

## Sir Nicholas Winton

The Jewish Holocaust was a time of great tragedy and inhumanity; yet, even during one of the most deplorable and cataclysmic periods of human history one man not only saved the lives of hundreds of children, but in doing so he also guaranteed a future for an entire race of people that Hitler and his followers sought to eradicate from the Earth. Sir Nicholas Winton, knighted in 2003 by Queen Elizabeth II for his courage and selflessness, was a true hero during mankind's darkest days and rightfully earned the title "Holocaust Hero (McFadden)."

Nicholas George Wertheim was born to German-Jewish parents; however, when his family converted to Christianity, they changed his surname to Winton (McFadden). Winton lived a comfortable life as a young man, and was working as a stockbroker in 1938 when he was asked by his friend, Martin Blake, to travel to Czechoslovakia to work with the British Committee for Refugees. With Blake, Winton visited refugee camps in Prague that were filled from the German annexation. Convinced that the Germans would soon occupy the rest of Moravia and Bohemia, Winton followed the lead of the British children's rescue effort called Kindertransport and established a children's section of the Committee for Czechoslovakia (the Rescue). From his hotel in Prague, Winton began taking applications from parents who were willing to do whatever it took to save their children; by 1939 the committee had details on over five-thousand children and full registration for nine-hundred. Winton, his mother, and a few volunteers then traveled back to London to raise funds for transportation and to search for foster families; the group printed ads that were featured in newspapers, churches, and on bulletins in synagogues. Money rushed in from donors (what was not covered by

benefactors Mr. Winton gave from his own pocket) and hundreds of families opened their homes to the foster children (McFadden).

The first group of children left Prague, by plane, just one day before the Germans occupied Czechoslovakia. The other seven transports that Winton organized all went by train to the Atlantic Coast and then boarded ships headed for Britain (the Rescue). After Britain declared war on Germany in September of 1939 all rescue efforts were halted (Nicholas). Though one train of 241 children could not be saved, Nicholas Winton effectively spared the lives of a confirmed 669 Jewish children over the course of nine months leading up to World War II, all having travelled in one of eight trains across four countries (Holocaust).

No one recognized Nicholas Winton for his bravery until nearly fifty years after the war when his wife uncovered an old journal filled with the childrens' names and photos. Winton didn't tell anyone about his part in the Kindertransport from Czechoslovakia because to him it wasn't a miraculous deed, it was something that had to be done and he just happened to be the one to do it (McFadden). After his wife uncovered the truth of his selflessness, he was received a letter of thanks from the President of Israel, was knighted by the Queen of England, and was made and honorary citizen of Prague (Nicholas).

Nicholas Winton, through his selfless acts, did not simply save the lives of a few hundred children, he saved the whole next generation of children. The majority of the children he saved left the war as orphans, but just being able to walk away from the war alive was a miracle. He saved the next generation of world leaders, and therefore insured a better future for it.

### Works Cited

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