WISH ME LUCK AS YOU WAVE ME GOODBYE

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THE EVACUATIONS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN IN GREAT BRITAIN DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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Abstract

This paper studies the evacuations of schoolchildren in Great Britain during the Second World War and examines how the progress of the war affected the government’s organization and implementation of these evacuations as well as the public’s opinions of and reactions to them. This study focuses on the perceived need for evacuation at various points in the war (1939, 1940, and 1944) and the ways in which this need affected how the government and the public viewed and endured the trials and tribulations of these mass movements of a large portion of Great Britain’s vulnerable population. It argues that as the war progressed and Great Britain was increasingly drawn in, these evacuations became less organized, but were better received and endured because they were perceived as necessary.
In 1939, the impending war with Germany forced Great Britain to take action to remove schoolchildren, as well as other vulnerable members of society, from the major cities, which the government believed were most likely to be attacked in the event of war. Great Britain evacuated schoolchildren three times during the next six years. The first evacuation occurred mainly over a two week period in early September 1939 as a result of the German invasion of Poland on September 1 and Great Britain’s subsequent declaration of war on Germany on September 3. In 1940, as the war edged closer to Great Britain after the Nazi occupation of Paris in June, the government realized that a second evacuation was needed as a majority of the children evacuated in 1939 had already returned home. This realization caused the development and initiation of the second evacuation which occurred from May-December 1940. The third evacuation occurred from July-September 1944 as a result of the German development and use of the V-1 buzz-bomb and V-2 rocket to bomb Great Britain. Each of these evacuations faced its own difficulties in terms of organization, implementation, and public opinion.

The government organization and public opinions of the evacuations were deeply affected by the progress of the war. As the war progressed and Great Britain was increasingly drawn in, the government sponsored evacuations became less organized, but were better received and endured by the public because they were perceived as necessary. The first evacuation in 1939 was the most well-organized of the three, but it was the poorest received and the only one that is considered a failure because a majority of the evacuated children returned home within six months. The other two evacuations, occurring in 1940 and 1944, were less organized than the first, but were better received by the public and were considered successes because the majority of the children in these
evacuations remained evacuated for the duration of the war. The perception of the need for evacuation in 1940 and 1944 made people more receptive to and understanding of the difficulties and hardships brought on by a mass movement of millions of their country’s citizens.

Although it would eventually become the best organized of the three evacuations, the plans for the evacuation in 1939 did not begin promisingly. The government viewed evacuation first and foremost as a militarily expedient, a counter move to the enemy’s attempts to attack and demoralize the civilian population.¹ Even though evacuation had been discussed since 1921 and considered an integral part of civil defense as early as 1933, it was not until 1938, when war became a real possibility, that the government began to make more detailed plans.² They thought that if war was declared, panic and mass movement from the cities would be inevitable and chaotic unless the government took firm control. In May 1938, the government appointed a committee chaired by Sir John Anderson of the Home Department to “review the various aspects of the problem of transferring persons from areas which would be likely, in time of war, to be exposed to aerial bombardment.”³ The committee received evidence from the Air Ministry, the Board of Education, the Health Departments, the Ministry of Labor, and the Home Office.⁴ The committee’s report, completed July 26, 1938, was presented to Parliament. It made the following conclusions: evacuation should be voluntary, production in large industrial towns must be maintained, evacuation of people from certain industrial areas must be provided for, people will be billeted in private houses under compulsory

³ Ibid, 27.
⁴ Ibid.
billeting, initial evacuation costs should be maintained by the government, and special arrangements would be made for schoolchildren to move in groups with their schools.\(^5\)

Originally, the task of preparing the evacuation plans had been delegated to the Home Department, but on November 14, 1938, it was transferred to the Health Department as part of a general redistribution of the functions of the Air Raid Precautions Department.\(^6\) They immediately began the daunting task of translating the committee’s report into a practical plan. The first task involved dividing Great Britain into three zones: evacuation, neutral, and reception.\(^7\) Evacuation areas were mostly large, urban areas that were expected to be targeted. This included cities such as London, Liverpool, Manchester, portions of Southampton, etc.\(^8\) Neutral areas were between large cities and the countryside and thus not in enough danger to send out evacuees, but not safe enough to receive them. Reception areas were places in the countryside that were thought to be the safest from German attack. These included counties such as Lancashire and Kent, and cities such as Cambridge and Oxford, among others.\(^9\) Although the process of evacuation was highly thought out and organized, there was very little attempt to coordinate the evacuation areas with the reception areas, which is a theme that can be seen throughout all three evacuations and would later cause many of the evacuation problems.

The second task in the preparation of the evacuation plans was to ascertain how many evacuees could be accommodated in each reception area. On January 5, 1939, local authorities were instructed to obtain estimates of local housing accommodations in the

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\(^6\) Titmuss, 31.


\(^9\) Ibid.
reception areas. Initially, it was reported that there were about 4,800,000 available rooms in the reception areas in England and Wales. However, by the time these reports were due at the end of February individual householders reported that 1,100,000 of these rooms had been reserved for people who were evacuating privately. This meant extra stress for the government because now they had to deal with the issue of planning the evacuation while worrying about the necessary housing being taken up by private evacuations, which they were powerless to stop.

In May 1939, a statement of the entire plan was publicized in more detail in Memo. Ev. 4. This outlined the duties of the authorities in both the evacuation and reception areas as well as revealed the “priority classes” who could participate in the government evacuation. These classes consisted of schoolchildren, to be evacuated with their school under the charge of their teachers and voluntary helpers; young children under the age of five, accompanied by their mothers or other people responsible for them; expectant mothers; and blind or handicapped adults. The unaccompanied schoolchildren made up the largest “priority class,” and were the most affected by the evacuation.

Surprisingly for the government, the May publication resulted in low registrations. People were resistant to the idea of evacuation for many reasons. Some people believed that the air raids would not occur and wanted to wait to see if they did before making the decision to evacuate. Others, especially in poorer families, believed that bombing was

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10 Titmuss, 37.
11 Ibid.
14 Titmuss, 33-34.
likely, but preferred that, “If one of us is going to die, it would be better if we all died together.”

By the end of July, local authorities were asked to complete a house to house canvas in order to increase registration. This canvas was completed by mid-August, but resulted in only a slight improvement of schoolchildren registration. Although less than half of London’s schoolchildren were registered to go, the government ultimately decided not to scale back their plans because they felt that people might be more inclined to go once the war started. The government took special care not to make the evacuation mandatory or disallow private evacuation for fear of upsetting public opinion, despite the fact that private evacuations, which were estimated to make up a quarter of the evacuees, were clearly upsetting the government arrangements, as shown in drastic change in the number of available rooms from January to February 1939.

Since the evacuation was voluntary, the government had the difficult task of planning every detail without having a concrete number of evacuees to base anything on. It was estimated that the government would need to provide transport, food, and lodging for about 4,000,000 people; 1,400,000 of them from the London area alone. Throughout the spring and summer of 1939, the government grew more panicked about the impending war and the evacuation plans grew more rushed. The government worried that the previous estimate of four days to evacuate London and the other major cities was too long and would be cut in half by heavy air attacks. The dominating concern was to get the evacuees to the reception areas at almost any cost, which resulted in the neglect of the planning for the receiving end of the evacuation. This would eventually become a major

15 Titmuss, 105.
16 Ibid, 44.
17 Ibid, 34-35.
contributor to the failure of this first evacuation and a defining factor between it and future evacuations. By the summer of 1939, Parliament passed the Civil Defense Act, part of which made it obligatory for local authorities to carry out any plan initiated by the Minister of Health.\textsuperscript{18} It also gave the Minister of Health the authority to commandeer private houses for billeting and to stipulate the extent to which the owners of those houses should be responsible for feeding and caring for children.\textsuperscript{19} Although the government insisted that both evacuation and billeting should be voluntary in the beginning, they noted that billeting could become compulsory if needed.

In early August, several schools held practice evacuations in order to test the arrangements for getting children from the schools to the train stations.\textsuperscript{20} Parents were instructed to have the children’s luggage ready to go at a moment’s notice. This luggage was to include the child’s gas mask, change of underclothing, pajamas, house shoes, spare socks, toothbrush, comb, towel, soap and face cloth, handkerchiefs, a packet of food and, if possible, a warm coat.\textsuperscript{21} The school teachers were responsible for creating two identity cards for each child; one for the child and the other for the child’s luggage. Finally, on August 31, 1939, the long anticipated and dreaded announcement came: evacuating and receiving authorities were told to be ready to carry out the evacuation plans within twenty-four hours.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{18} Padley and Cole, 30.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Longmate, 49.
\textsuperscript{21} “Evacuation To-day: Official Advice to Parents,” The London Times, September 1, 1939.
\textsuperscript{22} This was announced because the British government had received word that Germany would attack Poland on September 1\textsuperscript{st}. This attack caused Great Britain to declare war on Germany on September 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 1939.
On September 1, 1939, the children arrived at the school, clutching their gasmasks and rucksacks which they had been required to bring to school for over a week in anticipation of the evacuation. They were then organized into squads of fifty with at least five teachers per squad. Each group was led by a teacher or volunteer who bore a banner giving the school name and colors. The teachers and helpers were also easily identifiable by their bright-red armbands with the school numbers in black lettering. Some parents stood outside of the playground or school and attempted to keep a cheerful face as their children were marched past on their way to the stations. Some mothers were not as strong as others. They followed behind the school groups, weeping, and a few had to be restrained by the police from joining their children or snatching them back.

Unlike their parents, it was easy for many of the evacuees to be cheerful because they did not officially know what was going on. Many had been told by their parents that they were going on vacation. Some younger children even arrived with shovels and pails, having been told that they were going to the seashore. In his Mass Observation diary, Joseph Welbank describes a conversation he engaged in with a school mistress the night before the evacuation. “I said ‘I bet the kids feel miserable, don’t they?’ She said ‘No fear, they are looking forward to it. Some of them are sorry there wasn’t a war last

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23 Calder, 38.
24 Jackson, 27.
25 Longmate, 51.
September. They want a holiday. That’s the best way to look at it.”

26 This shows the extent to which many of the children did not know what was really going on or why they were being evacuated. This is also helpful in noting the differences in public opinion between this evacuation, which occurred before there was any real danger, and the latter two evacuations which occurred very much in the middle of battle zones.

Overall, the evacuation went well considering there were seventy-two stations and four thousand trains involved.27 Within three days, nearly 1,437,000 people had been moved from the cities without a single casualty or accident.28 Although the transportation part of the plan was the most organized, it did not go completely as planned because there were fewer evacuees than had been expected. When the children arrived at the railway platforms with their school groups they were loaded onto whatever train was available with little effort to control their destinations.29 School groups and families were often broken up in the rush to get everyone on trains. In a parents’ meeting the night before, the children’s parents had been instructed not to cry and told that they would be sent a postcard by their children notifying them of where they were to be billeted once they had reached the reception

28 Titmuss, 101.
area. On one railway platform, a mother was overheard remarking, “She [her youngest child] cried a lot last night…wish I knew where she was going.” Other parents saw the disorganization and “secrecy” as reasons to evacuate their children privately or not at all. Another woman was heard to remark, “Glad these two [her children] are going separately…I’ll know where they are.”

Besides the long, destination-unknown journey, the biggest problem for evacuees during the travel stage of evacuation was a lack of food and water. Teachers had forbidden children from bringing any water, the “official” reason being to avoid broken glass, but in truth they did not want to worry about children having to use the bathroom during the journey. Fruit, such as apples, oranges, and pears, were used as thirst quenchers. Although the largest movement of people occurred in the first three days, the evacuation was not considered to be “completed” for another two weeks. In London, only half of the schoolchildren were evacuated at this time. Nationwide 827,000 schoolchildren and 103,000 teachers and helpers were all evacuated during this first and largest evacuation.

When the evacuees arrived in the reception areas, the problems with the plan began to show. These problems ultimately contributed to the failure of this evacuation. Reception and billeting gave rise to the most complaints and brought forth a number of individual difficulties that were impossible to solve because they were inherent to the

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33 Jackson, 27.
34 Padley and Cole, 42.
35 Calder, 37.
36 Titmuss, 103.
structure of English society.\textsuperscript{37} Most of these difficulties would never be completely solved and would remain a problem in the latter two evacuations. However, because of the heightened sense of danger during the evacuations of 1940 and 1944, these problems were more likely to be ignored than they were during the autumn of 1939.

The Ministry of Health had delegated the powers of overseeing the success of the evacuation to the local authorities, but there were no devices in place to compel the authorities to adopt the Ministry’s suggested plans. Although he does not refer to any specific areas, Richard Titmuss notes in \textit{Problems of Social Policy} that in some areas, the local authorities had already worked out transport, food supplies, billets, and education, while other areas were disorganized and refused to think about the evacuation until the arrival of the evacuees was imminent.\textsuperscript{38} Many of the reception areas were also unprepared because their applications to the government to spend money on hostels and purchasing various equipment items had been denied until six days before the start of the war.\textsuperscript{39} The government’s refusal to fund preparations made many local authorities think that they did not need to take evacuation preparations very seriously.

Also, since there was no official policy for billeting and no official group in charge of billeting across different towns, methods of billeting were highly subject to local influence and thus differed greatly across the country.\textsuperscript{40} In some towns, evacuees were taken to schools or community centers that functioned as dispersal centers. In other towns, hosts were waiting at the stations to pick-up the evacuees. In still more places, evacuees were taken to the town center where dispersal was said to be like a cross

\textsuperscript{37} Padley and Cole, 75.  
\textsuperscript{38} Titmuss, 110.  
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 110-111.  
\textsuperscript{40} Calder, 39-40.
between “an early Roman slave market and Selfridge’s bargain basement,” with some children being chosen solely for their ability to help out on the farm or around the house.\textsuperscript{41} Other places, children were delivered haphazardly, sometimes even door-to-door, by the local billeting officer. One former evacuee remembers his reception in Morpeth, Northumberland where, “they actually marched us around (and we were only nine) various streets, knocking on doors – ‘Are you taking children?’”\textsuperscript{42}

One of the worst billeting issues that would continue throughout the war was the constant seesawing between what was compulsory versus what was voluntary. This quasi-voluntary, quasi-compulsory aspect of the plan created doubt among the hosts as to whether they could really be “made to take evacuees.”\textsuperscript{43} Since the government had no way to enforce their plans in the reception areas, the billeting system was open to many abuses and class discriminations.\textsuperscript{44} Housewife Renee Humphries explained:

No one knows exactly the rights and powers of the billeting officers. And no one challenges them because they seem to be exercised more rigorously on poor people than on the rich, as the poor people are often either tenants or employees of the billeting officers or his friends, they do not like to protest.\textsuperscript{45}

Disorganization and confusion upon the arrival of evacuees in reception areas prejudiced many people against the evacuation and the evacuees that they were now being forced to host. Many towns also experienced the issue of receiving the wrong evacuees or the wrong numbers as a result of the transportation rush in the evacuation areas. People expecting schoolchildren ended up receiving mothers with young children

\textsuperscript{41} Calder, 40.
\textsuperscript{43} Padley and Cole, 71.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 149-150.
\textsuperscript{45} Chrisp, 6.
or vice versa. This was publicly recognized by Walter Elliot, Minister of Health, in an article in the *London Times*. Part of the article reads:

> The Minister recognizes that a number of districts’ householders who had volunteered for and were looking forward to the reception of school children were called up on to provide lodging for mothers and young children. The Minister feels sure...householders will appreciate that this could not be completely avoided in a movement of this scale.\(^{46}\)

This situation would have been (and eventually was) more acceptable if the cities had been bombed and a rush evacuation had been needed (as it was in 1940 and 1944), but because there were no raids at this time, the government was widely blamed for causing unnecessary confusion and stress.\(^{47}\)

The cost of the evacuation was another factor in its failure that was overlooked in later evacuations. From the beginning, the Government promised to pay an allowance to those who took in evacuees. Hosts would receive 10 shillings (s) and 6 pence (d) per week for one schoolchild and 8s and 6d for any additional schoolchildren.\(^{48}\) For this allowance, hosts were expected to provide their evacuees with full board and lodging, with the exception of lunch on the days the children were in school. Originally, it was suggested that the Government finance the entire cost of the evacuation and maintenance, as well as paying for rations and transport. This system would most likely have been maintained had the evacuation been immediately followed by the predicted air raids. However, no air raids materialized, and two weeks into the evacuation on September 14, an official pronouncement stated that some parents of evacuated children would be expected to contribute towards this allowance.\(^{49}\)

\(^{46}\) “Reception Area Problems: Minister’s Advice,” *The London Times*, September 13, 1939.
\(^{47}\) Titmuss, 108.
\(^{48}\) Chrissp, 1.
\(^{49}\) Calder, 45.
This suggestion had been made as early as May 1939, but in the onset of war it had been overlooked and it was not until October 4 that the government announced they were going to use a means test to decide what contribution the parents should make.\textsuperscript{50} Parents of evacuated children would be expected to pay at least 6s per week if they could afford it.\textsuperscript{51} If they could afford more, then they were invited to pay the full 9s that was estimated to be the average per child per week.\textsuperscript{52} Most people only ended up paying 2s and 3d per week and a quarter of the evacuees had parents who could not afford any part of the evacuation cost because their wages were so low or they already received help from the government.\textsuperscript{53} These delays and changes in policy frustrated the evacuees’ parents and hosts in light of a lack of promised bombings and undoubtedly contributed to the failing of the evacuation by encouraging some parents to bring their children home.

There was also the question of decent clothing. Many slum children were ill-prepared for the evacuation. Some arrived with little clothing and others had clothes that were not suited for the wear and tear of country living. Kind foster parents felt it their duty to re-outfit children who came ill-prepared. They often did this at their own expense and then asked the parents to pay later, which caused more issues because many parents could not afford new clothes.

\textsuperscript{50} Calder, 45.  
\textsuperscript{51} Padley and Cole, 60.  
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, 60-61.
for their children.\textsuperscript{54} In some towns, charitable funds were organized for children who had insufficient clothes or shoes and the government secretly distributed thousands of pounds for the poorest and most “necessitous cases.”\textsuperscript{55}

Besides the monetary issues, social incompatibilities between the hosts and evacuees were the biggest problems that contributed to the evacuees return home. These social problems also had the greatest implication for Great Britain as a whole and had the longest lasting impact on those who experienced them. Some of these problems would be remedied in the later evacuations while others would cause problems throughout the duration of the war. The complaints from hosts began pouring into the local and national authorities from the day the evacuees arrived. Aside from the complaints of mistakes in the evacuation, most of the hosts’ grievances regarded evacuees who were verminous (lousy), bed-wetters (widespread enuresis brought on by the stress of the evacuation), liars, thieves, had no respect for property, unclean habits, rude, quarrelsome, stuck-up, gave no assistance in the home, and would be too expensive to keep.\textsuperscript{56} Most of these problems were “diseases of poverty,” which helped to make the middle and upper classes, as well as the poor people of the countryside, aware of the “deep and shameful poverty which exists to-day in the rich cities of England.”\textsuperscript{57} E. A. Stebbing wrote in his diary for Mass Observation, “If good can come out of evil, then this war is surely doing good in showing people how

\begin{itemize}
\item Padley and Cole, 149.
\item Calder, 44.
\item Padley and Cole, 72.
\item Ibid, 72-73.
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other people live. There is no doubt that people in this district have been taken aback by the habits and conditions of the life of slum children."

The hosts would have been more sympathetic to the conditions of their evacuees had the cities been bombed, but since they were not, the hosts felt that the exposure to these dirty habits and “diseases of poverty” was unnecessary and their moods quickly changed from sympathetic to hostile. This can be seen in the evacuation of 1940 and 1944 where, although the hosts and evacuees experienced much of the same social problems that caused the failure of the first evacuation in 1939, these problems were more accepted and less likely to result in a drift back to the cities because of the air raids and threat of invasion. Although the request for parental contribution to their child’s allowance and the later reopening of schools undoubtedly had some hand in encouraging the drift back to London,

of much greater effect...were the difficulties which were inherent in the scheme – the sundering of the family, the relations of the guests and host, the surrender of privacy, the desperate and incalculable effect of bringing certain inhabitants of the crowded towns into the homes which had never dreamt of conditions under which some of the back streets lived and moved and had their being."

Problems between the hosts and the evacuees coupled with the lack of bombings were ultimately the biggest factors in parents’ decisions to bring the evacuees home.

The disruption of schooling was also a problem that began in the first evacuation and would carry through to the end of the war. The rush of the evacuation meant that children were often billeted without regard to their school or grade level. Despite being evacuated together, schools were sometimes split up and scattered over several towns

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because there had been no attempt to coordinate the billeting authority with the education authority. One secondary school was spread over seventeen villages located around a town large enough to accommodate the entire school, but had already been occupied by younger children and expectant mothers. Another boys school ended up having its pupils deposited over fifty square miles. Some evacuation areas had attempted to make their own arrangements with reception areas only to have these plans overridden or modified by the government.

The children in the large cities, who did not participate in the evacuation, also had their schooling disrupted as they were left without school for several months. Since the government had expected more people to take part in the evacuation, they had repurposed many of the schools for the war effort and sent all of the teachers to the country with the evacuated children. This issue would occur in all three evacuations. Doctors and social workers began to notice physical deterioration in the children left behind due to the absence of school supervision, medical services, and free school milk. The government was reluctant to re-open the schools in the evacuation areas because it would mean admitting to the public that the evacuation had failed. However, on November 1, 1939, it was announced that schools could reopen in evacuation areas if there were children whose parents wanted them to attend. Unfortunately, the re-opening of several schools in London coincided with the new requests for billeting payments and a spike in parents missing their children which gave parents extra reasons to bring their children home. In

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60 Padley and Cole, 145.
61 Calder, 38.
62 Ibid, 49.
63 Padley and Cole, 154.
64 Calder, 49-50.
the words of one evacuee host Amabel Williams-Ellis, overall “The first evacuation was a failure…a costly failure.”65

In a December 21 War Cabinet meeting, the Secretary of State for Home Affairs and the Civil Defense Committee voiced fear that the Christmas holidays, in combination with the reopening of schools, requests for parent payment, and continued lack of bombings would incite further drift back of the evacuees.66 Despite attempts by the committee to stabilize the existing position in the evacuations, by January 1940, the Ministry of Health had recorded that 45% of the unaccompanied schoolchildren had returned home.67 It is difficult to determine the rate of return, but it appears that most returns occurred at the beginning when the first disillusionment set in, and then spiked again when the scheme for parents’ payments was announced. The main reason for the failure of the 1939 evacuation and the return of the evacuees to the cities was because the air raids and bombings did not occur.

At the time of the initial evacuation the Germans were focused on the invasion of Poland, which began on September 1, 1939, and ended with the surrender of the Warsaw garrison on September 28. The Germans were using most of their forces in this invasion and did not have enough manpower to attack Great Britain at this time, which would have created a two-front war. They also did not yet have the foothold in France that would be necessary to mount a full-scale attack on or invasion of Great Britain. Following the surrender of Poland, the Germans continued to make their way around Europe invading Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and France before setting their

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65 Amy Strachey, Borrowed Children; a Popular Account of Some Evacuation Problems and Their Remedies (New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1940), x.
67 Titmuss, 172.
sights on Britain.\textsuperscript{68} It was this invasion and occupation of France that ended the nearly nine months long “phony war” and caused the government to consider a second evacuation scheme despite the “costly failure” of the first.

Throughout the spring and early summer of 1940, the British government anxiously watched the Germans’ relentless progress through Europe and became increasingly worried about the encroaching war. The German invasion of France on May 10, 1940, caused the government to seriously consider implementing a second evacuation scheme.\textsuperscript{69} They knew that the fall of France would leave British citizens more vulnerable to invasion and air attacks than ever before. This was especially a concern for citizens who lived in the large, industrial cities or along the English Channel coast.\textsuperscript{70} On Thursday May 30, the War Cabinet decided to begin the evacuation of schoolchildren from nineteen ports on the East Coast and South Coast of England on the following Sunday.\textsuperscript{71} They realized that a second evacuation was needed to reduce panicked flight from these areas and to re-evacuate all of the children who had already returned home from the 1939 evacuation. While some people thought this evacuation was premature, the cabinet believed that if the country was invaded these civilians would interfere with important military operations.\textsuperscript{72} With these factors in mind, on June 25, 1940, the same day that France agreed to an armistice with Germany, Great Britain’s war cabinet agreed to organize and carry out a second government assisted evacuation scheme.\textsuperscript{73}

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\textsuperscript{68} Brown, 44. \\
\textsuperscript{69} Ben Wicks, \textit{The Day They Took the Children} (London: Bloomsbury, 1989), 144. \\
\textsuperscript{70} Robert Mackay, \textit{Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 192. \\
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. \\
\end{flushright}
This evacuation scheme, planned during the invasion of France in May and June, and implemented on the day of their surrender, was more successful than the first because it was spread over a longer period of time and the officials were able to draw upon their previous experiences in the failed evacuation of 1939.74 This second evacuation also stemmed from two very real fears: fear of a cross-channel invasion and fear of bombings. Using these fears to help guide their plans, the government decided that their first priority was to move the children who were currently living in coastal cities and towns away from those newly designated evacuation areas (thirty-one towns in total) to South Wales and the Midlands.75 For some of these children, this was their second evacuation in less than a year as they had been evacuated to the formerly safe coastal towns to get them out of the industrial cities.

Some of these movements even began before the official announcement of the second evacuation. On May 19, 8,000 schoolchildren who had previously been evacuated from London and Medway to Kent, Essex, and Suffolk were moved further into the interior of the country on sixteen special trains.76 After the failed evacuation of 1939, the government knew it would be difficult to convince parents to evacuate their children again. In an attempt to encourage evacuation in these areas, the government closed all state schools within several evacuation areas. In addition to the fear of invasion, the Nazi occupation of France also heightened Great Britain’s fears of civilian centre bombings. The new German control of airfields in France and Norway placed more of Great Britain within range of the Luftwaffe. The Daily Express reported on May 31, “Mr. Malcom MacDonald, Health Minister, in a speech last night, said the Government felt the risks of

75 Brown, 46
76 Ibid, 44.
early bombing so real that they must now make as complete as possible the plans for evacuation. 77

These plans were drawn up as quickly as possible and were known as Plan IV. This plan covered only schoolchildren who had previously registered. From June 13-18, 103,000 children (61,000 from London) were moved to Berkshire, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, and Wales. 78 This plan was immediately followed by Plan V which came to be known as the “trickle” evacuation. 79 The majority of the children who participated in this plan were children who registered after the deadline for Plan IV. As there was no registration deadline for Plan V, it became known as the “trickle” evacuation because evacuees did not flood into the reception areas as they had in the evacuation of the previous September, but trickled in slowly over several months. The plan officially began on July 6, 1940, and provided for the weekly evacuation of schoolchildren via train. 80 By the beginning of August 213,000 children (112,000 from London) had been evacuated through this scheme. 81 However, this was only a fraction of the children who were eligible for evacuation. Many children from newly labeled evacuation areas along the English Channel coast took part, but response to the evacuation in large cities was poor as a result of lingering resentment and frustration over the failed evacuation of 1939.

77 Brown, 44-45.
78 Chrisp, 2.
80 Ibid.
81 Brown, 46.
On August 16, southern England was bombarded by heavy air raids involving 1,720 Luftwaffe aircraft.\textsuperscript{82} One week later, the Luftwaffe began raiding RAF bases in the London and Portsmouth areas. Initially, the German plan was to raid only military bases and supply centers in order to knock Great Britain out of the war, but a devastating error and bad weather in the third week of August led to ten Luftwaffe night-bombers dropping their bombs on the heart of London instead of the previously arranged targets of the bomb storage depots east of the city.\textsuperscript{83} The RAF retaliated against this bombing of civilian areas by dropping bombs on Berlin, which infuriated Hitler. He announced that the British had dropped their bombs “indiscriminately” on German civilians and ordered Luftwaffe retaliation.\textsuperscript{84} This retaliation began on September 7, 1940, when the Germans savagely raided London with about 625 bombers directed at the capital.\textsuperscript{85} About one hundred tons of explosives were dropped on London every night (with only ten days let up) until November 13.\textsuperscript{86} The large scale bombings would continue until the spring of 1941 with some of the heaviest raids occurring in late December 1940 and May 1941.

This large-scale bombing of London and other large industrial cities sparked the second great exodus of the 1940 evacuation and changed Plan V as well as people’s reactions to it.\textsuperscript{87} During these bombings, Plan V changed to allow parties of schoolchildren to leave daily rather than weekly. At the peak period an average of 1,300 children were evacuated per day. As this was the first evacuation to occur during active fighting, it had to be treated differently than the evacuation of 1939 or even the summer

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} Holman, 32.
\textsuperscript{86} Inglis, 69.
evacuations of 1940. In order to be successful, the evacuation had to be more flexible and adjustable in relation to the intensity of the bombings. There was no mass evacuation as that would have been too difficult and lengthy to organize in the midst of the bombings. Instead weekly and eventually daily streams of evacuees filtered through different channels into the reception areas according to the progress of the war at the moment. This evacuation could not be as strictly planned, organized, and carried out as the evacuation of 1939 because the bombings and war-time movement required flexibility.

Initially, people living in the cities seemed to take the bombs in stride, but after the first few days of the Blitz, when it became evident that the bombers had no respect for either gender or age, more people began to consider sending their children out of the cities. Many of these children were taking part in evacuation for the second time. Most had been evacuated initially in 1939, but then brought back when the expected bombings did not occur. Now almost exactly one year later, there were still 520,000 schoolchildren in London when the anticipated bombings arrived making the second evacuation very different from the first. While the evacuation of 1939 had lasted barely five months before the majority of the evacuees returned, the second evacuation was spread over a longer period of time and had a lower rate of return. Although the official second evacuation began in May 1940, the second exodus in reaction to the bombings began in

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88 Inglis, 40.
September 1940 and would last until November 1941. The numbers of participants in this evacuation were also less consistent than in 1939 because the number of children evacuated rose and fell in accordance with the geographical distribution of the air raids.\textsuperscript{90} In December 1940, the number of schoolchildren still in London was estimated at 80,400 which was the smallest number at any point in the war after the initial evacuation of the previous year.\textsuperscript{91}

Another difficulty experienced with the organization of the 1940 evacuation was billeting. The billeting problems did not revolve so much around the fact that many householders would not take evacuees (this resistance was lessened due to the perceived necessity of evacuation in the face of air raids) as much as the fact that many billets were now being taken up by people who were needed to work in the new war industries and production factories.\textsuperscript{92} The idea of building special camps to billet children was brought up as it had been during the initial evacuation planning in 1938 and would be brought up again at various times throughout the war. Although this idea made sense and would certainly have cut down on the number of complaints about the heavy government reliance on private billets, once the war, and especially the bombings, began Great Britain did not have the resources or man power to spare on this project.\textsuperscript{93} The government also wanted to take into account each child’s psychological need to have a family and felt that this need would best be filled through private billeting.

Despite its fourteen month span, September 1940 was the busiest time during the evacuation of 1940. During this time about 20,500 schoolchildren were dispatched from

\textsuperscript{90} Titmuss, 355.
\textsuperscript{91} Greater London Record Office, 50.
\textsuperscript{92} Titmuss, 365.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid, 387.
London and its surrounding areas.\(^{94}\) There was a marked drop in October and government officials began to discuss ways of compelling parents to send their children. One of the more popular methods became the creation and use of propaganda posters. In December, the numbers dropped even further with only 760 children being evacuated.\(^{95}\) Ultimately, from September 1940 to the end of 1941 only 60,000 schoolchildren were evacuated from London which is only 15% of the schoolchildren evacuated in 1939 during the relatively safe “phony war.”\(^{96}\) In total during this evacuation, 141,000 schoolchildren were evacuated in school parties from all evacuation areas in Britain.\(^{97}\) Despite the significantly lower numbers of participants, this evacuation was considered a success because it was more accepted by the evacuees and the public as necessary and because more of the evacuated children remained evacuated.

This second evacuation scheme was also expanded to include a brief overseas evacuation, which was considered a limited success. In order to run this scheme, the government created the Children’s Overseas Reception Board, under the authority of Sir Geoffrey Shakespeare, Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Dominions.\(^{98}\) Shakespeare became the chief planner and first Chairman of the Children’s Overseas Reception Board, deliberately named so that its acronym would create one convenient word, CORB.\(^{99}\) The children who participated in this first and only official overseas evacuation came to be known as “seavacuees” or “seavacs.”

\(^{94}\) Titmuss, 358.
\(^{95}\) Ibid.
\(^{96}\) Ibid.
\(^{97}\) Inglis, 73.
\(^{98}\) Ponting, 147.
Although not implemented until June 1940, the vague idea of overseas evacuation goes back to the beginning of 1939, before the war had even begun. In January of that year, Miss Evelyn Mitchell of Southern Rhodesia wrote to the governor to outline a plan to evacuate two hundred children from England to Rhodesia in the event of war.\textsuperscript{100} She wanted to place these children on farms and had proactively contacted two hundred families who were willing to take part. The governor thought the idea was “very good, if it should prove feasible,” and in February encouraged her to write to then Prime Minister Chamberlain.\textsuperscript{101} Chamberlain passed the letter on to Mr. W. C. Hankinson in the Migration section of the Dominions Office. Hankinson had doubts that it would work and said “it would clearly be impossible to hope to move children simply on the threat of war” and “apart from the difficulties of arranging transport at such a time, would expose them to other risks on the sea.”\textsuperscript{102} The Ministry of Health agreed that the idea was “good-hearted, but impracticable.”\textsuperscript{103} Any discussion and publicity about possible overseas evacuation was brought to a halt and no major discussions took place until just over a year later when both the Dominions Office and the Ministry of Health took the lead in the planning of the CORB scheme as part of the second evacuation.

The minimal publicity that occurred about potential overseas evacuations in early 1939 took hold of some people who seriously considered the benefits of evacuation abroad. Many middle and upper class parents chose to evacuate their children overseas privately during the first three months of the war, rather than have them participate in the

\textsuperscript{100} Fethney, 24.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
first government organized evacuation.\textsuperscript{104} However others, along with Prime Minister Winston Churchill, feared that evacuating overseas at the outset of the war would appear to be an over-nervous reaction to Hitler’s threats against Poland and would seem defeatist. Churchill in particular was against the overseas evacuation from the start because he felt it would be bad for morale.\textsuperscript{105} He was especially afraid of appearing to the rest of the world that Britain was flagging and defeatism was in the air. He also thought that rushing out of the country smacked of “rats-and-sinking-ships,” which would not help the morale of those left behind.\textsuperscript{106}

For many people (Churchill not included) these beliefs changed as a result of two factors: the rapid and unnerving changes in the war situation after April 1940 and the mounting hostility towards the continuing private middle and upper class overseas evacuations.\textsuperscript{107} In mid-spring 1940, Lord Inskip, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs asked Parliament if he could approach the dominion governments to see whether children would be allowed to be evacuated to places of safety in the dominions.\textsuperscript{108} This was not necessary as thousands of offers from dominion citizens had been pouring in since 1939. Inskip also planned to ask Shakespeare about the offers received from the United States and Canada.

For reasons similar to Churchill’s, Shakespeare was initially against the idea of evacuation. He believed that the government “should not encourage people to run away from gathering dangers…nor should it lead the route by fostering evacuation.”\textsuperscript{109} He was

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[104]{Fethney, 26.}
\footnotetext[105]{Ponting, 147.}
\footnotetext[106]{Inglis, 106.}
\footnotetext[107]{Fethney, 29.}
\footnotetext[108]{Ibid, 31.}
\footnotetext[109]{Ibid, 33.}
\end{footnotes}
also worried about the emotional and psychological harm that could potentially result from overseas separation of children and families. However, after *The Times* declared that the government should accept the generous offers from overseas he quickly changed his opinions and less than two weeks after securing approval from the dominions and the United States he presented detailed plans for a government-sponsored overseas evacuation scheme to the War Cabinet.\(^{110}\)

The plan was created by an inter-departmental cabinet made up of the Parliamentary Secretaries to the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education as well as seventeen civil servants representing the twelve invited government departments.\(^ {111}\) This cabinet met for the first time on June 7 and worked diligently so that by the June 15 they had a full report prepared to give to the War Cabinet.\(^ {112}\) The potential endorsement of this scheme involved much squabbling and argument within the War Cabinet. Some members, such as Lord Privy Seal Clement Attlee, wanted to establish the necessary mechanisms for this scheme with all haste, while Prime Minister Winston Churchill staunchly opposed the entire thing.\(^ {113}\) After two days of discussion by the War Cabinet the scheme was approved and the press was able to announce that the government had received official invitations from the dominions and the United States to send evacuees from Britain.

The scheme was announced on June 20, 1940, and by opening time the CORB was overwhelmed with a flood of inquiries as 3,000 people crowded the offices of the

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\(^{111}\) Fethney, 35.

\(^{112}\) Ibid, 37-38.

board trying to secure spaces for their children.\textsuperscript{114} By the end of the day, the crowds had grown so large that they had to be marshalled by the police. Due to the massive number of applications received (more than the CORB was prepared to deal with), the War Cabinet decided on July 1, to close registration for the scheme on July 4.\textsuperscript{115} In total, CORB had received a staggering 210,000 applications in just two weeks.\textsuperscript{116} This massively favorable public response within such a short period of time angered Churchill. On July 18, he again made his beliefs known in a note to Sir John Anderson of the Home Department saying “I entirely deprecate any stampede from this country at the present time.” Shakespeare, aware of Churchill’s anger and disapproval, wanted to tread lightly and kept reminding the press that this was to be a fairly small evacuation and not a mass migration.\textsuperscript{117}

The details of the overseas scheme were clearly created to support the notion that this was to be a small, supplementary evacuation rather than a mass movement of a large portion of Great Britain’s population. The scheme was aimed at schoolchildren between the ages of five and sixteen attending grant-aided schools. In order to show that they were sympathetic to the main criticism of this type of evacuation (that it was previously only an option for the wealthy), the government instated a quota.

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{114}] Inglis, 105-106.
\item[\textsuperscript{116}] Ponting, 147.
\item[\textsuperscript{117}] Fethney, 46.
\end{itemize}
system in which three-quarters of the “seavacuees” had to come from state schools.\textsuperscript{118} However, it was also decided that the option of overseas evacuation would not be extended to whole schools themselves. The plans for the scheme also stated that it would be free and the children would be billeted in private homes, but attend local schools in order to make them feel more a part of the social fabric rather than alien.\textsuperscript{119} One of the most impressive facts about the entire scheme was that exactly six short weeks after the extension of the invitations from the dominion governments, the first group of “seavacuees” departed from Liverpool. By August 15, CORB had approved applications for 19,365 children, ninety-nine percent of whom attended state schools.\textsuperscript{120}

The overseas evacuation had only been operating for a few weeks when it ended abruptly at the end of September. On September 17, the \textit{City of Benares}, a ship carrying children being evacuated through CORB to Canada was torpedoed and sunk by a U-boat off the coast of Ireland.\textsuperscript{121} Seventy-three children were killed resulting in a War Cabinet decision that the scheme would be temporarily suspended. Privately however, the cabinet agreed on September 30 to end the official overseas evacuation because the danger to evacuated children was too high.\textsuperscript{122} However, the cabinet also agreed that permits would not be denied to people who wanted to continue to evacuate their children overseas.

\textsuperscript{118} Brown, 51.
\textsuperscript{119} Inglis, 105.
\textsuperscript{120} Brown, 51.
\textsuperscript{121} Wicks, 155.
privately. This suspension of the scheme changed the job of the CORB from arranging overseas evacuations to keeping in contact with the children who had already been evacuated. Overall, 3,500 children were sent abroad under the CORB scheme. The break down per destination was: 836 to the United States, 1,532 to Canada, 576 to Australia, 353 to South Africa, and 203 to New Zealand.

This second evacuation scheme contained many differences besides the rush during bombing and the brief addition of an overseas plan. Some of these differences helped the evacuation of 1940 to succeed where the evacuation of 1939 failed. This second evacuation took into account and corrected many of the problems experienced during the first evacuation. One of the largest problems it attempted to correct centered on the health and cleanliness of the evacuees. The evacuation of 1939 began at the end of a school holiday which meant that the majority of the evacuees did not have medical inspections prior to evacuating. This led to many evacuees arriving in the reception areas with sores, illnesses, lousy hair, and generally dirty, unkempt looks. The government attempted to remedy this in the second evacuation by employing some 200 general practitioners to aid the school doctors in medical inspections of all children who registered for the evacuation. If children were found to be dirty or unhealthy, they were cleaned up and made well before being evacuated.

Although this new system generally resulted in healthier evacuees arriving in the reception areas, that was not always the case. Pat Moore was just nine years old when she was evacuated from Liverpool to Southport in 1941. She recalled

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124 Inglis, 105.
125 Greater London Record Office, 11.
I was sick…I was throwing up everywhere and my mother was saying to Jimmy [my brother] “Make sure you take care of Patty!” Well he replied “Yes ma’am, yes ma’am,” but you know he was reading his comic book and I was throwing up. [In Southport] nobody wanted me because I was throwing up. I was only in the house one night when they took me in. They took me to the hospital and I had diphtheria. I spent quite a few weeks in the hospital.  

Moore would also recall this as the most personally frightening part of the evacuation. However, this is a rare case and most evacuees participating in the second evacuation arrived in the reception areas healthier than the children who participated in the first evacuation in 1939.

Another issue that the government attempted to remedy in the second evacuation was the emotional trauma of the overly crowded train station goodbye. During the evacuation of 1939, stations had become overcrowded due to a large number of relatives saying goodbye to their children. The government believed that the state of mind of the evacuated children had not been helped by these tearful and sometimes traumatic partings and more of an effort was made to keep parents and relatives away from the departure stations. Despite the intensity of the early raids, the government, warned by their experiences with the first evacuation, proceeded cautiously. They knew that there were over 520,000 schoolchildren still living in the London evacuation area when the bombings started, but they also knew that the goodwill of householders to take these evacuees and the goodwill of the local authorities to facilitate the evacuation had worn thin after the failure of the first evacuation and, in some cases, was irretrievably lost.

However, not all of the differences between the first two evacuations were good and not all the problems of the first evacuation could be easily fixed in the second.

126 Pat Moore, interview by author, Fredericksburg, VA, October 31, 2014.
127 Brown, 47.
128 Ibid.
129 Titmuss, 357.
Registration actually proved to be more of an issue in the second evacuation as a result of the ultimate failure of the first. When the time came to register for the second evacuation, many parents refused because they did not believe that the anticipated bombs or invasions would come. After all, nothing had happened during the first evacuation so why should they expect anything different now? Even after the bombing of large cities began many parents remembered the pain and anguish they and their children experienced by their separation in the first evacuation and were extremely reluctant and unwilling to be parted from their children again. Many stayed until forced to leave by the bombs and a disturbing number stayed in spite of the bombs.¹³⁰

Another difficulty that was unable to be easily remedied was the disregard of evacuees’ religions in billeting. This was mainly an issue for Catholic schools and families who wanted their children to continue attending mass and learning Catholic values despite the disruption of evacuation. Some schools insisted that their pupils only be billeted to other Catholic families. This was extremely difficult to guarantee. Pat Moore, is one such example. On recalling her billeting experience, Moore remarked “They would try to billet you with your own religion if they could, which I didn’t. They were a very nice family, but they made sure I went to Mass and everything.”¹³¹ Although Moore’s family and school did not have a problem with her being billeted with a Protestant family, several other schools and parents were outraged when this happened to their evacuees and they demanded immediate re-billeting. This remained a problem throughout all three evacuations.

¹³⁰ Chrisp, 2.
¹³¹ Pat Moore, interview by author, Fredericksburg, VA, October 31, 2014.
As witnessed in the first evacuation, the most difficult part of any evacuation was the early return of the children. In all three evacuations the government planned for larger numbers of children to leave the cities and coastal towns and in doing so, shut down and repurposed many of the schools in those areas. Once children began to return in large numbers, the local authorities were left struggling to find schools for them to attend. Not only were most schools repurposed for the war effort, but many schools were lost to war damage, especially in areas where heavy bombing occurred. Overall, approximately 290 schools were demolished or seriously damaged, 310 schools were less seriously damaged, and 550 schools were slightly damaged.\textsuperscript{132} In total, as the schoolchildren returned early from evacuation there were 1,150 schools that were in less than ideal condition to receive them.\textsuperscript{133}

As the war dragged on into 1941, protests and mutterings began to emerge from the reception areas. Although the second evacuation was much better tolerated than the first, complaints began to surface as the months went on. Some of these complaints were the same as in the first evacuation: the evacuated children were in poor physical condition (although this complaint was made less in the 1940 evacuation thanks to the better health inspection measures) and they were difficult to control. New complaints cropped up to take the place of the old. A common new complaint made was that parents were deliberately using the evacuation scheme as a means of riding themselves of responsibility for their children in order to earn extra money in the factories.\textsuperscript{134} These complaints in the second scheme were lessened and stabilized by the expansion of

\textsuperscript{132} Greater London Record Office, 51.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Titmuss, 389.
welfare polices after the experiences of the first evacuation (although the welfare polices would not expand to the extent they reach today until after the war).

Despite billeting difficulties due to competition between evacuees and war industries workers, the switch from the mass evacuation of 1939 to the “trickle” in 1940 allowed more time for better billeting.\textsuperscript{135} There were fewer evacuees in the 1940 evacuation and they were evacuated in smaller numbers which made it easier and more efficient to find billets (although billeting according to certain specifications such as religion would always be an issue). Even in places where billeting operated in the same fashion as in 1939, the results were often better because the experiences gained during the first evacuation were applied to the second. Unsatisfactory billeting officers had also been weeded out and increasing use was made of social workers. All these factors worked together to mitigate reception problems in the second and third evacuations.

Again, as in the first evacuation, the gradual lessening and eventual absence of heavy bombing raids on London and other evacuated cities made many hosts begin to see the evacuation and their evacuees as unnecessary burdens. In early 1942, the second evacuation scheme (with the exception of the overseas part) continued, but at a slower pace. The cities were not currently being bombed, there was no sign that the Germans intended to renew bombing, and more children were drifting back into the evacuation areas than were “trickling” out. Opinion in the reception areas was strongly in favor of ending the schemes, despite their general successes. Even though the strong public opinion was against doing so, the government ultimately decided to renew the second evacuation scheme in 1942, but they restricted it to only schoolchildren in organized

\textsuperscript{135} Titmuss, 390.
parties. They also restricted it to certain areas such as Hull, Portsmouth, Southampton, Plymouth, and London. This decision not to suspend the scheme entirely would be extremely helpful in the rapid execution of the third evacuation scheme nearly two years later.

The third and final evacuation scheme, also known as Plan VIII, was planned in 1943 after the limited suspension of the second evacuation. This was the smallest of the three evacuations and occurred solely in 1944 “when the civilian population thought the worst of the bombing was over. They were then harrowed by V-1 bombs, the ‘doodlebugs,’ which had a surreal awfulness almost surpassing the other more ‘conventional’ bombs.” The V-1’s differed from conventional bombs in that they were small, pilotless planes, packed with explosives and launched from France. They had barely enough fuel to make it to Britain and when the fuel ran out, the motor cut off and the bomb began its deathly descent. The first flying bomb hit the London area on June 12, 1944. Eventually, a hundred attacks would come over every day, sparking the need for a third evacuation.

Thanks to the minimal suspension of the evacuation schemes in 1942, the third evacuation was the quickest and easiest to organize. Registration for this evacuation began on July 1 and the first party of schoolchildren left London on July 5, less than three weeks after the first bomb hit. Once again children were loaded onto trains heading to the north, west, and midlands. The nature and trajectory of these new bombs changed the

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136 Titmuss, 425.  
137 Ibid.  
138 Great London Record Office, 17.  
139 Inglis, 70.  
140 Holman, 57.  
141 Titmuss, 427.  
142 Holman, 57.  
143 Brown, 51.
original evacuation categories and evacuation and reception areas had to be quickly reclassified. The evacuation areas were expanded to include twenty-seven boroughs and urban districts around London.\(^{144}\)

Prior to the renewal of bombing attacks, a steady stream of evacuees had been returning to the cities. Although the whole evacuation was carried out smoothly with only a couple of mishaps, the most difficulties arose again in registration and billeting. By this time in 1944, many people were weary of the war which made parents reluctant to send their children and hosts even more reluctant to take them. Unlike in the previous two evacuations, this was not a prolonged problem because the rush to evacuate children and the demand for billets dropped off sharply in August. By September 7, the flying bomb attacks had petered out enough that the government decided to suspend the third evacuation altogether.\(^{145}\)

Coincidentally, the first V-2 rocket attack occurred on September 8, just one day after the government announced the suspension of the third evacuation scheme.\(^{146}\) For a time the government debated the reopening the scheme, but that would mean admitting that the country was being attacked by rockets, which was something they avoided doing until November 10.\(^{147}\) By March, these second attacks were blunted by the Allied advance through Europe and weren’t as serious as they would have been had they occurred earlier in the war. The V-2s differed from the V-1s because they were rockets,

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\(^{144}\) Brown, 60.
\(^{145}\) Titmuss, 427.
\(^{146}\) Ibid, 429.
not bombs. These rockets were 45 feet long, weighed 14 tons, launched from bases in Holland, and were virtually soundless.\textsuperscript{148} This made them far more terrifying and destructive than the previous unmanned attacks. Overall, 100,649 schoolchildren were evacuated over the span of three months making this the smallest of the three government organized evacuations.\textsuperscript{149}

As the Allies advanced farther into France after the invasion in June 1944 they pushed the German launch sites further away from the coast and the bombings began to lessen. The evacuees once again began to make their way home with many returning in the late summer and autumn of 1944 even as the bombs fell around them. An evacuation survey of September 30 noted that there were 1,040,000 persons billeted in all areas of Britain.\textsuperscript{150} From then on the number continued to diminish rapidly. By January 1945, evacuees were returning home at a rate of 10,000 per week. Following the surrender of the German Supreme Command on May 7, 1945, even more people flooded back into the cities and coastal towns.\textsuperscript{151} By the end of 1946, the official resettlement scheme was complete.\textsuperscript{152} However for many evacuees, returning home did not mean goodbye forever as many of them kept in contact with their foster families after the war. Some even returned their reception areas later in life. Overall, the latter two evacuation schemes are considered successes.

Despite the relative successes of the second and third evacuations, they also experienced some degree of deterioration for many of the same reasons that the first evacuation failed: lull in enemy bombing threats, exhaustion of householders, impression

\textsuperscript{148} Holman, 60.  
\textsuperscript{149} Greater London Record Office, 17.  
\textsuperscript{150} Titmuss, 429.  
\textsuperscript{151} Wicks, 169.  
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
that the scheme was being abused by parents of evacuees, financial struggles on the part of evacuees’ parents, and the inexorable pull of home ties. Many government actions were taken to prevent the return home. The largest campaign undertaken involved propaganda posters that chided parents who thought of bringing their children home and showed them how foolish and irresponsible that would be. One of the most famous posters of this campaign depicts a mother visiting her children in the reception area. The mother looks contemplative as a ghostly Hitler stands at her shoulder whispering “Take them back! Take them back!” and gesturing towards the city in the distance. These posters were meant to appeal to mothers’ emotions and convince them that if they took their children back to the cities they would be doing exactly what Hitler wanted.

Thanks to the evacuation schemes, up to the end of 1942 only twenty-seven evacuated London children were killed in air-raids. Government estimates put the total number of children’s lives saved by all three evacuations at around 4,500. The schemes not only protected children from death, but also the nervous deterioration that can occur when exposed to repeated intense bombing. Unlike after the first evacuation, by January 1941, despite enormous difficulties in reception areas and other aspects of evacuation, the committee headed by Shakespeare was able to report that the evacuation was exceeding

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153 Wicks, 169.
154 Inglis, 81.
155 Ministry of Health Evacuation Poster, “Don’t Do It, Mother – Leave the Children Where They Are” (LCC/EO/WAR/5/3)
156 Greater London Record Office, 18.
157 Ibid.
in a majority of cases. This report was later endorsed by the Minister of Health who stated that 80% of the movement on the reception side had been a success.\textsuperscript{158} This was markedly different from the “failed” evacuation of 1939 when almost half of the children evacuated made their ways back to the cities by January 1940.

As the Second World War progressed and Great Britain was increasingly drawn in, the government sponsored evacuations of schoolchildren became less organized, but were better received and endured by the public and the evacuees because they were perceived as necessary. Despite being the most-well organized and carried out, the first evacuation in 1939 is the only one of the three to be considered a failure because it met with such strong negative public opinion that the majority of the schoolchildren evacuated returned home within six months. This negative public opinion was stronger than the reaction to the latter two evacuations because the adversities and discomforts of evacuation in 1939 were seen as unnecessary due to the lack of bombings or invasions during the “phoney war.” The latter two evacuations, occurring in 1940 and 1944 were less organized than the first, but were met with higher public opinion because they occurred during active war times which caused both hosts and evacuees to see the necessity of the evacuation. This more positive public opinion allowed these evacuations to be considered successes because the rate of return of the evacuees was much lower than in 1939 with the majority of the evacuees remaining in the reception areas until the danger passed. The public perception of the need for evacuation in 1940 and 1944 made the hosts, evacuees, and their parents more receptive to and understanding of the difficulties and hardships placed on society through a mass evacuation of millions of their country’s citizens.

\textsuperscript{158}Greater London Record Office, 18.
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