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Tara Zahra. *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011. 320 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-04824-9.

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The Political, Economic, and Cultural Battle over Children in the Postwar Era

This wide-sweeping work by Tara Zahra, associate professor of history at the University of Chicago, brings together several intertwined stories of the immediate post-Second World War in Europe through the lens of displaced children. Her work probes the reformulation of the place of children and families in the postwar world, from the viewpoint of American and British aid workers, the displaced themselves, and their respective governments. Battles over the âbestâ place for an unaccompanied child became microcosms of the wider political, economic, and cultural strife of this era. Politically, governments saw children as a valuable resource in rebuilding from the demographic devastation of the war and, as the Cold War intensified, as flesh-and-blood ideological representations of the nation. Economically, governments and aid workers prized young children as easily assimilable, often regardless of their actual ethnic origins, and saw those in their mid-to-late teens as strong and available workers to reconstruct the nation. Culturally, children became simultaneously symbols of the devastation wrought by war as well as the promise of building a new, more just world. They represented, as Zahra states, âthe biological and political future of national communitiesâ (p. 20).

These ideas alone make this an insightful book; but Zahra goes further and analyzes modern beliefs about children, including the treatment of those who had suffered trauma; the rise of the social welfare profession and its ways of viewing children, mothers, and families in general; and the emerging ideas about universal human rights and their enshrinement in United Nationsâ conventions. Observers at the time feared that if children could not be restored to stable families, then families themselves were at risk; if families were at risk, then so too was the nation. She argues convincingly that for contemporaries, how the world dealt with the children of war-torn Europe presaged whether peace, stability, and democracy could emerge from the shadows cast by Fascism and Communism as well as the ashes of war.

Unlike many scholars whose work on postwar refugees limits the geographic scope, Zahra conceives of the issue of unaccompanied children (some of whom were not actually orphans) as one affecting the continent as a whole, with particular emphasis on several key groups: Armenian children after the genocide during World War I, refugees of the Spanish civil war in France, Jewish children hidden in Christian homes and institutions, Polish and Czech children removed by the Nazis from their families and homelands to Germany for âGermanization,â and children of many nationalities living in displaced persons (DP) camps or in alternative housing in postwar Germany. In addition, Zahra broadens the study of refugees beyond the typical focus in refugee studies, individuals under the care of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and/or its successor organization, the International Refugee Orga-

nization (IRO). She is also careful to note that although children (typically defined as under the age of seventeen) were only a tiny minority of the millions of displaced people, the attention they received far outpaced their numbers, for all the political, economic, and cultural reasons mentioned above.

Zahra personalizes the larger struggles with extensive examples from stories of unaccompanied children coping with the aftermath of war. To cite but one example, she uses the writings of Ruth Kluger, Maximilien Adler, and other youth to explore the world of TerezÃn (Theresienstadt), where the adult community knowingly made sacrifices to provide for its youth and purposefully offered collective living and learning spaces for them while encouraging them to put the good of the whole ahead of individual needs. These and other examples also deftly highlight the overarching tensions among children and their surviving families; among aid workers (local or from Great Britain and the United States) and the children under their care; among intergovernmental agencies, such as UNRRA, and national governments; and among national governments. One notable illustration of these divides was the difference between Western organizations and the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (CKÅ»P). Western groups assumed that the placement of children within foster care or permanent adoption were superior to collective care. The CKÅ»P, however, which operated eleven childrenâs homes and forty-five half-boarding homes in 1946, believed strongly that given their wartime trauma, it was best to serve Jewish children through collective education, which the CKÅ»P also connected to the revival of the Jewish community. In addition, many Christian individuals and institutions refused to surrender Jewish children for whom they had cared, even going to the extreme of baptizing the children and/or fleeing with them, as was the case with the Finaly affair in France in 1953 or Sarah Kofman, who was torn between her biological mother and the woman who sheltered her. Zahra examines France in some detail. In addition to being the battleground for children who were Spanish refugees from the civil war and for Jewish children who had survived in hiding, France also was the site of one of the more curious debates over the âproperâ place of children. From 1945 to 1948, some French officials were so concerned over the demographic plunge that they laid claim to the children of French men and German women and scoured the French zone of occupation for them, as long as they were young enough to âbecome French.â However, fewer than five hundred children moved to France under this program, and by 1948, as the French population began to recover, the government abandoned it.

Beyond refugee studies, *Lost Children* has important and far-reaching contributions, particularly to the evolution of the field of social work. Aid workers in Europe honed the newly emerging concept of âcase-workâ and psychoanalytic theories that they learned in British and American universities. The immediate postwar years also mark the juncture where relief workers added nonmaterial needs (educational, vocational, spiritual, and cultural) to their standard elements of food, clothing, housing, and medicine. Often foreign aid workers assumed that they were bringing civilization and democracy to their charges. Zahra carefully knits these developments together with the push back from local aid workers and the children themselves to restore agency to those cared for and further highlights the tensions among the competing systems of thought regarding how best to assist children. The aforementioned struggle between those who believed that children were best rehabilitated within group homes and those who wanted children restored to ânormalâ domestic life is one of the most notable developments. Unlike the previous decades, where the common assumption was that separating children from their families would build well-socialized citizens, the new strain of thought was that children best thrived within their own families, even if those families were not strong units, best exemplified by the writings of Anna Freud. UNRRA and IRO officials struggled with community leaders of DP camps who privileged keeping children as part of the collective within camps rather than having the children adopted and placed with a family.

Zahraâs treatment of children as critical elements in the postwar reconstruction of national identities is also well done. A hallmark of the postwar era was the assumption that countries whose populations were homogeneous would be more stable and efforts to ârenationalizeâ children would be easier. But officials ran into problems as they sought to implement their ideas. Officials launched major efforts to recover Polish and Czech children (most notably the 105 children from Lidice) taken by Nazis during the war, but sometimes the children did not wish to return to the land of their birth. In addition, it was difficult to trace the children, as Nazi officials had changed their names and often placed them for adoption by German families. As renationalizing children dovetailed with homogenizing populations, what impact did this development have on a child of a Czech mother and Sudetenland German father? If Czechoslovakia rejected the child as âtoo Germanâ and expelled

the child (as per the agreement at Potsdam) even though the childâs Czech mother was still alive and wished to reunite with her son or daughter, whose ideas about family, the well-being of the child, and beliefs about the state would win? One solution to the problem was to untangle nationally mixed families by encouraging their dissolution through divorce. It often came down to a tipping point between increasing population and achieving homogeneity among the population. Either way, as Zahra states, ânot all families were considered equalâ (p. 196).

Zahra also shows how nationalism became a key dimension of rehabilitation. This idea, promoted by French humanitarian worker Alfred Brauner, among others, privileged restoring children to their ethnic homeland even in cases where the child had no memory of this home. As a temporary measure for those who could not yet return home, or as a âway stationâ for some ethnic groups, such as Jews, who did not yet have a nation to which they could return, DP camps became centers of national fervor. Said one aid worker, âfor both psychological and practical reasons, national grouping was best during the insecure and traumatic times in the lives of the displacedâ (p. 123). However another aid worker, Marie Syrkin, characterized the education provided in Jewish DP camps as âsheer indoctrination,â due to its emphasis on immigration to Palestine as the best choice for these youth (p. 135). As Cold War tensions accelerated in 1948, however, nationalism also became a rallying cry for Eastern European governments that charged the IRO and Western occupation powers with deliberately hampering the efforts of their nationals to return home. At this critical juncture, the IRO and aid workers began to backpedal on their steadfast commitment to return children to their families and/or homeland, especially with a shift toward refusing to repatriate individuals against their will.

Finally, Zahra shows how this system of aid to children, created by nations, intergovernmental agencies, and voluntary aid organizations, posited both children and women as beings to be acted upon, thereby underpinning a return to patriarchy. Many aid workers focused on women as mothers, and reinforced the notion that their rehabilitation lay with learning how to be good homemakers. Such aid workers believed that the war had defeminized women, reducing their maternal instincts, which in turn threatened the stability of the nation. These workers saw DP camps as sites of abnormal, communal living, which encouraged immoral and dissolute behavior. According to many aid workers, the way to combat these trends was to move women back into the home, which would bring both demographic and political stability.

Given the depth and breadth of her subject matter, not surprisingly, Zahraâs source base is impressive. She utilizes many of the standard records within refugee studies, such as the holdings of the IRO, housed in the National Archive in Paris; the records of UNRRA, housed at the United Nations in New York City; and records of larger relief agencies, e.g., the Joint and the American Relief Organization, located in smaller archives. But she buttresses these standard sources with a myriad of others, ranging from archives in Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Poland, and the United States, which underlines the value of this work for providing both a synthesis of many of the known stories while also challenging the usual story of refugee studies by extending it into under-explored places and populations.