

Times 7.7.2018

Blond orphan 'stolen' by Nazis sues

Germany

David Crossland Berlin

A man who was adopted by Nazi foster parents aged six under an SS genetics programme is demanding compensation on behalf of thousands of blond, blue-eyed children seized in occupied countries.

Hermann Lüdeking, 82, was taken as an orphan by the Lebensborn organisation that was founded by Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS. He wants official recognition for him and 300,000 other "stolen children" who he says were victims of Nazi war crimes.

"This isn't about the money. But if they award me compensation they have to acknowledge that this was a war

crime," he said. "The Jews, the forced labourers, the Roma people and homosexuals, they're all recognised as victims but we stolen children aren't. But what happened to us was bad too."

Lebensborn, which means "Fount of Life", was founded in 1935 to halt a high rate of abortions at a time when there was a shortage of men to marry after the First World War. It initially helped unmarried women to give birth away from their homes. The mothers then had the option of leaving their babies in Lebensborn homes, which found foster parents for them.

In many cases the fathers were married SS men who had obeyed Himmler's order to spread their Aryan seed even out of wedlock. After the invasion

of Poland the programme expanded massively as the Nazis began selecting blond children in occupied territories. In some cases they were snatched from their mothers in the street. They were brought to Lebensborn homes where they were examined for racial purity and, if found suitable, selected for "Germanification".

About 200,000 were seized in occupied Poland alone. Children were also taken from the Soviet Union, Slovenia and Czechoslovakia. Mr Lüdeking estimates that 20,000 could still be alive.

A court in Cologne this week rejected his case on the ground that German law did not categorise the children as war crime victims. The government did not respond to a request for comment.