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World

Child Welfare Agency Echoes Nazi Germany?

By Dale Hurd
CBN News Sr. Reporter

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BERLIN - It sounds like Nazi Germany: families afraid of a loud knock on their door in the early morning, police bursting in, and taking away their children.

But it's not Nazi Germany. It's today's Germany.

In Berlin, when authorities came for 7-year-old Dan Schulz, his family secretly videotaped the abduction. On the tape, family members are crying and the boy can be heard screaming, "Mom I don't want to go!"

A German official responds, "Your mother can't help you here."

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The boy was taken by Germany's notorious child welfare agency, the Jugendamt. The official reason young Dan was taken was that he wasn't in school, even though he had been homeschooled and then began private school.

Wrecking Normal Families

The Jugendamt, which dominates Germany's controversial family court system, takes children when it wants, from perfectly normal families. The Jugendamt's well-documented treatment of families, especially homeschoolers, has now become an international issue.

In January, the Romeikes, a German homeschool family, were granted asylum in the U.S. after an immigration judge ruled that Germany and the Jugendamt had violated their human rights. Mike Donnelly, with the [Home School Legal Defense Association](#), was one of the attorneys for the Romeikes.



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"The judge said that this policy was repellent to everything that we as Americans believe," Donnelly said. "He felt that these were basic human rights. These were the kinds of rights that no country had a right to deny their people. "

The Jugendamt undoubtedly does some good, somewhere, but it also has gained an international reputation as a ruthless organization that takes children from good families and wrecks homes.

"My experience with the Jugendamt has been terrible," Dan's mother Heidi Schulz said. "They destroy families; they torture people, and make money out of it."

She is still haunted by the morning her son was taken from her.

"He was screaming so much and he held me tight, and I couldn't do anything. Nothing," she recalled.

After he was taken, Heidi was only allowed sporadic visits and phone calls.

"And when I would call him, he would scream and say, 'Mama, come and get me!' And I would say, 'I don't know where you are,'" she said.

Child-Trafficking Network?

After three years of fighting and praying for her son, a judge finally ordered Dan to be returned home. Heidi said her son had been kept at an orphanage where he was beaten up by other children, poorly fed, poorly clothed and not educated for the first year and half.

"It was terrible. At first I thought I was just going to the doctor but it was nothing like that," Dan recalled. "They told me I was sick."

Opponents and victims of the Jugendamt say the system amounts to a government child-trafficking network, in which about 80 kids per day are seized from parents and funneled to children's homes and psychiatric care, with the overflow going to foster homes. They claim the system needs to continually take in more children to keep functioning.

"There is a system of persons, of social workers, of teachers, psychotherapists, who live on children being taken out of the family," German psychologist Carola Storm-Knirsch said. "We call it industry."

Storm-Knirsch has worked for the Jugendamt on several cases. But she broke with the Jugendamt over the Schulz case, which she called "totally wrong."

"There are homes with empty beds. And they need children," she explained. "And they call the Jugendamt and say, 'Hello, do you have a child for us?'"

Documents shown to CBN News indicate little Dan brought in about \$8,000 a month for the state home where he was kept. While CBN News was there, Heidi got a bill in the mail from the Jugendamt for what was done to her family.

"One thousand-six hundred euros," she said, adding sarcastically, "They take your child and then they take your money."

No Reform Needed?

The local Jugendamt office is right across the street from the Schulz's, so we asked for an interview. They said they couldn't talk about the case, but said that they "acted in a humane and correct way, and legally."

The German embassy in Washington told us flatly that the Jugendamt does not need to be reformed. And it answered "yes," when we asked, "Does Germany adhere to the European Convention on Human rights in respect to the rights of parents?"

But a German legal expert insists that the German Supreme Court ruled in 2004 that the European Convention on Human Rights is not binding on Germany.

In her fight for her son, Heidi tried to get the ear of German politicians, such as the former head of the European Parliament. But a videotape shows that when another Jugendamt victim suggested the Jugendamt should be considered a criminal organization, the former head of Germany's Green Party, Reinhard Bütikofer, exploded.

"Stop it with this stupid brazen radical cr---! It's stupid brazen radical cr--! I don't want to be insulted by such cr--," he screamed.

Heidi Schulz has already raised two exceptional daughters. Winonah has studied in Japan, and Tashina in America. But the Jugendamt suspects Heidi has psychological problems, and they have begun a new process which could lead to her son Dan being taken away again.

Dan told us there's nothing wrong with his mom.

"The children's home is sick, not my mother," he said.

Echoes of Nazi Germany

The psychologist Storm-Knirsch agrees, saying the Schulz family is healthy, but she thinks some members of Germany's Jugendamt and family court system could use therapy.

"These people are sick!" she said.

Heidi, who was raised in communist East Germany, said that in some ways, communism felt safer than the new Germany.

"They (the Jugendamt) are so mighty," she said. "They have all power and you are nobody."

The German establishment doesn't like to be reminded that the Jugendamt was started by Adolf Hitler. Storm-Knirsch adds that "Adolf Hitler really did his work well."

HSLDA Attorney Mike Donnelly told CBN News that more German families are seeking political asylum in the United States.

Meanwhile, in Berlin, Heidi admitted to us that she feels defenseless, as she waits for the Jugendamt to decide whether she will keep her son.

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