

**UPROOTED**

**(HI)STORIES OF STOLEN CHILDREN  
DURING WORLD WAR II**

# **UPROOTED Learning Cards Set**

intended to accompany the activity plans

This set of cards can be used in history or civic education lessons, or in non-formal education settings. It is advised that educators supplement the cards with local (history) examples of similar violations of children's rights.

We suggest duplex printing if you want to print the set for use.

The cards were created using images and information researched online, with sources noted on the back of the cards. The cards are intended for exclusively non-profit educational purposes and use, in classrooms or non-formal educational settings. Please give appropriate credit where it is due.

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For the project "Uprooted – (Hi)Stories of Stolen Children during World War II" conducted by Kreisau-Initiative e. V., the Krzyżowa Foundation for Mutual Understanding in Europe, Post Bellum, and Tolerspace.

A project in the Education Agenda NS-Injustice from 2021 to 2022.

This publication does not represent the opinion of the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation (EVZ) or the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF). The author bears responsibility for any statements contained herein.

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#### Project of the Education Agenda NS-Injustice

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# UPROOTED Learning Cards Set

## Categories

### Personal (Hi)Stories

Personal (hi)stories of individuals (either with an uprooted past or responsibility for these events)

### Events & Organisations

Notable events and organisations related to WW II stolen children (hi)stories

### Culture

Books, movies, music, art inspired by the history of stolen children

### International Dimension

Incidences of stolen children drawn from world history

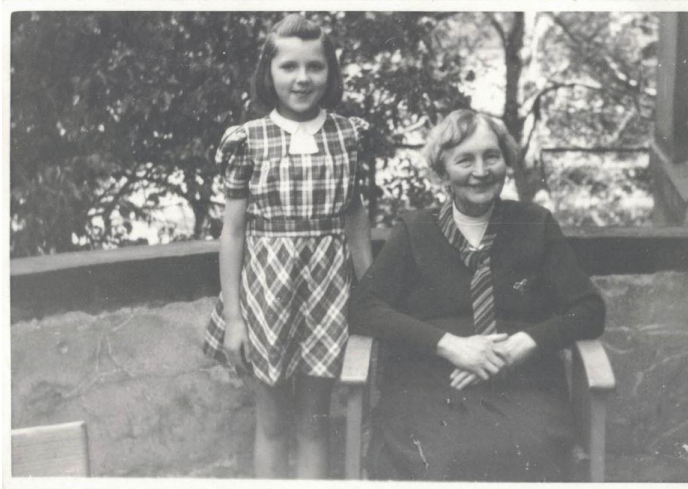
### Key Terms & Concepts

Key terms & concepts relating to the stolen children phenomenon

### Contemporary Issues

Contemporary violations of the rights of uprooted children

# Card Structure (Overview/Format)



Front image

Image and text source: [www.thefirstnews.com/article/exclusive-my-mum-was-kidnapped-by-nazis-9201](http://www.thefirstnews.com/article/exclusive-my-mum-was-kidnapped-by-nazis-9201) (Halina pictured in Germany with an unknown woman who could have been her adopted grandmother)

## Halina Czeszak 1935 - 1975

Halina Czeszak was born in Poznań in 1935. In 1940 or 1941 she was stolen from her family and underwent a process of Germanisation at a special camp designed for this purpose.

Her name was changed to Uta and she was given to a German family in Eisleben in Saxony-Anhalt. Her German mother's name was Ernestine Maurer and the father was called Richard Maurer. They lived in a big house near a meadow. The father wore a grey uniform and was away a lot because of the war.

Halina was found by the Red Cross and returned to Poland in 1947 or 1948 when she was about 12 years old. With her Polish parents' lead, and having spent a happy childhood in Germany, Halina got back in touch with her German mother soon after the war ended and they stayed in close contact. Halina's son Dziekan remembers this period well: "My German grandmother used to send me packages with clothes, toys, those kind of things. I had a lot of things from East Germany that we didn't have in Poland," he said.

Information on  
image source

Title/heading  
of the card

Description  
(key information)

Category  
colour  
code





Image and text source: [www.thefirstnews.com/article/exclusive-my-mum-was-kidnapped-by-nazis-9201](http://www.thefirstnews.com/article/exclusive-my-mum-was-kidnapped-by-nazis-9201)  
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## Folker Heinecke / Aleksander Litau

In 1942, Hitler's troops invaded Soviet Crimea (now in Ukraine) and changed this toddler's fate forever.

Two SS officers kidnapped Aleksander Litau from the front yard of his home because of the way he looked - blond hair, blue eyes. He was taken to Łódź in Poland where he was examined and declared "worthy of Germanization". Next, he spent about one year at Sonnenwiese ("Sun Meadow"), a large institutional "home" for Lebensborn children located in Kohren-Sahlis, near Leipzig.

Upon completing his re-education/adoption programme, he was given to a German couple for adoption. Heinrich Himmler himself had seen his photo and was "captivated by his Aryan appearance" so much that he personally made sure that the boy was adopted by a wealthy Nazi family. So, Aleksander Litau became Folker Heinecke, the only son of a Hamburg shipping magnate, Adalbert Heinecke. He found out the truth about his adoption after his adoptive parents' death.

*"I have had a good life and I loved my adoptive parents, even though they were Nazis. I was just without roots and it was these roots that caused me to spend over 30 years of my life looking for the secrets of the past... I had a good upbringing after the war. My parents gave me a good education, spells in London, Paris and Ireland. They believed in Nazism at the time but they weren't war criminals and always did right by me."*

Quotes from: <https://dirkdeklein.net/2017/06/24/my-name-is-aleksander-a-lebensborn-victim/>





Image and text source: <https://medium.com/short-history/singer-from-music-band-abba-was-born-in-the-horrific-nazi-project-fe6f6ce9af5f> and [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)

## Anni-Frid “Frida” Lyngstad

During World War II, the Lebensborn programme encouraged German soldiers to have relationships with Scandinavian women because they were blonde and blue-eyed, which made them perfect for creating offspring for the Aryan master race. However, after the war, these women were deprived of their civil rights, detained or expelled from the country; they were called the “German whores” and their children received derogatory nicknames.

Anni-Frid Lyngstad (Frida), the famous ABBA singer, was one of those children. Born to a Norwegian mother, Synni Lyngstad, and a German sergeant, Alfred Haase, on 15 November 1945, only a few months after Germany had lost the war and her father had departed back home, she had to emigrate to Sweden with her mother as a baby because Sweden had a policy of tolerance for the Lebensborn children. After her mother’s death in 1947, she was raised by her grandmother, Anni. She later managed to reconnect with her German father, in 1977.

On the 70th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Norway's Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, apologized to these women.



Image and text source: [www.nytimes.com/2021/04/18/world/europe/marie-supikova-dead.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/18/world/europe/marie-supikova-dead.html) (at the Nuremberg trials) and <https://arolsen-archives.org/en/news/marie-supikova-living-for-remembrance/>

# Marie Šupikova

## 1932-2021

Marie Šupikova, born Doležalová, was one of the nine Lidice children who survived racial selection and forced “Germanization” (everyone else in the village of Lidice was killed or transported to concentration camps). Her father was shot in Lidice and her mother was deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

In a children’s home near Poznań, Marie and other “selected” children underwent so-called “re-education”. There, speaking Czech was forbidden and severely punished. After a year, she was given a German name, Ingeborg Schiller, and, as an orphan, placed with a German family. For three years, that is, until 1946, she lived with them, first in Poznań, Poland, and later in Boizenburg, Germany.

After the war, her adoptive family reported her to the Czech authorities and Marie Doležalová returned to Czechoslovakia.

At the age of 15, Marie testified as one of three witnesses to the massacre in Lidice at the RuSHA trial, one of the subsequent Nuremberg trials.



## Zyta Sus

Zyta was born in Łódź, Poland, in 1934. After the death of her mother, she was placed in an orphanage. Because of her "Aryan" appearance, she was abducted from there and sent to a "re-education centre" and, after that, to the "Reich School for Volksdeutsche" in Achern. There, Sus was strictly forbidden to speak her native Polish. Once, Zyta tore down a poster of Hitler from a wall in the school. As a punishment, she was locked in the basement and starved. Later on, she was adopted by a loving foster family in Salzburg, Austria.

After the war, the Polish government returned around 30,000 abducted children to Poland. Zyta Sus was one of them and, having been "kidnapped" again, she was placed in an orphanage. Back in Poland, at the age of 12, she was insulted again, this time as a "stupid German" because the only language she could speak at that time was, of course, German. Even her new adoptive family treated her badly until she perfected her Polish accent again.

Looking back, Sus concluded that living with her Salzburg foster family was "the best time of her life", which is why a team of journalists from Deutsche Welle and the Polish news platform Interia.pl tried to help her trace her Austrian "relatives". Since German institutions changed children's names, the search was not successful.



Images and text source: <https://inf.news/en/history/37cb0e241fd11cb92d030e83551958cf.html>  
and <https://historyandsoon.wordpress.com/2015/10/31/the-women-who-gave-birth-for-hitler/>

# Hildegard Trutz

## “The Woman Who Gave Birth For Hitler”

Hildegard Trutz, a devoted member of the League of German Girls (female Hitler Youth) since 1933, had been a loyal supporter of the Nazis. Because of her blond hair and blue eyes and her “long legs and long trunk, broad hips and pelvis built for child-bearing”, she was a perfect example of “Aryan woman”. So, at 18, she was introduced to the state-sponsored programme known as Lebensborn. In order to raise the birth rate of “Aryan” children, racially “pure” women were chosen to sleep with SS officers and, hopefully, bear a child.

Hildegard, fearing their disapproval, told her parents that she was “undertaking a residential course in National Socialism” and was escorted to an old castle in Bavaria, near the Tegernsee lake. There she found forty other girls, all living there under assumed names. “All you needed to be accepted there was a certificate of Aryan ancestry as far back at least as your great-grandparents”. The residence was very luxurious, with common rooms for sports and games, a library, music room and cinema, “the food was the best she had ever tasted”, and the place had servants. She also had to sign a declaration that “there had never been any cases of hereditary diseases, dipsomania or imbecility in her family”. Additionally, there was a document to sign in which she would be renouncing all claims to her child. Then, Trutz and other young girls were introduced to very good-looking SS officers. In the first week, Trutz was visited by the officer on three consecutive evenings. She immediately became pregnant and was transferred to a special home where she was given special care. After the baby was born, she breastfed him for two weeks and then the baby was taken to a special SS home where he was to be brought up as a loyal servant of the Nazi state. Trutz never discovered what became of her child and his eventual fate remained a mystery.

The complete story of Hildegard can be found in Giles Milton’s book *Fascinating Footnotes from History* ([www.gilesmilton.com/historybooks/fascinatingfootnotes](http://www.gilesmilton.com/historybooks/fascinatingfootnotes))





Images and text sources: <https://mediadrumworld.com/2017/05/02/7442/> and <https://lady.co.uk/hitler%E2%80%99s-forgotten-children> (Ingrid Von Oelhafen holding the first official document of her existence, a vaccination certificate issued by Lebensborn)

## Erika Matko

“In the summer of 1942, parents across Nazi-occupied Yugoslavia were required to submit their children to medical checks designed to assess racial purity. One such child, Erika Matko, was nine months old when Nazi doctors declared her fit to be a “Child of Hitler”. Taken to Germany and placed with politically vetted foster parents, Erika was renamed Ingrid von Oelhafen. Many years later, Ingrid began to uncover the truth of her identity.” (Ingrid von Oelhafen, *Hitler's Forgotten Children: A True Story of the Lebensborn Program and One Woman's Search for Her Real Identity*, Dutton Caliber (publishing), 2016)

Ingrid/Erika discovered her true identity only at the age of 58. In 1999, she was contacted by the Red Cross about meeting her birth relatives. An investigation led her to the Matko family in today's Slovenia where a DNA test confirmed the relationship. She also discovered a woman living in Slovenia under her birth name. Together with the award-winning author and investigative journalist Tim Tate she wrote a memoir in 2016.

An estimated 600 children were snatched for the Lebensborn programme from their parents in Slovenia's Celje area alone.

Зорна Делић – Смиба



СПАСИТЕ МЕ  
УМИЉАТЕ ОЧИ

Image source: <http://weblibrary.apeiron-uni.eu:8080/proizvodi/?id=3686>

("I was saved by having sweet eyes" – a book cover, photo from 1943)

## Zorka Delić-Skiba 1936 – 2015

During World War II, a large part of today's Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well some parts of Slovenia and Serbia, were occupied by the Nazi puppet state NDH (Independent State of Croatia). It was governed by the fascist Ustasha movement. The NDH regime targeted Serbs, Roma, Jews and political dissidents. Many of them died in one of the 22 concentration camps (two of them, Jastrebarsko and Sisak, were only for children).

As a Serbian, whose parents had been killed, little Zorka was placed in a camp. The Jastrebarsko Children's Concentration Camp for predominantly Serbian war orphans was run by Ustasha guards and Catholic nuns. Over the years, some of the children managed to escape the worst fate by being adopted. This happened to Zorka too – one day she was adopted by an Ustasha officer, Slavko Dasović, from Zagreb. After a year spent in the camp, she did not even remember her name. When asked about it by her "future Dad", she replied: "97" (her camp number).

She testified: "I was born on 27 January 1937 in the village of Kruhari in the vicinity of Sanski Most. I was named Zorka. My surname is Delić. When I was adopted in Zagreb, I was named Zorica-Marija Dasović. One time, I didn't know the date of my birth. I was told I was born on 10 April. It was the date and day when the Independent State of Croatia was established. It is interesting how I was "changing" religion. I was born as a Serb of the Orthodox religion. In the process of adoption I became a Croat of the Catholic religion. When I was married, they wrote that I was a Yugoslav who had no religion. The last birth certificate which I got in Sanski Most, which belongs to the B&H Federation, was saying that I have no religion and nation."

(Cited from the book "I was saved by having sweet eyes": <http://jadovno.com/arhiva/zorka-delic-skiba-en.html>)

After the war, in 1948, her older sister managed to locate her in Zagreb with help from the Red Cross.



Image and text sources: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/naslovnica/djeca-lebensborna-3236297>

Book by Kjersti Ericsson, Eva Simonsen, *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, 2005

## Hans-Ulrich Wesch

He was born in a Lebensborn home in Wernigerode, a small town in the former East Germany, in 1943 and separated from his unwed mother shortly after that. His birth mother wanted to marry his birth father and take him back from foster care, but his father died before the war and the authorities wouldn't allow her to do so.

"After the war... I was sent to a family who shortly afterwards sent me to another family, it was probably too much for them... I was three at the time. In the end I was taken by a woman who was already 63 years old, who gladly accepted me, but who raised me quite strictly," said Hans Ulrich Wesch at the first meeting of the "Lebensspuren" – a support group for victims of Lebensborn ([www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-nazis-idUSL0414198720061104](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-nazis-idUSL0414198720061104)).

He continues his story: "I got married in 1975 and my wife was wondering about my birth documents. She said that it must be possible to find my family. So we contacted the town hall in Wernigerode but never got an answer. Instead the former GDR secret service, the "Stasi", ordered me to come to their office. They told me that there is nothing I can find anymore and I should stay away. They also told me that Lebensborn was a fascist organisation and that no files exist." ([www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/a26e7ee54d7d904077b202dd00253201](http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/a26e7ee54d7d904077b202dd00253201))

Only after German reunification, when he had a chance to look through the Stasi files, did he find the information about his birth mother (and three sisters). He also found out that the Stasi had been observing adopted or fostered Lebensborn children all along and, for years, they had collected information about his behaviour in school, during his apprenticeship, in the army and at work.

Eventually, he managed to trace his birth mother and they were both members of the group "Lebensspuren".



Images and text source: <https://arolsen-archives.org/en/news/lebensborn-new-additions-to-our-archive/>  
(Lebensborn children's home in Kohren-Sahlis (Saxony) – from the collection of Dorothee Schmitz-Köster (smaller image))

## Dorothee Schmitz-Köster's Collection

Starting in the mid-1990s, for more than 25 years, an author and journalist, Dorothee Schmitz-Köster, researched the topic of Lebensborn and created an extensive and very valuable personal archive. She started with her own “Friesland” neighbourhood near Bremen, but later expanded the search as far as Poland. The documents, interviews, stories from contemporary witnesses, and notes in her collection, many of them published, include interviews with Lebensborn mothers, children and employees in a wide range of audio formats. There are also some private records and photos of Lebensborn children that were given to her by different private individuals. All the materials she collected resulted in the publication of four books and numerous radio and television programmes.

She managed to help many people. For example, a boy who had been stolen from a Polish family in 1943 managed to reconnect with his biological siblings over 70 years later. This story became one of her books – *Raubkind* (“Stolen Child”), published in 2018.

Dorothee Schmitz-Köster handed over her collection to the Arolsen Archives (the International Centre on Nazi Persecution) in July 2021.

“I want people to understand what the core of Lebensborn is. These were not brothels in which Aryan couples were brought together. For the Nazis, it was about their racial policy and the selection of certain children for that.” (<https://arolsen-archives.org/en/news/85-years-of-lebensborn/>)





## Alodia Witaszek (in Poland) = Alice Wittke/Dahl (in Germany)

The example of the Witaszek family shows how the Nazis also obtained “racially valuable” children from their enemies. Halina and Franciszek, who lived in Poznań, had five children. During the occupation, Franciszek got involved in conspiratorial activities and he became an important member of the underground Polish resistance. In April 1942, he was arrested and then executed. Halina was also detained. She had previously managed to hide her children: the three older ones with her brother, and the two youngest daughters – three-year-old Daria and two-year-old Alodia – with relatives in Poznań. However, it was not possible to shield the two girls from the interest of the Nazis. The two blonde girls were sent to the Office for Racial Affairs for testing, where “experts” judged them to be true examples of the “Nordic” race. They were transported to the Lebensborn centre in Bad Polzin, i.e. Połczyn-Zdrój.

Alodia Witaszek was named Alice Wittke and adopted in January 1944. The girl was taken to the home of the Dahl couple from Stendar, near Berlin. Luise Dahl worked as a secretary; her husband Wilhelm was in France, in a prisoner-of-war camp. The German “Mutti” treated Alice like a little princess. She cuddled her, knitted her dresses, signed her up for swimming lessons and ballet classes.

In Autumn 1947, Alodia/Alice learned that she had to go to Poland and that her “Mutti” was not her real mother. In Poland, her real mother, Halina Witaszek, who had survived a concentration camp, was waiting. Alodia’s classmates called her a “German pig”, bullying her due to her imperfect Polish (her native language having been beaten out of her during her time in the Lebensborn centre).

She maintained written contact with the Dahls and, when she was aged 18, went to visit her German adoptive parents. Later she took her own children there to meet them.



Images and text sources: [www.nytimes.com/2018/07/06/obituaries/gudrun-burwitz-ever-loyal-daughter-of-himmler-is-dead-at-88.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/06/obituaries/gudrun-burwitz-ever-loyal-daughter-of-himmler-is-dead-at-88.html)  
("Puppi and Pappi". Himmler with daughter, Gudrun, Berlin, 1938 and Dachau, 1941)  
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/heinrich-himmler>

# Heinrich Himmler

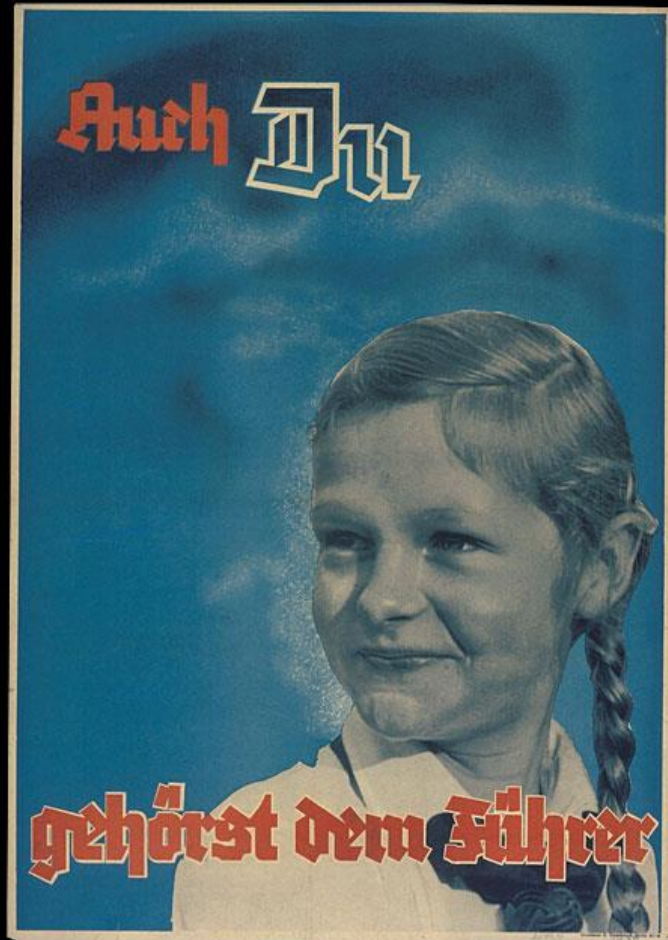
## (7 October 1900 – 23 May 1945)

One of the most important people in Nazi Germany, the man in charge of the extermination and concentration camps, joined the Nazi party in 1925. His anti-Semitic attitudes and extreme loyalty helped him to become an SS leader by 1929.

Obsessed with the idea of racial purification of the German nation (and with a population growth policy), he came up with the "Lebensborn" programme (promoting the growth of Germany's "Aryan" population) and "Germanization" (the location, abduction, false registration and "re-education" of Aryan-looking children in occupied territories). In his secret memorandum to Hitler from 25 May 1940, titled "Reflections on the Treatment of Peoples of Alien Races in the East", among others things, he wrote:

"For the non-German population of the East there must be no higher school than the four-grade elementary school ... Simply arithmetic up to 500 at the most; writing of one's name; the doctrine that it is a divine law to obey the Germans and to be honest, industrious, and good. I don't think that reading is necessary ... whether the child is racially perfect and conforming to our conditions. If we acknowledge such a child to be as of our blood, the parents will be notified that the child will be sent to a school in Germany and that it will permanently remain in Germany ... The parents of such children of good blood will be given the choice to either give away their child; they will then probably produce no more children so that the danger of this subhuman people of the East [Untermenschenvolk des Ostens] obtaining class of leaders which, since it would be equal to us, would also be dangerous for us, will disappear--or else the parents pledge themselves to go to Germany and to become loyal citizens there. The love toward their child, whose future and education depends on the loyalty of the parents, will be a strong weapon in dealing with them ... I consider it as a matter of course from an emotional as well as from a rational viewpoint that the moment children and parents come to Germany they are not treated like lepers in the schools and in everyday life, but, after having changed their names, they should, in full confidence, be incorporated into the German life, although attention and vigilance must be exercised with regard to them ... namely, that on one side one wants to win the people as Germans, and on the other side one constantly hurts and repudiates their human value, their pride and honor through distrust and insults. Insults like "Polack" and "Ukrainian" or something like that must be made impossible." (from Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals, at: <https://forum.axishistory.com/viewtopic.php?t=63400>)

At the end of the war, on May 20, 1945, Heinrich Himmler was captured by Russian soldiers who turned him over to the British. It was under their control that he committed suicide by biting own on a cyanide capsule hidden in his mouth.



Images and text sources: [www.ushmm.org/propaganda/themes/indoctrinating-youth/](http://www.ushmm.org/propaganda/themes/indoctrinating-youth/)

(poster on the left - translation: You too belong to the Führer) and <https://spartacus-educational.com/2WWgirls.htm>

## The League of German Girls (BDM – Bund Deutscher Mädel)

The BDM was formed in 1930 as the female branch of the Hitler Youth movement; its role was to indoctrinate girls into the beliefs and ideals of the Nazi regime but also to prepare them for their most important role – to be future dutiful wives and mothers. The programme trained girls how to care for the home and family. They also learned useful skills such as sewing, nursing, cooking and household chores.

The girls, divided into two groups by their age (younger, 10 to 14, and older, 15 to 21 years old), were also required to pass certain physical tests. For example, they had to run 60 metres in twelve seconds, jump more than 2.5 metres, throw a ball over a distance of 20 metres, swim 100 metres and complete a two-hour route march. Other physical requirements included somersaulting and tightrope walking. The BDM organized many different outdoor activities.

Nazi propaganda, such as the poster shown on the other side of this card, emphasized that the ultimate goal of the League of German Girls was to prepare its members for their role in German society: the role of a wife, mother, housewife and communal volunteer. Their typical after-school activity was to take children from large families for a walk in the park while their mothers were at work.

Ilse McKee wrote about her experiences in the League of German Girls in her autobiography, *Tomorrow the World* (1960): “We were told from a very early age to prepare for motherhood, as the mother in the eyes of our beloved leader and the National Socialist Government was the most important person in the nation. We were Germany's hope in the future, and it was our duty to breed and rear the new generation of sons and daughters. These lessons soon bore fruit in the shape of quite a few illegitimate small sons and daughters for the Reich, brought forth by teenage members of the League of German Maidens. The girls felt they had done their duty and seemed remarkably unconcerned about the scandal.” (From: <https://spartacus-educational.com/2WWgirls.htm> )



Image and text source: [www.smithsonianmag.com/history/story-lidice-massacre-180970242/](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/story-lidice-massacre-180970242/)  
(Eighty-two statues of children are depicted in Marie Uchytlová's "A Monument of children's war victims")

# The Lost Children of the Lidice Massacre

## 10 June 1942

A small Czech town located 20km from Prague was annihilated on June 10, 1942, as an act of revenge for the assassination of Reich Protector Reinhard Heydrich. All the men from the village who were over 15 years of age were executed. Most women and girls 16 years of age and older were deported to Ravensbrück concentration camp. The village was set on fire and the remains of the buildings destroyed with explosives. All the animals in the village were slaughtered as well.

Most of Lidice's children were sent to Łódź in Poland. There, German doctors measured the children's facial features, identifying those with "Aryan" characteristics as candidates for Germanization – a process by which suitably featured non-German children were adopted by German families. In total, nine children met the criteria and were sent to Puschkau, Poland, to learn German and begin the assimilation process. The remaining 80 children were sent to Chełmno extermination camp.

The event inspired Edna St. Vincent Millay, an American lyrical poet and playwright, to write a poem: [www.tenhubergreinhard.de/taeter-und-mitlaeufer/lieder-und-gedichte/the-murder-of-lidice.html](http://www.tenhubergreinhard.de/taeter-und-mitlaeufer/lieder-und-gedichte/the-murder-of-lidice.html)  
Czech drama film *Lidice* (also known as *Fall of the Innocent*) was released in 2011.



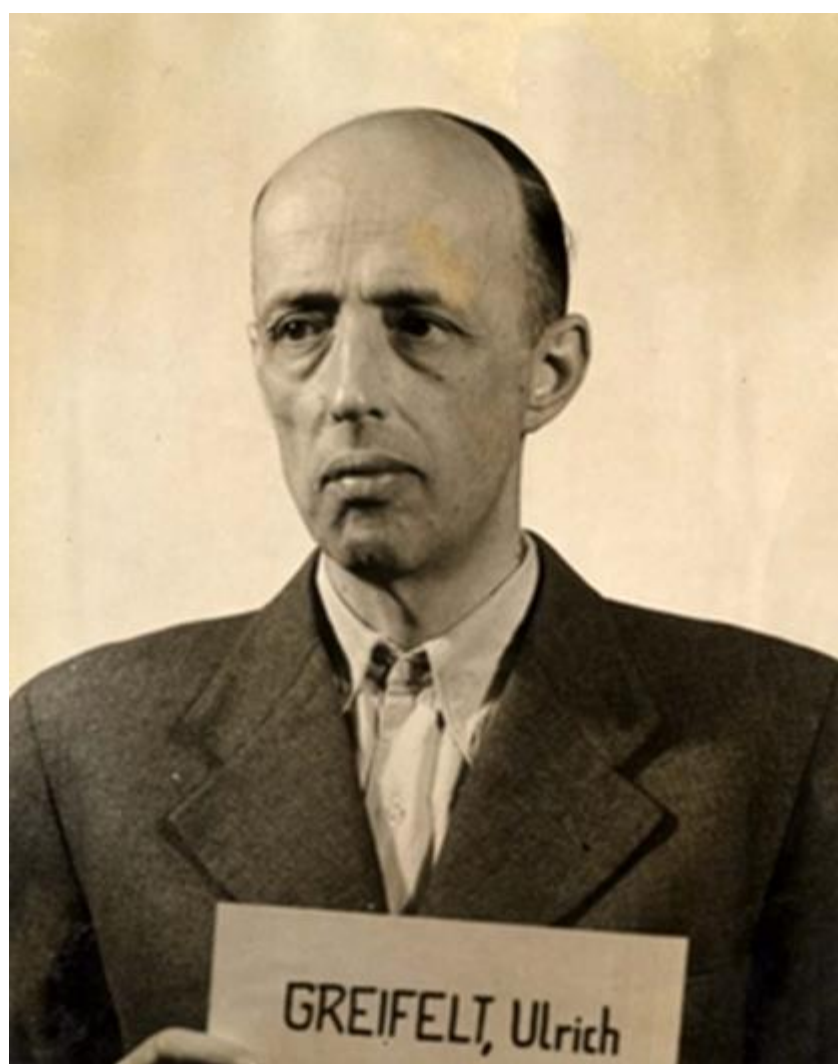


## Children of Zamość

When the Germans decided to expand their living space to the East, their first step was “the Cleaning” (“Generalplan Ost”). The plan was to move the entire Polish population of the Zamość area to make room for German *Volksdeutsche*.

The ethnic cleansing and deportations started on the night of November 27, 1942, and lasted until March the following year. It is estimated that by that time around 110,000 Poles had been displaced from the Zamość region. Some of the locals were murdered on the spot, other transported to the camps where Nazis made selections according to people’s “racial value”. There were several categories: people with some “German blood” were moved to Łódź, others were deemed suitable to be exploited as forced labourers of the Reich, while those “of no use” (mostly old people and children) were sent to death camps for extermination.

Many of the 30,000 children starved or froze to death in Holocaust trains; others were experimented on or gassed in death camps. Children with “Aryan features” were selected by a panel of German doctors as suitable for Germanization – they got a wooden plaque hung around their necks bearing the symbol KI, or *Kinderaktion*, and a number. The youngest ones were the most valuable ones because they could be taken away by German families straight away, while the older ones had to be taught German and their previous lives had to be “erased from their memories” first. It was only then that the older Polish children would get their new, changed names and false birth certificates. Due to that, it was difficult to determine later on how many Zamość children ended up being “Germanized”. Of an estimated 5,000 children, only around 800 of them were located and sent back to Poland after the war.



(page 6 of original)

Stamp

Personal Staff Reichsfuehrer-SS  
Records Office  
file number AS/

Regulation No. 67/1

Addressed according to special distribution key.

Subject: Germanization of children from Polish families and from former Polish orphanages.

There is a great number of children staying at former Polish orphanages and with Polish foster parents, who must be regarded as children of nordic descent, on account of their outward appearances. Investigations have shown that all orphans, who descended from ethnic German parents were in the past systematically taken by the Poles to Polish orphanages, as "foundlings", or to Polish foster-parents. The children were given Polish names. Documents regarding the children's descent are nowhere available.

In order to be able to regain for German Folkdom those children, whose racial appearance indicates nordic parents, it is necessary that the children, who are in former Polish orphanages and with Polish foster-parents, are subjected to a racial and psychological process of selection. These children, who are considered to be racially valuable to German Folkdom, shall be Germanized.

The children, who are considered suitable for Germanization, on the strength of the racial and psychological process of selection, will therefore, at the age of 6 to 12 years be sent to German Volksschools; children belonging to the age group 3-6 years old will be boarded with families to be designated by the Lebensborn.

In agreement with the agencies concerned I am giving the following instructions for the execution of this regulation.

- 1.) The Youth Offices of the Reich Gau Wartheland will register the children, living in former Polish orphanages and with Polish foster-parents and report them to the Reich Statthalter of the Reich Gau Wartheland (Gau self-administration).

Images and text sources: <https://phdn.org/archives/www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/WCC/greifelt1.htm>  
and [https://twitter.com/imt\\_nmtrials/status/1117774935932514304](https://twitter.com/imt_nmtrials/status/1117774935932514304)

## Regulation 67/1

In February 1942, SS Gruppenführer Ulrich Greifelt from Himmler's office issued Regulation 67/1 for dealing with (Polish) children, which instructed RKFDV (The Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood) and RuSHA (SS Race and Settlement Main Office) officials in the following terms:

“In order to be able to regain for German Folkdom those children, whose racial appearance indicates nordic parents, it is necessary that the children who are in former Polish orphanages and with Polish foster-parents, are subjected to a racial and psychological process of selection. These children, who are considered to be racially valuable to German Folkdom, shall be Germanized ...”

The decree further provided, in great detail, for the registration of the children, their racial examination by RuSHA, a medical examination and their subsequent treatment. Particular care was taken to keep secret that the children involved were of Polish “stock”:

“Special attention is to be given that the expression ‘Polish children suitable for Germanization’ may not reach the public to the detriment of the children. The children are rather to be designated as German orphans from the regained Eastern Territories.”

Greifelt was convicted at the RuSHA trial at Nuremberg, sentenced to life imprisonment, and died in Landsberg Prison shortly after, at the age of 52.

München, den 31. Dezember 1931

Bayernische  
Staatsbibliothek  
München

**SS-Befehl — A — Nr. 65**

1. Die **SS** ist ein nach besonderen Gesichtspunkten ausgewählter Verband deutscher Nordisch-bestimmter Männer.
2. Entsprechend der nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung und in der Erkenntnis, daß die Zukunft unseres Volkes in der Auslese und Erhaltung des rassistisch und erbgesundheitlich guten Blutes beruht, führe ich mit Wirkung vom 1. Januar 1932 für alle unverheirateten Angehörigen der **SS** die „Heiratsgenehmigung“ ein.
3. Das erstrebte Ziel ist die erbgesundheitlich wertvolle Sippe deutscher Nordisch-bestimmter Art.
4. Die Heiratsgenehmigung wird einzig und allein nach rassistischen und erbgesundheitlichen Gesichtspunkten erteilt oder verweigert.
5. Jeder **SS**-Mann, der zu heiraten beabsichtigt, hat hierzu die Heiratsgenehmigung des Reichsführers-**SS** einzuholen.
6. **SS**-Angehörige, die bei Verweigerung der Heiratsgenehmigung trotzdem heiraten, werden aus der **SS** gestrichen; der Austritt wird ihnen freigestellt.
7. Die sachgemäße Bearbeitung der Heiratsgesuche ist Aufgabe des „Rassenamtes“ der **SS**.\*)
8. Das Rassenamt der **SS** führt das „Sippenbuch der **SS**“, in das die Familien der **SS**-Angehörigen nach Erteilung der Heiratsgenehmigung oder Befahrung des Eintragungsgesuches eingetragen werden.
9. Der Reichsführer-**SS**, der Leiter des Rassenamtes und die Referenten dieses Amtes sind ehrenwörtlich zur Verschwiegenheit verpflichtet.
10. Die **SS** ist sich darüber klar, daß sie mit diesem Befehl einen Schritt von großer Bedeutung getan hat.  
Spott, Hohn und Mißverstehen berühren uns nicht; die Zukunft gehört uns!

Der Reichsführer-**SS**  
gez. H. Himmler.

\* Die sachgemäße Bearbeitung der Heiratsgesuche wird jetzt vom Heiratsamt durchgeführt.

# Heiratsbefehl No. 65

## SS Marriage Order (December 31, 1931)

1. The SS is a band of German men of strictly Nordic descent chosen according to certain principles.
2. In accordance with National Socialist ideology and in the realization that the future of our Volk [people] rests upon the preservation of the race through selection and the healthy inheritance of good blood, I hereby institute the "Marriage Certificate" for all unmarried members of the SS, effective January 1, 1932.
3. The desired aim is to create a hereditarily healthy clan of a strictly Nordic German sort.
4. The marriage certificate will be awarded or denied solely on the basis of racial health and heredity.
5. Every SS man who intends to get married must procure for this purpose the marriage certificate of the Reichsführer SS.
6. SS members who marry despite having been denied marriage certificates will be stricken from the SS; they will be given the choice of withdrawing.
7. Working out the details of marriage petitions is the task of the "Race Office" of the SS.
8. The Race Office of the SS is in charge of the "Clan Book of the SS", in which the families of SS members will be entered after being awarded the marriage certificate or after acquiescing to the petition to enter into marriage.
9. The Reichsführer SS, the leader of the Race Office, and the specialists of this office [*Referenten*] are duty bound to secrecy on their word of honour.
10. The SS believes that, with this command, it has taken a step of great significance. Derision, scorn, and incomprehension do not move us; the future belongs to us!

The Reichsführer SS

H. Himmler



Image and text source: [www.memoiresdeguerre.com/article-rasse-und-siedlungshauptamt-rusha-96875229.html](http://www.memoiresdeguerre.com/article-rasse-und-siedlungshauptamt-rusha-96875229.html) and <https://nieznalska.com/en/rassenhygiene-research-of-the-ss-main-race-and-settlement-office-rasse-und-siedlungshauptamt-rusha-wartheland/>

# The SS Race and Settlement Main Office (RuSHA – Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt)

The office “in charge of racial matters” was created in 1931 by two important SS officials – Heinrich Himmler and Richard Walther Darré. Initially, they were just overseeing the implementation of Himmler’s “1931 Marriage Order”, that is, they were responsible for issuing certificates of racial purity and marriage permits to members of the SS (only after a thorough investigation proved both prospective marriage partners to be of Aryan descent dating back to 1800).

In 1935, around the time Himmler introduced the Lebensborn programme, they were upgraded to an SS Main Office. After that, “the office's tasks included doing research and providing instruction on race issues, including special training courses for elite Nazi groups; making sure that SS men and their wives were racially pure; carrying out the resettlement of SS men in Nazi-occupied countries as part of the global Nazi plan for expanding the German Reich throughout Europe; and encouraging them to settle on farm lands near cities.”  
([https://www.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205760.pdf](https://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205760.pdf))

They were also in charge of confiscating land, “resettling” (very often a Nazi euphemism for deportation and/or murder) entire villages as well as conducting racial research and assessing the racial value of the population, in addition to implementing the so-called “Germanization policy” in occupied territories. Additionally, they oversaw the work of the Lebensborn network of maternity homes for “racially valuable mothers”. It is estimated that the RuSHA office activities caused the greatest forced migration of people in the history of Europe.





Image source: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1058586> (The defendants indock at the RuSHA Trial)

Text source: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/subsequent-nuremberg-proceedings-case-8-the-rusha-case>

# RuSHA Trial

## (Nuremberg, 20 October 1947 – 10 March 1948)

After World War II ended, many courts were established by the Allies to prosecute German officials. The famous Nuremberg Trials tried and convicted many of them in more than a dozen major proceedings.

The RuSHA Trial, that is, Case #8 of the Subsequent Nuremberg Proceedings, dealt with 14 defendants (Ulrich Greifelt, Rudolf Creutz, Konrad Meyer-Hetling, Otto Schwarzenberger, Herbert Huebner, Werner Lorenz, Heinz Brueckner, Otto Hofmann, Richard Hildebrandt, Fritz Schwalm, Max Sollmann, Gregor Ebner, Guenther Tesch and Inge Viermetz), all leading officials of the *SS Rasse und Siedlungshauptamt* (Race and Resettlement Main Office). They were indicted on three counts:

- crimes against humanity
- war crimes
- membership in criminal organizations

“The defendants were accused of criminal responsibility for many aspects of the Nazi racial programme, including the kidnapping of ‘racially valuable’ children for Aryanisation, the forcible evacuation of foreign nationals from their homes in favor of Germans or Ethnic Germans, and the persecution and extermination of Jews throughout Germany and German-occupied Europe.”

Eight defendants were found guilty on all counts, five only of membership in a criminal organization, and one not guilty. Ulrich Greifelt, the main defendant (the “author” of Regulation 67/1), was sentenced to life imprisonment. Heinrich Himmler was not put on trial because he committed suicide after being captured.

**U.N.R.R.A.**



Image and text source: [www.crommelin.org/history/Biographies/1914Edward/UnrraScrapbook/index.html](http://www.crommelin.org/history/Biographies/1914Edward/UnrraScrapbook/index.html) and <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/united-nations-relief-and-rehabilitation-administration>

## UNRRA The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

The purpose of the UNRRA, an organization created in the White House on November 9, 1943, was to “plan, coordinate, administer or arrange for the administration of measures for the relief of victims of war in any area under the control of any of the United Nations through the provision of food, fuel, clothing, shelter and other basic necessities, medical and other essential services” (Agreement, Articles 1 and 2). Half of the organization’s budget came from the US government. (<https://search.archives.un.org/united-nations-relief-and-rehabilitation-administration-unrra-1943-1946>)

Helping the children from the Lebensborn programme was especially challenging and, in most cases, unsuccessful. In August 1945, UNRRA developed a plan “to canvass all institutions and agencies caring for children, focusing on child welfare agencies, such as the Jugendamt (Youth Welfare Office); foster home placement agencies; kindergartens, and nurseries; as well as churches and schools. Each child would be screened and all information regarding the child’s background would be recorded, as well as an assessment of the quality of care the child was receiving, and from there make a decision as to if the child would remain or be taken to one of the children’s camps in Germany....Children’s information was registered with the tracing arm of the UNRRA and from there the administration checked their records to see if anyone, usually a family member, had submitted a request for the child.”

([https://history.barnard.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/They%20Must%20Be%20Germans\\_Willa%20Smith\\_Thesis%20Spring%202020.pdf](https://history.barnard.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/They%20Must%20Be%20Germans_Willa%20Smith_Thesis%20Spring%202020.pdf))

The agency ran out of funds and, in 1947, a successor organization, the International Refugee Organization (IRO), continued its work.

Read more about it in an interview with Gita Sereny who, at 23, worked as a child welfare officer with UNRRA: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/stolen-children> or listen to her audio interview testimony at: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn514865>

# Geraubt und „zwangsgermanisiert“

## Ausstellung erinnert an „vergessene Kinder“

Von unserem Redaktionsmitglied  
Patrizia Kaluzny

Kostja Pablowsitch Harelek, Janina Kunsztowicz, Zyta Suse, Barbara Gajzler, Roman Roszatowski... Sie alle eint ein Schicksal. Sie hatten blonde Haare und blaue Augen, Augenabstand, Nasenbreite und Schädelform waren „perfekt“. Sie sahen „arisch“ aus. Damit entsprachen sie den Rasse-Vorstellungen der Nationalsozialisten und wurden deshalb als Kinder geraubt und verschleppt. Sie kamen in Einrichtungen der „Lebensborn“-Organisation, in Erziehungsanstalten und Lager im „Alten Reich“, wo sie „zwangsgermanisiert“ und ihrer Identität beraubt wurden, einen neuen Namen bekamen und schließlich zu deutschen Pflegeeltern kamen.

Die Ausstellung „Geraubte Kinder – vergessene Opfer“, die am Samstagabend bei der Gedenkveranstaltung der Stadt für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus in der Erinnerungsstätte im Neuen Ständehaus eröffnet wurde, dokumentiert eindrucksvoll und zugleich beklennend die Biografien von Kostja, Janina, Zyta, Barbara, Roman und vielen anderen Kindern, die das gleiche Schicksal ereilte. Auf den vielen Tafeln, die sich auf den Stockwerken der Erinnerungsstätte verteilen, finden sich zahlreiche Bilder, historische Dokumente, von den Kindern geschriebene Briefe

und viele Texte, die den Hintergrund und die Zusammenhänge dieses Kriegsverbrechens erläutern.

Erarbeitet hat die Wanderausstellung der Freiburger Verein „Geraubte Kinder – Vergessene Opfer“. „Wir sind ein kleiner Verein, der dieses immer noch weitgehend unbekannt Thema in die Öffentlichkeit rücken möchte“, sagt Christoph Schwarz. Der Lehrer aus Freiburg ist Kurator der Ausstellung und Mitbegründer des Vereins, in dem sich auch betroffene Zeitzeugen engagieren – darunter Hermann Lüdeking, der als Roman Roszatowski auf die Welt kam und bis heute nach seinen Wurzeln sucht. Schwarz reiste mehrfach nach Osteuropa, unter anderem nach Slowenien und Polen, traf viele der einst Zwangseingedeutschten und ließ sich ihre Geschichten erzählen.

Die genaue Zahl der geraubten Kinder ist nicht bekannt. Historiker schätzen, dass es wohl mehrere hunderttausend Jungen und Mädchen waren, die aus nationalsozialistisch besetzten Ländern verschleppt wurden, hauptsächlich aus Polen, der ehemaligen Tschechoslowakei und Sowjetunion, aber auch aus Norwegen. Für den von Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler befohlenen „rassisch erwünschten Bevölkerungswachstum“ raubten die Nazis die Kinder aus Familien und Waisenhäusern.

Christoph Schwarz und der Verein wollen zum einen das Kriegsverbrechen,

### Verein kämpft um Entschädigung der Opfer



SEHENSWERTE AUSSTELLUNG: „Geraubte Kinder – vergessene Opfer“ stellt einzelne Biografien in den Vordergrund. Unser Foto zeigt Kurator Christoph Schwarz (links) mit Bürgermeister Albert Käuflein.

Foto: jodo

das deutsche Behörden lange bewusst totschwiegen und verschleierten, in Erinnerung rufen und das Ausmaß des Unrechts bekannt machen. Zum anderen kämpft der Verein an der Seite der Zeitzeugen um eine Entschädigung. „Das war auch der Anlass, diesen Verein zu gründen“, berichtet Schwarz. Diesen Menschen, von denen viele schwere Traumatisierungen davongetragen haben, wurden laut Schwarz bislang Anerkennung und finanzielle Entschädigung verweigert. „Das Bundesfinanzministerium veröffentlichte offiziell die Zahl von 250 Opfern – als ich das Schreiben von einem Bundestagsabgeordneten be-

kam, war ich ziemlich schockiert“, so Schwarz.

Wie wichtig das Gedenken an die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus ist, betonte Bürgermeister Albert Käuflein in seiner Ansprache. „Umzüge rassistischer Gruppen – auch in Karlsruhe, ein AfD-Politiker, der das Berliner Holocaust-Mahnmal als Denkmal der Schande bezeichnet und von dämlicher Bewältigungspolitik spricht – mehr Beispiele muss ich nicht nennen“, so Käuflein, der leidenschaftlich an die Zuhörer appelliert, sich denen, die sich rassistisch und menschenverachtend äußern, entschieden und mit Mut gegenüberzustel-

len und Position zu beziehen. Applaus gab es an diesem Abend auch für die Musiker Maya und Boris Yoffe (Violine), Emil Langbord (Viola) und Dimitri Dichtiar (Cello), die mit ihren mitreisenden klassischen Musikstücken das Publikum begeisterten.

### i Service

Die Ausstellung „Geraubte Kinder – vergessene Opfer“ ist bis 10. März im Neuen Ständehaus, Ständehausstraße 2, zu sehen. Öffnungszeiten: dienstags bis freitags von 10 bis 18.30 Uhr sowie samstags von 10 bis 14 Uhr. Der Eintritt ist frei.

Images and text sources: <http://geraubte.de/>

## Geraubte Kinder – vergessene Opfer e. V. Association

The organization “Geraubte Kinder – vergessene Opfer e. V. (Stolen Children – Forgotten Victims) was founded with the purpose of cherishing the memory of tens of thousands of stolen children from Europe who were abducted by the German occupation authorities during the Nazi era and who were housed in institutions of the former SS organization “Lebensborn e. V.” and the German “home schools” where they underwent Germanization.

The organization’s core activities revolve around the following pillars:

- a) Promoting the memory of the forcibly Germanized children, in particular by searching for traces of the testimonies of the stolen children and by appropriate didactic programmes for teachers and students in schools and other educational institutions;
- b) Managing the travelling exhibition “Stolen Children – Forgotten Victims”;
- c) Participating in Europe-wide research projects and Europe-wide exhibitions about the abducted children;
- d) Researching and publishing about the fate of the abducted children;
- e) Advocating for compensation from the Federal Republic of Germany for the survivors of forced Germanization.



Images and text sources: *Hitler Youth members listen to a speech by Adolf Hitler at a Nazi "party day" rally. Nuremberg, Germany, September 11, 1935 (World Wide Photo)* <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/hitler-youth-2>

## The Hitler Youth (HJ – Hitlerjugend)

The Nazi Party's goal was to exert influence over all aspects of German society, and youth – perceived as the foundation of the new world as future party members, mothers and soldiers – were seen as essential for the survival and the health of the People's Community ("Volksgemeinschaft"). Over the course of the 1930s, the Nazi state abolished all other youth groups in Germany, so that, by 1939, more than 82% of eligible youth (aged 10 to 18) belonged to the Hitler Youth or its female equivalent, the League of German Girls. These youth groups were designed to introduce children and young teenagers to the Nazi ideology.

While girls were prepared for their futures as wives and mothers, boys underwent military training. The Hitler Youth had a military structure at the local, regional and national levels, and boys practiced military drills and learned how to handle weapons; they worked on farms in the summer and took part in competitive sports, especially boxing. Many enjoyed the camaraderie of the Hitler Youth, while others found the constant focus on preparing for war and sacrificing themselves for the Fatherland to be overwhelming and alienating.

In 1943, the Waffen-SS formed a special division made up of Hitler Youth (boys aged 16 or 17) who committed several massacres in France (the Ardenne Abbey massacre of Canadian prisoners of war; the reprisal killing of French men known as the Ascq massacre, etc.). In the final months of the war, many of the Hitler Youth were recruited into a new defensive militia called the People's Storm ("Volkssturm") and engaged in final defensive battles against the Allied troops. Poorly equipped and inadequately trained, thousands of youths fought and died for the German war effort even though defeat had become inevitable by that point.





Image and text sources: [www.dw.com/en/stolen-children-of-the-gdr-ive-always-had-the-feeling-hes-alive-somewhere/a-46609893](http://www.dw.com/en/stolen-children-of-the-gdr-ive-always-had-the-feeling-hes-alive-somewhere/a-46609893)  
and [www.spiegel.de/international/germany/forced-adoptions-in-east-germany-continue-to-cause-pain-a-1250775.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/forced-adoptions-in-east-germany-continue-to-cause-pain-a-1250775.html)

## Stolen children of the GDR

A rough estimate (because there are still no reliable statistics) is that somewhere between several hundred and as many as 2,000 East German children fell victim to politically motivated forced adoptions. In East Germany, the state expected parents to teach their children the principles of communism and loyalty to the regime. If the parents spoke against that regime or attempted to flee the country to the West – they were “unfit” to raise their children properly and the state “stepped in”.

Children, from newborns to those of primary school age, were forcefully taken from their parents. Many mothers were, shortly after giving birth, told that their babies had died but were then prevented from seeing the body. Children were put into foster or adoptive homes. Only couples who were loyal to the party were considered as adoptive parents.

The East German Ministry of Education was in charge of those forced adoptions, and the Head of that Ministry (from 1963 to 1989) was none other than the Margot Honecker, the wife of Erich Honecker, who was the Head of State for most of that time.

Only after the collapse of East Germany in 1989 did many of these forced adoption cases come to light. Today, an organization called “Stolen Children of East Germany”, which has more than 1,700 members, is fighting for an official investigation and access to archives to find out what happened to their children.

See a documentary film, “East Germany’s Stolen Children”, on YouTube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_sQsrnkY1Eo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sQsrnkY1Eo) or listen to a tragic audio story, “What happened to Christoph?” (the boy in the photo) at: [www.dw.com/en/stolen-children-of-the-gdr-ive-always-had-the-feeling-hes-alive-somewhere/a-46609893](http://www.dw.com/en/stolen-children-of-the-gdr-ive-always-had-the-feeling-hes-alive-somewhere/a-46609893)



LEBENSSPUREN  
DEUTSCHLAND



Images and text sources: <https://lebensspuren-deutschland.eu/> (image from the 12th annual meeting of the Lebensborn children, held in May 2014 in Wernigerode)

## Lebensspuren Association

A small group of people, who were once children born on Nazi baby farms or kidnapped from their parents as toddlers because of their “Aryan” appearance, publicly met for the first time in 2006. Former so-called “Lebensborn children”, who were born or raised in one of the 22 Lebensborn homes between 1936 and 1945, met in the eastern German town of Wernigerode in 2006. The venue was symbolic – the “children” took a tour of the grounds of the “Harz” Lebensborn home that the Nazis operated there. One of them had even been born there, while another lived in the home during his “Germanization”. It was also the first public meeting of their support group, the *Lebensspuren*, or “Traces of Life”, an association that the “children” (by then all in their 60s) had formed a year earlier.

*“The aim was to take the children out into the open, to encourage those affected to find out their origins -- but also to show the outside world that the cliché of the stud farm with blond-haired, blue-eyed parents is not correct,”* said Matthias Meissner, managing director, on that occasion. ([www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-nazis-idUSL0414198720061104](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-nazis-idUSL0414198720061104))

The non-profit association Lebensspuren e. V., an interest group of people who were born in former homes of the Lebensborn organization or stolen from abroad and accommodated in these homes, is financed by membership fees, donations and public subsidies. The members and their families support the processing of the subject of Lebensborn and help each other in the search for their own roots. In addition to the “Lebensborn children” and their family members, the association now also includes historians, therapists, publicists and others interested in the subject.



Image and text source: <https://www.dw.com/en/stolen-children/a-52626238>

## STOLEN CHILDREN: the Kidnapping Campaign of Nazi Germany

This documentary film recounts three personal stories of abducted and “Germanized” children. Between 1941 and 1945, children were kidnapped from all over Eastern Europe. 200,000 of them came from Poland alone, 50,000 from all across the rest of Europe. Cases are known from the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Slovenia. After the war, those whose origins could be traced returned to their homelands.

Obsessed with racial purity and the Aryan race, Himmler and his aides prescribed precise guidelines on how a racially pure child was supposed to look like. Twenty-one characteristics were examined, including growth patterns, the back of the head, the bridge of the nose, and body hair. Those who passed the “Germanization” criteria were integrated into the Lebensborn programme.

Hermann Lüdeking, Jozef Sowa and Alodia Witaszek shared the same fate, as they were raised in Nazi-run homes and their identities were changed. Hermann Lüdeking was placed with a German family at the age of six, and he has worked for years to recover the traces of his early family life. Alodia Witaszek was five years of age when her life forever changed. The film follows her as she visits the grounds of the camp in which she spent eight weeks. Jozef Sowa’s parents were murdered by Wehrmacht soldiers in Poland in 1943, and he and his four siblings were taken to Germany. All but his younger sister Janina managed to return to Poland.

This DW Documentary is available on YouTube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GLsM169izM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GLsM169izM)

*Was she raised by the enemy?*

# STOLEN GIRL

A novel by **MARSHA FORCHUK SKRYPUCH**

Author of **MAKING BOMBS FOR HITLER**



**SCHOLASTIC**

Image and text source: <https://www.scholastic.ca/books/view/stolen-girl>

## STOLEN GIRL by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch

Inspired by true events that happened to her family (see below), Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch, an award-winning Ukrainian-Canadian children's writer, delivers a story of one girl's determination to uncover her truth – the novel follows a Ukrainian girl who was kidnapped as a child to be raised by a Nazi family.

“Sometimes she remembers running, hunger, and isolation. But other times she remembers living with a German family, and attending big rallies where she was praised for her light hair and blue eyes. The puzzle pieces don't quite fit together, and Nadia is scared by what might be true. Could she have been raised by Nazis? Were they her real family? What part did she play in the war?” (from: <https://www.scholastic.ca/books/view/stolen-girl>)

Here, the author talks about her family history and inspiration for the novel:  
<https://www.calla.com/wordpress/tag/stolen-child/>



 **MY CHILD**  
**LEBENSBOHN**



**Teknopilot**

 **SAREPTA  
STUDIO**

Image and text source: [www.polygon.com/2018/6/1/17409850/my-child-lebensborn-review-bullying-game](http://www.polygon.com/2018/6/1/17409850/my-child-lebensborn-review-bullying-game)  
[www.teknopilot.no/my-child-lebensborn-press/](http://www.teknopilot.no/my-child-lebensborn-press/)

## My Child Lebensborn (video game)

“My Child Lebensborn”, developed in Norway by Teknopilot, is “a story-driven simulation game letting you experience the fates of Children Born of War. Take care of Karin or Klaus and manage the day to day tasks while helping them through the challenges of living in a hostile and abusive society. The game is based on true events”.

The game deals with children born during World War 2 to Nordic women and German soldiers who were also registered in the Nazi Lebensborn programme. They were raised and indoctrinated through this programme, often in Germany. After the defeat of the Nazis, the children were sent back to Norway where they and their mothers were very often persecuted, abused and bullied.

The game was released in 2018 and won the Game Beyond Entertainment BAFTA in 2019. It has since been banned by Google Play in Germany, Russia, Austria and France due to its sensitive content.

The game: [www.mychildlebensborn.com/](http://www.mychildlebensborn.com/)



Images and text sources: [/www.imdb.com/title/tt0123956/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0123956/), [/www.rottentomatoes.com/m/ordered\\_to\\_love](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/ordered_to_love), [www.imdb.com/title/tt0230652/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0230652/)

## “Lebensborn” movies

World War II and topics relating to controversial Nazi ideas have inspired many filmmakers. Here is one example of a feature film which revolves around the Lebensborn programme.

*Lebensborn*, a 1997 American thriller drama written and directed by David Stephensen, follows “two college freshmen who unknowingly become part of a scheme to create superior humans through genetic engineering”.

A “Lebensborn-themed” episode of *History's Mysteries*, “Hitler's Perfect Children” (History Channel Documentary), is available on YouTube at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGMMygtY5FOg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGMMygtY5FOg)



Image and text sources: [www.geraubte.de/ausstellung.html](http://www.geraubte.de/ausstellung.html) [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3454458/The-children-stolen-start-Nazis-master-race-Moving-exhibition-chronicles-fate-300-000-youngsters-snatched-Aryan-citizens-Reich.htm](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3454458/The-children-stolen-start-Nazis-master-race-Moving-exhibition-chronicles-fate-300-000-youngsters-snatched-Aryan-citizens-Reich.htm)  
(photo: "A rehomed child from Poland, Kostja Pablowitsch Harelek is pictured being inspected by SS chief Heinrich Himmler")

## “Stolen Children, Forgotten Victims” Exhibition

“One of the worst crimes people do to people is when you steal their children. Parents and children are left with mental wounds that never heal again. The Nazis committed this crime tens of thousands of times during their ‘raids’ through Europe.”

The travelling exhibition “Stolen Children, Forgotten Victims” documented the biographies and fates of people who were deported to Germany as children from Poland, Russia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Norway because of their supposedly "Aryan" appearance and then forcefully “Germanized” into foster families (often prominent Nazi ones), homes or camps. The children were given false identities and dates of birth, they were “brainwashed” in “assimilation homes” and many of them had been too young to remember anything after the war. All this made returning the children after the war a mission impossible in many cases, despite the fact that the surviving parents in Poland and other countries reported to the authorities that their children had been kidnapped during the war.

Photos, documents and statements from children and young people who were deported to Germany and forcibly “Germanized” are the central part of the exhibition. The exhibition is largely supported and funded by the “Remembrance, Responsibility, Future” Foundation.

The primary aim of the exhibition is to show the extent of the injustice to those children. Firstly, the German post-war authorities did very little to help with finding the true identities of the victims and, secondly, after the war, the federal government restituted Nazi perpetrators and murderers (for example, an SS guard at Auschwitz death camp received war victim compensation until 1998), but their victims, the stolen children, have never been compensated in any way.



Image and text source: [www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/forgotten-wolf-children-world-war-ii](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/forgotten-wolf-children-world-war-ii)  
and [www.dw.com/en/lost-and-forgotten-german-wolf-children-in-lithuania/a-16798830](http://www.dw.com/en/lost-and-forgotten-german-wolf-children-in-lithuania/a-16798830) (from the photo album of Alfreda/Luise)

# Wolf Children

“Wolf children” (in German: Wolfskinder) was the name given to a group (as many as 5,000) of orphaned German children who, at the end of World War II, fled from East Prussia to Lithuania. The circumstances of the Second World War took practically everything from them: their parents, their home, their language and their past.

After the Red Army came to East Prussia in 1945, thousands of German children were left on their own, their parents having been killed or displaced. Older children often tried to keep their siblings together, and searching for food and shelter became their number one priority. Some of them were left to roam through unforgiving forests in order to survive. The children, most of them between four and twelve years of age, stumbled through forests, alone or in groups; their bellies were bloated, their arms and legs as thin as twigs, their teeth beginning to rot, some of them without shoes. They ate grass, frogs, whatever they could find – and often, simply nothing. Many went on the search for food into neighbouring Lithuania. There, they sometimes had to work hard for little food, but some of them were adopted by Lithuanian farmers, who often also employed them.

Alfreda (in the photos), born Luise Quietsch in the German town of Schwesternhof in East Prussia in 1940 (today in the Russian region of Kaliningrad), was adopted at the age of four by a Lithuanian family. Initially, Luise, together with her aunt and cousin, fled westward. She had seen burned trees, the cadavers of horses, abandoned half-opened suitcases (she remembers wanting to take the teddy bear from one). After the bombing, she got separated from her aunt. Eventually, she was saved by a Russian Red Army cook and taken to the authorities. Her new family organized Lithuanian papers for her and sent her to school. With help from the Red Cross, she even managed to find her siblings 48 years after the separation.

Since 2008, Lithuania provides a small pension for the “wolf children” (around 50 euros) but only if they can prove that they were born in East Prussia.





Image and text sources: [www.australianstogether.org.au/discover/australian-history/stolen-generations](http://www.australianstogether.org.au/discover/australian-history/stolen-generations) and <https://healingfoundation.org.au/stolen-generations/>

# Stolen Generations

The Australian “Stolen Generations” refers to the First Nations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) children who were forcibly removed from their families between 1910 and 1970 as a result of various government assimilation policies and church missions.

It was believed that, due to white superiority and black inferiority, the “full-blooded” Aboriginal people would naturally die out and that the children of mixed, Aboriginal and white, parentage, also called “half-caste” children, should be assimilated into white society because of their lighter skin. Those children were taken from their families and forced to adopt a white culture and forbidden to speak their traditional languages. Their names were changed and they were placed in various institutions where neglect and abuse were common. Some children were adopted by white families, but many of them were used for domestic work.

Many children were psychologically, physically and sexually abused while living in state-sponsored institutions or with their adoptive families. Children were told that their birth parents had died or had abandoned them. Their education was very basic as they were expected to work as manual labourers and domestic servants. Most of them experienced high rates of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress and suicide as well as poor health and socioeconomic outcomes later on in life. Many siblings were separated and many First Nations people are still searching for their parents and siblings.

On 13 February 2008, the Australian Government formally apologized to the Stolen Generations.

Watch the emotional “Intergenerational Trauma Animation”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlqx8EYvRbQ> made by [healingfoundation.org.au](https://healingfoundation.org.au), or watch *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, a 2002 Australian film based on the book *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington Garimara, loosely based on a true story about her mother, Molly, who was a part of the Stolen Generations.



Image and text source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/10/07/trudeau-apology-indigenous-residential-schools/> and <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/canadian-residential-schools-a-timeline-of-apologies-1.5700824>

# Justin Trudeau's apology to Canada's Indigenous Children/People

More than 150,000 Indigenous children all over Canada were forced to attend the government-funded religious residential schools from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1980 as a part of an effort to “assimilate the children into Canadian society”. There, children were punished for practicing their traditions and speaking their languages; they were abused and many of them died due to diseases, malnourishment, by suicide or while trying to escape. Many were buried in unmarked graves.

Here is a part of Pope Francis's apology to the Inuit and Metis delegates from March 31, 2022, translated from Italian (many others, for example, Pope Benedict and Canada's PM Justin Trudeau apologized for the residential schools as well):

“Listening to your voices, I was able to enter into and be deeply grieved by the stories of the suffering, hardship, discrimination and various forms of abuse that some of you experienced, particularly in the residential schools. It is chilling to think of determined efforts to instil a sense of inferiority, to rob people of their cultural identity, to sever their roots, and to consider all the personal and social effects that this continues to entail: unresolved traumas that have become intergenerational traumas.

All this has made me feel two things very strongly: indignation and shame. Indignation, because it is not right to accept evil and, even worse, to grow accustomed to evil, as if it were an inevitable part of the historical process. No! Without real indignation, without historical memory and without a commitment to learning from past mistakes, problems remain unresolved and keep coming back. We can see this these days in the case of war. The memory of the past must never be sacrificed at the altar of alleged progress.

I also feel shame – sorrow and shame – for the role that a number of Catholics, particularly those with educational responsibilities, have had in all these things that wounded you, in the abuses you suffered and in the lack of respect shown for your identity, your culture and even your spiritual values.”

A short documentary about residential schools in Canada:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TeW4hW1QD0&list=PLiE7YBxN9zmKzeQpzCIhNgQhxKkniUhel](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TeW4hW1QD0&list=PLiE7YBxN9zmKzeQpzCIhNgQhxKkniUhel)



Image and text source: <https://abuelas.org.ar/idiomas/english/history.htm>

# Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo

From 1976 to 1983, during the Dirty War, the military junta in Argentina, military and security forces and right-wing death squads hunted down political dissidents. The number of kidnapped and missing people (“desaparecidos”) is somewhere between 10,000 (official estimate) and 30,000 (estimate of the “Madres de Plaza de Mayo” organization). Most of these people are presumed dead.

An estimated 500 of the missing are the children who were born in captivity to pregnant “disappeared” women or “disappeared/kidnapped” together with their parents as toddlers. It is believed that many of these babies were given up for illegal adoption to military families and others associated with the regime.

Since 1977, an NGO called Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo) has been searching for those children so that they can be reunited with their surviving biological families.

At the moment, the organization is chaired by Estela de Carlotto and has its headquarters in Buenos Aires and subsidiaries in Mar del Plata, La Plata, Rosario and Córdoba.

So far, the Organization had restored the identity of 130 people. Check out their excellent website: [https://abuelas.org.ar/idiomas/english/cases/listado\\_padres.htm](https://abuelas.org.ar/idiomas/english/cases/listado_padres.htm) with detailed stories of each and every “grandchild” that was kidnapped with their parents or born in captivity and finally identified.

They have been nominated five times for the Nobel Peace Prize.



Image and text source: [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54693159](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54693159) (Nuns and children at Bessborough House in Cork, where more than 900 children died) and [www.irishcentral.com/news/mother-baby-illegal-adoptees-us](http://www.irishcentral.com/news/mother-baby-illegal-adoptees-us)

## Irish “Mother and Baby Homes”

In the 1900s, having a child outside of wedlock was frowned upon and stigmatized by Irish society. Mother and Baby Homes were state-sponsored religious (mostly Catholic) institutions that were supposed to help these mothers and their babies.

After investigative journalism uncovered the “Tuam babies” – up to 800 babies secretly buried in a “mass unmarked grave” previously used as a sewage tank near the Mother and Baby Home run by the Bon Secours order of Catholic nuns in Tuam, County Galway from 1925 to 1961 – there was international outrage and Irish society and the authorities finally decided to examine this ugly chapter of their history.

A special team of people, called the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation (2015-2021), was appointed by the Irish Government with the purpose of investigating and reporting on practices in 14 Irish Mother and Baby Homes between 1922 and 1998. They published their Final Report at the beginning of 2021. It is 2,865 pages long and is available online at: <https://assets.gov.ie/118565/107bab7e-45aa-4124-95fd-1460893dbb43.pdf> .

The report describes the cruel treatment of unmarried woman and their babies. In total, 56,000 women, some of them as young as 12 years old, and 57,000 babies passed through those Homes. 9,000 children died in these institutions, which is about 15% of all children recorded there. Many of the mothers died from malnutrition and diseases too. In addition, children were subject to medical experiments in various vaccine trials (carried out by different laboratories today merged into the GlaxoSmithKline pharmaceutical company). Those who survived were taken by force from their birth mothers and given up for domestic or foreign adoption. The report also revealed that the majority of babies put up for illegal adoption from these religious institutions were sent (effectively, trafficked) to the United States, very often to wealthy families. Nuns would even arrange an “illegal registration of birth” – the adopted parents were listed on the baby's birth certificate as birth parents.





Image and text sources: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-57274323> and [www.theguardian.com/society/2022/mar/20/we-were-human-be-uk-families-seek-apology-over-historic-forced-adoptions](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/mar/20/we-were-human-be-uk-families-seek-apology-over-historic-forced-adoptions)

# “If you love your baby...”

## The Story of Forced Adoptions in Britain

*“Between 1945 and 1975, more than half a million babies were put up for adoption in Britain. Many of the birth mothers were unmarried and say they were forced to give up their babies. Now, they want an apology.”*

These are the opening lines of a BBC documentary on the history of forced adoptions in the UK and the involved mothers’ search for justice. These coerced adoptions of babies of young unmarried mothers to “acceptable” married couples were facilitated by the church, charities and the government. The women faced sustained pressure to give up their children from all kinds of professionals involved in the process: doctors, midwives, workers in mother and baby homes and adoption agencies staff in both religious and council-run homes. Pressured by the rigid rules of society, their own parents were often ashamed of them and supported such actions.

Even though the 1975 and 1989 Children Acts and the 1976 Adoption Act made it easier for adopted children and their birth mothers to reconnect with each other, the UK remains one of the rare European countries that allows for the state to force a child into adoption without the consent of a child’s biological parents.

This 12-minute-long documentary filled with personal heartbreaking experiences is available on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q903K3RUwMM>



Image and text source: [www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2021/07/19/us-native-american-schools](http://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2021/07/19/us-native-american-schools)  
(An early picture of Stewart Indian School. The school is now a museum. (Courtesy of Stewart Indian School))

# The abuse of Native American children

From 1869 until the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of Native American children were placed in government and church-run boarding schools. They were taken from their families and their homes.

Deb Haaland – the first Native American to occupy the post of a cabinet secretary (Secretary of the Interior) in the US government – ordered an investigation into the conditions that Native American children endured in more than 400 boarding schools. This Department of the Interior report (released in May 2022) highlighted many of the abuses, such as instances of beatings, withholding of food and solitary confinement. It also identified burial sites at more than 50 of these former schools, with 19 federal Indian boarding schools accounting for over 500 American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian child deaths – with the number expected to grow as the investigation continues.

For more information on the initial findings of this report, see: *Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, May 2022*, at: [www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bsi\\_investigative\\_report\\_may\\_2022\\_508.pdf](http://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bsi_investigative_report_may_2022_508.pdf)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



Image and text source: <http://equityforchildren.org/2014/10/the-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child/>  
and [www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention](http://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention)

# United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

In 1989, the leaders of 140 countries made a historic commitment to the world's children by adopting this agreement. It has become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform the lives of many children around the world. Sadly, not every child gets to enjoy all of its benefits. Children's Rights are still being violated around the world. Here are some of the articles relevant to our topic:

Article 7: 1. The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.

Article 8: 1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference. 2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.

Article 9: 1. States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents, or one where the parents are living separately and a decision must be made as to the child's place of residence.

Article 19: 1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

The rest of it is available at: [www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child](http://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child)



Image and text source: Delegates from countries that signed the UN Genocide Convention (US Holocaust Memorial Museum) [www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide-convention.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide-convention.shtml) [www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/work/ferencz-international-justice-initiative/transitional-justice/the-legal-framework](http://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/work/ferencz-international-justice-initiative/transitional-justice/the-legal-framework)



# The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)

The Genocide Convention was the first human rights treaty adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, on 9 December 1948, and signified the international community's commitment to "never again" after the atrocities committed during the Second World War. Its adoption marked a crucial step towards the development of international human rights and international criminal law as we know it today.

Article II of the Convention states that genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.





Lebensborn

Image (front cover of a brochure for the programme) and text source:  
<https://medium.com/lessons-from-history/lebensborn-3ceac4608d1a>  
and <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/lebensborn-program>

# The Lebensborn Programme

The Lebensborn programme was launched in 1935 by Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS. The term “Lebensborn” means “Fountain/Spring of Life”. Its main goal was to increase the Germanic/Nordic population of Germany based on Nazi eugenics (also called "racial hygiene" by some eugenicists). Lebensborn provided welfare to its mostly unmarried mothers, encouraged anonymous births by unmarried women at their maternity homes, and mediated the adoption of children by likewise "racially pure" and "healthy" parents, particularly SS members and their families.

Initially set up in Germany in 1935, Lebensborn expanded into several occupied European countries with Germanic populations during the Second World War. It was responsible for the selection of "racially worthy" orphans for adoption and the care of children born to Aryan women who had been in relationships with SS members. It originally excluded children born from unions between common soldiers and foreign women, because there was no proof of "racial purity" on both sides. During the war, many children were kidnapped from their parents and judged by Aryan criteria for their suitability to be raised in Lebensborn homes and fostered by German families.

At the Nuremberg Trials, much direct evidence was found of the kidnapping of children by the Nazis across Greater Germany during the period 1939-1945.

Check out the Lebensborn brochure at: <https://perspectives.ushmm.org/item/brochure-for-the-lebensborn-program/collection/family-life-during-the-holocaust>



# “Sonnenwiese” (“Sun Meadow”)

## The Lebensborn home in Kohren-Salis, near Leipzig, Germany

The Lebensborn homes and maternity wards were part of the Population & Race Policy of the Lebensborn programme. Their purpose was to help increase the “Aryan” population of Germany in two ways – it was a place for unmarried “racially valuable” mothers and a place where kidnapped “Aryan-looking children” from occupied territories were “Germanized”.

The Sonnenwiese (engl. Sun Meadow), a former old people’s nursing home, was bought by the Lebensborn association in 1941. Its maximum capacity was 170 but, on average, it housed 130 children, most of them under the age of three.

“The care of the children was taken over by up to 20 sisters, three learning sisters, ten nursing students and three educators. The home ‘Sonnenwiese’ also played a role in the ‘Germanization’ of foreign children from Poland, Yugoslavia and Norway – reliable figures are not available here. Most foreign children came from Norway, mostly by air. In 1943/44, 200 children were brought from Oslo to Germany, of which 150 were recorded in Kohren-Sahlis. Not only abducted children but also anonymously released (illegitimate) children were housed in the home. Also, some children from Norway were the children of Wehrmacht soldiers that were sent to Germany with the consent of the Norwegian mothers and under pressure from their families.”

Sonnenwiese was primarily a children’s home (not a maternity hospital) and it was much better equipped than some urban children’s homes. Nurses, housemaids, kitchen maids and laundry room staff were regular employees; the doctor was called if there was a need for one. The sisters’ and the director’s salaries were above the national average.

After the war ended, the home was closed and the children were taken to foster homes. The agony of the residents and their birth families continued because of the GDR policy not to reveal the identities of Lebensborn children.



Image source: <https://imgur.com/gallery/U1WHI>

Text source: "They Must Be Germans": The Nazi Germanization Program and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, 1939-1947, Willa Smith, Senior Thesis, Department of History, Barnard College, Columbia University, New York, NY, April 2020

[https://history.barnard.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/They%20Must%20Be%20Germans\\_Willa%20Smith\\_Thesis%20Spring%202020.pdf](https://history.barnard.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/They%20Must%20Be%20Germans_Willa%20Smith_Thesis%20Spring%202020.pdf)

# Germanization

The terms "Germanization" (Eindeutschung) and "re-Germanization" (Wiedereindeutschung) were used by the Nazis to describe a process of "transforming non-Germans into Germans". Germanization was a process not exclusive to the kidnapped children of occupied territories; it was applied broadly to any individual, child and adult alike, of whom Germanic descent could be identified. The programme began in Poland, since it was the first nation to be conquered in 1939, and Poles became the largest group forcibly "re-Germanized", both adults and children.

Racial examinations that were based on Nazi racial theory across Germany and Europe were meant to determine the racial identity of individuals and they focused on a variety of factors, including family history, language, and things as rudimentary as physical appearance. Physical appearance was a key factor in the kidnapping of children, allowing the Nazis to lay claim to populations whose actual Germanic heritage was suspect.

In a treatise from the Office of Racial Policy in the NSDAP (The National Socialist German Workers' Party, or the Nazi Party) the following outline of the resettlement process of racially valuable Polish children is stated: ...*The children suitable for this [Germanization] are not to be over 8 to 10 years of age because, as a rule, a genuine ethnic transformation, that is, a final Germanization, is possible only up to this age. The first condition for this is a complete prevention of all connections with their Polish relatives. The children receive German names which are ethnologically of accentuated Teutonic origin. Their descendant certificate will be kept by a special department. All racially valuable children whose parents died during the war or later will be taken over in German orphanages without any special regulation.* (1939 Treatise by the NSDAP Office of Racial Policy in Germany, Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals, p. 675)



Images and text source: At the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Genetics, and Eugenics, a racial hygienist measures a woman's features in an attempt to determine her racial ancestry. Berlin, Germany, date uncertain, at: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nazi-racism> and <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/aryan-1>

## “Aryan Race”

For years before he rose to power and became the Chancellor of Germany, Adolf Hitler was obsessed with ideas about race which he promoted through his speeches and writings. These notions revolved around the concepts of racial “purity” and the superiority of the “Aryan master race”. For Hitler, the ideal “Aryan” was blond, blue-eyed and tall. After the Nazis came to power, they began putting their ideology into practice with the support of scientists who believed that the human race could be improved by limiting the reproduction of people considered to be “inferior”. Beginning in 1933, German physicians were allowed to perform forced sterilizations (making it impossible for the victims to have children) on Roma, people with disabilities, mentally ill people and people born deaf and blind.

Racial science “principles” were also applied in schools by Nazi teachers, who measured the skull sizes and nose lengths of their students, recording the colour of their hair and eyes to determine whether they belonged to the true “Aryan race” and humiliating Jewish and Romani students in the process.

The word “Aryan” has a long history – initially it was used to refer to groups of people who spoke a variety of languages, including most of the European ones and several Asian ones. Over time, the term took on new meanings, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some scholars transformed the Aryans into a mythical “race”, which was a notion later adopted and promoted by the Nazis.

Aryans are not a race, and the “Aryan master race” does not, in fact, exist.



## Poem: The Search Begins

“ They had taken away my family!  
The child within me cried,  
The stolen life, the agony  
Of many a year gone by.

The cover up; the pretence.  
The falsehood: All those lies.  
Didn't they know I'd find out the truth one day,  
And now I just ask WHY?

All their words and all their kindness  
Can never fill the pain.  
Can I ever trust the people,  
That I believed in, once again?

The stole me from a lifetime,  
My heritage. My home.  
My family. My identity.  
My spirit all alone.

But to let them win, would be a sin.  
To give up would be a crime.  
I must search on. I must fight on.  
To find what is rightfully mine.

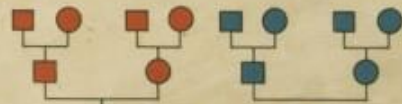
To find my heritage; my family.  
My home and identity.  
To find the person who was lost to me.  
Me... the Aborigine! ”

# Being/Feeling Uprooted – Effects and Consequences

Being uprooted in childhood leaves a lasting effect, impeding a child's and later an adult's ability to feel a sense of belonging, of having roots. As the example of extensive research into the effects and consequences of uprootedness on the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal children in Australia shows, being uprooted can generate:

- Low self esteem and feelings of worthlessness
- Loss of identity
- Loneliness
- Mistrusting everyone
- Deep distrust of government
- Internal guilt
- Violence (domestic or intrinsic, sometimes leading to suicide)
- Inability to bond with one's own family (having met them/having had the reunion later in life)
- Difficulties parenting (having absence of positive role models)
- Depression; substance or alcohol use
- Lower life expectancy
- Intergenerational traumas (occurs when the effects of trauma are passed down between generations)

# Nürnberger Blutschutzgesetz



Ehe verboten

Ehe verboten

Ehe verboten

Ehe genehmigungspflichtig

Ehe genehmigungspflichtig

HALT  
RASSENGESETZE

HALT  
RASSENGESETZE

Programm  
der NSDAP  
Punkt 8

Jede weitere  
Einwanderung Nichtdeutscher  
ist zu verhindern!



Nürnberg

Reichsparteitag 1935

## Rassengesetze

Aus dem Nürnberger Gesetz:

1. Eheschließungen zwischen Juden und Staatsangehörigen deutschen oder artverwandten Blutes sind verboten.
3. Juden dürfen weibliche Staatsangehörige deutschen oder artverwandten Blutes unter 45 Jahren in ihrem Haushalt nicht beschäftigen.

Wer dem Verbot zuwiderhandelt, wird mit Sachtaus oder Gefängnis bestraft.

Reinhaltung des Blutes sichert den  
Fortbestand des deutschen Volkes!

■ arisch  
■ jüdisch

Images and text source: Eugenics poster entitled “The Nuremberg Law for the Protection of Blood and German Honour”. The illustration is a stylized map of the borders of central Germany upon which is imposed a schematic of the forbidden degrees of marriage between Aryans and non-Aryans and the text of the Law for the Protection of German Blood. The German text at the bottom reads, “Maintaining the purity of blood ensures the survival of the German people”. US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Hans Pauli, at: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/eugenics>

## Eugenics (or: Racial Hygiene)

Eugenics, or “racial hygiene”, was a scientific movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that inspired a significant number of Nazi policies. The term “eugenics” (from Greek, for “good birth or stock”) was coined in 1883 by the English naturalist Sir Francis Galton, with German economist Alfred Ploetz first employing the term’s German counterpart, “racial hygiene” (*Rassenhygiene*) in 1895. At the core of this movement’s belief system was the notion that human heredity was fixed and immutable, and that the social ills of modern society – criminality, mental illness, promiscuity, alcoholism, poverty – stemmed from hereditary factors (rather than environmental factors, such as the rapid industrialization and urbanization of late 19th century Europe and North America).

Nazi Germany’s racial policies, implemented with the assistance of medical professionals, targeted individuals defined as “hereditarily ill”: those with mental, physical, or social disabilities. Nazis believed these individuals placed both a genetic and a financial burden upon society and the state. One of the first eugenic measures they initiated was the 1933 Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases, which mandated forcible sterilization for those affected by nine disabilities and disorders, including schizophrenia and “hereditary feeble-mindedness”. As a result of this law, 400,000 Germans were sterilized in Nazi Germany. Eugenic beliefs also shaped the 1935 Marital Hygiene Law which prohibited the marriage of persons with “diseased, inferior or dangerous genetic material” to “healthy” German “Aryans”.

Finally, the eugenic theory also provided the basis for the “euthanasia” (T4) programme – a clandestine initiative that targeted disabled patients living in institutions throughout the German Reich. An estimated 250,000 patients, the overwhelming majority of them Germans, were killed during this operation.



Image and text source: Afghan child in Fylakio Centre Near the Greek-Turkish Border, Greece, February 2020  
[www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org.eca/files/2021-03/UNHCR-UNICEF-IOM%20Factsheet%20on%20refugee%20and%20migrant%20children%20Jan-June%202020.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org.eca/files/2021-03/UNHCR-UNICEF-IOM%20Factsheet%20on%20refugee%20and%20migrant%20children%20Jan-June%202020.pdf)

# Unaccompanied Minor Refugees

An “**unaccompanied child**” is a child separated from both their parents and other relatives who is not being cared for by any other adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

Children separated from their parents and families because of conflict, population displacement or natural disasters are among the most vulnerable. Separated from those closest to them, these children have lost the care and protection of their families in the turmoil, just when they need them most. Refugee, migrant and displaced children are especially vulnerable to trafficking as they are escaping war or in search of opportunities.

[www.unhcr.org/protection/children/4098b3172/inter-agency-guiding-principles-unaccompanied-separated-children.html](http://www.unhcr.org/protection/children/4098b3172/inter-agency-guiding-principles-unaccompanied-separated-children.html)

Children make up almost one third of all human trafficking victims worldwide.



Image and text source: [www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/2/56c707d66/children-drown-day-average-trying-reach-safety-europe.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/2/56c707d66/children-drown-day-average-trying-reach-safety-europe.html)  
[www.savethechildren.net/news/concerns-mental-health-thousands-migrant-children-after-dangerous-sea-crossing-canary-islands](http://www.savethechildren.net/news/concerns-mental-health-thousands-migrant-children-after-dangerous-sea-crossing-canary-islands)

# The Plight of Refugee Children Trying to Reach Europe

## (2015 – present)

*“The Central Mediterranean from North Africa to Europe is among the world’s deadliest and most dangerous migrant routes for children and women,”* said Afshan Khan, UNICEF Regional Director and Special Coordinator for the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe. *“The route is mostly controlled by smugglers, traffickers and other people seeking to prey upon desperate children and women who are simply seeking refuge or a better life. We need safe and legal pathways and safeguards to protect migrating children that keep them safe and keep predators at bay.”* ([www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org))

“This migration crisis is also a child rights crisis: these children are in a difficult situation, having fled poverty or conflict in strenuous journeys over thousands of kilometres. They’re in need of psychological support because of what they have seen and gone through – they have seen people dying on board and being thrown into the sea, they have suffered from a lack of food, and some have experienced violence and separation from their parents. These are all factors that can scar children for life.” - Erik Hazard (Save the Children) [www.savethechildren.net/news/concerns-mental-health-thousands-migrant-children-after-dangerous-sea-crossing-canary-islands](http://www.savethechildren.net/news/concerns-mental-health-thousands-migrant-children-after-dangerous-sea-crossing-canary-islands)

Alan Kurdi was a three-year-old Syrian boy of Kurdish ethnic background whose image made global headlines after he drowned on 2 September 2015 in the Mediterranean Sea along with his mother and brother.





Image and text source: [www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk/what-is-daca-and-who-are-the-dreamers](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk/what-is-daca-and-who-are-the-dreamers)  
President Obama and VP Joe Biden meet with DREAMers on May 21, 2013 (Official White House photo by Pete Souza)

## Dreamers (USA)

In 2012, after the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act failed several times to pass Congress, President Obama issued the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order which established a programme to protect young undocumented immigrants, many of whom had arrived in the United States illegally, from deportation. Many of them did not even know that their parents (and they, by default) were unauthorized immigrants until they became teenagers – when they discovered that they could not get a driver’s licence or fill out financial aid forms for college because they did not have a Social Security number. Under US immigration law, even though they grew up as Americans and identify as Americans, many speak only English and most have no memory of or connection with the country where they were born – they have no way of gaining legal residency in the US. The young people impacted by DACA and the DREAM Act are often referred to as “Dreamers”.

Since the DACA began, approximately 800,000 people have been approved for the programme. To be eligible, applicants had to have arrived in the US before the age of 16 and lived there since June 15, 2007.

In 2017, President Trump ordered an end to the DACA programme. In 2020, the Supreme Court blocked the Trump administration’s attempt to end DACA in a 5-4 ruling. In January 2021, President Biden issued an executive order to direct federal agencies to “preserve and fortify DACA”. However, in July 2021, a federal judge in Texas ruled that DACA is illegal and said the Biden administration could not approve any new applications. The situation and position of Dreamers in the US remains uncertain.



Image and text source: <https://kafkadesk.org/2019/04/16/slovak-companies-team-up-to-fight-anti-roma-discrimination/>  
Roma children in a slum in Jarovnice, eastern Slovakia. Credit: Sorin Furcoi / Al Jazeera. Also see: [www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers](http://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers)

# Discrimination against Roma children (present-day Europe)

The Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority, with an estimated 10 to 12 million Roma living in Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Ireland, Spain and other EU countries.

Roma people are the target of immense structural discrimination and experience serious disadvantages in education, access to health care, living conditions and job opportunities. According to EU Fundamental Rights Agency research (2014), more than 90% of Roma children are at risk of poverty; 80% of Roma families and their children live below national at-risk-of-poverty thresholds; 50% of Roma children face nutritional risk, have underlying malnutrition and exhibit stunting and inadequate child growth.

In some cases, lawsuits have been initiated, reaching the European Court of Human Rights, in relation to state-level abuses of the rights of Roma people, different authorities' efforts to remove Romani children from their families or obstruction of their access to education. This unequal access to services, including schooling, results in a vicious cycle of marginalization and extreme poverty, high illiteracy levels and a general lack of opportunities later in life for Roma children and youth.



Image and text source: Danyk Rak, 12, holds a cat standing on the debris of his house destroyed by Russian forces' shelling in the outskirts of Chernihiv, Ukraine, Wednesday, April 13, 2022. After the shelling, Danyk's mother, Liudmila Koval, had to have her leg amputated and was injured in her abdominal cavity. She is still waiting for proper medical treatment. (AP Photo/Evgeniy Maloletka) <https://thehill.com/policy/international/3267579-ukraine-deported-children-facing-threat-of-illegal-adoption-in-russia/>

## Ukrainian Children facing Illegal Adoption in Russia (2022)

Over the course of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused the occupiers of violating the norms of international law, including forcing the displacement of Ukrainian citizens, such as children. Many of these children are deprived of parental care or are orphans, children whose parents died as a result of Russia's military actions, and they are being moved across state borders to the territory of Russia.

Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued a warning that there is "a blatant threat of illegal adoption of Ukrainian children by Russian citizens without observing all the necessary procedures determined by the legislation of Ukraine".

The Ministry called on a number of authorities, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to "accept urgent measures for the return of Ukrainian children to the territory of our State".

The statement pointed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which, according to the Ministry, requires that parties to the international treaty — including Russia and Ukraine — make efforts to fight against this illegal movement and failure to return children from abroad.



Viele Tausende Kinder wurden durch die Nazis geraubt  
Dieses Kriegsverbrechen will die Bundesregierung entschädigen  
Wir fordern eine sofortige Entschädigung!



Image and text source: <https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/baden-wuerttemberg/suedbaden/erfolgreiche-petition-geraubte-kinder-104.html> and <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/kinderraub-durch-nationalsozialisten-blond-blauaeugig-100.html>

# Struggle for the Recognition of Stolen Children as Victims of Nazi Policy (modern-day Germany)

Even today, the “stolen children” are fighting for their recognition as victims of Nazi Policy in Germany.

The Federal Compensation Act of 1953 designates as Nazi victims anyone who was persecuted for political, racial, religious or ideological reasons. In 2013, the Ministry of Finance stated:  
“The fate affected a large number of families as part of the war effort and served the war strategy. It was not primarily aimed at the destruction or deprivation of freedom of those affected, but rather at their extraction for one's own benefit. This is a general fate of the consequences of war.” For years, the association “Geraubte Kinder” – Vergessene Opfer (“Stolen Children, Forgotten Victims”) has been trying to get the group of forcibly Germanized children recognized by the German Parliament as Nazi victims – so far in vain. In 2022, the association achieved a partial success: the Constitutional Court in the German state of Baden-Württemberg recognized the stolen children as Nazi victims and compensated them financially with a small sum.

“The compensation is satisfying for me, not because of the money, but because we are recognized as stolen children!”  
Hermann Lüdeking, a stolen child