

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies  
CEGES-SOMA AB2167 René de Lathouwer, 'Comité de Defense des Jufis – Dossier Heiber' pp.43-70.

Persecution and Deportation in Western Europe  
– Rescue and Survival of Jews in Occupied Western Europe – A Reappraisal  
Translation: E09 Report of the CDJ youth section FR

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### HEIBER FILES

WRITTEN AT THE TOMBEEK SANITORIUM IN NOVEMBER 1944 BY MAURICE HEIBER, ORGANIZER AND NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE CHILDREN'S SECTION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF JEWS (CDJ) UNTIL HIS ARREST ON MAY 21, 1943.

### THE CHILDREN.

Large numbers of Jewish children were deported from the Nazi-occupied countries and sent to Silesia in leaden cattle cars.

Inside these cars, there was a very thin bed of straw. The windows were covered with iron bars and hung with barbed wire.

Children of all ages, who had been ripped from their mothers' breast, were gassed in specially outfitted gas chambers and their bodies were burnt in crematorium ovens. Gas chambers and "crematoriums" built according to the grand tradition of renowned German techniques.

Before they died, the children were stripped of all their clothes. Their clothing was cleaned, sorted and packaged using highly scrupulous German methods, labeled as donations from "NSDAP party collection efforts" and sent to be distributed to children in areas that had been bombed. The Nazi leaders proudly boasted about how very community-minded they were.

The following description details the actions carried out in Belgium in order to save the Jewish children from the clutches of their executioners.

#### The child martyrs. –

The first roundups of Jews, which were carried out by the Gestapo in August 1942 with help from the Feldgendarmerie, came as a violent shock for the public. Women,

men and children, the sick and the elderly, all suffered without distinction from the brutality of these tragic acts. All of them were kicked and beaten with sticks and crops and hauled into trucks parked near the targeted quarters. It was a stunning victory for German strategy and military engineering. Early in the morning, once the Gestapo and its henchmen had driven away

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with their catch, the distressed and distraught locals stood in their doorways and wondered whether the heart-rending scenes they had just witnessed had been real or whether it had just been a nightmare. Not long after, the sounds of crying children and babies emerged from street corners and from the ransacked apartments. Some mothers, driven undoubtedly by their instinct of self-preservation, had managed to either hide their children in a piece of furniture or in some corner somewhere; it is this same instinct that drove the little ones to hush up and stay silent in their improvised hiding places. There were also some children who got lost and others who fled.

Neighbors came to the aid of these young survivors. Local convents and parish preachers welcomed the children into their homes. Those were the first children to be hidden.

The Committee for the Protection of Jews immediately contacted the preachers and convents that had taken the children in order to provide them with material support and make sure that they were looked after.

That is when the idea of taking the preventative measure of hiding all of the Jewish children in safe places came about. This would not only give the persecuted children the greatest likelihood of escaping but also allow their parents to move about more freely and do whatever it takes to protect themselves from this manhunt.

Initially, in order to finance this operation, we developed a system whereby the parents of wealthy children would cover the lodging costs of one poor child as well. Since there were clearly not enough wealthy families to accomplish very much, this plan was quickly abandoned.

In September 1942, a director of the children's section was named, to be supported by a small action commission. This director was charged with finding ways to hide children of both sexes and all ages (from 0 to 16 years of age).

First, the branch director had the committee adopt the following principles:

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- 1. The member organizations will delegate one person to stay in permanent contact with the children's commission.
- 2. The member organizations will encourage parents to allow the children to be hidden immediately.
- 3. The committee organizations will forward any placement requests to the commission, which will ensure that the rest of the work is carried out according to a well-defined plan.
- 4. All means of finding placements must be employed, taking into account the number of requests and places available, regardless of budgetary constraints. The funds must be found and must not be obstacles to the children's safety.

*translated by Nina Fink*