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The children stolen to start the Nazis' master race: Heartbreaking story of the 300,000 youngsters who were snatched from conquered lands to become 'Aryan' citizens of the Third Reich

- **German exhibition details the plight of children stolen from eastern Europe**
- **'Stolen Children, Forgotten Victims' features orphans considered 'Aryan'**
- **They were rehomed in Germany if the Nazis believed their blood was pure**

By [Allan Hall for MailOnline](#)

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A rehomed child from Poland, Kostja Pablowitsch Harelek is pictured being inspected by SS chief Heinrich Himmler

A moving exhibition has opened in Germany chronicling the fate of 300,000 children stolen by the Nazis to become 'Aryan' citizens of the Third Reich.

They were snatched from eastern lands conquered by Hitler and sent back to the heart of Germany after inspection by Nazi genetics specialists if they were deemed racially pure enough to become part of the master race.

One of the children whose story is told in the exhibition which open this weekend in Cologne is that of Kostja Pablowitsch Harelek who is pictured next to the mastermind of the kidnap programme - S.S. chief Heinrich Himmler.

Himmler's racial quacks ultimately decided which children would be allowed to be shipped back to Germany to be adopted by Germans and brought up accordingly.

The bulk of the children were stolen in Russia and Poland. While both countries were branded racially inferior by Hitler, the reality was that

Germany needed as many children as it could get as the war ground on and losses mounted.

Kostja was chosen by Himmler to be a 'viable German lad' when he met him at a transit camp in Minsk, Belarus, in 1941. He was to be sent back to Germany and renamed Konstantin Gerelik.

The photo of him in his tattered flat cap next to the supreme overlord of life and death in Nazi Germany is to be seen at the exhibition entitled 'Stolen Children, Forgotten Victims.'

Kostja vanished in the closing days of the war. Even now hundreds of survivors trawl archives and root through geneological maps in a bid to find out who they once were.

Photos, documents, and statements from children and young people who were deported to Germany and forcibly 'Germanized' form the backbone of the exhibition.

A major player in this vast kidnap enterprise were the Lebensborn - Font of Life - homes run by Himmler where unmarried pregnant German women were allowed to have their babies to be adopted by fanatical Nazi families.

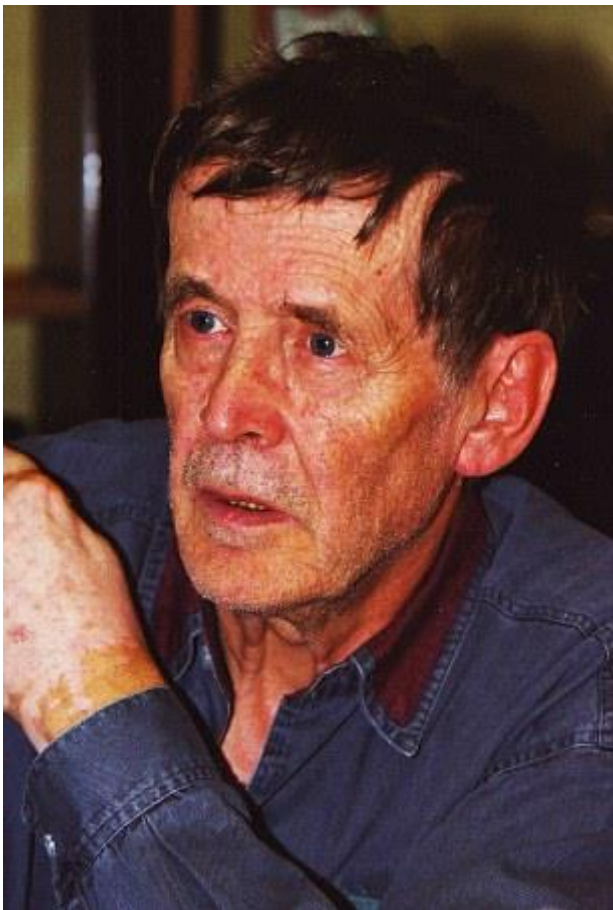
And the curators point out that German post-war authorities did little to find out the true identity of the victims when the war was over.

Many went to their graves unaware that their true parents were either alive or in Nazi mass graves.

Behind the programme stood the rigid racial ideology of the Nazis: the abduction of children from Eastern Europe was justified with their alleged 'non-Slavic origin of blood'.



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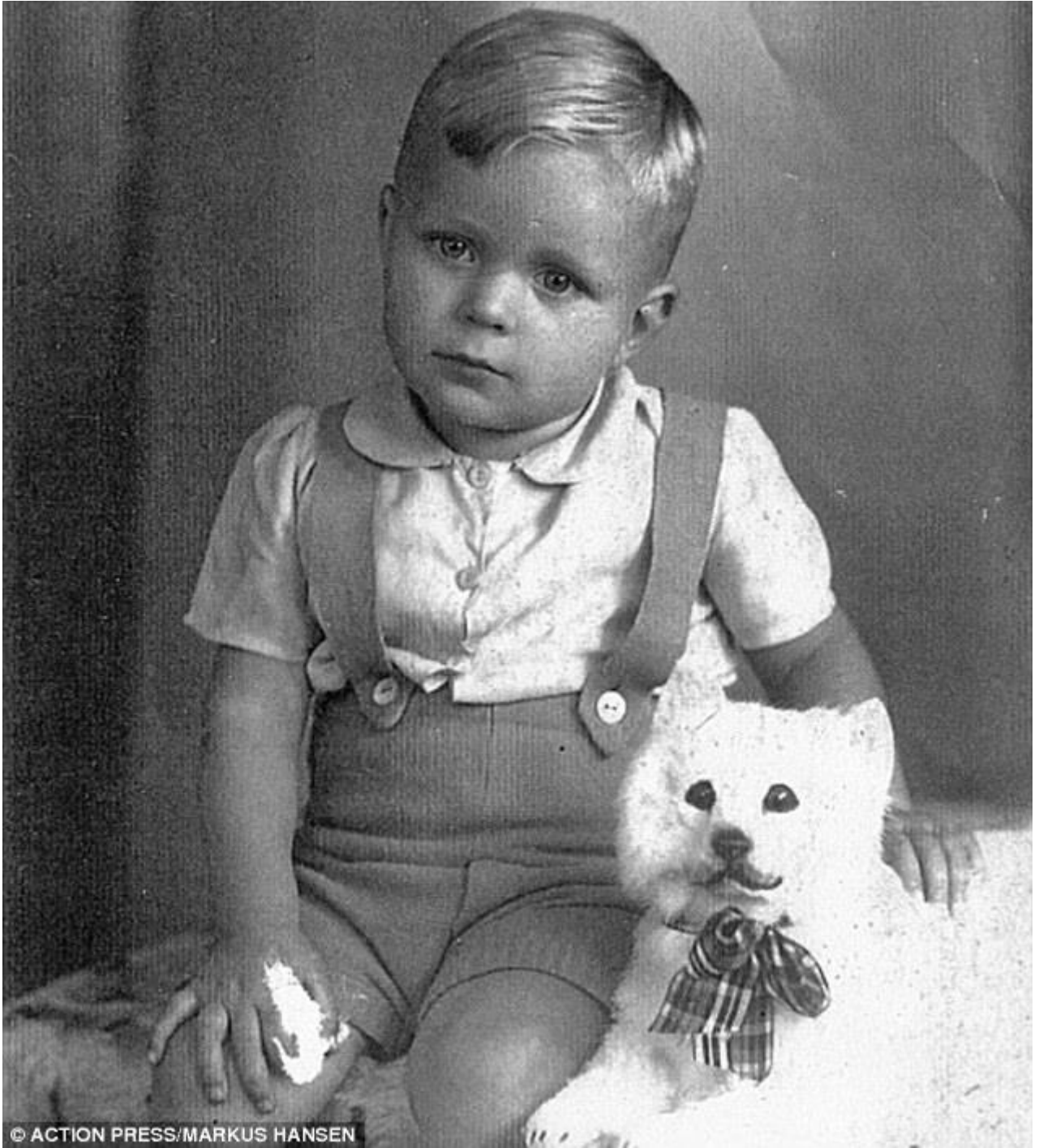
Hermann Ludeking (pictured left and right) was taken from his home in Poland and knows nothing about his cultural roots or who his parents were

Himmler first outlined his dastardly plan in 1938 when he said; 'Obviously in such a mixture of peoples, there will always be some racially good types.

Therefore, I think that it is our duty to take their children with us, to remove them from their environment, if necessary by robbing, or stealing them.

'Either we win over any good blood that we can use for ourselves and give it a place in our people, or we destroy that blood. I really have the intention to pick up Germanic blood all over the world, to rob and steal, where I can'. He was true to his word.

Once children passed the bogus physical checks - usually it amounted to whether the inspecting physician thought a child looked Germanic enough and wasn't Jewish - he or she had their pasts erased by Nazi bureaucrats who placed them with families loyal to the party.



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Folker Heinecke - or Aleksander Litau? This boy was stolen from the Crimea after Nazi officials saw he had blue eyes and blonde hair



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Pictured left, Hans-Ullrich Wesch in the arms of a nurse at a Lebensborn home. Right, Zyta Suse was another of the children stolen from eastern Germany because of their 'pure Aryan' appearance

'The children are to called German orphans from the recovered eastern territories' - such was Himmler's command.

They received a German name that corresponded to their birth name, a fake birth certificate and handed over to their new parents.

Many of those affected still don't know who their biological parents were.

The German Johanna Kunzer was actually Janina Kunsztowicz from Poznan and she learned of her true identity only decades later in 1990.

Now aged 80, Janina was taken in 1941, housed in a Lebensborn orphanage until 1944 and then adopted by a retired teacher who kept her true identity a secret.

Only a few children ever returned to their home countries.

Roman Roszatowski Łódź in Poland still lives in Germany as Hermann Lüdeking. His story is also in the exhibition where he asks: 'Who am I? How did I get here?'

Not all children were pliable: Zyta Suse, seven, snatched also from an orphanage in Lodz in 1941, was so opposed to her Germanization that she had to be deported to a forced labour camp back in Poland. Her fate is unknown.

None of the stolen children were ever compensated by postwar Germany.

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