

Meant to be Deported

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In Norway, World War II resulted in 10,000–12,000 children of German fathers and Norwegian mothers. During the first months after the end of the war, Norwegian political authorities took on what they saw as an urgent task: to develop a judicial framework to regulate the national status and citizenship of these children, officially labelled ‘war children’. This chapter aims to describe the process through which their national status and citizenship was established and to outline some important effects of that process on the condition of war children’s upbringing. The process started with a proposal to deport the children, a proposal which influenced events in significant ways, even if it was not carried out.

The social-affairs authorities were faced with acute problems when thousands of single mothers and their children were left without any means of support once the German administration was dismantled after the armistice. However, when the topic of war children and their mothers was raised in the press and in public opinion, concerns for their maintenance were seldom voiced. Rather, the discussion was characterized by massive demands that the children and their mothers be deported to Germany, *their real fatherland*. Many senior civil servants and politicians held similar opinions. However, several practical and moral problems made such a plan difficult to implement. To present proposals as to what should be done, the Norwegian government appointed a fast-track committee, the War Child Committee. The authorities wanted answers as soon as possible, and before the autumn at the latest, as they stated.

Participants in the discussions on the ‘war-child problem’ took differing approaches to the question in 1945. It is, however, remarkable that so many concurred on one decisive point: Whether they referred to eugenics, culture, psychiatry, occupation history or fear of the future, they contended that the children of war were not genuine Norwegians. It was felt that the children had only limited or simply no right to continue to live in this country. Thus, taking away their citizenship and deporting them was a logical solution.

One of the main ideas underlying the national War Criminal and High Treason process in Norway following World War II was that the loss of citizenship should

not at all be applied as punishment. Furthermore, from the judicial point of view, it was clear that the so-called 'tyskertøser' – i.e. women who had intimate relations with Germans during the war, had – not violated any law in the legal sense.¹ It was not feasible, without extensive legislative amendments, to define these women as legally German. Deporting them in an orderly fashion would call for a combination of new acts of legislation relating to both civil rights and child welfare. All the same, many confident individuals in positions of authority supported this idea. The impact of their views together with the bare existence of legislative amendments lent extra credence to the notion that there was something inferior about the children of war. In popular sense, their national status was defined as German, since they fell outside the systems which otherwise applied. The notion of their being 'German' and of a somehow inferior brand created an enduring image which 'everyone' agreed on. This image was broadly shared, and influenced regional and local authorities, not without consequences for the children of war in their formative years.

Agreement on deporting the children did not solve the problem of where to send them. We shall have a closer look at the solutions which were discussed. First, however, let us take a short glance at some relevant elements of the history of the phenomenon of deportation, in order to grasp what made such a solution thinkable in a country like Norway.

Some Aspects of Deportation History

Deportation must be seen in relation to the concept of citizenship and civil rights. Nothing of this nature was found in Scandinavia in feudal times or earlier. From early times, free people could settle wherever they wanted, within the law. During feudal times, the right to free movement disappeared. To be protected, everyone had to take an oath of allegiance to the king or to those he had authorized in the feudal construction. It was not until late in the age of Danish rule in Norway (1397–1814) that the first civil citizen legislation was adopted, as the oath of allegiance was supplemented by a birthright intended to keep Germans from holding Danish office. Thus, the first act introduced in this field aimed to restrict civil rights rather than enlarging them.

In the 1800s, most states in Europe introduced similar exclusion mechanisms, supplemented by persecution against the unaccepted. The Eidsvold Constitution of 1814 was an exception, even though it maintained exclusion of Jews, Jesuits and monasticism: exceptions of no practical significance. The oath of allegiance applied to the king and the Constitution for those who sought naturalization papers or to hold office. Otherwise, there were no rules or regulations of citizenship in Norway prior to 1888, when the first Citizenship Act was introduced, limiting citizenship to those whose parents were native-born in Norway. Whereas the

electorate included people of the Sapmi ('Lapp') minority, people of Finnish decent (Kven) in Northern Norway were initially excluded, a fact which demonstrates that the concept of citizenship was not entirely based on cultural and political ideas, but also had some racial undertones. The Constitution's notion of free citizens as 'members of the State' was replaced by the notion of 'Norwegian nationals' used in the Citizenship Act.

According to the Act of 1888, the citizenship of women and children was defined indirectly through the citizenship of their husbands and fathers, as in most European countries. When a Swede working in Norway married a Norwegian and had children, they all became Swedish by law, even if they never left their place of birth. If the father died, the family risked being deported to Sweden. In 1924, the women's movement managed to revoke this discriminating provision. But as we shall see it was reintroduced in order to deport women who married Germans and their children, in August 1945. The changes in 1924 had been induced not only by relations between Norway and Sweden, but also with the US, since the US authorities deported Norwegian emigrants to Norway if their papers were not in order. Consequently, in the law of 1924, an automatic right to reacquire citizenship through a simplified procedure had been installed. This policy was to be changed in 1945.

Although the US pursued a deportation policy in the inter-war years, this did not involve relatively more people than those deported by Norway to Sweden each year, many of whose papers were deficient. The authorities, and in particular the police, therefore had plenty of experience in dealing with deportations. It concerned only poor people, among them some who rode on a deportation merry-go-round.

An aspect of the authorities' attitude to such groups of poor people who were not considered genuine 'Norwegians' is related to the development of the attitude to minorities and groups of 'losers' held by people involved in eugenic research, psychiatry and other related scientific activities. This trend paved the way for a change of mentality during the Occupation, as German racial prejudices influenced the bureaucracy and administration.

The occupation authorities of Norway from 1940 to 1945 introduced deportations in abundance. Roughly 9,000 Norwegians were deported to camps and prisons in the German-Polish area, of whom 1,400 died. Some were sent to be exterminated, such as more than half of the country's Jews, while others were deported as war prisoners or political prisoners, or as preventive measures, or to set an example, for instance the people of Telavåg and other places.² In 1944–45, there were 40,000–45,000 residents of Finnmark forced to evacuate. These measures involved not only centralized Nazi Norwegian government agencies in the police and justice system, but also regional and local authorities.

Among Norwegian officials who had fled to England after the defeat in the campaign in Norway 1940, some with special interests in social affairs came into

contact with British ecclesiastical NGOs with pre-war experience in sending children overseas from the British isles, and probably was informed of their experiences. Since the early colonization, Britain had sent hundreds of thousands of children overseas from the British Isles. From 1880 to 1967 alone, interrupted only by World War II, the number is estimated at 150,000.³ These were often homeless children, orphans or children without parental attention, or children devoted to adoption or child-welfare provisions. Recent surveys have documented that many of these children grew up in institutions under trying conditions, without knowledge of their real identity or background. Many were subject to assaults quite similar to those recounted by the Norwegian war children.⁴

The British deportations of children share factors relevant to the Norwegian children of war in a specific way. At the end of 1945, the Australian authorities sent a delegation to Europe to speed up emigration, in particular to attract children of war, refugee and stray children to Australia. The delegation also visited Norway, and was offered 9,000 children of war by the Ministry of Social Affairs, as will be dealt with later in this chapter.

Those Behind the Deportation Proposal

The first influential group discussing the idea of deporting war children during the war was an assembly of Norwegian politicians in exile in Stockholm in the autumn of 1943. Here the Labour Party had appointed a party Committee to suggest what should be done.⁵ The reason for their action was the acquaintance with the book *Schwert und Wiege* ('Sword and Cradle'), which the head of the SS and police in Norway, Wilhelm Rediess, published early in the autumn of 1943. While the Wehrmacht had previously been reluctant to accept marriages or permanent personal relationships between Norwegian women and German soldiers, the book made it clear that the offspring of such liaisons could further Nazi Germany's racial objectives if the SS Lebensborn Maternity Home Programme were expanded and generous financial support provided for the mothers.

Early in December 1943, the party Committee completed its general recommendation, explicitly limiting the group of children and mothers to those who formally could be lawfully and unresistingly deported, which meant that those who were protected as Norwegian citizens should not be included. But the committee also proposed a separate supervision agency for the children of war with the power to separate mother and child in the event of failure of parental care of a specific national nature, which was to be in addition to the Child Welfare Act of 1896 giving the welfare councils the right to intervene on normal social grounds.⁶ The proposal left the future of such children uncertain. The recommendation, which also contained other proposals, was discussed by the Norwegian Labour Party in Sweden, without consensus being reached. In the end of March 1944, it was sent

to the Minister of Justice in London, where it was followed up by active Labour Party officials in exile.

In London, the Norwegian Directorate of Health also received reports on Rediess' book and on the alarming number of war children born in Norway, indicating that many Norwegian women had entered into liaisons with Germans. However, the recommendation aroused scepticism, not because of the proposal for deportation, but because of the proposal to establish a separate child-supervision agency. Some civil servants disliked the proposal because it allowed public opinion to weigh more heavily than the children's needs, and because the proposal was based on a completely new perception of what constituted a failure of parental care, as it introduced a concept of 'national failure' of parental care. The issue was becoming a hot potato volleyed between ministries. Following many discussions, a provisional regulation was drafted, but never submitted. Prime Minister Nygaardsvold's private secretary, who had long experience of child-welfare cases, held a particularly negative view. She was one of the few women in the exile community in London, as well as one of the few Norwegians there, who took interest in the British child-welfare system and engaged in such issues and, ironically, even made donations to the largest NGO in charge of deporting children to Australia.

The Clergy

Rediess' book *Schwert und Wiege* also became familiar to a group of anti-Nazi clergymen, interned in the so-called 'clergy colony' in the Norwegian town of Lillehammer in 1943. There, the wife of one of the country's most prominent and imprisoned bishops, after reading Rediess' book, initiated the appointment of a committee of clergymen to study her information and discuss what to do.

She felt that the war children represented a serious threat to the future Norwegian society, even if Germany were to lose the war. She envisaged a scenario in which, thirsty for revenge, a German Nazi movement would locate the children of war some 20 years later, using secret records and underground efforts, then use them to form a fifth column during a new war. She referred to German children from World War I, supposedly used in Belgium in 1940. In her opinion, the mothers were trained Nazis who would inexorably pass their Nazi sympathies on to their children. There was no point in taking the children from their mothers, according to her, so all of them had to be deported immediately after the war.

The bishop's wife had a second agenda. She expressed that it was necessary that the Christian Church be strict in respect to the 'tyskertøser' for preventive reasons, since Norway might be occupied by Allied troops once the war was over. At that point, it would be necessary to set an example and not demonstrate laxity, in order to protect 'our young girls', as she wrote. She warned against relationships between Norwegian girls and Allied soldiers.

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Her opinions received some limited support, but the majority of the Committee opposed the key proposal to deport the children. On the other hand, they did agree that the children should systematically 'be guided away from their past', and be given Norwegian names, and that other initiatives should be implemented to obliterate their extraction, registered secretly and adopted confidentially. However, the draft recommendation was never completed, and was never made known in Stockholm or in London. The explanation was probably that the clergy lost interest in taking any action as the war neared its end and the colony was dispersed. One of the committee members preserved the unfinished document and made an abortive attempt to obtain final comments from the others, before filing the papers away.

The recommendation subsequently became known in the summer of 1945, because another minister, Ingvald Carlsen, who was appointed a member of the War Child Committee, took interest in it. Even though he did not agree on the views on deportation to Germany, he shared the other opinions. As head of the Norwegian reform programme for settling and housing of travelling people; or 'tater', Carlsen was experienced in taking children away from their mothers. He was preoccupied with sterilization and interested in German eugenics.⁷ Somehow, he obtained the document and finished writing it before turning it over to the War Child Committee, where it supported the motions forwarded by him.

British Military Rejects Deportation

Following the Stockholm Committee's proposal regarding a child-welfare agency and deportation had been rejected in London, other preparations for dealing with post-war problems relating to war children were put on the back burner. No further planning was made in general or with a view to the Lebensborn Maternity Homes. On that account, the Resistance and the Ministry of Social Affairs in Oslo were unprepared for how to keep those children alive once the German personnel were interned at liberation. While many of the Maternity Homes were left in a state of chaos and only the efforts of volunteer organizations at local level ensured food, fuel and other supplies, the matter became an issue to the British military, who forwarded a query to the Ministry of Social Affairs, which eventually sent representatives to alleviate the situation.

Pursuant to agreements concluded between the Norwegian government in London and the Allies, the German-occupied sector of Norway was to become a British occupation zone following German capitulation. Accordingly, British troops had arrived in Norway in the days following 8 May 1945. Under British supervision, the Allied headquarters established that the war children and their mothers in Norway were to be treated according to general British occupation policy. The British supreme commander convened representatives of the

Norwegian ministries for a conference on 13 June 1945 and presented a proposal for classifying them, among different types of civilian problem groups. The plan was generally accepted. Here it was ascertained that Norwegian women who had married Germans were entitled to double citizenship as long as they lived in Norway and that they could not be sent out of the country, unless they wanted to go. The same applied if their German husbands were dead. The offspring of such marriages were German citizens, but they should be allowed to stay in Norway or leave, depending on their mothers' wishes. Single women with or without children or who were pregnant were to be treated as ordinary Norwegian citizens and should not be forced to leave. The same applied to their children. Although reservations were raised regarding future negotiations with Germany, it was entirely clear that no war children or their mothers should be forced out of the country against their will.

These guidelines, to which Norwegian representatives had no objections, would have precluded every discussion regarding deportation, had they been respected. Three weeks later, however, the Norwegian government appointed the War Child Committee to determine how this question could be resolved.

The War Child Committee

The War Child Committee was appointed on 3 July 1945. On 9 July, the terms of reference were established, the members were appointed and the first meeting was held. The Committee was to recommend whether it was desirable to deport mothers and children to Germany, what legal adjustments would be needed and also what initiatives should be implemented if they were to remain in Norway. The Committee enjoyed considerable authority. Besides the chairperson Inge Debes – city court judge and head of the pre-war Social Legislation Committee as well as editor of the Ministry of Social Affairs' professional journal *Social Work* – the Committee consisted of Alf Frydenberg, deputy secretary of State at the Ministry of Social Affairs; Else Vogt Thingstad, chief physician at Ullevål Hospital; the already-mentioned Resident Vicar Carlsen, who was the head of Norway's Child Welfare Council; an assistant secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice; and former Prime Minister Johan Nygaardsvold's private London secretary, who had been a journalist before the war. A lawyer with the Ministry of Social Affairs acted as secretary.

The Committee was instructed to finish its proposals before autumn. Things did not turn out that way. As the Ministry began sending cases over to the Committee, it became necessary for Debes and others to take a number of initiatives. The Committee thus became the Ministry of Social Affairs' unofficial office for children-of-war cases, with its own premises and administration. After a number of meetings until November 1945, the Committee submitted a *proposal*,

a *recommendation* to the Ministry of Social Affairs and a *draft legislation* for publication. In other words, the work was far more extensive than originally envisaged.

At its first three meetings, the Committee discussed the main questions and the secretary kept ordinary minutes of the meetings. The other meetings were devoted to detailed discussions of the wording of the documents and no minutes were kept. In terms of time, the work can be divided into two periods, before and after 12 October, when the Norwegian government adopted a resolution which put an end to the question of deportation to Germany.

Already at its first meeting, the Committee had voted against sending the children of war to Germany, and although they notified this in the minutes on grounds of principle, they emphasized the state of living conditions there as their practical concern throughout later documents. Shortly afterward, they were informed by the Parliament President, the Conservative Party leader C.J. Hambro, that the children could be sent to Sweden. They therefore decided to examine whether that was feasible, or whether it was feasible to send them to other countries, such as the US. Debes reported on the Lebensborn archives, where around 8,000 births had been recorded. Thingstad pointed out that a number were unaccounted for and likewise their whereabouts. Accordingly, this clarified the need to forward a motion from the Committee to the Ministry to ask the municipalities to get accurate information.

At its third meeting, based on new information, the Committee discussed whether from practical reasons it was possible to send the children to Germany. Further, they detailed how the authorities could intervene and take the children from their mothers if need be, not merely owing to failure of parental care from normal social reasons, but if the mother was nationally undeserving, or if local opinion so required. This was the same justification based on national failure of parental care that the Stockholm Committee had proposed. They also touched on the children's relations to their fathers, stating the undesirability of having future contact with Germany. Disregarding deportation or not, they asked the Ministry to perform psychiatric tests on the mothers and children. Debes made reference to a letter to the Ministry, probably written by Thingstad, which proposed that the children, with reference to their mental health, should be taken from their mothers and given an assumed name, place of birth and date of birth and be equipped with new identities before being put up for adoption or relocated by other means, at home or abroad. In another query to the Ministry, Debes asked that the establishment of a special War Child Office be officially formalized by the Ministry to deal with these important tasks. All in all, though it was not clearly stated, these elements most likely must be interpreted as preparations for a large-scale operation.

On 23 July, Social Minister Sven Oftedal travelled to Stockholm, where he had talks with Swedish politicians and senior civil servants about refugee issues and

the question of sending the war children to Sweden. This is evident from interviews he gave to Swedish newspapers.⁸ Although we have no detailed proof of it, he probably also made arrangements to organize the movement of the first group of children of war to Sweden, which actually occurred two days later. It consisted of 30 Norwegian children found at a Lebensborn home in Bremen, originally destined to be shipped to Norway.⁹ Not long after, the children were announced for adoption in Swedish newspapers, labelled as children found in concentration camps in Germany, whose parents, place of birth and date of birth were unknown.¹⁰ With falsified personal histories, most of them later were adopted through Swedish courts and subsequently granted Swedish nationality. The adoptions were at variance with Swedish and Norwegian adoption legislation and the Nordic Family Rights Convention of 1931, all of which require the permission of the children's parents, guardians or other responsible home authority. By and large, the similarity of these arrangements when compared to the plans of the Committee strongly indicates that the operation was considered to be the first project of a large-scale deportation to Sweden.

The Norwegian authorities were later presented with these cases, the first already in 1947, when they decided against allowing the mother to be informed or told the fate of her child. Another mother was pressured into accepting the adoption through the direct intervention in Norway of the Swedish adoptive parents' attorney, who had discovered her identity.¹¹ None of the other mothers was notified. Later, in the 1960s, many of the grown children contacted the Ministry of Social Affairs for assistance in locating their mothers.

Questionnaire to Poor-relief Councils

On 19 July, the Ministry of Social Affairs distributed the required questionnaire to the poor-relief county councils all over the country, with instructions to report the number of war children, where they currently were located, and whether they were with the mothers, at orphanages or elsewhere. It also included a question of how local opinion was disposed toward mother and child. Chair of the Committee Debes had proposed a rather imprecise text, which the Ministry had tightened up. Addresses were needed because the Lebensborn archives were not organized by residence addresses. If the Ministry was to utilize the archive in any practical sense, such as to collect the children or simply to contact them, it was imperative to know where the children were living and how many they were in each and every district.

Reporting practices were uneven. A total of 558 poor-relief agencies responded, or roughly 75 per cent of those who received the circular. They listed a total of 3,128 war children, of whom 1,492 had specific names and addresses. Other information¹² estimates the aggregate number at the end of the 1945 to be 7,853,

which translates into an identification rate of only 19 per cent. Those who provided the most useful information were those with the largest numbers while, with some exceptions, the lowest scores were found where there were low numbers. As far as local opinion was concerned, a total of 360 responded; of that number only 38 reported that opinion was favourable while 116 reported that it was indifferent. The rest were negative to varying degrees. It did appear, however, that the atmosphere in distinctly rural communities was more conciliatory than in the most urban communities, but there were no sharply pronounced geographical patterns. Municipalities with condemning or conciliatory public opinion could be found side by side throughout the country, in the largest districts with children of war being along the coast from Rogaland to Finnmark, and in eastern Norway which, with the exception of Oslo, had the smallest number.

The low reporting rate for addresses weakened any implementing of large-scale projects in the immediate future, and in the longer term a new registration would be required. It is hard to tell whether or to what extent ideas of disobedience played a part in the poor-relief councils' failing reports. Conditions were difficult in the northern counties, even chaotic. Finnmark hardly had any poor-relief services at all. Several poor-relief councils responded that they would not provide names or addresses, stating only that the children living in their area were doing well, and that there was no need to do anything about them. Such motivation might be perceived as a reflection of a local protection mechanism against central authorities, a long-standing tradition in Norway. It was not unnatural to conclude that the children could be better cared for by regional or local authorities. As it was, the central authorities had little choice. Operating through normal manners and means, they simply could not reach the majority of the children.

Another element must also be mentioned. The reports showed that a mere 142 children received support from the poor-relief services. That figure must be far too low. Nonetheless, it does indicate that the children of war had not yet become a financial liability for the municipalities. Lebensborn had paid support to the mothers until the end of the war.¹³ Many poor-relief councils wrote that if the municipalities were to bear such costs in future, public opinion would become more negative. That could be understood as a demand that the State should cover the costs.

The War Child Committee made special mention of the reports in its recommendation, but made no remarks to the fact that its main objective was to find out where the children were. Nor did it mention that so few respondents had specified names and addresses. Otherwise, it painted a far more favourable picture of public opinion throughout the country than the reports actually described. This was probably linked to an attempt to orchestrate a change in public opinion in the autumn of 1945. The Committee appeared to be paving the way for that. Actually, it is difficult to substantiate that type of statement so early.

The Government makes its Decision

Parallel to the deliberations of the War Child Committee, the Ministry of Justice explored the legal basis for deportation. No legislation contained any provision against being the sweetheart of or married to a citizen of an enemy state. Nor had any attempt ever been made to make it punishable, not even in the time of the London government, which had otherwise initiated a system of provisional laws on a large scale. To implement the deportation legally, it was important to make rules of law which were not at odds with the public's sense of justice.

As a judicial step, in mid-August 1945 a provisional law was adopted, reintroducing the provision from the Citizenship Act from before 1924, which had deprived married women of their own citizenship. The amendment stated that women who married a citizen of an enemy state, i.e. a German, would lose their Norwegian citizenship, even if they never left Norway. The provision applied to everyone who married after 9 April 1940. Although it was not mentioned directly, the Ministry of Justice contended that the regulation also abolished the right to reacquire citizenship in the Citizenship Act of 1924. The regulation contravened two basic principles of Norwegian law: that no act of legislation shall have retroactive effect and that no act shall establish collective punishment. The women's movement protested, but to no avail.¹⁴

The provisional law can be seen as the first judicial step of the strategic policy of deportation, but this seems to be contradicted by the circumstances which gave birth to it; it was adopted owing to a near-panic reaction on the part of the authorities when, at the end of July 1945, it was reported that a Swedish ship with 'tyskertøser' and children of war was en route from Germany to Norway. This happened shortly before the first election after the war, and the government feared the effects on public opinion. The national chief of police was allowed to organize a press conference where he reassured people by telling them that the police were in full control of the situation. They had registered the 'tyskertøser' throughout the entire war, he contended, which was quite a stretch of the reality. However, the need of a provisional act had prior to this incident been signalled in the Ministry; eventually it would have found an appropriate occasion.

Thus, with immediate effect, it was possible to convey these married women and their children to Germany on the German military transports which were returning German prisoners. The authorities took care not to use the term 'deportation', which had negative connotations, opting for the term 'denationalization' instead. We have no idea how many women and children were denationalized in this way. Moreover, augmented by a number of women who *wanted* to leave along with their sweethearts, the numbers were considerable.

Following the capitulation, a corps of Norwegian repatriation officers worked in Germany to bring home prisoners and 'displaced persons', organized under the

auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs. In the field in Germany, they served under the British military occupation authorities, and their leader, the former bomber pilot Johan K. Christie and his subordinates, mostly officers or former civilian prisoners, had received British military commissions to execute this special work. They soon saw the need to bring home also human beings in distress in Germany other than former prisoners, among them war children and their mothers. This brought Christie and his men into conflict with the authorities at home, who were shipping off to Germany as many as possible more or less willing women and children. The repatriation corps' attitude was partly in response to its subordinate position under the British Army of the Rhine under whose auspices the repatriation corps found itself.¹⁵ The BAOR feared that the children would become a burden on the occupation authorities. The British felt conditions were better off in Norway. Secondly, based on their own experience, the repatriation officers, who knew how to trawl for refugees in the countryside where the destitution was palpable, feared that the winter of 1945/46 would turn into a huge disaster, and felt it was advisable to get as many people as possible home, regardless of their background. These were the officers who found the 30 Norwegian children of war in Bremen in June 1945, sending them homeward on 25 July. The fact that they ended up in Sweden was the responsibility of the Norwegian Ministry of Social Affairs.¹⁶

Women with or without a child, who had either been in Germany during the war or arrived there immediately afterward, reported to the repatriation corps in growing numbers in autumn 1945, begging for help to get home. The British also sent such individuals to the repatriation corps. Meanwhile, the central passport office in Oslo did everything it could to prevent this by refusing to grant entry permits. The office tried to get those who were already under way interned in Denmark, before returning them to Germany. In early August, the rules were tightened up further on the part of Oslo, requiring strict documentation and demanding that those who made it through the eye of the needle had to pay their own very high travel expenses. In connection with the ship mentioned earlier, i.e. the one bound for Oslo and filled with women and children, the repatriation corps received a reprimand.

The criticism from the police in Oslo was followed by a proposal to dismantle the repatriation corps in Germany from October 1945, and to let the diplomats take over. Until then, the repatriation officers were prohibited from trying to repatriate anyone other than former prisoners. Christie protested, as did his British superiors. In a personal appeal to Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen, Christie referred to Norway's humanitarian traditions and asked whether the Norwegian government realized what a disaster the German winter could inflict on Norwegian-born women and children who were leading miserable lives because they were not accepted and were barely able to make themselves understood. He demanded that

all of them should be allowed to come home if they wanted to, and that if any of them had done anything illegal during the occupation, they should be judged individually, rather than making all of them suffer. Following meetings with Secretary of the Ministry of Refugee Affairs Kirsten Hansteen and the Ministry of Justice, Christie wrote a memo to the Norwegian government, urgently requesting that the rules for a so-called repatriation visa be made more lenient, after having been made more stringent four weeks earlier. To rally support, Christie made an exception for women who had been in the Nazi movement or who would not declare their willingness to divorce their German husbands.

In the middle of October 1945, the Government adopted a motion which leaned in the direction Christie wanted, but opened the door to a number of exceptions. The Ministry of Social Affairs presented the decision as a humanitarian relief operation, pointing out that it did not cover those who had married after 9 April 1940 or childless widows, and furthermore that everyone had to be politically acceptable. One condition had to be that they were in mortal danger. Everyone had to sign a personal declaration which would be controlled by the police.

In a new clarification late in October, the Ministry of Social Affairs had to admit that the decision could be interpreted as covering all children in distress, even if they preferred not to repatriate children born in wedlock and other specific groups. Meanwhile, the Ministry was aware of the problems involved in limiting the number of children and therefore began using the term 'children of Norwegian extraction or partially Norwegian extraction' instead of the more straightforward terms Norwegian or German citizen.

The formula of the personal declaration dictated by the Ministry stated that the person who signed it was aware that the public opinion against them was far from friendly, that she was prepared to face difficulties and unpleasantness for herself and her children, that she could be interned if need be, that their stay was temporary and that she had to be prepared to be sent back to Germany. Furthermore, she had to declare that she had not been a member of any Nazi organization. It was a quasi-legal and humiliating document, depriving them of their legal rights.

On the other hand, even though the declaration marked a defeat for humanism in the spirit of Fridtjof Nansen, as Christie wrote to the Prime Minister, the reality behind the Government's resolution was to put a stop to all further deportation plans to Germany and, as the police later stated in a report, probably also individual deportations. The authorities now found that it was not possible to dismantle the repatriation corps in Germany. The British would not allow Norway to establish diplomatic stations. The whole thing ended with the repatriation corps continuing, although in a slightly reorganized form. Following the government resolution, the corps could also seek out women and children in distress and bring them home. By mid-1946, they had repatriated 400–500 women and their children.

A Change in Attitude in Sweden

The Government resolution in October entailed that the Norwegian government supported the War Child Committee's resistance against deporting the children to Germany. It seems as if Sweden as a consequence appeared to be the only feasible option for relocation. During and after his visit to Stockholm late in July 1945, Secretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Oftedal was in contact with the central social-democratic politician and educator Alva Myrdal, who had a major impact on relief organizations such as Save the Children and the Red Cross. Oftedal also met with the head of the Swedish Labour Market Board, Nils Hagelin, who took on the responsibility for the matter on behalf of the Swedish authorities. A few days later, Secretary of the Ministry of Refugee Affairs, Kirsten Hansteen visited Stockholm, where she continued talks with Myrdal and Hagelin about the placement of the children. The contact with Hagelin was subsequently handled through Debes, head of the War Child Committee, who dealt with the correspondence from his home address, probably owing to the delicate nature of the project. On 11 August, Hagelin wrote Debes that the process was in progress and that the war children could soon be relocated to Sweden.

A month later, Oftedal and Director General Frydenberg met Swedish Minister of Social Affairs Gustav Möller and Minister of Culture, later Prime Minister Tage Erlander, at a conference in Copenhagen, where they were hoping to get a green light from Sweden. This issue was not the topic of the conference; it was discreetly dealt with off the record. Unexpectedly, however, Erlander signalled a new Swedish attitude. They were concerned about the project and Oftedal had to assure them that Norway would go no further in materializing it. Although we have no clear explanation, the reason for Sweden's change of heart was presumably that the adoption process for the 30 children who had already arrived was proving to be more controversial than expected and that the Swedish government feared the problems which could arise with thousands of children.

A new initiative was taken during Christmas week 1945, when a liaison from the Ministry of Trade and Industry was told at a conference in Sweden by his Swedish counterpart, the Minister of Trade Gunnar Myrdal, that Sweden was willing to take 1,000 war children. Oftedal subsequently wrote to Alva Myrdal, the wife of Gunnar Myrdal, telling her that Norway had not taken any new initiative after the conference in Copenhagen. A new initiative would have to come from Sweden, he wrote, adding that he would be pleased to send some of the children to Sweden. In mid-January 1946, the secretary general of the Norwegian Red Cross wrote to the Ministry of Social Affairs, recounting a query from the Swedish Save the Children. The Red Cross wanted to know if the project was still feasible and how far the inquiries had come. It does not appear that the Ministry followed up the query.

Since going to Sweden was no longer seen as an option, the war children were to remain in Norway. The War Child Committee had to re-write its documents and concentrate completely on proposals toward this end. The most important thing was to safeguard the children financially. Demanding individual child maintenance from the fathers was not an option for reasons of principle. Based on a similar Danish compensation to Finland for children fathered by fascist Danish soldiers during World War II, the Committee secretary concluded that any lump-sum payment from Germany had to be roughly 50 million Norwegian kroner. (That was \$7 million or £2.5 million in the currencies of the day. A very rough estimate could be based on a cost-of-living increase from 1945 to 2005 of 1546 per cent: with today's £ sterling equivalent to NOK 11.9, this sum would total £65 million.) The sum was totally unrealistic, in his opinion. Instead, the State should settle a sum on the mothers corresponding to the father's child-maintenance liability. Moreover, the State should provide education for the mothers.

On 18 October, the Committee finished its *Draft of an Act relating to War Children* and *Draft of the Special Circumstances Motivating the Act relating to the War Children*. Apart from the Act's definition of 'a war child' as being the child of a German father and Norwegian mother, the explanation in the special circumstances gave a more detailed definition by stating that one expected allied children of war in the near future. Although Norwegian law should apply to the determination of paternity, the same law's regulation for public announcement of paternity was not desirable. The Ministry should have the right to change the child's first name, even if the mother was not amenable to this. Registrars should have an obligation to give notification to the Ministry. Interventions in the family home in the event of national failure of parental care should be allowed. The State should have a broader right to take a child away from its mother based on living conditions, explained in the special circumstances as a hostile atmosphere on the part of the local population in respect of the foster home or the child. As far as deportation was concerned, the draft bill stated that the Ministry, based on a proposal from the Child Welfare Board, in compliance with international agreements, could relocate children of war to another country, even without the consent of the mother or guardian, if the child was in danger of being exposed to lasting damage if it stayed in Norway. Nevertheless the special circumstances emphasized that 'the case' primarily had to be dealt with here at home. The draft bill finally stipulated that child maintenance was not to be claimed from the German fathers, as links between the German father and the child in Norway was undesirable. The bill assumed that the State would provide child maintenance in advance.

The Committee accordingly wrote *A recommendation regarding measures for the war children* to the Ministry, which emphasized that children in distress in Germany should be brought home, that Norway's child-welfare system had to be expanded, that the Child Welfare Board had to be given higher priority, and that

training of the mothers was crucial. Last but not least, it proposed a public campaign to shape opinion in respect of the children in a favorable direction. The Ministry had to ensure that the authorities and general public used the term children of war rather than derogatory characterizations. Points relating to the organization of deportation were also included as well as comments to the proposal that the State advance the payment of child maintenance to the war children. As a whole, the three documents contained everything from brutal suggestions about taking the children away from their mothers based on the wishes of the local community and sending them abroad or relocating them at home, to well-intentioned integrating proposals to advance child-maintenance payments and a campaign in the public and private sectors to get society-at-large to accept the children. Some of the motions, like the suggestion that the German fathers should not be requested to pay child maintenance, represented a violation of a main principle in the Child Act of 1915, which secured children born out of wedlock legal assistance from the State to enforce the fathers' contribution to their upbringing.

In mid-November, the secretary sent the material to be printed. It consisted of the general *Recommendation to the Ministry of Social Affairs from the War Child Committee* as well as the three above-mentioned documents, with an abundance of documentation, including quotations from the Clergy Committee, and a memo from a psychiatrist, Chief Physician at Gaustad Hospital in Oslo, contending that many of the children were mentally handicapped, as well as a report from a children's conference in Switzerland. Before it was printed, however, all the material was returned to the Ministry. New objections had been raised. They referred to doubts about whether the description of the situation was completely adequate, in particular in the light of reports which could indicate that more of the children than anticipated were with their mothers, doubts about establishing of numerous orphanages which would be needed according to the motions and whether it would be possible to fund their operation. Then there were doubts about the need for the psychiatrist's plans for psychiatric evaluations and how urgent the matter really was, now that deportation was no longer an option. A new motion to make it easier for those who really wanted to move to Germany with their children needed further clarification, since the Directorate of Refugee Affairs specifically advised against it.

In addition to these elements, the most decisive argument against publishing was probably that the Ministry had been notified that an Australian immigration delegation would be coming to Oslo in the next few days, for the purpose of speeding up immigration to Australia in general and in particular in taking 50,000 'war orphans' overseas.

Australian Solution?

The news reached the headlines, not solely as a solution to the war- children problem, but more so as it triggered the expectations to emigrate orchestrated by an association known as the 'Australia Club'. The newspapers wrote that Australia was also interested in taking in orphans. To make it clear that Norway was not in favour of emigration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wished to ignore the delegation, but felt obligated to arrange a meeting on a senior-civil-servant level. At the meetings which took place on 22 and 23 November 1945, Frydenberg invited himself and Debes to participate. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs clarified to the point of a ban that it did not favour emigration from Norway, according to both Norwegian and Australian sources, Frydenberg and Debes offered 9,000 children of war to the Australians. The mothers were never mentioned. The delegation was taken on a tour to the former Lebensborn home Godthaab in Bærum, where they could see for themselves how some hundred children of war were living. At the closing lunch, the Ministry of Social Affairs added prestige and support to the motions to the delegation by seating two Ministers of Government at the table.

The Australians' report mentioned the possibility of mass emigration from Norway.¹⁷ They referred to the offer of 9,000 children as one of the two largest, and most promising results of their trip. However, in March 1946, the Australian prime minister stated in a parliamentary debate that the lack of transportation made it hard to tell when the emigration of children could begin.¹⁸ It had become clear to them during the trip that neither Norway nor any other country could transport that many emigrants. By the time the report was put before the parliament in November 1946, an Australian MP had visited Oslo and reported home that 7,000 of the 9,000 children had already been adopted and that the remaining 2,000 were to be 'absorbed'.¹⁹ The immigration of children had become controversial. The head of the delegation to Oslo in 1945, Social Democrat Leslie Haylen, challenged the opposition to accept the Norwegian offer of 9,000 war children, ostracized from their own country, as he put it, although he himself opposed such a scheme. Notwithstanding, even the political opposition did not want the war children, since they considered them German children. They wanted white Europeans to stem the tide of Asians and to strengthen ties to the British Empire, but not the children of the empire's adversaries because that would strengthen ties to Germany.

Excluding Mechanism of Citizenship

Frydenberg probably postponed publication of the recommendations from the War Child Committee when the unexpected possibility of an Australian solution had popped up, because the latest wording of the War Child Act primarily was based on the idea that the children would be staying in Norway. Now some changes

might have to be made. Three days after the Australians left Norway, another unexpected event took place when the chair of the War Child Committee Debes unexpectedly died, and with him the driving force behind the work.

Although work on the Act was shoved to the back burner pending an answer from Canberra, Frydenberg had many urgent questions linked to the children of war which had to be resolved. Later in 1946, the legislative work resumed. At that point, the objections within the Ministry led to a less comprehensive draft aimed at regulating paternity issues. The efforts continued in 1947, but no proposition was put forward. In other words, the temporary stop on publication in 1945 became permanent. Although the Committee's recommendation was made available to scientists and the war-children organizations in the beginning of the 1990s, it was not made public until 1999, 44 years after the fact.²⁰

In the years subsequent to 1945, various problems of a legal and practical nature raised by the children-of-war issue were dealt with in other ways, through circulars, regulations and communications from the Ministry of Social Affairs. Neither the War Child Act nor the separate suggestions made by the War Child Committee were instituted. Proposals such as allowing the authorities to take children away from their mothers based on public opinion in the community and for specific political reasons were also put on ice. However, falsifying the children's identities, as proposed by the psychiatrists and psychologists, was instituted to some extent through a circular which gave the authorities the right to change their first names. The Ministry lost its motivation for funding the undertaking of the large-scale psychiatric investigation required for the deportation project, and as it was not claimed for other purposes, it was set aside, along with the proposal for separate orphanages. But the very important motion of not requesting child support from the German fathers was carried through, as we shall see.

What can be described as the legislative project begun in the summer of 1945 to legalize mass deportations and to be completed by the War Child Act was given an important sequel. The provisional regulation which had transformed married 'tyskertøser' and their children into 'Germans' and deprived them of important rights enjoyed by all Norwegians became regular law in December 1946. This took place despite the fact that the government resolution of October 1945 had caused more than 500 women with children to stay in the country without the police being able to deport them. The provisional regulation and the Act, as the Ministry of Justice interpreted them, also deprived the women of the right to reacquire Norwegian citizenship. Not even in 1949, when the ordinary rules for the acquisition and loss of citizenship in the Citizenship Act from 1924 were reintroduced in their entirety, also in relation to Germany, was this applied to the mothers of the children of war and to the children themselves. The Cold War was emerging in full, Germany was Norway's new ally, military collaboration was being initiated between the two countries under the new alliance, and the legal purge against treason had run its course.

This collective punishment had been sharply criticized as early as in 1945. The criticism swelled over the years, not least from the perspective of gender equality. A new Citizenship Act in 1950 brought the discussion to a close. The mothers could reacquire their citizenship by providing notification within five years. However, their children had to wait until they turned 18 to obtain the same right. That meant that a child born in 1943, whose mother had married a German, who had spent his or her whole life in the same village and never been in Germany or abroad at all, was not able to be 'Norwegian' until he or she gave notification in 1961. Once each year, by a particular date, these children or their guardians had to apply for a residence permit at their local police office. The signal effect of such a scheme can hardly be overstated, not merely for the local community, but also for the individuals involved. Even though it was only these children, remaining in Norway, who by law became German, and the vast majority of the others were by law Norwegians as offspring of single mothers, the German stamp rubbed off on everyone. The authorities might easily have reversed the regulation of August 1945 and established that these children should follow the nationality of their mothers, and thus be treated as any other citizen.

On the contrary, the concept of the war children as basically German and not entitled to *full* support and legal protection from society as Norwegian children, spread onto another field of legislature, with grave effects to them in the years to come. In the period 1946–1957 new laws on children and child care were introduced in Norway. But war children gained little from these.²¹ In 1946 a law on family allowance or child benefit from the State was put forward, without covering the first child. This proposal would exclude nearly all war children from benefiting. Protests from the women's movement resulted in a new draft, which included the first child out of wedlock. In order to receive the allowance at least one of the parents had to support the child and had to be a Norwegian citizen. As a consequence, the children of women who were dead, who had temporarily left their children to others, had left the country or had been Germanized inside Norway, received no support. The law came in to force in October 1946.

As indicated, more serious and extensive effects followed Ministry of Social Affairs' application of the Child Act from 1915 (*barnelovene*). It was the obligation of the State to enforce paternity order and maintenance from the father on behalf of all children born out of wedlock. As the Ministry of Social Affairs opposed all contact between the children, mothers and the German fathers, it suspended efforts by the local courts to fulfil the Act, and directed them to forward all paternity cases on war children to the Ministry. More than 6,000 cases were left there and never dealt with. Following a notion from the Ministry of Justice in 1950, the Ministry was instructed to return the cases to the local courts. The cases were returned, followed by strong appeal from the Ministry of Social Affairs that all cases ought to be closed without decisions. Along with other obstacles in the

process of collecting of child maintenance from fathers in foreign countries, these policies reduced the number of cases to fewer than 500, and the number of children who were to receive paternity support from the German fathers likewise. Even as late as in the 1970s, the authorities did not want to forward claims against East German fathers.

A longtime claim for all children born out of wedlock was eventually met in 1956, as the Ministry forwarded a motion for a law on State prepayment of child maintenance from the fathers (*lov om forskuttering av barnebidrag*). This provision had been postponed for many years. But when it appeared, it demanded that the father had to live in Norway or in a country with which Norway had a formal agreement. Not so with Germany. As documents show, the Ministry had made this exception to exclude the war children; their vast number could halt the process in Parliament, a Deputy Secretary of State in the Ministry wrote. The motion came under heavy protest from social councils of many counties, and the Ministry was eventually pressed to supply the motion with a new law of supporter insurance (*lov om forsørgertrygd*) to meet the needs of these children. The two laws were put in motion from April 1958. Due to the many years' delay of the laws, combined with the fixed 18 years' age-limit regulations in them, few war children benefited much from them, as the youngest was 12 years of age and the oldest 17 at the time.

In these, as in other public regulations of importance for their lives to come, war children were faced with a general attitude from society which originated from the characteristics fixed in 1945 and the previous years. Individually, many of them were to experience both marginalizing and stigmatizing within private, public and local life, which clearly bore the hallmark of that category.

Notes

1. The term 'tyskertøs' (Jerry hussy, tart, whore) is not easily translated, as it mixes the concept of national deceit with female sexuality and girlish immaturity. Literally 'tøs' in dialect and old Norwegian refers to a young girl.
2. Of the country's approximately 1,800 Jews, 767 were sent to extermination camps in Poland. Only 32 survived. From Telavåg, on the west coast of Norway, 72 men were sent to Germany after a shooting incident, and 31 died.
3. Barry Coldrey, 'A Charity which has Outlived its Usefulness: The Last Phase of Catholic Child Migration, 1947–56', *History of Education* 25(4), 1996, p. 377.
4. M. Parsons, *Precious Commodities. Overseas Evacuation: England's Future* (Paper at Europeiske krigsbarndager, Uleåborg 13.–15. juni 2003, Riksförbundet Finska Krigsbarn, 2003).
5. Because of the Swedish ban on party politics for refugees, they acted under the cover of being a TUC study circle. This is the reason why most writers

- incorrectly refer to the committee as the TUC committee in Stockholm ('AFL-komiteen i Stockholm').
6. The Child Welfare Act of 1896.
 7. Carlsson shared an interest in the application of eugenics toward minority groups such as Gypsies and travellers/tinkers or 'tater' with the German eugenicist Robert Ritter. See Per Haave, *Sterilization of travellers* (Research Council of Norway, 2000), pp. 67–9.
 8. Including *Dagens Nyheter* on 24 July 1945.
 9. The story of these children, known in Sweden as 'the Fiskeboda children', is first described in detail in Lars Borgersrud, *Overlatt til svenske myndigheter* (Televågkonferansen 2002: Born og krig). See also Lars Borgersrud, *Staten og krigsbarna: En historisk undersøkelse av statsmyndighetenes behandling av krigsbarna i de første etterkrigsårene* (University of Oslo, 2004), pp. 85–137.
 10. *Södermanlands Nyheter*, 4 September 1945, and *Dagens Nyheter* 4 September 1945.
 11. Borgersrud, *Overlatt til svenske myndigheter*, pp 72–73.
 12. *Statistisk sentralbyrå: Folke- og bolig tellingen i 1946*.
 13. In fact, all the expenses incurred by the Reichs Commissariat for Occupied Norway, including the cost of the Lebensborn programme, were charged to an account in Norges Bank and thus paid by the Norwegian state.
 14. Henvendelse fra Norske Kvinners Nasjonalråd v/ Sigrid Stray 12.12.45, Justisdepartementet, Lovavdelingen, Dc- Statsrett og forvaltningsrett, 78, *Legg 43–44. Ny statborgerlov. Diverse 1923–1946, Justis-og-politidepartementet*.
 15. 'British Army of the Rhine', i.e. the military authority in the sector of Germany occupied by the British.
 16. Borgersrud, *Staten og krigsbarna*, pp. 133–5.
 17. *Report 1946*, p. 30, A 436/1, 45/5/563 1, Australian Archives.
 18. *International Affairs* 1946, p. 533 (22 March 1946), Parliamentary Debates, Commonwealth of Australia.
 19. T. Dunbabine to Director-General, Dept. of Inf., Canberra, att. Mr Aub. Williams, 13 November 1946, A 436/1, 45/5/563 1.
 20. In *A White Paper: Selected Public Documents Regarding the Children of War Issue* (Research Council Norway, 1999).
 21. Borgersrud, *Staten og krigsbarna*, pp. 333–71.

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