

The Plight of Belgian Children: The Allied Interest in the Child Evacuation Scheme to Switzerland, 1942-1945

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In June 1942, the Allied governments investigated whether they could support and enlarge an ongoing Swiss-led humanitarian mission to evacuate 100,000 Belgian, French and Yugoslav children from their war-torn countries and send them to neutral Switzerland. The logistics of these plans involved gaining the consent of the German government, the participation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and its national branches, the approval of the Swiss government, the financial support of the British government, and the promise of provisions from the United States and Canada. British Foreign Office (FO) reports reveal that despite strong British and American interest in the project, failure to agree upon how support would be given effectively meant that the Allies did not donate any relief to the project. Regardless, from 1940 to 1945, the Swiss Red Cross and other Swiss charities successfully evacuated some 60,000 children of predominantly French origin¹ to Switzerland for three-month periods of recuperation, after which they were sent back to their countries of origin.

The earliest mention of the Allied child evacuation scheme within British FO documents occurred on 16 June 1942.² This document, and others that followed, evaluated the feasibility of the child evacuation scheme from nearly every angle: transportation, food, selection processes, involvement of the Red Cross, approval by

- 1 Although French children would constitute a large portion of those evacuated British Foreign Office (FO) reports reveal that despite strong British and American interest in the project, failure to agree upon how support would be given effectively meant that the Allies did not donate any relief to the project. Regardless, from 1940 to Switzerland, they were not considered an initial target during its inception, according to FO documents written later in 1943 (See The National Archives, London, Public Record Office, Foreign Office Papers {Hereafter TNA, PRO, FO} 371/36509-0011, 1 February 1943, "Copy of letter to Treasury regarding financial responsibility for proposed child evacuation schemes, mostly with reference to Belgians going to Switzerland," 4). Instead, French children seemed to be an afterthought, and a convenient demographic to include due to their close proximity to Belgium and their moderate suffering under German occupation.
- 2 TNA, PRO, FO 371/32566, 16 June 1942, "Evacuation of Belgian children – destinations of French Canada and United States considered; provision for Greek children and Swiss scheme noted; plight of Polish children in Soviet Union raised."

the German occupying authorities, financial compensation, Swiss refugee policy, et cetera. Most importantly, these documents referred consistently to wartime conditions in Belgium, even though the evacuation scheme would also include French and, to a lesser degree, Yugoslav children. Therefore, Belgium's wartime context becomes central to understanding the evacuation scheme as a whole.

On 28 May 1940, Belgium surrendered to Germany and, as a result, was occupied for four long years until liberation in September 1944. During this period, the FO had access to a variety of documents regarding Belgium's conditions under occupation, including official reports from government delegates and ambassadors, interviews with individuals who had recently left Belgium, and even letters from Belgians to their government in exile in London. Nearly every week from June 1940 onwards, a brief memorandum entitled "Conditions in Belgium" was made available to the FO, outlining the dire situation that would become characteristic of the German occupation of Belgium.

This paper will focus solely upon the Allied interest in the Belgian context in order to identify which specific wartime conditions they sought to improve or alleviate through the scheme.³ Food scarcity, labour regulations and unique turning points of 1942 will reveal that Belgians, and specifically Belgian children, were among the worst victims of German occupation in Western Europe. This analysis will suggest that while humanitarian concern for Belgian children was one incentive for intervention in Belgium, other motivations, such as the political and economic post-war prospects, and the abundance of detailed reports of the changing situation, also fuelled Allied support in this ambitious scheme.

Overview of German Occupation Policies in Belgium

Before the outbreak of the Second World War, Belgium was the most densely populated country in Europe, with 8.39 million inhabitants within 11,779 square miles of territory.⁴ Brussels was the capital and political centre, with 910,000 inhabitants, while Antwerp was Europe's largest port and Ghent was a major manufacturing city.⁵ Over half the population spoke Flemish as a first language, while just under half spoke French.⁶ After Great Britain, Belgium was the second most highly industrialized country in Europe, with 48.9 per cent of its work force employed in industry and mining.⁷ Industry was concentrated in the south and east (and in Brussels), whereas the rural northern provinces inhabited by Flemish-speaking Belgians tended to be poorer and economically backward.⁸ Due to this industrialization and high level of food consumption, Belgium was heavily dependent on food imports in the prewar years.

3 The American position was explored through the British Foreign Office Papers (Series 371), which provided significant detail of the exchanges between the British and American governments regarding this project.

4 Werner Warmbrunn, *The German Occupation of Belgium 1940-1944* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 5.

5 *Ibid.*

6 This statistic is based on data compiled in 1930. *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, 6.

8 *Ibid.*, 7.

9 One estimate suggests that fifty percent of the national caloric intake was imported in the prewar years. See *Ibid.*, 7.

German occupation policy in Western Europe generally aimed to maintain and modify the prewar structures to support the requirements of the new occupying authorities, while exploiting the industrial assets and resources.¹⁰ Belgium was no exception. As Martin Conway points out, the German authorities in Belgium had three goals: to extract the maximum of both human and material resources to serve the German war effort, to ensure the maintenance of order within the country, and, finally, to lay the basis of a more long-term Germanization of the country.¹¹ In addition, a repetition of the events of 1914–1918, during which Belgium had been devastated by extreme loss of life and unrelenting food shortages, was to be avoided at all costs. Therefore, it was recognized that maintaining the pre-war standard of living was essential.¹²

Food Scarcity and Its Impact on Belgian Children

Although the basic principle of German occupation regarding food was to make Belgium sufficiently self-sustaining without significant imports from the Reich or other occupied territories, this was extremely difficult in Belgium, as only twelve percent of its prewar acreage had been utilized for direct human consumption.¹³

Immediately after occupation, the German authorities called for the conversion of 200,000 acres of pasture to grain and potato production and a reduction in livestock.¹⁴ However, it took time to implement this new agricultural plan, which failed to be effective during the 1941 harvest year.¹⁵ As late as 1943, only half the land ordered to be plowed had actually been converted,¹⁶ and it was not until the last harvest year of occupation that dependence on grain imports from Germany finally ceased.¹⁷

The ineffective restructuring of Belgium's food economy also exacerbated Belgium's grim food shortages. One of the most contentious issues was the establishment in 1940 of the *Coporation Nationale de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation* (CNAA) within the Department for Agriculture and Food Control. The CNAA was empowered to assign production quotas, to close or open agricultural projects, and, most importantly, to regulate prices and distribution.¹⁸ As the CNAA was considered a tool of the Germans and another organization aimed at exploiting the country, Belgians were hesitant to cooperate. Although the CNAA could impose fines and confiscate products, the organization spent most of its efforts trying to persuade farmers to deliver their produce at legal prices, so that they would be available to the population through regular rationing channels.¹⁹ This did not occur easily. Werner Warmbrunn argues that

10 Polymeris Voglis, "Surviving Hunger: Life in the Cities and the Countryside during the Occupation," in *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe*, ed. Robert Gildea, Oliver Wieviorka and Anette Warring (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 17.

11 Martin Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium: Liberation and Political Reconstruction, 1944–1947* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15.

12 Warmbrunn, *The German Occupation of Belgium 1940–1944*, 198.

13 *Ibid.*, 214.

14 *Ibid.*, 215.

15 *Ibid.*, 219.

16 Warmbrunn suggests that this is actually a result of underreporting, 216.

17 *Ibid.*, 219.

18 *Ibid.*, 215.

19 *Ibid.*, 215.

the CNAA actually helped facilitate a slow increase in agricultural production, but even he acknowledges that it was not until after 1942 that the situation improved, and certainly not until 1943 that Belgium's food consumption was roughly equivalent to that of the neighboring countries.²⁰

Reports to the FO in 1941 indicate that the food situation in Belgium was growing progressively worse. By January 1941, two documents outlined the grave situation, claiming, "If no relief in the way of wheat or other substitutes arrives by February 15, there will be no grain of any kind in Belgium."²¹ Another FO document referring to February 1941 emphasized the precarious food situation, outlining that daily rations of only 125 grams of bread and 35 grams of meat were extremely difficult to procure regularly; vegetable provisions were sufficient but nearly twenty times their pre-war price; and potatoes²² had not been available for the last two months.²³ By 1 June 1941, one report stated that the only issue which occupied the minds of Belgians was food – even the word "famine" was used – as "the informant strongly urged that His Majesty's Government would be well advised to listen to a reasonable scheme for feeding children between certain ages."²⁴ These various reports, submitted regularly to the FO, indicate that the food shortages were leading to a severe situation and, most interestingly, that children's suffering should be acknowledged and alleviated.

Belgium's food situation must be contextualized within the larger historical framework. According to Bernhard R Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller and Hans Umbreit, Belgium had the lowest calorific value of normal rations in Europe in 1941 (1,360), with the exception of Italy (1,010) and Poland (845).²⁵ (It must be noted that Germany's normal daily rations, the highest from 1941-1944 on average, were approximately 1,900).²⁶ In 1942, Belgium had the lowest weekly bread rations of any occupied territory in Europe (1,575 grams), with the exception of Greece (1,260).²⁷ This general food situation would not improve until late 1942 and early 1943.²⁸ Consistent with the reports submitted to the FO, Belgian food rations were the poorest during the first years of occupation, and, when contextualized within the larger historical and geographical picture, it can be stated that Belgium had the lowest food rations of all countries in Western Europe from 1941-1942.

Additionally, reports created by external organizations also brought attention to

20 Ibid., 216 and 219.

21 TNA, PRO, FO371/26342-0002, 10 January 1941, "Conditions in Belgium under German occupation," 3. Also, one document states that if the food conditions will be "terrible" if no more wheat is available after 15 February 1941 (TNA, PRO, FO371/26342-0009, 5 February 1941, "Overwhelming Belgian belief in British victory; shortage of wheat predicted," 2).

22 Potatoes were rationed at 500 grams per day, a third of what German soldiers stationed in Belgium were fed. (R. Gildea, D. Luyten and J. Fürst, "To Work or Not to Work?" in *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini*, 46).

23 TNA, PRO, FO371/26343, 12 March 1941, "Conditions in Antwerp," 4.

24 TNA, PRO, FO371/26343-0007, 1 June 1941, "Report by Belgian engineer on conditions in Belgium," 2.

25 Bernhard R Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller and Hans Umbreit, *Organisation und Mobilisierung des Deutschen Machtbereichs* (Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999), vol. 2, 226.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., 230.

28 Warmbrunn, *The German Occupation of Belgium 1940-1944*, 220-221; By 1944, Belgium's calorific values of normal rations had risen to 1,555. See Kroener, Müller and Umbreit, *Organisation und Mobilisierung des Deutschen Machtbereichs*, vol. 2, 226.

the dire effects of food shortages on children. For example, a report prepared by the Belgian Commission for the Study of Post-War Problems, undertaken by Dr. G. J. Bigwood and entitled *Food and Health Conditions in Occupied Belgium* (4 December 1942, London), was based on the examination of fifteen thousand boys and girls between the ages of three and eighteen in Brussels in autumn 1940. In this report, it was found that 38 percent of children over the age of fourteen were underweight and that 80 percent of all children were debilitated and always hungry.²⁹ As this study was published in London in December 1942, it can be assumed that its findings were probably circulated within British medical and even government circles. From a historical standpoint, we know that Belgian children were one of the most challenged demographic groups, but it is impossible to determine the extent to which such studies influenced Allied interest in this evacuation scheme.

Similar to other German occupied territories, a black market developed and thrived during food shortages, exacerbating the situation, and, due to the ineffectiveness of the CNAA and the lack of agricultural resources, Belgium's black market was more widespread than in other occupied territories in Western Europe.³⁰ This was also due in part to inconsistent attitudes and policies of the German authorities. While the Military Administration tried to limit illegal transactions, other German agencies engaged in large-scale purchases, and in March and August 1942 two agencies (the Zentralmeldestelle and Überwachungsstelle, respectively) were created to monitor all transactions. However, this resulted in general evasion, and it was not until the spring of 1943 that Göring prohibited all German black market purchases.³¹ Therefore, Belgians had very little respect for rationing and price regulations, especially since shortages were attributed to German plunder. It must be noted that almost every consumer in Belgium participated in black market transactions at one time or another.³²

Therefore, when evaluating the general atmosphere in Belgium from the beginning of the occupation until June 1942 (when the child evacuation scheme was first mentioned in FO documents), it can be argued that Belgium's food shortages were very severe, exacerbated by poor agricultural resources that were ineffectively and inconsistently monitored by German authorities, resulting in a thriving black market. With regard to food availability and consumption, Belgium was the worst-off country in Western Europe in 1941-1942, and the plight of its children was brought to the fore by documents which predicted an impending famine if nothing were to be done.

Labour Regulations and Their Impact on Children

Another central aspect of life in wartime Belgium was the exploitation of Belgian labour for the German war effort. Initially, recruitment for work was voluntary, but from 6 October 1942 onwards Fritz Sauckel's notorious compulsory labour draft for

29 G.J. Bigwood, *Food and Health Conditions in Occupied Belgium*, Belgian Commission for the Study of Post-War Problems, Doc. S. 4/46 (London, 4 December 1942), quoted in Dorothy Macardle, *Children of Europe, A Study of the Children of Liberated Countries: Their War-time Experiences, their Reactions and their Needs* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1949), 167-168.

30 Warmbrunn, *The German Occupation of Belgium 1940-1944*, 222.

31 *Ibid.*, 223.

32 *Ibid.*, 222.

Germany and German-occupied territories came into effect. After 1942, Belgian labour contracts increased by 200,000, as compared to the 250,000 to 280,000 contracts issued during the period of voluntary recruitment.³³

It is important to understand how labour regulations impacted children and their relationships with their providers. Although employment in the early years of the occupation was generally more relaxed than after October 1942, Belgians were still subjected to harsh regulations by the German authorities. For example, although German and Belgian agencies were successful in reducing unemployment from 600,000 in summer 1940 to 110,000 in July 1941,³⁴ the German authorities applied increasing pressure to persons remaining unemployed. Refusal to accept work, even on part-time public works projects, classified individuals as “asocial” and made them subject to deportation to Germany for forced labour, removal of all rationing stamps and denial of any benefits.³⁵ When labour conscription became compulsory, German teams visited Belgian factories to identify the best skilled labourers suitable for work in Germany. In addition, a minimum 48-hour work week was implemented, and by November 1942, six-month prison sentences were given as penalty for persons refusing to work in Germany.³⁶ Fundamentally, this meant that all able males between the ages of 18 and 55 years of age, usually the primary providers within their families, were working very long hours and were consistently threatened with deportation and removal of benefits if they did not comply.

There were two additional consequences of labour regulations that would negatively affect children’s lives. First, while women were not subjected to deportation for work in Germany (except as domestic servants), Belgian women between the ages of 21 and 35 were drafted to work in 1943. This removed mothers, traditionally the primary child-care providers, from the home. Secondly, specific cohorts of university students were also drafted for work. First-year university students were required for six months labour service in Belgium from 1 May to 1 October 1943, after which they could resume their studies; if they refused, they could be sent to Germany for an indeterminate length of time.³⁷

While labour conscription successfully fed the German war machine, it was another significant pressure upon Belgian children, as it removed fathers, mothers and older siblings from the home. If children’s providers were not deported to Germany, they were still forced to work long hours, often at the expense of providing adequate levels of childcare.

FO documents briefly, though regularly, describe the labour regulations imposed upon Belgians throughout 1941. On 15 February 1941, one weekly report described an increased rate of Belgian workmen being sent to Germany, stating that “the engagements are ‘voluntary’ that is to say, if they refuse to accept work in Germany, subventions paid by Belgian funds are stopped.”³⁸ While the term ‘voluntary’ was

33 Ibid., 235.

34 Ibid., 228.

35 Ibid., 228.

36 Ibid., 231-232.

37 Ibid., 233.

38 TNA, PRO, FO371/26342-0020, 15 February 1941, “Interview with woman recently arrived from Belgium;

used, the threat of losing government benefits denotes that people were in fact given little choice in the matter. Another report describing the situation in February 1941 claimed that 75 per cent of the unemployed went to work in Germany where “they are much better fed; they are free to return to Belgium after their contract expires.”³⁹

While these documents attest to the quasi-forced labour situation in Belgium (and Germany), there is no indication that it was evoking a great call for humanitarian assistance from the Allies. Although labour regulations negatively affected fathers and mothers and therefore their children, there were no reports about the majority of Belgians being used for slave labour in the same way that, for example, FO reports on France or Poland denoted.⁴⁰ Therefore, Belgian labour regulations, though important, would not receive significant attention by the FO until 1942.

The Turning Points of 1942

With Fritz Sauckel’s compulsory labour draft in October 1942, Belgians were subjected to heightened levels of exploitation, as many more were forced to work within Germany, a trend that would not cease until liberation in autumn 1944. The aforementioned food shortages left 55 percent of workers at least five kilograms below their normal body weight, and prolonged malnourishment became visible as infant mortality rates increased.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the black market was flourishing under inconsistent German policies and uncooperative Belgian farmers, leading to only the richest Belgians receiving even the barely self-sustaining daily calorific ration of 1,300 calories.

In addition, the summer of 1942 brought about a marked increase in raids and persecution of Jewish citizens in Belgium. While discrimination against the Jewish populations (through methods of requiring special passports and affixing signs to Jewish shop windows) was reported as early as February 1941,⁴² it was not until summer 1942 that deportations of Jews began in earnest. Belgium had 55,670 registered Jews, of whom 25,000, or almost 45 per cent, were exterminated by the end of the German occupation.⁴³

The repercussions of these actions led to an overall shift in the Belgian attitude to their German occupiers. While it would be unfair to say that Belgium was predominantly cooperative with the German authorities from the beginning of the occupation, it was not until after 1942 that resistance groups increased their sabotage efforts, social-welfare organizations absorbed more Jewish individuals within their

increasing food shortages,” 3.

39 TNA, PRO, FO371/26343, 12 March 1941, “Conditions in Antwerp,” 4.

40 Working conditions similar to “slave labour” in France is described on 18 October 1941. See TNA, PRO, FO 371/28275-0027, 18 October 1941, “Postal and Telegraph Censorship report on France No. 3 containing some criticism of British propaganda, the Catholic Church and prisoners,” 22.

41 Conway, *Sorrows of Belgium*, 28.

42 TNA, PRO, FO371/26343, 12 March 1941, “Conditions in Antwerp,” 6.

43 This can be held in comparison to the 75 percent or 105,000 Dutch Jews of the 140,000 registered in the Netherlands, and the 25 per cent or 75,000 French Jews in occupied France of the 310,000 registered. Meanwhile, the highest rates of Jewish extermination were 81 percent in Greece and 69 percent in Hungary. See Thomas J. Laub, *After the Fall: German Policy in Occupied France 1940-1944* (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2010), 220.

underground hiding schemes, and crime rates soared.⁴⁴ As Conway points out: “1942 proved to be a watershed. Though a reticence to enact German orders had become evident in some areas in 1941, it was during the subsequent year that Belgian society, as a whole, turned against German rule.”⁴⁵

This shift in attitude did not go unnoticed by the FO. An increase in Belgian hatred of their German occupiers had been noted as early as February 1941,⁴⁶ and complementing this attitude was a disbelief in German propaganda, while English broadcasts were considered always truthful.⁴⁷ Even Allied military activities were reassuring to Belgian civilians. By May 1943, one informant to the FO described the “pleasure caused when (Allied) planes fly over and said that people feel a certain security.”⁴⁸ This transition from tolerating German occupation to actively disagreeing with German policies, propaganda and military activities denoted that Belgian society was retreating from German rule and beginning to wait for their liberation.

Belgium as the Catalyst: Allied Motivations for the Evacuations

When reviewing the information accessible by the FO with singular regard for the Belgian context, it can be noted that the British and Americans were extremely aware of the deteriorating conditions in the country. However, deteriorating conditions were experienced throughout *all* of German-occupied Europe. Everyone needed humanitarian assistance. Everyone was hungry. Everyone wanted to be safe. Everyone wanted his or her children to thrive. Therefore, pragmatically speaking, suggesting that the Allies were solely motivated by humanitarian concern is not enough.

There are two key reasons why Belgium’s immediate wartime experiences can be considered the catalyst behind Allied interest in this evacuation scheme. First, food supply in Belgium was extremely low, and food scarcity was extremely high. As food is arguably the single most important aspect to wartime life, and Belgium was the worst-off country in Western Europe according to FO documents, Belgium deserved attention. Children, in turn, were regularly acknowledged as the most profoundly affected demographic group due to food scarcity.

Secondly, Belgium, especially after 1942, espoused pro-British sentiments. Although anti-Nazi attitudes were recorded already in early 1941,⁴⁹ it was not until after 1942 that Belgian society began, in earnest, to voice their attitudes through direct, anti-Nazi, pro-Allied action. For the Allies, this meant that Belgians supported their intervention and favoured an American or British presence in both the liberation and post-war rebuilding of Europe. As Belgium was highly industrialized, perhaps one of the Allied motivations for the child evacuation scheme was an ancillary hope that the

44 Conway, *Sorrows of Belgium*, 20, 50.

45 *Ibid.*, 54.

46 See TNA, PRO, FO371/26342-0009, 5 February 1941, “Overwhelming Belgian belief in British victory; shortage of wheat predicted.”

47 TNA, PRO, FO371/30783-0019, 30 October 1942, “Copy of report of interview with lawyer now a refugee from Belgium describing conditions in country,” 6.

48 TNA, PRO, FO371/34301-0010, 4 May 1943, “Details of conditions in Belgium including German requisitioning, sabotage, air raids and attitude to the King,” 2.

49 TNA, PRO, FO371/26342-0009, 5 February 1941, “Overwhelming Belgian belief in British victory; shortage of wheat predicted,” 2.

child evacuation scheme would positively affect post-war political negotiations. Also, as Belgium was highly industrialized and densely populated, similar to Britain, these two nations could form strong economic partnerships in post-war Europe. Therefore, while it would be impractical to suggest that the child evacuation scheme was implemented due to a singular hope of improving post-war economic and political activity between the two countries, it could be seen as a secondary or tertiary motivating factor.

Additionally, the fact that Belgium⁵⁰ was featured within consistent FO reports should not be underestimated as having an impact upon sparking Allied attention towards these child evacuations. Consistent communication between Britain and Belgium helped to raise British awareness of Belgian concerns and to promote efforts to alleviate challenges in the region. Unlike other occupied countries, such as Yugoslavia or Poland, the reports on Belgium were given weekly (rather than monthly, or even irregularly), and they covered a variety of topics; they were also surprisingly comprehensive.

Finally, parts of Belgium, Switzerland and France shared a common language. Therefore, a language barrier would not further challenge the already inherently traumatic transition for children between the countries. While difficulties with language would still exist in the minority of cases, it was the shared language that helped bring a level of consistency to the scheme.

From the beginning of occupation until late 1942, Belgium was in an exceptionally difficult position. On the one hand, there were extreme food shortages, a thriving black market, unfair labour laws, and inconsistent occupation policies, resulting in exploitation of Belgian agriculture and industry. Meanwhile, as German occupation policies became increasingly brutal and Jewish citizens were targeted for deportation in 1942, Belgian society began to fight back with active resistance, hoping for an Allied victory. For Belgian children, their lives were characterized by acute hunger, prolonged absence of parents and siblings from the home due to harsh labour regulations, and overall instability in home life.

The Allied powers were stimulated by Belgium's dire wartime conditions to support an evacuation of 100,000 children from Belgium, France and Yugoslavia to Switzerland. However, despite the Allies' obvious interest in Belgium, it did not translate into tangible support by the end of the war. British and American departments (independently and jointly) struggled to agree upon blockade policy, and the endless infighting and a lack of a singular vision meant that the Allies were hardly in agreement with each other, much less able to successfully lead a major humanitarian operation for children. Instead, Swiss charities were ultimately responsible for the successful temporary evacuation of 60,000 children to its borders.

However, this article has revealed that the Allies were not ignorant to the plight of Belgian children but, instead, strongly evaluated the feasibility of a major humanitarian intervention in order to protect children in war. Belgium's exceptionally high food scarcity, together with its acute effect on children, was the fundamental catalyst behind the Allied interest. Belgium's growing pro-British, anti-Nazi sentiments only fuelled

50 Weekly reports about the conditions in France were also supplied in abundance, usually entitled "Situation in France" from June 1940 onwards.

Allied interest in this strongly industrialized country, who could become a strong post-war economic trading partner. Furthermore, the comprehensive FO reports and consistent information regarding the changing conditions in both countries, as well as the common language shared between participating nations, helped to support this evacuation. All of these factors, it can be assumed, created a sense of opportunity, and urgency, among the Allies, sparking their interest in one of the largest wartime child evacuations during the Second World War.

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