuation to the United Kingdom and repatriation of Basque refugee children in the Spanish Civil War: symbols and souls," 309.

return of their children, as well as certain refugee camps, which refused to let them depart and attempted to delay the process as much as they could. For instance, one of the former child refugees, as an adult has testified:

“[m]other had refused to sign the form claiming us, even though she had been visited by a priest and an official, who had threatened to imprison her and take her other children away. . . She said that if we returned, we would all starve...”¹¹⁶

According to the data gathered by the Delegation for the Repatriation of Minors, by November 1949 the overall number of children who repatriated to Spain amounted to 20,266 (Figure 5).¹¹⁷ It can be noted that the quantity of children returned to their homeland from Mexico and the Soviet Union was considerably lower than from the other countries (e.g., France, Belgium, and United Kingdom).

<i>Países</i>	<i>Expatriados</i>	<i>Repatriados</i>
Francia	17.489	12.831
Bélgica	5.130	3.798
Inglaterra	4.435	2.822
Rusia	3.291	34
Suiza	807	643
México	430	56
Territorios franceses		Orán 23
Norte de África	335	Casablanca 1
Dinamarca	120	58
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	32.037	20.266

*Figure 5. Breakdown of the numbers by country.*¹¹⁸

The children who returned to Spain found themselves facing a particularly diverse environment from the one they had left before the war. In fact, many of them could not withstand the change and immediately returned to the countries in which they had sought refuge in the first place, or they left for other countries. Some of the children who remained in Spain winded up at orphanages of Social Aid, and a substantial number of them bore the stigma of being children of the “reds”, as they came from the Soviet Union, experiencing discrimination, rejection, and

¹¹⁶ Peter Anderson, "The struggle over the evacuation to the United Kingdom and repatriation of Basque refugee children in the Spanish Civil War: symbols and souls," 311.

¹¹⁷ Alicia Alted Vigil, "Las consecuencias de la Guerra Civil española en los niños de la República: de la dispersión al exilio," 218.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

humiliation.¹¹⁹ This is added to the powerlessness of many due to the loss of their parents or to the fact that their relatives (e.g., mothers and fathers) had suffered retaliation. Exiled or returned, what is certain is that there was a generation indelibly marked by the war.

¹¹⁹ Alicia Muñoz Ramírez, "Child Refugees of the Spanish Civil War," 64.

3.2 THE RESCUE OF JEWISH CHILDREN FROM PERSECUTION

The life of children with a Jewish background during the Second World War has been widely analysed throughout the years under diverse point of views. Nonetheless, research focuses little attention on those minors who succeeded in escaping from the German anti-Semitic persecutions and found shelter in other countries. Certainly, under the ruthless National Socialist regime, Jewish people had to face a variety of hardships, chief among them the horror of the Holocaust and the ethnic cleansing advertised by Adolf Hitler. In its ferocious racist attacks, which lasted from 1939 to 1945, the Nazi extermination of Jewish slaughtered 1,5 million innocent children throughout Europe. This reminds us that Adolf Eichmann, one of the main organizers of the Holocaust, chose to make them the primary target of persecutions, as he feared possible repercussions and revenges in post-war Europe.¹²⁰ At the outset, Jewish children were growingly excluded from conventional schools in Germany following the implementation of the law in April 1933, which was euphemistically called “Gesetz gegen die Überfüllung der deutschen Schulen und Hochschulen” (Law against overcrowding in German schools and higher education institutions).¹²¹ Even those children who were already enrolled in schools were increasingly ostracized from school trips or other extra-curricular activities. Moreover, they faced discrimination and violence in public life in general, leading them to fear even leaving the house. Because of the threats experienced, most children understood their families’ desire to ensure them a better life through emigration. Martha Blend, born in 1930 and nine years old when she migrated from Germany, recalls:

“When my parents broke this news to me, I was devastated and burst into hysterical sobs at the mere thought. [...] I felt as though some force stronger than myself was dragging me into an abyss and I had no power to prevent it. Although I was still very young, I had seen and understood the build-up of terror in the last two years, so I knew very well that my parents were doing this out of sheer necessity”.¹²²

¹²⁰ Christoph Houswitschka, “Escaping on the *Kindertransport* from Democratic Czechoslovakia,” *Brno Studies in English* 37, no.2 (2011): 97.

¹²¹ Andrea Hammel, “Child Refugees Forever? The History of the *Kindertransport* to Britain 1938/39,” *Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung Heft* 5, no.2 (2010): 132.

¹²² Andrea Hammel, “I Remember Their Labels Round Their Necks’ Britain and the *Kindertransport*,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust*, ed. Tom Lawson and Andy Pearce (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 98.

After 1933, it became apparent to the Council of German Jews that the only solution to save the lives of children was to leave the country, thus assisting emigration became the main purpose of the organization. The approximately one hundred thousand who survived became known as the “hidden children”.¹²³ There were various efforts to aid children and bring them to safety, especially following the eruption of violence during the pogroms of 1938. Furthermore, following the *Anschluss* (Nazi invasion) of Austria in March 1938, the systematic persecution on racist grounds increased drastically in the country. Jews were deprived of their civil rights, removed from economic and public life, and increasingly lost their means of existence.¹²⁴ The terror and violence of Nazi tyranny and the events of the night of the 9th of November 1938 (i.e., Night of Broken Glasses) were the last straw that broke the camel’s back. Various countries assisted in the emigration of children. For instance, a group of teenagers from the Nazi-occupied countries travelled on ocean liners to Australia where they were welcomed by several Jewish agencies.¹²⁵ Similarly, the United States gave refuge to numerous Jewish escapees. In particular, the term *Kindertransport* (Children’s Transport) is generally applied to the liberation of approximately 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish minors from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and the borderland between Germany and Poland to the United Kingdom between December 1938 and September 1939, when the Second World War commenced.¹²⁶ This operation was considered to be the “biggest rescue procedure aimed at a specific group of people by British official bodies”.¹²⁷

3.2.1 Transfer and Resettlement in the United States

Towards the end of June 1941, around 111 European Jewish refugee children docked at the Manhattan Pier in New York. The vast majority were Germans coming from children’s homes and alien detention camps in unoccupied France who had been chosen to enter the United States as immigrants on the German quota.¹²⁸ Between 1934 and 1945 close to a thousand unaccompanied Jewish minors from Central Europe sought refuge in America under the

¹²³ Suzanne Vromen, “Introduction,” in *Hidden Children of the Holocaust: Belgian Nuns and their Daring Rescue of Young Jews from the Nazis* (Oxford University Press, 2008): 1.

¹²⁴ Andrea Strutz, “‘Detour to Canada’: the fate of juvenile Austrian-Jewish refugees after the ‘Anschluss’ of 1938,” in *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime*, ed. Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 32.

¹²⁵ Christoph Houswitschka, “Escaping on the *Kindertransport* from Democratic Czechoslovakia,” 99.

¹²⁶ Andrea Hammel, “Child Refugees Forever? The History of the *Kindertransport* to Britain 1938/39,” 131.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹²⁸ Judith Tydor Baumel, “The Transfer and Resettlement in the United States of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazism, 1934-1945,” *American Jewish History* 77, no. 3 (March 1988): 413.

scheme known as “The One Thousand Children” program.¹²⁹ The first expedition of young refugee boys to arrive in the United States came under the auspices of German Jewish Children’s Aid (GJCA) in November 1934.¹³⁰ The procedure followed by parents to send children abroad was constant throughout the years. Applications and pictures of the minors were submitted to the provincial social worker, who had to assess the imperativeness of the petition. Consequently, the forms were forwarded to the central office which supervised the children’s emigration from Germany, the *Kinderauswanderungs Abteilung* of the *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland* in Berlin.¹³¹ One of the principal criteria for acceptance was that the child had to be under 16 years of age and physically and mentally healthy. Generally, whenever the minor would reach the maximum authorised age, his/her application would be withdrawn from the waiting lists for emigration to America. Moreover, those who were physically disabled or had any handicap were immediately rejected from GJCA with the intention of not causing any complication with the American immigration law. The organization distributed pamphlets to the parents of children chosen to travel overseas indicating what types of clothing were needed for the journey. Nevertheless, parents often exaggerated and sent their offspring with several steamer trunks; some of the younger children arrived with enough garments to clothe them until adulthood.

Minors originating from Central Europe used diverse routes to arrive to the United States. Until the outbreak of war, children would arrive on steamships navigating from Germany to the U.S. through Southampton in England.¹³² Thenceforth, from 1939 the most common routes were via Italy, Portugal, Holland or Sweden. With the collapse of Western Europe in the spring of 1940, children were even transferred overseas via Siberia and Japan, disembarking on the West Coast. However, the well-developed Jewish social work network in Germany stood in marked contrast with the disorganized situation in Austria and Czechoslovakia. The Jewish communities in these two countries lacked trained social workers and required an emigration department which was run by experienced Jews or friendly citizens. Even though the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde* in Vienna and Prague began to serve as the principal Jewish organization in both states, the GJCA deemed it necessary to send an American representative

¹²⁹ Michele Langfield, “Memories of Jewish Child Refugees in Australia,” *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 16, no. 3 (2010): 80.

¹³⁰ Judith Tydor Baumel, “The Transfer and Resettlement in the United States of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazism, 1934-1945,” 414.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, 416.

to coordinate smoothly the transfer of refugee children to the United States.¹³³ With the completion of these arrangements towards the end of 1939, the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* and the *Kultusgemeinde* in Vienna and Prague worked as the central Jewish organizations regarding the transfer of child refugees.

On 23 October 1941, the Gestapo Commander Heinrich Müller wrote a notification which banned emigration of Jews from the Third Reich under the command of the *Reichsführer SS* Heinrich Himmler. It articulated: “The *Reichsführer SS* and Chief of the German Police has decreed that the *emigration* of Jews is to be prevented, taking effect immediately (...) Permission for the emigration of individual Jews can only be approved *in single very special cases*; for instance, in the event of a genuine interest on the part of the Reich, and then only after a *prior* decision has been obtained from the Reich Security Main Office”.¹³⁴ As a result, the *Kinderauswanderungs Abteilung* of the *Reichsvereinigung* was disbanded and some staff members were incarcerated in concentration camps. Furthermore, the *Kultusgemeinden* of Vienna and Prague were utilized by the Nazis to deport the remaining Jews in both countries. Only approximately 590 unaccompanied Jewish children were able to enter the U.S. from Germany.

The second major group of children to reach America originated from Great Britain. In this instance, along the Jewish minors there were also British children who travelled overseas. Following the fall of Western Europe and responding to the menacing threat of a German invasion, the British government suggested that all British children between the ages of six and sixteen be evacuated to more secure areas. Hence, during June and July 1940 a number of organizations were created on both sides of the Atlantic to deal with the evacuations of young individuals.¹³⁵ The most promoted and largest of these institutions was the United States Committee for the Care of European Children (USC). Additionally, on 13 July 1940 the Department of State and Labour cancelled the bureaucracies which involved the immigration of British children in the U.S., declaring that since it would be only a temporary placement and that the minors would return to their homeland, they could enter the country on visitors’

¹³³ Judith Tydor Baumel, “The Transfer and Resettlement in the United States of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazism, 1934-1945,” 417.

¹³⁴ Heinrich Müller, “Order Banning the Emigration of Jews from the Reich,” Yad Vashem Archives, TR-3/1209.

¹³⁵ Judith Tydor Baumel, “The Transfer and Resettlement in the United States of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazism, 1934-1945,” 419.

visas.¹³⁶ Around 860 children eventually embarked in the transoceanic journey under the USC scheme. By November 1939, eighty Jewish children who were sent to Britain from Central Europe assisted by the Refugee Children's Movement had remigrated to America, and around 820 more children wished to follow.¹³⁷ Sadly, on September 17, 1940, the steam passenger ship *City of Benares* which was carrying around a hundred children aged two to fifteen across the sea, was torpedoed by a German submarine resulting in the death of 83 young refugees.¹³⁸ The torpedo, "a five-hundred-pound, acoustically guided missile, packed with TNT (...) pierced the side of the *City of Benares* at three minutes past ten, tearing through the number five hold, directly beneath the children's quarters".¹³⁹ Following the catastrophe, the British government suddenly withdrew its endorsement and encouragement of the evacuation scheme.

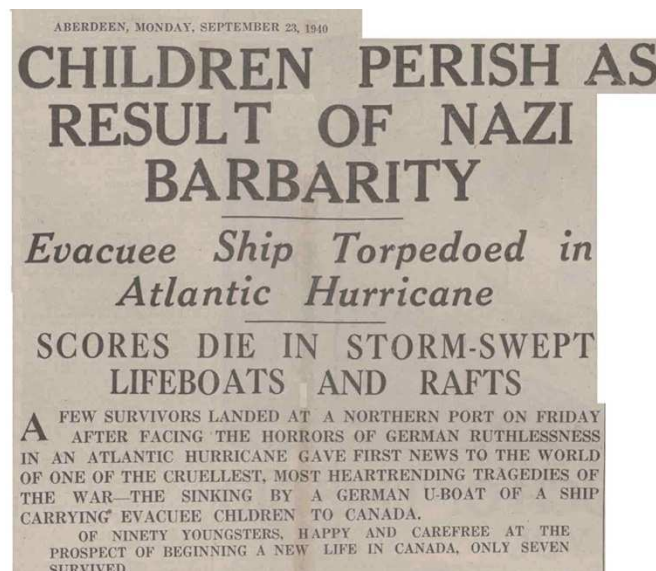


Figure 1. Headline of the Aberdeen Press on 23 September 1940.

A third group of young Jewish escapees arrived in America after a stopover in Belgium or the Netherlands. Indeed, in the aftermath of the *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glasses) in November 1938, various parents took the decision to send their children out of Germany, Austria and Poland while they were waiting for the approval of their visas to the U.S. The two main countries which welcomed these children were, as said, Belgium and the Netherlands.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Judith Tydor Baumel, "The Transfer and Resettlement in the United States of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazism, 1934-1945," 419.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 420.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 421.

¹³⁹ Tom Nagorski, "10:03 P.M.," in *Miracles on the Water* (USA: Hyperion, 2006).

¹⁴⁰ Judith Tydor Baumel, "The Transfer and Resettlement in the United States of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazism, 1934-1945," 421.

In both countries, they were cared for privately under the supervision of Jewish refugee committees. A well-known Jew who escaped Germany was Anna Frank, who arrived in the Netherlands with her family. The exact number of children of the Third Reich who sought refuge in the Netherlands in the years preceding the war will never be determined as several of them were never registered at arrival in the country.¹⁴¹ With the fall of Western Europe, almost exclusively children who had already submitted their applications for visas beforehand were permitted to emigrate. Moreover, several Dutch and Belgian children were allowed in the United States under USC auspices travelling either directly from the Continent or from England.¹⁴² However, due to the insurmountable limitations set by the government of the U.S., the emigration of children from the two aforementioned countries ceased well before the Nazi decree of 23 October 1941 cited above.

The final groups of unaccompanied refugee children arrived via France, Spain, and Portugal. A social welfare organization founded in 1912 called *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants* (OSE) was particularly interested in the fate of Jewish minors. Towards the end of 1940, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) based in southern France began the selection of children to send to the United States and an upper limit of twelve years of age was recommended.¹⁴³ In May 1941, the countdown for the departure to America began; the children were assembled in Marseilles where they were assessed and fingerprinted. On May 29th the children were made to board the train carriages and provided with blankets to sleep. The trains left for Spain where the minors were transferred on different coaches which took them to Madrid.¹⁴⁴ On June 2nd they proceeded to Lisbon where they were embarked on the Portuguese ship *Mouzinho* and 199 refugee children arrived in New York on 21 June 1941. This was only one of the various groups of children who arrived in the U.S. from France under the auspices of the USC. By August 1942, the USC had brought to safety 309 children, most of whom were Jewish.

¹⁴¹ Miriam Keesing, Peter Tammes and Andrew J. Simpkin, "Jewish Refugee Children in the Netherlands during World War II: Migration, Settlement, and Survival," *Social Science History* 43, no.4 (2019): 791.

¹⁴² Judith Tydor Baumel, "The Transfer and Resettlement in the United States of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazism, 1934-1945," 422.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 424.



Figure 2. Refugee children waiting to board the Portuguese ship *Mouzinho* that will take them to the United States, 19 August 1941.¹⁴⁵

3.2.2 Jewish child refugees in Australia

Around 430 children were brought to Britain under the will of their parents between Hitler's rise to power in 1933 and the wave of violent anti-Semitic pogroms in Germany on 9-10 November 1938.¹⁴⁶ This happened by virtue of the British Committee for the Jews of Germany and the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany who insisted to welcome in Great Britain an unrestricted number of children (from new-borns up to seventeen years of age) coming from the occupied territories in Germany. Subsequently, about 10,000 child refugees, of whom the majority were Jewish, coming from Germany and Austria arrived through the *Kindertransport* between December 1938 and September 1939.¹⁴⁷ Precisely, Palmer gives the exact figures of 9,354 German and Austrian children, 7,482 of whom were Jewish, 1,123 Christian and 749 of no religion.¹⁴⁸ In all, the approximately 10,000 children constituted about a third of the nearly 30,000 who, generally unaccompanied and alone, were brought far and away from Nazi reach.¹⁴⁹ However, as the situation degenerated in Europe, it became

¹⁴⁵ Federico Ferrari, "Invisibile Razzismo - Federico Ferrari," *Antinomie*, September 21, 2020, <https://antinomie.it/index.php/2020/09/08/invisibile-razzismo/>.

¹⁴⁶ Michele Langfield, "Memories of Jewish Child Refugees in Australia," *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 16, no. 3 (2010): 79.

¹⁴⁷ "Kindertransport, 1938–40," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum - Washington DC, September 30, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/kindertransport-1938-40>.

¹⁴⁸ Glen Palmer, "Reluctant refuge: unaccompanied refugee and evacuee children in Australia, 1933-45," *History Department of the University of Adelaide* (1995): 44.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Geyer, "Virtue in Despair: A Family History from the Days of the Kindertransports," *History and Memory* 17, no.1-2 (2005): 323.

increasingly dangerous for children to reside in Britain and especially in the main cities which could be attacked by the Nazi regime. Hence, the government took the decision to evacuate them either to the countryside or to former British colonies, which were the long-established recipients of British child migrants, as it will be illustrated further on in this thesis.

Numerous organizations and single individuals from different religions (e.g., Jews, Quakers, or Christians) aided in this unprecedented rescue of children. Indeed, five voluntary British-Jewish organizations arranged the various transports out of Germany and, occasionally, from Poland and Czechoslovakia.¹⁵⁰ For instance, the Australian Jewish Welfare Society (AJWS) was born as a temporary response to the oppression of Jews in Germany under the Nuremberg laws in 1935.¹⁵¹ The organization asked the government for the permission to admit 750 orphans from Central Europe. The Society would oversee the transport, reception, and assistance of the children.¹⁵² As mentioned above, approximately a thousand children were sent to America with the help of sponsoring organizations and individuals between November 1934 and May 1945. Likewise, Australia took a small number of young unaccompanied children. These included twenty teenagers who were embarked on the ship *Jervis Bay* which reached the port of Melbourne on 15 May 1939 under the auspices of the Jewish Welfare Guardian Society, which was founded in 1938, and the Save the Children Fund (SCF).¹⁵³ A further twenty children, sponsored by the Polish Jewish Relief Fund (PJRF) anchored in Melbourne on the ship *Oronsay* on 28 May 1939. Moreover, a group of twenty-seven travelling on the *Strathallan* assisted by the Gross-Breesen Farm in Germany, arrived in Sydney on 19 July 1939.¹⁵⁴ Seventeen reached Melbourne on the *Orama* on 23 July 1939 sponsored by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, while another 15 or 16 “non-Aryan Christians”, nominated by the German Emergency Fellowship Committee (society of Friends) and travelling on the same ship, disembarked in Sydney on 26 July 1939.¹⁵⁵ Along with these child refugees there were 23 British children aged between five and twelve who were bound for the Fairbridge and Lady Northcote Children’s Homes in Western Australia and Victoria, which will be discussed later.¹⁵⁶ Over the years, Australia took in the highest percentage of Holocaust survivors per

¹⁵⁰ Michele Langfield, “Memories of Jewish Child Refugees in Australia,” 80.

¹⁵¹ Barry M. Coldrey, “Good british stock - Child and Youth Migration to Australia,” *National Archives of Australia* (August 1999): 150.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Michele Langfield, “Memories of Jewish Child Refugees in Australia,” 80.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁵⁵ Glen Palmer, “Reluctant refuge: unaccompanied refugee and evacuee children in Australia, 1933-45,” 357.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

thousand of its population.¹⁵⁷ However, the law forbade the arrival of individuals of enemy or enemy-controlled territories for the whole duration of war. Only after the end of the war, small groups of Jewish children began to travel to Australia again. Barry Coldrey notes that December 1949, the Jewish Welfare Guardian Society cared for 67 boys. Consequently, the two Jewish societies involved in juvenile migration merged and welcomed the first group of 26 orphan survivors who arrived in Melbourne on the *Radnik* on 1 February 1948.¹⁵⁸ The migration of Jewish child survivors remained contained in the years following the end of the war, as many ended up leaving for the United States as previously described.

Most of the children were selected carefully by the German Refugee Aid Society in London on the basis of their physical and mental fitness for land settlement. Palmer defines several characteristics critical for the selection of the children: quick action by parents; the age being between seven and twelve; their vulnerability especially where the father had disappeared, or they were under threat; their extreme poverty or 'statelessness'. Moreover, parents had to provide a character of reference and proof of sound physical and mental health of the child, as mentioned above. Finally, the ability to pay and, intelligence and a family background played an important role in the selection for the Australian scheme.¹⁵⁹ The children who arrived in Melbourne were generally allocated to various farms under an exhaustive plan of guardianship conceived by the society. It was a particularly emotional and psychologically draining journey for the children. As recalled by the testimony of one of the boys who arrived in Australia: "I can never forget the *Bahnhof* [station] in Cologne when we left our parents; the parents had to leave all the kids behind. When I think about it, I break down, really. It's something you never forget".¹⁶⁰ Indeed, the moment in which they had to separate themselves from their families, recalled by various children in later testimonies, was particularly heart-breaking. That is also because the peculiar circumstances of the *Kindertransport* is that the minors had to leave their families behind, with little time to prepare and without having an idea of how long their stay abroad would last.¹⁶¹ Various testimonies show that children suffered from extreme homesickness and had complicated relationships with their foster parents who often exploited the older children or adolescents.¹⁶² Some of these youngsters suffered psychologically from

¹⁵⁷ Michele Langfield, "Memories of Jewish Child Refugees in Australia," 81.

¹⁵⁸ Barry M. Coldrey, "Good british stock - Child and Youth Migration to Australia," 151.

¹⁵⁹ Glen Palmer, "Reluctant refuge: unaccompanied refugee and evacuee children in Australia, 1933-45," 79-84.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁶² Marion Berghahn, "Emigration," in *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (Berghahn Books, 2007): 111-112.

obsessive compulsive disorder, feeling anguished in confined spaces, anxiety, and constantly having to check things.¹⁶³

3.2.3 Migration to Palestine

When the persecutions of Jews by the Nazis began in Germany, the Zionist Organization got together to help them through the hardships. A department for the assistance of the Jews of Germany was founded by the Jewish Agency in Palestine, chaired by Chaim Weizmann who worked for several years as President of the Zionist Organization.¹⁶⁴ Within this division, a Youth *Aliyah*¹⁶⁵ was requested to organize groups of adolescents aged 15 to 17 to study in Palestine for two years. The final goal was to reduce their suffering by helping them to continue their studies and receive professional training. Nonetheless, with the strengthening of the authoritarian Nazi regime in Germany, the purpose of Youth *Aliyah* changed from a schooling agency into a program for saving Jewish children.¹⁶⁶ In terms of the British Mandate, which was entrusted by the League of Nations, the authorities had to facilitate the immigration of Jews to Palestine with the aim of establishing a national home for all Jewish people.¹⁶⁷ Even though there was no mention of a limited number of immigrants, Churchill's White Paper of June 1922 established restrictions on the number of people moving to Palestine based on economic considerations.¹⁶⁸ The idea was that "this immigration cannot be so great in volume as to exceed whatever may be the economic capacity of the country at the time to absorb new arrivals" and avoid a further burden on the country's inhabitants.¹⁶⁹ The British government created a specific system to distribute the immigration certificates. Hence, the High Commissioner for Palestine was given the control to determine the immigration policy and its implementation was guided by the Immigration Department of the Mandatory Government.

¹⁶³ Michele Langfield, "Memories of Jewish Child Refugees in Australia," 86.

¹⁶⁴ Dvora Hacoen, "British Immigration Policy to Palestine in the 1930s: Implications for Youth Aliyah," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no.4 (October 2001): 206.

¹⁶⁵ *Aliyah, meaning the immigration to the Holy Land, was perceived in the Jewish tradition as a religious and sacred act. Hence, the migration to Palestine denoted an uplifting on the spiritual level of individuals.*

¹⁶⁶ Dvora Hacoen, "British Immigration Policy to Palestine in the 1930s: Implications for Youth Aliyah," 206.

¹⁶⁷ Elizabeth Hudson, "Recha Freier and the Youth Aliyah," *The Holocaust and European Mass Murder*, HGS 510 (October 2020): 6.

¹⁶⁸ "Correspondence With the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organisation, 1922," His Majesty's Stationery Office (1922).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

The Youth *Aliyah* Bureau began its operations in the summer of 1933 and, after having created several groups of children in Germany to travel to Palestine, 350 certificates were granted by the High Commissioner to the organization in 1934. Thereafter, the first group of adolescents aged 15 to 17 arrived in Palestine in February 1934.¹⁷⁰ In the following year more children arrived from Germany and the majority was sent to *kibbutzim* (i.e., intentional communities based on agriculture) which combined academic learning with professional training in cultivation.



Figure 3. The first German Youth-Aliyah group walking to Kibbutz Ein Harod.¹⁷¹

When the situation for Jews in Germany worsened with the passing of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935¹⁷², the demand for immigration to Palestine by Youth *Aliyah* intensified. The organization's ability to rescue Jewish children depended on several factors: the compliance of the British government in the delivery of immigration certificates; the ability of the Jewish Agency in procuring means of transportations and visas through transit countries; the availability of fund to support such operations and travel, the preparedness of Youth *Aliyah*

¹⁷⁰ Dvora Hacoen, "British Immigration Policy to Palestine in the 1930s: Implications for Youth Aliyah," 207.

¹⁷¹ David B. Green, "This Day in Jewish History: Recha Freier Founds Youth Aliya," *Haaretz*, January 30, 2013. <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/2013-01-30/ty-article/.premium/this-day-recha-freier-founds-youth-aliya/0000017f-f70a-ddde-abff-ff6fd27a0000>.

¹⁷² Law which deprived Jews from their civil rights and the German citizenship. Jews were defined as "persons with at least one Jewish grandparent and the law declared explicitly that "a Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He cannot exercise the right to vote; he cannot occupy public office." Moreover, it completed the process of Jewish segregation. Jewish passports were stamped with a red "J" (for Jude), and Jews were compelled to adopt "Jewish" names (Michael Berenbaum).

representatives in Europe.¹⁷³ Most of the travel costs were often paid by the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), with the help of HICEM¹⁷⁴, the World Jewish Congress and further Jewish organizations.¹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, there was a drastic reduction in the number of certificates granted by the British government as the Italian-Abyssinian War increased the strategic importance of Palestine. The reason was that the British wanted to obtain the support of the Arab States which did not support the immigration of Jews to Palestine. With the outbreak of the Arab Revolt in April 1926, the British feared of losing the Arab support and decided to suspend temporarily Jewish relocation.¹⁷⁶ When the situation in Germany sharply deteriorated, culminating in the *Kristallnacht*, the Jewish leaders in London attempted to persuade the British authorities to allow 10,000 children to escape to Palestine where they would be adopted by relatives. The government permitted 5,000 children to travel to Palestine however, ultimately only 500 certificates were granted to children.¹⁷⁷ Another issue arose with the expulsion of Jews residing in Germany who fled to France living in dreadful conditions, lacking both money and food. With the assistance of the Joint Distribution Committee, a Jewish-American welfare society, and the Jewish community in France, Youth *Aliyah* managed to bring various groups of children to Palestine.¹⁷⁸ Until June 1940, Youth *Aliyah* groups originating from Europe had been able to travel to Palestine via Marseilles or Trieste. Following the entrance of Italy in war, they had to travel via Russia, Turkey and Syria.¹⁷⁹ In all, 5,600 children migrated to Palestine with the help of Youth *Aliyah* in the years preceding the Second World War, primarily from Germany (3,680) and from Austria (1,385).¹⁸⁰ Moreover, from September 1939 to February 1945, the organization rescued some 3,000 youth from Nazi-occupied territories in Europe and from neighbouring neutral countries.¹⁸¹ Nonetheless, tens of thousands of children who could have been saved by emigrating to Palestine succumbed to Britain's Middle Eastern politics.

¹⁷³ Sara Kadosh, "Youth Aliyah policies and the rescue of Jewish children from Europe 1939-1942," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1997): 96.

¹⁷⁴ HICEM was the result of the merger of three Jewish migration associations: HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society); ICA (Jewish Colonization Association); and Emigdirect. The name HICEM is an acronym of HIAS, ICA, and Emigdirect.

¹⁷⁵ Sara Kadosh, "Youth Aliyah policies and the rescue of Jewish children from Europe 1939-1942," 99.

¹⁷⁶ Dvora Hacoheh, "British Immigration Policy to Palestine in the 1930s: Implications for Youth Aliyah," 208.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 212.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Sara Kadosh, "Youth Aliyah policies and the rescue of Jewish children from Europe 1939-1942," 98.

¹⁸⁰ Dvora Hacoheh, "British Immigration Policy to Palestine in the 1930s: Implications for Youth Aliyah," 215.

¹⁸¹ Sara Kadosh, "Youth Aliyah policies and the rescue of Jewish children from Europe 1939-1942," 95.

3.2.4 Migration to Canada in the aftermath of the war

Following the end of the war and the liberation of the various concentration camps, 1,123 young Jewish survivors were able to migrate to Canada between autumn 1947 and spring 1952.¹⁸² The resettlement scheme sponsored by the Canadian government and the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), the main organization of Canadian Jewry, was known as the War Orphans Project.¹⁸³ These young people, who originated predominantly from Eastern Europe, survived the horrors of internment camps or were able to hide during the war years. After the end of the Second World War, the majority were living in displaced persons (DP) camps in Austria, Italy, and Germany, while others found refuge in children's homes in France and Belgium or had evacuated to the United Kingdom, Switzerland, or Sweden.¹⁸⁴

The Canadian federal authorities approved the War Orphans Project in April 1947 with an original limit of 1,000 visas, which was later augmented to 1,250.¹⁸⁵ The selection of children was conducted by representatives of the Canadian Jewish Congress sent to Europe. The first feedback received by the delegates was particularly pessimistic: "I was flatly told that to their knowledge very few children would be available, 100 to 150 being indicated as the likely maximum".¹⁸⁶ Moreover, they were informed that the majority of young survivors had been already sent to or were planning to travel to Palestine, while other children were dreaming of going to the United States. In fact, unaccompanied Jewish children and adolescents were a central focus for local Jewish communities, nation-states, and further immigration projects: the Canadian scheme was only one option among many.¹⁸⁷ For instance, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and Jewish agencies competed for the control over surviving Jewish children, while Jewish organizations themselves, such as the American Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Palestine, disputed over how and where the best interests these children might be served.¹⁸⁸ Nonetheless, the CJC representatives

¹⁸² Antoine Burgard, "Navigating a Limited 'World of Possibilities': Refugee Journeys of Jewish Children and Youth in the Aftermath of the Holocaust," *Contemporary European History* 31, no.2 (2022): 227.

¹⁸³ Adara Goldberg, "The War Orphans Project," in *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation, 1947-1955* (University of Manitoba Press, 2015).

¹⁸⁴ Antoine Burgard, "Navigating a Limited 'World of Possibilities': Refugee Journeys of Jewish Children and Youth in the Aftermath of the Holocaust," 228.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹⁸⁶ "Children's Movement: Report on Trip to Europe," Memorandum of Manfred Saalheimer to Saul Hayes CJA, UJRA, Ca War Orphans Project (9 September 1947).

¹⁸⁷ Antoine Burgard, "Navigating a Limited 'World of Possibilities': Refugee Journeys of Jewish Children and Youth in the Aftermath of the Holocaust," 233.

¹⁸⁸ Tara Zahra, "Lost Children: Displacement, Family, and Nation in Postwar Europe," *The Journal of Modern History* 81 (March 2009): 51.

found a sufficiently large number of potential candidates to be resettled in Canada. Most of the Jewish youth departed between September 1947 and January 1949 (Figure 1).

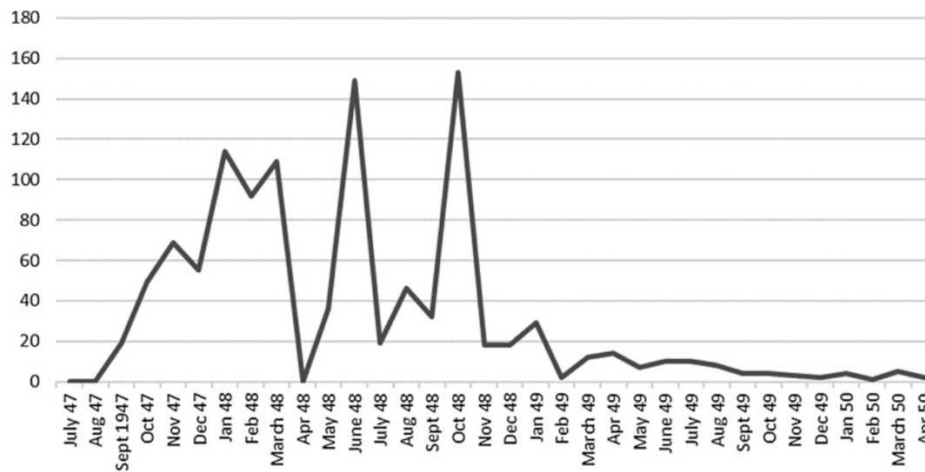


Figure 1. Timeline of the departures to Canada, July 1947-April 1950
(y: number of orphans, x: month of departure)¹⁸⁹

As entering in Palestine became ever more impossible due to the restrictions in immigration laws and the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli War. The whole region was at war from November 1947 to March 1949, which in fact corresponds with the period in which the majority of the Jewish orphans of Europe left for Canada.¹⁹⁰ Hence, it is highly likely that the unstable situation in Palestine, which made it particularly difficult to relocate there, led various young survivors to reconsider their options and travel overseas.

The United States was another favoured destination among Jewish survivors. However, the borders of the country were almost completely closed to unaccompanied Jewish youth in 1947 and 1948. At the end of 1945, the Truman directive pushed for a more relaxed immigration policy, claiming that the “immensity of the problem of displaced persons and refugees is almost beyond comprehension” and asking its nation to “do something to relieve human misery”.¹⁹¹ Although Truman pledged for a more inclusive and loose policy, this provision did not influence the nation’s long-term immigration program which was based on a system of quotas.

¹⁸⁹ Antoine Burgard, “Navigating a Limited ‘World of Possibilities’: Refugee Journeys of Jewish Children and Youth in the Aftermath of the Holocaust,” 234.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 236.

¹⁹¹ “Harry Truman Administration: Statement and Directive on Displaced Persons,” Jewish Virtual Library: a Project of AICE (December 22, 1945), <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/president-truman-statement-and-directive-on-displaced-persons-december-1945>.

Hence, in the autumn of 1947, the quotas had been for the most part filled and a departure to the U.S. was very unlikely for Jewish people in Europe. The Canadian Jewish representatives received various information on unaccompanied Jewish children who were supposed to leave for America but whose application had been rejected, generally because of their age (the age limit for non-quota admissions under the directive was set at sixteen) or nationality.¹⁹² In view of this, many young survivors winded up applying for a Canadian visa after the rejection of the American authorities. Canada was seen as the safest option for young, displaced persons but was usually regarded as a temporary destination making it extremely difficult to determine the exact end of the refugee journey.

¹⁹² Antoine Burgard, "Navigating a Limited 'World of Possibilities': Refugee Journeys of Jewish Children and Youth in the Aftermath of the Holocaust," 238.

CHAPTER IV: MIGRATION IN SEARCH FOR A NEW LIFE

4.1 EMIGRATION OF ITALIAN CHILD LABOURERS

Italian child emigration has not been widely examined by historians, neglecting in this way the close relationship between child labour and migratory waves in the second half of the 19th century. Certainly, the difficulty lies principally in the lack of data records of the time making it difficult to reconstruct the phenomenon. Nevertheless, some scholars have pointed out the existence of two specific phases in the expatriation of minors from Italy. During the first phase, going from the 1820s to the 1870s, children were mainly hawkers and wanderers who oftentimes ended up being vagrants and beggars. For instance, in 1845 an inquiry noted that there were around 1,000 Italian children in England who made their employers earn 20,000 pounds per year.¹⁹³ The second period, which was identified between the last three decades of the 19th century and World War I, is strictly connected to industrialisation in Europe and prompted the great mass emigration. Child migration is a socio-historic phenomenon which occurred all around Italy. For instance, boys and girls from the eastern Alps or from Tyrol would move to German lake districts to work as shepherds and maids. Similarly, children from Friuli, Veneto or Trentino emigrated towards the South or to Austria and Germany where they worked as grinders and chimney sweepers.¹⁹⁴

Juvenile emigration from Italy has a long-lasting history: the employment of children in working activities has been a deeply rooted tradition in the peasant and working-class families. In fact, children were exploited for labour in urban centres or even abroad. Most seasonal workers, who travelled frequently to offer their services (e.g., coppersmiths, knife grinders, tailors, woodcutters etc.), were indeed children or adolescents.¹⁹⁵ Children emigrated in Europe and in the United States for higher-qualified professions, such as stonemasons, glassworkers, or painters. In a world where also the youngest were supposed to contribute to the household economy, children were sold or rented by their relatives to work for other individuals.

¹⁹³ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, "I bambini e le bambine emigranti," in *Soli per il mondo: Bambine e bambini emigranti tra Otto e Novecento* (Edizioni Unicopli, 2001): 72.

¹⁹⁴ Linus Bühler, "I giovani spazzacamini ticinesi," *Quaderni Grigoni italiani* 53, no.4 (1984): 341.

¹⁹⁵ Dolores Freda, "'Tratta dei fanciulli' e onor di patria: la regolamentazione dell'emigrazione minorile tra l'Unità e la legge del 1901," *Italian Review of Legal History* 5 (2019): 288.

However, often they were assigned dangerous tasks which were health hazards for children, like chimney sweepers who had to crawl into a filthy confined space for several hours.

The adoption of children in arduous labour grew in time, facilitating harsher forms of exploitation, outright mistreatment, and above all for the profiteering of unscrupulous intermediaries.¹⁹⁶ Initially, this well-established tradition of labour mobility abroad concerned principally the Apennine mountains and Alpine valleys. On the contrary, in the southern part of Italy, the movement took place mainly towards the coast or from the plains to the mountains. Nonetheless, southern pipers, tinkers, shoemakers, and silversmiths left for more distant European destinations.¹⁹⁷ The number of young emigrants working in mines, building sites, textile mills, furnaces and glassworks continued growing until the beginning of the 20th century. Thousands of minors left Italy to work for German, Hungarian and Croatian furnaces; while, towards the end of the 1880s, they were directed to construction sites in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and France.¹⁹⁸ Even though the data on this subject is still scarce and imprecise, it is certain that amongst the young Italians employed in such tasks there were very high rates of illnesses and mortality. The children were subjected to enormous amounts of labour and working hours up to sixteen hours a day. Moreover, they were exposed to violence and abuses and the detrimental conditions in which they worked weakened their physique, condemning them to illness and, often, to an early death.¹⁹⁹ For example, as observed by Angelo Mazzoleni, transoceanic migrations of children were “forced migrations” where “fifty per cent died of starvation and exhaustion, and only one fifth could, in time, make the best of their lives and return to their homeland with a profession they had acquired”.²⁰⁰ Moreover, there have been cases reported of child migrants in London who suffered such extreme ill treatments that it would be almost unbelievable if they were not witnessed by consular authorities.²⁰¹

The above-mentioned forms of employment are a clear portrayal, both in terms of destinations and itineraries, of the most prominent juvenile migratory waves generating from the poorest

¹⁹⁶ Bruna Bianchi, “Percorsi Dell'emigrazione Minorile,” in *Storia Dell'Emigrazione Italiana: Arrivi*, edited by Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2002): 355.

¹⁹⁷ Dolores Freda, ““Tratta dei fanciulli” e onor di patria: la regolamentazione dell'emigrazione minorile tra l'Unità e la legge del 1901,” 288.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 290

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 291

²⁰⁰ Angelo Mazzoleni, “La statistica sul movimento dello stato civile e studj speciali,” in *La famiglia nei rapporti coll'individuo e colla società* (Milano: Tipografia Domenico Salvi, 1870): 231.

²⁰¹ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, “I bambini e le bambine emigranti,” 75.

and retrograde Italian regions. History recalls of those minors employed in arduous and dangerous trades who travelled to do such professions which would later on fix in the European imagery some of the most enduring defamatory stereotypes and anti-Italian prejudices abroad.²⁰²

4.1.1 The diverse professions of Italian child migrants

Musicians

Towards the end of last century, organ players were the most well-known juvenile laborers in Europe. The phenomenon was so ample that the character of the mistreated child, who was forced by a cruel boss to beg in the streets, was depicted by various writers such as Dickens, Dostoevsky and Poe. Moreover, the Italian newspapers would also report on pitiful cases, such as beatings, neglect, runaways, lives of hardship, children who had forgotten their name and that of their town etc.²⁰³ Until the mid-19th century small companies of musicians and comedians leaving the southern regions of Italy were mainly made of adult men and the presence of children would be occasional. Nonetheless, due to the socio-economic crisis that hit the South following the Unity of the country in 1861 the circumstances changed, and numerous minors began to emigrate under the guidance of solely one adult. It can be said that the situation moved to a true exploitation of child labour unconcerned about the age or gender of the children involved.²⁰⁴ For instance, several child musicians started to travel for work already before the age of ten. They could participate to itinerant journeys through the Italian peninsula and at times to neighbouring countries like Switzerland. Furthermore, they travelled both around European countries and across the Mediterranean basin (e.g., France, Spain or Egypt). Finally, musicians moved across the sea, principally to South America and the United States by sailing with small vessels from harbours in Naples, Genoa and Marseille.²⁰⁵

The Italian consul in New York published an article in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* in 1868 in which he distinguished three categories of itinerant musicians. The first cluster is characterized by small groups where “one or two mature men, family fathers and sometimes

²⁰² Dolores Freda, ““Tratta dei fanciulli” e onor di patria: la regolamentazione dell’emigrazione minorile tra l’Unità e la legge del 1901,” 290.

²⁰³ Bruna Bianchi, “Percorsi Dell'emigrazione Minorile,” 356.

²⁰⁴ Chiara Trara Genoio, “Suonatori ambulanti nelle province meridionali. Archivi della polizia borbonica e postunitaria nell'Ottocento,” *La Ricerca Folklorica*, no.19 (1989): 71.

²⁰⁵ Enzo Vicinio Alliegro, “Il flautista magico: i musicanti di strada tra identità devole e rappresentazioni contraddittorie (sex. XVIII-XIX),” in *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome – Italie et Méditerranée* (École Française de Rome, 2003): 157-158.

very accomplished musicians themselves, (who) leave for foreign countries taking their children or grandchildren with them”; the second category is that of “organ-players who sometimes extend the attributes of their inept trade by coupling it with the exhibition of a monkey or marmot (...) regarded abroad with such disdain as to often make them a synonym for vagabonds”; even more despicable is the third category, consisting of “ignorant men, true parasites of society (...) who go to some villages in Basilicata to acquire children as if they were like any other merchandise”.²⁰⁶ Moreover, the replacement of the harp and bagpipe with the hand-cranked organ boosted the profiteering of children making them more attractive to sales.



Figure 1. Three young musicians c.1893.²⁰⁷

Abuses and beatings of boys were compounded by sexual violence for little girls. In fact, the habit of abusing girls and driving them into prostitution was so diffused that it was still surfacing in testimonies at the end of the 20th century. Ortensia, who was born in 1903, remembered:

“My family was large, ten children one after the other, a great misery. When I was nine years old, I was sold to a pedlar, they sold me for five lire, but he used me as a slave. The first day he said to me: *T'se ti fè i basin?* [Do you know how to kiss?] The next day he made love to me and wanted me to do it with others. I

²⁰⁶ “I suonatori ambulanti italiani in America,” in *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* 172 (Firenze, June 1868).

²⁰⁷ Alison Rabinovici, “Musical migrants: pictures and stories from the lucanian community in Melbourne,” *Italian Historical Society Journal* (2013): 12.

ran away, I became a servant girl in farmhouses, I lived like this until I was almost twenty”.²⁰⁸

The issue was brought to the attention of the Italian parliament by the deputies Giuseppe Guerzoni and Antonio Oliva in January 1868.

Figurine-makers and chimney sweepers

The trafficking of Italian minors did not only concern itinerant musicians or the child labour market in industry (e.g., glassworks or furnaces), which will be discussed later; but also, those minors who were employed in traditional jobs, such as chimney sweepers and figurine-makers. These occupations were practised from town to town, both in Italy and abroad, but were excluded by the law of 1873 which prohibited the employment of children in wandering professions. In fact, they were deemed decorous activities because they provided a service or an 'artistic' product. For instance, the work of figurine-makers was considered to be honest even though these children were too subjected to hard exploitation and forced to wander late at night around the streets bringing a heavy basket on their shoulders. Already present in England in 1820, the young Italian peddlers sold not only statuettes but also paper and silk flowers. A few years later in France, from 1830 onwards, it was possible to see them displaying their wares on the streets. Even then, the emigration of the chalk-makers was regulated by the system still in force in 1900, “that of masters and boys, of the exploiter and the exploited”.²⁰⁹ These young vendors could be found not only in the various European states (especially in Belgium, Germany, England and France), but also in North America (in the United States, in 1870 there were 1800 figurine-makers) and even more in South America (e.g., Brazil and Argentina).²¹⁰

A further profession which was defended in various parliamentary debates, was that of chimney sweepers even though the young workers were forced into a hard life, “but far less dishonest in principle” that that led by wandering children.²¹¹ Nonetheless, deputy Paolo Paternostro suggested to include this specific category of child migrants to be safeguarded by the law.²¹² Hence, the liberal government issued a comprehensive decree on chimney sweepers in which

²⁰⁸ Bruna Bianchi, “Percorsi Dell'emigrazione Minorile,” 356.

²⁰⁹ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, “I bambini e le bambine emigranti,” 128.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

²¹² Bruna Bianchi, “Percorsi Dell'emigrazione Minorile,” 357.

the employers were branded as speculators and exploiters, assuming the role of scapegoats.²¹³ Indeed, the advent of the second industrial revolution with the development of factories with furnaces led to a considerable increase in the number of chimney sweepers, often just little more than infants.²¹⁴ Children aged six or seven years or less, predominantly coming from Piedmontese valleys and the Aosta valley, were sent to France and Switzerland to work as chimney sweepers. Notably, the Aosta valley provided around 300 masters and 1200 children.²¹⁵ The bosses would rent them from their families with annual contracts and bring them to other cities. The principal destination of emigration between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was the Netherlands, where children were taken at the age of twelve, “or even earlier if possible, by a master who guarantees the family an income of around 100 lire a year”.²¹⁶ Chimney sweepers also moved from Lake Maggiore and the Aosta valley, travelling to Torino or Susa, but also to northern France; some little Piedmontese workers then went on to work as apprentices in Belgian glassworks.²¹⁷

²¹³ Linus Bühler, "I giovani spazzacamini ticinesi," 337.

²¹⁴ Evelina Scaglia, "L'opera educativa ed assistenziale per i piccoli spazzacamini ticinesi nella Milano del secondo Ottocento," *Archivio Storico Ticinese* 157 (June 2018): 40.

²¹⁵ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, "I bambini e le bambine emigranti," 125.

²¹⁶ Amy Allemand Bernardy, "L'emigrazione delle donne e dei fanciulli dal Piemonte," in *Bollettino dell'emigrazione* (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1912): 1146.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1147-1149.



Figure 2. A young chimney sweeper during the Victorian age.²¹⁸

The age of the children, the hazards to their health, the lack of basic schooling and abuses of all sorts were cited as the main reasons for the enactment of the decree-law.²¹⁹ Various testimonies show, in addition to the hunger, tiredness and fear felt by the children, the abuses suffered by hand of their bosses which forced them to carry out a job which was beyond their strength. A child recalls working as a chimney sweeper at just eight years old:

“We had to clean the chimney of a bakery. The baker had just finished cooking the bread and said that we could start three hours later, when the oven would have been cold. Not even after fifteen minutes that he had left, my boss pushed me into the chimney. It was horrible. The still soot was still smouldering, and I feared it would burn once it fell on the ground. I managed to resist and finished the work in half an hour, but at the end my body was all scarred by burns”.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Gaetano Barbella, “Nel mezzo del cam(m)in di nostra vita - I ragazzi spazzacamini del primo 900,” *Inchiostro Nero* (October 2021).

²¹⁹ Linus Bühler, “I giovani spazzacamini ticinesi,” 337.

²²⁰ Benito Mazzi, *Fam, füm, frecc: il grande romanzo degli spazzacamini: Valle d'Aosta, Valle Orco, Val Cannobina, Val Vigezzo, Canton Ticino* (Priuli & Verlucca, 2000), 31.

Moreover, these children were usually squeezed into moleskin jackets, tucked into their trousers, and held in place by a belt, to prevent them from rolling up while working inside the chimney hoods. On their heads they wore a cloth bag, called a *capariüscia*, which would enable them to withstand the soot and dust raised by working inside the narrow and dark chimney shafts. Additionally, they carried a rasp in one hand and a broom in the other, the former to remove the soot, the latter to sweep it down and clear the duct.²²¹ Their long working day involved climbing up and down in twenty to thirty chimney pipes. At night, they would eat a frugal dinner of polenta and the little food begged in the streets. Successively, they would spend the night sleeping on top of sacks placed in basements or other makeshift shelters.²²² The dialect expression *fam, füm, frèc e fastidi* summarises perfectly the dramatic experience of these youngsters, who were forced to live in hunger, smoke and cold, stricken by contagious diseases, scarred by deprivation and social marginalisation.²²³ Already in 1869, the *Society for the protection of young chimney sweepers* was founded in Milan to improve the material and moral situation of child migrants.²²⁴ Nonetheless, the recruiters continuously increased the number of children to work for them, as they were attracted by the easy profits, worsening their living conditions and misery.

Glassmakers

Like chimney sweepers, children working as glassmakers in France were rented for periods of three years at the price of one hundred lire a year. As described in *La Riforma Sociale* by Raniero Paulucci di Calboli in 1897: “the districts of Potenza and Caserta are the big production centres, where there are parents so wretched that they can sell three years of their children's lives for eighty or one hundred lire!”²²⁵ Generally, the employers, with the complicity of municipal workers, would falsify the birth certificates of the youngest children to evade the limit imposed by the French laws (i.e. children had to be at least nine years old to be able work).²²⁶ Moreover, they would keep the entire salary of their young employees which varied from 45 to 65 francs per month. As noted by Paulucci di Calboli, the money kept by the

²²¹ Evelina Scaglia, "L'opera educativa ed assistenziale per i piccoli spazzacamini ticinesi nella Milano del secondo Ottocento," 41.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid., 41-42.

²²⁴ Linus Bühler, "I giovani spazzacamini ticinesi," 338.

²²⁵ Raniero Paulucci di Capalboli, "Emigrazione italiana in Francia, i mestieri girovaghi ed i vetrai ambulanti," in *La Riforma Sociale* VII (1897): 568.

²²⁶ Dolores Freda, "'Tratta dei fanciulli' e onor di patria: la regolamentazione dell'emigrazione minorile tra l'Unità e la legge del 1901," 304.

employers had to be used to feed, bed, and clothe the children; nonetheless, “those wretched children are barely clothed and sleep leaning against each other, worse than animals, in the filthiest filth”.²²⁷ The Italian bosses were numerous and would enrich themselves with teams of up to fifteen or twenty minors who would fulfil indispensable duties in the French glassworks. As always, the immigrant, even if it was a child, provided labour for those tasks and professions that locals no longer wanted to do.²²⁸ Unfortunately, the existence of minors employed in French glassworks was only unveiled in 1895 when the Italian consul in Lyon, Carlo Caccia Dominioni, denounced the issue present in the Rhone area.²²⁹ According to a doctor at the Italian embassy in Paris, children oftentimes suffered of pulmonary and cardiac infections (e.g., emphysema and pneumonia), of skin diseases (e.g., blisters and itching from excessive sweating), and a general decay.²³⁰ Certainly, working in a glassware was one of the most dangerous occupation for children; it was a root cause of pleurisy, tubercular diseases, typhoid fevers, severe burns, and pulmonary tysis.²³¹ However, even in light of these issues, neither did the emigration law of 1901 nor the consequent convention between France and Italy in 1910 for the protection of employment of immigrant minors achieve the elimination of child trafficking.²³² Some inquiries were carried out in the areas of Lion and the Loire to find boys under the age of thirteen who were still occupied in glassworks even though it had been banned by the new laws. As a result, approximately 130 young children were located and repatriated to Italy.²³³ Nevertheless, according to the councillor of the women’s secretariat, Giuseppina Scanni, due to the ability of the well-organized exploiters, clandestine emigration continued; with more precautions and more wicked tricks than before, but it still continued.²³⁴ If at the end of the 19th century there were around 1,600-1,700 young Italian glassmakers in French glassware, at the beginning of the 20th century the number was almost doubled.²³⁵

²²⁷ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, “I bambini e le bambine emigranti,” 89.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Carlo Caccia Dominioni, “Minorenni italiani in Francia,” *Rivista della beneficenza pubblica delle istituzioni di previdenza e di igiene sociale* 24, no. 2 (February 1896): 100.

²³⁰ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, “I bambini e le bambine emigranti,” 91.

²³¹ Ibid., 96.

²³² Bruna Bianchi, “Percorsi Dell'emigrazione Minorile,” 362.

²³³ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, “I bambini e le bambine emigranti,” 105.

²³⁴ Giuseppina Scanni, “L’emigrazione delle donne e dei fanciulli dalla provincia di Caserta,” in *Bollettino dell’emigrazione* (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1913): 1425.

²³⁵ Bruna Bianchi, “Percorsi Dell'emigrazione Minorile,” 362.

Weavers and furnace workers

With the growing industrial development and a new mass migration context, itinerant activities and traditional work linked to agriculture began to be replaced by industrial labour. The emigration towards textile mills and furnaces was far more extensive than the ones examined hereabove. The core of the workforce consisted predominantly of minors between the ages of nine and sixteen, but the age of entry could be as early as five or six years old.²³⁶ Indeed, young Italian girls took the place of locals in Swiss, French and German establishments, as the laws on compulsory education became much stricter in those countries. They were hired as apprentices with the minimum salary and successively fired whenever they reached an age where they would have more rights. They were then replaced by new younger girls.²³⁷ These girls came prevalently from Piedmont and Veneto, but also from Tuscany, Calabria and Sicily.



*Figure 3. A little girl amidst the machinery of a textile factory.*²³⁸

On the other hand, young furnace workers came almost exclusively from Veneto and Friuli.²³⁹ Towards the beginning of the 19th century, around 5000 child migrants were sent to furnaces abroad only from the province of Udine. The majority of these children was brought to Bavaria, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. As noted by the Italian consul in Croatia, they generally slept in huts under canopies, lying on straw bags with a light blanket bought at their own expense.

²³⁶ Danilo Palmisano, "Storie minori: migrazioni non accompagnate," Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione (2019): 95.

²³⁷ Bruna Bianchi, "Percorsi Dell'emigrazione Minorile," 363.

²³⁸ "I diritti dei bambini presi sul serio," *La Ricerca* (18 April 2014).

²³⁹ Bruna Bianchi, "Percorsi Dell'emigrazione Minorile," 363.

Moreover, despite the fact that the consul found no specific cases of ill-treatments, he observed that 12 to 15% of children appeared at first glance to be “suffering, emaciated, ill-grown, cachectic and some already show the first signs of tuberculosis”.²⁴⁰ In the factories, all portering tasks were handled by minors: transport of coal and bricks, loading and unloading of ovens and carts etc. It was not uncommon for boys and girls to be employed in excessively hard work, such as wheelbarrow transport, which “contorts the spines of young and weak constitutions, generated herniae, pelvic failures, asthma and other diseases”.²⁴¹ Unfortunately, the most serious accidents involve Italian furnace workers and, in particular, the minors who are the most inexperienced: “in the gears of machines (...) impractical young men and women are left without fingers, hands, arms and hair (...) and sometimes even without life”.²⁴² In addition to the hardships of this profession, every mistake and slackening were punished with beatings and verbal attacks.²⁴³

On top of that, the swiftness with which they were carrying out their work, the fatigue and tiredness, and the long shifts they had to tolerate, exposed them to sickness and accidents. Furthermore, the labour inspectors could not exert their power on the numerous furnaces and the fines they imposed were so little that they could be easily paid out with a few hours of work. Nonetheless, they were concerned with the health and wellbeing of these children as it was not a work appropriate for youngsters and “often it fatigues them so much that they appear heated and panting, barely being able to continue working with the same rhythm. [Not rarely] they get sick of typhoid at the end of the first season, to then die after a long illness in their home country”.²⁴⁴ Furthermore, the dealers employed children under the legal age, they were ten years old or even younger. The Italian consul in Croatia identified some of them being “ten years old, out of Italy already for two or three years, weak, undernourished, exhausted of strength, real walking skeletons”.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰ Vittorio Lebrecht, “I minorenni italiani nella Croazia,” in *Bollettino dell'emigrazione* (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1906): 6.

²⁴¹ P. Sandicchi, “I fornaciai italiani in Baviera,” in *Bollettino dell'emigrazione* (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1912): 1303.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 1322.

²⁴³ Bruna Bianchi, “Percorsi Dell'emigrazione Minorile,” 363.

²⁴⁴ A. Mattanza, “L’immigrazione minorile italiana nell’impero guglielmino (1890-1914),” in *Lavoro ed emigrazione minorile dall’Unità alla grande guerra*, edited by Bruna Bianchi and Adriana Lotto (Venezia: Ateneo Veneto, 2000): 182.

²⁴⁵ Vittorio Lebrecht, “I minorenni italiani nella Croazia,” 7.



*Figure 4. A Glassworks at midnight, taken in Indiana in August 1908.*²⁴⁶

The exploitation of young furnace workers did not raise such indignation as the one mentioned above for musicians or glassmakers even though their work was equally hard, and they too had to adapt to the working rhythm of adults. Overall, however, the temporariness of work and the dispersion of the furnaces in the countryside made the extremely arduous life and work conditions of the children less visible. Moreover, the Italian authorities recognized the recruiters an important economic function and they held a certain esteem. In fact, knowing the profession and having some knowledge in administration made them more acceptable than the “human flesh sellers” like the takers analysed above.²⁴⁷ The great majority of furnace workers left to go to Croatia from the provinces of Udine and Treviso; in 1905 a total of approximately 1,500 persons travelled for work out of whom more than 350 were young boys.²⁴⁸ This type of seasonal mobility around Europe continued until the eve of the First World War. For instance, in 1912 there were an estimated 15,000 furnace workers in Bavaria and children under the age of thirteen continued to work among them.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Christopher Woody, “Striking Photos of America’s Child Laborers Reveal What Work Was like a Century Ago,” *Business Insider* (September 4, 2017), <https://www.businessinsider.com/photos-of-child-labor-in-united-states-2016-9?r=US&IR=T#a-glassworks-at-midnight-taken-in-indiana-in-august-1908-1>.

²⁴⁷ Bruna Bianchi, “Percorsi Dell’emigrazione Minorile,” 364.

²⁴⁸ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, “I bambini e le bambine emigranti,” 117.

²⁴⁹ Danilo Palmisano, “Storie minori: migrazioni non accompagnate,” 98.

4.1.2 Migration to America

Already in the 1850s a massive presence of young musicians could be noticed in New York, to the extent that A.E. Cerqua founded in 1856 the *New York's Children's Aid Society*. The institution created a school which aimed at giving a better lifestyle to Italian immigrants through education, starting with the basics of personal hygiene.²⁵⁰ In particular, children who worked as monkey exhibitors, shoe shiners, harp and organ players, and sellers of plaster statues and flowers, were a priority for the newly established school.

In 1867, a large group of Italian children arrived in New York, mainly harp and violin players from Viggiano and other towns in Basilicata. In the following year, the consul in New York, Ferdinando De Luca, reported that "all the old Italians living in New York assure that they have never seen such a multitude of little musicians in the city as they do now".²⁵¹ At the end of the 19th century, there were around 42,000 youngsters between fourteen- and sixteen-years old working in glassworks and in further industrial sectors.²⁵² According to the census of the United States of 1870, around one child out of eight was employed in waged labour. In 1900, the ratio augmented to one out of six with the percentage increasing up until 1910.²⁵³ Indeed, solely in the main cities of the United States there were around 8,000 Italian children in 1871. While according to the passengers lists of the ships coming from Italy, "in the three months of April, May, and June of 1873 approximately 370 children disembarked in New York, all of them younger than twelve-years-old, the majority between the ages of eight and nine".²⁵⁴ These children were sold to their exploiters for 100-200\$ for boys and 100-500\$ for girls. The phenomenon of child begging persisted in the 1990s.

Without a doubt, Italian children were the "chief boy workers of the American city".²⁵⁵ Indeed, in that period the Italian wandering child migrant par excellence was the newsboy: the majority was in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. The age of these boys is a tedious

²⁵⁰ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, "L'infanzia emigrante e il Parlamento italiano," in *Soli per il mondo: Bambine e bambini emigranti tra Otto e Novecento* (Edizioni Unicopli, 2001): 20.

²⁵¹ Bruna Bianchi, "Ragazzi italiani negli Stati Uniti: dalla metà dell'800 alla Grande Depressione," *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 34, no.1 (2004): 158.

²⁵² Danilo Palmisano, "Storie minori: migrazioni non accompagnate," 93.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Giovanni Florenzano, "Una vergogna riparata," in *Della Emigrazione Italiane in America comparata alle altre emigrazioni europee* (Napoli: F. Giannini ed., 1874): 156.

²⁵⁵ Amy Alleman Bernardy, "Sulle condizioni delle donne e dei fanciulli italiani negli Stati del Centro e dell'Ovest della Confederazione del Nord-America," in *Bollettino dell'emigrazione* 1 (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1911): 44.

subject, as children much younger than ten or even eight years old were seen around the streets selling newspapers.²⁵⁶ Additionally, in the bigger cities like New York and Chicago, it is estimated that one third of the young newsboys was victim of violence and suffered from various illnesses; they also became accustomed to cigarettes, alcohol, bad language and gambling at an early age.²⁵⁷ While the little boys were mainly employed for wandering professions and selling newspapers, the girls usually worked from home (i.e., sweat-shops). The living conditions between the piling up of rags and kitchen utensils, the housework itself, and the lack of air and light, favoured the spread of tuberculosis, a typical disease of migrants.²⁵⁸ Finally, children were also employed in can-making or textile factories, where the work was more unhygienic than truly dangerous. However, above all, they were employed in glassworks where occupational accidents were frequent and serious. Scelsi noted that the working conditions were no different from those in French glassworks. Here too, “hundreds of Italian boys, undoubtedly under the age of thirteen, are employed in services that are absolutely detrimental to their health”, obliged for ten consecutive hours to hold the mould in which the worker blowed incandescent glass and to breathe air impregnated with poisonous vapours.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ Amy Alleman Bernardy, “Sulle condizioni delle donne e dei fanciulli italiani negli Stati del Centro e dell'Ovest della Confederazione del Nord-America,” 45.

²⁵⁷ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, “I bambini e le bambine emigranti,” 150.

²⁵⁸ Amy Alleman Bernardy, “Sulle condizioni delle donne e dei fanciulli italiani negli Stati del Centro e dell'Ovest della Confederazione del Nord-America,” 51.

²⁵⁹ Lionello Scelsi, “Il distretto viceconsolare di Pittsburg,” in *Emigrazione e Colonie – Raccolta di rapporti dei RR. agenti diplomatici e consolari* III, no.3 (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1909): 191-192.



Figure 5. Bringing stories with them...an Italian mother with her children arriving at Ellis Island, New York.²⁶⁰

The consul of Chicago attempted to address the issue of working child migrants in 1894, believing it to be a consequence of the extreme poverty of some Italian immigrant families.²⁶¹ Consequently, the American control over immigration was expressed through the federal law of 3 March 1903, which prohibited the landing in the United States of all those persons who “may fall victim to public charity”.²⁶² In particular, minors of frail constitution, unaccompanied, illiterate or without a family in America capable of taking them in and supporting them. Furthermore, those minors were prevented from entering the country when it was suspected that they could take part in businesses such as shoe-shining or street vending.²⁶³ However, it was only with the law emanated in 1907 that minors under sixteen years old unaccompanied by at least one parent could be rejected at the frontier.

²⁶⁰ Sunjeev Sahota, “Top 10 books about migrants,” *The Guardian* (22 July 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/22/top-10-books-about-migrants-sunjeev-sahota>.

²⁶¹ “Fanciulli italiani mendicanti in Chicago,” in *Bollettino del Ministero degli Affari Esteri* 81(Tipografia di Gabinetto, 1894): 888.

²⁶² Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, “I bambini e le bambine emigranti,” 146.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

4.1.3 “La tratta dei fanciulli” – legal framework

The exploitation of children as a seasonal migration scheme both in Italy and abroad became a proper trafficking system throughout the years. Those forms of recruitment, similar to the modern era’s apprenticeship contracts, often degenerated into shady trafficking and hoarding aimed at the most despicable exploitation of minors. The market, widespread in various areas of the Italian peninsula, took the form of a real “trade” in children (i.e. “la tratta dei bambini”) and its young protagonists became the “little white slaves” or “little martyrs”, as recited in the headlines of the newspapers and books of the time.²⁶⁴ It regarded children between the age of six and fifteen coming from the poorest communities in Italy sold to traffickers who brought them to the most populous Western metropolises to work.²⁶⁵ As described by the Honourable Arrivabene:

“if the unhappy creature does not bring home every night the price of what the misbegotten initiator of that industrial society is demanding, not only do the children go to bed on an empty stomach, but they are sometimes beaten, when they are not thrown out onto the street, where they are then, butchered by the rain, parched by the cold, arrested as vagrants...”²⁶⁶

The issue was brought to the attention of important politicians and grew into being the subject of several governmental reports. With the publication of the order of the Parisian prefect of police in 1863, acrobats, organ grinders, street musicians and singers were forbidden to be accompanied by children under the age of sixteen.²⁶⁷ The order led to the incarceration of 1,544 Italian children beggars in 1867.²⁶⁸ In 1868, the *Société Italienne de Bienfaisance* in Paris published a statement which concluded that the streets of the French capital were the landing point of a market which brought children from Italy to exploit them.²⁶⁹ Indeed, the phenomenon of musicians was seen purely as a child trading activity:

²⁶⁴ Lorenzo Luatti, “Venduti, girovaghi e randagi: bambini e ragazzi per il mondo nella letteratura per l’infanzia,” in *Rapporto Italiani nel Mondo 2014*, Fondazione Migrantes (Tau Editrice, 2014): 144.

²⁶⁵ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, “L’infanzia emigrante e il Parlamento italiano,” 23.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Giacomo Zanella, “Documenti e Notizie”, in *Il piccolo calabrese* (Firenze: G. Barbera Editore, 1871): 105.

²⁶⁸ Giovanni Florenzano, “Una vergogna riparata,” 157.

²⁶⁹ Enzo Vicinio Alliegro, “Il flautista magico: i musicanti di strada tra identità debole e rappresentazioni contraddittorie (sex. XVIII-XIX),” in *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome – Italie et Méditerranée* (École Française de Rome, 2003): 168.

“Every year hundreds of children of all ages and sexes leave their villages under the conduct of individuals who claim to be their relatives. But, in reality, these men are true slave masters; because these children are rented or sold to them (...). The real “trafficking of whites” begins at the frontiers. The conductor re-sells them to other individuals who live in Paris or other big cities. After delivering their human goods, they go back to Basilicata to gather more children”.²⁷⁰

The Italian government’s response was incited, not for humanitarian reasons, but for the safeguard of the national decorum. In fact, the living conditions of children residing outside of the country shone a bad light on the state. The government was prompted by the publication of certain reports by the Italian consuls abroad. Already in 1862, the Consul General of Italy in Paris, Luigi Cerruti, drew the attention to the conditions of the young musicians, emphasizing the need to control the “disgraceful emigration” and ban the movement of minors without the guide of a parent.²⁷¹ Indeed it was a substantial phenomenon, as it was assessable at more than three-hundred children with more than sixty employers solely in the city of Paris, and more than six-hundred youngsters and conductors in the United States.²⁷² On the 21st of December 1873, the law on the prohibition of the employment of children of both sexes in itinerant professions was promulgated under the auspices of the Honourable Guerzoni. Article 1 of the law punished whoever would employ individuals under 18 years of age in wandering professions. It cited:

“Whoever entrusts or hands over to nationals or aliens, individuals of either sex under the age of eighteen years, even though they are their own children, and whoever, national or foreigner, receives them for the purpose of employing them in the Kingdom in any way and under any name in the exercise of wandering professions, such as those of acrobats, charlatans, itinerant musicians or singers, rope jumpers, soothsayers or explainers of dreams, animal exhibitors, beggars

²⁷⁰ Enzo Vicinio Alliegro, “Il flautista magico: i musicanti di strada tra identità devole e rappresentazioni contraddittorie (sex. XVIII-XIX),” 168.

²⁷¹ Dolores Freda, ““Tratta dei fanciulli” e onor di patria: la regolamentazione dell’emigrazione minorile tra l’Unità e la legge del 1901,” 294.

²⁷² Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, “L’infanzia emigrante e il Parlamento italiano,” 34.

and the like, shall be punished by imprisonment of one to three months and a fine of fifty-one to two hundred and fifty lire”.²⁷³

Moreover, in 1877, the *Charity Organization Society* in England promulgated the results of an investigation which denounced the existence of a criminal organizations aimed at the recruitment and exploitation of children. The inquiry led to the incarceration of 478 employers and the repatriation to Italy of around a hundred minors.²⁷⁴ Furthermore, the British government implemented in 1889 the *Prevention to Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children Act* which explicitly stated that

“any person who causes or procures any child, being a boy under the age of fourteen years, or being a girl under the age of sixteen years, to be in any street for the purpose of begging or receiving alms, or of inducing the giving of alms, whether under the pretence of singing, playing, performing, offering anything for sale, or otherwise (...) shall be liable to a fine not exceeding twenty-five pounds or alternatively to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for any term not exceeding three months.”.²⁷⁵

The image of young emigrants was portrayed with conflicting characteristics. On the one hand, children were seen as helpless victims at the mercy of brutal exploiters. On the other hand, they were depicted as cunning children who were incapable of following the rules of civil society and, for this reason, destined for a life of delinquency and exclusion. The ambivalent description of child migrants immobilized lengthily the government whose backwardness ended up fuelling the European child labour market.²⁷⁶ Certainly, the state attempted to create norms which could guarantee the observance of a minimum schooling obligation following the political unification of the country in 1861. Nonetheless, no further inclusive measures were implemented until 1886, mainly due to the hostilities of entrepreneurs and industrialists who wanted to preserve their autonomy and maintain the use of child labour to aid in the

²⁷³ Articolo no.1, Legge 21 Dicembre 1873 n.1733, “Sul divieto dell’impiego di fanciulli in professioni girovaghe,” GU n.354 del 23-12-1873.

²⁷⁴ Dolores Freda, ““Tratta dei fanciulli” e onor di patria: la regolamentazione dell’emigrazione minorile tra l’Unità e la legge del 1901,” 295.

²⁷⁵ Parliament of the United Kingdom, “An Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to, and better Protection of, Children,” 26 August 1889.

²⁷⁶ Dolores Freda, ““Tratta dei fanciulli” e onor di patria: la regolamentazione dell’emigrazione minorile tra l’Unità e la legge del 1901,” 296.

development of their industries.²⁷⁷ Law no. 3657 of 1886 prohibited the work of children of both sexes under the age of nine in industrial factories, quarries, and mines. Moreover, from the age of nine to fifteen an assessment of their physical aptitude was required. The regulation limited the working day to eight hours, and it sanctioned the employment of children under the age of fifteen in hazardous and insalubrious environments.²⁷⁸ Nonetheless, it was only between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century that the migration of children as musicians and peddlers began to decrease due to the growing restrictions imposed in various European countries to discourage the practice of wandering professions.²⁷⁹

The former President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian government, Luigi Luzzatti, pushed for the implementation of an improved and more efficient law on emigration. The new decree, promulgated on the 31st of January 1901, aimed to protect all emigrants and in particular to defend those youngsters “enlisted illicitly to defile themselves abroad in wandering professions, to exhaust themselves in unhealthy industries with precocious jobs, as in the glassworks in France” and who the society should protect with great care.²⁸⁰ Indeed, the law on the state protection of emigration of 1901 remained the most fundamental law on emigration until the advent of fascism.

Moreover, alongside the previously mentioned law, in 1902 the law on the work of women and children was promulgated. The new regulation raised the age limit for admission to work from nine to twelve and included glassworks in the list of dangerous and unhealthy industries. Additionally, it excluded the possibility of employing children under the age of fifteen for harder and more hazardous tasks.²⁸¹ Starting already from the 1880s, in the rest of the European countries, mandatory schooling had been set at 13 or 14 years of age. Thus, in countries like France, Switzerland or Germany autochthonous child labour was replaced by minors coming from more backward neighbouring countries such as Italy.²⁸² This is because the Italian legislation lacked on regulations for compulsory education until 1904 where the law required children to go to school until the age of 12.²⁸³ Thus, the limit was still significantly lower than

²⁷⁷ Dolores Freda, “Tratta dei fanciulli” e onor di patria: la regolamentazione dell’emigrazione minorile tra l’Unità e la legge del 1901,” 296.

²⁷⁸ “Legge n. 3657 dell’11 febbraio 1886,” *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 040 (Roma, 18 febbraio 1886).

²⁷⁹ Dolores Freda, “Tratta dei fanciulli” e onor di patria: la regolamentazione dell’emigrazione minorile tra l’Unità e la legge del 1901,” 303.

²⁸⁰ Giulia di Bello and Vanna Nuti, “L’infanzia emigrante e il Parlamento italiano,” 57.

²⁸¹ “Legge n. 242 del 19 giugno 1902,” *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 157 (Roma, 7 luglio 1902).

²⁸² Danilo Palmisano, “Storie minori: migrazioni non accompagnate,” 88.

²⁸³ “Legge n. 407 dell’8 luglio 1904,” *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 182 (Roma, 4 agosto 1904).

other countries. Certainly, what evolved above all over the course of the entire century is the “feeling of childhood”.²⁸⁴ In fact, in medieval societies this specific sentiment did not exist, which does not mean that children were neglected or despised. Simply, the child was brought into the adult world already after its first five or seven years of life. This conception of a short-lived duration of a childhood remained until the enhancement of compulsory schooling.

²⁸⁴ Danilo Palmisano, “Storie minori: migrazioni non accompagnate,” 99.

4.2 BRITISH CHILD MIGRATION

The process of child migration from the United Kingdom to the various colonies of the state continued in a structured way from around the beginning of the 19th century until the late 1960s. In this case, child migration will be henceforth referred to as being the “arranged emigration of children *without their parents*”, not the migration of a child as part of the family.²⁸⁵ Doctor Coldrey observes that child migration was a program of social engineering: “it involved the transfer of abandoned youth from the orphanages, homes, workhouses and reformatories of the United Kingdom to overseas British colonies”.²⁸⁶ This practice started in 1840 with the shipment of about 440 children to South Africa by the Society for the Suppression of Juvenile Vagrancy as a replacement for slave labour, as it had been freshly abolished.²⁸⁷ Nonetheless, it became a proper institution only towards the end of the century, when approximately 100,000 children were sent to Canada between 1869 and 1935.²⁸⁸ The Empire Settlement Act passed in 1922 by the British parliament and active until 1935 openly encouraged child migration.²⁸⁹ The rationale that underlay the role of the UK government within this scheme was apparently welfarist; however, it was clear that the concealed motive was that of separating the human ‘wheat from the chaff’. Moreover, there was a transparent economic intention, as removing poor children from the British territories and sending them to their colonies would relieve the financial drain on the United Kingdom’s economy.²⁹⁰ The organizations which recruited children were by and large charitable and devout, the most prominent ones were Dr Barnardo’s Homes and the Children’s Farm School Immigration Society of Western Australia, also known as the Fairbridge Society.

²⁸⁵ John Eekelaar, "The Chief Glory: The Export of Children from the United Kingdom," *Journal of Law and Society* 21, no. 4 (1994): 488.

²⁸⁶ Barry M. Coldrey, *Child Migration to Catholic Institutions in Australia: Objectives, Policies, Realities 1926-1966* (Tamanaraik Publishing, 1995): 1-2.

²⁸⁷ John Eekelaar, "The Chief Glory: The Export of Children from the United Kingdom," 488.

²⁸⁸ Antonio Buti, "British child migration to Australia: history, Senate Inquiry and responsibilities," *eLaw Journal: Murdoch University Electronic Journal of Law* 9, no. 4 (2002): 2.

²⁸⁹ Stephen Constantine, "The British government, child welfare, and child migration to Australia after 1945," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 30, no. 1 (2002): 100.

²⁹⁰ Antonio Buti, "British child migration to Australia: history, Senate Inquiry and responsibilities," 1.

4.2.2 Child migration to Canada, Rhodesia, and New Zealand

Canada

Canada had developed a rapid-growing farm-based economy and society; however, the country was facing a shortage in workforce. Thus, motivated by the social and economic forces, the British and Canadian governments developed child migration schemes, such as the ‘Juvenile Farm Immigration Policy’, allowing thousands of children to be sent overseas to work as farm laborers for boys or domestics for girls.²⁹¹ Two main voluntary institutions contributed to child migration: Fegan Homes and the Waifs and Strays Society. The former was accountable for sending 3200 boys between 1884 and 1915 to Canada and the latter for transferring around 3500 children (aged 5-14) between 1883 and 1937.²⁹² At the outset, the religious and philanthropic organizations usually sent poor, destitute and orphaned children to the Canadian territories. Nonetheless, to meet the larger demand for labour, a larger selection mechanism was utilized. This process was put to a hold in the 1930s as a result of the escalating Depression in North America.²⁹³ Both Fegan Homes and the Waifs and Strays Society followed a strict policy of demanding consent of a parent or legal guardian to be given prior to the emigration of the child to Canada.²⁹⁴ However, there were various cases in which the child was sent without parental consent. Moreover, at times, the child itself could grant permission to emigrate overseas making parental consent unnecessary. Over time, Canadian child welfare experts began to be concerned about British children not receiving sufficient care or guidance in Canada.²⁹⁵ In fact, the Canadian Centre for Home Children stated that “upon their arrival in Canada the acceptance and treatment of children varied widely throughout the country... [however] research has shown that 66% of all former child migrants were abused in some form. This was either at the hands of the receiving homes or farms they were placed on”.²⁹⁶ These issues prompted the Labour government in 1924 to create a committee of investigation, which determined that solely children above school-leaving age could travel overseas.²⁹⁷ The decision

²⁹¹ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration* (Commonwealth of Australia, 30 August 2001): 14.

²⁹² Wendy Sims-Schouten, “‘A troublesome girl is pushed through’: Morality, biological determinism, resistance, resilience, and the Canadian child migration schemes, 1883–1939,” *History of the Human Sciences* 35, no. 1 (2022): 88.

²⁹³ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 14.

²⁹⁴ Wendy Sims-Schouten, “‘A troublesome girl is pushed through’: Morality, biological determinism, resistance, resilience, and the Canadian child migration schemes, 1883–1939,” 92.

²⁹⁵ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 14.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁹⁷ Stephen Constantine, “The British government, child welfare, and child migration to Australia after 1945,” 101.

led Britain to cease funding the emigration of such children to Canada. Furthermore, in 1925 the Canadian Government approved an interim law which banned the migration of children under 14 years of age. As Canada began to further restrict its immigration laws with regards to child migration, British sending institutions focused their attention on Rhodesia, New Zealand, and more importantly Australia.

Rhodesia

In the 1930s, the Fairbridge Society took specific measures towards the inauguration of a farm school in Rhodesia, Africa. There was a large support from the Rhodesian Government and from commercial businesses as they sought to increase the racial balance within the territory by welcoming 'white' migrants. The organizations found various opportunities for child migrants, primarily in farming, but also in the police forces, the railways and mining. Hence, they planned a scheme starting with 30-40 boys and 5-10 girls, building up to 200-250 within five years. The Prime Minister, Godfrey Huggings, supported the project and promised a grant of land, maintenance support and education for the migrants.²⁹⁸ In opposition to other destinations to which British child migrants were sent to, children in Rhodesia were better cared for and were bound for becoming superintendents and managers rather than farm workers. Around 276 children were shipped to Rhodesia between 1946 and 1956.²⁹⁹

New Zealand

During the 19th century up until World War II, British children were evacuated to New Zealand under an arrangement between the Government and Britain's Overseas Reception Board.³⁰⁰ The flow of evacuees towards New Zealand influenced the creation of a formal migration scheme for British children also following the end of the World War. In fact, between 1949 and 1954 about 500 children aged between five and fifteen years were sent overseas under the Child Welfare Act 1948 (NZ).³⁰¹ Children brought to New Zealand were fostered by local families and, in contrast with the previously mentioned migratory schemes, humanitarian institutions were not involved in the program. This migration process was carried out along with another program which targeted around 200 boys aged 15 years and above to work on the

²⁹⁸ Geoffrey Sherington and Chris Jeffery, "Extending the Empire," in *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration* (Oxon, UK: Woburn Press, 1998): 182-185.

²⁹⁹ Antonio Buti, "British child migration to Australia: history, Senate Inquiry and responsibilities," 2.

³⁰⁰ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 15.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

land, called the Flock House Scheme.³⁰² Even in this case, there were concerns of abuse on children and complaints that they might have been used as cheap labour. These worries were settled by a report published by the UK House of Commons Health Committee which stated that “the limited nature of the New Zealand scheme, and the fact that it appears to have been better organised than some of the other schemes, seems to have led to fewer cases of severe abuse”.³⁰³ Nonetheless, the report also asserts that former child migrants resented the way they had been treated in New Zealand and accusations were made regarding the lack of educational opportunities, the loss of identity, the absence of an adequate supervision, and the exploitation as free labour.³⁰⁴

Several common themes come into being with regards to the treatment of child migrants throughout the history of British child migration. Indeed, various children sent to the state’s colonies faced analogous patterns of abuse and neglect. Child migrants were used as slave labour, were separated from their families in their home country and were later lied to about their whereabouts and were stigmatized as *persona non grata* in the country of arrival. Nonetheless, politics and economic interests were systematically prioritized over the well-being of children. These arguments will be analysed at greater length in the following paragraph on the British child migration scheme towards Australia.

4.2.3 Child migration to Australia

Few people are familiar with the history of child migration towards Australia, where children were being sent overseas from Britain until the mid-1960s. Throughout the 20th century Australia changed its rationale towards child migration. In fact, preceding World War II, British children were sent to Australia to undergo rural farm training for boys and improve domestic skills for girls. Following the advent of the Second World War, this rationale decreased drastically in significance for the Australian government as it shifted towards a post-war immigration program aiming at implementing the country’s population.³⁰⁵ Following the war against Japan, Australia faced a period of under-population and national security which pushed the government to increase its efforts to boost immigration from Britain. Hence, the

³⁰² Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 16.

³⁰³ House of Commons, Health Committee, *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants*, HC 755, Session 1997-98, ‘New Zealand’, 2.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 19.

Empire Settlement Act, which was in effect until 1935, was reactivated, and in March 1946 the two governments signed an agreement which authorized assisted passages for British emigrants to Australia.³⁰⁶ Consequently, the Act was extended for five years in 1952 and again under a diverse title, namely the Commonwealth Settlement Act, in 1957, 1962 and 1967.³⁰⁷ Having said that, as the Canadian government was reducing the access for child migrants due to considerable concerns about child safety and care, and the British authorities were less supportive of child migration, Australia overlooked these concerns and persevered in its choice to admit child migrants in its country.³⁰⁸ Furthermore, the Commonwealth government had a limited involvement with child migration up until the end of World War II, facilitating the migratory flows of children towards Australia. Solely after 1946 the Commonwealth enacted a legislation which regulated the migration, settlement and caretaking of migrant children, the Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946. This allowed for the Minister of Immigration to be the legal guardian of child migrants who were sent to Australia by voluntary societies.³⁰⁹ In alignment with the scarce legislative framework, the federal government provided subsidies to the agencies which welcomed children in Australia, thus encouraging these organizations to operate intensively. At first, societies looking after the children earned 10s per week for each child by the Australian government, 5s (sterling) from the British government and further amounts from the state governments (*Figure 1*).³¹⁰ Subsequently, the agencies would receive the benefit of a 50% state endowment for their activities, which was then increased to 75%.³¹¹

³⁰⁶ Stephen Constantine, "The British government, child welfare, and child migration to Australia after 1945," 102.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 19.

³⁰⁹ Julie Grier, "Voluntary rights and statutory wrongs: The case of child migration, 1948-67," *History of Education* 31, no. 3 (2002): 266.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Kristen Rundle, "Improbable agents of empire: coming to terms with British child migration," *Adoption & Fostering* 35, no. 3 (2011): 31.

In 1949 the British maintenance rate was increased to 10s. per week. By 1955 the following rates of maintenance were paid for child migrants. The figures show the amount paid per week per child (in Australian £):

	New South Wales	Victoria	S. Australia	Queensland	W. Australia	Tasmania
UK government	12.6	12.6	12.6	12.6	12.6	12.6
Federal government	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
State government	4.6	7.6	7.6	12.6	£1.2.3	10.0
Total	£1.7.2	£1.10.0	£1.10.0	£1.15.0	£2.13.0	£1.12.6

Figure 1. Amount paid per week per child (in Australian £)

Child migration policy was based on diverse ambitions, notably it was partly humanitarian and partly in line with the Australian post-war migration program which, as already mentioned, was based on re-populating the country. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs noted that the “concept of rescuing ‘war babies’ and underprivileged children from orphanages in war torn Britain and offering them a new life in Australia had popular appeal, and the fact that these migrants were children was thought to give them an advantage in being able to more readily adapt and ‘assimilate’ into the Australian community”.³¹² Lastly, economic factors also played a large role in child migration. The Department asserted that like other immigrants, children would eventually increment the labour force.³¹³ Notwithstanding all that was said about children's care, between 1947 and 1967 eight British-based philanthropic agencies sent approximately 3200 boys and girls to the forty officially approved childcare organizations in Australia (*Figure 2*).³¹⁴ The Rhodes Scholar Kingsley Fairbridge agency, a relative neophyte amongst the charitable organizations which had been relocating British children to Canada for several decades, facilitated the migration scheme to Australia. The institution offered a model of farm school which could have the dual-purpose child rescue and empire building.³¹⁵

³¹² Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 24.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ Stephen Constantine, "The British government, child welfare, and child migration to Australia after 1945," 105.

³¹⁵ Kristen Rundle, "Improbable agents of empire: coming to terms with British child migration," 31.

SUBSIDISED CHILD MIGRANTS SENT TO AUSTRALIA BY
VOLUNTARY SOCIETIES 1947-65

	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956
ACI	334	28	18	84	14	134	184	82	34	15
CE	16	12	39	32	12	53	36	47	35	37
DrB	38	22	24	50	36	44	18	22	46	31
FS	51	65	39	109	73	57	54	52	63	24
NCH				65	8	1				
NCT		38	9	13	14	4	5	6	12	3
CS				28	3	7	1	22	4	2
SA				7	1	23	7	12	5	12
Total	411	165	129	388	161	323	305	243	199	124

	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	Total
ACI	1	2		4	5	2	2	1	2	946
CE	24	29	13	20	1	1			1	408
DrB	10		30	8	12	11	31	8	16	457
FS	36	42	56	24	46	60	38	95	47	997
NCH										76
NCT	5	3								112
CS	1	2		11						83
SA	5	12	4	1						91
Total	82	90	103	68	64	74	71	104	66	3170

(Initials represent, in order, Australian Catholic Immigration Committee, Church of England Advisory Council of Empire Settlement, Dr Barnardo's, Fairbridge Society, National Children's Home, Northcote Children's Trust, Church of Scotland Committee on Social Services, Salvation Army.)

Figure 2. Subsidised child migrants sent to Australia by voluntary societies 1947-65

Pre-World War II migration

Prior to World War I there were solely two philanthropic agencies which organized juvenile migration to Australia, namely the Dreadnought Trust in New South Wales from 1911 and the Fairbridge Society in Western Australia from 1913. However, with the inception of World War I, the projects designed by these institutions were hampered and child migration was put to a halt. In 1920, all forms of migration, which included child migration, were resumed although at a small-scale level. Nonetheless, juvenile migration was widely accepted within the Australian community in contrast with adult migration which was less tolerated. According to Barry M. Coldrey that is because it generated the 'feel-good' factor. Unemployment was high in the 1920s and adult migrants were competitors for scarce jobs. However, it was hard to be opposed to the arrival of deprived youngsters brought by Fairbridge or Barnardo's, and equally difficult to be bitter towards young men brought by the Dreadnought Trust or the Big Brother Movement or the churches, intended for rural work at low wages which few Australians wanted.³¹⁶ In 1921, the first group of Barnardo's boys arrived in Australia and, likewise, two years later the first party of girls was sent overseas.³¹⁷ Indeed, the organizations bringing children to migrate to Australia became increasingly ambitious in the mid-1920s. For instance, in 1925 the Salvation Army leased an entire ship to bring migrant boys from Britain.³¹⁸ John

³¹⁶ Barry M. Coldrey, "Good british stock - Child and Youth Migration to Australia," *National Archives of Australia* (August 1999): 34.

³¹⁷ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 22.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

McGillion who was sent to Australia by a Northern Ireland children's home remembered the large number of children who went with him:

“we were literally hundreds on the boat. There were British, Irish, Scottish, Welsh. The ship went from place to place, just picking up children. It was a possibility there could have been at least eight or nine hundred on that ship; and there were also two or three more ships that arrived at Fremantle with hundreds of other boys”.³¹⁹

Up until then, these charitable and religious institutions were focused primarily on juvenile migration, as they wished to create a ‘new start’ in a new country for school-leavers. Only in the late 1920s, the Catholic Church commenced to focus its attention on migration for younger children. Following protracted negotiations between Australian and British clergymen and their respective governments, around 114 British boys were brought to Christian Brothers’ orphanages in Western Australia between 1938 and 1939. Dr Coldrey distinguished Catholic child migration, which took place in the late 1930s, as being small-scale, privately organized, enjoying a government subsidy, and motivated by sectarian and child rescue considerations.³²⁰ Nonetheless, due to the deepening of the Depression in 1930, nearly all immigration to Australia was terminated. Only the Fairbridge Society and Barnardo’s were allowed to continue their work and bring children inside the territory until 1937, when also the Big Brother Movement and the Dreadnought Trust were able to recommence juvenile migration. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 ceased migration for the whole duration of the war.

³¹⁹ Philip Bean and Joy Melville, “Australia: Lost Souls,” in *Lost Children of the Empire* (Unwin Hyman Limited, 1989): 110.

³²⁰ Barry M. Coldrey, “British child migration,” in *The Scheme: The Christian Brothers and childcare in Western Australia*, (Argyle-Pacific Publications, 1993): 128.



Figure 3. Four children carrying suitcases bearing Fairbridge farm school stickers.³²¹

Post-World War II migration

As mentioned above, following the end of the war, Australia was facing a severe under-population crisis. Hence, the government commenced to develop a tactical plan to boost immigration to Australia as expeditiously and efficiently as possible. On 2 August 1945 the then Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, published his first major report on immigration policy referring in particular to the government's program to bring 50,000 British orphans to Australia. In his speech, he officially stated:

“Pending the resumption of large-scale adult migration, the Government will take every available opportunity to facilitate the entry into Australia of accepted children from other countries. The Government has already approved in principle a plan to bring to Australia, in the first three years after the war, 50,000 orphans from Britain and other countries that have been devastated by the war”.³²²

³²¹ Caroline Davies, “Britain's Child Migrant Programme: Why 130,000 Children Were Shipped Abroad,” *The Guardian* (February 27, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/feb/27/britains-child-migrant-programme-why-130000-children-were-shipped-abroad>.

³²² “Rebuilding post-war Australia,” *Journal of the Australian Population Association* 5, no. 1 (March 1988): 220.

This plan was the most clear-cut immigration program to develop in the war years. Australia's post-war immigration program officially entered into force on 31 December 1946.³²³ However, it became promptly noticeable that the goal of transferring 50,000 children from the European continent to Australia could not be reached. The idea that the war had influenced a rise in the number of orphans in Britain was rapidly dispelled. Hence, it was decided that the Commonwealth Government would rely on voluntary agencies such as Fairbridge, Barnardo's and further religious organizations to uphold child migration. Indeed, the voluntary societies were responsible for the administration of the immigration schemes prescribed by the British and Australian governments. Child migration truly resumed in 1947 with the arrival of the first post-war group of child migrants for the Christian Brothers institution in Western Australia.³²⁴ Indeed, the Catholic Church became the largest sponsoring organizations to bring child migrants to Australia after the Second World War. As noted by Dr Coldrey, "Catholic Church leaders – late arrivals on the Australian juvenile migration scene – responded to government policy with the fervor and dedication of recent converts".³²⁵ For instance, Archbishop Prendiville from Perth wrote to Cardinal Griffin in London offering to take 2,500 British orphans into the Western Australian Catholic orphanages during the first year and a half of peace.³²⁶ This sudden and rapid-growing interest of the Catholic Church into child migration sparked several accusations. In fact, it was believed that one of the motives for promoting child migration was monetary gain. Children were employed in diverse forms of labor like laundries, child nurseries, construction, or farming while the institutions were also sponsored by the government. The subsidies and the income deriving from these activities allowed these religious orders to be self-sufficient. Marion Fox observed that the Catholic Bishops would not accept child migrants within their institutions without first acquiring concessions from the government, as "public funding towards capital works and children's maintenance provided a pragmatic reason for participation in the [child migration] program".³²⁷ As the complaints reached the Catholic Child Welfare Council (CCWC) in the United Kingdom, it was agreed that the negotiations about child migration were to be assessed by the Australian Catholic Migration Committee. However, this decision hindered the plans of the representatives of the

³²³ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 25.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

³²⁵ Barry M. Coldrey, "Good british stock - Child and Youth Migration to Australia" *National Archives of Australia* (August 1999): 112.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ Marion Fox, "British Child Migrants in New South Wales Catholic Orphanages," *History of Education Review* 25 (1996): 13.

Catholic hierarchy in Australia and in 1956 the migration of children under Catholic Church auspices came to an end.³²⁸

In the 1950s the British government conducted two separate investigations on the situation of child migrants and, consequently, published two reports respectively (the Moss Report in 1953 and the Ross Report in 1956). The former recommended child migration as a suitable child welfare strategy and supported numerous Australian institutions. However, as Stephen Constantine points out, Moss endeavored also to encourage the assessment of such institutions as he was critical of their facilities and of their isolation.³²⁹ Additionally, he expressed concern about single-sex structures and pointed out the lack of trained staff working in these establishments. In contrast with this investigation, the Ross Report was very critical of the very principle of child migration. Indeed, it rejected the idea that deprived children were those most in need of a 'fresh start'. The brief asserted that it was "precisely such children, already rejected and insecure, who might often be ill-equipped to cope with the added strain of migration".³³⁰ Moreover, the report also denounced the essence of institutional care in Australia stating that, especially in the larger establishments, there was a lack of "homely atmosphere" and too little privacy.³³¹ Lastly, the report noticed that the isolation of certain institutions and the scarce contact between children and the local community restricted the assimilation into Australian society.³³²

In 1967 the last party of children was allegedly flown from Barnardo's agency to Australia. Nevertheless, it was fairly obvious that the conclusion of these migratory programmes was not due to official British interference. As a matter of fact, child migration to Australia was terminated because the charitable organizations ran out of prospective child migrants to send overseas. Due to economic growth, demographic change and extended welfare services in Britain, children did not need the aid of voluntary societies.³³³ Additionally, if children could not remain with their families, they were more often adopted or fostered directly in the United Kingdom.

³²⁸ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 35.

³²⁹ Stephen Constantine, "The British government, child welfare, and child migration to Australia after 1945," 108.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ *Ibid.*, 124.

In 1987 a Child Migration Trust (CMT) was founded in order to reunite former child migrants with their parents and other relatives which were still alive in their home country. The broadcasting of its work invigorated both public and academic interest. In fact, in 1998 a British Parliamentary delegation visited Australia to carry out an enquiry on child migration. The report, which was successively published, was critical of child migration policy and of the treatment of former child migrants in Australia. Its publications, recommendations and findings could be the last resolution to assess a legislation which commenced approximately 400 years ago.³³⁴

4.2.4 Agencies involved in child migration

Barnardo's

The most well-known child migration scheme of the late 19th century was run by Dr Barnardo, an evangelical philanthropist who had moved to London to train as a missionary. At that point in time, several church workers concerned with the plight of children saw emigration as the only solution to escape poverty. Indeed, Barnardo chose to establish a receiving home for boys in Toronto, Canada, and he began to send children overseas as early as 1872. Over the coming twenty years, Barnardo's Homes became the towering childcare institutions and by the end of child migration to Canada in 1930 the organization had sent 20,000 children in the Canadian territory.³³⁵ In proportion, its involvement in Australia was rather small-scale. The work was systematized similarly to what had been done in Canada: he purchased a home as a receiving centre for boys. In 1921, 47 children came; in 1922, 50; in 1923, 106; in the following year, 155; and over the next four years another 523 children arrived in Australia.³³⁶ At first, Barnardo's agency established a model of farm school under which boys were trained as farm labourers and girls as domestic servants, with six cottages built to welcome around two hundred children.³³⁷ In 1946, the clause which required boys and girls to follow the prescribed trainings was removed and all children were given a choice of occupation within their interests and skills. In 1956, the agency aimed at establishing small, family-group homes and in 1964 it reoriented

³³⁴ Barry M. Coldrey, "Good british stock - Child and Youth Migration to Australia" *National Archives of Australia* (August 1999): 24.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

its services towards accommodating Australian-born children.³³⁸ By 1967 the last party of seven child migrants under Barnardo's Homes auspices arrived in Sydney by air. Barnardo's sent around 2,340 children to Australia between 1921 and 1938; child migration was put to a hold during World War II and its activity diminished between 1947 and 1964, with 444 children shipped to Australia.³³⁹

Fairbridge

Kingsley Fairbridge was a philanthropist whose aim was to aid poor and orphaned children by providing them with a sense of self-worth and teaching them the necessary farming skills for life in rural areas of the British Empire. He founded in 1909, with several fellow students at Oxford, the Child Emigration Society, later on known as the Fairbridge Farm Schools.³⁴⁰ Kingsley wanted to see deprived children "shedding the bondage of bitter circumstances and stretching their legs and minds amid the thousand interests of a farm".³⁴¹ In 1912 he established a Farm School at Pinjarra, with the help of the Western Australian Government, where he could accommodate the children. In 1913 the first group of child migrants arrived in Western Australia.³⁴² With the enactment of the Empire Settlement Act in 1922, the Overseas Development Board granted Fairbridge a substantial subsidy to buy more acres of property near Pinjarra and improve its facilities.³⁴³ Furthermore, the Commonwealth and State governments agreed to provide funding for each child sheltered in the cottage homes. By 1932, the Farm School was receiving financial aid from the Commonwealth, State and British Governments. In 1937 the agency established a second Farm School in New South Wales which accommodated a total of 545 children between its creation and 1959. After World War II, the Fairbridge schools received fewer children every year that passed. The rapidly changing times had made child migration schemes anachronistic. Fairbridge persisted longer than other child migration bodies, but the end came in 1973.³⁴⁴ Fairbridge Society sent a total of 2,301 child migrants in the period 1912 to 1969. In the table it can be noticed that the majority of

³³⁸ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 48.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁴⁰ Barry M. Coldrey, "Good british stock - Child and Youth Migration to Australia," *National Archives of Australia* (August 1999): 74.

³⁴¹ Geoffrey Sherington and Chris Jeffery, "Out of Africa," in *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration* (Oxon, UK: Woburn Press, 1998): 1-44.

³⁴² Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 48.

³⁴³ Barry M. Coldrey, "Good british stock - Child and Youth Migration to Australia," 75.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

children were sent in the pre-war stage (1,471 pre-war and 830 post-war). Of these, the biggest group was sent to Western Australia, particularly in the pre-war period (1,175).

<i>Pinjarra (WA)</i>	
1912 - 39	1175
1949 - 60	346
<i>Sub-Total</i>	1521
<i>Northcote (VIC)</i>	
1937 - 39	161
1948 - 58	112
<i>Sub-Total</i>	273
<i>Molong (NSW)</i>	
1938 - 39	135
1947 - 60	364
<i>Sub-Total</i>	499
<i>Tresca (TAS)</i>	
1952 - 54	8
Total	2301

Table 1. Numbers of Fairbridge child migrants³⁴⁵

Although it is difficult to give a precise estimate of the number of child migrants sent to Australia, it is believed that between 6,000 and 7,500 children were sent to Australia throughout the 20th century. Of these, between 3,000 and 3,500 children migrated in the pre-World War II period and approximately the same amount in the post-war phase.

4.2.5 Consequences of migration on children

Oftentimes, child migrants were confronted with improper and unsafe treatment in non-government or government institutions in Australia. In fact, various inquiries reported on the care of children by the voluntary agencies. The UK House of Commons Health Committee noted that: “These children were placed in large, often isolated, institutions and were often subjected to harsh, sometimes intentionally brutal, regimes of work and discipline, unmodified by any real nurturing or encouragement. The institutions were inadequately supervised,

³⁴⁵ Geoffrey Sherington and Chris Jeffery, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration* (Oxon, UK: Woburn Press, 1998): 264-266.

monitored and inspected”.³⁴⁶ Moreover, the Interim Report of the Western Australian Select Committee into Child Migration and the Closed Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions reported significant levels of child abuse in these institutions. The evidence presented by the various reports shows that children suffered from abuse over many years. Broadly speaking there were three main categories of assault which had diverse facets: sexual, physical, and psychological.

Sexual assault

The accounts of sexual abuse are undeniably the most serious and distressing practices of criminal abuse perpetrated against child migrants in the care of institutions. Time and again, children had to sustain the humiliation and hardship of sexual assault combined with the intense pain associated with rape and sexual penetration. Sexual abuse was committed by a number of individuals including priests which superseded the institutions, members of families who hosted the children during holidays or for work, employees who worked for the organizations, regular visitors to the establishments, and at times also by other child migrants.³⁴⁷ Indeed, severity, violence, physical abuse and sexual assault were carried out on a continuum.³⁴⁸ The endurance of such abuses had a great impact on a child’s life, as he/she could develop issues of lack of trust, depression, anxiety, and the inability to maintain personal long-lasting relationships. In particular, a worrisome impact was that some of these abused children may become themselves molesters as adults.

It is important to recognize that regular sexual assaults which involved child migrants took place only in a small number of organizations, as noted by the UK Health Committee. In fact, of the 207 submissions received from singular child migrants, around two-thirds were from the Christian Brothers institutions in Western Australia – Bindoon, Castledare, Colntarf, and Tardun.³⁴⁹ The details of sexual abuses at these institutions are horrendous, amplifying the Health Committee’s depiction of “quite exceptional depravity”.³⁵⁰ The stories of former child

³⁴⁶ House of Commons, Health Committee, *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants*, HC 755, Session 1997-98, ‘Background’, 13.

³⁴⁷ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 72.

³⁴⁸ Barry M. Coldrey, "A Mixture of Caring and Corruption: Church Orphanages and Industrial Schools," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 89, no. 353 (2000): 9.

³⁴⁹ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 76.

³⁵⁰ House of Commons, Health Committee, *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants*, 51.

migrants located in Western Australia provide a narrative of predatory behaviour of the Brothers. Evidence has shown that boys were abused in various ways for the sexual gratification of the workers in the institution, they were terrified in bed at night as the Brothers would take them and bring them to their own rooms, they were considered as ‘pets’ being repeatedly pushed into depraved acts.³⁵¹ For example, in his deposition, a former child resident stated that he was “a particular favourite of some Christian Brothers at Tardun who competed as to who could rape him 100 times first”, and he recalled of being in terrible pain, bleeding, and bewildered.³⁵² Sadly, many children experienced a sense of powerlessness as they felt like they had nobody to turn to.

Physical assault

In contrast to sexual abuse, criminal physical assault appears to have been much more widespread in Australian childcare institutions. Indeed, beatings were prevalent. Certainly, these types of punishment were more common and accepted than they are now; nonetheless, at times they were far more exaggerated and brutal than a simple disciplinary method. It seems that in some establishments, these sadistic punishments were even encouraged, as it was believed that systemic beatings would subjugate child migrants. There are several testimonies of children being excessively beaten. For instance, a woman’s account describes the cruel treatment she experienced as a child migrant:

“I felt the strap come down across my body. It was the most painful thing I had ever experienced. She continued flogging me, ranting and raving, until I could take no more (...) she caught me and dragged me back to my bed, kicking and screaming, where she proceeded to strip me, tearing and ripping at my nighties, exposing my naked body...”.³⁵³

At times the punishments were so extreme that children had long-lasting adverse secondary effects. For example, a boy recalled that a nun caused him injury on one occasion “by hitting me over the head with a steel potato masher, she split my head open, I still have the scar. I suffer from epilepsy and my doctor has put forward the possibility that it was caused by this

³⁵¹ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 76.

³⁵² House of Commons, Health Committee, *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants*, 51.

³⁵³ Marilyn Rock, "Child migration schemes to Australia: a dark and hidden chapter of Australia's history revealed," *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, The 38, no. 2 (2003): 154.

particular trauma”.³⁵⁴ Moreover, children endured further punishments whenever they attempted to run away from the establishments in which they resided.

Psychological abuse

This specific type of abuse is also related to the issue of depersonalisation, as children felt denigrated and embarrassed by being belittled for their backgrounds and status. It is a widely held view that the destruction of their self-esteem was a deliberate policy with phrases such as the ones listed here being constantly repeated: “we were from the gutter and that is where we belonged and where we would end up”; “You’re no good. You will never be any good. You will amount to nothing...” and further derogatory expressions such as “sons of whores” or “scum of the English Empire”.³⁵⁵ These statements and the humiliations suffered by child migrants increased their feeling of worthlessness and tended to permanently damage their self-images. Furthermore, any form of contact with their previous lives was prevented with justification of providing them with a ‘new start’. Hence, letters from relatives or friend in Britain were destroyed or concealed from children determining in this way a process of depersonalization which crushed their individual identities.³⁵⁶ This practice was entrenched by names being changed or by referring to children by numbers: “Our clothes were numbered, and we were not a name just a number. Any names we were given were terrible racist taunts”.³⁵⁷ Additionally, brothers and sisters tended to be separated in various institutions due to the rigid separation of sexes that occurred within the establishments, causing substantial distress at being not able to maintain such relationships. As consequence, children felt a sense of abandonment which was aggravated by constant derisions and by being told that their families did not want them. Based on this evidence, the UK Health Committee commented that:

“the level of deception, the deliberate giving of wrong information or withholding of information, the policies of separating siblings, all make it very hard to accept that everything was done simply for the benefit of the children. It indicates an abuse of power and a disregard for the feelings of the mothers and children, and it was certainly felt as such by many former child migrants”.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁴ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 81.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

³⁵⁷ Kathleen Daly, “Institutions for Children and Memories of Institutional Life,” in *Redressing Institutional Abuse of Children* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2014): 63.

³⁵⁸ House of Commons, Health Committee, *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants*, 45.

On top of this, several children reported that they learned to not stand out amongst others in order to avoid random beatings or denigrations. Such denial of existence constituted in its own way psychological abuse and deepened the child's depersonalisation. The Forde Commission of Inquiry noted that a particularly harmful practice for children's self-esteem was that of regarding bed-wetting as a misbehaviour requiring physical punishment or public humiliation.³⁵⁹ There were systematic patterns of children who wet their beds being forced to smell their wet sheets, made to stand in front of other residents while they were eating, or to go to school without being able to wash beforehand.³⁶⁰ These practices increased the children's anxiety at night time resulting in a vicious cycle of bed-wetting and angst.

³⁵⁹ Leneen Forde, "Commissions of Inquiry Order (no.1) 1998," *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950* (Brisbane, Australia: Parliament House, 31 May 1999): 76.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Chapter V: Legal Framework on migration and child migration

Until the beginning of the 20th century there were hardly any policies on child migration between two or more states. Each state had its own legislative framework on migration which regulated the arrivals and departures of people from the territory and coordinated the protection of minors originating from their country. For instance, the Italian government promulgated several laws on the protection of child labourers within its borders in the 19th century, while stipulating solely at the beginning of the 20th century an agreement with another country (i.e., France). On the other hand, the British government established several laws on the emigration of children in the 20th century, but these were focused entirely on the emigration to its colonies (e.g., Australia), while omitting further destinations. Only in the aftermath of World War I, under the guidance of the League of Nations, which was created in 1919, European governments started to create a multi-governance normative agenda which could regulate inter- and intra-territorial movements on various levels. Moreover, various countries did not have any immigration or emigration policies up until they were admitted to the European Community which required such policies. In fact, throughout the years, states began to focus their attention on the education of migrants, the protection of vulnerable categories, and on the creation of legislative means for their independence. With the creation of the European international community, regulations became more balanced across countries, generating a shared focus for migration in the whole continent. However, a scarcity in specific legislations on the protection and supervision of child migrants has been noted in this research. Oftentimes, governments issued a general rule on migration and movement of people with no regards to their age or gender. In particular, international migration is usually envisioned as an activity of adults and families, who move across borders in search of employment, safety and family reunification. The recognition of children as individual international migrants comes typically as an afterthought among migration experts. Inasmuch as attention is focused on the issues of “vulnerable groups” of migrants, it has a tendency to be directed to the necessities of the disabled, the elderly or, most often than not, “women-and-children” as a single and inseparable entity.³⁶¹ Alarmingly, all child migrants lack in legal capacity and special protection needs.

³⁶¹ Jacqueline Bhabha, "More than Their Share of Sorrows: International Migration Law and the Rights of Children," *Immigration and Nationality Law Review* 24 (2003): 301.

Thus, it is imperative that policy makers and authorities take into account the position of young migrants independently.

5.1 Italo-French bilateral agreement on child labourers

As already mentioned in a previous chapter, the Italian government emanated several regulations on the matter of child labourers and juvenile migrants. However, these pieces of legislation were principally centred on the Italian territory. Only in 1912, the authorities acknowledged the lack of an international agreement for the protection of the Italian children also abroad. With the promulgation of the Law n.214 on the protection of minors, the Italian and French governments aspired to ensure, through specific guarantees, the protection of Italian child labourers who worked in France and, vice versa, French working children who worked in Italy.³⁶²

Article 2 of the law stipulates that both Italian and French children abroad must obtain a work admission booklet, as required by the laws emanated in November 1892 and in November 1907, by submitting to the municipal authorities a certificate which was released by the competent consul. Moreover, the certificate had to be endorsed by the mayor of the city in which they worked, bearing the municipal stamp.³⁶³ To receive the certificate, the minor had to appear before the consul with his/her father, or mother, or legal guardian, and show the admission booklet obtained in his/her country of origin. Article 2 of the law promulgated in 1907 states that underage girls and children up to the age of 15 years, who do not possess a booklet and a medical certificate proving that they are healthy and fit for the work to which they are assigned to, may not be admitted to the jobs listed in the law.³⁶⁴ Particularly, children are banned from working in industrial plants, building construction and non-underground work in quarries, mines and tunnels whenever they do not comply do the prescribed procedures.³⁶⁵

³⁶² “Legge n. 214 con la quale viene data esecuzione all'accordo italo-francese per la protezione dei giovani operai italiani in Francia e dei giovani operai francesi in Italia,” *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* 82 (Rome, April 1912).

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ “R. decreto n. 818 che approva l'unito testo unico di legge sul lavoro delle donne e dei fanciulli,” *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* 12 (Rome, January 1908).

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

Furthermore, Article 8 provides that

“Employment in unhealthy and dangerous industries is regulated by the law of the country where the work is carried out. As far as glass and crystal factories are concerned, the dangerous and unhealthy work forbidden to children in Italy on the date of the signing of this agreement will be forbidden to children in France too. But because of the differences between French and Italian law on the age limits to which legal protection extends, the decrees issued in each of the two countries will specify the ages at which the said work must be prohibited”.³⁶⁶

Finally, Article 9 recommends the work committees to ensure that the child labourers residing outside the familiar home are treated fairly and humanely, and that hygiene and decency are respected in their regard. If the conditions of nourishment, clothing or accommodation are found to be unsatisfactory, and in the event of abuse or ill treatment, the committees should report the facts to the local authorities, who should swiftly take action according to the circumstances.³⁶⁷

5.2 Legislations between the United Kingdom and its colonies

5.2.1 Empire Settlement Act 1922

Presented to the House of Commons and ratified by the Prime Ministers’ Conference in 1921, the Empire Settlement Act was a piece of legislation that legitimized the Secretary of State and the Dominion Governments to establish and fund programs for assisted emigration.³⁶⁸ Specifically, it was designed to promote the resettlement of farm labourers, housemaids and juvenile migrants throughout the Empire. The financing of such schemes occurred under the supervision of the Treasury which prohibited the Government’s financial contributions to be more than half of the total expenses of the project.³⁶⁹ The initial capital to be allocated for the functioning of the emigration schemes by the United Kingdom Government in 1922 could not be superior to £1,500,000 or £3,000,000 in the following years.³⁷⁰ These loans and grants were

³⁶⁶ “Legge n. 214 con la quale viene data esecuzione all'accordo italo-francese per la protezione dei giovani operai italiani in Francia e dei giovani operai francesi in Italia”.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Gordon Lynch, “‘The Risk Involved is Inappreciable... and the Gain Exceptional’: Child Migration to Australia and Empire Settlement Policy, 1913–1939,” in *UK Child Migration to Australia, 1945–1970 A Study in Policy Failure* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021): 26

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

to subsidise the journeys, land settlement and training courses in cooperation with the foreign governments or with the public and private organizations in the UK and in the dominions.³⁷¹ The Act provided financing for organisations such as the Salvation Army, children’s and women’s migration societies, and brought about several new programmes, especially in Australia.³⁷² In spite of the delayed initial effects, the number of assisted passages which took place under the Act grew rapidly (*Figure 1*), reaching the tens of thousands by mid-1920s and the Empire Settlement Act became the primary legislative mechanism through which the British government continued supporting child migration up until the 1970s.

	Assisted passages granted in October 1923.	Total assisted passages granted.			Total Departures.	
		1922	Jan.-Oct. 1923.	Departures in Oct. 1923.	1922.	Jan.-Oct. 1923.
Assisted Passage Schemes						
To Australia	2,123	7,058	23,659	2,591	6,118	19,952
To New Zealand	794	1,133	5,409	512	694	4,365
To Canada						
Dominion of Canada	495		3,443	478		3,344
Province of Ontario	54		1,681	67		1,309
Minor Schemes	113		1,531	113		1,468
Total	3,579	8,191	35,723	3,761	6,812	30,438

*Figure 1. Numbers of assisted passages granted during October 1923 and the total number of such passages granted from the inception of these schemes.*³⁷³

In fact, renewed every 15 years, the regulation remained on the statute book until 1972.³⁷⁴ In all, between 1922 and 1936, 405,230 people migrated overseas under the auspices of the Empire Settlement Act: 46% to Canada, over 42% to Australia and 11% to New Zealand.³⁷⁵

³⁷¹ Marjory Harper, “‘Abroad Was Where It All Happened’: Inter-war and Post-war Sponsored Migration to the Commonwealth,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 50, no.2 (2022): 320.

³⁷² *Ibid.*

³⁷³ Wm. C. Noxon, “Empire Settlement,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 72, no.3713 (January 18, 1924): 144.

³⁷⁴ Marjory Harper, “‘Abroad Was Where It All Happened’: Inter-war and Post-war Sponsored Migration to the Commonwealth,” 320.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

5.2.2 Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946

In August 1946, a new legislation was introduced at the Premier's Conference in the United Kingdom by the Minister of Immigration, Arthur Calwell. The Bill appointed the Commonwealth Minister of Immigration as the legal guardian of all child migrants which were sent to Australia unaccompanied by their parents.³⁷⁶ In particular, it placed all child evacuees and juvenile migrants under the Minister's guardianship until they reached the age of 21. Clause 6 of the Act stated that:

“The Minister shall be the guardian of the person, and of the estate in Australia, of:

(a) every evacuee child; and

(b) every immigrant child who arrives in Australia after the commencement of this Act, to the exclusion of the father and mother and every other guardian of the child, and shall have, as guardian, the same rights, powers, duties, obligations and liabilities as a natural guardian of the child would have, until the child reaches the age of twenty-one years or leaves Australia permanently, or until the provisions of this Act cease to apply to and in relation to the child, whichever first happens”.³⁷⁷

Moreover, the Minister was legitimized to delegate his powers and liabilities as a legal guardian to State officials, such as State Child Welfare departments, and to place the children under the care of previously approved organizations. Subsection 5(1) of the Act enabled the Minister to entrust with his control:

“...any officer or authority of the Commonwealth or of any State or Territory of the Commonwealth all or any of his powers and functions under this Act (except this power of delegation) so that the delegated powers and functions may be exercised by the delegate with respect to the matters or class of matters, or the child or class of children, specified in the instrument of delegation”.³⁷⁸

Arrangements were made with the local voluntary organizations to take the

³⁷⁶ Gordon Lynch, “,” in *UK Child Migration to Australia, 1945–1970 A Study in Policy Failure* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021): 142.

³⁷⁷ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 27.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

responsibility for the safeguard and welfare of the children placed under their care.³⁷⁹

When the powers of the Commonwealth's Minister for Immigration were accredited to the Western Australian Under Secretary for Lands and Immigration in 1947, specific arrangements for the care of migrant children were taken by the custodians (i.e., the receiving agencies) and the guardian. The terms and conditions encouraged each custodian to

“(1) bear all responsibility for the care and welfare of the children (2) not remove them from the place specified without consent, and (3) in all things comply with the provisions on its part relating to such children and contained in the Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946 (...) and the regulations made thereunder and amendments thereto”.³⁸⁰

Simultaneously, the Child Welfare Department established its control and supervision over child migrants, assisting in such manner the Lands and Immigration Department in fulfilling its responsibilities.

5.2.3 Children Act 1948

With the promulgation of the Children Act in 1948, the British Secretary of State gained the legal power to supervise the arrangements for the emigration of children operated by voluntary organizations. In fact, this legislation gave provision for the care of those children who did not have parents, or whose parents were considered ill-equipped or unable to take care of them. Under the Act, a local authority could obtain or assist in procuring the emigration of children with the consent of the Secretary of State. Moreover, the Secretary of State would not give his consent unless the emigration would solely benefit the child and that satisfactory arrangements had been or would have been made for the child's reception and well-being in the country of arrival.³⁸¹ Furthermore, the parent or the legal guardian of the child had to be consulted beforehand or, in the case in which it was not possible to consult them, the child itself had to give his/her consent to emigration.³⁸² In the latter case, where the child was too young to

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on child migration*, 28.

³⁸¹ Parliament of the United Kingdom, “Children Act,” 5 July 1948.

³⁸² Ibid.

express a definite opinion on the matter, the Secretary of State could give consent to his/her emigration even though the child could be unable to consent. In addition, the expatriation was granted in any case where the child was accompanied by a parent, guardian or relative, or the purpose of the emigration was to reunite with them.³⁸³

5.3 The creation of a shared normative agenda

In the past, no specific international regulation was established to deal with refugees, and it was not required by states as well. Broadly speaking, nations would warmly welcome any addition to their population of further healthy and hardworking individuals coming from abroad.³⁸⁴ Solely after the end of World War I the issue started to be addressed differently. On the one hand, because of the overpopulation in the more developed countries; and, on the other hand, due to the economic crisis which was caused by the destruction of war. Hence, international cooperation and organization have been of the essence to deal with the resettlement and movement of thousands of people who have been suddenly made homeless.³⁸⁵ In this way, the League of Nations (LoN) has been of service to numerous national and international institutions.

The first world war (1914-1918), its preliminaries (i.e., the Balkan Wars) and its aftermath (i.e., the wars in the Caucasus, and the Greco-Turkish War) caused considerable disorders in the States involved.³⁸⁶ The first intervention of the League was in the assistance of the millions of emigrants from Russia who were escaping from the Soviet Revolution. Refugees were dispersed around several countries in Europe, even though the largest and most poverty-stricken groups overcrowded Constantinople and Eastern Europe.³⁸⁷ Moreover, due to the recently increased economic crisis in both new and old states, the influx of people created a serious issue. The refugees were bound to live in miserable conditions, their lack of recognizable identification papers being an added impediment both to integration and resettlement.³⁸⁸ By the end of 1920, numerous charitable organizations acknowledged the fact that the task of assisting refugees was beyond their capacities. Nonetheless, by the terms of

³⁸³ Parliament of the United Kingdom, "Children Act."

³⁸⁴ Norman Bentwich, "The League of Nations and Refugees," *British Yearbook of International Law* 16 (1935): 115.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Gilbert Jaeger, "On the history of the international protection of refugees," *International Review of the Red Cross* 83, no. 843 (2001): 727.

³⁸⁷ Norman Bentwich, "The League of Nations and Refugees," 115.

³⁸⁸ Atle Grahl-Madsen, "The League of Nations and the refugees," in *The Land Beyond* (Brill Nijhoff, 2001): 126.

Article 25 of the Covenant of the League, “the Members of the League agree to encourage and promote the establishment and co-operation of duly authorised voluntary national Red Cross organisations having as purposes the improvement of health, the prevention of disease and the mitigation of suffering throughout the world”.³⁸⁹ Thus, on 26 February 1921, Gustav Ador, President of the International Red Cross Society (ICRC), finding itself not able to handle the task of supervising the multitude of refugees, appealed to the Council of the LoN, asking for support to cope with the juridical and material conditions of the people, on the premise that the League was “the only supernational political authority capable of solving a problem which is beyond the power of exclusively humanitarian organizations”.³⁹⁰ Already six days later, the Council adopted its first resolution on the matter of refugees. From that moment on, the refugee issue remained on the Council’s and Assembly’s agenda throughout the lifespan of the League of Nations.³⁹¹

With regard to migrants, the League finally focused its attention specifically on children and women with the publication of the International Convention for the suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children on September 30, 1921. The importance of setting up central national authorities was advocated by establishing a bureaucratic unit composed by states’ representatives, with a procedure of annual reports to be compiled and sent periodically to all governments.³⁹² Moreover, a system of supervision among all bodies was suggested. Hence, a permanent body was founded, the Advisory Committee on Traffic in Women and Children, which consisted of representatives of nine countries³⁹³ and of international non-governmental organizations. These institutions were given the official status of “assessors”.³⁹⁴ This system of social control, to which the countries that ratified the convention abided to, was relatively successful as far as obtaining the requested information.³⁹⁵ The 1921 Convention aimed at ensuring the protection of women and children from sexual exploitation and trafficking on an

³⁸⁹ “The Covenant of the League of Nations,” *The American Journal of International Law* 15, no.1 (January 1921): 12-13.

³⁹⁰ Louise W. Holborn, “The league of nations and the refugee problem,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 203, no. 1 (1939): 124.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

³⁹² Nitza Berkovitch, ““For the protection of Women and Children’: The Interwar Era Discourse on Women,” in *From Motherhood to Citizenship: Women's Rights and International Organizations* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999): 75.

³⁹³ *Denmark, France, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Poland, Romania, Spain, and Uruguay.*

³⁹⁴ Nitza Berkovitch, ““For the protection of Women and Children’: The Interwar Era Discourse on Women,” 75.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

international level. It required to punish anyone who hired, abducted, or enticed for immoral purposes any woman under the age of twenty-one or children of either sex.³⁹⁶ In fact, Article 6 states that

“The High Contracting Parties agree, in case they have not already taken legislative or administrative measures regarding licensing and supervision of employment agencies and offices, to prescribe such regulations as are required to ensure the protection of women and children seeking employment in another country”.³⁹⁷

Moreover, specifically regarding the protection of child migrants and women, Article 7 stipulates that the signatory states

“Undertake in connection with immigration and emigration to adopt such administrative and legislative measures as are required to check the traffic in women and children. In particular, they undertake to make such regulations as are required for the protection of women and children travelling on emigrant ships, not only as the points of departure and arrival, but also during the journey; and to arrange for the exhibition, in railway stations and in ports, of notices warning women and children of the danger of the traffic and indicating the places where they can obtain accommodation and assistance”.³⁹⁸

5.3.1 Nansen passport

On 27 June 1921 the Council decided to authorize the President to appoint a High Commissioner for Russian Refugees.³⁹⁹ Fridtjof Nansen, a Norwegian statesman and head of the Norwegian delegation in the Assembly of the League, was named High Commissioner for Russian Refugees (HCRR) after having already served the League as High Commissioner for the repatriation of prisoners of war in 1920. As a matter of fact, because of his hard work, nearly half a million of prisoners of war had been returned to their homelands by autumn of

³⁹⁶ Jacqueline Bhabha, "More than Their Share of Sorrows: International Migration Law and the Rights of Children," *Immigration and Nationality Law Review* 24 (2003): 256.

³⁹⁷ "International Conventions for the Suppression in Traffic of Women and Children," League of Nations (Geneva, September 1921).

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Louise W. Holborn, "The league of nations and the refugee problem," 127.

1922.⁴⁰⁰ As the HCRR, Nansen assumed the responsibility to define the legal status of refugees and coordinate their employment in host countries or their repatriation. His mandate was later expanded to further groups of refugees, such as Turkish, Armenian, Assyrian, Assyro-Chaldean people.⁴⁰¹ In this way, he served hundreds of thousands of refugees enhancing the procedures which came to be the basis of the past and present international administration for the protection of refugees: resettlement, voluntary repatriation, or local integration.⁴⁰² One of the main issues for these displaced persons was that they were deprived of their nationality and of their passports. The legal aspect of this problem was that they had to be provided with documents of identity in order to establish “some agreement as to the law which should govern their civil status, and to secure them some form of protection in the countries in which they were living”.⁴⁰³ Thus, Nansen aimed at obtaining the consent of the member states of the LoN to create an international passport which could give expatriates the same freedom of movement and level of protection as the ones enjoyed by nationals of a state. In 1922, he summoned an international conference where he achieved to adopt an identity certificate which was approved by the Council of the League.⁴⁰⁴ The so-called “Nansen passport”, or certificate, was valid for one year, just enough time to grant freedom of movement from one country to another, but without the possibility of returning to the country of issue unless there was a specific agreement.⁴⁰⁵ This arrangement was eventually acceded to by 53 States.⁴⁰⁶ This kind of international passport gave rise to the legal existence of refugees, who could not be forgotten anymore by governments and civil servants.⁴⁰⁷ Indeed, the displaced person who became de facto stateless and having neither protection nor representation from his home country, was provided with both by the High Commissioner for Refugees.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁰ Vincent Chetail, "Fridtjof Nansen and the International Protection of Refugees: An Introduction," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2003): 3.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Norman Bentwich, "The League of Nations and Refugees," 116.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Atle Grahl-Madsen, "The League of Nations and the refugees," 126.

⁴⁰⁷ Vincent Chetail, "Fridtjof Nansen and the International Protection of Refugees: An Introduction," 4.

⁴⁰⁸ Louise W. Holborn, "The League of Nations and the Refugee Problem," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 203, no. 1 (May 1939): 126.



Figure 1. Nansen passport given to a 15-year-old boy in 1938.⁴⁰⁹

5.4 Children as an object of international relations

In September 1924, the General Assembly of the League of Nations adopted unanimously a Declaration of Children's Rights. This regulation was the first of its kind and the direct predecessor of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989. Moreover, the Secretariat of the League founded a Child Welfare Committee consisting of two dozen members, half of them national delegates and half of them representing voluntary associations.⁴¹⁰ The Committee and the Declaration characterized the passing of social assistance for childhood into an official goal of international relations.

⁴⁰⁹ Picture taken by Marta Galimberti of the personal documents of her grandfather.

⁴¹⁰ Dominique Marshall, "The construction of children as an object of international relations: The declaration of children's rights and the child welfare committee of league of nations, 1900-1924," *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 7 (1999): 103.

5.4.1 Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Declaration of Geneva)

In 1919, the founding members of the League of Nations vowed to protect children and to "endeavour to secure and maintain fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women and children".⁴¹¹ The first reference to children in the Assembly of the League came due to the concerns related to the war. During the first ever session of the General Assembly in 1920, the League was requested to make as one of its principal interests the child welfare for victims of war. Moreover, in the aftermath of the First World War, the League was confronted with another demand which was concerned with long lasting measures of child protection for all children equally. On a similar note, in 1919, Eglantyne Jebb had already launched a movement for the relief of war-children, which was called "Save the Children Fund" (SCF). Inasmuch as every country's participation as well as everybody's goodwill were needed, the SCF, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Swiss Committee of Child Welfare came together to establish the Save the Children International Union (SCIU) on January 6, 1920.⁴¹² During its first working years, when its activities were almost entirely based on relief actions, the delegates of the ICRC generally took charge of the distribution of relief material. Furthermore, Miss Jebb was certain that solely adequate childhood protection and education could ensure a better future for the whole world. In April 1921, the Save the Children International Union, which was devoted to "œuvres de secours aux enfants éprouvés par la guerre" (i.e., relief works for children affected by war), demanded a division of the Secretariat of the League of Nations to take care of child protection.⁴¹³ On May 17, 1923, the Declaration of Geneva was promulgated by the Council of the SCIU and the final draft in five brief clauses was adopted. Around one year later, on September 26, 1924, the Declaration was solemnly approved by the Assemble of the LoN as the League of Nations' Charter on Child Welfare.⁴¹⁴ With the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child the League had gone one step further than the Treaty of Versailles, which had mentioned the protection of the young in its Preamble. In fact, the Declaration states that men and women of all nations recognize that "mankind owes to the Child the best it has to give".⁴¹⁵ In addition, as asserted by Miss Jebb, if

⁴¹¹ "The Covenant of the League of Nations," 12.

⁴¹² Andrée Morier, "The Declaration of the Rights of the Child," *International Review of the Red Cross* 26 (May 1963): 228.

⁴¹³ Dominique Marshall, "The construction of children as an object of international relations: The declaration of children's rights and the child welfare committee of league of nations, 1900-1924," 108.

⁴¹⁴ Andrée Morier, "The Declaration of the Rights of the Child," 229.

⁴¹⁵ Dominique Marshall, "The construction of children as an object of international relations: The declaration of children's rights and the child welfare committee of league of nations, 1900-1924," 129.

children grow up mentally, morally and physically deprived, “they are not only miserable themselves, they will spread misery around them, and it is impossible to say where the influence of this misery will end”.⁴¹⁶ The Charter sought to summarize the needs of children which should be met at any cost, even during severe monetary pressure.⁴¹⁷

The Declaration was the first international human rights declaration to be embraced by an inter-governmental body, being published nearly a quarter of a century prior to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). As illustrated hereafter, two of the principles listed in the 1924 text define the rights relevant to child migrants. On the one hand, Article 3 urges to first and foremost support and assist children in a period of turmoil. On the other hand, Article 4 is concerned with the long-standing worry about child exploitation and trafficking.

Declaration of Geneva

“By the Present Declaration of the Rights of the Child, commonly known as the "Declaration of Geneva", men and women of all nations, recognising that all Mankind owes to the Child the best that it has to give, declare and accept as their duty that, beyond and above all considerations of race, nationality or creed:

- i. THE CHILD must be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually.
- ii. THE CHILD that is hungry must be fed; the child that is sick must be nursed; the child that is backward must be helped; the delinquent child must be reclaimed; and the orphan and the waif must be sheltered and succoured.
- iii. THE CHILD must be the first to receive relief in times of distress.
- iv. THE CHILD must be put in a position to earn a livelihood and must be protected against every form of exploitation.
- v. THE CHILD must be brought up in the conscience that its talents must be devoted to the service of his fellow-men.”⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ Philip E. Veerman, “Declarations and Conventions: Past and Present,” in *The Rights of the Child and the Changing Image of Childhood* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1992): 157.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Dominique Marshall, "The construction of children as an object of international relations: The declaration of children's rights and the child welfare committee of league of nations, 1900-1924," 1209.

5.5 International cooperation from the 1930s on

In the 1930s, with the breakdown of the League of Nations, the emergence of belligerent authoritarian regimes in Italy and Germany, and the dawning of World War II, international relations and multi-governance agendas received a strong backlash in Europe. In fact, adherence to international law deteriorated due to the aggressive strategies of the newly founded dictatorships. The war itself produced a drastic change in the agenda of world politics. Hence, legislations on migration and on the protection of children came to a halt for the whole duration of the World War. Solely in the aftermath of the global war, new international institutions with long-term plans were brought into being to regulate the newly changed international scene with the goal of a more legitimate, secure and peaceful world.

Due to the inadequacies of the League of Nations, from legislative provisions and a lack of satisfactory authority to unacceptable peacekeeping tasks with the enhancement of the Treaty of Versailles, it was in no condition to prevent the catastrophes of the Second World War and its aftermath. Moreover, it was never able to bind all great powers in the Permanent Council to take responsibility for world peace.⁴¹⁹ As the war was coming to an end in 1945, representatives of fifty countries congregated at the founding Conference of the United Nations in San Francisco, California from 25 April to 26 June 1945.⁴²⁰ In those two months, the authorities drafted and later on signed the UN Charter, which established a new international organization, the United Nations, which would maintain international peace and security, grant humanitarian assistance to those in need, safeguard human rights, and advocate international law.⁴²¹ Following the official dissolution of the League of Nations on 18 April 1946, the UN assumed the control of its social and economic working panels. Furthermore, special agreements were made with the already existing specialized agencies, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO). ‘First-aid’ institutions, like UNICEF and the Economic Commission for Europe, were also newly created.⁴²² The UN Human Rights Commission was assigned the creation of an International Bill of Human Rights independent from the Charter. Moreover, in 1950, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was

⁴¹⁹ Sven Bernhard Gareis, “The United Nations System,” in *The United Nations: an Introduction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012): 5.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴²¹ “History of the United Nations,” United Nations, accessed August 8, 2022, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un>.

⁴²² Sven Bernhard Gareis, “The United Nations System,” 8.

established to protect and supervise the governance of Europe's refugees in the aftermath of the Second World War. It had the function of monitoring the newly constructed 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, which defined who a refugee is and the rights to which he/she would be entitled.⁴²³

5.5.1 International Labour Organization (ILO)

The International Labour Organization (ILO) was created in 1919 as a part of the Treaty of Versailles to bring together governments, employers, unions, and workers to seek social justice and better working conditions.⁴²⁴ In the same year, the drafting of the Constitution of the ILO resulted in a tripartite organization, the only one of its kind. Moreover, the prime movers for the creation of such organization arose from security, humanitarian, political and economic considerations.⁴²⁵ There was also increasing awareness of a global economic interdependence and need for cooperation to achieve equitable working conditions in all countries competing for markets.⁴²⁶ In fact, the fields for improvement listed in the Preamble of the Constitution are still of utmost relevance nowadays, including the

“regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children, young persons and women”.⁴²⁷

In the following two years, nine International Labour Conventions and ten Recommendations were adopted by the ILO, covering key issues such as minimum age and night work for young persons.⁴²⁸ The former stipulated that “children under the age of fourteen years shall not be employed or work in any public or private industrial undertaking, or in any branch thereof”.⁴²⁹

⁴²³ Alexander Betts and Lena Kainz, “The history of global migration governance,” Working Paper Series no.122 (Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre, July 2017): 2.

⁴²⁴ “History of the ILO,” International Labour Organization, accessed August 14, 2022, <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/history/lang--en/index.htm>.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ International Labour Organization (ILO), *Constitution of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)*, 1 April 1919.

⁴²⁸ “History of the ILO,” International Labour Organization, accessed August 14, 2022.

⁴²⁹ International Labour Organization (ILO), *Minimum Age (Industry) Convention* (no.5), 1919.

While the latter articulated “young persons under eighteen years of age shall not be employed during the night in any public or private industrial undertaking, or in any branch thereof”.⁴³⁰

In 1946, the International Labour Organization became a specialized agency of the recently established United Nations. Its focus shifted more towards the safeguard of child workers and on strengthening the regulations on child labour. In 1973, the comprehensive Minimum Age Convention was established, gathering all former Recommendations and Convention on specific areas of interest (e.g., minimum age in industries, agriculture, or underground work). This fundamental document sets the general minimum age for admission to employment or work at 15 years (i.e., “age of completion of compulsory schooling”) and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 (i.e., a work which is “likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons”).⁴³¹ It provides for the possibility of lowering the minimum age at 14 where the Member’s economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed.⁴³² In 1999, a further Convention was founded which addressed the worst forms of child labour. This legislation urges ratifying states to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including “all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict”; child prostitution and pornography; using children for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs; and, “work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children”.⁴³³ Furthermore, the Convention requires the states to “provide the necessary and appropriate direct assistance for the removal of children from the worst forms of child labour and for their rehabilitation and social integration”.⁴³⁴

5.5.2 International Organization for Migration (IOM)

In the aftermath of World War II, the United Nations founded a temporary specialized agency, the International Refugee Organization (IRO), whose main functions were “the repatriation; the identification, registration and classification; the care and assistance; the legal and political protection; the transport; and the re-settlement and re-establishment, in countries able and

⁴³⁰ International Labour Organization (ILO), *Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention* (no.6), 1919.

⁴³¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), *Minimum Age Convention* (no. 138), 1973.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ International Labour Organization (ILO), *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention* (no. 182), 1999.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

willing to receive them”, of refugees and displaced persons in Europe.⁴³⁵ Until 1952, the legal protection of refugees was entrusted to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, but there were no further agencies freely available to take over its responsibilities. Moreover, Europe was facing an overpopulation crisis with a large number of unemployed people wishing to emigrate but who were unable to do so by their own resources.⁴³⁶ Hence, Western countries decided to create an international body, outside of the United Nations framework, which was established in Brussels in December 1951.⁴³⁷ The organization had to be based on the principle of free movement of persons, that is, “which respected the right for everyone to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their own country; and accepted that refugees and displaced persons should be free to decide whether they wanted to be repatriated or resettled in a third country”.⁴³⁸ On 5 December 1951, the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME) was set up by the Migration Conference of Brussels, and started its activities in February 1952. The purpose of the Committee was to “make arrangements for the transport of migrants for whom existing facilities are inadequate and who could not otherwise be moved from certain European countries having surplus population to countries overseas which offer opportunities for orderly immigration, consistent with the policies of the countries concerned”.⁴³⁹ Moreover, the founders of the Committee recognized that the need of migration for refugees, displaced persons and migrant were identical, and that a single organizations had to be in charge of the planning.⁴⁴⁰ Thereafter, the Organization modified its name to the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) and, on 19 October 1953, officially adopted its Constitution.⁴⁴¹ The Organization underwent a succession of name changes, as already seen, from PICMME to ICEM in 1952, subsequently to Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) in 1980 in recognition of its increasing global role, and finally to its present name, the

⁴³⁵ *Constitution of the International Refugee Organization*, Treaty Series 18 (New York: United Nations, 15 December 1946).

⁴³⁶ Richard Perruchoud, "From the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration to the International Organization for Migration," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 1, no. 4 (October 1989): 502.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 503.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ Julius Isaac, "International Migration and European Population Trends," *International Labour Review* 66, no. 3 (September 1952): 186.

⁴⁴⁰ Richard Perruchoud, "From the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration to the International Organization for Migration," 504.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 505.

International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 1989.⁴⁴² These changes reflected the organization's transition from being a logistics agency to a migration agency.

With regards to child migration, the work of IOM grew substantially in relation to providing assistance to children on the move making it of major importance to strengthen and encourage consistent approaches to unaccompanied migrant children (UAM).⁴⁴³ The Organization's work is first and foremost established in the framework of international migration law, in particular the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which will be later discussed.⁴⁴⁴ Furthermore, unaccompanied migrant children have the right to international protection under international human rights law, international refugee law, international humanitarian law and further regional human rights instruments. Within this framework, IOM's constituent acts have always pertained to the significance of promoting the human rights of migrants.⁴⁴⁵ Operations in relation to UAMs encompass diverse schematic areas, including health and resettlement-related activities; reception and integration in the country of arrival; return in the country of origin; and family reunification.⁴⁴⁶ Table 1 depicts the fundamental characteristics of the framework of international migration law; these parameters, which intersect all of the activities of the Organization, are vital at all stages which involve unaccompanied migrant children. The table highlights the urgency to identify UAMs early in the migration process to address their special protection needs. Moreover, it demonstrates the critical role of the best interest assessment in finding the best solutions for these children (e.g., return to the country of origin, local integration, resettlement, or adoption).⁴⁴⁷ Lastly, references to measures to prevent children from being separated from their families, family tracing and family unity suggest that that an unaccompanied child's family reunification is considered to be in his/her best interests.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴² "IOM History," International Organization for Migration, accessed August 10, 2022, <https://www.iom.int/iom-history>.

⁴⁴³ *Unaccompanied Children on the Move: The work of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)*, International Organization for Migration (2011), 11.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Principles: Non-discrimination – Best interests of the child – Life and full development – Family unity – Evolving capacities – Participation – Confidentiality	Measures to prevent separation
	<u>Initial assessment and measures:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-refoulement obligation • Identification of child as separated or unaccompanied/ specific vulnerable groups (e.g. VoTs) • Registration • Family tracing
	<u>Specific protection needs:</u> Temporary care arrangements, including appointment of a guardian, child-appropriate accommodation, access to education, access to health care
<pre> graph TD A[Best interest determination (BID)/long-term options] --> B[Return to the country of origin] A --> C[Local integration] A --> D[Resettlement in a third country] A --> E[Adoption] </pre>	

Table 1. Principles, protection measures and long-term options

5.6 United Nation’s legislative framework for the protection of children

5.6.1 UNHCR Guidelines on Refugee Children 1988

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is unparalleled among United Nations bodies because of its comprehensive involvement with the needs of children: overall, half of its mandate is devoted to the care and protection of child migrants.⁴⁴⁹ In 1951, the UN published the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees which did not make any distinction between adults and children. Nonetheless, the Conference of Plenipotentiaries, which had the responsibility of drafting the Convention, attached a resolution which recognized that “the unity of the family, the natural and fundamental group unity of society, is an essential right of the refugee”.⁴⁵⁰ Moreover, the resolution recommended governments to provide for the protection of the refugee’s family and to safeguard refugee minors, in particular unaccompanied children, and girls.⁴⁵¹ Nevertheless, the only actual references to children are

⁴⁴⁹ Cynthia Price Cohen, "The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Implications for Change in the Care and Protection of Refugee Children," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 3, no. 4 (October 1991): 677.

⁴⁵⁰ *Collection of international instruments and legal texts concerning refugees and others of concern to UNHCR: International Instruments, volume 1: UNHCR, refugees and asylum, statelessness, internally displaced persons, migrants, human rights* (UNHCR, June 2007): 30.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

those regarding (a) the refugee's "freedom as regards the religious education of their children"; (b) the effect of having "one or more children possessing the nationality of the country of residence"; and (c) the need of applying to refugees the same national standards for the minimum age for employment and young persons' work.⁴⁵² Curiously, the article on public education (Article 22), leaves out any reference to childhood or age. This lack of official distinction between children and adults changed in 1987, when the High Commissioner for Refugees submitted a Note on Refugee Children to the UNHCR Executive Committee, recognizing that refugee children represent approximately one-half of the world's refugee population.⁴⁵³ The Note underlined the need of refugee children for international protection, assistance, and durable solutions. Two main principles as guides to action on behalf of refugee children were also articulated: the principle of the best interests of the child and the principle of family unity.⁴⁵⁴ Subsequently, the main concerns expressed in the Note were formalized in the UNHCR Guidelines on Refugee Children in 1988. What is not contemplated in the Guidelines, however, is the definition of the child's best interest, which requires that "the child's welfare precedes all other considerations, that individuality be respected, and that physical, psychological and social developmental needs be met".⁴⁵⁵ According to the text, the Guidelines on Refugee Children were drafted to "call attention to particular problems refugee children are facing and the policies that guide UNHCR action regarding children and to present guidelines for practical steps Field Offices can take to address their needs".⁴⁵⁶

5.6.2 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

As mentioned above, the development of a set of international norms which could protect the rights of children started in 1924, with the adoption of the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child by the League of Nations. The need to prioritize the protection of refugee children has been continuously asserted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).⁴⁵⁷ Thirty-five years later, the United Nations similarly

⁴⁵² *Collection of international instruments and legal texts concerning refugees and others of concern to UNHCR: International Instruments, volume 1: UNHCR, refugees and asylum, statelessness, internally displaced persons, migrants, human rights* (UNHCR, June 2007): 12-16.

⁴⁵³ *Note on Refugee Children*, EC/SCP/46 (UNHCR, 09 July 1987).

⁴⁵⁴ Cynthia Price Cohen, "The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Implications for Change in the Care and Protection of Refugee Children," 683.

⁴⁵⁵ *Note on Refugee Children*, EC/SCP/46 (UNHCR, 09 July 1987).

⁴⁵⁶ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Guidelines on Refugee Children* (August 1988).

⁴⁵⁷ Jason M. Pobjoy, "A Child Rights Framework for Assessing the Status of Refugee Children," in *Contemporary Issues in Refugee Law*, ed. Satvinder Singh Juss and Colin Harvey (Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2013), 92.

adopted the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child.⁴⁵⁸ The Declaration raised additional aspects than the previous document, for example, the child should be granted the right to a name and a nationality and to be raised in an atmosphere of peace.⁴⁵⁹ Interestingly, it was not until 1979, as part of the festivities for the International Year of the Child, that action was taken to draft a treaty which would translate into legally binding language the concepts which had been already articulated in the previous declarations.⁴⁶⁰ The first draft was concluded during a two-week drafting period (January-February) in 1988. The official Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the Commission on Human Rights in 1989.⁴⁶¹ Within a year from its approval, more than seventy States had become Parties to the Convention.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the sole human rights treaty which safeguards the whole range of rights incorporated within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It does not simply combine the rights of children found in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), but also integrates principles from diverse sources, such as the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the Standard Minimum Rules for Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty.⁴⁶² Moreover, the Convention aimed at protecting rights which had never been dealt with before, like the right to identity and to adoption.⁴⁶³ The principal focus of the text is the “best interest of the child”, which recognized children as human beings of equal worth and individual rights-bearers.⁴⁶⁴ Additionally, it promoted a construction of children as “social actors and active holders of their own rights”.⁴⁶⁵ Thus, the CRC represents a radical shift away from the understanding of a child as a passive subject tied to a parents, which was evident in the previous instruments which were centred on a child’s need to be cared for.⁴⁶⁶ This change in attitude is illustrated by the incorporation in the CRC of traditional civil and political rights,

⁴⁵⁸ Cynthia Price Cohen, “The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Implications for Change in the Care and Protection of Refugee Children,” 677.

⁴⁵⁹ Thomas Hammarberg, “The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child--And How to Make It Work,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 12, no.1 (February 1990): 98.

⁴⁶⁰ Cynthia Price Cohen, “The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Implications for Change in the Care and Protection of Refugee Children,” 678.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 681.

⁴⁶³ Jaime Sergio Cerda, “The Draft Convention on the Rights of the Child: New Rights,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 12, no.1 (February 1990): 115.

⁴⁶⁴ Thomas Hammarberg, “The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child--And How to Make It Work,” 99.

⁴⁶⁵ *The State of the World’s Children: Celebrating 20 Years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, United Nations Children’s Fund – UNICEF (November 2009), 2.

⁴⁶⁶ Jason M. Pobjoy, “A Child Rights Framework for Assessing the Status of Refugee Children,” 104.

such as the freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and freedom of association and assembly.⁴⁶⁷

Under Article 2(1) of the Convention, State Parties should “respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status”.⁴⁶⁸ Hence, the obligation is not restricted to the children within the national territory, but it extends the liability to any child “within their jurisdiction”, this includes refugees, asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers.⁴⁶⁹ Indeed, this is of great relevance not only as a general principle, but also because several rights have international aspects or provide for their international regulation, such as in the context of refugees, custody or armed conflict.⁴⁷⁰ Furthermore, Article 22(1) articulates:

“States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties”.⁴⁷¹

Furthermore, Article 22(2) regulates international cooperation, as State Parties should “protect and assist such a child and to trace the parents or other members of the family of any refugee child in order to obtain information necessary for reunification with his or her family”.⁴⁷² Whenever no parents or relatives can be found, the child can benefit from the protection granted under article 20 of the Convention as above described.

⁴⁶⁷ Jason M. Pobjoy, “A Child Rights Framework for Assessing the Status of Refugee Children,” 104-105.

⁴⁶⁸ “Convention on the Rights of the Child,” General Assembly resolution 44/25 (20 November 1989).

⁴⁶⁹ Jason M. Pobjoy, “A Child Rights Framework for Assessing the Status of Refugee Children,” 105.

⁴⁷⁰ Dominic McGoldrick, “The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,” *International Journal of Law and the Family* 5, no. 2 (1991): 134.

⁴⁷¹ “Convention on the Rights of the Child,” General Assembly resolution 44/25 (20 November 1989).

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

5.6.3 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

With its mandate exclusively focused on children, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) contrasts sharply the other UN agencies. By centring its work on the needs of children, the Organization's work intersects a variety of sectoral and policy issues.⁴⁷³ Nonetheless, it is most well-known for its work in the health sector due to its large advertisement of the Child Survival Revolution during the 1980s.

UNICEF was brought into being in December 1946, as a principal organ of the United Nations. Its activities began in the aftermath of World War II by enhancing emergency relief programmes for European children. In fact, it was founded to meet the needs of children as much as its resources would permit.⁴⁷⁴ Even though its main task was to continue the emergency feeding program that had been established by the UNRRA, it also engaged in health and training schemes.⁴⁷⁵ Up until World War I there were few child welfare organizations which would operate on an international basis and any concrete effort had been made by state governments to take part in child welfare programs on a world-wide level.⁴⁷⁶ Only the immense destruction cause by the World War demonstrated that restoration of mankind was a concern for everybody. With the establishment of the League of Nations, member states advocated for a program for the improvement of child welfare standards bringing to the assimilation of the work of the International Association for the Promotion of Child Welfare into the League's scope of activities in 1924.⁴⁷⁷ Indeed, by 1933, the Advisory Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People was implementing at the international level several child welfare safeguards, such as family allowances or protection of the children of migrant workers.⁴⁷⁸ In 1946, it became clear to the UN General Assembly that an international organization for the implementation of such programmes was needed and the International Children's Fund was established.⁴⁷⁹ By December 1947, UNICEF was operating in six diverse

⁴⁷³ Anne Lafond, "Spotlight on international organizations: UNICEF," *Health Policy and Planning* 9, no.3 (September 1994): 343.

⁴⁷⁴ Samuel K. Jacobs, "The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund: An Instrument of International Social Policy – Part I," *Social Service Review* 24, no.2 (Jun., 1950): 143.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁹ Benjamin Mason Meier, Mitra Motlagh, and Kumanan Rasanathan, "The United Nations Children's Fund: Implementing Human Rights for Child Health," in *Human Rights in Global Health: Rights-Based Governance for a Globalizing World*, ed. Benjamin Mason Meier and Lawrence O. Gostin (Oxford University Press, 2018): 180.

European countries, generating programs for food aid that would support 375,000 children.⁴⁸⁰ Finally, as board members of the UN recognized the “continuing need for an organization devoted solely to children”, the UN re-established indefinitely UNICEF’s charter in 1953, consolidating the permanent role of the newly named “United Nations Children’s Fund”.⁴⁸¹ Moreover, the Organization expanded its activities to protect children’s health, safety, and well-being throughout the world. Lastly, with the publication of the CRC, UNICEF’s International Child Development Centre developed a Human Rights Conceptual Framework for UNICEF to formulate “its mandate for human rights”, by that outlining its work in implementing human rights liabilities, framing an organization-wide resolution to human rights realization, and determining the implications of the CRC to its country programs.⁴⁸² Delineating its mandate in the context of the CRC, UNICEF came to be regarded as the leading UN agency in “thinking, strategizing and experimenting on RBD (rights-based programming)”.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸⁰ Benjamin Mason Meier, Mitra Motlagh, and Kumanan Rasanathan, “The United Nations Children’s Fund: Implementing Human Rights for Child Health,” 181.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 187.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

Chapter VI: Contemporary child migration

Nowadays, new migratory waves originating from the Global South are composed by an ever-increasing number of non-adults, unaccompanied migrants (UAMs). The term ‘unaccompanied minor’ first appeared in an official EU document in the year 2000, as the European Parliament had commissioned a study to compare diverse asylum practices in the EU member states and to look at the ways in which children’s rights were valued in various settings.⁴⁸⁴ As most recently defined by the European Union (EU) in Article 2(I) of Directive 2011/95/EU (Recast Qualification Directive), an unaccompanied minor in the European Union is a “minor who arrives on the territory of the Member States unaccompanied by an adult responsible for him or her whether by law or by the practice of the Member State concerned, and for as long as he or she is not effectively taken into the care of such a person; it includes a minor who is left unaccompanied after he or she has entered the territory of the Member States”.⁴⁸⁵ Furthermore, UAMs are included under the category of the most vulnerable persons, as stipulated in Article 20(3) “when implementing this Chapter, Member States shall take into account the specific situation of vulnerable persons such as minors, unaccompanied minors (...)”.⁴⁸⁶

Even though children have moved alone in other historical periods, as described in the previous chapters, the current circumstances of migration are of unprecedented difficulty. Today, there are new challenges and new forms of vulnerability for minors. Indeed, child migrants flee from conditions of acute inequalities, hindrances, and hazards with effects that are aggravated by harrowing obstacles and perilous migratory routes.⁴⁸⁷ As Pope Francis said during the International Forum on Migration and Peace in 2017, "migration is an expression of the intrinsic longing for happiness proper to every human being, a happiness that must be sought and pursued. (...) Unfortunately, at the beginning of this third millennium, we are dealing with forced displacement, caused by conflicts, natural disasters, persecution, climate change,

⁴⁸⁴ Annika Lems, Kathrin Oester, and Sabine Strasser, "Children of the crisis: ethnographic perspectives on unaccompanied refugee youth in and en route to Europe," *Journal of ethnic and migration studies* 46, no. 2 (2020): 319.

⁴⁸⁵ "Directive 2011/95/Eu of the European Parliament and of the Council," *Official Journal of the European Union* (13 December 2011).

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁷ Cecilia Menjívar and Krista M. Perreira, "Undocumented and unaccompanied: children of migration in the European Union and the United States," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no.2 (2019): 197.

violence, extreme poverty and unworthy living conditions”.⁴⁸⁸ He concluded his reflection by drawing attention to the most vulnerable among migrants, refugees and displaced persons, namely "children and adolescents who are forced to live far from their homeland and separated from family affection".⁴⁸⁹ In fact, the struggle experienced by these children position them in a diverse way and at greater disadvantage than child migrants in the past.

It is also of utmost importance to notice that, although thousands of minors migrate to high-income countries, the significant majority are either internally displaced or remain in their region of origin.⁴⁹⁰ Indeed, the so-called Arab Spring in 2011 produced new forms of internal south-south and north-south mobility.⁴⁹¹ Contrary to popular perception, the number of migrants is far greater between southern Mediterranean states than that of Europe. For instance, in 2014, most Syrian refugees fled to neighbouring countries, principally Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.⁴⁹² Nonetheless, this chapter will focus on those unaccompanied migrants who face the lengthy and tortuous travel towards the European Union and the reception of these children in the EU territory.

6.1 New migratory routes

Contrarily to what has been analysed in previous chapters, in the last century migratory routes have changed their directions, making the European Union a receiving area and not a sending territory anymore. In fact, while European children were the ones to be sent away or who moved overseas in search for a better life in the 19th and 20th century, today it is their home countries to accept migrant minors coming from remote locations.

Recent research on child migration indicates that usually it is the older children that move to other countries and the number of unaccompanied minors is highest where there is also a high

⁴⁸⁸ “Discorso del Santo Padre Francesco ai Partecipanti al Forum Internazionale ‘Migrazioni e Pace’,” Vatican - La Santa Sede, February 21, 2017, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2017/february/documents/papa-francesco_20170221_forum-migrazioni-pace.html.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Cecilia Menjívar and Krista M. Perreira, “Undocumented and unaccompanied: children of migration in the European Union and the United States,” 197.

⁴⁹¹ Mercedes Jiménez, "Autonomous child migration at the southern European border," *Geographies of Children and Young People* 6 (2015): 2.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

rate of adult migration, contrarily to child migration in the past.⁴⁹³ Generally, the principal reason that drives minors to emigrate from their countries is the improvement of their living conditions. Further factors influence said decision, such as escaping from war or fleeing from ethnic and religious persecutions, or the search for new work opportunities.⁴⁹⁴ Over the last decade, several member states of the European Union have dealt with rising numbers of unaccompanied minor migrants, generally originating from countries that are facing armed conflicts or abuses of human rights.⁴⁹⁵ These children, who can also be defined as “separated children”, are fragile and lack the care and safeguard of their caregivers which can expose them more easily to abuse and neglect.⁴⁹⁶ According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of unaccompanied minors entering the EU doubled from 13,800 in 2013 to 23,300 in 2014, and then quadrupling to 96,000 by 2015.⁴⁹⁷ Overall, as reported by Eurostat, around 233,000 children have entered Europe alone seeking asylum since 2012.⁴⁹⁸ UNICEF estimated that about 535 million minors (one out of four in the world) live in countries affected by conflict or natural disasters and are often forced to abandon their homes to seek shelter elsewhere.⁴⁹⁹ Several nations are experiencing conditions of extreme poverty, war, climate change, natural disasters, and human rights violations that pressure people to flee to other countries, seeking a safer and more just future for themselves and their children.⁵⁰⁰ The majority of these migrants come from Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Eritrea, Iraq, Albania and Russia.⁵⁰¹ In fact, since 2008, approximately 76,700 unaccompanied minors have travelled from Afghanistan making the country the single largest source country of children in Europe

⁴⁹³ Daniel Senovilla Hernández and Kristina Touzenis, “Introduction,” in *Migrating Alone: Unaccompanied and Separated Children’s Migration to Europe*, ed. Jyothi Kanics, Daniel Senovilla Hernández, and Kristina Touzenis (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2010), xiv.

⁴⁹⁴ Elisabetta Di Giovanni, “Separated Children’s Migration in the Mediterranean Sea. An Ethnohistorical Perspective,” *Collegium antropologicum* 40, no. 3 (2016): 2.

⁴⁹⁵ Pietro Ferrara, Giovanni Corsello, Annamaria Sbordone, Luigi Nigri, Olga Caporale, Jochen Ehrich, and Massimo Pettoello-Mantovani, “The “invisible children”: uncertain future of unaccompanied minor migrants in Europe,” *The Journal of pediatrics* 169 (2016): 332.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Cecilia Menjívar and Krista M. Perreira, “Undocumented and unaccompanied: children of migration in the European Union and the United States,” 198.

⁴⁹⁸ Eurostat, “Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors - annual data,” 01/07/2022, accessed 28 august, 2022, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00194/default/table?lang=en>.

⁴⁹⁹ Ettore Fusaro, Alessandro Botta and Danilo Felciangeli, “Minori migranti, maggiori rischi: Pericoli e problematiche dei minori non accompagnati che migrano verso l’Unione Europea,” *Dossier con Dati e Testimonianze* 42 (Caritas Italiana, Dicembre 2018): 4.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Cecilia Menjívar and Krista M. Perreira, “Undocumented and unaccompanied: children of migration in the European Union and the United States,” 198.

since data has been made available.⁵⁰² The top sending countries of unaccompanied minors arriving in the EU have been classified by the Global Peace Index as the least peaceful countries in the world today.⁵⁰³ Moreover, the increasing poverty rates in such countries has become a further push factor for children to seek employment or better living conditions abroad. One of the recurring themes in the life stories of these minors is the importance of finding a job with a decent wage, that is, migration is perceived primarily as a form of career advancement.⁵⁰⁴ In Afghanistan, 50% of the population lived in poverty in 2015, in spite of international humanitarian and economic assistance. Over half of the people living in these conditions were children under the age of 15.⁵⁰⁵ In Syria, the overall poverty rate drastically increased following the outbreak of the conflict, reaching numbers as high as 83% of the population.⁵⁰⁶ While in Somalia 70% of the population lives in extreme poverty also due to the ongoing civil war which started in 1986.⁵⁰⁷ Another aspect which influences the migration of minors is that of education, as children in various countries have a substantially limited access to schooling. For instance, in 2001, girls in Afghanistan did not have access to education and only one million boys were enrolled in primary school. The situation changed overtime, but even in 2015 only 21% of girls had completed primary education.⁵⁰⁸

In 2019, around 13,800 unaccompanied minors sought asylum in the 27 Member States of the European Union.⁵⁰⁹ According to the data gathered, the highest number of minor applicants was registered in Greece at 3,300. In the same year, Germany registered 2,700, Belgium 1,200, and the Netherlands listed 1,000.⁵¹⁰ The majority were males (85%), and two-thirds were aged 16 to 17, while 22% of unaccompanied minors were aged 14 to 15 and 11% less than 14.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰² Phillip Connor and Jens Manuel Krogstad, "Europe Sees Rise in Unaccompanied Minors Seeking Asylum, with Almost Half from Afghanistan," Pew Research Center (May 10, 2016), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/05/10/eu-unaccompanied-minors/>.

⁵⁰³ *Global Peace Index 2022: Measuring Peace in a Complex World*, Institute for Economics and Peace (Sydney, June 2022).

⁵⁰⁴ Mercedes Jiménez, "Autonomous child migration at the southern European border," 6.

⁵⁰⁵ Cecilia Menjívar and Krista M. Perreira, "Undocumented and unaccompanied: children of migration in the European Union and the United States," 204.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ *Somalia Overview*, World Bank, accessed August 28, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/somalia/overview>.

⁵⁰⁸ Cecilia Menjívar and Krista M. Perreira, "Undocumented and unaccompanied: children of migration in the European Union and the United States," 205.

⁵⁰⁹ Francesca Morgano, "Unaccompanied Minors (UAMS) in the European Union," *CESPI – Osservatorio Nazionale sui Minori Stranieri non Accompagnati* 4 (July 2020): 3.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ "Almost 14 000 unaccompanied minors among asylum seekers registered in the EU in 2019," Eurostat Newsrelease (28 April 2020).

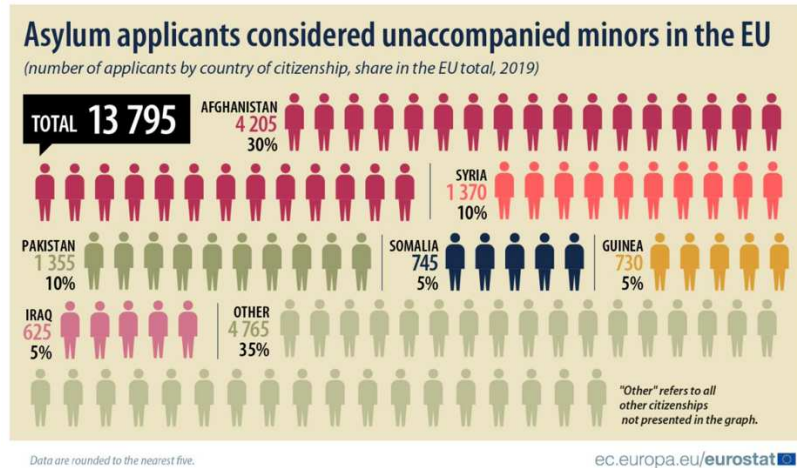


Figure 2. Asylum applicants considered unaccompanied minors in the EU (number of applicants by country of citizenship, share in the EU total, 2019).⁵¹²

Minors arrive at the European borders through two principal routes: the Central Mediterranean path, the largest groups of adolescents and children on this route come from Nigeria, Gambia, Guinea, Eritrea and Bangladesh, and the Eastern Mediterranean route, most adolescents and youth come from Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic, with smaller numbers from Iraq (Figure 1).⁵¹³ Children undertaking the former route mostly travel through Libya before reaching their final destination, which is generally Italy. On the other hand, juveniles facing the latter route stay for some time in Turkey before reaching their intended target, which in this case is usually Germany.⁵¹⁴ Migrants held in Libyan detention centres have reported of beatings, shootings, stabbings and sexual violence.⁵¹⁵ Whether experiencing one route or the other, various testimonies of minors show the consequences of the hardships faced throughout their travel. For instance, a 17-year-old boy from Gambia recounts a recurring nightmare where he has always the feeling of swaying, due to his travel through the Mediterranean Sea.⁵¹⁶ While an eighteen-year-old Somalian girl, who was rescued from a shipwreck by another boy, describes the countless epileptic attacks and bouts of a loss of consciousness she has had since her travel.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹² “Almost 14 000 unaccompanied minors among asylum seekers registered in the EU in 2019,” Eurostat Newsrelease (28 April 2020).

⁵¹³ International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNICEF, *HARROWING JOURNEYS – Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation* (2017), 15.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁵¹⁶ Elisabetta Di Giovanni, "Separated Children's Migration in the Mediterranean Sea. An Ethnohistorical Perspective," 3.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

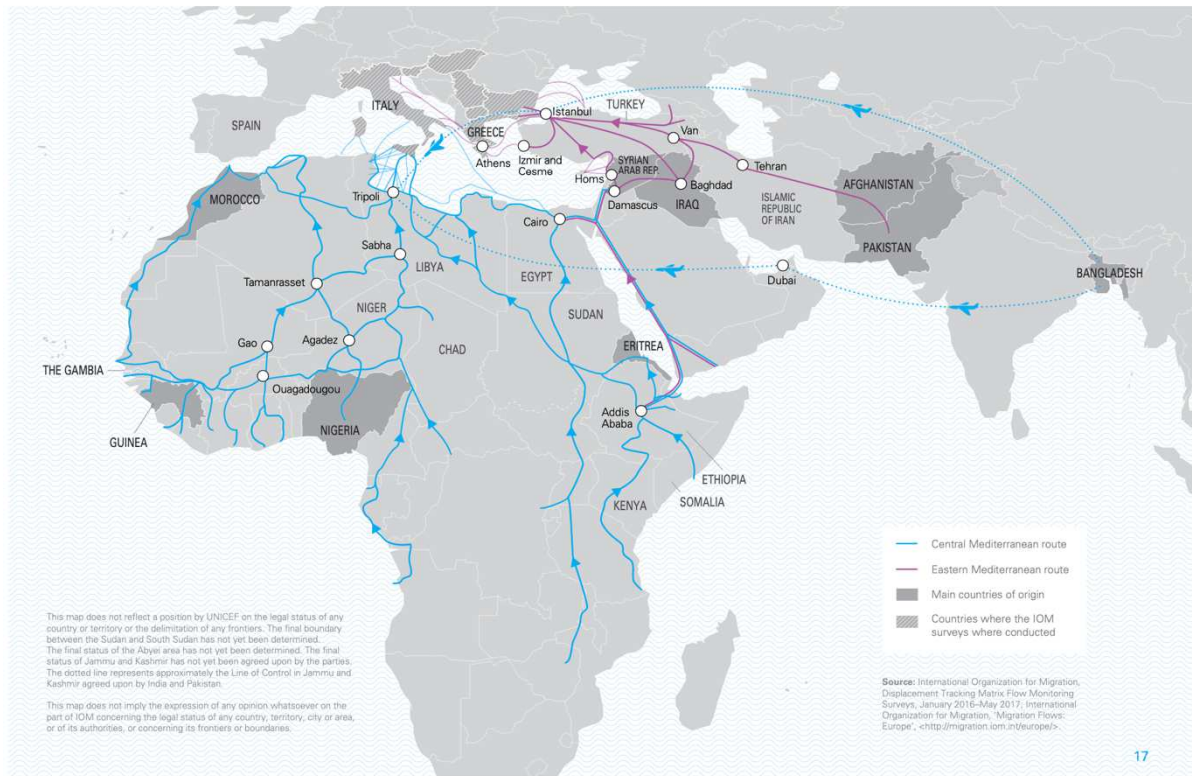


Figure 1. Central (blue) and Eastern (purple) Mediterranean mixed migration routes with main countries of origin⁵¹⁸

Sadly, unlike various experiences in past centuries, today there are very few safe and regular pathways for children and youth who escape harm or seek a better future. In fact, regular migration channels enabled by humanitarian or work visas, or refugee resettlement are limited and closed to most. Thus, many are forced to engage smugglers to help them move across borders. Driven underground, child migrants traverse a plurality of dangers, such as withstanding the heat of the desert packed into pickup trucks, hiking through arduous mountains, or crossing rough seas in boats which were not made to hold so many people.⁵¹⁹

Moreover, the fact that most national territories have two or even three levels of competences suggests that there is a wide spectrum of diverse national practices that influence how migrant children are treated. The national level often assumes the competences relating immigration and asylum concerns (entry to the territory, identification, asylum process, immigration

⁵¹⁸ International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNICEF, *HARROWING JOURNEYS – Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation* (2017), 17.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

status).⁵²⁰ Nevertheless, as many aspects of childcare (such as evaluating each individual situation, reception and care, and providing guardianship or foster care) fall under the purview of regional or municipal authorities, there is a considerable variation in procedures. The lack of sufficient solutions to the primary objectives of migrant children, along with this dispersion and confusion, means that a sizable portion of them continues to be outside the jurisdiction of the competent authorities and care facilities.⁵²¹ For these reasons, several unprotected migrant children struggle to survive on their own, often by engaging in illegal or criminal activities, or as victims of trafficking and exploitation networks, leading to conditions of increased vulnerability and instability.

6.2 Legal framework

An analysis of the national legislations of Member States regarding unaccompanied children shows that several countries generally utilize a combined approach of immigration and asylum law, which attempts to reduce the number of arrivals, with a dubious recognition of the vulnerable condition of these children.⁵²² Only with the adoption of the Stockholm Programme and the Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors by the European Commission in 2010, the European Union received specific common policies regarding the treatment of unaccompanied minors within the territories of its Member States. Although there are no international or regional legislative frameworks dealing directly with child migrants, minors arriving alone at the borders of the EU cannot be deported, principally due to the ratification of international legal apparatuses drafted for the safeguard of all children, such as the CRC. Furthermore, EU members have to abide by a shared set of regulations of asylum, immigration, and the trafficking of human beings that comprise provisions on the protection of the best interests of unaccompanied minors.⁵²³ The Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors classifies these children based on whether they are (a) asylum seekers or victims of human trafficking who are entitled to international protection, or (b) migrant minors seeking employment, who are repatriated to their country of origin.⁵²⁴ Nevertheless, in certain cases, clandestine extraditions

⁵²⁰ Daniel Senovilla Hernández and Kristina Touzenis, "Introduction," xiv.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Daniel Senovilla Hernández and Jyothi Kanics, "Protected or Merely Tolerated? Models of Reception and Regularization of Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Europe," in *Migrating Alone: Unaccompanied and Separated Children's Migration to Europe*, ed. Jyothi Kanics, Daniel Senovilla Hernández, and Kristina Touzenis (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2010), 4.

⁵²³ Cecilia Menjívar and Krista M. Perreira, "Undocumented and unaccompanied: children of migration in the European Union and the United States," 208.

⁵²⁴ Mercedes Jiménez, "Autonomous child migration at the southern European border," 4.

without any procedural guarantee have taken place after family reunifications, thus disregarding the right to live together as a family.⁵²⁵

At the beginning of 2020, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) developed an ambitious Blueprint for Joint Action to accelerate governments' efforts in the protection of the rights of refugee children. Indeed, by encouraging host countries to involve refugee children in national development schemes and budgets, and to intensify national service delivery systems, the access to education, child protection services, clean water, and safe sanitation and hygiene facilities can be productively improved.⁵²⁶ Additionally, in May 2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR and UNICEF produced, in a joint effort to advocate European governments, an advocacy brief on the detention of asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, either upon or after arrival, for reasons relating to immigration or asylum.⁵²⁷ In fact, child immigration detention occurs in at least twenty-seven countries in Europe in spite of the elevated commitments to end this form of confinement of children in the region, the present standards of international law, the straightforward evidence of its disastrous effects on children's health and well-being, and the substantial financial and organizational costs involved.⁵²⁸ The three international organizations recommended alternative solutions to child-detention, such as supported independent living, foster and family-based care, or supervision and case management.

Since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, there has been a general agreement between governments about the construction of minors as "subjects with rights who are entitled to a specific form of protection".⁵²⁹ However, in countries like Spain, the already mentioned tension between control and protection of unaccompanied migrants can result in the "intermittent institutional abuse" that takes place in socio-educational interventions. This is seen in the use of medical examinations to determine the age of the child, which is used by the authorities to control access to the protection system (generally, such medical test, which consists of an x-ray of the child's wrist, has greater say than an official

⁵²⁵ Mercedes Jiménez, "Autonomous child migration at the southern European border," 4.

⁵²⁶ *Blueprint for Joint Action - Five Accelerators for Refugee Inclusion*, UNHCR and UNICEF (2020).

⁵²⁷ *SAFETY AND DIGNITY FOR REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN: Recommendations for alternatives to detention and appropriate care arrangements in Europe*, IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF (May 2022).

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

passport); the lack of a right to the possibility of questioning administrative activities; limitations on the right to be heard; several restrictions on obtaining residency permits and schooling etc.⁵³⁰ Moreover, in EU member states, these minors are handled in reception centres within the territory of their arrival, where they were initially fingerprinted or where they filed their request for asylum.⁵³¹ For instance, in British reception centres, asylum officers identify and register children, confirm their ages, track their families for reunification, and assess their health conditions and their well-being.⁵³² In reference to the specifics of their case, children could be transferred to a different EU member state, released from the centre into the care of a relative or legal guardian, or held in a detention centre.⁵³³ In the latter case, UNICEF is demanding a coordinated system to help children who do not receive adequate care in European countries like Sweden, the United Kingdom, Greece, and Italy. The special coordinator for the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe said: “children on the move have endured war, persecution, deprivation, and terrible journeys. Even when they have reached the relative safety of their destination, they still need protection, education, health care, and counselling”.⁵³⁴ Moreover, a concern raised by *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) and further non-governmental organizations is the EU-Turkey deal signed in March 2016, which credited with restricting the flow of migrants to the European Union in return for financial and political compensations, this meant that every migrant and asylum seeker who arrived irregularly on the Greek islands would be returned to Turkey.⁵³⁵ This deal was based on the so-called ‘one to one’ mechanism: EU Member States would accept one Syrian refugee from Turkey for every Syrian rejected from Greece.⁵³⁶

6.3 Reception of unaccompanied migrant children

Policies and practices regarding the reception of unaccompanied and separated children vary across European models and there is no predominant response regarding measures and

⁵³⁰ *SAFETY AND DIGNITY FOR REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN: Recommendations for alternatives to detention and appropriate care arrangements in Europe*, 9.

⁵³¹ Cecilia Menjivar and Krista M. Perreira, “Undocumented and unaccompanied: children of migration in the European Union and the United States,” 209.

⁵³² HOUSE OF LORDS – European Union Committee, “Children in crisis: unaccompanied migrant children in the EU,” *2nd Report of Session 2016–17*.

⁵³³ Cecilia Menjivar and Krista M. Perreira, “Undocumented and unaccompanied: children of migration in the European Union and the United States,” 209.

⁵³⁴ Sharmila Devi, “Unaccompanied migrant children at risk across Europe,” *The Lancet* 387 (25 June 2016): 2590.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁶ Clara Piazza, “L'accordo UE-Turchia e Il Principio Di Non-Refoulement,” *Diritto Consenso*, May 22, 2021, <http://www.dirittoconsenso.it/2021/05/22/accordo-ue-turchia-principio-non-refoulement/>.

facilities. On the one hand, certain governments, such as the French, Germany and Italian, prioritize the integration of migrant children in mainstream facilities for children in need.⁵³⁷ On the other hand, countries like Spain or the UK incorporate reception in specialized or general facilities based on the reception phase or the profile of the child.⁵³⁸ Lastly, some countries founded an exclusive network of specialized facilities for the receiving of unaccompanied children, as in the case of Belgium. Broadly speaking, the strengths of mainstream facilities is their goal of integrating these children in the host society while not adapting completely to their specific needs. On the contrary, specialized models adapt to children’s needs and provide the most suitable care for them, however it often leads to the segregation of the migrant children.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Mainstream facilities	<p>Provision of a similar standard of care to that of British-born children.</p> <p>More focus on the fact that children are children first and foremost (they are supported by staff qualified in dealing with children’s issues).</p> <p>Better possibilities of raising children’s issues in consultations and planning of children’s general care.</p>	<p>Lack of experience of staff in asylum issues.</p> <p>Possible negative staff attitudes towards asylum seekers.</p> <p>‘Bottlenecks’ over integrating asylum-seeking children in these services because of insufficient resources.</p>
Specialized facilities for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children	<p>Ability to provide specific expertise on asylum issues.</p> <p>Children may have more influence: they can make their opinions heard about the services provided.</p>	<p>Team feeling of being ‘sidelined’.</p> <p>Tendency to consider these services as temporary.</p> <p>Perception of unaccompanied children as ‘different’. Risk of receiving a lower standard of care than other children.</p> <p>Staff unqualified in child care and child protection.</p>

*Table 1. Mainstream versus specialised facilities: opinions of practitioners working with local authorities.*⁵³⁹

⁵³⁷ Daniel Senovilla Hernández and Jyothi Kanics, “Protected or Merely Tolerated? Models of Reception and Regularization of Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Europe,” 10.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 11.

The United Kingdom can be considered as an exceptional case of good reception of child migrants. The British national legislation grants a high degree of protection to unaccompanied asylum-seeker minors. In fact, once the asylum application has been registered, a child should be immediately referred to the social services of the municipality of arrival, where an assessment of his or her needs should be executed.⁵⁴⁰ Subsequently, a custom-built plan should be drafted. In the UK there are three diverse types of residential facilities: residential centres (either general or specializing in the reception of unaccompanied asylum seekers); semi-independent resources (guest houses or shared flats); and, finally, foster care.⁵⁴¹ Nonetheless, children are often placed in reception centres as not many families are willing to take into care an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child.

In 2017, with the adoption of Law n.47/2017, the Italian government introduced specific measures for foreign minors arriving in the country without parents or adult guardians, safeguarding children with a homogeneous protection and inclusion system.⁵⁴² The so-called *legge Zampa* fully safeguarded the reception of UAMs and sought to build around the protection of the minor an organic and specific reception system, introducing the figure of a voluntary guardian, promoting the development of family fostering, and reaffirming the rights to health and education.⁵⁴³ Moreover, Article 1 of the law clearly states that unaccompanied foreign minors are entitled to the same rights in the field of child protection as minors of Italian or European citizenship.⁵⁴⁴ In brief, as commented by Save the Children Italy, “Italy can be proud to be the first country in Europe to have an organic system that considers migrant children first and foremost as children”.⁵⁴⁵ However, the sharp increase in the presence of child migrants, made its application difficult, debilitating the national network and the reception capacity of the territory. Furthermore, the approval of Law n.840 in 2018, the so-called ‘Decreto Sicurezza e Immigrazione’, raised various questions with regards to child migrants, as it enforced the detainment of foreign minors and their families in border facilities such as

⁵⁴⁰ Daniel Senovilla Hernández and Jyothi Kanics, “Protected or Merely Tolerated? Models of Reception and Regularization of Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Europe,” 12.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Ettore Fusaro, Alessandro Botta and Danilo Felciangeli, “Minori migranti, maggiori rischi: Pericoli e problematiche dei minori non accompagnati che migrano verso l’Unione Europea,” 14.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ “Legge 7 aprile 2017, n.47,” *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana* 93 (Roma, 21 aprile 2017).

⁵⁴⁵ “La Legge per La Protezione e Accoglienza Dei Minori Migranti è Finalmente Realtà,” Save the Children Italia, March 29, 2017, <https://www.savethechildren.it/blog-notizie/la-legge-la-protezione-e-accoglienza-dei-minori-migranti-%C3%A8-finalmente-realt%C3%A0>.

hotspots, or it influenced the loss of protection for newly become adults from one day to the next.⁵⁴⁶

6.3.1 Bad practices in the reception of migrant children

Each Member State of the EU is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which plays a significant role in the legal safeguard of migrant children, as it grants rights on children without any distinction (i.e., it applies to all children including refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented or irregular migrants). For this reason, the political status of asylum-seeking minors differs from that of adult migrants, as the CRC includes a comprehensive set of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.⁵⁴⁷ However, there are several discrepancies between the provisions of international law and national regulation on the one hand and the application of these principles on the ground on the other.⁵⁴⁸ Even though national legislation considers migrants under the age of 18 as individuals with special rights, the protection of child migrants is jeopardized by their status as aliens (i.e., asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, irregular foreigners).⁵⁴⁹ In a number of ways, the tension between migration control and protection of children becomes apparent, blurring the lines between the two.

The rights of child migrants are at great risk when they are on the move, as the journey towards Europe can take months or even years, with long stopovers in camps or cities in Turkey, Greece, Serbia, Bosnia, and Belarus before entering the EU's borders. Border crossing are particular moments in the transit experience, as the majority of migrant children travel undocumented or without a valid entry visa. Some frontiers, such as the French-Italian, Slovenian-Croatian, Serbian-Hungarian, and Polish-Belarusian borders, are especially guarded.⁵⁵⁰ In these zones, migration repression takes priority over the protection of minors. Indeed, crossing borders has been proven to be extremely traumatic and hazardous for migrant minors in a variety of cases. Generally, the hindrance of children's rights takes place in the form of refolement and readmission processes at the frontier, in addition to physical violence by the national police. For instance, Doctors Without Borders published a report which reveals

⁵⁴⁶ Annalisa Camilli, "I rischi del decreto sicurezza per i minori stranieri," *Internazionale* (20 novembre 2018).

⁵⁴⁷ Barbara Gornik, "Comparative report on migrant children in refugee camps, asylum homes, reception centres & informal camps," Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE) (March 2022): 4.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

an alarming and repeated use of violence by the Hungarian authorities against unaccompanied child migrants attempting to cross the border with Serbia in search of a better future in the European Union.⁵⁵¹ Dr Andjela Marcetic, an MSF doctor, says: “every week we see several patients, including children, with severe bruises, wounds and deep cuts, dislocations and fractures often on legs, arms and sometimes on the head”.⁵⁵² Similarly, in January 2022, twenty-five migrants from Afghanistan, 17 of them small children, were intercepted on the island of Lesbos, beaten and abused before being set adrift on the open sea in an outrage carried out by Greek authorities.⁵⁵³ A woman explained that, as they were being forced by the police to get in a small life raft to be brought in Turkish waters, a small baby ended up in the sea: “the Greek police threw the baby down from the Greek ship, but missed the life raft, luckily we managed to get the baby back in the raft. Another girl was pushed down from the Greek ship, and broke her foot, it was barbaric, they enjoyed it, as if we were not humans”.⁵⁵⁴ Sadly, pushbacks such as the one described occur more than one might assume on EU’s soil.

6.4 Media debates on child migrants in EU’s Member States

Unaccompanied child migrants are ensnared in a dual position of being both migrants to be governed and minors requiring guardianship. Their entitlement to rights is consistently challenged as it is a result of the tension between protection and control.⁵⁵⁵ The European Union’s migration policies aimed at improving the regulation of migration and dislocating this control to other countries in the aftermath of the Arab Spring which started in 2011.⁵⁵⁶ Against this background, the arrival of numerous unaccompanied minors from Tunisia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Egypt to the coasts of southern Italy attracted the attention of the media. In the summer of 2015, following the arrival of thousands of refugees in Europe, journalists and political analysts labelled the momentary breakdown of the European strategies of prevention against migrants as a “crisis”.⁵⁵⁷ This crisis was not referred to the people who were forced to flee their countries due to violence or chronic uncertainty, but it concerned the European

⁵⁵¹ “Serbia-Ungheria: dati allarmanti sulle violenze indiscriminate al confine,” Medici Senza Frontiere, Agosto 5, 2022, <https://www.medicisenzafrotiere.it/news-e-storie/news/serbia-ungheria-violenze-confine/>.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Tommy Olsen, “17 Children Left Drifting at Sea,” Aegean Boat Report, January 13, 2022, <https://aegeanboatreport.com/2022/01/13/17-children-left-drifting-at-sea/>.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Mercedes Jiménez, “Autonomous child migration at the southern European border,” 1.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁵⁷ Annika Lems, Kathrin Oester, and Sabine Strasser, “Children of the crisis: ethnographic perspectives on unaccompanied refugee youth in and en route to Europe,” 315.

countries who could not ward off the movements of displaced people.⁵⁵⁸ Governments could see countless masses of people crossing their borders or climbing their fences, but one subject was placed at the centre of the problem: the child refugee. Indeed, stories and images of children taking part in the long journey towards Europe without parents or legal guardians made their way into media reports. Sensationalists press across the continent, which had advocated for anti-refugee discourses driven by resentment and fear, changed drastically tenor when it came to unaccompanied refugee minors.⁵⁵⁹ In particular, when the photograph of the dead body of three-year-old Alan Kurdi on a Turkish beach traumatized people across the European continent, images of young migrant children stranded in various border points began to be broadcasted by the media placing moral pressure on both politicians and common people.⁵⁶⁰ On the 12th of June 2015, the British right-wing newspaper the Daily Mail printed an article carrying the title:

“They’ve already walked across the blistering Sahara desert, witnessed ISIS beheadings and survived the voyage across the Med in boats so hot ‘they couldn’t breathe’. Now these child migrants – as young as ten – are travelling Europe ALONE”.⁵⁶¹

Along the same line, the German journal Bild published another article in October 2015 about the appalling situation of children, both alone and accompanied, who travelled along the Balkan route titled:

“HUNGER, KÄLTE, MISSBRAUCH: So leiden die Kinder auf der Flucht nach Europa” (Starvation, coldness, abuse: This is how children on their way to Europe suffer).⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁸ Annika Lems, Kathrin Oester, and Sabine Strasser, "Children of the crisis: ethnographic perspectives on unaccompanied refugee youth in and en route to Europe," 315.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 316.

⁵⁶⁰ Carly McLaughlin, “‘They don’t look like children’: child asylumseekers, the Dubs amendment and the politics of childhood,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no.11 (2018): 1757.

⁵⁶¹ Hannah Roberts, “They’ve Already Walked across the Blistering Sahara Desert, Witnessed ISIS Beheadings and Survived the Voyage across the Med in Boats so Hot ‘They Couldn’t Breathe’. Now These Child Migrants - as Young as Ten - Are Travelling Europe ALONE,” Daily Mail, June 12, 2015, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3119751/They-ve-walked-blistering-Sahara-desert-witnessed-ISIS-beheadings-survived-voyage-Med-boats-hot-couldn-t-breathe-child-migrants-young-ten-travelling-Europe-ALONE.html>.

⁵⁶² Viktoria Dümer, “Hunger, Kälte, Missbrauch: So Leiden Die Kinder Auf Der Flucht Nach Europa,” Bild (October 27, 2015), <https://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/fluechtlingskrise/sexuelle-uebergreifung-das-leid-der-fluechtlingskinder-43154476.bild.html>.

In the following weeks, innumerable articles described the young refugees as shocked and highly vulnerable migrants in search for help and socio-medical intervention. In fact, a new narrative emerged in which unaccompanied minors were victims of the misconduct of a world controlled by corrupted adults, a planet where children were not in charge of their own lives and that they needed to be protected against.⁵⁶³ There was a talk of moral obligation towards these children, often by drawing on historical events which were described in previous chapters, such as the *Kindertransport* for Jewish children in the Second World War, or, as regards Germany, by depicting the responsibility of aiding refugee children as a repayment for the failures of the Nazi regime in the past.⁵⁶⁴ Indeed, the analogies between the *Kindertransport* children and present-day unaccompanied minors were rapidly picked up by the media.⁵⁶⁵ The Guardian published an article in which former children of the *Kindertransport* were interviewed asking them to reflect on the situation of child refugees today.⁵⁶⁶ Moreover, European governments focused their agendas on unaccompanied migrant minors on particular conceptions about childhood and children's rights. For instance, media outlets began to publish images of teddy bears and children's shoes stranded in mud, which were an indication of innocent childhoods destroyed, to imply that the very idea of childhood was at stake and not only the lives of individual children.⁵⁶⁷ Didier Fassin places the origins of the perception of childhood at the end of the 19th century, when legislations about the ill-treatment of children and the institution of social work began to appear in Western Europe and North America.⁵⁶⁸ The author underlined the link between childhood and an authentic sense of innocence, generating a clear cut between the states of adulthood and childhood. In the aftermath of World War II, the idea that childhood as a moment of innocence had to be protected was spread around the globe, especially with the foundation of the UNICEF in 1946, the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶³ Annika Lems, Kathrin Oester, and Sabine Strasser, "Children of the crisis: ethnographic perspectives on unaccompanied refugee youth in and en route to Europe," 316.

⁵⁶⁴ Bridget Anderson, "The politics of pests: Immigration and the invasive other," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (2017): 11.

⁵⁶⁵ Carly McLaughlin, "'They don't look like children': child asylumseekers, the Dubs amendment and the politics of childhood," 1761.

⁵⁶⁶ "Kindertransport Survivors on Today's Child Refugees," The Guardian (May 19, 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2016/may/19/kindertransport-survivors-todays-child-refugees-nicholas-winton>.

⁵⁶⁷ Carly McLaughlin, "'They don't look like children': child asylumseekers, the Dubs amendment and the politics of childhood," 1760.

⁵⁶⁸ Didier Fassin, "Massacre of the Innocents: Representing childhood in the age of AIDS," in *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (University of California Press, 2012), 179.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

Hence, the figure of the child victim deep-rooted in contemporary debates on unaccompanied minors was already established into its legal and policy definition.⁵⁷⁰ According to Liisa Malkki, the sentimentalized images of innocent children were designed to “cut across cultural and political difference” and appeal to a common humanity of people.⁵⁷¹

However, barely months following the wave of compassion for the unaccompanied children, the figure of the minors began to raise doubts and suspicion amongst the media and the principal authorities of European countries. Narratives of “imposter-children”, who were thought to fake their age and identity in order to gain access to preferential treatment, were connected to migrant youth criminality and threats to Europe’s moral and social order.⁵⁷² In the public and media debate, the figure of unaccompanied minors progressively lost its innocence transforming itself into its extreme opposite. The word ‘children’ was quickly abandoned to be replaced by ‘youths’, ‘minors’, ‘lads’, or it was placed in inverted commas to suggest that frauds had taken their place.⁵⁷³ An ever-increasing media coverage was portraying unaccompanied minors’ supposed dangerous criminal and sexual energy.⁵⁷⁴ In December 2017, the Bild broadcasted an article entitled:

“Mannheimer Oberbürgermeister spricht von ‘Staatsversagen’: Minderjährige Flüchtlinge sorgen für Ärger ‘Bislang nicht gekannte hohe kriminelle Energie, kein Interesse an Integration’” (Mannheim’s mayor speaks of ‘State failure’: Underage refugees cause trouble ‘Unprecedented high criminal energy, no interest in integration’).⁵⁷⁵

Associated with the cultural politics of asylum, the politics of age operated against the new arrivals to transfigure them from innocent children into blameable adolescents who were no

⁵⁷⁰ Annika Lems, Kathrin Oester, and Sabine Strasser, "Children of the crisis: ethnographic perspectives on unaccompanied refugee youth in and en route to Europe," 325.

⁵⁷¹ Liisa H. Malkki, "Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization," *Cultural anthropology* 11, no. 3 (1996): 388.

⁵⁷² Stephanie J. Silverman, "'Imposter-Children' in the UK Refugee Status Determination Process," *Refuge* 32, no.3 (2016): 31.

⁵⁷³ Carly McLaughlin, "'They don't look like children': child asylumseekers, the Dubs amendment and the politics of childhood," 1763.

⁵⁷⁴ Annika Lems, Kathrin Oester, and Sabine Strasser, "Children of the crisis: ethnographic perspectives on unaccompanied refugee youth in and en route to Europe," 328.

⁵⁷⁵ "Mannheimer Ob Spricht Von „Staatsversagen“ - Minderjährige Flüchtlinge Sorgen Für Ärger," Bild, December 2, 2017, <https://www.bild.de/news/inland/fluechtlinge/oberbuergermeister-schlaegt-alarm-54058212.bild.html>.

longer worthy of protection.⁵⁷⁶ Having said that, this conception of unaccompanied minors as the personification of a ‘crisis’ is clearly similar to historical discourses from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries about child migrants taking part in illegal and criminal activities in Europe and North America, as already mentioned in previous chapters of this thesis. Indeed, these children were depicted as deranged, unpredictable, and out of control.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁶ Carly McLaughlin, “‘They don’t look like children’: child asylumseekers, the Dubs amendment and the politics of childhood,” 1763.

⁵⁷⁷ Susan J. Terrio, "New Barbarians at the Gates of Paris? Prosecuting Undocumented Minors in the Juvenile Court: The Problem of the 'Petits Roumains'," *Anthropological Quarterly* 81, no.4 (2008): 875.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

This paper aimed at going beyond the common understanding of child migration, that is being solely a part of adult migration and it being generally forced, and alternatively analysing the phenomenon from a more comprehensive point of view. Child migration and its relationship with an ever-changing legal framework has been examined giving a deeper understanding of the subject. Through diverse case studies, the analysis adds insights into the already available field of study on child migration by increasing the general knowledge on the matter. The migration of children and adolescents, whether between or within countries, led by their relatives or legal guardians or unaccompanied, is recognized as being an important part of past and present global and mixed migration flows. Nonetheless, child migration has solely recently become a concern and focus of research and policy debate. As a result, little information about this category of migration is addressed in the global migration debate. Academic and political debates often tend to portray children as passive victims of exploitation, perhaps even in the case of human trafficking, forced to move and work in exploitative situations.⁵⁷⁸ However, several studies and policy approaches to unaccompanied minors demonstrate the diverse experiences of migrant children, both positive and negative. Independent youth migration is not necessarily an exploitative or harmful experience, but a multifaceted phenomenon. In fact, children can be actively involved in the decision-making process about their future.

It is for this reason that this thesis aimed at investigating child migration as an independent entity, separated from the general perception of migration as being only an adult-centric phenomenon. In the analysis, two principal categories of migration have emerged, namely migrations due to wars and persecutions and migrations in search for a new life. The examination focused on specific instances which took place between the 19th and 20th century placing them alongside the situation in contemporary times. In this way, the comparison shows certain similarities and differences between the historical periods analysed.

First and foremost, the causes for migration have remained unchanged. In both historical periods, minors are forced to leave their home countries as a result of ongoing conflicts, poverty, or they move to other nations in search for a better future. Moreover, the modalities

⁵⁷⁸ *Unaccompanied Children on the Move: The work of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)*, International Organization for Migration (2011), 11.

in which these journeys occur are particularly similar. As analysed above, in the first decades of the 20th century, children would leave the European continent on steamships (e.g., Jews escaping Germany to the U.S., through England, or via Siberia and Japan). Nowadays, minors originating from Africa usually arrive in Italy or Greece on inflatable boats or life rafts. Perhaps, international organizations and voluntary agencies have altered their focus, as in the past they coordinated mainly the journey itself while nowadays they centre their attention more on the reception of minors in the country of arrival. Nevertheless, there have always been institutions which aided child migrants in the search of a safe shelter. Another similarity identified in the analysis of the diverse case studies is that of the treatment of children in the country of arrival of child migrants. In fact, minors have repeatedly endured abuses and neglect by receiving organizations in the country of arrival, as they are considered to be *persona non grata*. For instance, British children suffered from sexual, physical, and psychological abuses perpetrated by the authorities in Australian voluntary agencies. Similarly, in the present, young individuals have documented numerous times the maltreatments suffered during their journey towards Europe both by hands of smugglers and by the border guards at the European borders. Finally, there has always been a double representation of child migrants by the media. Indeed, young Italian emigrants in the 19th century were portrayed as being both helpless victims at the mercy of brutal exploiters and cunning children incapable of following any rule. Likewise, the mediatic attention on child emigrants in Europe nowadays has shifted from wanting to aid the ‘helpless martyrs’ to pursuing them as criminals and imposters.

On the contrary, as a result of the analysis of the two cases, some structural differences have emerged. Above all, Europe switched from being the principal supplier of migratory movements to being the main target for migrants coming from other countries. Furthermore, over the last fifty years, with the creation of new regulations, the migration of individuals has started to be more controlled by European states. For instance, with the implementation of the Schengen agreements, most countries abolished their national borders allowing the free movement of people between the various territories and creating a common European space. Another example is the foundation of the Dublin regulation, that determines which EU member state is responsible for the examination of an application for asylum submitted by persons seeking international protection. Nevertheless, as already seen above, migrants are often not even allowed to enter the European territory under the pretext of migration control. Thus, the instruments created become obsolete for minor migrants. In fact, there are many violations of the newly created rules (e.g., the principle of non-refoulement is often violated by border

guards in European countries). Certainly, much progress has been made in creating new and more specific legislations to control child migration and not only migration in general, as we have seen in previous chapters. For instance, the International Labour Organization published laws which set a minimum age for child labour, setting it to 15 years of age. Moreover, it has to be noted that today the top sending countries of unaccompanied minors have been classified as the least peaceful countries in the world, contrary to the past. Finally, nowadays there are very few safe and regular pathways for youth to migrate, as regular migration channels are closed to most.

When establishing a new agenda for further regulations on the matter, European governments should prioritize the following actions. First and foremost, authorities should listen to the voices of migrant and refugee children and youth. In fact, adolescents and child migrants exercise agency and show a great resilience during their journeys; hence, their opinions should be taken into account when designing, implementing and evaluating services, policies and interventions.⁵⁷⁹ Furthermore, all concerned parties (i.e., countries of origin, arrival and transit) should provide more channels to travel safely and regularly for children seeking escape from violence or better opportunities.⁵⁸⁰ This stems from the fact that the longer the journey and transit are, the higher is the likelihood of exploitation and harm for children on the move. In addition to these actions, it must be emphasized that migrant and refugee children are children first and they are entitled to all rights preserved under the Convention on the Rights of the Children, as already mentioned above. Thus, enhanced efforts should be undertaken for early identification of these children in order to protect them from the risks of exploitation or trafficking and further forms of abuse and to guarantee them their fundamental rights. Finally, all involved states should bring to a prompt end the detention of children for immigration intents and generate valid alternatives that aim at preserving family unity.⁵⁸¹

Within this thesis, the topic of child migration has been analysed to a limited extent, focusing solely on the European continent and on a specific historical period. Nevertheless, research could direct its attention to numerous further topics related to the matter, such as analysing the

⁵⁷⁹ International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNICEF. *HARROWING JOURNEYS – Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation* (2017), 50.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

issue in other countries or from a diverse point of view. Furthermore, there are numerous internal migrations taking place both in Europe and within the countries of origin of child migrants that are not taken in consideration in this thesis. When establishing a new agenda for further research, it is essential to recognize the importance of the inherent agency of children in their journeys and the uniqueness of such movements. There is still a variety of cases and particularities that are not analysed in this thesis. Certainly, alternatives to unaccompanied migration should be studied; however, as long as there are no further options, the main aim of all parties involved should be to out the interests of migrant children first and guide them through their journeys as much as possible. Lastly, a larger evidence base on the phenomenon and needs of children on the move has to be built. Research efforts should examine the ways in which children become separated from their families, and methodically review child protection systems across countries.

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