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Mothers for Germany: a look at the ideal woman in Nazi propaganda

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Mothers for Germany: A look at the ideal woman in Nazi propaganda

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: History

Program of Study Committee:
Jana Byars, Major Professor
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Kevin Amidon

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the Nazi Party's ideals regarding women in Germany from 1933-1945. It looks at how propaganda was used to foster a desire in women for the continuation of separate spheres, and motherhood as the ultimate expression of womanhood. The goal is to show how the ideal woman, according to propaganda of the Nazi Party, had three stages of life in which she would remain, as best as possible, in the private sphere. These stages are, childhood, single adulthood, and finally, motherhood. This paper studies these stages in reverse order. It starts by examining the pedestal that mothers were put on in Nazi Germany before looking at who the ideal woman would have been to be a German mother, and finally how girls were prepared even in childhood to grow up to be the ideal Nazi woman and mother. To gain an insight into how the party viewed women, this thesis examines many primary sources, including speeches, and posters, but focuses much of its attention on the Nazi women's magazine *Frauen Warte* as well as looking at scholarship already done in the field.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi minister of propaganda gave a speech to the women of Germany six weeks after Hitler took power. It was in celebration of a new women's exhibition in Berlin. He said, "...Men make history, I do not forget that women raise boys to manhood."¹ He continues later in the speech declaring,

Clear and often drastic examples will give thousands of German women reason to think and consider. It is particularly pleasing to us men in the new government that families with many children are given particular attention, since we want to rescue the nation from decline. The Importance of family cannot be overestimated...²

The exhibit was about women in Germany, and Goebbels hoped that women would see in it their role as mothers for the German nation.

In Germany mothers were considered to be the ideal of womanhood. They were essential for the creation of a larger German population. The Nazi Party put women on a pedestal in order to venerate mothers in society. Propaganda aimed at women depicts images of women as happy, smiling mothers surrounded by children. Propaganda told stories of how happy and full life with a gaggle of children around was. Women were praised as being different from men, but even more important because they helped bring about and nurture the next generation of Germans. The propaganda that the Nazi Party directed toward women did not support equality between the sexes in any way. Instead, the party worked to deepen an already prevailing ideology of separate spheres in society.

¹ "Deutsches Frauentum," *Signale der neuen Zeit. 25 ausgewählte Reden von Dr. Joseph Goebbels* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1934), pp. 118-126, Calvin German Propaganda Archive, translated by Randall Bytwerk

² Goebbels, *Deutsches Frauentum*, trans. Bytwerk.

The ideology behind separate spheres became ingrained in the modern European mindset prior to the twentieth century. It was a pan-European phenomenon that dictated a strong division between the genders and their role in society. As the Bourgeoisie became a prominent class in Europe, the ideal of separate spheres became popular. The idea was that there was a domestic sphere separate from the public world that men worked in where the family could relax away from the chaotic world around them. Women were put in charge of this part of life. They kept the home, and raised the children. They were in charge of domesticity. Men however went out into the public sphere of business and politics. In Joan B. Landes' book *Feminism the Public and the Private*, she writes that during the French Revolution women tried to restructure the public sphere so that their interests could be heard but they were promptly and consciously shut out.³ Jürgen Habermas according to Landes, relates the beginnings of separate spheres to the changes in how society was organized and how communication was shifting because of urbanism, capitalist commerce, state administration, and the new policing of subject populations.⁴ Sherry B. Ortner argues that women were kept to the private sphere because the Bourgeoisie saw women as being closer to nature and men as being more in tune with culture. She writes that historically men believed women's bodies and their physical ability to bear children created a closer connection to nature. Men do not have this constant connection to nature and so they are freer to spend time contemplating culture.⁵ This made a separation of spheres where women stayed in the domestic realm raising children ideal for the Victorians.

³Landes, Joan B. *Feminism the Public and the Private*. Oxford University Press, 1998, 143.

⁴ Landes, *Feminism*, 138.

⁵ Ortner, Sherry B, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in Joan B. Landes, *Feminism the Public and the Private*, Oxford University Press, 1998, 28.

The earliest decades of the twentieth century saw a rise in female autonomy for a number of reasons, including women's involvement in the workforce during World War I. Women gained the right to vote and were becoming more active in the political sphere. Many of the women who were able to gain position in political parties and in the government were part of more liberal parties such as the SPD. This new independence was especially personified with the development of the "New Woman" in Weimar Germany. The women who exemplified this ideal were typically more independent and outspoken. They wore more masculine clothing and were more sexually liberated than their mothers. These women worked outside the home, choosing not to settle into the domestic life that was expected of women. They were by no means the majority of women in Weimar society, but they were prevalent enough that they caused anxiety in German society.

The New Woman brought many fears and insecurities to German society. Due to the loss of life in the First World War there was a population shortage in the country. The government felt that the women of Germany should be marrying and having as many children as possible in order to reestablish their country's population.⁶ The women who had taken jobs during the war were viewed as taking jobs away from returning soldiers. Men were afraid that women were becoming too masculine and would not return to a life of submission under a patriarchal home. Many scholars and historians have written about the women of the Weimar Republic and the concept of the New Woman and each one brought something to the discussion of how the New Woman fit into Weimar culture. These scholars believe that while the New Woman was important to the development of

⁶ Mouton, Michelle, and The German Historical Institute Washington D.C., *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk: Weimar and Nazi Family Policy, 1918-1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 36.

female autonomy the majority of society also feared her because she brought with her many changes including a weakening of traditional gender roles. This is part of the reason that the cult of motherhood the Nazi party would create did not cause a commotion in Germany. Many Germans, especially those who allied themselves with the conservative political parties, desired a return to what they thought of as traditional home structures.

Much has been written already on women in the Third Reich. There are a few iconic works that make wonderful overviews of the female experience of Nazi Germany. The earlier studies of women in Nazi Germany focus on the role of women and whether they were victims or perpetrators. Much like *Hitler's Willing Executioners*⁷ and *Ordinary Men*⁸, historians studying women were trying to figure out the extent to which women were culpable in the Nazi atrocities. Claudia Koonz's book *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics*, is one piece that is cited by most historians of women in Nazi Germany since its publication.⁹ Her book published in the 1980s is really the first one to look specifically at women. She tells of women as members of the family and how they managed to take care of their children through the war and tried to manage their children's involvement in the youth programs. Her argument focuses on the hypocrisy of the Nazi party once war begins. When Germany finds itself at war, the women are encouraged to go back to work while the men go off to fight. Koonz writes that for too long historians had dismissed women in Nazi Germany as the passive "other"

⁷ Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Vintage, 1997.

⁸ Browning, Christopher R. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, Harper Perennial, 1998.

⁹ Koonz, Claudia, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics*, First Edition, First Printing edition. St. Martin's Griffin, 1988.

while men of the time were written as being active subjects in their stories.¹⁰ She wanted to change that image of women into an image of women as actors in Nazi Germany. They acted as mothers and as caretakers for their families. They worked outside towards the war effort and they often believed in the Nazi cause. One of the women that Koonz dedicates a great amount of space to is Gertrude Scholz-Klink, an influential woman in the women's branch of the Nazi party. Koonz wants women to be seen as an important part of Nazi society and even as major contributors to the crimes that the Nazi Party committed.

Other historians want to see women as victims of Nazi policies. Michelle Mouton in her book, *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk*, discusses official family policy of both the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany.¹¹ She argues that the Nazi Party policies regarding women and families were reactionary ones. Nazi policy wanted to keep women out of the labor force. The Nazi party was worried about the masculinization of women, but they shifted their policies regarding workingwomen when the war broke out.¹² She writes in her introduction that both the Weimar government and the Nazi Party had family policies that women supported when they were beneficial and evaded when they went against women's interests.¹³ The Nazi Party was working to distinguish itself as being different from the Weimar Republic. Mouton sees women as being victims of Nazi policy instead of as actors in their own right.

¹⁰ Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 3.

¹¹ Mouton, Michelle, and The German Historical Institute Washington D.C., *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk: Weimar and Nazi Family Policy, 1918-1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 36.

¹² Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, 276.

¹³ Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, 4.

Gisela Bock is one who wants to shift the focus away from women and put blame back on the state. She disagrees with Koonz's desire to see women as having agency. Bock argues that the Nazi party was not a maternalist regime at all and that women were victims of the racial policies that the Nazi Party enforced. She wrote about women's reproductive rights and struggles in her article "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany."¹⁴ She argues that too many historians like Koonz focus on women as mothers and do not have enough of an analysis of how racial policy affected women.¹⁵ She spends a great deal of time in her article discussing the forced sterilizations of German women who were not racially fit to be mothers according to Nazi racial policy. Bock argues that the Nazi party wanted to see women as "inferior" and "superior" at the same time.¹⁶

Another book titled *Women in Nazi Germany* by Jill Stephenson describes the changes that women's lives underwent during the Third Reich.¹⁷ Stephenson, like Bock, wants to examine how the state affected the lives of women. She discusses how the Nazi party truly came to invade the private sphere as well as the public part of people's lives. She argues that the state was so patriarchal in nature that it took away ordinary men's power as well as women's. The state became the authority figure in the home, not the husband.¹⁸ Stephenson does not give the same agency to women that Koonz does. Instead, Stephenson sees women in Nazi Germany as being victims of a patriarchal state that did its best to dictate all aspects of life.

¹⁴ Bock, Gisela, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State," *Signs*, The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 8, No. 3, Women and Violence (Spring, 1983), 400-421.

¹⁵ Bock, "Racism and Sexism" 402.

¹⁶ Bock, "Racism and Sexism," 419.

¹⁷ Stephenson, Jill. *Women in Nazi Germany*. Harlow; New York: Longman, 2001.

¹⁸ Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 20

One of the most recent publications about women in the Nazi period is *Hitler's Furies*, written by Wendy Lower. In it Lower argues that historians need to go back to seeing women as Koonz did, as perpetrators in the Nazi atrocities. Her book is a discussion of the women who most supported Hitler and the Nazi policies.¹⁹ It focuses on the women who helped carry out Nazi racial policy in the East. These women that Lower focuses on were killers for the Nazi party who wielded tremendous power as “self proclaimed superior rulers” in the East.²⁰ She wants historians to stop seeing all women in Nazi Germany as part of a group of victims.²¹ Some women were the perpetrators. She shows in her book what happens when a generation of women is raised in a time of mobilization for war, to believe they are superior racially to all others. Lower does not want women to be seen only as victims of the Nazi Party. Many women were fervent supporters of the National Socialist government.

The idea of separate spheres and how well the Nazi Party either encouraged or broke away from the ideology became a topic of discussion in the literature regarding women. In his book, *Women in the Third Reich*, Matthew Stibbe tries to pull together all of the previously known knowledge of the subject into a succinct work.²² He gives a brief historiography and then delves into his discussion on how the twelve years of fascism affected German women in their everyday lives. He writes that for many early feminist historians who wrote about women in Nazi Germany the focus was on extreme separate spheres. More recent historians in his opinion have shifted the historiography toward a more complex image of the time period. They write that there was a difference between

¹⁹ Lower, Wendy, *Hitler's furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*, 2013.

²⁰ Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 6.

²¹ Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 11

²² Stibbe, Matthew, *Women in the Third Reich*. London; New York: Arnold ; Co-published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press, 2003.

the ideal and the reality because of the war effort.²³ He also describes debates about whether the Nazi Party was reactionary or modern in its treatment of women.²⁴ Stibbe argues that the Nazi Party was neither reactionary nor modern; its intentions were elsewhere. The party was more concerned with restructuring society along racial lines than it was with whether women were in the home or out working. He believes that the separate spheres ideology was not what was important to the Nazi Party.

Patrizia Albanese argues in her book, *Mothers of the Nation*, that Nationalism caused many European nations to turn women into breeders.²⁵ Like, Koonz, she chides historians of the twentieth century for leaving the stories of women to “women’s history” and not including it in their discussions of nationalism.²⁶ Women in the Weimar period had touted “Voluntary Motherhood” in the hopes of liberating women from the home, but that changed when the Nazis took power.²⁷ Her book is one of the more recent works on women in German history. She argues that Nationalism played a large part in creating a specific role for women as mothers and that state support for separate spheres was a pan-European movement.

Ute Frevert in her book *Women in German History* writes about equality of the sexes in German history.²⁸ She argues that women had been inferior in German history just as they had been throughout Europe. While women continued to make progress throughout history they struggled against the separate spheres ideology that had become deeply ingrained in German culture. Frevert focuses more on women as laborers in Nazi

²³ Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 2.

²⁴ Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 2.

²⁵ Albanese, Patrizia, *Mothers of the Nation: Women, Families, and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Europe*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, 2006.

²⁶ Albanese, *Mothers of the Nation*, 5.

²⁷ Albanese, *Mothers of the Nation*, 28.

²⁸ Frevert, Ute, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, Translated by Terry Bond, Oxford ; Washington: Bloomsbury Academic, 1990.

Germany and argues that Nazi policy was constantly shifting as the war went on. The Nazi Party campaigned on the promise that they would keep married women out of the workforce, but because of the war the Party had to encourage women to return to work in order to keep the nation functioning.²⁹ The Nazi party wanted a true separation of spheres, but was unable to enforce it, because in the practical world they needed workers. There was a stark difference between the imagined ideal and the reality that the Nazi Party faced.

The question of how the Nazi party changed such a strong step towards a feminist movement into a group of women willing to stay at home and obey is one that still needs discussing. What was the Nazi policy on women's place in society? What constituted the ideal German woman? What rhetoric was used to show and encourage women and girls to live in accordance with the Nazi beliefs? How did women react to this rhetoric? These are the questions that need further exploring in the history of German women under the Nazi regime.

The Nazi party had a very strong propaganda branch and they utilized it. Their messages pulled at the heartstrings of women and in some cases used guilt as a way to force women back into the home. This is a concept that has not been examined as fully as it could be in the literature on women during the Nazi era. The Nazi state platform was inherently anti-feminist and glorified motherhood as the only true calling of "good" German women. The Nazi party had a top down approach to indoctrinating women with their beliefs about the role of women in society and the ideal family using propaganda in the form of magazines, speeches, and posters. For many women life did not change drastically and the new emphasis on motherhood was even welcomed, but for others the

²⁹ Frevert, *Women in German History*, 221-222.

new Germany was difficult to accept. Using a variety of primary sources from the period such as the journal *Frauen Warte*, speeches, and propaganda posters, this paper will address the transformation of the state rhetoric on women and motherhood, and attempt to evaluate women's reaction to this state policy.

The Nazi Women's magazine, *Frauen Warte*, is the source this paper focuses on more than any others. The magazine was in print from 1935-1945. Early on in its publication the magazine was bi-weekly, but when the war started it slowed down to only publishing a few times a month and by 1945 there were only ten issues. The covers have images on them of traditional German women in the countryside, cherub cheeked babies, flowers, or images of the soldiers fighting on the front. Inside the issue are articles on a range of topics from war news, anti-Bolshevik propaganda, home care advice, child rearing, and career advice. There are often poems and little songs scattered throughout as well. Most articles and poems have images to accompany them. Towards the end of the magazine there is usually fashion advice, tips for turning old garments into new ones, and how to sew children's clothes. Sometimes there are cooking articles containing recipes. The advertisements are also in the back of the magazine. These sell things such as Velveeta cheese, baby products and beauty products. Some of the earlier magazines end with a story that continues through a couple of issues. The magazine held news, stories, propaganda, and advice. It was designed just for women and women authored many of the articles. It both glorified women by putting them on a pedestal as mothers and encouraged them to be the kind of women Germany needed to be strong.

Other important sources are speeches given to women, and even by women. The Nazi Party held women's rallies and often speeches from these rallies would be reprinted

in the *Frauen Warte* magazine. Hitler, Goebbels, and Himmler all gave speeches to women reminding them of their desired place in society, in the world of domesticity. They praised women for being strong and maternal and reminded them that the Nazi Party was allowing them to finally be where they wanted to be in life, in the home, instead of forcing them to be out in the world of politics. Women were praised as being self-sacrificing when they did come out and work in the public sphere for the war effort and were reminded that the difficult situation was only temporary.

Posters also give an insight into how the Nazi Party wanted women to be. Many of the posters show women as mothers usually with multiple children surrounding them. Sometimes the posters would be of an entire family, but often they depict only the mother and her children. She is the primary caretaker of the next generation and as such is incredibly important in society. Posters also remind women that they need to be strong, both as mothers, and as women working for the war effort. Women would have to fight for the victory of the German people in their own ways. This paper looks at all of these types of sources in order to better understand Nazi rhetoric regarding women and girls in German society.

The average ideal woman in Nazi Germany had a distinct life cycle. As a child she would attend school with her male peers and after school she participated in the Hitler Youth branch for young girls. When she was finished with her education the next phase of life began. She may work before marrying as a nurse or as a teacher. She may be a secretary in an office setting or help take care of a family business. She may spend her single adult time in one of the Reich Schools for brides where she would learn how to be the best wife and mother possible. The next phase of life for a woman was marriage and

more importantly motherhood. She would have as many children as possible for the Fuhrer while maintaining a happy and comfortable home for her husband. This was the ideal life for a Nazi woman. This paper examines these life stages in reverse order.

Chapter one is focused on the mothering stage of life. This chapter argues that the Nazi Party created of a cult of motherhood in which a woman's worth was measured by her ability to mother. Motherhood was the ideal for German women according to the Nazi party. Mothers were placed on pedestals the very foundation of the German nation. Women were encouraged to have as many children as possible for the Fuhrer. The Nazi party wanted a to grow their "superior" race of Germans. They supported women who had children even if the children were conceived out of wedlock. Rules of morality had to be bent in order to encourage German women to reproduce as quickly as possible. Raising children became a matter of the state. All of life was a battle to the Nazi Party and the home front was an important battle that the women could secure victory for by bearing babies. Having children was a public affair as the state was invested in growing its population.

Chapter two focuses on the single adulthood stage of life. This stage is seen as a transition stage as women are waiting to marry, but it is an important stage in life. The Nazi party focused on instilling National Socialist ideals in women during this stage. This chapter argues that the Nazi party wanted women to be mothers, but in order to be sure that they would be the right kind of mother the Nazi party needed to mold women into the perfect German woman who would raise her children to be a part of what the Nazis believed was the superior race. German women were to be well educated to become wives and mothers for Germany. Women should want to be mothers. If they had to work

their occupations should be ones that had a maternal side to it such as nursing. German women also had to be strong because they were Germany's future. As the war continued women were reminded to be strong for their children and the nation. They took care of the home front and they worked temporarily while the men were away. The ideal woman took all the necessary steps to ensure that she would make a great wife and a great mother. Schools were even set up to help prepare women for their future as mothers. Women needed to act, dress, and behave in a way that reflected National Socialist ideals.

Chapter three looks the first stage of life for a German woman, girlhood. It examines how the Nazi Party engaged young girls in their mission to create a "superior" race of Germans. This chapter argues that German girls were of the utmost importance to the Nazi Party because they would be the future mothers. As such, the state took an active role in their education hoping to mold them into the ideal German woman by the time they reached adulthood. German girls were required to join the League of German Girls and were taught that they were racially superior to others. The Nazi Party wanted to instill their racial beliefs in girls while they were young and their opinions were more malleable because they would be the next mothers for Germany. The Nazi Party needed to make sure that the next generation of German mothers understood their duty to their race. Girls were taught about race and how the Jewish population could not be trusted. It was hoped that the children would learn in school and the youth groups Nazi beliefs and would then in turn help educate their parents. Children were essential for the Party to continue creating a master race.

The Nazi Party needed women to support them and their policies. They could not have a large "racially superior" population without women. They dedicated a lot of

propaganda in the form of speeches, posters, and magazines to showing women how much happier they would be if they were allowed to be in the home as mothers and only work in maternal fields in stead of being forced to participate in the public sphere like they had in the Weimar Republic. All of life was a battle to the National Socialists and the home front was an important battle to win. Everything the Nazi Party wanted would have meant little if they did not have a future German population to continue on their racial policies.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN AS MOTHERS

“The family receives both its outward and inward characteristics through the woman. The mother gives her husband and children their home. The motherly spirit is the source of all that is eternal.”³⁰ Erna Günter writing for *Frauen Warte* reminded women that only they could guarantee the success of the new German state. As wives and mothers they would ensure that the new laws that gave women back their natural duties would succeed.

The Nazi Party had many objectives for the Third Reich, but more than anything the Nazi Party was focused on ensuring that the German “race” would be larger than and superior to any other. The Nazi beliefs on family centered on growing a large population of German “Aryans.” The war on the home front was a war for the cradle. Desirable couples were encouraged to have as many children as possible, while people deemed “inferior” by racial standards were sterilized, often against their will. For those who were encouraged to procreate, there were many incentives placed before them by the German government. Medals of honor were given to women who bore many children. Newlyweds could collect money from the government for starting a family. Homes were founded to teach young women how to be better wives and mothers. Women were of vital importance for the Nazi Party’s desire for a large German race to be achieved. The Party worked hard to ensure the mothers were taken care of in every way they could think of. Women were praised as being honorable and strong for having many children for the

³⁰ Günter, Erna, 1934, *Frauen Warte*, “Wir Frauen im Kampf um Deutschlands Erneuerung,” Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

Fuhrer, they were placed above the rest of society in Nazi rhetoric. Nazi rhetoric and policy regarding mothers culminated in a kind of “cult of motherhood” that praised mothers above all other women as being almost goddess like and vital for the survival of Germany.

Women who did not have multiple children for the country or who questioned the wisdom of those that did were ridiculed as being selfish or unpatriotic. A story was featured in which one woman named Frau Winter, confronts the author and chides her for having so many children already “Now your husband is away and you are alone with seven children!” The author who had all of the children replied curtly that her children were all blessings and that she never felt that it was too much work or that she should have stopped just because it was a lot of work. She then gave examples of other women she knew who had many children, some of whom had to care for their children alone because their husbands were on the front, and all of them felt extremely proud to be helping Germany. She argues, “What would our faith in Eternal Germany mean if mothers were not willing to conceive and sacrifice?”³¹ The author in this article clearly articulates to Frau Winter that she sees it as her patriotic duty to bear children for Germany. She explains that it inspires the German soldiers to fight harder knowing they have children back home to protect. German women must make sacrifices for the war effort and for Germany overall and the most important way to do that is to have children. In the first issue of *Frauen Warte* in 1940 a quote of Hitler’s is cited.

What the man sacrifices for his people, the woman sacrifices in fighting to maintain this people. The man shows heroism on the battlefield, the woman shows it in eternal patient devotion, in ever patient sorrow and endurance.

³¹ 1940, *Frauen Warte*, “Ready to Die Ready to Live” Calvin German Propaganda Archive, Trans. Randall Bytwerk.

Each child that she brings into the world is a battle that she fights for the existence or nonexistence of her people.³²

The battle for the Germany's survival was not only a physical battle against other nations and "races" as the Nazis would say, but a war for the cradle as well. The Nazis wanted women to believe that their bearing children for the Fuhrer was just as important as it was for the men to go to war for him. If women did not have children, the German race would cease to exist and the inferior races would take control of the world.

Mothers were constantly celebrated in Nazi rhetoric. Every year in the Mother's Day issue of *Frauen Warte*, mothers were especially praised. An article in a 1940 issue written by a mother describes all of the good work that the Mothers' Service is doing for women through classes they have set up for mothers. These classes were established in Germany first, but then moved to the Sudetenland and Austria with the goal "to build a stable foundation for motherhood training in the new areas."³³ Motherhood was praised and celebrated, but the Nazis felt that it often times had to be taught. It was important that mothers conform to their way of raising children, which focused on race. Mothers were the "eternal source of blood" and were important for the race. The end of the article exclaims, "The National Socialist state realizes that it has everything to gain when it has the hearts of its mothers."³⁴

The fear of a population shortage had grown as women in the earlier twentieth century had begun to desire autonomy and refrain from marriage. Some historians argue that many women remained single and childless not only out of personal desire but

³² 1940, *Frauen Waete*, "Life Must Win," Calvin German Propaganda Archive, Trans. Randall Bytwerk.

³³ 1940, *Frauen Warte*, "Mothers' Day 1940," Calvin German Propaganda Archive, Trans. Randall Bytwerk.

³⁴ 1940, *Frauen Warte*, "Mothers' Day 1940," Calvin German Propaganda Archive, Trans. Randall Bytwerk.

because there was a shortage of men due to World War I. The new sexuality that the surplus of women seemed to promote worried nationalists since they believed that in order for the German population to rebound, each woman must bear at least three children.³⁵ Not all women believed in motherhood or marriage however. Helene Stöcker, the leader of the League for Protection of Mothers, believed that men and women should be allowed to forgo marriage entirely and love affairs, even long term ones, outside of marriage. She also advocated for a women's ability to choose whether or not she wanted children in a relationship.³⁶ Birth control became an issue during the Weimar Republic and the rise of female autonomy was often cited as the cause much to the dismay of the government at the time. In their opinion stunting the population growth was extremely detrimental to Germany's recovery from war. In 1930 sexual advice centers, that had been set up as early as 1919 by the Berlin Institute of Sexology, began distributing contraceptives. Doctors found that eventually nearly all of their patients asked about birth control.³⁷ Conservatives and the government wanted women to stay at home and have as many children as possible, but women themselves, whether they identified as the New Woman or not, were choosing not to do so. If women were intentionally limiting the number of children they had, then they were better able to assert their independence from the home. Many feared that this would lead to the breakdown of the traditional family and in turn, German society. The Nazi party firmly believed that something had to be done to stop the population decline.

³⁵ Boak, Helen. *Women in the Weimar Republic*. Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press : distributed in the United States exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 200.

³⁶ Boak, Helen, *Women in the Weimar Republic*, 205.

³⁷ Frevert, *Women in German History*, 189.

The Nazi party had a stake in each marriage, and believed that marriage was a public affair that they had a say in. One Nazi Women's Group official said, "Marriage is not merely a private matter, but one which directly affects the fate of the nation at its very roots."³⁸ The state had a vested interest in making sure that young Aryan women only married young Aryan men. The Nazi party even passed laws forbidding marriage between German women and anyone of another race. The race the Nazis were most concerned with in regards to intermarriage was the Jewish "race". Another Nazi official proclaimed, "National Socialism reiterates with crushing conviction that the task of the family is reproduction. For companionate marriage it has nothing but scorn."³⁹ Marriage according to the Nazi Party was about bearing children in order to continue the German race; it was not about marriage or friendship, those things in a marriage were just a bonus but certainly not a requirement. The state encompassed every aspect of German life during the Third Reich, especially the home.

Heinrich Himmler took Hitler's desire for a greater German population and created the Lebensborn. These were places for SS men and their growing families to be taken care of. They also provided a place for single women who were carrying the children of German soldiers to stay. Heinrich Himmler in 1939 ordered the SS men to father more children, and he called on women to set aside their bourgeois moral standards and have children out of wedlock for the good of the country. He told women that the Lebensborn would help them.⁴⁰ If a young woman's parents reacted badly to the news that she was carrying the child of an SS officer out of wedlock she could denounce them

³⁸ Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 28.

³⁹ Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 28.

⁴⁰ Thompson, Larry V, "Lebensborn and the Eugenics Policy of the Reichsfuher-SS" *Central European History* 4, no. 1 (March 1971): 17.

to the authorities and they would be punished accordingly.⁴¹ These Lebensborn homes were created to encourage women to keep their good Aryan babies. However, not every mother who entered one of the maternity homes was allowed to leave with her child. If the doctors or administration found the mother to be “morally unsuitable for motherhood” or did not have the financial support that the state deemed necessary, her child could be taken and given to an adoptive couple the home thought appropriate.⁴² In a letter to General Field Marshal Keitel, Himmler wrote, “Lebensborn leads the campaign against abortion in a positive way; in the Lebensborn homes, which are scattered all over the nation, any German mother of good blood can await in serenity the hour when she commits her life to the nation.”⁴³ In his letter he also writes that these homes will help create an extra 600,000 soldiers when the babies reach adulthood. The Nazi party was strongly pro-natalist.

The Lebensborn project was started in 1935 by Heinrich Himmler in an attempt to further promote Nazi motherhood, and they would later spread to German occupied territories. Himmler wrote in 1926 in his reading list that one of the terrible things in Germany was that women no longer wanted to be mothers. In a speech in 1937, two years after Lebensborn had been created, he said that a nation filled with children would “become a world power” but a nation that was barren would die.⁴⁴ The Nazi party had strong opinions about where women belonged in society. The primary job of a good German woman was to raise as many German children as she possibly could. A large portion of prewar Nazi propaganda was directed towards women, enticing them with

⁴¹ Clark, Anna, *Desire: A History of European Sexuality*. Routledge, 2008, 192.

⁴² Thompson, “Lebensborn”, 15.

⁴³ Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 150.

⁴⁴ Clay, Catrine, and Michael Leapman, *Master Race*. London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1995, 53.

idyllic imagery and financial benefits if they stayed at home and birthed a greater German population. Rallies were sponsored and speeches given specifically to show that the Nazi Party put women on a pedestal as mothers. They needed to prove to the women that the party was not keeping them out of the public sphere because they saw them as inferior, but because they were the most important part of society. Joseph Goebbels gave a speech to a women's rally in which he told the women that German women were the most important part of Germany. They were being kept out of politics and the public sphere because the Nazi party respected them too much to let them be anything but what they were created for and desired.⁴⁵ In another speech directed towards women, Hitler praised women as being the heart of Germany. He told them that there was nothing nobler than being a mother and assigning women any other task would be degrading.⁴⁶ In a letter to General Field Marshal Keitel, Himmler wrote, "Lebensborn leads the campaign against abortion in a positive way; in the Lebensborn homes, which are scattered all over the nation, any German mother of good blood can await in serenity the hour when she commits her life to the nation."⁴⁷ The Nazi party had a mentality that women were required to produce as many "pure" children as possible, and the Lebensborn became the strongest entity in the party to support that position.

While all women were able to apply, Himmler hoped that the SS would be the primary recipients of the Lebensborn care. His hope was that each SS officer would have at least four children for the Reich, but the reality was much different. His men were marrying much later than the average German male, and in 1939 sixty-one percent were

⁴⁵ "German Womanhood," *Signals of the New Era. 25 Selected Speeches of Dr. Joseph Goebbels* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1934), pp. 118-126, Calvin Archive.

⁴⁶ Rupp, Leila J, "Mother of the 'Volk': The Image of Women in Nazi Ideology," *Signs* 3, no. 2 (December 1, 1977) 3.

⁴⁷ Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 150.

bachelors.⁴⁸ Even those that were married were not producing children at the rate that Himmler would have liked. Ninety-three thousand of his married men had only produced one hundred thousand children in 1939, which was barely enough to replace them if they died in war.⁴⁹ The concept of eugenics was important from the beginning of Nazi control, but positive eugenics became increasingly important when more Germans were dying. The desire for a larger population even began to infringe on traditional, conservative beliefs regarding morality.

The Nazi party built their ideas of morality around the Victorian bourgeois morals, but they molded them into something very different. The Party wanted to continue the “Separate Sphere” ideas that had become the prescribed way of life for the Bourgeois in which men were a part of the public sphere of life working and influencing politics, while women stayed at home and cultivated a calm and nurturing environment for their husbands and children. Bourgeois morals dictated that men and women were not to engage in any form of sexual activity outside of marriage, children should be the product of a loving couple that had created a life together. The Nazi party was not as concerned with how the children came about, only that they were brought forth in large numbers for the party to mold.

The women who sought care in the Lebensborn, even in Germany, did not need to be married; they only needed to be “racially pure.” The Nazi party was accused of destroying family values by promoting sexual relations outside of marriage, but Himmler said that, “I do not find it right that some poor young girl expecting an illegitimate child

⁴⁸ Thompson, “Lebensborn” 63.

⁴⁹ Thompson, “Lebensborn,” 63.

is rejected by everyone when she has only done what her nature demanded.”⁵⁰ Dr. Gregor Ebner, the first chief medical officer of the program, wrote that, “We can’t preach morals about these things. What helps the race is good and what harms the race is bad.”⁵¹

Himmler, and the others who promoted the Lebensborn fully expected the majority of the women who came to them would be pregnant outside of marriage, but so long as the child born from the liaison would benefit the race, they did not care if it was conceived in marriage, premarital or extramarital. In actuality, Himmler encouraged his SS officers to have extramarital affairs in the hopes that the relations would result in genetically superior children. Himmler condemned what he called “Bourgeois morality” believing that it was what keeping Germany from replenishing its population. He argued that confining sex to marriage made it difficult for young Germans to bear children for Germany since so many had to wait for financial security before marrying.⁵² Society struggled to accept single motherhood as moral though. When a thirteen-year-old girl became pregnant and her parents scorned her, she told them after her delivery that she was only acting in accordance with the Furher’s wishes and they should be proud that she was doing her part.⁵³ If parents reacted poorly to the news that their daughter was carrying the child of an SS officer out of wedlock she could denounce them to the authorities and they would be punished accordingly.⁵⁴

The Nazi party had to find a way to encourage women to have children, even outside of marriage, without allowing them to become scorned in society. They created the slogan “Bear a Child for the Fuhrer” and created new laws to help improve the social

⁵⁰ Clay, Catrine, and Michael Leapman, *Master Race*, 57.

⁵¹ Clay, Catrine, and Micheal Leapman, *Master Race*, 57.

⁵² Thompson, “Lebensborn,” 57.

⁵³ Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, 215.

⁵⁴ Clark, *Desire*, 192.

standing of unwed mothers and their illegitimate children. Schoolteachers were forbidden from treating illegitimate children any differently and new tax laws allowed “racially pure” single mothers to pay the same reduced tax as widows.⁵⁵

There was, however, another side to Nazi policy regarding single women. Only women who were of the highest pedigree would be allowed to have their children if they conceived outside of marriage. Single mothers, who had too many children, especially if they all had different fathers, were sterilized with the belief that they were morally inferior to those women who were able to find themselves in a stable home.⁵⁶ The Nazis hoped to separate the idea of “bearing children” from “raising children” with the Lebensborn project.⁵⁷ Women were encouraged to bear as many children as possible, but family units were still prized as the best situation for children to be in. Many children born to the Lebensborn would later be placed within SS homes so that a family, not a single mother, could raise them. Another reason Himmler gave for taking children from their biological parents was that the SS would be able to raise them to be better Nazis.⁵⁸

The Lebensborn originated in Germany, but was later spread to occupied territory, primarily Norway. The Nazi Party believed that there were hundreds of thousands of “racially German” people living in the territory they conquered. These people may not have practiced Germanic traditions, or even spoken German, but the Party considered them German if they looked Aryan. By the end of the war there would be six homes in Germany, one in Austria, nine in Norway, one in Belgium and one in France.⁵⁹ While the program was in operation roughly 7,500 babies were born in Germany and another

⁵⁵ Mouton, Michelle, *From Nurturing the Nation*, 215.

⁵⁶ Mouton, Michelle, *From Nurturing the Nation*, 217.

⁵⁷ Mouton, Michelle, *From Nurturing the Nation*, 216.

⁵⁸ Clay, Catrine, and Micheal Leapman, *Master Race*, 135.

⁵⁹ Mouton, Michelle, *From Nurturing the Nation* 215.

10,000 were born in the Norwegian institutions. The institutions were important for encouraging soldiers at war to procreate without the responsibility for taking care of the children. The state understood that these “genetically superior” soldiers had more important matters on their minds than caring for the women they impregnated, but the state needed the offspring.⁶⁰ While Himmler attempted to implement these homes in multiple occupied territories, Norway was their only success story outside of Germany itself. Norwegian women who entered the program did not have to prove “racial purity” as all of the Norwegian population was considered important for the Aryan race. However, within the homes there were different levels of care given to those who proved to be genetically purer. The tests to determine genetics were done in secret since the Nazis did not want women to fear coming to the Lebensborn.⁶¹

The women who entered the Lebensborn had to prove their racial purity and that of the child’s father. One study showed that only forty percent of the women who applied were approved to join. In the first three years the seven homes in Germany only took in 653 mothers.⁶² The majority of the women who came to the homes were not pregnant by SS men. During the entire war only about two hundred of the babies born in the German homes were fathered by the SS.⁶³ The rest of the babies were fathered by regular German soldiers and that made it more difficult for women to prove their children’s racial pureness. Some of the women had difficulty proving the racial purity of their partners

⁶⁰ Henry, Clarissa, Marc Hillel, and & 1 more, *Of Pure Blood*, Translated by Eric Mossbacher. New York: McGraw-Hill, n.d., 82.

⁶¹ Olsen, Kare in Ericsson, Kjersti, and Eva Simonsen, *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy*. Oxford, UK ; New York, NY, USA: Bloomsbury Academic, 2005, 22.

⁶² Thompson, “Lebensborn,” 66.

⁶³ Thompson,. “Lebensborn,” 66.

because many of the children conceived during this time were by one night encounters and the women never learned the true identities of their German lovers.

Once the mothers gave birth to their babies there were different options for how to proceed within the program. Himmler hoped that most of the women would chose to leave their children to the Lebensborn so that they could later be adopted by SS men and their families, thus ensuring that they were raised to be excellent National Socialists.⁶⁴ The children were in theory not the mothers' children; they belonged to the Fuhrer and the Lebensborn. The other path that was most hoped for was marriage between the German soldier and the mother.

The Nazi slogan "After the victory on the battlefield comes the victory in the cradle" best describes the feeling Himmler had about intermarriage so long as it was between people of "good blood."⁶⁵ Even in occupied territories, such as Norway, marriage was the preferred outcome when babies were conceived out of wedlock. There were occupied countries that were considered just as Aryan as Germany. In *Frauen Warte* there are several articles that describe how Aryan the Norwegians and Dutch are and how Germans should welcome their culture and idyllic life into modern German culture because they are closely related.⁶⁶ The images in one article depict a smiling Dutch child wearing traditional clothing similar to the traditional clothing German children would have worn. There are women lying on a hillside with a windmill in the background and a third picture shows women hanging laundry out to dry. These images conjure up similarities in the way good Germans and Dutch live showing that they are all

⁶⁴ Mouton, Michelle, *From Nurturing the Nation*, 216.

⁶⁵ Olsen, in *Children of World War II*, 19.

⁶⁶1941, *Frauen Warte*, "Holländisches Leben zwischen gestern und morgen." University of Heidelberg Archive.

a part of one pure race that is tied to the idyllic countryside. The following article in the magazine is one encouraging young, unmarried German women to move to Norway to help in the Lebensborn. It describes the homes that had been set up for mothers in Norway and touted that counseling centers had already been established to help new mothers. German women are reminded that while Germans had been living in Norway for many years, it was not until the National Socialists took power that the Germans and the Norwegians were able to have a “real reunion.”⁶⁷ Not all of the children born in these homes were “perfect” specimens and thus were not up to par with Nazi racial beliefs. Those children born in the program with disabilities were euthanized with or without the consent of the mother.⁶⁸ The main purpose of the Lebensborn was not to produce as many German babies as possible, but to produce as many healthy “perfect” German babies. The Nazi party had no use for anyone who was not considered “fit.”

Some historians in the past have argued that the Lebensborn were “stud farms” created by Himmler in an attempt to breed his SS officers with as many women as possible. Marc Hillel, and Clarissa Henry are two such scholars who wrote a book together entitled *Of Pure Blood*.⁶⁹ In their book they use Himmler’s creation of a separate registrar known as the Steinhöring II as evidence that the sole intention of the Lebensborn was to breed children as one might breed pedigree puppies. This registrar was created so that birth records would stay within the SS offices instead of being sent back to the women’s home towns as was customary when a single mother gave birth. Since many of the SS fathers were already married, it would have caused a scandal for

⁶⁷ Reimer, Lydia, 1941, *Frauen Warte*, “Deutsche Frauenarbeit in den Niederlanden.” University of Heidelberg Archive.

⁶⁸ Olsen, Kare in *Children of World War II*, 17.

⁶⁹ Henry, Clarissa, Marc Hillel, and & 1 more, *Of Pure Blood*. Translated by Eric Mossbacher. New York: McGraw-Hill, n.d.

the birth records to be sent back to where their wives and families were already living.⁷⁰ Rumors spread through the villages where the homes were set up that young, unmarried women would come to the home and walk through the gardens, sometimes accompanied by an SS officer and months later she would give birth staring at a portrait of Hitler believing she was doing her duty for her country.⁷¹ More than three quarters of the girls who gave birth in the German Lebensborn were part of the BDM or Reich Labor service and were only fifteen to sixteen years old. In the correspondence of these women they give no indication that they hold sentimental feelings for the fathers of their children, only that sexual intercourse resulting in children was a duty they had to the state.⁷²

Certainly, some of the women who came to the Lebensborn did so after intentionally becoming pregnant by German officers in order to do their duty, but not all of the women who came through the program had those motives. Most historians today argue that the Lebensborn was created to curb abortion and encourage Germans to procreate, but not to help them find their sexual partners. Kare Olsen in an essay that became part of the book *Children of World War II* claims that, “There is, however, no evidence for such assumptions either in Germany nor in Norway or in any other country where the Lebensborn was active. The Lebensborn organization was an instrument in the Nazi racial policy and a supplier of mother- and childcare for racially selected persons.”⁷³ Himmler was severely concerned with the rising number of abortions in Germany prior to the opening of the Lebensborn. He believed that the half million or so abortions that were occurring each year were costing the country hundreds of thousands of “biologically

⁷⁰ Henry, Clarissa, Marc Hillel, *Of Pure Blood*, 77.

⁷¹ Henry, Clarissa, Marc Hillel, *Of Pure Blood*, 78.

⁷² Henry, Clarissa, Marc Hillel, *Of Pure Blood*, 81.

⁷³ Olsen, Kare, in *Children of World War II*, 16.

valuable children” and it needed to be stopped if Germany was going to rise to the top.⁷⁴ Larry V. Thompson, another historian opposed to the “stud farm” theory cites the Nuremberg Trial court case known as “RuShA Case” in which four SS were prosecuted for facilitating an environment in which illicit conception could take place, but there was not enough evidence and the case was thrown out.⁷⁵ Billing the Lebensborn as a stud farm creates even more scandal and was a way to get people interested and to sell scholarship, but most modern historians argue that there is no evidence to prove they were any more than maternity homes with extremely harsh standards for admittance. There is no denying that Himmler wanted more babies to be born to German families, and openly condoned sex outside of marriage to achieve that goal, but he did not provide partners for those who wanted to “do their part” for Germany.

All German women who were of the “proper” race were encouraged to procreate and the majority that did so outside of the Lebensborn projects. These women were just as glorified as those within the homes as the mothers of Germany. In a 1942 issue of *Frauen Warte* there is an article that is written more as a story that is meant to praise the women who bore children. The story is one of an unidentified German woman who comes into a hospital to give birth looking slightly nervous and afraid. The nurses smile at her and ask for her husband’s occupation to which she replies, “Fallen in the East.” At hearing she is a widow the nurses “would like to bow before this expectant mother...carrying her fate with proud dignity.” The woman gives birth to a son whom she names after her deceased husband. The entire story worships this woman who lost her soldier husband and continues on to give her all to her country. She gives Germany not

⁷⁴ Thompson “Lebensborn,” 57.

⁷⁵ Thompson “Lebensborn,” 71.

just any child, but a son. Towards the end of the story the narrator exclaims, “I’m grateful that I live in this time, which also makes us women so strong and so proud.... And if a tear wets my cheek, it holds a glimmer of happiness, because now I am admitted into the circle of those who pass the torch of eternity of a people into the ranks of German mothers.”⁷⁶ Women were often described as “passing on a torch” or living through their children who will “carry on the torch.” The rhetoric of the magazine reminds women that the German race must continue on no matter how difficult life becomes as war continues.

The war would be lost if it was not for women doing their part in bearing children for the country. An article titled “Life Must Win” was published in *Frauen Warte* in 1940 reminding women that self-pity over the situation during war would not help the soldiers win. Instead, it was the women whom were “in the service of maintaining and extending the life of our people” that could help Germany win the war.⁷⁷ The article proclaimed that winning a political or military victory was not enough to guarantee the future of Germany or the Fuhrer’s work. Women would be the decisive factor.

The fate of her people is determined by her attitude toward life, in her will to happiness and her desire for children. Our soldiers protect Germany and all that we have accomplished. But it is our women who are the foundation of Germany’s future, who build it stone by stone through fine German children.⁷⁸

If Germany was to win the war against Bolshevism and the Jewish population women had to do their part and produce children for the Fuhrer.

A poem featured in the magazine describes how Germans were supposed to feel about their children, especially their sons. They knew that their time would end, but their

⁷⁶ Henckel, Liselotte, 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “Des Lebens ewige Wiederkehr” University of Heidelberg Archive.

⁷⁷ 1940, *Frauen Warte*, “Life Must Win,” Calvin German Propaganda Archive, Trans. Randall Bytwerk.

⁷⁸ 1940, *Frauen Warte*, “Life Must Win,” Calvin German Propaganda Archive, Trans. Randall Bytwerk.

children would carry on into the bright future that they were creating for Germany. The poem is titled “My Boy” and it focuses on how important this new little boy is for not just the father, but also the country as a whole. “Still, you are yet small. How could you know That you are a branch on a large tree...But when you understand, Then I will know That in each heartbeat in you and me That keeps us living, Also flows drop of eternity.”⁷⁹ Children would carry on the German race and would be the beneficiaries and care takers of Nazi policies. It was important therefore for women to have as many children as possible.

A woman wrote an article for *Frauen Warte* titled “Confessions of a Mother” in which she describes the wonders that come with having a large family. She had five children and wrote that before she had a brood of children surrounding her, she was a thankless and unsatisfied person. Even after having her first child, a boy, she was not fully satisfied in her life. She writes that she wishes she could call the other women mothers who have only one child, but no one can be satisfied until they have a small healthy crowd around them. “We draw joy and strength from the life and prosperity of our children.”⁸⁰ She continues on to say that she now knows what purpose women serve in the world “so that we can exist in honor.”⁸¹ The author writing directly to women reminds them that having many children is the noble and honorable thing for a good German woman to do. She recognizes that having such a large family scares some women and to that she replies, “Oh, I just wish I could show all the women who are afraid of a big blessing of children... Our little house on Main, our garden, and our

⁷⁹ *Frauen Warte* 1938 Trans. Bytwerk

⁸⁰ Schmalfutz, Hannes, 1942 *Frauen Warte*, “Confessions of A Mother” University of Heidelberg Archive.

⁸¹ Schmalfutz, Hannes, 1942 *Frauen Warte*, “Confessions of A Mother” University of Heidelberg Archive.

children, that is our world in which we feel comfortable and happy.”⁸² She finds her happiness and peace in her home with her children and she encourages the women reading the article to do the same for themselves and for the country.

Another Mother’s Day article appeared in 1942 in which a man named Josef Magnus Wehner describes the amazing woman he was blessed to have as a mother. He acknowledges all that mothers have to sacrifice, especially during wartime. His mother had four sons who entered the military and “a mother’s heart cannot forget, because it is always a part of her own life that he offers on the field of battle for the life of the whole people.”⁸³ Wehner writes to women telling them that,

Fate has willed it that this war is one of life and death, not only a war of men. The longer it lasts, the deeper it intervenes in the lives of the people, the more urgent is the call for the women. . . . May your great motherly heart, you women, be an example to us all; indelibly as deep as the leader of this new example, I know of my own mother; you have eternal thanks!⁸⁴

Wehner reminds women that as mothers they will sacrifice. Their sons will go off to war and may never come home, but it is for the good of Germany and the state will forever be grateful for what they give up for the glory of the fatherland. In another article in 1942 a woman writes a letter to her son who would be finishing up his training soon and would be heading off to war. She wrote that she is thankful she can say “God Bless” as she sends him off to war proudly.⁸⁵ Women had children for Germany, for the Fuhrer. They knew that their sons would be raised to fight for her protection and their daughters would grow up to be wives and mothers just as they were. Children did not belong to their

⁸² Schmalfutz, Hannes, 1942 *Frauen Warte*, “Confessions of A Mother” University of Heidelberg Archive.

⁸³ Wehner, Josef Magnus, 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “The Great Maternal Heart,” University of Heidelberg Archive.

⁸⁴ Wehner, Josef Magnus, 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “The Great Maternal Heart,” University of Heidelberg Archive

⁸⁵ 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “A Mother Writes to Her Son,” University of Heidelberg Archive.

parents instead children were something that German women from good racial stock gave to the country in order to help build and sustain the German nation.

In order to help encourage women to have many children, the National Socialist Party began to implement governmental measures to aid with the transition that occurred when a new baby arrived. The National Socialist People's Welfare Association was described in an article to be setting up a maternity care program for women. The article touts that while there were already countless legal and voluntary measures in place to ensure comprehensive care of mothers and children, there would soon be a further expansion. It was the hope of the NSV to provide care for women in the weeks before and after the birth of a child and would not be restricted to families in financial distress, but would be open to all German women.⁸⁶ When more women began to work in the factories once war began, the Party began to work on legislation to protect working mothers. An article in *Frauen Warte* describes the history of legal protection for working mothers in Germany. It writes that on May 17, 1942, a new Maternity Protection Act was passed and would override the previous maternity law beginning on July 1. The preamble of the law state that the greatest achievement of the German woman is the birth of healthy children and that can only be accomplished when she is protected under the law.⁸⁷ The law was to ensure that workingwomen received financial compensation while they were away from work so that women would not return to work too quickly after the birth of a child.

Not all the racial policies put in place fell under what is often coined “positive eugenics” there were also many “negative eugenic” policies enacted in the Third Reich.

⁸⁶ Altgelt Ingeborg, 1941, *Frauen Warte*, “Die NSV-Helferin in der Mutterschaftschilfe,” University of Heidelberg Archive.

⁸⁷ 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “Das neue Mutterschutzgesetz.” University of Heidelberg Archive.

Abortion was prohibited in Nazi Germany, and marriage counseling centers were replaced by facilities to educate couples on eugenics. The Nazi Party did not believe in abortion. The Lebensborns as well as many other initiatives created to encourage women to have children were done so in order to curb women's desire for abortions. The punishments for breaking the laws against birth control became increasingly severe. Arrests for doctors performing abortions soared, and most of those that were arrested were female physicians.⁸⁸ Women did not make up the majority of physicians, they were actually in the minority; they were targeted more than males in investigations against doctors. These women were the complete antithesis of the Nazi ideal for women. They were working outside of the home in a prestigious position, and they were helping women control how many pregnancies came to fruition. As the Nazi Party gained control, these women were forced out of their positions.

While Nazi ideology encouraged large families, there were laws put in place to hinder the creation of children that the Nazi party found inferior. In 1933 the sterilization laws were passed instructing the new Hereditary Health Court on who must be sterilized and who must submit the applications to have someone sterilized. Within the law itself it states "the sterilization must be carried out even against the wishes of the person to be sterilized unless that person was solely responsible for the application."⁸⁹ People could apply for their own sterilization, but most of the time it was neighbors, or sometimes even family who denounced people with genetic diseases or physical deformities for sterilization. The picture shown is an advertisement for the Nazi monthly magazine "The New People" and it reminds Germans that the "genetically ill person will cost our

⁸⁸ Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 186.

⁸⁹ Moeller, Robert G, *The Nazi State and German Society: A Brief History with Documents*, Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010, 89.

people's community 60,000 marks over his lifetime. Citizens, that is your money."⁹⁰ The National Socialist Party believed that certain people were worthy of being called German and others were not. In order to enforce these beliefs they had to convince the populace.

The Nazis used many different mediums to convince women that being mothers was ultimately what they wanted and that



the burgeoning movement for female autonomy was something that led them astray from their true desires. The National Socialist Party needed as many German women to have children as possible in order to help create and ensure the success of a “superior” race. As in all aspects of Nazi culture, race was important and the German race was considered to be above all others. The women who were of good racial stock were not only strong in blood, but looked, worked, and composed themselves in a certain way. The ideal German woman was a number of things, but each aspect was important and was a matter of state. The Nazi party wanted to make sure that women were doing their part for Germany and that meant that they were in the home, not out in the workforce exerting their independence like the women in the previous generation and been trying to do. In order to do this, they had to ensure that German women would follow the lifestyle and belief

⁹⁰ Permission of Randal Bytwerk, German Propaganda Archive, Calvin College.

systems that the Party approved of. It would not do for women to have many children and raise them to oppose the Party's system. The Nazi party used a number of different means to show the women of Germany not only how to be the perfect mother, but also how to be the ideal woman.

CHAPTER 3

THE IDEAL NAZI WOMAN

German women have been transformed in recent years. They are beginning to see that they are not happier as a result of being given more rights but fewer duties. They now realize that the right to be elected to public office at the expense of the right to life, motherhood, and her daily bread is not a good trade.⁹¹

Joseph Goebbels spoke to a group of women reminding them that the autonomy they had been seeking in previous years was not fulfilling to them as women. Their primary role was that of mother. The Nazi party needed women to be at home. They wanted to show women that the ideal German woman was nothing like the “New Woman” that had been demonized in propaganda. Women wanted to be at home; they belonged in the private sphere that they had created. The Nazi Party used rhetoric and propaganda to instill in German women the desire to be the homemaker that the Nazi Party wanted them to be.

The New Woman was the image of women that the Nazi Party was working against. They did not want women to continue on a path towards independence and political equality. “Modern woman refuses to lead the life of a lady and a housewife” Elsa Herrmann spoke to a group of women in 1929, only four years before the Nazi party came to power. Her speech continued with her saying that a woman’s purpose in life had previously been her children. Her job was to ensure her son was a capable worker and her daughters were married off. “Then she collapsed completely, like a good racehorse collapses when it has maintained its exertions up to the very last minute...” Herrmann

⁹¹ Goebbels, “Deutsches Frauentum.” Calvin German Propaganda Archive, Trans. Randall Bytwerk.

argued that the New Woman focused on the present and on herself first.⁹² This speech by Herrmann is indicative of the changing position women had in Weimar society prior to the National Socialists' rise to power. The woman who lived only for her family and devoted all that she had to others was to be pushed into the past. The new modern woman was devoted to her own self before others and went about her life doing what was best for her and her alone.

Germany was beginning to loosen in matters of culture. It was becoming increasingly known for its progressive literature, music, film and overall culture. With that came the idea of the "New Woman" that was also taking hold. Women were working outside of the home in ever-growing numbers, and they were asserting their independence on the political stage as well. The New Woman was taking hold in Weimar Germany. She was more openly sexual, she was independent, and she was no longer tied to her family. Germany was considered progressive in women's rights giving them the right to vote before the United States and France. Women were breaking free politically and were finding ways to do so financially as well.⁹³ In his book *Weimar Germany: Promises and Tragedy*, Eric D Weitz describes the New Woman. He calls her the "most renowned symbol of the sexual revolution of the 1920's." The New Woman cut her hair short, was athletic, slender, and often wore men's clothes. He continues on quoting Else Herman as saying the war had "laid upon them the responsibility of their own fate."⁹⁴ There was controversy over the ideology of the New Woman. Many men were uncomfortable with women stepping out as independent, especially in their sexuality.⁹⁵

⁹² Moeller, *The Nazi State*, 33-34.

⁹³ Moeller, *The Nazi State*, 5

⁹⁴ Weitz, Eric D, *Weimar Germany: Promises and Tragedy*, Princeton University Press, 2013, 307.

⁹⁵ Wietz, *Weimar Germany*, 308.

The characterization of women in film and literature was sexually promiscuous and experimenting. Women's economic independence was seen as leading to social independence and illicit activity. Moeller agrees with this saying that while these new ideas of female autonomy excited some, it frightened others.⁹⁶ Not all women lived as the New Woman; many continued to stay wives and mothers. The important part of the ideology of the New Woman was not how many women took part, but that they had the opportunity to take their independence.

Women's roles in Weimar Germany changed, as they became more independent and especially in matters of finances. With the development of the typewriter, women gained access to the professional world for the first time. While many of the women who entered the workforce were becoming secretaries and typists, they were still a vital part of the workforce. Women working outside of the home began to hear more about the political world as well. These women started taking part in the political process. The German Nationalists People's Party (DNVP) particularly saw a rise in female participants, and even politicians. The women that were involved were heavily interested in topics that were stereotypically feminine in nature, such as national morality, and family values.⁹⁷ Even though the platforms that many women were running on and supporting were seen as feminine issues, these women were still breaking from their traditional roles when they entered politics at all. Weimar Germany had a place for women in the public sphere.

Even with all of the hype surrounding the New Woman, she was only a small percentage of the female population. The majority of women and girls were still being

⁹⁶ Moeller, *The Nazi State*, 5.

⁹⁷ Scheck, Raffael, "Women on the Weimar Right: The Role of Female Politicians in Deutschnationale Volkspartei (DNVP)" *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 4 (October, 2001): 2.

prepped for marriage and motherhood. The government in Weimar Germany was still doing its very best to keep traditional gender roles alive. The Weimar government worked to ensure the gender roles remained traditional by creating policy that favored family, and encouraged women to remain housewives if possible. The Weimar government felt that matters of procreation were far too important to be left to the individual.⁹⁸ The German Civil code mandated that husbands were the head of the household and should make all major decisions regarding the family while wives were to manage the common household.⁹⁹ Motherhood was given special care and consideration by the government under Article 19 of the constitution, but it was the child and not the mother who would receive the majority of the attention.¹⁰⁰ There were even women within the government who helped to promote these types of programs. These new doors that women were opening and exploring would soon be closed to them with the rise of a new political regime.

In 1933 the National Socialist Party came to power in Germany. They ran on a platform that was inherently anti-feminist, and yet as Hitler proudly touted, women comprised a majority of the votes they received. The Nazis had their own version of feminism that prized motherhood above all callings for women, and asked for national servitude instead of personal desires for their female population. According to the Nazi party, the ideal German woman was well dressed, educated, a hard worker, nurturing, and above all a mother. The National Socialist platform in its relation to their female population really comes to a cult of motherhood. Hitler envisioned a Germany in which men were the strong leaders who took care of business both at home and abroad while

⁹⁸ Mouton, *From Nurturing the Natio*, 156.

⁹⁹ Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic*, 225.

women worked inside the home, breeding the master race. Women were to be subservient, and mothers to a new generation of genetically superior warriors for the German race. The Nazi party preached that women who entered the workforce during World War I had taken jobs away from men. They were trying to take man's place in the public sphere. In reality women did not displace men in the workforce, instead they had taken up the jobs left empty because so many men did not return from war. It did not matter if what the Nazi party said was true or fabricated at the time, it only mattered to them that they made people believe it.¹⁰¹ The Nazis needed the German people to believe that there were fewer jobs for men because of working women so that they would support the laws the party wanted to put in place ensuring women would stay home and have babies.

While women were told they needed to be at home, Nazi Party also put women on a sort of pedestal. This was a key part of Nazi tactics. When the Party began to use propaganda to glorify women and give them a place of honor in society, they did so with the intent to take away much of the autonomy and independence that women had been working for. The National Socialists praised women as being essential for the future of Germany. They proclaimed women to be of vital importance, and yet women were not allowed to think independently anymore. Before the Nazis came to power, there were one hundred and eleven women serving in the Reichstag. Many of them represented parties to the left of the National Socialists on the political spectrum.¹⁰² The Nazi party wanted these women out of politics, but they also could not alienate the female half of the population. In order to convince women that they had no place in the public sphere, they

¹⁰¹ Gupta, Charu. "Politics of Gender: Women in Nazi Germany." *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 17 (April 27, 1991): 4.

¹⁰² Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 16.

needed to convince women that they had a much more significant role to play in society, a role only they could take on: motherhood.

During the early years of the Third Reich, rallies were used to indoctrinate the people of Germany. Speeches were given to thousands of women at The National Socialist Women's Organization and others similar to it. In one speech given by Hitler in 1934, women were told "We feel it is not appropriate when woman forces her way into a man's world, into his territory; instead we perceive it as natural when these two worlds remain separate."¹⁰³ He continues later with a story.

A woman once said to me: "You must see to it that women get into the parliament, because only they can ennoble it." "I do not believe," I replied, "that we should ennoble something that is inherently bad. And the woman who gets caught in this parliamentary machinery will not ennoble it; instead it will dishonor her. I do not want to leave something to women that I intend to take away from men."¹⁰⁴

Hitler was very honest about his feelings toward women being involved in politics. He spoke to women about how women and men would fight hand in hand in order to bring about a better, stronger Germany, but each gender has its own place in that battle.¹⁰⁵ In 1935 Hitler discussed women in another speech saying

When our opponents say: you degrade women by assigning them no other task than that of childbearing, then I answer that it is not degrading to women to be a mother. On the contrary, it is her greatest honor. There is nothing nobler for a woman than to be the mother of the sons and daughters of the people.¹⁰⁶

Once again, Hitler is praising motherhood as the highest calling for women, and reminding them that the Nazi party believes them to be important. Hitler was not the only leading Nazi who spoke directly to women about their place in society.

¹⁰³ Moeller, *The Nazi State*, 80.

¹⁰⁴ Moeller, *The Nazi State*, 81

¹⁰⁵ Moeller, *The Nazi State*, 82

¹⁰⁶ Rupp, "Mother of the 'Volk'" 3.

During the opening of a women's exhibition in Berlin in 1933, Joseph Goebbels took time to speak to women about the Nazi party's beliefs regarding womanhood. He told the women in the room that their job was to raise little boys to manhood, and that was important because men make history. He praises women throughout his speech and then says

We have kept women out of the parliamentary-democratic intrigues of the past fourteen years in Germany not because we do not respect them, but because we respect them too much. We do not see women as inferior, but rather as having a different mission, a different value, than that of the man. Therefore we believed that the German woman, who more than any other in the world, is a woman in the best sense of the word, should use her strength and abilities in other areas than the man.¹⁰⁷

Goebbels flatters women. He praises them over and over again as “special” and “strong” in his speech. When discussing women and their abilities he, along with the other top Nazi officials often used flattery and compliments. By praising women and their “inherent” attributes that separated them from men, the Nazis were luring women away from the previous feminist beliefs. The use of words such as “respect” and “strong” give women a feeling of power and importance, even when the other words surrounding them tell them very openly that women are not wanted in public discourse or society.

Both Hitler and Goebbels in their speeches give women a role in society. They do not tell their people that women are less than men, or that their abilities are not as important. Instead, they tell women that they are different than men and that is something to be celebrated. They play into women's pride using words such as “vital” and “important.” The Nazi party made sure that in all of their propaganda directed towards women they did not give the impression that they believed women to be less than men,

¹⁰⁷ “German Women,” *Signals of the New Era. 25 Selected Speeches of Dr. Joseph Goebbels* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1934), pp. 118-126, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

only different. The men of the party did not truly believe this though, or they would have allowed women to run the women's branch of the party without interference. Gertrud Scholtz-Klink was only allowed to keep command because she took orders from the men in the party without questioning too much. Gertrud Scholtz-Klink was one woman who chose to hold onto her power by allowing men to think they were in control of the women's branch of the party. She gave numerous speeches like the one referenced above to convince women of their special role in the Third Reich. Other women, such as Guida Diehl, a politician, and writer, lost their positions within the Nazi party when they refused to give up control to the men's organizations.¹⁰⁸

Male Nazi officials were not the only ones trying to indoctrinate women with the ideology of motherhood above all professions for their gender. There were women in the party who maintained deep feelings of connection to this Nazi rhetoric. A speech given by Gertrud Scholtz-Klink was printed in a 1936 issue of *Frauen Warte*; the speech was titled "To Be German is to Be Strong." In her speech she said that the National Socialist Movement sees women and men as equals in bringing about Germany's future. They are just as vital to the success of the state and the race as men. However, "Women should first care for those who need her help as mothers of the nation." She openly condemns the feminism of the past saying "Empty intellectual thinking or a superiority complex have never saved a people." Not only does Scholtz-Klink tell women that they should not be pursuing their own interests, or education, but she uses guilt as a way to subjugate women once more. Speaking of motherhood she says during the period of 1918-1933 or the Weimar period, the term motherhood was robbed of its meaning. Children were seen as a burden, a sacrifice. Women had forgotten how to "subordinate themselves to the law

¹⁰⁸ Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 81.

of life.” Women should not be living selfishly, but in service to others as the “Führer’s little helpers.”¹⁰⁹ Scholtz-Klink in this speech was speaking directly to women. She herself was working outside the home, within the Nazi party, but she believed that other women did not belong in the public sphere.

Gertrud Scholtz-Klink was a leader of the Nazi Women’s Organization. In 1943 an article was published in the women’s magazine discussing the accomplishments of the organization. It says that the organization was founded on February 24, 1934 with the purpose of shaping the woman’s role in the political world and her place in Nazi Society. It was meant to help bring all of the women in Germany together in order to better meet their needs. The article boasts that in 1943 the Women’s Organization had touched every part of Germany and had begun to spread to places such as Romania, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland, Slovakia, and the General Government.¹¹⁰ This organization helped establish the Reich School for Brides, and other classes for women to attend to be trained in the domestic fields. Along with the article are multiple photographs of women working in fields the Nazi party deemed acceptable for women such as teaching children, and nursing. There is also a photograph of seven women crowding around a table watching as another woman shows them the proper way to swaddle and infant. The caption above it reads “...the women receive modern education about the care and education of children.”¹¹¹ While the article praises and calls Scholtz-Klink a true leader for her contribution to German society, it focuses on what the

¹⁰⁹ “Be German - means to be strong. Speech of the Reich Women's Leader Gertrud Scholtz-Klink at the New Year,” *N.S. Frauen-Warte* 4 (1936), 501-502, Calvin Propaganda Archive.

¹¹⁰ 1943, *Frauen Warte*, “Zehn Jahre politische Frauenarbeit,” University of Heidelberg Archive.

¹¹¹ 1943, *Frauen Warte*, “Zehn Jahre politische Frauenarbeit,” University of Heidelberg Archive

organization has done to better aid mothers, and instruct women on their roles in the home.

Besides rallies and speeches, the Nazis used visuals such as posters and pictures to instill the message of motherhood as the role of women, and work as the role of men. Women surrounded by the glory of domesticity while the men stand by their side looking strong and capable as providers. These posters would have hung in government offices and other locations throughout Germany where women would have been able to see them. Images can speak as clearly as words, and they often times stay in people's minds longer. Imagery was important to the Nazi propaganda machine. The early posters used by the party show the ideal German family, usually with more than two children, always looking brightly either at the children, or out into the future. In a poster titled "Healthy Parents- Healthy Children!" there is a family of six depicted.¹¹² This poster was used to promote the Nazi idea of racial science. It shows two strong, and healthy looking adults showing the characteristics of what people considered "Aryan" with their children, two boys and two girls. They are all happy and filled with energy. The oldest boy is even wearing a Hitler Youth uniform while the smallest child, the other boy, reaches out to the onlooker with joy in his eyes. The father is dressed like a farmer and the oldest daughter is wearing an apron and carrying a basket. All three females have their hair in braids.

¹¹² Moeller, *The Nazi State*, 83.

Sometimes the family is depicted in modern cloths, but more often they are dressed in traditional German garments, out in the countryside. Images of farms, and the people and animals that lived on them were used frequently to show what the idyllic, peaceful, German life was

supposed to be. The image above depicts a woman holding and nursing her child out in the countryside. The caption reads “Support the assistance program for mothers and children.”¹¹³ The strong, loving woman is shown breastfeeding a newborn in front of the idyllic countryside.



These posters are flashbacks to what the party considered a better, more civilized time. They created an idealized version of the past as being simple, and clean. They wanted to bring the focus of German culture back to the epic tales of German heroes such as in the *Nibelungenlied*. It was a time for the Nazis that represented an era in which both genders had their place in the family. Both genders are characterized as strong, even physically. These women show muscle as they are holding and nursing their children. Hitler and the Nazi party wanted to show that a strong Germany was rising.

¹¹³ Permission of Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

These images were placed on posters and in magazines where everyone would see, but women especially were the target for the sentimental images of motherhood and children.

Even when late in the war women continued to be depicted with as many children as possible. Just as magazine articles encouraged women to have large families in order to support the state, so too did propagandist posters. Women were shown with strength and prowess as they

protected their children from the oncoming horde.

The poster to the right shows a woman with her four children being blown about by strong winds.

The caption reads

“Mothers, fight for your children.”¹¹⁴ German women were called upon to be strong, and support the war cause, but still as mothers. There was a war for the home front and



women were at the forefront of Germany’s protection. Women were expected to take on the double burden of working at home, and taking on war jobs as well. Throughout the

¹¹⁴ Permission of Randall Bytwerk, “Mothers Fight for Your Children.” Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

war, the Nazi party continued to remind women that their primary position in society was as a mother. There was no greater task for each woman, than the raising and protecting of her children.

This is not to say that women were not encouraged to work. Germany needed people working, especially once the men were off at the front. The positions in the factories that opened up and had to be filled by women were considered to be temporary positions. In the women's magazine there are many images of women working in war industries and are praised as being strong patriotic Germans who sacrifice the ideal life of wife and motherhood in order to help the state while the men are fighting on the battlefield. Women were asked to step into the role of worker only while the men were away. In an ideal world women would not be working in masculine industries.

The areas that women were deemed necessary and wanted were vastly different from the wartime positions the government reluctantly let them enter. Women were called to serve the Fuhrer in positions that were considered feminine such as in nursing, teaching, and childcare. In order to encourage women to have as many children as possible, the Nazi Party pushed for maternity care before and after the birth of a baby. Their hope was to have women come in and help mothers in the two weeks pre and post birth. In a 1941 issue of *Frauen Warte* an article was written to entice women into the National Socialist People's Welfare service. The article describes women and children as the "most precious good of the people" and as such it needs to be taken care of. Women are implored to join this new profession. It calls upon the women whose lives are "not fully filled" such as widows whose children are grown or unmarried women to step up and help take care of the women who are giving Germany children. It says that all

women are suited to such tasks provided they have idealism, a good heart and “good housekeeping skills, empathy and organizational skills.”¹¹⁵

Many articles in *Frauen Warte* describe the emotional and spiritual benefits nurses gained because of the sincere gratitude of the soldiers. These articles became more frequent as the war continued. One article early in 1941 describes the war experiences of nurses working in Russia. They worked to care for the soldiers as best as circumstances would allow, but they wrote that they were working in very primitive conditions.¹¹⁶ The nurse quoted in the article describes how lucky she is that she comes from such a sturdy German background working in such terrible conditions. Seeing the horrors of Bolshevism up close makes her all the more grateful for what Hitler has done for Germany.¹¹⁷ An article appearing later in the year includes a letter from a German soldier to a nurse who cared for him while he was wounded. The soldier asks the nurse if she knows what it is like to be rescued from the mud and despair like the nurse did. He wrote, “It's like a piece of home, like a piece embodiment of what we are defending, holding: the home.”¹¹⁸ He continues in his letter to tell the nurse that she and the others like her represent Germany itself and all of the good that home provides. They act like the mothers that they left behind. The articles and the letters printed in the magazine remind women of why nurses were needed. The soldiers needed mothering, they needed care and only women could provide the nurturing they needed to recover and continue to fight for the fatherland.

¹¹⁵ Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, *Frauen Warte* 10.1941-1942, 34-35.

¹¹⁶ Stößel, Dr. Dora, 1941, *Frauen Warte*, “Kamrade Schwester” University of Heidelberg Archive.

¹¹⁷ Stößel, Dr. Dora, 1941, *Frauen Warte*, “Kamrade Schwester” University of Heidelberg Archive.

¹¹⁸ Faschingbauer, Dr. Hedwig, 1941, *Frauen Warte*, “Ein Soldat schreibt an eine DRK. Schwester.” University of Heidelberg Archive.

The ideal German woman was often described against the ideal German man. The party believed that men needed to be strong and militaristic. Goebbels argued in a speech in 1933 that the only reason women were tempted to act in the public and political sphere was because men were not willing to. Men had become feminized and in the process women had become masculinized. This in his opinion was changing for the better. Goebbels said in regards to women, “They are beginning to see that they are not happier as a result of being given more rights but fewer duties. They realize that the right to be elected to public office at the expense of the right to life, motherhood, and her daily bread is not a good trade.”¹¹⁹

Men were supposed to be courageous and strong as they went off to fight for the motherland. Women however were expected to stay at home and support them from afar. Part of being a good German woman was encouraging one’s husband who was fighting for Germany. A 1942 issue of *Frauen Warte* expresses the importance of sending letters and photographs to soldiers. The article tells the readers that men are more likely to do well on the front and fight hard if they have images of what they are fighting for. It says “...the soldiers sit together and show each other, full of pride, what gorgeous boys and girls they have.” It goes on to say that the greatest joy comes when an image of a newly born child arrives “the more so if it is the first fruits of a young marriage.”¹²⁰ Five pictures of sweet cherub cheeked babies, each one with a caption saying where the child is from surround the article.

Single women in Nazi Germany and even married women who did not have children struggled to find a place in society. According to Nazi rhetoric, women were

¹¹⁹ German Women,” *Signals of the New Era. 25 Selected Speeches of Dr. Joseph Goebbels* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1934), pp. 118-126, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹²⁰ Trenkler, Ilse, 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “Lieber Vati, so sehe ich aus!” University of Heidelberg Archive.

meant to be mothers. Having children was how they contributed to the German nation. There were ways for women to contribute before they became mothers, but it was meant to be a temporary part of life. Women according to the Nazi propaganda were never intended to stay single and childless. There were occupations and schools for single women to attend after their formal education, but they were not intended to be full time careers. The Nazis wanted women to leave the workforce so that men could fill the positions. The opportunities that were presented to women in the magazine were ways to help them prepare for marriage and children.

The Nazi Party set up the Reich School for Brides as a holding place for women who were finished with school but were not yet ready to get married. A mother's day article in 1940 boasts that over four hundred schools for mothers, brides and housewives had been established and were helping to ensure that women were fully prepared for their roles. Over two and a half million women had taken courses offered by these homes and "Each participant always says how much joy, how much inner satisfaction, it has brought her and her family."¹²¹ Many of the women who entered the school were already engaged, but not all of them were. The schools were large idyllic Bavarian looking homes surrounded by woods and fields. In their time there, the women were taught the skills that would help them take care of a husband and home.

The scent of the sea wafts across the moor, the same sea German flyers cross on their way to England. That does not distract the women and girls. Just as the men do their duty, they are preparing for their duties as wives and mothers, when they will give birth and care for and protect their children. Man and woman are both fulfilling their duty to do everything for their people.¹²²

¹²¹ Linhardt-Kopker, Erna, 1940, *Frauen Warte*, "Am Müttertag 1940" Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹²² Linhardt-Kopker, Erna, 1940, *Frauen Warte*, "Am Müttertag 1940" Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

The remarks made in this article are very idealized in order to encourage other women to take up the task of continuing the German race and keeping their man happy at home.

A similar article in an issue a few years later includes a picture of one of the schools that had been established in occupied territory. It begins by describing the two-story, humble, and unassuming house in the countryside that started out as only a small branch of a larger organization that has now penetrated every area of Europe in which Germany holds influence. The article declares that the existing school in Krakow has held 753 classes with a total of 11,500 women participating. They are anticipating the addition of two more schools in Poland, one in Warsaw and another in Lublin. According to the article, the “demanding work that had previously been carried out in the kingdom” had been slow moving and more intense in order to bring it to the people living outside of Germany because the infrastructure that Germany was blessed with was not something that Poland had yet. However, the women were just as determined to obtain the same classes that those in Germany were privileged to partake in. “The hardness of our life forces us everywhere today, to look for the deeper meaning of all things, and it is natural to ask what the inner driving force was when the wives and mothers often made long journeys in the evening after a busy day to come to the school for mothers.”¹²³ Along with praising the mothers who worked so hard to receive an education regarding wifely and motherly duties, the article praises the German women who worked tirelessly to bring this privilege to a wider population, all for the good of Germany. The article exclaims that the work these women were doing:

¹²³ Reimer, Lydia, 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “Mutterliche Krafte zrahlen auf Europa aus.” University of Heidelberg Archive.

...Represents a commitment, a genuine German commitment to the maternal as a spiritual force, without which our lives would only be half...The maternal, this unconditional love for life, is a grace, and at the same time this power of mothers is an organizing element in life...Without the maternal principle with her devotion...would be no family and with no family, no community, no nation, no culture.¹²⁴

The Reich saw the work German women were doing in educated young women on how to be good wives and mothers as essential for the survival of Germany.

In another article a young newly married woman reminisces on her time spent in the home. She remarks that she is so grateful for the skills that she learned. For example, she is grateful that she was taught to prepare fresh flowers on the dinner table so that her husband can come home to a clean and fresh feeling home after a stressful day at work. Learning about flowers and home decorating was her favorite activity at the school. She is careful to set aside a part of the household budget for flowers.¹²⁵ The woman in the story wants to “build a comfortable home for him and make the few weekend hours he has at home warm and treasured. The weeks she had at Husbaeke refreshed her after years of a strenuous job, and what she learned there will help her in her daily tasks. With cheerful resolve, she goes about her day’s work!”¹²⁶ The women in the Reich schools for brides were groomed to be the best homemakers possible.

In order to attend the school the women paid 135 marks. There were many different ways to cover the costs if the women could not afford it. Those who received one of the marriage loans could receive a hundred marks towards the tuition. They could also receive aid from the NS People’s Welfare Organization and the companies they

¹²⁴ Reimer, Lydia, 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “Mutterliche Krafte zrahlen auf Europa aus.” University of Heidelberg Archive.

¹²⁵ 1940, *Frauen Warte*, “Gelernt ist gelernt: Mit Bildbericht aus der Reichsbräute- und Heimmütterschule Husbäke in Oldenburg” Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹²⁶ 1940, *Frauen Warte*, “Gelernt ist gelernt: Mit Bildbericht aus der Reichsbräute- und Heimmütterschule Husbäke in Oldenburg” Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

worked for.¹²⁷ The women's organizations in conjunction with the state did all that they could to ensure that, as many women as possible were able to attend one of these schools. It was important to instill in young women the fierce belief that the entirety of their strength and intellect were intended to help them keep a home and raise a family. It was the most important thing they would do in their lives.

Other opportunities presented to young single women in the magazine revolved around childcare and nursing. One article encouraged women to move out to the Netherlands and help in the Lebensborns, taking care of the babies fathered by German soldiers there. The article describes how influential German women were working with women in Holland. The women working in Holland were conducting lectures and classes for other women on parenting. They founded a department of economics, which worked with homemakers to teach specific courses on mothering and taking care of the home with a special emphasis on cooking and using what food was available. The new Dutch brides of SS officers participated in many of the parent services available because of these German women.¹²⁸

Within Germany itself, the Party was working to provide care for new mothers both before and after the birth of a child. In order to do this, the program needed young women who were willing to work as caretakers. An article describing the new program tells the readership that there is a dire shortage of women volunteering to work these programs, especially in the rural areas. It claims that there are many women whose lives are "not fully filled correctly" meaning they are still single and without children, or who

¹²⁷ Linhardt-Kopker, Erna, 1940, *Frauen Warte*, "Am Müttertag 1940" Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹²⁸ Reimer, Lydia, 1941, *Frauen Warte*, "Deutsche Frauenarbeit in den Niederlanden," University of Heidelberg Archive.

are widowed with grown children who most likely are feeling useless and empty. Young farm women who “shy from long apprenticeships because they are getting married in the foreseeable future and yet want to bring their rich, practical knowledge to use” are especially desired for the program.¹²⁹ The article describes the job as being “a rewarding, and satisfying solution, which is also economically advantageous” for young women in between school and motherhood.¹³⁰ Any woman is capable of working for this program provided she “posses idealism, a warm heart, combined with good housekeeping skills, empathy, and organizational skills.”¹³¹ So long as a woman held all of the attributes ascribed to the ideal German woman she would be a perfect maternity assistant for the Party’s new program for new mothers.

Women were also encouraged to become nurses as war continued. It was a field that was perceived to be the ideal fit for a German woman because its main purpose was caregiving, something German women should have been doing already at home with parents, siblings, or even their own children. One article describing nursing on the Eastern front exclaims, “The trust of the soldiers fills their hearts with boundless maternal love. They invent new ways to bring pleasure, or to make life easier for those they care for.”¹³² The article describes the nurses as being ‘motherly’ and ‘maternal’ showing that women are perfectly suited for the task because women were meant to be mothers. The article goes on to say of the nurses, “When we join the columns of our soldiers, always heading forward, we are filled with joy despite everything, because we are a part of it.

¹²⁹ 1941, *Frauen Warte*, “NSV- Helferin in Mutterschaftschilfe” University of Heidelberg Archive.

¹³⁰ 1941, *Frauen Warte*, “NSV- Helferin in Mutterschaftschilfe” University of Heidelberg Archive.

¹³¹ 1941, *Frauen Warte*, “NSV- Helferin in Mutterschaftschilfe” University of Heidelberg Archive.

¹³² Stößel, Dora, 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “Kamerad Schwester,” Translated Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

Our hearts do not grow hard. We do not lose our soft, motherly nature.”¹³³ The women describe their time in the East as being difficult, but knowing how hard the soldiers work, and that they as nurses can help ease pain, makes them proud to do what they do. The article also reminds women of the horrors of Bolshevism and that Hitler has saved them from the same terrible fate as those living in Ukraine.¹³⁴ Nursing was a necessary position both within Germany itself and with the army as war progressed. They needed women to enter into the field, but it was always tied to women’s innate ability to mother and nurture, not the science of medicine, or the heroism of battle that is advertised to women. The greatest joy for the nurses was in bringing pleasure to others even if it was something as simple as bringing water to soldiers working under the hot sun.¹³⁵

Each of the opportunities presented to women in *Frauen Warte* as an occupation for women is a stereotypically feminine job. The positions require women to be motherly, and organized as well as compassionate. Issues in later years, after the war had been underway for a number of years, women were encouraged to enter into the factories more and more, but it was always described to them as a temporary position. They would were doing what was necessary for the good of Germany, and they knew that it was not where they wanted to stay, but just as they sacrificed as mothers, they would sacrifice as workers to ensure victory for the fatherland.

Another important part of being a Nazi woman was making sure that one was not seen as being too masculine. At the end of almost every issue of *Frauen Warte* was a

¹³³ Stößel, Dora, 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “Kamerad Schwester,” Translated Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹³⁴ Stößel, Dora, 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “Kamerad Schwester,” Translated Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹³⁵ Stößel, Dora, 1942, *Frauen Warte*, “Kamerad Schwester,” Translated Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

section on fashion. Models depicting the latest trends in dresses, belts, and shoes demonstrated for German women how to look beautiful and fashionable even during wartime. An article from 1943 shows women how to take pieces from old dresses and redesign them in order to create a whole new look without needing to buy a new dress.¹³⁶ In some issues patterns are included to show women how to sew pieces of a dress or a coat. Others give tips on how to better sew zippers Children's fashion is often included next to women's fashion pieces. One issue from 1944 gives a pattern that could be used for making a cape style coat or a regular trench coat style jacket for children.¹³⁷ The fashion section encouraged women to be fashionable and spend time on their appearance and that of their children, all the while being frugal and thrifty. Even towards the end of the war the magazine continued to encourage women to be fashionable and pretty. The Party wanted women to continue putting on the appearance of normalcy.

The Nazi party used a number of mediums in order to instill in women a sense of purpose that aligned with what the party wanted for Germany. They needed women to want to be at home acting as wife and mother, instead of desiring career and independence the way the New Woman had in the Weimar period. The party realized that some women were going to be in the workforce, especially when war began and the men were away. The party rhetoric regarding women working was always that it was a temporary situation. Working outside of the home was a sacrifice that the good women in Germany were willing to make to ensure victory for the fatherland. Working was a sacrifice that kept them away from their true desire to be a wife and mother and the party continued to remind women that that is where they would be in the end, at home raising

¹³⁶ 1943, *Frauen Warte*, "Einzelne Teile zum Erneuern," University of Heidelberg Archive.

¹³⁷ 1943, *Frauen Warte*, "Unsere Kinder auf der Strasse," University of Heidelberg Archive.

families. The role of mother as the ideal for women was presented as the highest honor for a woman and the party reassured women that they would do all that they could to ensure that women could once again take control of the home while the men took control of the state. It was not just adult women however that the party sought to indoctrinate with a desire for motherhood above all. Young women and girls also had to be convinced that their ultimate purpose was to settle down with a racially pure mate and bear children for the Fuhrer.

The home front was important to the National Socialists and it was primarily the job of women to ensure that the home front was thriving before and especially during the war. The party needed German women to be homemakers and stay in the private sphere, having as many children as possible, while the men were fighting on the battlefield for the German race. The Nazi Party was not just looking at the immediate needs of Germany however. They were equally as concerned with ensuring that the next generation of German women was happy to conform to the needs of the state. The need for nurturers would not diminish once the war was won and children would be the next ones to take over and continue on the legacy that the National Socialists were building. Young girls especially needed to be educated as to their proper roles in German society.

CHAPTER 4
GROWING UP GRETEL

In a letter to Hitler on his birthday, a mother described an argument between her seven-year-old daughter Gina and her son Aribert. The young girl had decided that she was going to marry Hitler. Unlike Goebbels and Goring, Hitler did not have a wife and that made Gina sad. Aribert told her that Hitler was happy when his friends were happy and by the time she was old enough to marry, Hitler would be old. Gina would not be dissuaded. She argued that Hitler deserved the best wife and she would be that. She would make sure that he had flowers everyday, and that the dinner table would always be set for him. Hitler was the best man in Germany and they would have the best children. Her brother continues to argue with her calling her stupid and telling her that she would make a terrible wife. Their father intervened and sent the boy away while the little girl cried herself to sleep in his arms because she could not marry Hitler.¹³⁸

Little girls were important for Nazi Germany, as they would be the future mothers for the country; as such they had to be taught how to be the ideal woman that Germany needed for strong mothers. Girls, along with boys were brought into tightly monitored youth organizations in order to teach them the values of the National Socialist Party. The Hitler Youth was an organization that taught thousands of children to think the way the Party wanted them to by teaching them to work together and explore the outside. The women's branch of the National Socialist Party wanted a group for young women separate from the boys in order to help ensure that girls were adequately prepared for their roles as adult women in Germany.

¹³⁸Eberle, Henrik, *Letters to Hitler*, Translated by Victoria Harris and Steven Rendall, Polity Press, 2012, 147.

The League of German Girls (Bund Deutscher Mädel in German or BDM) was established to teach young girls about their important role in German society. They had their own rallies, although they did attend the women's rallies as well, and they had their own magazines. Everything was tailored specifically to young girls who joined at the age of ten. Jutta Rüdiger speaking of the purpose of the organizations said, "Therefore, we want to shape girls who are politically conscious. That does not mean women who debate or discuss things in parliament, but girls and women, who know about the necessities of life in the German nation and act accordingly."¹³⁹ The information the girls were given was not all about homemaking and childrearing. Girls were taught physical fitness, and reading and party loyalty. After Germany went to war the girls were taught how they could aid in the war effort. Just as their mothers were encouraged to go to work in factories or become nurses, the girls were encouraged to help the men on the front. Young girls were being shaped by the state to conform to the ideal woman who would go on to give more children to the nation.

Children had a high value in the Third Reich and as such the state could not allow children's education, and values to be dictated by their parents alone. The state took an active role in directing the parenting of children. This was part of the state sponsored patriarchal nature of Nazism. Women were praised as being important to the nation as mothers but they still could not have singular control over any aspect of society, not even their own children. While many countries had compulsory education, Germany also had compulsory after school programs to teach children about National Socialism. The youth of the country were of vital importance to the Nazi party. Like in every society, the children are the future. They will grow up to lead the nation when their parent's

¹³⁹ Moeller, *The Nazi State* 85

generation is no longer able. The Party needed to make sure that when the children became the leaders of society, they would take the Germany the Nazis were creating and continue to follow National Socialist Party policies. The Nazi party believed that education for children really began outside of school, especially for young girls.

As the Nazi Party stated multiple times, children held a special place in Germany and as such, their education was important. “The German youth are a foundation of the rebuilding of the German people and the German fatherland.¹⁴⁰” The party wanted to ensure that all German children were educated in a way that would keep them in line with party ideals. “The new Germany created by our people’s chancellor Adolf Hitler places special demands on the German youth. The German youth are a foundation of the rebuilding of the German people and the German fatherland.”¹⁴¹ An article in a 1936 issue of *Frauen Warte* laid out in detail the educational principles that the party wanted implemented in schools. They wanted education to have an emphasis on race, military training, leadership, and religion.¹⁴² In terms of race, parents and teachers are reminded that they must instill in the children a concept that the race is greater than the individual. There must be in all people a “holy sense of people and fatherland!” and that everyone must be willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of the fatherland.¹⁴³ German children must be ready to serve as soldiers if the situation demands. “They will train them, even when they are older, not to waste their spare time by dubious or even harmful activities such as card playing, drinking alcohol, and bad music, but rather to prepare their bodies

¹⁴⁰ 1936, *Frauen Warte*, “Die Erziehungsgrundsätze des neuen Deutschlands,” Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹⁴¹ 1936, *Frauen Warte*, “Die Erziehungsgrundsätze des neuen Deutschlands,” Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹⁴² 1936, *Frauen Warte*, “Die Erziehungsgrundsätze des neuen Deutschlands,” Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹⁴³ 1936, *Frauen Warte*, “Die Erziehungsgrundsätze des neuen Deutschlands,” Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

for their future tasks.”¹⁴⁴ Athleticism was highly valued, even for girls because their bodies would be tasked with giving life to the next generation of Germans. Another important aspect of education was obedience. The article masks obedience to the totalitarian state as the beginnings of true leadership, but what it really wanted was to instill in children the value of following. “They will not bend to an empty mass will expressed through useless votes, but rather look with enthusiasm to the nation’s strong and noble Führer.”¹⁴⁵ The article uses phrases such as “controlled freedom” to remind mothers that their children have to learn obedience in order to be truly free. Of course the obedience that education was supposed to instill in children was obedience to the state, not to their parents.

When the League of German Girls was founded in 1933, there had already been organizations for girls to join that had been similar in structure, but not in purpose. Before the BDM, organizations for girls were fiercely competitive and difficult to join.¹⁴⁶ By June of 1934 membership in the Nazi youth organizations was compulsory. Those who refused to attend meetings on Saturday had to attend school instead and during those Saturday school sessions the teachers were required to teach on subjects that pertained to the National Socialist agenda.¹⁴⁷ The youth organizations were intended to fully immerse the children in Nazi doctrine. Trüde Burkner, the Reich representative for the BDM spoke to leaders of the girls saying “...make them for me into strong and brave women! ...In the BDM, the girls should be molded into champions of the National Socialist

¹⁴⁴ 1936, *Frauen Warte*, “Die Erziehungsgrundsätze des neuen Deutschlands,” Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹⁴⁵ 1936, *Frauen Warte*, “Die Erziehungsgrundsätze des neuen Deutschlands,” Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹⁴⁶ Reese, Dagmar, *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany*, Trans. William Templer, The University of Michigan Press, 2006, 28.

¹⁴⁷ Reese, *Growing Up Female*, 33.

worldview.”¹⁴⁸ The purpose behind the earlier organizations was to collect young girls into elite organizations, but when the Nazi party made membership in the BDM mandatory for girls they did it to establish Nazi beliefs in children so that they would grow up to be the ideal German women they would need to help create a master race.

The Nazi party wanted girls to be raised as mothers, but they knew that the older girls were coming of age during wartime and it was not practical for Germany’s survival to relegate them only to the home. Workers were needed while men were at war and so for the short term the party believed in educating young women on how to help the war effort. One article in *Frauen Warte* tells women that their daughters’ education is just as important as their sons’ and an important dinnertime topic should be “What will our daughters learn?”¹⁴⁹ The article encourages women to not only urge their daughters to attend the Reich Mother Schools that had been set up, but also to attend vocational schools which would allow their daughters to work in the interim between childhood and marriage.¹⁵⁰ With the nation at war and so many young men entering into the military, Germany needed women to work for a short time. The article reminds women that their daughters are needed temporarily in the workforce before they begin their role as wife and mother. Due to the demand for labor, girls were raised not only to be strong for motherhood, but also to be strong enough to step into new roles whenever the government saw fit. This was supposed to be a short term part of life for Germany, as war was meant to end with their victory and then women would be able to take up their place in the home with their children, the place they had been raised to see as the epitome of what a German woman would want in life.

¹⁴⁸ Karl Jaspers, quoted in Reese, *Growing Up Female*, 41.

¹⁴⁹ 1941, *Frauen Warte*, “Nach Der Shule fangt erst das Lernen an!” University of Heidelberg Archive.

¹⁵⁰ 1941, *Frauen Warte*, “Nach Der Shule fangt erst das Lernen an!” University of Heidelberg Archive.

The young boys, who participated in the Hitler Youth program, acted as policemen for the young girls. They had the power to reprimand and escort girls away from places they were not permitted to be. Young boys and girls were both forcefully encouraged to be a part of the youth organizations that would teach them and help them grow in Nazism, but even as girls in the BDM were being taught to be strong, they were being taught to obey just like in school. A historian interviewed a woman by the name of Helga who had been a part of the BDM as a child. Helga told her interviewer of all the rules that came with being a part of the organization such as not staying out past eight o'clock in the evening, attending rallies where women were being awarded the Mother Cross for their accomplishments in procreating, and not attending films that were rated 18 and older. She recalls a time she went to such a film and was caught. A male member of the Nazi Youth discovered her, shined a light in her face and escorted her out.¹⁵¹ Women were in charge of the BDM, but they were not the only ones with the power to reprimand the girls if they did not comply with party ideals. The boys the girls' own age were able to reprimand them as well. Even at young ages children in Germany were being taught the proper place of men and women in society, and the man was superior in public power. Along with being taught that men had the place of power in society, they were taught that women had the special and important task of being mothers. The girls saw women being rewarded with medals and honor for bearing many children for the Fuhrer. They were being prepped from a young age to grow up into the ideal woman for the Nazi party.

There was a magazine for the BDM, as well as one for the adult women who helped run the program, that helped build an image of what kind of girl was needed for a strong Germany, both in the temporary war period and the future that the party believed

¹⁵¹ Crawford, Chris; Hansen, Stephan. "One Girl's View." Bund Deutsche Maedal Archive.

would come to be. The magazine for girls was filled with images of women doing chores that were stereotypically feminine such as cooking, and laundry and acting as nurses for wounded soldiers once the war began. Songs that were meant to instill national pride in the young girls were often published in the magazine. The images show idyllic young women taking part in these activities that were being promoted to them as what every German girl wants to be. The girls are always happy and pretty and often determined. The girls are not only depicted doing activities such as cooking or helping childcare, but also participating in athletics.

The magazine frequently shows girls exercising and hiking together.¹⁵² In the March issue of 1937 there are several images of girls practicing athletics. The girls, each wearing a white tank top and black shorts, with pigtail braids are photographed playing basketball, climbing walls, and swinging on bars.¹⁵³ Girls were being taught that they should be physically strong and active. “The young girl steels her body just as the adolescent boy, to help in times of battle, if it is necessary.”¹⁵⁴ All of German life was considered a battle. They were fighting for the dominance of the German race and women would play an important role on the home front. It was essential that young women were raised, groomed even, to take on the role that the Party believed was necessary for them if the German race was to prevail above all. The article continues to reassure the girls that the primary function of their strength would not be for the actual battlefield with their male compatriots however. The birthing of a master race was a battle that had to be fought just like war. Each race was trying to overcome the others and the Germans had to be the race to take control. The energy gained from exercise was to

¹⁵² July 1936, *Das Deutsches Maedel*, Bund Deutsche Maedel Archive.

¹⁵³ March 1937, *Das Deutsches Maedel*, Bund Deutsche Maedel Archive.

¹⁵⁴ March 1936, *Das Deutsches Maedel*, Bund Deutsche Maedel Archive.

be used for domestic chores and nursing others. The girls were repeatedly encouraged to become nurses either in nurseries or for the military and to “bandage the wounds of fighters.”¹⁵⁵ They needed to be strong for the Fuhrer in order to care for the next generation of German children, but also to help make sure the men were strong enough for the battlefield. “Boys are trained to be political soldiers, girls to be strong and brave women who will be the comrades of these political soldiers, and who will later, as wives and mothers, live out and form our National Socialist worldview in their families. They will then raise a new and proud generation.”¹⁵⁶

In an article in the magazine for girls, *Bund Deutsches Maedel*, the author writes that children were encouraged “to be necessarily superior to others” and that it was “already the principle according to which the German educated their sons and daughters, and they often called on an old saying that goes: ‘The child heroes must be bold in battle.’”¹⁵⁷ The article is, like many articles in the magazine, a tale of the ancient Germanic people who are a model of German racial superiority. The articles remind the girls that Germans of the present must look to their ancestors and strive to live as they did, to be as strong as they were. The articles recall a non-specific German past that places the German race above all others.

The children who participated in Hitler Youth activities were encouraged to take the information they were given and teach their parents how to be better Germans. Children were important to the party because they are more malleable than adults. Adults can be influenced and opinions changed, but they have more life experiences and

¹⁵⁵ March 1936, *Bund Deutsches Maedel*, Bund Deutsches Maedel Archive.

¹⁵⁶ Rüdiger, Jutta, January 1938, *Das Deutsche Maedel*, “Die Aufgaben des BDM. im Arbeitsjahr 1938,” Translated Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹⁵⁷ March 1936, *Bund Deutsches Maedel*, Bund Deutsches Maedel Archive.

generally their minds are not as open to change as children are. The Nazi party believed that children were warriors for the party and one of those tasks given to these little warriors was helping to influence and educate their parents on the importance of race, especially when it came to how to treat the Jewish population that had been their neighbors, and even friends.

A story in *Der Giftpilz*, tells of a young German girl who was a member of the BDM and fell ill. Her mother wanted her to go see a Jewish doctor. The girl protested telling her mother that she had been taught in the BDM that Jews were their deadly enemies and a Jewish doctor could not be trusted. The mother refused to listen to her and sent her anyway. When the girl arrived at the doctor's office she heard a young girl crying in the examination room for the doctor to leave her alone. When it was her turn to be seen, a doctor with the face of a devil and with criminal eyes comes out to get her saying "Now I have you at last, little German girl!" and he tried to grab her. She hit him square in the face and ran back home to find her mother filled with regret for not listening to her warnings. The mother in the story began to cry over what she had done and it is the little girl who comforts her by telling her that she had learned a great deal in the BDM and they have a lot they can teach their parents. The mother replies "I promise. I'm finding that one can learn even from you children."¹⁵⁸ The story depicts a young girl who, because of her training in the BDM, knows more than her parent's generation does about the dangers that Germany faces. The Nazi party knew that they would not be able to persuade all adult Germans to following their line of thought just through propaganda directed specifically at them. The Party needed to train the children properly so that even

¹⁵⁸ Streicher, Julius, *Der Giftpilz*, "Inge's Visit to a Jewish Doctor," Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin, German Propaganda Archive.

if the children could not help persuade the parents, they would at least be believers themselves instead of allowing parents to teach them tolerance. The education of children was important and needed to be monitored by the Party to ensure that it was instilling in both girls and boys the principles that the party desired.

Educating girls on Nazi Party policy was important and attending the summer camps set up for the BDM was promoted as the best way for girls to learn. An article in BDM describes why it is more important to attend the BDM summer camp than to take the summer to travel with parents. The article is written from the point of view of a member of the BDM. She is explaining to “Irma’s” parents why traveling with them does not give their daughter the same education as what she would get if she was allowed to join her group at camp. She wrote that except for Irma, the whole class went to this camp and it is all they talked about for weeks after as they gave pitying looks to Irma who was not allowed to go.¹⁵⁹ Irma’s parents wanted their daughter to learn to obey and be in control of her actions, but the writer wonders why they think they are the best ones to teach Irma those values. She argues that the girls at camp learn control better than anywhere else because they learn to view themselves as part of a larger community. The writer gives thanks for having such “sensible” parents who allow her to spend her summers learning and growing in the camaraderie of the BDM.¹⁶⁰ The article is a glowing review for this camp that would ensure that all of the girls who attend will learn how to be the best, controlled and well behaved German women as they grow. Going to camp allowed the girls to act their age and learn to be the adults that they will need to be

¹⁵⁹ 1936, *Das Deutsches Maedel*, “Summerreise oder Lager,” Bund Deutsche Maedel Archive.

¹⁶⁰ 1936, *Das Deutsches Maedel*, “Summerreise oder Lager,” Bund Deutsche Maedel Archive.

in order to travel beside their parents later in life.¹⁶¹ The Nazi party had these camps for children in order to help cultivate a love for the German nation as they worked together. The girls hiked and enjoyed nature while learning about how the Nazi Party ideals would help protect and grow Germany in the future.

Women's education continued to be different from that of their male peers. Girls were required to take domestic science courses and in higher education women were separated from men. Girl's education had to be equal to the education of boys but it did not have to be the same.¹⁶² Boys were still pushed to succeed in math and science, whereas girls were taught language, needlework and teaching similar to girls in other European countries. Most girls only completed tenth grade.¹⁶³ They would not need the same extend of formal education in order to be the mothers and caregivers that the Party wanted them to be. Education for girls also had another element to it besides the ones laid out for formal education. The principle of race was especially important in girls' education and was stressed outside of school as well. In the organizations for girls, they are reminded that it is their duty to find good Aryan husbands in order to keep the race pure.

The Norse family histories lead us again and again the proud, ready to keep the girls and the women in mind, which has its ultimate foundation in the racial purity of these people. As circled in the people of the current healthy pure blood, so in them the consciousness was alive, to be able to take everything on themselves for the family, fidelity to hold over after death... or in exile.¹⁶⁴

Girls were taught that race was important from an early age because they would be the mothers of the next generation and they had to choose their mates carefully. Their

¹⁶¹ 1936, *Das Deutsches Maedel*, "Summerreise oder Lager," Bund Deutsche Maedel Archive.

¹⁶² Frevert, *Women in German History*, 179.

¹⁶³ Frevert, *Women in German History*, 180.

¹⁶⁴ March 1936, *Bund Deutsches Maedel*, Bund Deutsches Maedel Archive.

bloodlines were ancient and filled with history. It was their duty as good German girls to make sure that nothing dirtied that bloodline. In one of the earliest issues of the magazine the girls are taught of a book by a Professor Staemmler, which discussed how to maintain the perfect race. In the article the girls are told that their duty is, “To maintain the breed and educate, To Preserve the breed healthily, To keep the breed pure. The first duty is to maintain the breed and educate.”¹⁶⁵ Young girls were raised to be breeders for the next generation and as such they had to be fully indoctrinated with the beliefs the Nazi Party held as fact regarding their history, blood and race.

In a newsletter to the girls’ youth group the girls are reminded once again that the Jews pose a serious threat to the German race. The newsletter tells the girls that the Jews are a mixing of many races and not just a religion. This mixing of bloodlines is, according to Nazi propaganda, encouraged in the Jewish religious texts. The Jewish people are encouraged to “corrupt the blood of Gentiles.”¹⁶⁶ Later in the issue girls are reminded of the Nuremberg Laws enacted in 1935. Marriage between Germans and Jews is forbidden, as are extramarital relations between the two groups. Violation of either law would result in imprisonment.¹⁶⁷ The newsletter is from 1944 when the Holocaust was already well under way, but the Nazi Party was still propagating to the youth about how devastating this other “race” could be for the German people.¹⁶⁸ In Nazi thought, mixing blood was horrific. It weakened the race. It was important therefore that the party continued to educate young girls and women on the supposed dangers of interracial

¹⁶⁵ October 1933, *Bund Deutsches Maedel*, “Wir lessen:” Bund Deutsches Maedel Archive.

¹⁶⁶ *Führerinnendienst des Bundes Deutscher Mädel in der Hitler-Jugend*, Gebiet Mainfranken 39, February 1944, Trans. Randall Bytwek, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹⁶⁷ *Führerinnendienst des Bundes Deutscher Mädel in der Hitler-Jugend*, Gebiet Mainfranken 39, February 1944, Trans. Randall Bytwek, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹⁶⁸ *Führerinnendienst des Bundes Deutscher Mädel in der Hitler-Jugend*, Gebiet Mainfranken 39, February 1944, Trans. Randall Bytwek, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

relations. The girls of the BDM would be the next generation of mothers and therefore it was essential that they carry on the purity of the German race. The war against Jewry and the Bolsheviks was not only on the battlefield. The Nazi party believed that races were constantly at war and as such, the creation of new generations played a large role in which race would overcome the others and be the dominant empire.

As the future mothers of the German people, many of the articles and speeches that would aid in the education of German girls centered on the heroes and glories of the German race. An article in the BDM's magazine titled "Nordic Womanhood" begins by saying it is the story of a woman who stood at the beginning of the story for the German race. However, there are very few women even mentioned in the article. It is a story of Germanic chieftains who as friends with the Romans found danger and glory in taking power. The main woman mentioned is the daughter of a chieftain who has a child, a son, who looks forward to having power when he is older. The Nordic heroines are mothers who breed the next generation of warriors for the Germanic tribes, just as women are praised for bearing children for the Fuhrer.

Another article, this one in a magazine written for leaders of the 10-11 year old BDM girls instructs the leaders to educate the girls on Armin an early German hero. "In these home afternoons this winter, we will hear of the great figures of Germany's past. The lives and deeds of these people are so clean, honest, and clear that they can be a model to young girls at any time."¹⁶⁹ The girls are meant to learn about how lucky they are to be living in Hitler's Greater German Reich "that fulfills the struggle of a thousand

¹⁶⁹ *Die Jungmadelschaft, Blätter für Heimabendgestaltung der Jungmaedel*, Ausgabe A, October 1938, Trans. Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

years, that realizes German's dreams."¹⁷⁰ It goes on to tell the leaders that the girls must meet athletic achievements as well as being able to recite a simple biography of Hitler. The girls have to know the great history behind the race they are entrusted to carry on.

The education of young women and girls in the BDM often revolved around the domestic sphere, which they were expected to enter when they reached adulthood. The BDM magazine included articles on keeping the home just as the women's magazine did. An article titled "We want the Gracious: Home Décor" appeared in a July 1935 issue. The article explains to the girls what makes home décor dignified and gracious. It describes how "One thinks of a room...and the furniture and objects with which one might embellish this space..."¹⁷¹ Home décor must be at the same time tasteful and exemplary. Interior design is important in a German home because it helps people understand the way Germans live in their homes. However, the way in which one lives at home must compliment other spaces as well.¹⁷² The home should not be a place to try and stand out, but instead to be a place that is dignified and gracious.

The members of the BDM were encouraged to learn how to care for younger children. One article describes how the girls "go from house to house to pick up 'our' little ones."¹⁷³ The older girls pick up the younger ones and they walk to school together. The girls learned quickly that it is much easier to cross an intersection carrying the smallest children when a squad of twenty children walked together.¹⁷⁴ Caring for the younger members in the organization was an important part of membership when the

¹⁷⁰ *Die Jungmadelschaft, Blätter für Heimabendgestaltung der Jungmaedel*, Ausgabe A, October 1938, Trans. Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹⁷¹ July 1935, *Bund Deutsches Maedel*, "We want the Gracious: Home Décor," Bund Deutscher Maedel Archive.

¹⁷² July 1935, *Bund Deutsches Maedel*, "We want the Gracious: Home Décor," Bund Deutscher Maedel Archive

¹⁷³ April 1936 *Bund Deutsches Maedel*, "Unsere offenen Kinderstuben," Bund Deutscher Maedel Archive.

¹⁷⁴ April 1936 *Bund Deutsches Maedel*, "Unsere offenen Kinderstuben," Bund Deutscher Maedel Archive.

girls got a little older. Acting as guides and nursemaids to the small children was considered practice for when the girls would grow up and become mothers.

The girls of the BDM often received the same messages their mothers would have received. Gertrude Scholtz-Klink at the Nuremberg Rally in 1936 gave a speech at which a delegation of the League of German Girls was present. In the speech she describes the “freedoms” that women are afforded in Soviet Russia and how the women there were miserable because they were forced to work at the same jobs as men and could be divorced at anytime which caused absolute misery for the children who consequently had to be placed in group-homes. The full equality of the sexes in Russia created “...worn out sick women as the result of heavy labor and abortions, a rapid fall in the birthrate, and growing complaints from the women themselves...”¹⁷⁵ She states that Bolshevism is the absolute evil because it ignores the laws of nature that gave men and women different roles in society. Germany, according to Scholtz-Klink, knew better. She says that she looks at the children being impacted by Nazi policy and she knows that what she is doing is right. “Then I know why I do everything. It is not to build some miserable business that will perish, but rather this work is for something lasting and eternal.”¹⁷⁶ German girls were being told, just as German women were, that what they had to offer Germany was important and more lasting than what their male counterparts would go out into the workforce to create. They would be eternal in their bloodlines. They played the most

¹⁷⁵ “Die Tagung der deutschen Frauenschaft,” *Der Parteitag der Ehre vom 8. Bis 14. September 1936. Offizieller Bericht über den Verlauf des Reichsparteitages mit sämtlichen Kongressreden*, 161-169. Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹⁷⁶ “Die Tagung der deutschen Frauenschaft,” *Der Parteitag der Ehre vom 8. Bis 14. September 1936. Offizieller Bericht über den Verlauf des Reichsparteitages mit sämtlichen Kongressreden*, 161-169. Translated by Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

important role in German society. They would be the mothers of the next generation and that role was vital for Germany's success.

Like *Frauen Warte*, the BDM magazine talked about ethnic Germans living outside of Germany. An article in the July 1935 issue describes the values and commitment to the Fuhrer's ideas as being just as strong in the ethnic Germans outside of the border as those of the girls living within Germany itself. The article states, "... practically anywhere abroad and in the border areas of Germany, girls are fulfilled by the same spirit and the same will."¹⁷⁷ In another article for the BDM leadership, there is a section on the young Germans living outside of the borders. "The girls who live along the border should know that they do not stand alone. Each girl in the interior of the Reich must know the significance of the border."¹⁷⁸ The Nazi Party wanted all Germans, including those they considered to be ethnic Germans living outside of the borders, which were dictated to them by the Treaty of Versailles, to be educated along Party lines. The girls growing up outside of Germany's official borders were just as important in growing the Nazi race for future generations. The Nazi Party did not believe that the only true Germans were the ones living within borders that had been created for them. They saw thousands of Europeans as racially "German" who had been forced out of the Motherland because the territories they were living in had been taken away from Germany. The girls living in these territories were future mothers for the German race, just like the adult women living in these territories were. The Nazi Party wanted the young girls to

¹⁷⁷ *Bund Deutsches Maedel* July 1935, "Auslandsdeutsche Maedel Schreiben," Bund Deutsche Maedel Archive.

¹⁷⁸ *Die Jungmadelschaft, Blätter für Heimabendgestaltung der Jungmaedel*, Ausgabe A, October 1938, Trans. Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

understand that German was bigger than just its borders. There were other girls just like them working for the same values and goals.

Girls were not the only ones being indoctrinated by German youth groups. Young boys were also programmed from an early age to follow Party lines. The young boys had a magazine similar to the BDM's called *The Pimpfs*. In January 1937 an article was published in *The Pimpfs* describing the type of boy the Hitler Youth wanted. "This is the type we hate – the pint sized grownup in a Manchester suit, collar, and tie, with a white handkerchief in the breast pocket, dressed to the nines – a delight to his aunts. We prefer a real boy."¹⁷⁹ The article tells an old legend of a farmer who had three sons who fought each other over everything. The farmer as he was dying took a bundle of sticks and showed the boys how each stick can be broken individually, but when put together will not even bend. He told the boys to be like the sticks and stay strong together. The sons stood together, then as a community, and no one was ever able to defeat them.¹⁸⁰ The Hitler Youth wanted strong militarized boys who would band together to keep Germany strong and unbending like the sticks in the story. They did not want boys who were seen as too well educated or cultured to be the rough and tumble boys who would be needed in the military later in life. It was equally important for the Nazi party that boys be raised to be strong and "masculine" as they were raising girls to be nurturing mothers.

Encouraging masculinity in boys and femininity in girls was necessary to keep genders in their rightful places in the public and private spheres, respectively. The Nazi

¹⁷⁹ January 1937, *Morgan*, "He, ihr da! Jetzt geht;s einen anderen Weg!," Trans. Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

¹⁸⁰ January 1937, *Morgan*, "He, ihr da! Jetzt geht;s einen anderen Weg!," Trans. Randall Bytwerk, Calvin German Propaganda Archive.

Party wanted to keep the traditional gender lines that became deeply imbedded during the nineteenth century with the rise of Victorian values. The bourgeois family was, by most historians perceived to be split along strict gender lines of who had what tasks and responsibilities. There was a strong desire to separate themselves from the working class families in which both men and women had to be a part of the public world while at the same time separating themselves from the aristocracy that did not require either spouse to work. This helped establish strong opinions of masculinity and femininity in bourgeois culture. The masculine role was to work and provide for the family, while the feminine role was to provide a peaceful and loving retreat for the working husband. Historians that argue that separate spheres was not only the desired ideology but was grounded in reality are considered to be more traditionally minded drawing on the Jürgen Habermas' distinction between the public and private world. Not all historians agree that women actually kept themselves to the private sphere, but most agree that the separate spheres idea was considered to be the Victorian's ideal way to structure society.

The Nazi Party wanted to structure German society as best as possible within these gendered spheres. The boys were being told that they needed to be masculine and ready to fight on the battlefield at a moments notice. The girls were also being told to be strong, but for very different reasons. Girls would be the ones to fight the war at home. The "battle for the cradle" as it was often coined in propaganda, would be their war to fight and they needed to be strong and well educated in order to help grow the population. Young girls were important to the Nazis because the Party was deeply concerned with population growth and race. Girls needed to be raised to be the mothers that they would need for the German race to grow. If the Nazi ideal of seeing all women

working within the private sphere, raising a gaggle of children was to be realized they had to instill a cult of motherhood in not only the women, but also the girls who would grow up to be the next generation of mothers for Germany. The German race, according to the Nazis, needed to grow and expand into new territories and that dream was impossible without the cooperation and dedication of women.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Nazi ideals propagated through images and rhetoric worked to combat the progress that women had been making in the Weimar Republic. They wanted a return to a private sphere for women separate from the public sphere of politics that was inhabited by men. The ideal German woman lived her life in three stages, childhood, single adulthood, and motherhood with the first two parts of her life preparing her for her ultimate task of mothering the next generation of Germans. This ideal did not hold up to the realities of an ever-increasing war effort however. The Nazi Party had to allow women into the public sphere to help support the economy and the war effort while the men were away, but it was always with the intention that once Germany saw victory women could return to the homes they had created, surrounded by children.

The Nazi women's magazine *Frauen Warte* combined with speeches and propaganda from the 1930s and 1940s provide a valuable insight into how the Nazi party worked to instill in German women the desire to stay at home and raise babies for the Fuhrer. The Nazi party was concerned with the falling birth rate in the 1920s and set about encouraging women to be mothers soon after they took control of the nation. Women were not only meant to be mothers though. They also had to be racially pure, and have a strong work ethic. Nazi rhetoric that was aimed at women did all it could to glorify women in society, especially women who had children, in order to show how they were supporting women's innate desire to stay at home with their children while men went out and worked. The magazine speaks to women of many different ages and includes articles on a variety of topics.

The Nazi party was patriarchal and entered into German homes as the paternal figure. The party had a strong top down approach to ensuring that its value system was instilled in the German population and that meant indoctrinating women with a new vision toward a cult of motherhood. Using propaganda in magazines, speeches, and posters, the Nazi party created a time of strong anti feminism that ended the surge in women's autonomy from the Weimar period. Joseph Goebbels and Adolf Hitler were cunning and manipulative in their rhetoric. Throughout their speeches they chose to praise women and use endearing terms to convince women that they were women's staunchest supporters who only voiced what they knew in their hearts women wanted. For many of the women in the audience, motherhood and domesticity may not have been the highest goal on their list of desires, but hearing speeches praising them for their potential would have swayed them to the party's policies. In posters women saw the ideal German family portrayed countless times, and again, women were praised for their motherly instincts and capabilities. Motherhood was their natural God given role. In *Frauen Warte* and other Nazi magazines, women were inundated with articles on how to be the best German woman possible, and make the Fuhrer proud.

The ideal of the woman staying in the home while the men went out into the public sphere is an ideal that was already deeply rooted in European society by the time the Nazi Party came to power. The Victorian Bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century helped the ideology of "separate spheres" become the norm in society. Women were already used to being told that the home was their domain, that they were the best ones suited for creating a comfortable and relaxing private world for their families. While the reality of separate spheres has been debated among historians, there are few who argue

that it was not the ideal or the prescription given to the middle classes. Women may not have always been able to refrain from working, managing businesses with or for their husbands, or taking care of land however, it was not what good, well to do Bourgeois women were supposed to be doing with their time.

The Nazi Party did not only focus on indoctrinating women with National Socialists' beliefs, but they also worked to ensure the young girls would grow up to be the ideal German woman some day. Children were important to the Nazi Party just as they are to any society; they are the future. The Nazi party took the education and indoctrination of children very seriously and worked to ensure that all children, boys and girls, were educated on the importance of race and gender roles in society. Membership in the German youth programs was in essence mandatory. The girls who were a part of the League of German girls learned the skills they would need to be the ideal German woman and mother. They learned how to keep a home, how to nurture others, and how to be physically strong in order to help bring about a stronger Germany.

The sudden change in rhetoric being put forward from the German government was at times difficult for women to stomach, however, many women went along with the Nazi party and even participated in party activities. Women's rallies were attended in high numbers, and there were women who were able to procure positions in the higher echelons of the party, but only if they were willing to submit to male authorities. Women were not openly allowed free reign in these positions. The women that did submit to male authority and were able to gain position in party leadership, such as Gertrud Scholz-Klink, did not feel that they were in anyway less than their male counterparts however. They continues to preach that women belonged in the home with their children even as

they themselves were speaking in front of thousands of women acting as a voice for the Nazi party.

For the women who chose to resist the Nazi party, their reasons for doing so were not always for feminist reasons, but usually for moral ones. Nearly twenty percent of the women who openly challenged the party did so for religious reasons. Many women, both Catholic and Protestant, found National Socialism to be “ungodly.” A reason for this may have been the Nazis’ treatment of the disabled. Many of the patients who were forcibly sterilized, or put to death, had been under the care of religious organizations.¹⁸¹ One of the most famous cases of resistance to the Nazi regime is the White Rose Movement. A young woman named Sophie Scholl along with her brother and a few other students printed anti-Nazi leaflets and distributed them at school. They were caught, and Sophie Scholl was executed for treason.

For women who chose to oppose the Nazi beliefs against women in the work place, high paying jobs were not uncommon. The Nazis had taken advantage of foreign workers in factories, and because of race policies German women could not work among them. The women who took positions at factories then were put in higher up, high paying positions.¹⁸² After the war began there was an increasing number of positions that needed to be filled, and with so many of the nation’s men at war, women were able to find employment once again.

The most successful place for women to oppose the Nazi regime was within their own homes. These women were not necessarily resisting the ideology of motherhood above all, but other aspects of the Nazi regime. These were women who refused to

¹⁸¹ Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich* 130.

¹⁸² Stibe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 141.

divorce their Jewish husbands, would not allow the denunciation of handicapped children, or refused to let their children join the Nazi youth organizations.¹⁸³ In 1943 two hundred Jewish men were rounded up for deportations. Their Gentile wives discovered where they were being held and went to bring food and clothing to them. These women stood outside the building screaming for their husbands' release.¹⁸⁴ Their stubbornness and courage in protest freed their men. Women were not always vocal about their anger towards the Third Reich, but many did have the tenacity to speak out against what they saw happening to themselves, and others. They rebelled against the Nazi party's entrance into the home with their refusal to conform to Nazi party policy.

Even within the Nazi party there were women who disagreed with the official party stance on women. Female militants from within sought to remind their male counterparts of the good that women can do. These women chose to remind the Nazi party of the how much women had accomplished for Germany in the past, instead of focusing on the ideals of the future. They argued that women should be highly educated if they are to cultivate the next generation of Germans, and if accomplishment is the cornerstone of the party, than women should be allowed to make personal achievements as well.¹⁸⁵ Women wanted to be seen and heard. They believed that they had more to offer the Fuhrer than just their childrearing abilities. They published a journal called *Die deutsche Kämpferin*, which openly opposed the Nazi policies. Shortly after the party began to fire women from their jobs in order to higher men in 1934, the journal published an article claiming the only things left to women were "suicide or prostitution."¹⁸⁶ These

¹⁸³ Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 142.

¹⁸⁴ Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 337.

¹⁸⁵ Rupp, "Mother of the 'Volk'," 365-66.

¹⁸⁶ Rubb, "Mother of the Volk," 367.

women believed that without opportunities in the public sphere, there was nothing left for women to strive for.

There were consequences for women who chose not to conform to the Nazi party ideals. Sometimes repercussions were quiet and not direct. For example, if a woman's husband owned a shop or business of any kind, and she made a remark against the party, his store would lose business and possibly have to close.¹⁸⁷ Other times punishments could be much harsher. Women who spoke or acted out could face months of hard labor. For women who openly resisted the party's ideals such as previously mentioned Sophie Scholl, the consequence was death. When asked why women acted in resistance to the party, Doris Masse in 1970 responded, "Not to oppose fascism would have been unthinkable... Either you had your beliefs or you did not. If you did, well, you just had to pay the consequences."¹⁸⁸

Finding stories of average German women who disagreed with the Nazi's anti-feminist rhetoric is difficult. Most women who kept diaries or wrote memoirs of the time focused more on what was going on to their families, and neighbors. They tell the horrors of war, and the devastation of its aftermath. Their beliefs and opinions on the politics of National Socialism are not typically written about. It is much easier to find stories of women who resisted the other aspects of Nazism such as the Eugenics program of anti-Semitism. Women did not have their own resistance groups; they joined the men in the underground resistance organizations during war.¹⁸⁹ However, it is possible to gauge the dissatisfaction women had with the party as a whole by looking at their attitudes toward resistance.

¹⁸⁷ Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 313.

¹⁸⁸ Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 343.

¹⁸⁹ Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 311.

Many women are not addressed in Nazi propaganda. They are warned against perhaps, but they are not part of the demographic that the Party was trying to reach. Women who were disabled, Roma and Sinti, homosexual women and Jewish women were not part of the target audience for Nazi propaganda. They had no place in the idealized worldview the Nazis had created. They were largely ignored if not outright persecuted. There was another part of the female population that was also left out, but was not seen as being an “other” in the way that the previously mentioned groups were.

A glaring absence in *Frauen Warte* though is the presence of elderly women. There are very few articles that discuss how older women can play a role in German society. The only images of elderly women are when people are praising their mothers such as in the Mother’s Day issue of 1940 in which Josef Magnus Wehner praises his mother as having the greatest maternal heart. He discusses how much he misses having his mother around after she passed away.¹⁹⁰ There are several pictures of elderly women on the farms tending to gardens and taking care of livestock, but there are few articles that mention them. A few things could account for the absence of articles on the elderly women of Germany. The elderly generation had been through the First World War and the Weimar Republic tainted those that survived in the eyes of the Nazi party. Another reason for their absence could be that the magazine was intended for women of their childbearing years.

There is one other theory as to why the elderly are not a focus of discussion in the magazine. Older women who were well past their childbearing years and may not act as active grandmothers anymore were dismissed as useless. They had served their purpose to the state in their younger years by having children and perhaps continued to help when

¹⁹⁰ 1940, *Frauen Warte*, “Die Grosse Mutterliche Herz,” University of Heidelberg Archive.

their children had children. When the little ones were grown though and the matriarchs were reaching their twilight years however, they were no longer needed. The Nazi Party was focused on the young and strong, those who had something tangible they could provide for society, and elderly women did not have that anymore. Their time as mothers and homemakers was over.

Prior to the 1930s women had been breaking away from their prescribed life of domesticity to some extent. The rise of the New Woman as a figure for new female autonomy was gaining popularity and women were beginning to follow her in a pursuit of a life that did not revolve around a husband and children. Many in Germany were concerned about what would happen if women were allowed to continue to gain independence. The National Socialists came to power and used that concern to promote their racial policy that required women to stay in the private sphere and help grow the population of a “superior” race. Mothers were praised above all other women and having multiple children became the best thing a woman could do for her country. Nazi propaganda focused on how wonderful children were and how women were perfectly suited to take the role as primary caregiver while their husbands worked. Even during the war when women were called to work in the factories the propaganda made sure to praise women for the difficult sacrifice they were making by being away from their home and children.

The Nazi party was effective in their plan to return women to the home for a time, but ultimately Germany’s need for workers during wartime pulled women back out of domesticity. Nazi policy and rhetoric had to change slightly to accommodate practical experiences during the war. However, no matter how many women left home for the

factories, the party never abandoned its belief and rhetoric that motherhood was the true and proper place for good German women. The party encouraged motherhood throughout its time in power and worked to indoctrinate even the young women and girls with the ideals of the party regarding their gender. Nazi party officials used their propaganda branch to repeatedly overwhelm women with images of motherhood and domesticity in order to keep women in the home, and men in the public world.

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