

Initiative for the release of the 5 Gorber children from Überlingen, Germany:

**Sarai – 17 years, Prisca – 15 years, Thea -12 years, Esther – 10 years, Rebecka – 8 years,
and for the return of custody to the Gorber parents.**

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PLEA

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Local court- Family court
Justice Gerhard Völk
Bahnhofstr.8
88662 Überlingen
Germany

Dear Mr. Völk,

Naturally even you try to fulfill your tasks as a judge according to your best knowledge and conscience, in order to treat everybody in accordance to the principles of our constitutional law.

Our nation is lucky to have God's commandments as the fundamental basis of our law. Praise to the judge who administers the law well.

On September 25th you'll have to decide whether the 5 children of Mr and Mrs Gorber, who have been living in child and youth foster homes since January 16th, will be allowed to return to their parents. The youngest (in January), David, who was 2 years old, was finally allowed back home some weeks ago, after having been separated from his beloved parents and the siblings who remained at home, for almost 7 months. We're very grateful to you, that you finally let him return home.

What was the reason for sending these six children into (child and youth) foster homes? I would like to comment on this question - after questioning both parents -separately apart from each other- for many hours, and after looking into the court-file.

Mrs. Gorber was pregnant with their 9th child and had suffered from pregnancy diabetes since the beginning of January, which affected her psychological well-being. She therefore spent a few weeks in hospital.

In her husbands absence, on the 15th January, while he was visiting her there, 20 policemen and 9 child welfare officers turned up at their home, surrounded the entire area where they live, closed off the street, as if they had to catch terrorists, and took all Gorber children under 18 years with them, even though the oldest daughter, 21 year old Miriam, assured them, that she had learned to run the household and take care of the children. She received the reponse that she wasn't her father's housekeeper and should go to work outside the home.

They grabbed 7 year old Rebecka, who was screaming with fear, and dragged her by her upper body over the yard and shoved her into one of the cars along with her siblings. Two year old David also screamed, holding onto Miriam and not letting her go until they reached the foster home and he got tired and gave in. Miriam and her 20 year old brother Benjamin, were allowed to return home, as they were no longer minors.

The father is a self-employed carpenter, who works from home; therefore even in the mother's absence the younger siblings were never without somebody watching over them. The children had learned to work together, with the parents as a team, to do the daily chores. As a result of the co-operation, homeschooling was not a huge burden for the mother to oversee.

The written notice advising of the children's commitment into foster homes was left on the kitchen table for the father, signed by you, Mr Völk. A policeman, who lived in the neighbourhood, had told the Child Welfare Authority that the father was psychologically unstable, and there now existed, in the mother's absence, the danger of a mass homicide – ie that the father could possibly murder all of his children and lastly kill himself.

After taking the children to the foster homes, the policemen came back, probably in order to see the father's reaction to the horrifying situation –the whole house was empty! – and to take him, if necessary, to the psychiatric ward.

But the suspicion of the policeman in the neighbourhood wasn't confirmed: Mr. Gorber reacted completely calmly; obviously he was able to handle the situation, otherwise the policemen would surely have brought him to the psychiatric ward. But Mr. Gorber did not go ballistic.

Nevertheless his children, 8 months later, (with the exception of David) are still being detained in foster homes - against their express wishes and desires!

Your motive, to prevent a family tragedy, is admirable; but now you also need to understand that a tragedy of another kind has occurred through this action.

When the father was deemed of sound mind, the officials looked for another reason for having taken the children: The children's welfare was supposedly "in danger", because the children had been, up to that moment, educated at home instead of attending school - with the full knowledge and toleration of the school authority.

Not long prior, the parents had had a good rapport with the Child Welfare Authority. They had always shown their willingness to let these people examine their children. They had even invited the "Child Welfare Authority" to check on their children's well-being. Two years ago the child welfare authority social worker said during a visit: "You are an island paradise!"

"We really don't need to have any concern about your children's welfare; we seldom see such happy children. If all children were doing so well, we would be happy." It was obviously clear, that the children had been educated and socialised well by their mother. Since, as a result, the local school authority have tolerated their homeschooling.

So why now, suddenly, is their home education supposed to endanger the children's welfare? In all European countries, except Germany, and in the whole free world (except dictatorships) homeschooling is tolerated with more or less government support, or even promoted, because this method of education is a good alternative to the public school system. The "compulsory school building attendance mandate" has only been established in Germany, since 1938, without exceptions, in order to subject all children to the ideology of the "Third Reich", under the guise of state education. Isn't it possible to see the parallels to today's compulsory school attendance? We shouldn't have to worry today, that our children are to be given into the hands of the State, for the same reasons (ever earlier, already from 3 years old!). Is it, because Germany wants to have,

according to politician Olaf Scholz's wish "the sovereignty over the airspace above the children's beds?"

The first 4 weeks after the removal of their children to foster homes, the parents were not allowed to visit them.

The grounds being that the children should first be observed, to be sure they really hadn't been harmed, and that this could best be seen whilst separated from their parents. Isn't that cruel, especially considering how young, some of the children are?

Then the children were evaluated, by order of the court, 2 to 5 times, by a child psychologist unit. The experts were supposed to answer two questions:

1) How delayed are the children, in their development, compared to their peers?

The conclusion, from the expert evaluation of the children, was as follows (ibid, page 57):

"According to the detailed clinical investigations, the personal impression of all 6 of the children and the discussion of the results at hand, it must be stated, that all the children's cognitive development is age-appropriate,"; one child showing an "outstanding intellectual ability".

Further to that (ibid): "Concerning socialisation, the children have views, that fit their age, that are very peaceable, while at the same time clearly "black and white", in line with the distinct norms of their parents."

The overall psychological condition of the children is "stable". The children's experience in their family is positive and they want to go home as soon as possible, which is well-documented in the evaluations as well - as their "greatest wish". The tests prove, that the children have grown up in a loving and harmonious environment. The Gorbers were a happy family up until the mothers' illness, from which she has long since recovered.

As such, on the day the children were uplifted, the children had fed and taken care of their pets (guinea pigs etc.). The oldest brother had even taken some photographs of his brothers and sisters, petting the animals, not knowing, that he would lose his siblings soon.

Even the experts wrote: "With regard to the style of upbringing, all children give witness to a very harmonious family system, where quarrels and contempt are almost not existent, everything is solved with as much harmony as possible."

Obviously there is no developmental delay of the children. To which the second question must then follow:

2) What measures are necessary and appropriate to remediate a lack of development?

Consideration to answering to this suggestive question is not necessary because of the good test results. There is no developmental delay to make up for.

The experts. in my opinion, prove that the children have no notable shortcomings, neither intellectually nor socially. You can find "late developers" in every family, also in the Gorbers; the oldest son was, like the father, a "late developer", but he caught up well later on and in trade school was - like his older sister- a joy and a help for the teacher, as the teacher indicated to the father

The 7 year old Rebecka suffered a lot from the removal from her parents home; therefore she fell behind with her learning. She was already able to read and write well (already at 5 years old!). Now she is supposed to repeat the 1st grade.

There are so many different giftings in a big family; some children are more practically gifted, others

in turn theoretically.

Shouldn't the children, according to the evaluations, be allowed to return home, especially after the mother has long since recovered from the delivery and 5-week hospital stay, and is home again?

Mr. Völk, during the court-hearing in April you issued, as far as I know, the following conditions, to be fulfilled before the return of the children:

- 1) All children are supposed to be enrolled in school.
- 2) An expert should evaluate the parents' ability to raise their children.

Re 1) After the court-hearing Mr. and Mrs. Gorber enrolled all their school-aged children in public schools. Fulfilling the first condition for the return of their children.

Re 2) The parents refused (during the first weeks) to be examined psychologically because there were no grounds given therefore.

One only has to look at the facts, regarding the question of the ability to raise up children: All the tests of the children above and respectively the experts prove, that

-the children are well raised. Parents, who have educated their children for 20 years in such a good way, neither endangering them intellectually, psychologically nor physically, and of course never neglected them, don't need to have, in my opinion, to undergo a psychological evaluation of their ability to raise children.

-the family situation is shown to be good and harmonious.

In addition to that, the parents see the demand to undergo a psychological evaluation as an attack on their privacy and their personal rights, which they were not willing to tolerate.

Because of the refusal of the parents, up until some weeks ago, to undergo a psychological evaluation, it was to be done from the court files. The expert psychologists admit (in their evaluations) that "We don't see ourselves, without personal exploration and investigations (of the parents), in a position to answer the courts questions in a satisfying way, based upon the court files alone."

Nevertheless the experts came to a negative conclusion, which was sent to the judge. They could not know, that there was a reason for Mrs. Gorber's illness, which had long since been resolved, and which can not be discussed in any further detail due to privacy issues.

I don't deny, that the family was in an exceptional situation in January because of the mother's illness. If this was the reason to order a psychiatric evaluation, it is then clear, that the illness is long since over. The mother is healthy again.

You have to be aware, that it was an exceptional situation for the parents to have the children removed.

Should 20 good years of marriage and child-rearing be forgotten due to this exceptional situation?! That is not right!

It is a well-known fact that problems can crop up in extended family dynamics, especially because of religious differences.

It is normal, that Mrs. Gorber would suffer under these strains on her side of the family. That she had called her husband into question, in a letter to her parents had been a side effect of not being

psychologically well. She regrets that. She believably assured me, with the aid of many examples, that she and her husband love each other very much and that her husband supports her wherever possible.

At that time, she couldn't bear the whole situation knowing that her illness caused the loss of her 6 children. She suffered incredibly, particularly because she knew that she had lost everything as a result of her illness. She blames herself.

She will continue to suffer, as long as the children are separated from her, but in the interim she has learned to live with the pain, even if it is constantly difficult to look at the children's empty beds. She is able to manage the household again. It is really a miracle; what mother could bear such a pain of losing her 6 children?!

Why do the children continued to be separated from their parents, although they are suffering desperately from homesickness, and clearly express, that they want to go home? Formerly they had a sparkle in their eyes; now the lustre has disappeared due to the frustration of being separated from home for so long, as the parents saw during their 2.5 hour visits, once a week.

Every time it becomes harder for them to say good-bye, especially because they feel out of place in the foster home; in particular Rebecka was always crying a lot.

These children, whom you, dear Mr. Völk, considered to be "too nice", as "scaredy cats, who wouldn't be able to get along in society", as I was told, have started several weeks ago to become, according to the parents, naughty and aggressive in the foster home, telling the caregivers "you are not my mother, I want to go home!" They are impatient and disappointed, because their hope to return to their parents has not yet been fulfilled. But the children's attorney, which you appointed for the children, does not seem to have made the desire of the children, to be with their parents, plain to you. The critique of this attorney, as of the experts for the children, is that they (the children, except one) are not objective enough and were doubtlessly sharing the parents' religious beliefs. Are children no longer allowed to orient themselves to their parents?

Obviously there is no lack of upbringing at home, to speak of, which endangers the children intellectually, psychologically or physically- there is no basis for this conviction. The children's evaluations prove that.

The two oldest girls in the foster home in Linzgau (in Salem-Weildorf) felt from the beginning- according to their own words- very much left alone in that place. After a few weeks they in-line skated and cycled home twice of their own volition, because they really wanted to see their parents. The same day a whole swarm of policemen appeared to take them back to the foster home. They were warned at the time: "If you run away again, you will be taken far away- to Munich." That made them very sad. Don't children have the right to be with their parents, who have taken care of them well for 20 years and nurtured a harmonious family life with them?

Mr and Mrs Gorber are naturally very sad that their children have been forced to remain in children's and youth homes for 8 months already (with the exception of 2 ½ weeks holiday).

Everybody knows that living in a foster home can never replace the feeling of security of a loving family, such as the Gorber children had experienced at home. The Gorber parents are not self-centred, but are all for the positive development of their children, which they see is in danger in the foster homes. The 5 children who continue to be detained, are distressed to have to return to the foster homes, after being allowed to spend 2 ½ weeks holiday at home. At home they spoke about the problems they had to face in foster care; it is ironic to speak about the "protection of the child's well-being" in this case: Esther had been choked twice and punched in the stomach by a boy, Thea had been harassed by boys coming into her room. The children don't even have a key to their own room, to lock the door! Each morning Thea had been bullied, ridiculed, mobbed by the boys. One of them tried to flirt with her. When Thea complained, the group tutor replied "Flirting is ok, as long as it

doesn't become serious". In the girl's group some of the older girls are necking with the boys all the time; that's all allowed there!

That's why the Gorber parents are very concerned and grieved about their suffering children. Please consider, that these parents love their children and take their responsibility to raise them up very seriously, even if their christian education is not common these days.

Our judicial system also grants protection of minorities- thank God! That's the reason many foreigners feel safe in Germany. Why must so called christian minorities be criminalised ?

Why shouldn't the Gorber family get the chance to resume their beautiful family-life, which all the family members treasure. The child welfare authority could for instance, in the next six months, carry out regularly checks and verify that the family has finally overcome the crisis, that occurred in relation to the 9th pregnancy.

Our plea to you, dear Mr. Völk, is as follows:

Bring the family back together again – for the good of the children.

In anticipation of your favourable consideration and good will, to allow the children to return to their parents,

Sincerely

Christa Widmer

PS: Please note this plea was also sent to the local mayor and the "Child Welfare Authority".

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