**The Politics of Removing Children: The International Tracing Service’s German Foster Homes Investigation of 1948**

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**Abstract**: After the Second World War, the International Tracing Service’s Child Search Branch (CSB) responded to inquiries for missing children and, until 1950 when funding was stopped, searched for children ‘in the field’. As the Cold War set in, the US military authorities restricted the opportunities for such children, mostly Eastern European, to be removed from their German foster parents and returned to their countries of origin. In the spring of 1948, when tensions between the CSB fieldworkers and the military authorities were at their height, ITS appointed an experienced fieldworker, Charlotte Babinski, to investigate cases of children in German foster homes with a view to streamlining policy regarding child removal. Despite her findings, as monetary and geopolitical pressures increased, the CSB had to accept that many children of Eastern European origin would remain in Germany. Children were thus a battleground in the early Cold War, in which politics triumphed over ethics.

**Keywords**: International Tracing Service, child search, Charlotte Babinski, German foster homes, Cold War

**Introduction**

In the first years after the Second World War, child search workers gradually realised the scale of a problem that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) had been unprepared to deal with in 1945. The fact that children had been stolen for the purpose of ‘Germanisation’ was a rumour not widely believed in at the end of the war; the truth soon came to light, as orphanages and children’s homes were discovered across the western occupation zones. The same was true for children of forced labourers, lost or (supposedly) abandoned in the chaos at the end of the war; UNRRA had expected to encounter adults in large numbers but rapidly learnt that it also needed to put in place an infrastructure for dealing with children. There were, as expected, few child survivors of concentration camps (especially Jewish children) but the number of children from a variety of other backgrounds astounded the fieldworkers. For example, in November 1946, Knut Okkenhaug, leader of one of the child search teams, reported on a visit to Neu-Ulm; his description indicates the complexity of the problem:

All these children are living scattered over the whole Landkreis and mostly with farmer families in the different villages. Babies and smaller children are better treated and taken care of than older children. The reason is obvious: The babies and the smaller children are in most of the cases abandoned by their mothers. Through the German Jugendamt they have been placed in childless families where the foster parents hoping for an adoption of the children do everything for them. And so you find these babies healthy (in many cases overfed), nice and clean in their cradles or beds, surrounded by anxious foster parents and admiring neighbours. Often you are met by direct hostility from these people and they unwillingly tell you the history about the child.

Okkenhaug contrasted the treatment of babies with that of older children, and he gave several examples of teenagers working on farms who were obviously being badly treated, including one 14-year old Russian boy who had previously been a Wehrmacht mascot.[[1]](#footnote-1) Throughout the years 1945–8, child searchers realised that they were faced with a problem of immense proportions. What mechanisms were in place to assist them?

The International Tracing Service (ITS) was established at the end of the Second World War with the aim of tracing ‘United Nations’ missing persons and aiding in their repatriation or resettlement. Known at first as the Central Tracing Bureau, it was administered by Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF); it was then handed over to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in autumn 1945 which set up headquarters in Arolsen (Hesse) and then, in turn, the International Refugee Organisation (IRO). The name ‘International Tracing Service’ came into existence simultaneously with the IRO’s full takeover, at the start of 1948.[[2]](#footnote-2) Its Child Search Branch (CSB) was run as a separate body, based in Esslingen near Stuttgart but reporting to Arolsen; it responded to inquiries for missing children and, until 1950 when funding was stopped, searched for children ‘in the field’ with a view to having them returned to their families (where identifiable) or countries of origin. In practice, this meant looking for ‘unaccompanied children’ in German hospitals, orphanages and foster homes.

The postwar search for children has long attracted historians’ attention. The first postwar studies were journalistic, designed to alert readers to the scale of the problem and many of the studies produced during the Cold War period were written by historians of postwar organisations or those who had worked for them.[[3]](#footnote-3) More recently, historians have turned to the wider postwar European problem of displaced and missing children, showing how work to assist children was influenced not only by psychological theories of child development but also by nationalist agendas.[[4]](#footnote-4) On the one hand there was a desire to reunite and rebuild families; on the other hand, military, national and charitable agencies considered children as crucial for the reassertion of national values after the war. With respect to Jewish children, considerable research has now been undertaken on those in orphanages and the first efforts to take testimonies from them.[[5]](#footnote-5) The problem of ‘rescuing’ Jewish children from non-Jewish settings, such as religious institutions or non-Jewish hiding families, has been crucial here,[[6]](#footnote-6) as has their resettlement and development in their new homes.[[7]](#footnote-7) Unsurprisingly, in this broader context, the CSB has been the focus of much research, with scholars describing its operation, its relations with the occupation authorities, and the practical and ethical dilemmas affecting its work.[[8]](#footnote-8) In particular, Lynne Taylor has investigated the relationship between the CSB’s fieldworkers and their UNRRA/IRO overseers, the German civilian authorities, Office of the Military Government, United States (OMGUS) and the Allied Control Authority (ACA), showing how the competition between them determined children’s fates; she also argues that the IRO came to focus more on a child’s citizenship than its nationality, since the legal protection afforded by citizenship ‘determined whether a child would be repatriated to its homeland (whether born there or not), resettled elsewhere (as an immigrant to a country such as Canada, the United States, or Australia), or “established” in West Germany’.[[9]](#footnote-9) This article illustrates how Taylor’s claim about the shift from nationality to citizenship worked in practice, showing how the Cold War and fears of appearing to act undemocratically whilst ‘educating’ the West Germans about democracy gave rise to a situation in which clear instructions which were meant to apply to all ‘unaccompanied children’ came to be applied only to some.

As the Cold War set in, the quadripartite agreement behind UNRRA broke down, to be replaced by the IRO, which the Soviets refused to join. With the IRO being ultimately subordinate to the Allied Control Authority (ACA) and the Office of Military Government, United States (OMGUS, given the location of most of the children in the American zone), one result of the Cold War split was that the military authorities gradually restricted the opportunities for children, the majority of them Eastern European, to be removed from the care of German foster parents and returned to their countries of origin. There had long been tension between the military authorities and the UNRRA field workers. The latter, who met the children and were driven by a desire to undo Nazi policies, tended to favour removing children even when that was to the short-term detriment of the child; the former were inclined, because they were faced with numerous pressures of which child search was just one, to let children, especially children of ‘undetermined nationality’, remain in Germany and obtain German citizenship.[[10]](#footnote-10) This conflict is typified by the ACA’s 1947 directive stipulating that ‘a child of unknown parents, born either in Germany or outside Germany in an undetermined country, will be assumed to possess German nationality’.[[11]](#footnote-11) There followed a long and bitter tussle, with UNRRA mobilising its contacts in the US State Department and War Department. In the summer of 1947 OMGUS backed down, agreeing that children of undetermined nationality would be treated as United Nations displaced persons; at the same time, the ACA insisted that OMGUS should remain responsible for approving child removals.[[12]](#footnote-12) Here we see how the Cold War context in which the CSB was operating limited its room for manoeuvre. Fear of alienating the West German population as well as growing fear of communism were reshaping the context in which child removals took place.

In the spring of 1948, in light of these tensions, the CSB appointed an experienced fieldworker, Charlotte Babinski, to investigate cases of children in foster homes with a view to analysing and streamlining policy regarding child removal.[[13]](#footnote-13) Her investigation reveals the pressures on the CSB and the struggles over children which centred on principles of nationality, the putative right of the child to choose, and the disputes between eastern and western European welfare and search bureaus. As monetary and geopolitical pressures increased, the CSB had to accept that many children of eastern European origin would remain in Germany. Charlotte Babinski’s investigations marked an important milestone in this history, revealing the extent to which children’s fates became a crucial battleground in the early Cold War. Although Olga Gnydiuk has already looked at some of the material which forms the basis of what follows, her focus is solely on Ukrainian children and she does not problematise their national identity.[[14]](#footnote-14) Here I look at all the children in Babinski’s study, noting that the designation ‘Ukrainian’ is not without its ambiguities, and noting that the experience of Western European children very often differed from those from Eastern Europe. This article examines Babinski’s foster homes investigations with a view to revealing not just the ethical drive to ‘rescue’ children from Germany which motivated the ITS’s child search branch, but how that ethical imperative was overwhelmed by Cold War expediency.

**Searching for Children after the War**

Searching for children in postwar Germany was a complex task. It is hardly surprising that Irish journalist Dorothy Macardle wrote that ‘after three years of work it has begun to appear that the tracing of the majority of the children whom the Germans kidnapped is an almost hopeless quest’. She noted the reluctance of the German authorities to report such children and the lengths to which some families would go to keep them hidden from the fieldworkers. ‘Some of the ITS authorities’, she observed, somewhat incredulously, ‘have been forced to the conclusion that nothing less than a special census and examination of every child in Germany who was under ten years old when the war ended will produce satisfactory results’.[[15]](#footnote-15)

And yet this is what they did. Although the ITS did not have the resources to examine every child in Germany (perhaps more than 12 million), as of October 1948 it began what it called the Limited Registration Plan (LRP), ‘limited’ because it was restricted to institutions where United Nations children might be found: orphanages, hospitals, care homes, foster homes and the like.[[16]](#footnote-16) The LRP was implemented in the three western zones as well as the western sectors of Berlin. It ended prematurely, having registered 347,057 children, 191,199 in institutions, 130,682 in foster homes, and 21,176 adopted.[[17]](#footnote-17) The ITS then had to work out which children were likely to be eligible for IRO assistance. This was not straightforward, as children often did not know the answers to questions relevant to their origins, such as about nationality, religion or language, or were evasive and frightened of the process. Those who had been kidnapped for ‘Germanisation’ were without documentation, which, as the ITS’s Swiss Director Maurice Thudichum noted, had been ‘obliterated’.[[18]](#footnote-18) It often turned out that the children were in fact German or that their nationality could not be determined. Those who were identifiable were turned over to the IRO’s child welfare officers, who were responsible for arranging for their repatriation or resettlement – once that was approved by the military authorities.

Removing children from German foster families presented emotional and ethical dilemmas. The basic problem was that for many children in that situation, their foster families were the only ones they could remember, German the only language they spoke, and the idea of being sent somewhere alien to them frightening. Gitta Sereny, later well known as a journalist and biographer, was a 23-year old UNRRA officer when, in early 1946, she was involved in the removal of two young Polish children from their German foster home, a process which caused them and their foster parents ‘inconsolable grief’. When she encountered the children again in the children’s centre in Bavaria to which they had been sent, she found them in deep distress, in no way reconciled to their return ‘home’. Many years after these events, Sereny pondered this event:

This was the question that so often occupied us. What was the ‘right’ solution to this human conundrum? Should we return the children to parents who longed for them, but also to an impoverished and largely destroyed Eastern Europe, and to an ideology unacceptable to many of us? Or should we leave them with their loving German second families – our only-just-past enemy, with their lingering love for Hitler – who had obtained them as beneficiaries of a crime of truly Biblical proportions? What was in the best interest of the children?

She concluded by saying that she still did not know, over five decades later.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Some governments, for example the Belgian and Dutch, decided that, for lack of institutional facilities at home, children who were established in German families and had no relatives in Belgium or the Netherlands, should remain in Germany.[[20]](#footnote-20) Nevertheless, a whole host of arguments was put forward as to why removal and repatriation was preferable. Eileen Davidson, the deputy director of the Child Search Section, set them out in an influential and widely-cited memorandum from early 1948, as the newly-named ITS came into operation. Practical considerations came first: many children in postwar Germany were living in poverty and, although ‘one never moves a child from a family by reason of poverty alone, under the present unsatisfactory impoverished living conditions in an occupied country, an Allied child who has an alternative mode of life should be assisted in obtaining it’. Next came objections from the countries where the child originated: ‘In most Laender, German families with legitimate children of their own are ineligible to adopt; a child may be adopted only in accordance with the laws of his own country; only in rare cases, will national representatives give consent to such an adoption’. Then there were the problems deriving from adoption to be considered: citizenship would not automatically be granted, meaning children could become stateless; and even on a day to day basis, having to produce one’s birth certificate for school or medical registration would mean exposure as a foreigner. According to the child welfare workers, there would thus be ‘untold dangers for a sensitive child forced more or less to lead a life of collusion and deception’. Given all these possible dangers, the risk to the child’s stability was simply too great a gamble: in cases of death or divorce or other occurrences which forced a serious change in the foster family’s circumstances, ‘the child finds himself once again alone in an indifferent, yes even hostile world, since the fact has to be faced that he has been grafted into the social structure of his former enemies’. Were the worst to happen, the result would be devastating for the child: ‘Far from securing the best interests of the child, one has run the danger with the passage of years contributing to the development of a warped and twisted personality, a misfit with roots neither here nor in his home country’. Finally, and presented at the end of the memorandum by Davidson as the simplest and most powerful point, there was ‘the right that a child has to his own heritage’.[[21]](#footnote-21)

If all of this seems reductionist today – suggesting that a child’s place of birth should determine their identity, or that identities cannot be mixed or shared – it also faithfully reproduced the political realities of the time, which insisted on the reassertion of national values. Even in the context of a desire to create new international bodies such as the United Nations, the Nazi occupation of Europe had engendered a strong renationalising drive across Europe, a force which was bolstered by the work of ostensibly internationalist humanitarian organisations such as ITS. Some even went so far as to argue that ‘the psychology and mentality of Slavs is quite different to German[s]’, indicating that racial stereotypes had not died with the end of the war.[[22]](#footnote-22) Davidson was thus conforming to the ‘nationalisation of empathy’ which Nazism had created and whose aftereffects powerfully contributed to the reshaping of postwar Europe’s borders and demography.[[23]](#footnote-23)

This seeming paradox notwithstanding, the fact was that so-called ‘United Nations children’ in German homes and institutions, even the minority who were loved and well housed, had arrived there as the result of criminal actions. One could even extend this argument to the children who had been handed over by their own parents (usually mothers) for protection, as forced labourers were sent off to uncertain destinations or were otherwise unable to care for them: the circumstances that led to mothers entrusting their children to strangers, or relative strangers, were not of their own making. Thus, the general feeling prevailing amongst CSB staff was that, from an ethical point of view, leaving these children in the care of German families or institutions was ultimately to condone German criminal policies. And this was something for which these officials would not be held responsible, with the result that many children were relocated yet again, forced to endure moves which, at the time, they could neither comprehend nor approve.

Nevertheless, the occupation authorities, to whom UNRRA and, later, the IRO had to defer, were not always of the same opinion. Indeed, OMGUS and its regional headquarters, especially the Office of Military Government, Bavaria (OMGB) put considerable obstacles in the way of the child searchers’ goals. Attempts to create consensus between UNRRA and OMGUS were rebuffed, as when CSB officer Eileen Blackey travelled to Berlin in May 1946 to meet OMGUS officials to discuss the matter. In a follow up letter, UNRRA acknowledged that it was problematic to remove children from their families, especially when they could remember no others. But, it went on:

it is recognized that it is also important to consider the lifetime destiny of these children. They are not Germans and should not be raised as such. Many of them have parents or relatives waiting for their return. Even those who have no close relatives still living have a right to their own identity and the protection of their own countries. It should be remembered that the United Nations which have unaccompanied children in Germany have made firm demands that these children be located and repatriated.[[24]](#footnote-24)

The majority of ITS fieldworkers remained of this opinion for the duration of the CSB’s activities ‘in the field’. But they also had to operate in the context of considerable inter-agency competition over who had the right to decide the child’s future, with each stage in the process being, as Eileen Davidson put it, ‘a contest with the current invested interest – the German who hides the child or is unconvinced and does not wish to give him up; the Liaison Officer who is eager to have the child; the military government which is sensitive to unrest or dissatisfaction among the Germans, and wishes to maintain the status quo’.[[25]](#footnote-25)

By the start of 1948, ITS was still complaining that OMGUS policy on child removal was unclear. It noted that questions still existed over whether children without family in their countries of origin or illegitimate children who had been left behind their mothers should be removed from German care. And it observed that the ITS’s position, which stressed the rights of governments of the children’s countries of origin to offer protection in the absence of parents was ‘largely a carry over of the early SHAEF and UNRRA policy’. Where OMGUS had a different view, it was usually one with which ITS largely disagreed: ‘It was obvious after going through a number of cases that in some the objections were based solely on lack of confidence in the care which would be given to the children by the Eastern countries. It was explained that I.R.O. could accept no such generalities’.[[26]](#footnote-26) Thus, although the relations between ITS child search and IRO child care teams had been established with Provisional Order No. 75 in July 1948, between IRO/ITS and OMGUS there remained conflict and confusion.[[27]](#footnote-27)

It was primarily in order to argue its case with the military authorities that ITS commissioned Charlotte Babinski’s study on children living in German foster homes for whom permission to be removed had been withheld by OMGB. Babinski, at the time of the initiative the Senior Tracing/Search Officer for IRO Area 4 (Regensburg), was an experienced case worker who understood well, on the basis of her own experience in the field, the legal and administrative problems of removal and resettlement of children.[[28]](#footnote-28) Described by Cornelia Heise as ‘our outstanding children’s case worker’, the hope was that her study would ‘break the impasse on a number of cases’.[[29]](#footnote-29)

**Babinski’s Investigations**

On 26 April 1948, Maurice Thudichum, the Director of ITS, announced Babinski’s investigations to OMGB. Their aim, Thudichum went on, was ‘to select cases in which the decision regarding eventual plans for the child is likely to be based on the child’s adjustment in the foster home and the long time security the family can offer’.[[30]](#footnote-30) This was rather delicately put and appeared to concede OMGUS’s position that children in well-established foster family relationships could be allowed to remain in Germany and be adopted. But Thudichum’s use of the phrase, ‘to determine the best interests of United Nations’ children’ in the subject line of his letter suggests a less disinterested approach since, as we have seen, this term was usually interpreted by ITS’s child search workers to mean that ‘unaccompanied children’ should be removed from German foster homes. Babinski was to spend four weeks in Bavaria, and then one week each in Hesse and Baden-Württemberg, studying selected cases of children whose removal had been withheld by the Military Government. Thudichum put it diplomatically:

We have in mind particularly, instances in which there is a difference of opinion between IRO and the national representatives on the one hand, and Military Government and the German agencies on the other, as to what solution is to the best interests of the child, cases in which there are conflicting claims to the child, and cases of older boys and girls who are resisting return to their own countries.[[31]](#footnote-31)

On the same day, Cornelia D. Heise, the Chief of the ITS’s Child Search/Tracing Section, sent an outline guide for use in evaluating foster homes to field representatives in Wiesbaden and Munich[[32]](#footnote-32); she had already advertised Babinski’s mission to other interested outside parties, such as the International Union for Child Welfare in Geneva.[[33]](#footnote-33) Probably with little fear of having their authority questioned, the relevant State branches of the Office of Military Government agreed to the investigation.[[34]](#footnote-34) But ITS was on the offensive, inasmuch as it wanted to highlight what it regarded as the inappropriateness of allowing unaccompanied children to remain in Germany because of prevailing social and geopolitical mores. Although Babinski’s investigation was halted, ostensibly on financial grounds, before she could get to Hesse and Baden-Württemberg, the ten cases she examined in Bavaria (out of an initial 20 proposed) provided considerable ammunition for ITS’s cause.[[35]](#footnote-35) As Heise wrote:

The 10 cases completed by Miss Babinski and studied by us, confirm us in our belief that, for a variety of reasons, a German foster home is not satisfactory as a permanent placement for an allied child. We suggest you press on with the task of securing Military Government permission for children to be removed to IRO care, so that permanent plans can be worked out for them.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Heise then wrote to Babinski, instructing her to note if the children in her study had been kidnapped or ‘otherwise imported’, or ‘were illegitimate children placed or abandoned by their mothers’. The reason she gave for this request was ‘because the criticism has been, “O.K. to return the kidnapped children to the countries from which they came, but why disturb the illegitimate children born here whose mothers are not interested in them, and who have been given good homes by the Germans”’.[[37]](#footnote-37) Heise and most of her colleagues in the CSB – the majority of whom were women – believed that national origins trumped all other considerations and that, even where removing a child would cause it emotional distress or reveal embarrassing personal stories, doing so enacted a reversal of Nazi criminality which was the CSB’s ultimate aim and its specific contribution to creating the postwar order.

The children examined by Babinski had much in common. Three were Polish (Bodo Manneck, Stefania Myczkowska and Maria Szenkowicz), two were French (Gerhard Gauthier and Monika Morisse), and the rest were Ukrainian, either ‘Russian-Ukrainian’ or ‘Polish-Ukrainian’, to use ITS’s classifications (Helene Baranenko, Walentin Kudinow, Maria Kutiak, Walla Pitschmarga, Boris Sweschenetz). Mostwere born in 1944 (Manneck was born in 1942, Myczkowska in 1943, Szenkowicz in 1938 or 1939) and were unable to remember their mothers. Six of the children had been placed with German families by their mothers, ‘because either they were unable to care for the children on account of their work or were leaving for their home countries and would not or could not take the children along’. Because they were illegitimate, the placements were usually arranged in a hurry, through friends of friends. Two of the children were placed by the local Youth Welfare Office (*Jugendamt*), one came to Germany on a transport of workers from Ukraine, and one was placed by a hospital after the mother died in childbirth, ‘and a woman who wanted a child was in the hospital at the time of the orphaning of the child’.[[38]](#footnote-38)

Helene Baranenko, born in Freilassing in January 1944, was the daughter of an unmarried young female eastern European forced labourer (*Ostarbeiterin*), Nina Baranenko, and a German soldier. Since it was forbidden in Nazi Germany for Germans and foreigners to have sexual relations, a Pole was named as the girl’s father on the official documents. At the end of the war, the mother returned to Ukraine leaving Helene behind, because she feared returning with an illegitimate child, especially one whose father was German (even though he had been certified as dead). After several placements, she ended up with Stefan and Creszentia Hocheder, the husband a railway worker, in a three-room flat just outside the village of Piding, near Berchtesgaden. The Hocheders wished to adopt Helene. Babinski observed that despite their straitened financial circumstances, the living conditions were adequate, and that the child ‘regards its foster parents and sister as natural parents and sister’, adding that ‘[p]eople in the village are familiar with the child’s real story’.[[39]](#footnote-39) A measure of the extent of Babinski’s inquiries, which the families no doubt felt were intrusive, appears in the information given about them and their living conditions. Babinski noted that the family was in good health, had some small savings but owned no property other than their furniture. She recorded her impression that ‘Mr. and Mrs. H. appear to be honest, reliable, respectable people, sincerely attached to the little girl’; she noted with obvious satisfaction that ‘the H’s wish and intend to give Erna the same care and opportunities as their own daughter’, and cited statements from neighbours testifying to the foster parents’ good character.[[40]](#footnote-40) In her summary, Babinski noted: ‘Care child receives from her foster parents is very good. It is indeed surrounded by loving foster parents and foster sister’.[[41]](#footnote-41) Nevertheless, even in these positive circumstances, Babinski concluded that Helene should only be able to stay with the Hocheders if the Soviet authorities agreed; since she was half-German and had been cared for well despite the Nazi authorities’ disapproval of the Hocheders’ arrangement, she argued that presenting the case to the Soviets once more would at least ‘satisfy the foster family in as much as they claim they have done a real service to the child, a service that should be taken into the consideration’.[[42]](#footnote-42) She was firm in her understanding of what should happen if the Soviets did assert their claim, however: ‘If the Russian [sic] Government will disfavour the retention of the child by the family in Germany, removal should take place as readily as possible’.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Given this decision, it is hardly surprising that Babinski took an even tougher line on most of the other cases. In each, the living conditions and the attitudes of the foster families were, in her opinion, unsatisfactory and she came down firmly on the side of removal. The French boy Gerhard Gauthier, for example, born in November 1944, was living with a war widow, Mrs Haller (her husband was killed on the eastern front) and her four children in what Babinski described as ‘sub-standard housing’. Although the child seemed happy and Mrs Haller clearly cared for him, two rooms between six people was obviously too small; the family’s economic circumstances were also precarious with Mrs Haller reliant on her war widow’s pension and her daughter’s salary.[[44]](#footnote-44) Mrs Haller claimed to have no political affiliations and was devoted solely to the care of her children, amongst whom she included Gerhard, who she wished to adopt. Babinski described Mrs Haller in sardonic terms as ‘one of the formerly desirable “Kuechen [sic]-Kinder-Kirche” women’.[[45]](#footnote-45) She thought the placement was suitable on a temporary basis only, and not just because of the ‘low income standard of living, crowded housing, naturally limited economic opportunities’. Babinski assumed that the French authorities would want to claim Gerhard; her conclusion was that there should be a six-month search for his mother and that: ‘After that action should be taken regardless whether or not mother is found’.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Babinski reached a similar conclusion with respect to Monika Morisse, the other French child in the study. Living with an older couple in Berchtesgaden, the Hoelzls (he aged 60, she 54), Monika was being well cared for yet, as Babinski perceptively observed: ‘The foster parents are much more dependent on the child than it on them.’ And she worried about their age: ‘In ten years, when Monika is 14 years old, the foster parents will be 70 and 64 years old respectively. There is serious question in my mind that they will be able to cope with the necessary personal education and supervision of the young girl’. She concluded that the French should be contacted again to ask their policy on the adoption of French nationals by Germans and insisted that ‘I would not support it in asking the French Government for special consideration’.[[47]](#footnote-47)

In yet other cases, Babinski’s assessments constituted a serious reproach to OMGB for refusing to permit the children’s removal. Walentyn Kudinow was living with a Josef Blasinger and his housekeeper in Traunstein, following the death of Mrs Blasinger in June 1947. The housing was quite inadequate and Mr Blasinger’s housekeeper – with whom his relations ‘appear to be rather close’, as Babinski delicately put it – ‘obviously does not wish to have him [the child] around’. The conclusion was simple: ‘It would be in the child’s best future interests to remove it from present surroundings as early as possible’.[[48]](#footnote-48) Similarly, Maria Kutiak was described by Babinski as poorly nourished and with ‘the beginning of “Englische Krankheit” or rickets’.[[49]](#footnote-49) Her foster family, the Tomanis, had no money to pay for Maria to attend kindergarten, and the child ‘looks more as if she were two years old than four’.[[50]](#footnote-50) Babinski was horrified, arguing that the surroundings in which the child was living were ‘a real hazard to her immediate physical, mental and social development’; that she should be placed with a more desirable family for foster care and eventual adoption; that United States European Command (EUCOM) should be involved with the case; and finally, that ‘The child is in most undesirable circumstances and immediate removal is recommended as urgent’. Any obstacles that OMGB might place in the way, based on the foster parents’ wish to keep the child, should immediately be brushed aside.[[51]](#footnote-51) And although she was more understanding of Walla (Walentyna) Pitschmarga’s foster parents, Josef and Maria Hoepfl, especially since the mother had taken in the child when her natural mother (a Ukrainian forced labourer) died after childbirth, Babinski still argued that the foster parents’ plan for adoption reflected their desire to have a child more than it reflected a wish to care for this particular child. She argued that the poor, rural setting in which they lived was unsatisfactory for the child, that if she was brought up German, Walla ‘would never have the chance to let us know if she wanted to be German or Soviet Ukrainian’, and that the foster home placement ‘does not and can not, in my opinion, compensate the loss in group displacement incurred later on’. She recommended repatriation to Ukraine. Once again, the notion of innate group belonging trumped, in Babinski’s eyes, the fact that the child, who had no parents and knew nothing of her background, was being well cared for.[[52]](#footnote-52)

The only exception was Boris Sweschenetz (Karl Hurler), born in Augsburg in January 1944 and living with a foster family in Donauwörth. Here Babinski found that the foster parents, the Hurlers, had adopted the boy very soon after he came to them, that they took good care of him, and that they could offer him ‘reasonable economic security’. The boy himself was ‘a very lovable child’. The fact that his Ukrainian origins were not mentioned in public bothered Babinski somewhat but she gave the Hurlers the benefit of the doubt, reasoning (with some incredulity) that they regarded him as having changed nationality as well as name, parents and home. The early adoption moved the parents, in Babinski’s words, ‘forward into the above average group so far as attitudes towards foreigners are concerned’. She noted that removal would be justified ‘if the child had a country to go back to’, but that Ukrainians ‘are resettling themselves, either in the German economy or Allied countries’. And so she concluded, in the only moment of her investigations when she concurred with OMGB’s reluctance to intervene: ‘If the child stays where it is it will grow up to be a German. If it emigrates, it will grow up to be an American, Canadian or what have you. I have no national axe to grind and so would recommend leaving child where it is’.[[53]](#footnote-53) Although Babinski reached this conclusion on the basis of factors unrelated to geopolitics – the absence of relatives, the child’s statelessness, the attitude of the parents – she nevertheless arrived at a position which coincided with OMGUS’s and which adopted the Cold War script by rejecting (indeed, by not referencing at all) the Yalta and Potsdam agreements.

Boris Sweschenetz’s case was the only one in which Babinski concurred with the OMGB assessment. In general, her study confirmed many of the points made by Eileen Davidson in her celebrated report on child removal. Babinski found that what Davidson said about poverty was borne out by her investigation: nine of the ten children were found to be living in inadequate housing and most were not receiving care commensurate with their needs: ‘Only one out of the ten studied appears to be a satisfactory placement and might be considered for approval as a permanent placement’. She argued, on the basis of what she had seen, that emotional attachment was insufficient justification for leaving a child in its current foster care arrangements: ‘It is not believed that the foster family has a monopoly on love for the child in its care’, she wrote. Babinski understood why the German foster parents felt that they had a claim on the child but noted the contrast between German love for the foreign children and the fact that ‘the Germans as a group far from love the foreign adult’. And she concluded by rebuking OMGB, saying that the foster families’ confusion and protests arose ‘not so much because the foster families and children cannot accept separation and removal as because the opportunity to protest is combined with a lack of OMGB policy on removals, which only abetted the difficulties encountered by and from German families on this score’. Her conclusions were thus clear: ‘The results of this study point to the formation of a policy of not leaving Allied children in German families; and, in their best interests, to removing them in order to repatriate or resettle them’.[[54]](#footnote-54)

And yet, in most of the cases, the children were not removed. In a striking indication of how Cold War politics affected the decision-making processes surrounding child removal, insofar as one can tell from the records, whilst the French children in Babinski’s study were removed and repatriated to France, the Polish and Ukrainian children were not, but remained in Germany.[[55]](#footnote-55) Gerhard Gauthier’s mother was located at a sanatorium in Hauteville (Ain) shortly after Babinski’s investigation. Although his foster mother, Mrs Haller, refused to let him go, in March 1949 OMGB authorised the boy’s removal; in June he was taken first to the children’s village in Bad Aibling and then, following clearance from EUCOM, he was handed over the to the French Red Cross and given permission to leave for France. Despite some delays, on 15 December 1949 he left for France and in early 1950 the case was closed, although there remained some doubt over whether he had actually been reunited with his mother or not.[[56]](#footnote-56)

By contrast, the stories of the Polish and Ukrainian children investigated by Babinski had quite different endings.[[57]](#footnote-57) In the case of Stefania Myczkowska, the child was removed from the foster parents in early 1948 and placed in the children’s centre at Prien (Chiemsee), the successor to the Kloster Indersdorf children’s centre. But despite the request of the Polish authorities that she be repatriated, the child was shortly afterwards returned to the care of her foster parents, Mr and Mrs Kaiser, German refugees who brought the child with them to Bavaria when they were expelled from Czechoslovakia in November 1946.[[58]](#footnote-58) Stefania’s mother, Maria Myczkowska, originally from Moczary near Lesko, had returned to Poland after the war to search for relatives and had not been heard of since. Despite the fact that, as Cornelia Heise wrote, ‘The Polish authorities have many times expressed themselves as feeling that no Polish children should remain in families of other nationality’, and although the girl’s grandmother was located in Poland and wanted to take her in, Stefania Myczkowska remained with the Kaisers.[[59]](#footnote-59) The Bavarian Youth Welfare Bureau protested against the removal, saying that it would be better ‘for the child to be brought up under sound environments than to be transferred into an uncertain fate’.[[60]](#footnote-60) OMGB agreed and ordered that Stefania be returned to her foster parents, ‘pending final decision in this case’.[[61]](#footnote-61) She was released from Prien two days later.

At the end of 1949, the Polish Red Cross reported that Stefania’s mother had been found.[[62]](#footnote-62) It seemed that the girl would now be removed from her German foster parents and sent back to Poland. Yet, when the Polish authorities were unable to send documents which satisfied OMGB – there were doubts as to the mother’s citizenship – the foster parents and the IRO decided instead that the best course of action would be for Stefania to be resettled in the United States. The case dragged on until the local *Jugendamt* again intervened, stating that the foster parents and the child were attached to each other and requesting that Stefania be allowed to stay where she was.[[63]](#footnote-63) By this stage – the end of 1951 – the arguments put forward three years earlier by Charlotte Babinski no longer carried the same weight, and the IRO reversed its original position, saying that ‘resettlement in Germany is the only possible plan in this case under the existing circumstances.’[[64]](#footnote-64) At the end of 1952, Stefania was officially transferred to the Kaisers’ legal guardianship and at the end of 1954 ITS closed her case.

The story is almost the same with respect to Helene Baranenko. Authorised by the Soviet Liaison Officer and OMGB to be repatriated to the USSR in 1946, the foster parents and the *Jugendamt* protested, saying that the mother had voluntarily left the child with the foster parents, the Hocheders, and that she knew where to find Helene if she wanted to come back for her. This was somewhat disingenuous as the mother had not been located and there seemed little chance of her being found; it seems, therefore, that the decision was made in order to prevent the Soviet authorities from making good their claim on the child and to facilitate Helene’s remaining with the foster parents she knew and loved. When, in April 1950, the case was reviewed again, removal authorisation was rejected, the Hocheders were appointed legal guardians with a view to adopting Helene should the law on adoption be changed, and the case was closed.[[65]](#footnote-65)

Even in Walla Pitschmarga’s case, in which Babinski conceded that the child was being well cared for following the mother’s death after the birth, the overturning of the ITS’s position is striking. Where Babinski had argued that the child should be removed as quickly as possible, Walla ended by being adopted by the Hoepfls. While in 1948 ITS was still corresponding with the Red Cross in Moscow to try and find Walla’s relatives, by 1950 it was saying that there were no objections to adoption.[[66]](#footnote-66) Indeed, one of the IRO’s child welfare officers went so far as to say that ‘the advantages of repatriation do not offset the trauma of a removal’.[[67]](#footnote-67) By May 1951, Walla Pitschmarga had been, as the phrase went, ‘resettled in the German economy’ and her case closed.

The outcomes of three of the others in the survey - Walentin Kudinow, Maria Kutiak and Monika Morisse – are not known but, from the above, one can surmise that the first two remained in Germany. Indeed, the fact that there are no case files for them in the ITS records suggests as much. Only one case – Bodo Manneck’s – was solved in a surprising manner: after writing to the Polish authorities for any information, in July 1948 the municipal council of Bydgoszcz wrote to ITS to inform them that the child and his mother were German nationals. As a result, Cornelia Heise closed the case and passed it to the German authorities – Bodo Manneck was no longer eligible for ITS services.[[68]](#footnote-68)

Although the surviving case files for Stefania Myczkowska, Helene Baranenko and Walla Pitschmarga are substantial, the case which exemplifies the complications of child search in general and of the foster home placements in particular is that of Maria Szenkowicz, born in 1939. Because she was a little older than the other children, her case brings to light the ethical difficulties of removing a child whose views, if by no means primary, could not wholly be ignored by the child search and care teams. An ethnic Polish girl from a small town near Tarnopol in Ukraine, Maria was separated from her mother as they were evacuated from their home in the face of the Red Army advance and put on a transport of forced labourers bound for Germany, ending up in a foster home in Neuburg an der Donau in Bavaria in May 1944. Three years later, the *Jugendamt* in Neuburg reported that Maria, although timid, seemed happy to be living with her foster parents, the Scheuermayers, who wanted to adopt her if her parents could not be found.[[69]](#footnote-69)

The child search workers had very little else to go on in the early stages of the investigation, noting only that Maria’s mother might also have been deported to Germany.[[70]](#footnote-70) Their first step was to write to the Polish Red Cross and to the Executive Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Moscow, asking them to try and identify Maria’s father, who they assumed had the same name, and, if possible, her mother.[[71]](#footnote-71) Neither were able to provide any information and so the child remained with the Scheuermayers, who had taken Maria in during the Nazi period with the approval of the German authorities.

Although Babinski found Maria in reasonably good health and performing satisfactorily at school, she was concerned about Maria’s future. In particular, the foster father’s son, Josef Scheuermayer, worried Babinski, since he had been a member of the SS and ‘this man in a few years may be the head of the family’. This Nazi background and a sense that Maria remained insecure despite the care she received from the Scheuermayers led Babinski to conclude that she should either be adopted by another family or, preferably, be resettled following a month’s stay at a YMCA-IRO summer camp where she could be introduced to a non-German environment. ‘The only future plan to consider for this Polish Ukrainian child is resettlement’, she insisted.[[72]](#footnote-72) The family, however, ‘refused categorically to give their agreement for the removal of the girl from their foster care’.[[73]](#footnote-73) As a result of their refusal, which they maintained despite the fact that adoption was unlikely to be approved since they already had three children of their own, the IRO child care team assumed – correctly, as it turned out – that the Bavarian Military Government (OMGB) would not approve removal for immigration. They therefore referred the case to IRO headquarters for them to take up the matter with the highest Allied authority, EUCOM.[[74]](#footnote-74)

As with the cases referred to above, the Cold War played its part in Maria Szenkowicz’s case too. In February 1949, just months after some of the key developments in the Cold War in Europe, Herbert Meyer from the ITS wrote to the child care team in Augsburg, noting that tracing Maria’s parents was ‘difficult, if not impossible’. He then went on:

The locality from which the child is believed to have come is in the USSR now. In view of the dearth of particular and reliable data, we do not believe that any constructive results will be effected in tracing through the USSR. It may be years before we hear that results are negative. The initiation of such action could perhaps halt future planning. Then too, there is always the possibility that the Russian authorities will want to place a claim on the orphaned child on the basis that she originated from a territory which at the present time belongs to the USSR.[[75]](#footnote-75)

The IRO agreed with Meyer’s assessment.[[76]](#footnote-76) In other words, ITS and its parent body, IRO, were arriving at a position that would allow them to bypass the Soviet authorities and thus to permit Maria Szenkowicz to remain in Germany. This may well have been the most feasible option from a logistical point of view as well as the child’s, but here we see ITS as a Cold War instrument, taking Western policy in a direction contrary to the one signed up to at Yalta. In doing so, ITS was by no means at the forefront of anti-Soviet Western action but its reaction also contributed to the general reshaping of postwar Europe, whereby institutions of all sorts turned away from the eastern bloc. Many children like Maria, including some of those in Babinski’s investigations, ended up remaining in Germany because that was considered preferable to ‘repatriating’ them to Poland or to the USSR. Maria’s case was kept open ‘until we determine whether any new directives issued regarding unaccompanied children might result in the reversal of this case’.[[77]](#footnote-77)

The case was not reversed. To the contrary, in 1951 Maria’s case was heard at the Children’s Court, a division of HICOG’s District Court in Augsburg. In the court’s pre-hearing summary, the child care officers noted that:

As the International Tracing Service has searched actively since 1947 for clues to identify the child and locate relatives, without results and as nationality has not been clearly established, resettlement in local economy is recommended, provided the present foster parents will adopt her thus to be in a position to provide her with legal and political protection.[[78]](#footnote-78)

The IRO was here following the thrust of its thinking from a few years previously through to its logical conclusion: the child would not be repatriated; the fact that the child was ethnically Polish and a Roman Catholic but from a region now part of the Soviet Union (in Ukraine) was conveniently brushed aside as ‘undetermined nationality’; and the Soviet claim on ‘its’ citizens – in this case, as in so many others, a very dubious claim – simply ignored. So too the ruling on families with children being barred from adopting was overturned. The request was granted and, with Maria being ‘established in the local economy’, the case was closed.

In Maria Szenkowicz’s case, we see how complex the child search process was. ITS spent several years trying to locate her parents and to establish her identity more accurately, to no avail. The process that led from Maria being almost removed from her foster parents after Charlotte Babinski’s investigation, ending with her adoption by the same foster family, reveals the ITS’s swiftly changing operating conditions in the period covering the late 1940s and early 1950s. Given that the IRO was a Cold War instrument from the start – its creation annoyed the Soviets, who refused to join a body that offered ‘resettlement’ instead of ‘repatriation’ as an option – the gradual overturning of many of ITS’s working assumptions should hardly be surprising. What we hear only dimly in Maria’s case is her own voice, or even a real sense of what she wanted, beyond the fieldworkers’ assertions that she seemed healthy and reasonably happy with the Scheuermayers. The wishes of the children, as per OMGUS’s assertion of its role of *parens patriae*, did not feature in the decision-making process.[[79]](#footnote-79) Babinski claimed that ‘Removal of the very young children requires preparation not so much of the children as of the foster parents’.[[80]](#footnote-80) In Maria Szenkowicz’s case, as with other slightly older children, we have no way of knowing whether this was true or not.[[81]](#footnote-81)

**Conclusion**

In the period covered here, although in some of the cases the foster families wanted to adopt the child and, in others, an uncertain future awaited them were they to be repatriated (in one case, the mother was located in prison in Poland, in others the mother was supposedly ‘not interested’ in the child), ITS usually concluded that, ‘for a variety of reasons, a German foster home is not satisfactory as a permanent placement for an allied child’.[[82]](#footnote-82) Cornelia Heise, in particular, was delighted with Babinski’s work and congratulated her on it, saying: ‘I cannot tell you how helpful this will be in interpreting the situation of the non-German child in the German home’.[[83]](#footnote-83) Yet the reality, just a few years later, was that unaccompanied UN children without living close relatives, especially if they were from countries now behind the Iron Curtain, almost always ended up remaining in Germany. ITS was low down the pecking order of Allied institutions and so we should not be surprised that the military authorities declined to provide the resources necessary to remove such children, when doing so would be seen as appeasing communist regimes and would come at the price of negative publicity in West Germany.

A UNESCO report from 1950 asked ‘whether, when the family is not traced, it is justifiable to expose a child to the risk of life in an orphanage in his own country, the language of which he has forgotten’. But on the other hand, it went on, ‘the child may one day learn that he was grafted into his present environment for the purposes of racialism and Nazi civilization and he may bitterly reproach the people who dared not send him back to the country of his birth’.[[84]](#footnote-84) Despite these concerns, the IRO, as we have seen, did recommend leaving children with their German foster families, especially after the onset of the Cold War in 1947-48 and the increasing intransigence displayed by the US Military Government on the matter.[[85]](#footnote-85) To a large extent it had no choice, and most ITS child search officers regretted the decision. But at an official level, ITS also reconciled itself to the policy change and increasingly found in favour of the German foster parents in its own reports, as we have seen in several of the cases analysed above. Before that change took place, Charlotte Babinski summarised her spring 1948 investigation into children in German foster homes by writing: ‘It is unfortunate that the children do not stop growing until a study is completed, a policy is formed and carried out’.[[86]](#footnote-86) Likewise, UNRRA and IRO policy towards United Nations children did not stop changing, with different outcomes for different children. Those from Western Europe stood a good chance of being repatriated; those from Eastern Europe were just as likely to be ‘incorporated into the German economy’ and, from the ITS’s point of view, ‘lost’ to their national group, their surviving family members and their homeland. As removing children from German homes became too controversial in the context of winning over the West Germans to the new Western alliance, the ITS was forced to row back on its idealistic and ethically coherent position. ITS was both a Western instrument and a victim of Cold War politics; the real losers in this tug of war, however, at least from the CSB’s ethically clear perspective, were the children themselves.[[87]](#footnote-87)

1. Excerpt from Report of Knut Okkenhaug, Leader Group No. III, November 15, 1946: ‘Illustrations of Situations of Non-German Children in German Homes’; 6.1.2/82487741-7742, International Tracing Service Digital Archive, Wiener Library, London (henceforth ITS DAWL). ITS documents are cited by sub-unit (here 6.1.2) and then the unique document ID number. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Suzanne Brown-Fleming, *Nazi Persecution and Postwar Repercussions: The International Tracing Service Archive and Holocaust Research* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016); Jennifer L. Rodgers, ‘From the “Archive of Horrors” to the “Shop Window of Democracy”: The International Tracing Service, 1942-2013’, PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2014; Bernd Joachim Zimmer, *International Tracing Service Arolsen: Von der Vermisstensuche zur Haftbescheinigung. Die Organisationsgeschichte eines ‘ungewollten Kindes’ während der Besatzungszeit* (Bad Arolsen: Waldeckischer Geschichtsverein, 2011); Dan Stone, ‘The Memory of the Archive: The International Tracing Service and the Construction of the Past as History’, *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, 31, 2 (2017), 69–88. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Thérèse Bonney, *Europe’s Children 1939 to 1943* (self-published, 1943); Thérèse Brosse, *Homeless Children* (Paris: UNESCO, 1950); Dorothy Macardle, *Children of Europe* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1949); Francesca M. Wilson, *Aftermath: France, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia 1945 and 1946* (West Drayton: Penguin Books, 1947); Kanty Cooper, *The Uprooted: Agony and Triumph among the Debris of War* (London: Quartet Books, 1979); Kyrił Sosnowski, *The Tragedy of Children under Nazi Rule* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1963); Roman Hrabar, Zofia Tokarz and Jacek E. Wilczur, *The Fate of Polish Children during the Last War* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1981). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe’s Families after World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011); Heide Fehrenbach, ‘War Orphans and Postfascist Families: Kinship and Belonging after 1945’, in Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller, eds., *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 175–95. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Boaz Cohen, ‘The Children’s Voice: Postwar Collection of Testimonies from Child Survivors of the Holocaust’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 21, 1 (2007), 73–95; Boaz Cohen and Rita Horváth, ‘Young Witnesses in the DP Camps: Children’s Holocaust Testimony in Context’, *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 11, 1 (2012), 103–25; Joanna Beata Michlic, ‘What Does a Child Remember? Recollections of the War and the Early Postwar Period among Child Survivors from Poland’, in Michlic, ed., *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939-Present* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 153–72. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For example: Emunah Nachmany Gafny, *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Post-war Years* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009); Diane L. Wolf, *Beyond Anne Frank: Hidden Children and Postwar Families in Holland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Michael R. Marrus, ‘The Vatican and the Custody of Jewish Child Survivors after the Holocaust’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 21, 3 (2007), 378–403; Daniella Doron, ‘Lost Children and Lost Childhoods: Memory in Post-Holocaust France’, in Seán Hand and Steven T. Katz, eds., *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945-1955* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 85–117; Mary Fraser Kirsh, ‘Remembering the ‘Pain of Belonging’: Jewish Children Hidden as Catholics in Second World War France’, in Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian, eds., *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar Displacement* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 257–75. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Beth B. Cohen, *Child Survivors of the Holocaust: The Youngest Remnant and the American Experience* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018); Daniella Doron, *Jewish Youth and Identity in Postwar France: Rebuilding Family and Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015); Françoise S. Ouzan, *How Young Holocaust Survivors Rebuilt Their Lives: France, the United States, and Israel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. On the CSB, see Henning Borggräfe, Akim Jah, Nina Ritz and Steffen Jost, eds, *Rebuilding Lives – Child Survivors and DP Children in the Aftermath of the Holocaust and Forced Labor* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017) = *Freilegungen: International Tracing Service Yearbook*, 6 (2017); Ruth Balint, ‘Alexander and Anastayzia: The Separation and Search for Family among Europe’s Displaced’, *The History of the Family*, 22, 4 (2017), 432–45; Ruth Balint, ‘Children Left Behind: Family, Refugees and Immigration in Postwar Europe’, *History Workshop Journal*, 82, 1 (2016), 151–72; Dan Stone, ‘“The Greatest Detective Story in History”: The BBC, the International Tracing Service, and the Memory of Nazi Crimes in Early Postwar Britain’, *History & Memory*, 29, 2 (2017), 63–89; Susanne Urban, ‘Unaccompanied Children and the Allied Child Search: “The right … a child has to his own heritage”’, in Gigliotti and Tempian, eds., *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime*, 277–97; Verena Buser, ‘Die “Child Search and Registration Teams” der UNRRA’, *Nurinst: Beiträge zur deutschen und jüdischen Geschichte* (2016), 75–88; Verena Buser, ‘“Mass Detective Operation” im befreiten Deutschland: UNRRA und die Suche nach den eingedeutschten Kindern nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg’, *Historie: Jahrbuch des Zentrums für historische Forschung Berlin der polnischen Akademie der Wissenschaft*, 8–9 (2015–16), 347–60; Verena Buser, ‘Displaced Children 1945 and the Child Tracing Division of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration’, *The Holocaust in History and Memory*, 7 (2014), 107–21. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Lynne Taylor, *In the Children’s Best Interests: Unaccompanied Children in American-Occupied Germany, 1945-1952* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 321; see also 195–6 on legal protection. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Taylor, *In the Children’s Best Interests*, 161, 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Cited in Taylor, *In the Children’s Best Interests*, 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Taylor, *In the Children’s Best Interests*, 196–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find more information about Babinski. The ITS does not hold a personnel file on her, as it does for some of the other child search officers. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Olga Gnydiuk, ‘“The Advantages of Repatriation Do Not Offset the Trauma of a Removal”: IRO Welfare Officers and the Problem of Ukrainian Unaccompanied Children in German Foster Families’, *Freilegungen: International Tracing Service Yearbook*, 6 (2017), 160–78. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Macardle, *Children of Europe*, 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The Hollerith punch-card results of the LRP make up the 55,066 digital documents in sub-unit 3.3.1.1 of ITS DAWL. For the history of the LRP, see Taylor, *In the Children’s Best Interests*, 222–30. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Maurice Thudichum, *The International Tracing Service: Brief Review of its History and Activities* (March 1951), 15; 6.1.1/82493202, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Thudichum, *The International Tracing Service*, 15; 6.1.1/82493202, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. ‘Stolen Children: Interview with Gitta Sereny’, *Talk Magazine* (November 2009), online at Jewish Virtual Library: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/stolen-children>. See also Cornelia Heise’s ‘Child Welfare Field Report on Eastern Military District, November 28, 1945 to December 9, 1945’ for a setting out of the dilemmas facing child search workers. 6.1.2/82486985–6989. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Eileen Blackey, Child Search Consultant, ‘Minutes of Field Trip to Berlin, 4th and 5th November 1946’; 6.1.2/82487210, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Eileen Davidson, Deputy-Chief, Child Search Section, Tracing, Child Search Division, Ludwigsburg, ‘Removal from German Families of Allied Children. Reasons Why This is to the Best Interest of the Child’, 21 January 1948; 6.1.2/82486419\_1/\_2, ITS DAWL. See also Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 131–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. John Widdicombe, Chief, PCIRO Office in Poland, to Mrs. M. Lane, Chief, Division of Welfare, PCIRO Headquarters, Geneva, 2 August 1948; 6.1.2/82486682, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children’s Lives under the Nazis* (London: Pimlico, 2006), 376. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Letter to Col. S.R. Mickelson, Displaced Persons Division, USFET, 21 May 1946, cited in Taylor, *In the Children’s Best Interests*, 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Eileen Davidson, untitled, handwritten note on child tracing, n.d. (1948); 6.1.2/82487535\_1/\_2, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Cornelia D. Heise, ‘Conference at Wiesbaden’, 16 February 1948; 6.1.2/82487951\_1/7952\_1, ITS DAWL. This meeting examined the cases of 14 children. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. W. Hallam Tuck, Executive Secretary, PCIRO, PCIRO Provisional Order No. 75: Unaccompanied Children – Search; Tracing; Care; and Repatriation, Resettlement, or/other Final Establishment; 6.2.1/82486641–42, ITS DAWL. For a detailed examination focusing mainly on the IRO, see Taylor, *In the Children’s Best Interests*, esp. ch.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. The documents relating to Babinski’s investigations are in 6.1.2/82487928–82487991, which, for ease of using the digital archive, can be found in Ordner (folder) 006 of sub-unit 6.1.2; the children’s individual case files are at 6.1.2/82487993–82488205, which comprises the whole of Ordner 006a. Details of some of the children’s trajectories can be found in the individual case files in sub-unit 6.3.2.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Heise to Acting Chief, ITS, U.S. Zone Division (Wittamer), 15 March 1948; 6.1.2/82487965\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Thudichum to Military Governments for Land Bavaria, Munich; Gross Hessen, Wiesbaden; Wuertt.-Baden, Stuttgart, Subject: Investigation of German Foster Homes to Determine the Best Interest of United Nations’ Children, 26 April 1948; 6.1.2/82487930\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Thudichum to Military Governments, 26 April 1948; 6.1.2/82487930\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Cornelia D. Heise, Chief, Child Search/Tracing Section, ITS, to Field Representatives, Wiesbaden and Munich, Subject: Outline for Foster Home Investigations, 26 April 1948; 6.1.2/82487931\_1/\_2, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Mrs J. M. Small, Chief, Research and Information Dept., International Union for Child Welfare, Geneva, to Heise, 20 April 1948; 6.1.2/82487978\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. For example: James H. Campbell, Refugee and Welfare Adviser, Office of Military Government, Land Wuerttemberg-Baden, Stuttgart, to IRO, ITS Headquarters, Esslingen, 14 June 1948; 6.1.2/82487940\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See Heise to A. J. Wittamer, Chief, U.S. Zone Division, ITS, n.d.; 6.1.2/82487948, ITS DAWL. Wittamer’s instruction is at 6.1.2/82487957\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Eileen Davidson pp. Heise, memo to Field Representative Munich, 3 June 1948; 6.1.2/82487958\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Heise to Babinski, 16 June 1948; 6.1.2/82487949\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Charlotte Babinski, Notes on the Table accompanying the Summary of the German Foster Home Placements, 2 July 1948; 6.1.2/82487985\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Statement of Stefan Hocheder, 19 March 1947; Charlotte Babinski, ‘Foster Home Investigation: Baranenko (Barawenko), Helene Erna’, 20 May 1948, 3; 6.1.2/82487997\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Babinski, ‘Foster Home Investigation: Baranenko (Barawenko), Helene Erna’, 4; 6.1.2/82487998\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ibid., 5; 6.1.2/82487999\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid., 6; 6.1.2/82488000\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ibid.; 6.1.2/82488000\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Charlotte Babinski, ‘Foster Home Investigation: Gauthier, Gerhard’, 25 May 1948, 3; 6.1.2/82488003\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ibid., 4; 6.1.2/82488004\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Ibid*.*, 6; 6.1.2/82488006\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Charlotte Babinski, ‘Foster Home Investigation: Morisse, Monika’, 25 May 1948, 6; 6.1.2/82488025\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Charlotte Babinski, ‘Foster Home Investigation: Kudinow, Walentin, n.d. (May 1948), 5; 6.1.2/82488032\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Charlotte Babinski, ‘Foster Home Investigation: Kutiak, Maria’, 18 May 1948, 1; 6.1.2/82488053\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid., 2; 6.1.2/82488054\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid., 8; 6.1.2/82488060\_1, ITS DAWL. EUCOM was the American replacement for the Allied Control Authority. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Charlotte Babinski, ‘Foster Home Investigation: Pitschmarga, Walla’, 26 April 1948, 7; 6.1.2/82488130\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Charlotte Babinski, ‘Foster Home Investigation: Sweschenetz (Hurler), Boris (Karl), 1 June 1948, 6; 6.1.2/82488201\_1, ITS DAWL. ‘Very lovable child’ is on p.1 on this report: 6.1.2/82488196\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Charlotte Babinski, ‘Summary on the German Foster Home Placements’, 2 July 1948, 3; 6.1.2/82487981\_1-82487983\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. From the ten children’s case files, which are among the 10,000 on record in ITS sub-unit 6.3.2.1, it is only possible to say for certain what happened to seven of them. The documentation is missing from the case files of Morisse, Kudinow, and Kutiak, although a file was created for each of them. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. See the documents in Gerhard Gauthier’s case file: 6.3.2.1/84236930#1-84236967#1, ITS DAWL. On Bad Aibling, see Christian Höschler, *Home(less): The IRO Children’s Village Bad Aibling, 1948-1951* (Berlin: epubli, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. That is, for those for whom we can find out what happened: Sweschenetz, Myczkowska, Baranenko, Pitschmarga, and Szenkowicz. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See Mrs Kaiser’s statement at 6.3.2.1/84394092#2, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Cornelia Heise to UNRRA Team 1063, 19 June 1947; 6.3.2.1/84394101#1, ITS DAWL. The Polish Liaison Officer gave permission to repatriate the child on 20 December 1947: 6.3.2.1/84394115#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Strauss, Bayerisches Landesjugendamt (Munich), to OMGB Public Welfare Branch, 5 March 1948; 6.3.2.1/84394119#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Kenneth J. Maccormac, Deputy Chief, Public Welfare and DP Br., OMGB, to Director, IRO and Miss Maylan, Children Center, Prien, 9 March 1948; 6.3.2.1/84394121#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. J. Bikart, PRC Senior Representative for Germany and US Zone, to Miss Marjorie M. Farley, IRO, Area No. 7, 29 December 1949; 6.3.2.1/84394180#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Dr Kopp, Kreisjugendamt, Mindelheim, to IRO, 10 October 1951; 6.3.2.1/84394217#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. L. Wijsmuller, Child Welfare Officer, ‘Note for File’, 22 October 1951; 6.3.2.1/84394220#1, ITS DAWL. See also Eleanor Ellis to Landesjugendamt, 23 January 1952, advising looking into the foster family adopting Stefania; 6.3.2.1/84394221#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. ‘Survey of Children Established in German Economy. U.S. Zone: Baranenko, Helene, b. 21.1.1944 – USSR’; 6.3.2.1/84152639#1, ITS DAWL. German law prevented couples with children of their own from adopting. This changed the following year and the Hocheders immediately adopted Helene (Erna). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. ‘Chronological Record: Pitschmarga, Walla’; 6.3.2.1/84434588#2, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Anna M. C. Woltjer, Child Care Officer, IRO Area 5, ‘Fosterhome visit in order to check the present situation’, 4 May 1950; 6.3.2.1/84434637#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Heise to Director, IRO Area No. 6 (Gauting), 22 July 1948; 6.3.2.1/84375600#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. K[nut] Okkenhaug, summary of Jugendamt Neuburg report on Maria Szenkowicz, June 1947; 6.3.1.2/84477945#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. PCIRO Child Search Division, Ludwigsburg, index card for Maria Szenkowicz, 27 October 1947; 6.3.2.1/84477929#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Child Search Division to Central Information Bureau for Displaced Persons, Executive Committee of the Union of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Moscow, n.d.; 6.3.2.1/84477937#1/7938#1, ITS DAWL. Child Search Division to Polski Czerwony Krzyz, Warsaw, 10 September 1947; 6.3.2.1/844779471#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Charlotte Babinski, ‘Foster Home Investigation: Szenkowicz, Maria’, 18 May 1947 [sic, 1948 is meant], 8; 6.1.2/82488158\_1/8159\_1, ITS DAWL; for decision firmly in favour of resettlement, see Babinski to Heise, 24 May 1948, re: Foster Home Investigation for Szenkowicz Maria, 9-10 Years Old, Polish Ukrainian; 6.3.2.1/84477964#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. R. Mussin Pushkin, Senior ITS Officer, to Mrs. M. Steinmetz-Vondracek, Field Representative, ITS IRO Area 7, Munich-Pasing, 22 October 1948; 6.3.2.1/84477979#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Miss T. Bruwer, Area Child Care Officer, Area 5 Hqs IRO, to Miss Eleanor Ellis, Zone Child Care Officer, IRO Headquarters, Bad Kissingen, 29 October 1948; 6.3.2.1/84477980#1, ITS DAWL. OMGB’s refusal to grant permission for removal was sent to Eleanor Ellis on 30 December 1948: 6.3.2.1/84477985#1. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Herbert H. Meyer, Chief, Child Search Branch, to The Director, IRO Area No.5, 17 February 1949; 6.3.2.1/84477986#1/7987#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. See Ethel Starner, Area Child Care Officer, IRO Hqs Area 5, to ITS Esslingen, 1 March 1949; 6.3.2.1/84477989#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Eleanor Ellis to E.B. Cox, Director, IRO Area 7, Munich, 31 March 1949; 6.3.2.1/84477991#1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Ethel Starner, ‘Pre-Hearing – Summary’, 20 February 1951; 6.3.2.1/84477995#3, ITS DAWL. HICOG was the High Commission for Occupied Germany; it replaced the ACC in 1949 and existed until 1955. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. There are case files, usually of older children, where letters and other documents exist which testify to their views. In general, however, the children’s voices cannot be heard directly. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Charlotte Babinski, ‘Summary on the German Foster Home Placements’, 2 July 1948, 3; 6.1.2/82487983\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Although given what we know from other contexts, especially the removal of Jewish children from non-Jewish families, it sounds very plausible. See the works in note 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Davidson for Heise, Memo to Field Representative Munich, IRO No. 7 HQ’s, 3 June 1948; 6.1.2/82487958, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Heise to Babinski, 23 July 1948; 6.1.2/82487979\_1, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Thérèse Brosse, *War-Handicapped Children: Report on the European Situation* (Paris: UNESCO, 1950), 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Cornelia D. Heise to Eileen Blackey, 30 June 1947, re: Removal of Children from German Care: Report on Current Situation. Here Heise noted that Military Government policy in the US Zone ‘continues not only to reflect a policy contrary to the reported recommendations of the Department of State, but is becoming progressively restrictive and rigid. Public Welfare Branch, O.M.G.B. gave notice to UNRRA on 28/4/47 that it will in the future withhold approval for removal of children who are being cared for in foster homes.’ 6.1.2/82486150-6151, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Babinski, ‘Summary on the German Foster Home Placements’, 3; 6.1.2/82487983, ITS DAWL. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Before concurring, one should bear in mind Wolf’s comment, in *Beyond Anne Frank*, 337, made on the basis of an analysis of hidden Dutch Jewish children’s postwar experiences, that ‘blood was rarely thicker than water’ and that ‘what matters is a connection with a caring adult, even if he or she is not the biological parent.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-87)