

Germany & the Battle for Home Education

This seems set to be a regular column as the situation for home educators in Germany remains of continuing concern, particularly since Germany's politicians fight to retain control over children and as parents fight ever harder to have their rights acknowledged. Home education contacts in Germany have learnt of a memo circulating in one federal state, Bavaria, demanding that education laws and court judgements be rigorously applied. German politicians are now embroiled in embarrassing international diplomatic scandals with Canada and Austria while yet more families seek to escape the overbearing authoritarian restrictions of their human rights as parents.

In one case Canada has offered asylum to a family from Germany facing persecution and attempts to remove children from the family simply because they home educate. It is believed that others will follow this family. Another family had attempted, with the assistance of the President of Austria, to avoid compulsory schooling in Germany by enrolling their child in an Austrian distance learning programme. The child was subsequently removed from her home in Germany. Concurrently the mother of another family (the Platt's) was arrested and her children only escaped incarceration by being with their father in Austria at the time.

The latest saga has led the Neubronner family, who have been fighting their own private war with the German authorities for some time, to reluctantly decide to leave Germany to avoid the risk of losing their children. The determination of the German government to pursue loving and caring families to the ends of the earth is only matched by the determination of families to live in peace and freedom from tyranny.

The grounds for these actions and court cases are always on the grounds of child protection and the welfare of the child. However the policy of insisting that all children attend German schools is actually one of homogenisation of educational chances and the maintenance of German identity. This policy is established in Germany to prevent what are called 'parallel societies', that is any kind of sub-culture or alternative way of living.

Germany has also become obsessed with the idea that all children should have exactly the same education otherwise some children will be worse off than others. In fact they have just recently undertaken a review of their entire education system, closing down their equivalent of grammar schools to ensure this homogeneity of experience. In violating this sacred aim, home education was described to me by Ingrid Gogolin, professor of comparative education at the University of Hamburg, as being "undemocratic" (*HEJ issue 8 p37*). She clearly confused the concept of democracy with a form of statist, extremism now pervading Germany. Her admission that even though her own children would fare better if home educated she would nonetheless send them to school, exposes the lie perpetrated by the German authorities that compulsory schooling is all about the child's best interests. This smokescreen is simply created to justify the unjustified imposition of state policy over family rights on the grounds of the individual child's best interests.

German courts are now almost routinely removing parental rights or even removing children from home educating families on the grounds that parents are abusing their children by refusing to send them to school. If the child states that she does not wish to attend school then she is deemed to be either brainwashed by her parents or mentally ill or possibly school phobic (despite there no longer being an internationally recognised disorder of 'school phobia'). Such a child can then be removed to a clinic, as happened recently to a 16 year old.

The real reason that the German state wants to prevent children from being home educated, and this is no secret since it formed the mainstay of their defence in a case recently taken to the

European courts, is because it wants to prevent children from being educated in diverse ideologies, diluting German national identity. It seems to me that this is dangerously akin to Himmler's wartime National Socialist policy of "Germanisation", during which Arian looking children were stolen from their parents, principally from occupied Poland and Scandinavian countries, or similar to the disgraceful former UK/Australian policy of removing Aboriginal children from their parents in Australia in order to impose a Western style education. One cannot but come to the conclusion that this policy is nothing less than the theft of children to maintain an experiment in social engineering.

Whereas this was once perpetrated on ethnic minorities it is now being perpetrated upon the members of the general populace who have the audacity to have their own views on how their child is brought up, particularly if these parents fit into any kind of minority due to their religious or cultural philosophy.

Following a UK case in the 1970's involving the Sibley family (*HEJ Issue 5 p34*) it was recognised that it was unlawful to take a child into care solely on the grounds of education. This is part of the reason why in the UK so many local education authorities are now turning to their social services colleagues for 'assistance' and we are seeing a rise in cases brought against families on the grounds of child welfare, socialisation and so called emotional abuse (*HEJ Issue 8 p36*). It has not yet reached the point where home educated children are being removed from their families but with the political climate of Germany so close at hand we cannot be complacent.

Only a close minded and uncaring bureaucrat or ideologically motivated politician could ever believe that it is justifiable remove children from their families because they want to educate them themselves. This is not in the best interests of children but is merely expedient for a state that wants to completely control what children learn.

Across the global home education communities are buzzing with news of a letter circulating in Bavaria concerning the custody of children. Reliable sources within Germany have verified that it urges education departments to remove custody rights from parents who home educate. While the children may remain in the home, legal custody would rest with the state, meaning that parents could not subsequently leave Germany with their own children without permission.

Other countries, particularly members of the EU would be bound by international treaty to return these children to Germany and extradite the parents for prosecution.

It goes without saying that an attempt by the UK courts to return such a child would result in a widespread reaction by the UK home education community.

In addition home educating parents in Germany report that new laws are being considered which would enable the state to even more easily remove children from home educating families.²

Clearly the German state is taking this threat to its authority seriously and the world wide home education community needs to respond with similar vigour.

1 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kidnapping_of_Polish_children_by_Germany

2 www.dji.de/dasdji/home/news_0711_2_workshop_izkk_massnahmen.pdf