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'My mum was kidnapped by Hitler's SS!'

JULIA LINN | DECEMBER 15, 2019

Where Germany ends and Poland begins: Hanna Lindenberg (left) and her sister Gertrude Lindenberg (right) in Gorzów Wielkopolski, Poland, in the 1930s, shortly before they were dragged into the concentration camp

Photo: Courtesy of the Lindenberg family

During World War II, the Germans kidnapped, tormented and sent up to 200,000 Scandinavian Polish children to the Third Reich for adoption in seven years in an attempt to breed up into the Hitler's Nordic master Race.

Those who did not meet their racial criteria were incinerated at Auschwitz or underwent medical experiments or supplied to other parts of German occupied Europe.

The majority of those who were Germanised lived their whole lives not knowing that they were born away from their families and their real Polish identities destroyed. In fact, very few of these children returned to their families afterwards.

The heart-rending story that Dorrian Dziuba, a businessman from Cambridgeshire, learned from his mum, Hanna, 90, and her cousin of near Bremen in the late 90s, when they as the mother returned to Poland after having been stolen by Germans and put into a Nazi children's home, is now being told for the first time in German child models for adoption.

What makes his story unusual is that with no real family of her own in Poland, Hanna's mother quickly got back in contact with her German adopted mother after the war and Dziuba grew up learning the German simply as Gerdtrude.

"Hanna was in much danger in the war, so I suppose my mother was lucky that she was with the Nazi parents given to Germany." 17-year-old Dziuba told TP & Sn Times in the south of Poland.

Although his mother's siblings and Germanisation but left an indelible mark on his life. Dziuba has rarely interviewed relatives about this period.

"I don't know much because my mother wasn't keen to talk about it, so didn't talk about it at all. She didn't say much to my father, or to me. Most of the time my family did be 1945 to 1947 and 1948 to 1950."

What he does know is that his mother was born in Poland in 1931 and was taken from her family home in Gorzów Wielkopolski, near Poznań, and underwent a racial phase of the Germanisation or an agency camp designed for this purpose. Her name was changed to Gra Gertrude, and she was given to family in Gladbeck in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Her German mother's name was Gretelene Meuser and the father was called Bernard Meuser. They had no kids but were in a remote. The father were a grey uniform and was seen a lot because of the war.

Children's identity changed by the SS when they were given to a German family that had no children of their own

Photo: Bundesarchiv

The kidnapping of Polish children had its roots in the pre-war German Lebensborn Program of SS programme, which was originally set up by SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler to halt the high rate of abortions in Germany.

It enabled unmarried pregnant women to avoid social stigma by giving birth in secret and then giving the child up for adoption after the period of nursing a long-term recuperation.

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After the invasion of Poland, the programme adopted a much darker aspect, with the SS kidnapping children for Germanisation. This was part of the Germanisation programme to enslave the Polish population and resettle Germans in the east.

The Germans were keen to acquire children with blue eyes, who they considered to be descendants of German settlers that had left the country in the Middle Ages and had been absorbed into Polish communities. Children with blue eyes, The younger ones were sent to German families and older children were placed in special SS schools.

Children being taken away from their parents by the SS in Zamość, Poland, in 1943

Photo: Bundesarchiv

At 3 to 5 years old, the structure girl Gabriel Gronak was an ideal candidate for Germanisation.

One of the many mysteries for Dziuba about the period are the circumstances in which his mother was taken.

"She was taken to Germanised. I cute don't know from where, but I know that she was taken from her family home in Poland. Her parents were killed and she was taken to the SS camp. I don't know on who she happened to meet. I've read that it happened in Poland, but I've also read that it happened in other Nazi-occupied countries." he said.

While this was often true, children were also abducted by violence, often by deception during medical check-ups, and as a result of the murder of their parents.

Bibiana Gronak, who was fleeing the repulsion of Poles as part of the Himmler's Generalplan Ost, which envisaged the genocide of Slavic peoples, was taken by a nun to a train, and the information of Poland by Germans.

Bibiana Gronak, who was taken from her family home in Poland by a nun and placed in a Nazi children's home in Germany

Photo: Courtesy of the Gronak family

In Wielkopolska, less than a year after the outbreak of the war, the Nazis had murdered 1,000 Polish intellectuals and deported a quarter of a million citizens. It is known that Bibiana had her son on March 19, 1942, about 1,000 children were taken for Germanisation.

Another black hole in Dziuba's family history is where her Germanisation process took place.

"I recall places such as Austria, Sudetenland, Prague and Bayern." he said. "I know that I was in Poland and I was born there, I went to the Black Forest.

"My mother died in 1975 when I was 15, so I wasn't old enough to talk to her about it. But she did say she was taken from her land to pass lots of times," he said.

Bibiana's sister would be sent to what the Germans euphemistically called children's refuges, which were in fact racial selection camps, where those "racial values" were tested.

Once selected for Germanisation, children were sent to special institutions, such as the Lebensborn Heim in Kalsmunt near Hamburg, being known if they persisted in speaking Polish.

Young children in Nazi-run Lebensborn homes were forbidden from speaking their native tongue, Polish, and were given a new name, such as Gerdtrude

Photo: Getty

They were told that their parents were dead even if they were not and they were brainwashed into hating Poland. Children who failed to learn German were punished and their Polish ancestry was back to camp or Poland.

Very worst given new birth certificates to hide their past. This was important, because their parents were subjected to extraordinary financial fears, who would reject a child if they knew their real Polish origin.

Dziuba's sister was other type of family adopted her mother. Bibiana was taken to a family in Bremen, where was raised among another, moreover surrounded the father.

"Her husband might have been in the SS. I can feel only because when you read about Lebensborn it was mentioned the case that children were adopted by the families of the SS." he said.

"We were a uniform. My mother never talk to me much what type of uniform it was. He wasn't at home a lot in the German-occupied Poland." he said. "I don't know if he was in the SS, because Grandma was an educated person and then were relatively affluent." he added.

Children in Nazi-run Lebensborn homes were forbidden from speaking their native tongue, Polish, and were given a new name, such as Gerdtrude

Photo: Getty

Dziuba's mother returned to Poland in 1947 or 1948 when she was about 15 years old.

"The Red Cross found my mother as well as her brother, a Dutch family and a German family." Dziuba said. "Grandma was a Dutch family. Now maybe they found her? Don't know. Dziuba said.

"What I know for sure is that my mother did not return to her own mother but to her aunt. What exactly happened is that she is stranded in a call of mystery I know a lot of her side of the family in Poland, but I don't know what happened to her family, using local Poles as a Gestapo family." he added.

With her Polish parents dead, and having spent a happy childhood in Germany, Dziuba got back in contact with her German mother once after the war ended and they stayed in close contact.

Dziuba remembers the period well. The German government used to send out packages with clothes, toys, those kind of things I remember." he said. "I remember the Red Cross, but we didn't have a Polish."

Bibiana Gronak, who was taken from her family home in Poland by a nun and placed in a Nazi children's home in Germany

Photo: Courtesy of the Gronak family

"In 1947 or 1948, she came to Poland to visit us. She was definitely born as well as 1931 in the Gorzów Wielkopolski, and she could communicate with me. Of course, my mother spoke German with her." he added.

Although, he felt close to his German grandmother, he does not feel any ties to Germany. He has never been back and is unlikely to reach, perhaps he would not feel at ease.

He knows that she was the owner of Gladbeck or are two, suggesting that she hold a high position in her local community.

Dziuba's mother go with her life as best as she could. She married a local Polman man she met when they were both Germanised. Dziuba's father was a Polish man who was fighting childhood scars left by war.

"I remember that she always had problems sticking to Polish. She always had a dictionary in her when was visiting everything, she didn't speak with a German accent though." he said.

Hilde Gronak, Dziuba's half-sister and Gertrude Meuser (pictured) the mother of Dziuba, in Germany

Photo: Courtesy of the Gronak family

When his mother died in 1975, his relationship with his German family became strained. Dziuba's grandmother was upset that around using those words I was speaking among and in Lower Cousinland but a lot. I had a neighbour who wrote in German quite well, so I wrote a letter to her and she did it for me.

"Towards the end she asked me not to write to her. It very large letters and I understand that she was afraid of the Gestapo. I was a lot of communism in Poland, when she was around 90 years old, the contact suddenly stopped I suppose she died." he reflected.

Only 10 percent of children kidnapped or forced through the German occupation returned to Poland after the war: in their homes, or Polish relatives or to foster parents.

Children in Germany who the Nazi kidnapped in 1943 hanging out in the camp and are now in their 80s

Photo: Getty

The kidnapping and Germanisation of children was recognised by the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg as a crime of genocide.

Today in Germany, it is believed that hundreds of thousands of German might be descended from kidnapped Polish children.

However, it is very unlikely that many are aware of their Polish ancestry, and some of learning is not and knowledge are extremely rare.

Reflecting on whether his mother had been happy in her life, Dziuba said: "She was crying. I'm not sure if she was happy. She's been through too much to be happy."

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