

Norwegian "Wehrmacht-children" - psychosocial aspects, identity development and stigma.

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Abstract:

On April 9th in 1940, German troops invaded Norway. Nine months later the first "Wehrmacht-children" were born. In the course of the war 13 "Lebensborn-homes" were established in Norway, including the first outside the former German Reich and more than in any other country occupied by the Nazi regime. In the archives of the Lebensborn almost 8,000 children were registered. It is estimated that 10,000 to 12,000 children were born during the German occupation in Norway, whose fathers belonged to the German troops and their mothers were Norwegian citizens.

"Wehrmacht-children" carried a double stigma: They were often born out of wedlock and were, also, the result of the relationship with the enemy. Their social environment was discriminatory and segregated them; they were ridiculed and, in many cases, physically and mentally abused. The children also suffered a variety of reprisals from the state.

The social sciences and humanities began to investigate the circumstances and conditions of the "Wehrmacht-children" in Norway already at the end of the last century. Recently, psychosocial sciences have also taken up this issue. The introduced research project aims at investigating the psychosocial consequences of growing up as a "Wehrmacht-child", in post-war Norway, for the first time.

The project is part of an already established international and interdisciplinary research network, namely "children born of war" (www.childrenbornofwar.com). The universities of Leipzig and Greifswald conducted a parallel study on German Children Born of Occupation after WWII.

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