



French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial

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French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial From NYU Press

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During World War II, 11,000 Jewish children were deported from France to Auschwitz and other Nazi death camps in convoys that continued rolling until August 18, 1944—the very day of the Paris uprising that ended with the city's liberation. The children were among more than 75,000 French Jews deported to the camps under the Nazi plan for the final solution of the Jewish question. Nearly all of the young victims—some less than two years old—were arrested by the French police on orders of the Vichy government and turned over to the Germans for deportation. Only a handful of the children survived.

In *French Children of the Holocaust*, Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld—the man who brought Klaus Barbie to justice in 1983—has created a volume of stunning documentary importance. Drawing together archival evidence pried with difficulty from the French government, family testimony and photographs solicited by advertisements in Jewish publications in Europe, Israel, and the United States, and the Nazi's own lists of deportees—which were discovered, fading and crumbling, by Klarsfeld in a French Jewish archive—this book represents the culmination of many volunteers' painstaking efforts to give testimony to the short lives of these Jewish children.

Photographs of over 1,500 of the children, gathered from their surviving relatives and family friends all over the world, bring life to their brief biographies. Included with each photograph is the name, age, place and date of birth, home address, and the date and brief history of the deportation convoys that transported them to the death camps.

This book is an invaluable reference for scholars of the Holocaust, signifying the last attempt to rescue these young victims of the Nazis from oblivion and to help them leave a permanent mark on history as individuals and as a group.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

December publications Serge Klarsfeld, a tireless Nazi hunter who located Klaus Barbie, among others, and the author of 20 books on the Holocaust, has compiled an astonishing, haunting document which restores to us the memory of 2500 children deported by the Vichy government to the German death camps. *French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial* has a b&w picture of each child, with a short paragraph detailing his or her place of birth, parentage and manner of deportation. By forcing us to confront each victim individually, Klarsfeld not only allows readers a vital historical connection to them but has shown how any attempt to explain their plight must fail.

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From [Booklist](#)

[Editor's note: In ordinary circumstances, Booklist would rarely devote space to a 1,881-page documentary reference work costing \$95. Clearly, such a work is specialized and almost certainly of more interest to scholars than general readers. Yes, all that is true, but when you read Molly McQuade's Focus essay below, you'll see that this is a very special 1,881-page book. It's a memorial, really, to French children who died in the Holocaust, and as such its heft only adds to its poignance. Though the book may seem to fall into a category outside our usual scope, its mission, to provide a "collective gravestone" for some 11,400 French children, was one we could not ignore.]

Among the 75,000 French Jews deported to Nazi death camps were 11,400 children, ranging in age from teenagers to toddlers less than two years old. Nearly all were sent to the gas chamber. Their remains were burned. Serge Klarsfeld, well known for his efforts to locate former Nazis and bring them to trial, has compiled *French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial* as "an instrument of memory" to document the lost French children. First published in France in 1994, the book was translated into English by Glorianne Depondt and Howard M. Epstein, with additional translation by the poet Magda Bogin, and published by New York University Press in the fall of 1996.

The enormous volume of nearly 2,000 pages, priced at \$95, serves as a dolefully heroic atlas of unthinkable destinies. In page after page, 2,500 children's faces rise in photographs from the brink of better times: a brother and sister, Elie and Helene Magier, hold hands in front of the Eiffel Tower. The brothers Albert and David Szymkowicz sit side by side like twins, incurably innocent of the future. Every deported child of the 11,400 is documented in a paragraph or more providing name, place of birth, age and address at time of deportation, and deportation convoy number. Some entries include other information, as well as excerpts from the children's diaries and letters.

Sarah Lichtstein, who was arrested at age 14 in the notorious Velodrome d'Hiver "roundup" of 4,000 Jewish children in Paris in 1942, escaped after her deportation and wrote of the 1942 arrest: "I can still see every detail of that day marked by grief. . . . On the track where cyclists normally ride, people are sitting on their suitcases, terrified, disoriented. Some of them are running every which way and shouting, but most of us just sit there silently, as if paralyzed by anxiety, not understanding what is happening to us. People recognize each other and shout out the details of what they saw during their arrest; a woman threw herself from a fifth story, a man hanged himself, a mother was torn from her children, they fired on people who were trying to escape. I listen terrified, and watch people being carried in on stretchers."

The arrival of a children's deportation convoy at Drancy, just outside Paris, was observed in 1943 by Odette

Daltroff-Baticie. "Buses arrive. We remove children in unimaginable condition. A cloud of insects surrounds them, and a terrible stench. They have traveled for days and nights from Pithiviers in sealed boxcars: 90 to a car. . . . The horror of the days they have lived through has been etched into their small faces, stigmatized them. They have understood everything, like adults."

As that witness was quick to note, the smallest children--the very youngest was 15 months old--were too young even to know their own names. The Nazis identified them only by assigned numbers. Klarsfeld confides in his preface, "I felt a deep shame that they died nameless to the world."

Part of his work as a historian of genocide involved verifying the spelling of family names of children as these were known at deportation. Deportation records listed variants. In addition, children of East European parentage usually had both a French name and a Yiddish one. The French spellings of the Yiddish names included many inconsistencies. Klarsfeld searched for this and other information by talking extensively with French survivors and seeking out sources via radio and newspaper in France, the U.S., Israel, and elsewhere.

Only 300 of the deported French Jewish children are known to have survived their ordeal. Klarsfeld himself was hunted as a child by the Nazis in Nice, where his family, Romanian by nationality, was then hiding. Arno Klarsfeld, his father, was captured there in 1943 by Alois Brunner, an SS officer and deputy of Adolf Eichmann, and was later killed in Auschwitz. The father gave himself up in order to save his wife and children, who were concealed nearby in a closet. *Molly McQuade*

Review

"This haunting book is hard to pick up, harder to put down, and still harder to forget."

-*Choice*, May 1997

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sherrie Shannon:

Here thing why that French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial are different and reputable to be yours. First of all reading a book is good however it depends in the content than it which is the content is as delightful as food or not. French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial giving you information deeper and in different ways, you can find any e-book out there but there is no e-book that similar with French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial. It gives you thrill looking at journey, its open up your own personal eyes about the thing in which happened in the world which is maybe can be happened around you. It is easy to bring everywhere like in playground, café, or even in your means home by train. If you are having difficulties in bringing the paper book maybe the form of French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial in e-book can be your alternate.

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Diane Wilson:

The particular book French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial has a lot of information on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of help. The book was authored by the very famous author. The writer makes some research ahead of write this book. This book very easy to read you can get the point easily after perusing this book.

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