

# 'Nazi' eugenics disclosure rocks Sweden

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By Simon Haydon  
REUTERS NEWS AGENCY

STOCKHOLM — The Swedish government could face thousands of legal claims for compensation because of a Nazi-style campaign of forced sterilization of women that historians say has been hushed up for years.

Swedes have been shocked over past days by revelations from journalist Maciej Zaremba that Swedish governments sterilized 60,000 women to rid Swedish society of

## Women found 'inferior' were sterilized

"inferior" racial types and to encourage Aryan features.

"What happened was nothing but barbaric," Social Affairs Minister Margot Wallstrom said Saturday, adding that she was prepared to review laws that said the sterilizations were written into law and that damages could not be paid.

Mr. Zaremba, whose revelations have been published for four days by the liberal newspaper Dagens

Nyheter, said Sweden, Norway and Denmark pioneered racial cleansing "sciences" after World War I.

In Sweden the sterilizations began in 1935, peaked in 1946 and were not stopped until 1976. Though the procedures were officially voluntary, victims say they were ordered to sign permission slips or risk losing their other children and all benefits.

Most of the victims were "inferior" or of "poor or mixed racial quality," meaning people with learning difficulties, from poor families or who were not of the common Nordic blood stock.

What is more, most signs of 40 years of forced sterilization have disappeared from Swedish school and history books, Mr. Zaremba says.

One victim, 72-year-old Maria Nordin, said she was viewed as educationally "inferior" because

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## SWEDES

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she had no classes as a child and could not see the school blackboard.

Thrust into a school for the mentally subnormal, Miss Nordin was called into an office at the age of 17 — during World War II — to sign some papers.

"I signed because I knew I had to to get out... I was sent to Bollnäs hospital, where they took everything out."

Miss Wallstrom, who confessed to feeling ashamed that she originally rejected Miss Nordin's application for damages in 1996, said she would raise the subject in Cabinet. "It's the least I can do."

"The silence surrounding this issue has been caused by it going so deep in society. People are defending themselves," she said.

Miss Wallstrom said the rise of neo-Nazism in Europe and the ability of scientists to manipulate genes meant this was a good time for such issues to be discussed.

"The most astonishing thing is the ideological difference. In Germany it was the Nazis and in Scandinavia it was the welfare states that showed the most willingness to cleanse themselves of 'racially' or 'socially inferior' types," Mr. Zaremba wrote.

## Swedish Newspaper Details Sterilizations

Reuter

STOCKHOLM, Aug. 24—The Swedish government has acknowledged it could face thousands of compensation claims because of a 40-year Nazi-style campaign of forced sterilization of women that was disclosed in a series of newspaper articles here last week.

The sterilizations, which involved about 60,000 women, began in 1935 and continued to 1976, the series revealed. Officially, the program was voluntary, but many women say they had to comply or lose state benefits and custody of their children.

The series said most of the women were judged "inferior," meaning they had learning difficulties, lived in poverty or were not of Nordic stock.

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