

How to Succeed in a Systematic Kidnapping Campaign While Trying: The Germanization of Abducted Children in Nazi Occupied Eastern Europe

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Introduction: Cultural Genocide and Children

When scholars write about genocide, the connotation is that genocide is intrinsically linked with mass killings of civilians based on their religion, race, ethnicity, etc. But about what instances in genocide absent of mass killings but still destroys a group's culture. In such a case, death is not the only means of destruction, but rather an actor can conduct genocide by destroying the future of a society through the kidnapping and reeducation of enemy children. This was brutally demonstrated by the Nazis in the Holocaust, as they annihilated approximately six million Jews as well as Roma, homosexuals, and political prisoners. However, amid these systematic killings there was also a campaign to abduct and indoctrinate children in the Nazi occupied East, who possessed attributes of the 'Aryan' race. This leads into the essential questions of this paper, why do actors abduct enemy children while perpetrating alternative methods such as sterilization or murder against their other children? What are the aims of the perpetrators in this action? How are they able to concurrently conduct a genocide and a mass systematic kidnapping campaign?

In an attempt to answer these questions, this essay will utilize the Nazi occupied Eastern territories between 1938-1945 to examine the Nazi criteria, kidnapping procedure, and reeducation methods. First, this paper will examine the definition of genocide, specifically the cultural genocide the Nazis were implementing against the kidnapped children. Then it will examine other instances of systematic kidnapping campaigns during a genocide and the theories of why they happened. Next, it will examine the infrastructure the Nazis and Himmler established to carry out their policy such as the Lebensborn program. Then explore the case studies of kidnapped children in occupied Poland and Czechoslovakia. Finally, it will consider the possible alternatives that the Nazis could have utilized regarding the children.

While there were Nazi occupied areas in the northern Europe that contained women and children who would be assumed into the ‘Aryan’ race, I shall focus on the systematic kidnapping campaign across the occupied states of eastern Europe. Prior to the official start of World War II, the Nazis began expanding their perceived rightful territory. On October 10, 1938, the Nazis annexed the Sudetenland, the areas of Czechoslovakia that are primarily inhabited by ethnic Germans. Then on March 15, 1939, the Nazis invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia and established the Protectorates of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. These Protectorates were very ethnically diverse, with large populations of Germans, Czechs, Jews, Slovaks, and smaller populations of Poles and Roma. The ethnic German population served as the pretext taking this territory as they claimed them as their kin. SS officer Heinrich Himmler recognized the potential value of these populations as well as he remarked how with effective Germanization, Germany could rely on six to six hundred million people for work and reproduction rather than Germany’s pre-war population of about a hundred and twenty million.¹ Therefore, the Nazis began their kidnapping campaign of children considered ‘racially valuable’, those with Aryan traits, in the occupied Eastern territories. Through Nazi programs designed for those ‘racially valuable’ children, such as the Lebensborn program, they were then subjected to ‘Germanization’ or the process of reeducating the children to become future members of Germany.

According to historian Isabel Heinemann, there were three categories of children targeted for kidnapping: orphans, partisan children, and children of German soldiers. For the purposes of this paper, I shall be primarily addressing the first two categories, as the latter often involved the children of Nazi soldiers and foreign mothers, predominately Norwegian or Dutch, who were

¹ Isabel Heinemann, “Defining ‘(Un)Wanted Population Addition’: Anthropology, Racist Ideology, and Mass Murder in the Occupied East.” In *Racial Science in Hitler’s New Europe, 1938-1945*, ed. Anton Weiss-Wendt and Rory Yeomans, (UNP - Nebraska Paperback, 2013), 36.

incentivized by the Lebensborn program to emigrate to Germany.² The hunt for ‘German’ orphans began in Polish orphanages and foster homes, before expanding into the rest of Eastern Europe. The SS claimed that the children who possessed Aryan qualities were actually ethnic Germans, and therefore the Nazis had the right to repatriate them to Germany.³ ‘Partisan children’ refers to children of parents who were killed or imprisoned for their anti-Nazi actions. This case is best exemplified through the destruction of Lidice and Lezaky in Czechoslovakia, that led to puzzling cases where some children were taken for reeducation, while others were gassed at Chelmno. However, there were also SS orders to seek out Aryan children whose parents were either causing difficulties or had already been taken to concentration camps.⁴ Overall the Nazi’s campaign of systematic kidnapping was predominately based on their racial ideology, with the added strategic benefit of lowering the population capacity of other states and a source of their future power.

The Nazis considered children as both an asset and a threat because they are the future of their respective society, they believed that those who control the children, control the future. They viewed non-German children as dangerous, “If the quality of all these children was not properly controlled, the future existence of [German] peoples and states might be endangered, according to Nazi views.”⁵ Hitler executed his ‘Final Solution’ to safeguard the Aryan bloodline from what he considered to be an inferior race, the Jews, he charged Himmler with the discovery of ‘lost’ Aryan children to Germanize. Foreign children possessing Aryan features, most

² Isabel Heinemann, “Until the Last Drop of Good Blood: The Kidnapping of ‘Racially Valuable’ Children and Nazi Racial Policy in Occupied Eastern Europe.” In *Genocide and Settler Society*, ed. Dirk A. Moses, (Berghahn Books, 2004), 255-256.

³ Heinemann, “Until the Last Drop of Good Blood,” 248.

⁴ Heinemann, “Until the Last Drop of Good Blood,” 254.

⁵ Michael Simunek, “Children in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia between 1939-1945”, in *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, ed. by Kjersti Ericsson and Eva. Simonsen, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005), 191.

commonly with blond hair and blue eyes, were considered ‘racially valuable’ and were the most likely candidates to undergo Germanization. Between 1938-1945, there were roughly 20,000-50,000 children taken from the Nazi-occupied Eastern territory taken for the purposes of Germanification.⁶ The Nazi’s kidnapping campaign in the occupied Eastern territories addressed the need for population growth of the Aryan race and committed cultural genocide against the children’s heritage, thus eliminating their potential threat. In order for a state to effectively implement a systematic kidnapping campaign while simultaneously committing genocide, the actor requires extensive infrastructure to not only develop policies and procedures in regards for selective kidnapping, but also the ability to successfully reeducate the children to be integrated into society.

Theories and Explanations Behind Cultural Genocide and Kidnapping Campaigns

To understand the various fates of children in the midst of a genocide, it is first vital to differentiate the general goals of a genocide. Article II in the UN Convention on Genocide, states that, “...genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.”⁷ While mass killings are the most well-known aspect of genocide, the Convention does also stipulate that the ‘forcible transferring of children from one group to another’ is a form of genocide, in response to the systematic kidnapping campaigns perpetrated by Nazi Germany. On the surface, it is puzzling why kidnapping would be a form genocide. As according to Kalyvas, a way to distinguish whether or not genocide is taking place, is whether or not the actor intends to govern the targeted population as the end goal.⁸

⁶ Heinemann, “Until the Last Drop of Good Blood,” 247.

⁷ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, United Nations.

⁸ Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 26.

According to scholars, genocide is an answer to states attempting to overcome the ‘fifth column’ problem. Straus outline this problem as, “perpetrators are likely to see target groups [the fifth column] as inherently dangerous, uncontrollable, and unwinnable.”⁹ Therefore, Straus cites that the reasoning behind genocide is in the attempt to preemptively remove the perceived threat of a group, that has either posed a considerable threat against them in the past or could pose a threat in the future. This is why Straus says targets of genocide are not just those who are an immediate threat, able-bodied and of military-aged, but also the people and things that are essential for the groups continued existence.¹⁰ Logically, children are fundamental for a population’s survival, and therefore would be targets of genocide. The Nazis also had no hesitation in the killing of Jewish, disabled, Roma, and other children, while sparing other children who fit the Aryan criteria.

Raphael Lemkin, one of the earliest genocide scholars, argues that there are several different types of genocide other than physical. He argues that beyond mass killings of a group, genocide also includes destroying the foundations of the group via their political and social institutions.¹¹ Children are a part of this category as they form the future foundation of the group. The Nazis committed cultural genocide in their systematic kidnapping campaign, by not necessarily killing all the children but by destroying their culture. Lemkin wrote, “genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor.”¹² The latter statement is what is commonly referred to with Nazi Germany as the process of ‘Germanization’. This paper will focus on the

⁹ Scott Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 18.

¹⁰ Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations*, 24.

¹¹ Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe; Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of International Law, 1944), 79.

¹² Ibid

children that were integral to the second phase, but it is important to note that many children, specifically Jewish or disabled, were primarily involved in initial destructive phase.

The Nazis were neither the first nor the last to engage in a systematic kidnapping campaign of occupied territories. The first known cases were within Western empires and their territorial expansion, such as the Aboriginals in Australia prior during British imperialism. The British viewed the Aboriginals as racially inferior and feared the emergence of the ‘half-caste,’ children resulting from relations between Aboriginal women and European men.¹³ In order to address this, the British passed the Aboriginal Act of 1897, which gave the British Protectors the legal ability to remove any aboriginal or ‘half caste children’.¹⁴ In 1929, Dr. Cecil Cook began his program of ‘breeding out the color’ of half-castes, where ‘half-caste’ children, predominately girls, were taken to state homes to receive an education that would give them higher ‘white’ standards.¹⁵ Dr. Cook’s purpose in doing so was to create suitable women for the lower-class European men to marry. Overall, in the case of the ‘half-caste’ aboriginals in Australia, the government undertook a kidnapping campaign in order to ‘breed out the color’ and create a suitable population of wives for the occupiers.

Armenia was one of the first well-documented cases of a large-scale transfer of children within the midst of genocide. During the genocide, Armenian men were either immediately killed or utilized as forced labor in unlivable conditions, while the women and children were largely forced into refugee and prison camps. The Ottoman state then targeted Armenian orphans between the ages of 7 to 10, especially girls.¹⁶ The collected Armenian orphans were then placed

¹³ Thomas Manne, “Aboriginal Child Removal and the Question of Genocide, 1900-1940.” In *Genocide and Settler Society*, ed. Dirk A. Moses, (Berghahn Books, 2004), 220.

¹⁴ Manne, “Aboriginal Child Removal and the Question of Genocide, 1900-1940,” 221.

¹⁵ Manne, “Aboriginal Child Removal and the Question of Genocide, 1900-1940,” 228-229.

¹⁶ Keith David Watenpaugh, “Genocide and the Transfer of Armenian Children (1915-1922).” *Journal of Human Rights* 12, no. 3 (July 1, 2013): 290.

into state-sponsored orphanages or foster homes, where they converted them to Sunni Islam, gave them Muslim names, and punished for speaking Armenian.¹⁷ Therefore, the Ottomans established the necessary political organization required to facilitate the collection and education of Armenian children. Throughout the Armenian genocide, children were separated from their families, reeducated by the Ottoman state, and then adopted into suitable families, thus perpetrating a genocide that took the form of inhibiting the children's ability to pass on their culture in the future.

In the same timeframe as the Nazi systematic kidnapping campaign in occupied Eastern Europe, a genocide and kidnapping campaign was happening in Franco's Spain. Children of executed or imprisoned Republicans were taken by the state, renamed, and given to sympathetic families.¹⁸ The church and hospitals were a part of the kidnapping campaign as infants were taken away from suspected Republican-affiliated women to be cleaned or baptized and never returned.¹⁹ As in Nazi Germany, increased standards for mothers were implemented by the women's section of the Falange, the Sección Femenina, whose duty it was to ensure the physical well-being of the children and to ensure the competency, and loyalty, of the mothers.²⁰ In May 1937, the Auxilio social was established. Similar to the Lebensborn program, it began as a school to meet the needs of women and children effected by war and evolved into a reeducation center for children of Republicans.²¹ At the Auxilio Social, they began the process of 'regeneration', where the children were instilled with nationalism and an education based on Catholicism and a

¹⁷ Watenpugh, 'Are There Any Children for Sale?' 291-293.

¹⁸ Michael Richards, "Ideology and the Psychology of War Children in Franco's Spain, 1936-1945," in *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, Edited by Kjersti Ericsson and Eva. Simonsen, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005), 117.

¹⁹ Richards, "Ideology and the Psychology of War Children in Franco's Spain, 1936-1945," 118-119.

²⁰ Richards, "Ideology and the Psychology of War Children in Franco's Spain, 1936-1945," 121.

²¹ Ángela Cenarro Lagunas, "Memories of Repression and Resistance: Narratives of Children Institutionalized by Auxilio Social in Postwar Spain." *History and memory* 20, no. 2 (2008): 43.

Falangist doctrine.²² The children of Republicans were taken due to fears of population loss from the civil war and ‘regenerated’ into society.

Overall, similar to the Nazis, the British, Ottomans, and Spanish perpetrated cultural genocide by abducting children and reeducating them to fill the actor’s need. The British required a suitable population for the European men to marry and both the Ottoman and Spanish needed to reinvigorate the population due to the mass loss of lives in the genocide. Like the Nazis, these actors were successful due to the extensive infrastructure they created with schools to reeducate them.

The Nazi’s Kidnapping Campaign in Eastern Europe

Nazi Ideology and Infrastructure that Facilitated the Kidnappings

Heinrich Himmler served as the primary architect of the racial policies in the Nazi occupied Eastern territories. In 1939, Himmler was appointed as the Reich commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood (RKFDV). As the RKFDV, Himmler outlined three tasks in order to achieve racial policy aims in occupied Poland. In “The Problem of the Manner of Dealing with the Population of the Former Polish Territories on the Basis of Racial-political aspects” Himmler stated, “First, the complete and final Germanization of the population which seems to be suitable for it. Second, deportations of all foreign groups which are not suitable for Germanization; and third, the resettlement by Germans.”²³

In order to achieve his first policy directive, all citizens under Nazi occupation were required to undergo racial registration in order to determine their worth to the Nazis. According to Nazi racial ideology, there were four racial groups that they tested for, in the guise of a generic

²² Cenarro Lagunas, “Memories of Repression and Resistance,” 50.

²³ RuSHA, Nuremberg Trial 8, 93.

health screening, virtually all in the occupied territory underwent racial screening.²⁴ Group I were those of a Nordic background and Group II contained those of Phalian and South Dinaric ancestry. Both of these groups were considered racially valuable. The third group, which made up the majority of the occupied Eastern territories, were those considered ‘mixed breeds.’ This group was mostly utilized for forced labor, but some children from this group were considered suitable for Germanization.²⁵ Therefore, those in Group III underwent expansive racial examinations and were tested for 21 physical traits including eye and hair color, head shape, height, etc., and those that passed within the parameters of the racial criteria were deemed Germanizable.²⁶ Those found unvaluable were either forcibly deported, sent to concentration camps, or used as free labor, in order to make the Eastern territories suitable for German habitation. Finally, Group IV were those of unwanted races, such as Jews and Gypsies, and also any persons that were diseased or disabled. Group IV was targeted for genocide.²⁷

Under Himmler’s first task in the Germanization of suitable foreign populations, he specifically targeted ‘racially-worthy’ children in order to bolster the Aryan population and to remove a population source for the inferior races. “The object of this program was to strengthen the German nation and the so-called ‘Aryan’ race at the expense of such other nations and groups by imposing Nazi and German characteristics upon individuals selected therefrom.”²⁸ Himmler was able to accomplish two duties through this policy: increasing the German population and committing cultural genocide by indoctrinating the children to German culture and replacing their native culture.

²⁴ Heinemann, “Defining ‘(Un)wanted Population Addition,’” 42.

²⁵ Heinemann, “Defining ‘(Un)wanted Population Addition,’” 36.

²⁶ Heinemann, “Until the Last Drop of Good Blood,” 246.

²⁷ Heinemann, “Defining ‘(Un)wanted Population Addition,’” 36.

²⁸ RuSHA: United States of America vs. Ulrich Greifet et al., Nuremberg Trial 8, World Courts, 1947-1948, 89.

The Nazis were able to commit cultural genocide through the vast infrastructure they created to conduct the systematic kidnapping campaign throughout the Lebensborn program. In 1935, The *Rasse-und Siedlungshauptamt*, or the race and settlement office (RuSHA), led by SS Heinrich Himmler, established the Lebensborn program as a means to promote the growth of the German Aryan population. Lebensborn literally translates to ‘fount of life’; however, not just any population increase would do and the program sought to increase its racial purity. The program was based on Nazi racial ideology, and its original focus was to internally increase the Aryan population by requiring current SS families to certify their racial purity and encouraging them to expand their families.²⁹ To discourage pregnant, unmarried Aryan women to seek abortions, they created the Lebensborn homes where they would take care of the women through the duration of their pregnancies.³⁰ As the Nazis expanded their territory and WWII began, Lebensborn evolved. The program became a systematic kidnapping campaign of ‘racially-worthy’ foreign children as an external source of Aryans to increase the population. These children would then become Germanized through the Lebensborn homes and programs.

Aside from Lebensborn, another prominent actor responsible for the Germanization of children was the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* or Coordination center for Ethnic Germans (VoMi). VoMi was responsible for properly preparing the Eastern territories and did so firstly with the evacuation and repatriation of ethnic Germans.³¹ Then the VoMi continued with the forced expulsion of the native populations, conscription of enemy nationals, utilization of foreigners as slave labor, and the kidnapping of alien children. The kidnapping of children was a part of the Nazi process to claim land.

²⁹ “Who are you Pamphlet” Lebensborn Program Pamphlet, *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum* (#2008.56.1).

³⁰ “Who are you Pamphlet” Lebensborn Program Pamphlet.

³¹ RuSHA, Nuremberg Trial 8, 100-101.

The Nazis both systematically targeted certain age groups and established infrastructure in order to facilitate the reeducation process. There were two age groups primarily under consideration for ‘Germanization’: 2-6 and 7-12. The first group contained children who were old enough to present Aryan qualities, but young enough for immediate adoption into a German family. The older age group contained children with Aryan features but, due to their age, were required to undergo strenuous Nazi reeducation prior to adoption.³² Age was an important factor in the Nazi consideration of Germanizable children, as Himmler 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 only possible up to this age.”³³ However, as the war went on, the Nazis were more willing to take older children for Germanization. The older children were taken to Nazi reeducation homes, where the kidnapped children’s names were Germanified and they received German language and culture lessons in order to become ready for adoption. This process was broadly used across the occupied Eastern territories, including children taken from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bohemia, Slovenia, the USSR, and assorted Eastern European lands.

Poland: The Lost ‘German’ Orphans

The Nazi systematic kidnapping of children began with narrow parameters but expanded over the course of the war. SS Geriffelt issued Regulation 67/I in order to begin the process of taking the desirable children from Poland. Under Regulation 67/I, children with Aryan features in Polish orphanages or foster homes were to be subjected to a racial examination and selection process and valuable children would be Germanized.³⁴ Racial examinations took place at

³² Heinemann, “Until the Last Drop of Good Blood,” 249.

³³ RuSHA, Nuremberg Trial 8, 94.

³⁴ RuSHA, Nuremberg Trial 8, 103-104.

RuSHA offices, homes, military bases, and schools.³⁵ The doctors/race experts spoke to the children in German, often without interpreters, so the children did not really understand what they were instructed to do. Once the children gave their personal information, the children were required to strip naked in front of each other, regardless of the mixed genders. They were then measured, had their teeth checked, given psychological tests, checked for Syphilis or Tuberculous, and of course hair and eye colors were checked.³⁶ Children who were racially worthy were then seized by police or welfare officers from their families and escorted to trains. The Nazis were certainly aware of possible repercussions of their wrongdoings and even feared negative German public opinion as the SS took great care to call the selected children ‘German orphans from the regained Eastern territories’ rather than racially beneficial Polish children.³⁷ Aside from public perception, it was imperative to the Nazi racial ideology to consider and claim them as ethnic Germans.

Outside of the orphanages and foster homes, children were still required to be racially separated and categorized. There was an annual ‘sifting’ of children generally between the ages of 6-10, in order to categorize their racial quality.³⁸ Himmler also utilized the education system in order to control and separate the Eastern populations from those that were ‘racially valuable’. Under Nazi occupation, only children of racial value could apply for education above the elementary level, and even then they could only go to Germany to receive that education.³⁹ This was to bolster the racially valuable and to guarantee their German reeducation.

³⁵ Ines Hopfer, *Geraubte Identität: die gewaltsame “Eindeutschung” von polnischen Kindern in der NS-Zeit*, (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2011), 90.

³⁶ Ines Hopfer, *Geraubte Identität*, 91.

³⁷ RuSHA, Nuremberg Trial 8, 104.

³⁸ RuSHA, Nuremberg Trial 8, 97.

³⁹ RuSHA, Nuremberg Trial 8, 97.

There were two notable Germanification centers that the Polish children were taken too: the Parsch Lager near Salzburg and the Lebensborn Home “Alpenland” in Oberweis. Here the children were given their German names, which were generally their existing names but ‘Germanized’. It was in these institutions where they learned to read and write in German, mathematics and German cultural lessons. Calisthenics were also emphasized in their curriculum, as the Nazis desired able-bodied Germans.⁴⁰ Boys in “Alpenland” even took part in military exercises, where they would wear uniforms, carry unloaded guns, and participated in drills.⁴¹ The children were even granted some free play time in parks or gardens, but always under strict observation. The children were also continually told that Poland had lost and forgotten about them and they should therefore believe in Hitler’s Germany.⁴² Thereby, the Nazis combined the children’s reeducation, while eroding any faith in their former families.

Once the children graduated from these Germanification institutions, they were adopted by Nazi-friendly families. The parents were not told of the child’s true heritage, partially due to Nazi ideology that, “the ‘racially fit’ were to become Germans, since Nazi racial theory assumed those individuals had German roots, regardless of the ethnicity”⁴³ Also, their background was often fictionalized with matching documentation to show the Nazis in a more heroic stance as rescuing the children. While not their real parents, a lot of the kids liked their foster parents and did not want to leave at the end of the war as they were treated well, got to go school, and often got along with their adopted siblings. Of course, there were some children who were mistreated or used for free labor and gladly left at the end of the war.⁴⁴ Overall the Nazis successfully

⁴⁰ Ines Hopfer, *Geraubte Identität*, 182.

⁴¹ Ines Hopfer, *Geraubte Identität*, 186.

⁴² Ines Hopfer, *Geraubte Identität*, 138.

⁴³ Heinemann, “Defining ‘(Un)Wanted Population Addition,’” 44.

⁴⁴ Ines Hopfer, *Geraubte Identität*, 148-149.

undertook the process to separate the ‘racially-worthy’ children and utilized their infrastructure to reeducate them in their attempt to destroy their Polish heritage.

Czechoslovakia: the Partisan Children

As the war went on, Himmler began to expand the racial criteria and sources of alien children to be Germanized. In February 1942, Himmler extended the kidnapping of alien children from orphanages to the children of partisan prisoners.⁴⁵ These were the children whose parents were sent to concentration camps as political prisoners and victims. This policy was blatant in the case of Lidice. On May 21, 1942 Reichsprotektor SS Officer Reinhard Heydrich died in Prague as a result of an attack by Czech partisans. The Nazis were given a false tip that the village of Lidice was partially responsible for the SS officer’s death. Himmler’s response to the believed treachery led to the destruction of an innocent community. On June 10, the Nazis destroyed and burned the village, killing almost all of its inhabitants. The families were separated and the men were lined up in front of mattresses and shot. Whereas the women and children were sent to a high school for racial examinations. There, two children were selected for Germanization, the rest were sent to Poland.⁴⁶ In Poland, seven more children were selected to be Germanized and were sent to the Lebensborn home in Puschkau.⁴⁷ In all, just 17 out of 105 children from Lidice survived the massacre, as 82 non-racially valuable children were gassed in Chelmo.⁴⁸ The nearby village of Lezaky underwent a similar experience when 13 out of 93 children were selected for Germanization. The ‘racially-valuable’ children from both villages were sent for Nazi reeducation at Puschkau.⁴⁹ Maria Hanfova was twelve years old when she was

⁴⁵ RuSHA, Nuremberg Trial 8, 104.

⁴⁶ Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families After World War II*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), 174.

⁴⁷ Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 174.

⁴⁸ Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 174.

⁴⁹ Heinemann, “Until the Last Drop of Good Blood,” 252.

taken from Lidice, she recalls her time at Puschkau and how that they were beaten if they spoke Czech.⁵⁰ In the Upper Carnolia and Lower Styria regions of Slovenia at least 860 children were kidnapped for the ‘Germanization’ process.⁵¹ While these children were spared from the massacre that befell the other children due to their ‘Aryan’ features, they lost a major part of their cultural identity through the Germanization process.

Following the end of the war, the search for the lost children of Czechoslovakia began in earnest. The Czechs had undergone substantial losses during the war and wanted to recover all the possible ‘Germanized’ children they could in order to replenish their population.⁵² The destruction of Lidice and the attempt to erase the village from history led to a publicized movement to find the children. On January 8, 1946, there was a radio address calling on the Czech public’s aid to locate the missing 105 children, featuring the rallying cry, “What happened to the children from Lidice.”⁵³ However, it was traumatic for many of the Germanized children who were returned to the Czech Republic. There were severe communication issues for those who were repatriated to their families as many of the children no longer remembered Czech and their parents could not speak German. Other children had grown attached to their adopted families and the separation from them caused them emotional trauma. And then there were the children of whose mothers died in Auschwitz or Ravensbrück; therefore, orphans and dependent on the government.⁵⁴

Similar to the stolen orphans from Poland, the Nazis also attempted to cover up the backstories of many of the children from Czechoslovakia. Hana Spotová was two years old when

⁵⁰ Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 173.

⁵¹ Heinemann, “Until the Last Drop of Good Blood,” 253.

⁵² Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 174.

⁵³ Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 176.

⁵⁴ Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 180.

she was taken from Lidice and rechristened as Hanna Spot. Her adopted mother was told by the Nazis that she was a German orphan, whose parents had been killed by allied bombs.⁵⁵ Partially thanks to the similar name Hana was given, she was found and returned to Czechoslovakia at age seven in 1947.⁵⁶ Parallel to how the Nazis did not publicize their extermination camps, they also covered up how these so-called orphans were found.

Alternatives Fates of ‘Racially Undesirable Children’

It is important to understand the alternative options the Nazi’s could have used against these kidnapped children and that they did on a regular occasion towards other children. An estimated 500,000-700,000 non-Jewish Poles were forcibly removed from their homes in order to make room for the incoming German settlers.⁵⁷ The families were taken to transit camps where they would undergo racial examinations. Those children found to be racially undesirable would then be further expelled, sterilized, utilized as free labor, or murdered via starvation or direct methods of killing. Sterilization of ‘racially inferior’ children was another practice. In a note regarding groups of partisan mothers and children, Himmler writes, “Brunhilde Muszynski is to be taken into protective custody. Her two children, aged 4 and 7 years, are to be sterilized and lodged somewhere with foster parents”⁵⁸ Therefore, sterilization was another tactic the Nazis utilized in order to regulate to alien children. Labor was also forced upon less desirable children. Approximately, 500,000 forced laborers in Germany from Poland were under 18. At first it was children over 14 taken; however, the age of children laborers decreased throughout the duration of the war so that children as young as 10 were forced into labor.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 173,

⁵⁶ Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 180.

⁵⁷ Heinemann, “Defining ‘(Un)wanted Population Addition,’” 43.

⁵⁸ RuSHA, Nuremberg Trial 8, 105.

⁵⁹ Johannes-Dieter Steinert, “Polish and Soviet child forced laborers in National Socialist Germany and German-occupied Eastern Europe, 1939-45,” In *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, the Holocaust, and Postwar Displacement*, edited by Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian, (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 136-138.

The Nazis held no qualms about killing children either and they utilized a variety of methods to do so. Starvation was a common tactic to passively cause the death and weakness of a population. In order to bring about their death, there were housed in specially designed ghettos and villages, such as the Krakow Ghetto or the Rentendörfer, where children and the elderly were sent to slowly die in.⁶⁰ Finally, as was seen in Holocaust, the Nazis simply murdered them. During the Holocaust almost 1,500,000 children were murdered by the Nazis, predominantly those of Jewish faith.⁶¹ Jewish children were killed due to their perceived racial inferiority, while other children were mostly killed because their lack of utility. When arriving at concentration camps, children under 12 were unlikely to survive the initial selection because they were too young to be effectively usable for slave labor.⁶² According to SS officer Otto Ohlendorf, prior to 1942, children were killed the same way as adults, primarily shot; however, “then an order came from Himmler that in the future women and children were to be killed only in gas vans.”⁶³ This was to protect the mindset of Nazi soldiers who had qualms with killing women and children. Additionally, children in concentration camps were experimented upon until death by SS members such as Kurt Heissmeyer’s attempts to test an immunization from tuberculosis and Josef Mengele’s experiments on twins.⁶⁴ In the Lidice massacre, the 82 children not deemed ‘racially worthy’ were gassed outside of Chelmno. This case demonstrates how the outcomes for the children’s fate depended on their physical attributes. Overall, the Nazis utilized a variety of strategies to control the populations of children through both lethal and non-lethal methods.

⁶⁰ Heinemann, “Defining , (Un)wanted Population Addition,” 44.

⁶¹ Gideons Greif, “Children and youth in Auschwitz: Experiences of life and labour,” In *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, the Holocaust, and Postwar Displacement*, edited by Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian, (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 202.

⁶² Greif, “Children and youth in Auschwitz: Experiences of life and labour,” 203.

⁶³ Paul R. Bartrop and Eve E. Grimm, *Perpetrating the Holocaust: Leaders, Enablers, and Collaborators*, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2019), 367.

⁶⁴ Bartrop and Grimm, *Perpetrating the Holocaust: Leaders, Enablers, and Collaborators*, 130.

The Success of the Nazi Kidnapping Campaign

Why were some children kidnapped and not subjected to alternative methods of being dealt with such as starvation, sterilization, murder? Why would the Nazis kidnap children at all? Put simply, the children that were kidnapped from the Eastern occupied territories all possessed the physical qualities desired in Hitler's Aryan race. The Nazis began the Lebensborn program domestically with the goal of ensuring the racial integrity of current German families. This process began then spread to the areas that were newly occupied by the Germans, because the Nazis needed to replenish their population. Partially because through their process of 'perfecting' the German races through mass killing of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, disabled people, etc., they were killing off a portion of the German population, which is a source of power in the international system. Therefore, in order to regain some of that human power, which they knowingly murdered, they needed to rapidly increase their population. But they could not do so with just any population. In order to legitimize their claims for killing 'inferior' races, they had to replace the victims with people who possessed the Aryan racial qualities. Their light-colored hair and eyes may have saved them from death by solidifying their worth to the Nazis, who were willing to invest significant time and resources into the Germanization process.

In order to establish a mass selective kidnapping program to fulfill a population need, an actor needs both extensive infrastructure and the ability to implement it without losing public opinion. The Nazis created the procedures and infrastructure necessary to undertake a massive logistically complex policy. Himmler expanded the Lebensborn program to the occupied eastern territories and developed racial criteria and examination procedures. The Nazis systematically targeted orphanages and foster homes to find children who possessed the 21 different attributes linked to the Aryan race. Once the SS depleted the sources of parentless children, they moved to

the children of partisans and those who would be taken to concentration or labor camps. Once they had been taken, children were subjected to the Germanization process. Toddlers could be easily adopted into German families, but the Germanization process required substantial resources to reeducate the older 'racially-worthy' children, required language classes, housing, uniforms, and food.

It requires extensive infrastructure capabilities and some perceived notion of legitimacy in order for a state to effectively implement an extensive kidnapping and reeducation program of enemy children. Looking at other examples of systematic kidnapping, this same logic can be applied. The British passed legislature that facilitated the removal of 'half-caste' children in Australia into state homes so that they could be elevated to 'white status' to provide wives for European men. In Armenia, orphans in refugee camps were targeted and collected by the Ottoman state, placed into state-sponsored homes, and converted them to Sunni Islam. During Franco's reign in Spain, churches and hospitals were involved in the process of stealing infants from Republican mothers and the Auxilio Social would reeducate Republican children. These cases, like the Nazi case, required extensive infrastructure and government policies in order to facilitate a massive campaign of abductions.

Infrastructure Needed to Repopulate Satisfied Through Mass Kidnapping Campaign

Even if a state desired to increase their population while committing a genocide, they would be unable to perpetrate a massive abduction campaign unless they possessed sufficient infrastructure. That is why it is unlikely for an actor perpetrating a genocide in a state with less developed infrastructures to conduct a widespread and systematic kidnapping campaign for the purposes of bolstering its population. In less developed states there may be mass kidnapping of children, but it would be to serve the war effort, not bolster the population. There have been

multiple cases of children kidnapped and forced to be soldiers; however, the actors that execute these kidnapping campaigns typically utilize fear as the primary method of control and there is little infrastructure needed to indoctrinate the kidnapped children into their ideology.

The Nazis needed to fulfill a population gap in the Aryan race. Therefore, as stated by Himmler, “whatever is available to us in good blood of our type, we will take for ourselves, that is, we will steal their children and bring them up with us, if necessary.”⁶⁵ So through both their systematic kidnapping campaign and the mass murder during the Holocaust, the Nazis simultaneously decreased the population of their enemies and increased their own Aryan population through Germanization. The Nazi’s developed the necessary infrastructure through the Lebensborn program, racial examinations to effectively separate racially worthy and inferior children, and the curriculum within the reeducation institutions. By means of the substantial organization and resource allocation, the Nazis were able to effectively conduct a systematic kidnapping campaign with the goal of bolstering their Aryan population.

⁶⁵ Heinrich Himmler, “*Speech of the Reichsführer-SS at the SS Group Leader Meeting in Posen*” translated by Carmelo Lisicotto, *H.E.A.R.T.*, 2007.

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