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SECOND WORLD WAR

Children of the occupation

OVERPAID, OVER-FED, over-sexed and over here. That was a tag frequently applied to US soldiers stationed in Britain during the Second World War and, despite the comic veneer, it reflected genuine concerns. With many British men conscripted away by the conflict, numerous relationships were formed between American troops and local women.

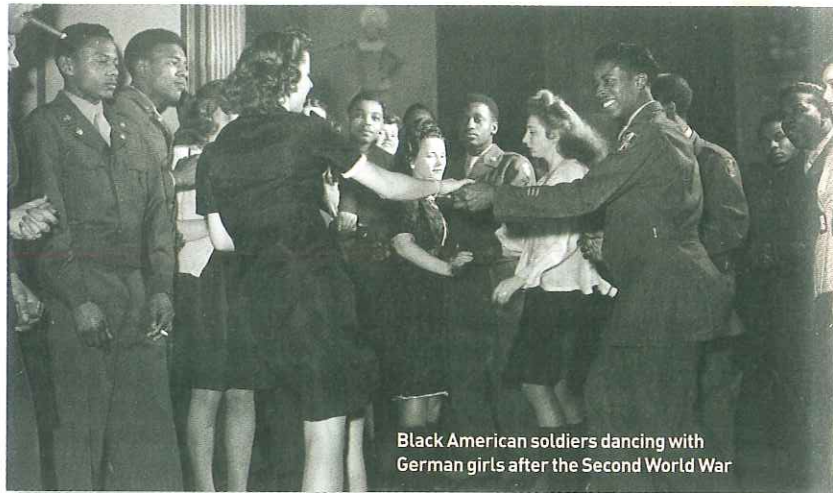
These liaisons resulted in the fathering of an estimated 22,000 children between 1942–45. Similarly in West Germany there were 37,000 children born of relationships between German women and occupying US forces from 1945–55. The treatment of these children is the subject of “A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War” (*Contemporary European History*, vol 20, no 2, CUP) by Sabine Lee of the University of Birmingham.

In Britain, despite societal condemnation of ‘good-time girls’ who fraternised with GIs, the majority of their offspring faced little discrimination. Single women often emigrated to the US to marry

their lovers. Even when the British woman was already married, the children were frequently accepted by her husband and included within the nuclear family.

One major exception was the 1,700 children born to African-American fathers. The US military and much of American society frowned on such relationships, so marriages between these soldiers and British women faced many impediments. At the same time it was harder to disguise the ‘brown babies’ of extramarital affairs when the husband returned. Therefore many women gave up these babies

for adoption, some of whom were taken in by African-American families across the Atlantic. Those who remained in Britain found it difficult to fit in with the surrounding white population and suffered identity crises. “I did not only feel different but was obviously made to feel different by



Black American soldiers dancing with German girls after the Second World War

the normal evil children”, was how one of these children recalled it.

In West Germany, the fact that the Germans and Americans had recently been adversaries ensured there were strong pressures on both sides against relationships between the two. Yet with a shortage of

As in Britain, it was mixed-race babies who were the most visible evidence of such relationships. While some did face stigma, most were relatively well received by German society. Furthermore, after initial reservations, the West German government encouraged an open discourse on the plight of the children and sought to aid their integration. This was a far cry from the fate of the ‘Rhineland Bastards’ – children of African troops stationed in the region in the 1920s who were sterilised under the Nazis. Indeed, with their actions towards postwar mixed-race children, Lee suggests, “German decision makers [could] demonstrate that such racially motivated injustice was a thing of the past”. **II** RA

It was harder to disguise the ‘brown babies’ of extramarital affairs

young German men, it was unrealistic to prevent intermingling and so restrictions were soon slackened. Thousands of GIs married their German girlfriends, although where babies had been born out of wedlock, complex legal issues made it difficult for the fathers to be involved in their lives.

NEW TOWNS

The monorail metropolis

BRITAIN’S NEW-TOWN planners came up with a plethora of ideas to accommodate south-east England’s exploding population in the postwar era. Yet, as Guy Ortolano explains in “Planning the Urban Future in 1960s Britain” (*The Historical Journal*, vol 54, no2), few were as radical as Fred Pooley’s proposals for a monorail metropolis in the heart of north Buckinghamshire.

By 1960, the South East was among Europe’s most crowded

areas. A 1964 study found that 18 million people lived in what Ortolano calls “the triangle between Dover, Weymouth, and the Wash”. And it wasn’t just people clogging the region’s arteries. A massive surge in the number of cars in the 1950s threatened to overwhelm cities in a “general thrombosis” of teeming roads.

Many planners believed that the answer to the birth of the car-owning democracy lay in filling Britain’s new towns with even more roads. Not Fred Pooley. He proposed building a ‘North Bucks New City’ in which cars would play second fiddle to a high-speed monorail, free at the point of use.

North Bucks New City’s

250,000 residents would live in ‘townships’ of 5,000 people, sited along monorail circuits “like beads on a string”. Each station would be no more than a 15-minute journey

from the centre, and children would be able to cross safely beneath the tracks without dodging traffic.

Pooley’s proposed new city came tantalisingly close to being built – Buckinghamshire county council even declared that it intended to designate 220,000 acres for the project. Yet, in the end, it fell foul of what Ortolano calls “intellectual trends” – one of those being towards car-friendly urban sprawls. Within a few years, North Bucks New City had been replaced by plans for a town that, says Ortolano, “embraced the car by laying down roads”. The town’s name? Milton Keynes. **II** SM



Could monorails have eased traffic gridlock?