

# Truus Wijsmuller, the woman who rescued thousands of Jewish children in WWII

Dutch documentary makers are starting a crowdfunding campaign to realize a movie about a forgotten war hero

Dutch World War II hero Truus Wijsmuller made sure that around 10.000 children from Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria could escape the Nazis before war officially broke out in 1940.

She personally went to Vienna to negotiate a deal with Adolf Eichmann, one of the major organizers of the Holocaust. He allowed her to take Jewish children – as long as they would be traveling without their parents and with only one small bag – on trains to safer places like Holland and in most cases eventually England. The train journeys became known as *Kindertransports*.

So why has hardly anyone heard about this exceptionally brave woman, and why has she not been added to the list of heroes that so rightfully contains the names of people like Oskar Schindler, Raoul Wallenberg and Sir Nicholas Winton?

Those are the questions that motivated documentary makers Pamela Sturhoofd and Jessica van Tijn, in cooperation with Freek Zonderland and Rabbi Lody van de Kamp to come up with a feature-length film to do history right.

They were able to locate 15 of the 10.000 children that owe their lives to Miss Wijsmuller – now all well into their eighties and nineties – who will testify about how this extraordinary woman operated and went beyond her official task in being there for the children she was bringing to safety.

Many of the ‘children’ in the film were saved on the very last occasion, when Truus Wijsmuller succeeded in taking 74 children from the Dutch orphanage ‘Burgerweeshuis’ on the exact day Holland surrendered to the Nazis. Their long and harrowing boat trip from IJmuiden to England was the beginning of their new life, their only chance to survive the Holocaust, far away from their family and the life they knew.

The makers have so far been able to gather enough funds to interview the first 6 children that they have traced down in England, Israel and Switzerland. Among them is Lord Alf Dubs, who fled the Nazis from his hometown of Prague to arrive in England, where he has been representing his new country as member of the British Parliament for decades. He is currently using his position to fight for the rights of modern day refugee children.

With an official website ([www.truus-children.com](http://www.truus-children.com)), a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/truuschildren](https://www.facebook.com/truuschildren)) and a crowdfunding campaign, the makers are in search of enough funds to travel to Canada and the United States. Another 9 Kindertransport children are waiting to share their memories of a decisive time in their lives, and of the woman that made the difference between life and death for them. This includes the story of four (!) sisters from Leipzig who are all still alive and able to talk about Truus Wijsmuller and their English years.

If you want to help the makers to win their ‘race against the clock’ – taking in consideration the ages of all the involved – please contact the makers, or make a donation through their website.

Depending on how fast the crowdfunding will succeed, the film is expected to have its first run during the Berlin Film Festival in February 2018, followed by more viewings on both Dutch public television and many memorial sites, the Anne Frank Museum and other important locations in different countries.

Donations via [www.truus-children.com/donate](http://www.truus-children.com/donate), all donations being deductible.

**Note from the makers:**

*Are you, or do you know one of the children that were saved by miss Truus Wijsmuller, please contact us at [pamela@special-eyes.nl](mailto:pamela@special-eyes.nl)*