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Kjersti Ericsson, Eva Simonson, eds. *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*. New York: Berg Publishers, 2005. viii + 296 pp. \$28.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-84520-207-1.

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Children in Danger or Dangerous Children?

Few academic books could enjoy such propitious timeliness as this collection of essays. The essays resulted from a research project begun in Norway in 2001 to explore the history of children born of Norwegian mothers and German fathers during World War II. These children, now in their sixties, have been receiving considerable media coverage lately as they have organized to press their rights and seek damages for discrimination from Norway in the European Court of Human Rights. In the past year, major print and television media outlets, even in the United States, have covered this story as these “war children” from Norway, Germany, and elsewhere have sought to make their stories heard through organized activism. These essays give voice to these historical subjects through ethnographic interviews and personal testimonies as well as study the impact, experience, and variety of state policies regarding these ongoing reminders of the war’s legacy. Thus, the book as a whole reveals, in a transnational and comparative fashion, the ways in which these children and their mothers were categorized and stigmatized as the object of both benevolent and harsh state policies and social pressures. Importantly, the comparative aspect not only juxtaposes nation-states, but also examines the differences and continuities between the periods of Nazi occupation and the postwar years of liberation.

The editors, Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, used the project in Norway as a base to work toward an international focus, resulting in this collection of fourteen essays which cover the prelude to the war via Republican children in Spain to Black German “Occupation” chil-

dren of the war’s aftermath. The essays, however, mostly focus on the offspring from German soldiers and local mothers throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. As is usually the case with such collections, the burden to make the essays cohere effectively falls to the editors, who, in their introduction and epilogue, have done a marvelous job of laying out the meaningful themes and historical significance of the topics under study. This is particularly noteworthy here, because several of the essays fail to fully capitalize on their interesting material with persuasive interpretation. That is to say, all the essays are interesting for the information they provide, but they are rather uneven in narrative quality and historical analysis. Perhaps this is a consequence of the disciplinary methodology of the individual authors, but without a descriptive list of contributors, this reader is left guessing. Still, Ericsson and Simonsen have done a very good job of laying out the complexities, problems, and historical significance that these essays reveal collectively.

This compilation shows in new ways the contradictions and twisted logic of Nazi racial and social policies, but also, importantly, the problematic ways in which these children were managed in the postwar period in their respective countries. The various postwar national policies regarding these offspring of German soldiers are the focus of many articles in the book and show the range of responses possible. Thus state policy intersects with lived experience. Kåre Olsen’s interesting opening chapter uses the Norwegian Lebensborn maternity home as a case study to explore how Nazi policy would place the children of German soldiers and local mothers on a racial

scale that differentiated “valuable” populations of northern Europe from those of lesser quality, from the East for example. Thus, the Lebensborn maternity homes, designed to care for the mothers and their offspring in ways that would promote a healthy Aryan population, was the logical inverse of the genocidal efforts to eliminate racial undesirables. But after the war, these children became a national political problem for Norway because of the hostility directed towards them as a result of their German paternity. Lars Borgersrud examines the Norwegian War Child Committee established in 1945 and its efforts to deny these women and their children citizenship and to deport them, if not to Germany, then to Sweden or even Australia. Thus, these women and children landed in a legal limbo and were denied their rights and citizenship—the subject of the current legal suit. Meanwhile, Arne Øland’s chapter shows how the Danish government succeeded in concealing the German paternities of several thousand children born during and shortly after the war. His chapter combines a historical narrative followed by extended personal testimonies, but it ends without any sort of conclusion or interpretive analysis that connects his policy survey with these biographical sketches. Thus, the reader is left wanting the author to advance an interpretation or argument in addition to providing information and anecdote. Still, the official silence in Denmark was a marked contrast to the overt machinations in Norway to be rid of the problem altogether. Fabrice Virgili shows that in France it was felt that the children were French, but that due to their problematic paternity, they ought to be sheltered from social ostracization. Hence the French state responded in a protectionist and pronatalist manner, while in the Netherlands, these children were viewed as a threat to Dutch society and the object of occasional violence, as recounted by Monika Deiderichs.

Particularly interesting to this reader was the persistence of eugenic social policies and scientific endeavor in the wake of the war and its terrible racial legacies. Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz de Faria’s article on the children of German women and African American soldiers clearly demonstrates how this racial/anthropological scientific enterprise continued well into the postwar period as these children were repeatedly put under professional study in ways reminiscent of the Nazi regime. While not seeking to eliminate these children from the German population, the study of their racial difference did help determine social policy of the 1950s, emphasizing how they ought to be treated as different from the more purely German children. The policies of socialization, then, were meant to make up for this racial difference.

This theme comes through elsewhere, too, as states were worried that local children with soldier fathers might be too “German,” which could be displayed, for example, in a propensity for marching. Hence, psychiatrists and other professionals across Europe engaged in diagnosis and remedy at the service of the state to determine if these children were in danger or themselves dangerous—perhaps even depraved due to their German paternity. It becomes evident over the course of the book that there were two competing paradigms regarding what might become of these children due either to their biological heritage or socialization. Thus, these children became valued for what they offered as objects of scientific study in the postwar nature/nurture debate. Michael Richards looks at similar themes in prewar Spain. Since his essay is neither about World War II nor the German paternity of children, it is something of an outlier in this collection. Nonetheless, what is interesting is that the dilemma for Republican children in Francisco Franco’s Spain was not about race or nationality so much as ideology. Many of these children were secretly given to families sympathetic to the new regime, because “it was concluded that ‘Marxism’ had ‘psycho-biological roots’ and that women were particularly prone to this threatening ‘bio-psychic’ conditioning” (p. 123). The danger to Spanish children lay within the ideology of the familial household, and particularly with the mother, thus efforts were made to counteract these pseudo-biological leftist tendencies among Republican children through the socialization and moral puericulture of Nationalist households.

Some chapters, like Dorothee Schmitz-Köster’s on German Lebensborn homes, read more like reports than interpretative essays. While Ebba D. Drolshagen’s ruminations on the terminology for these children are interesting and full of data, they again lack the interpretive bite of a compelling essay. Anette Warring’s chapter on the plight of Danish women as sexual collaborators is a story familiar to historians of the period, though of course the particulars may be new. The issue of women’s sexual practices during the war is a recurring theme throughout, and while related, it leads some essays away from the valuable contribution of this book and its focus on children into the well-trod territory of women, sex, and the war. However, the chapter by Kjersti Ericsson and Dag Ellingsen explicitly shows how the stigmatization of the mother affected the offspring, or as they write, “not only were the ‘sins’ of the mothers visited upon their children: so also were the sins against the mothers” (p. 99) as they suffered through violence both symbolic and

real. In an interesting twist, Regina Mühlhäuser shows how the children of German fathers in the occupied eastern territories served to stigmatize the soldiers as lacking appropriate racial awareness. Owing to the children's "racially mixed" nature, the manner in which the Nazi state dealt with these children while in control of Poland was a marked contrast to those of Norway. In Poland there was a danger of either the dilution of German blood or the dangerous improvement of the subject population due to the infusion of German traits. The Nazi policies in Bohemia and Moravia lay somewhere in between those of Norway and Poland. Michal Šimek shows how the Nazi protectorate there adopted policies that it hoped would be a long-term eugenic breeding program for the systematic change and replacement of hereditary traits. Because of the already high degree of intermarriage between ethnic Czechs and Germans in the Sudetenland, the goal became carefully selective breeding to diminish the Czech qualities of children while augmenting the

German ones.

This collection, as a whole, certainly adds to our understanding of the lasting impact and human legacy of the war. As the editors state, "the war did not only take lives, it also created lives" (p. 1). Taken as a whole, we also see how various policies of intervention in the post-war period anticipate or parallel the proliferation of the welfare state. The suitability of mothers, the social scientific study of children, and the adoption of policies to develop and provide for these young charges all presage the expansion of the European state into familial affairs as the continent struggled to recover from the effects of the war. This book is, without a doubt, the most complete study of these war children to date, filling a significant void both in the history of the war and the history of children, but it also suggests numerous directions for new research or for a truly transnational monograph to examine the issue comparatively.

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