

Room for Newborns in the “Lebensborn” Association Maternity Home in Steinhöring (Upper Bavaria) (1938)

Abstract

Like many other aspects of Nazi population policy, the battle against abortion was only superficially socially conservative in nature. It was not based on ethical and religious concerns, but rather on “racial-biological” imperatives, according to which the rejection or murder of urgently needed progeny was a betrayal of the national community. In fact, the regime sought a fundamental reordering of social structures, as well as traditional ideas about values and morality. For example, Heinrich Himmler believed that the causes of abortion could be found in the social pressures of the lower middle-class, since reigning norms led to the stigmatization of unmarried mothers and illegitimate children. He thought many pregnant women saw abortion as the only solution. To protect them and to support large families in the SS, Himmler founded the so-called “Lebensborn” [“Fountain of Life”] Association on December 12, 1935. The organization operated maternity homes where single women of “good blood” could deliver their babies in secret. The organization often assumed guardianship of the children and continued caring for them. Altogether, about 8,000 children were born in “Lebensborn” maternity homes. Himmler’s program, however, did not change the German people’s Christian-bourgeois conception of morality. It soon became the object of scandalous rumors according to which “Lebensborn” homes were “breeding bordellos,” where SS members systematically impregnated single women. So far, research has found no proof for such assertions.

Source



Source: Infant room in the maternity home of the “Lebensborn” Association in Steinhöring. Unknown photographer.

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