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BLONDE? PRETTY? GIVE BIRTH FOR THE FÜHRER!:
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN NATIONAL SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA 1933-1939

by

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Abstract

The Third Reich is one of the most notorious government regimes the world has ever encountered and created problems that humanity had never anticipated in the modern world. Yet many aspects of the government policy before WWII are left unexplored, including the role of women in the Nazi take-over of Germany. Why were women important? What role did they play in the National Socialist policy and German life? In fact women were one of the most important intended audiences of Hitler’s plans. It was women that would give him the vote into the government of the Weimar Republic, support his perspective of traditional housewife, and most importantly the continuation of his ideas through a genetically pure generation of offspring. Because of these plans several propaganda campaigns would be conducted through a myriad of outlets, presenting a perspective of a pure nationalist state supported by the strong women of the Reich. It was these plans, from the campaign posters of 1933 to the personalized Nazi Women magazines that present a clear picture of Nazi policy towards women and their importance in the plan of Lebensraum and Germany supremacy.
To My Father

The most important man in my life,

the first inspiration in my pursuit of history,

and my loving hero.
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Hundreds of women and men awaited entrance to one of the first Women’s Conventions on March 18th, 1933. Joseph Goebbels, the newly appointed head of the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda and People’s Enlightenment, stood before them and gave a speech. “This is the beginning of a new German womanhood,” he stated, “If the nation once again has mothers who proudly and freely choose motherhood, it cannot perish. If the woman is healthy, the people will be healthy.” As he ended the speech, it became apparent exactly how the rising regime viewed women: “Woe to the nation that neglects its women and mothers. It condemns itself.” Although this group would spend the day enjoying exhibits celebrating the role of motherhood and the traditional housewife, the extent of the Nazi Propaganda campaign to reinforce the concept was not readily apparent.

When speaking of Nazi Germany and the mass atrocities committed by the government before and throughout WWII, it is easy to forget the circumstance and desperation that Germany faced after losing WWI. Remembering the heinous crimes for the sake of honoring the victims is important. However, it is also vital to understand how the perpetrators came to power and how they operated in order to stop similar groups in the future. This paper examines the context of the election of 1933 and how the Nazis gained power afterwards. After losing WWI, Germany was placed officially at fault for the conflict and severely handicapped economically and politically by the Treaty of Versailles. The population loss from the conflict was staggering and left many sectors of the economy with a lack of human resources other than the women that had filled the positions on a presumed temporary basis during the war. As a result of losing the national wealth invested into the Alsace-Lorraine region and the clause prohibiting steel production, Germany had no possible way of rebuilding its own economy or repaying the massive war-time debts assigned to them. These were only a few of the critical situations that
led to the depression that overtook Germany shortly after the war. Nation-wide depressions can lead people to making desperate decisions for the sake of change, regardless of personal political issues with parties. The National Socialist Party on the ballot of the 1933 election was offering jobs, food, and stability for a nation that was facing great internal instability. The poorly equipped Weimar Republic could offer very little to the German people besides promises of political freedoms and the possibility of a brighter future through diplomacy. Unfortunately, none of these freedoms could provide food to a starving population, jobs to the unemployed and destitute, or safety from rampant gangs. The German people, struggling to give up their freedoms, still knew that something had to be done in order to reestablish the economy and strength of the *Vaterland*. Many testimonies from the women of their period indicated they simply wanted change and the National Socialists were promising the most. Although many of these women indicated they disagreed with the individual policies of Hitler’s party, very few were aware of how far his regime would carry out the more radical ideas of *Mein Kampf*.

To achieve what Hitler saw as the greater good - genetic purification of the state - would require cooperation and dedication of Germany’s female population. From women managing their households to those enjoying their newly won political and workforce freedoms, the Nazis had a monumental task of establishing their ideal role for the entire population of women. Regarding whether or not they were successful is not the point of this paper; instead, its function is to analyze and present multiple examples of the massive woman-oriented propaganda campaign. This genre was created for women of all social stations and changing the public image of the female population in the Weimar Republic and subsequent generations. This paper will only analyze propaganda examples from 1930 to 1939 because the second war was a state-changing event that shook the foundation of not only the people but the government and its
philosophies. It is during this period that the Third Reich was able to utilize its resources from its growing power base and focus on establishing its ideal state without the inconvenient drain of war. During this time it is very apparent that the National Socialists were convinced that a stronger, more genetically pure people could be established into a working patriotic machine. It was these people, they believed, that would firmly rebuild the broken nation of Germany. Their plan therefore required the cooperation of women deemed suited for the cause.

Some historians argue that the Nazis were primarily sexist in their policies towards women. That ousting women from the workforce and placing them in positions that socially pressured them into the stereotypical housewife and mother was the main goal. However it is more logical to view the overall plan of the Nazi party as a racial renovation of the German state with little regard to human rights. This was not sexist, but a means to meet an end. The policy required females because of their ability to reproduce and their expected/forced role in the home to support the regime. Therefore the plan was inherently sexist, but motivationally racist in nature. However, this reduces the vast nature of the indoctrination of the German state as well. Women were encouraged to have as many healthy children as possible within certain parameters. Simplifying the Nazi perspective to women being fertile subjects, however, leaves out the larger and more complex picture of the regime's efforts to overthrow an entire generation of democracy and to place themselves within every household and every mind in the country. Nazis created an entire genre of propaganda targeted (sometimes primarily and other times indirectly) at Aryan women and their role as homemakers and mothers of the nation in hopes of preserving their legacy. Nazis understood that in order to accomplish longevity, it would require the cooperation and enthusiasm of women across the German state.
The National Socialist Party had three primary generations of women to target, either for or against, in order to gain power: the independent feminists of the Weimar Republic, the younger marriage-eligible females born within the time of the Weimar Republic, and the young girls born then and in the future. Each of these generations held the keys to the National Socialists rising to power and realizing their dreams as a dominant and pure state that would last through the ages. These propaganda campaigns had to present a perspective and a justification for the invasion of the ‘private’ sphere of the home from the ‘public’ and political sphere. It was evident and crucial that a campaign involving a myriad of mediums be conducted to convince everyone, especially women, that the Nazis knew the truth path to the Nation’s stability and prosperity.

The Problematic Feminists

The Feminist movement in Germany gave women the chance to realize the possibility of leaving the tradition roles that had been expected of them. This movement had been established long before the beginning of the war in 1894\(^2\), and suffrage was granted to women in 1919 to those ages twenty and above as a result of their efforts.\(^3\) Later, during the Weimar Republic, images would come from around the world of vivacious and independent women. From the American cigarette-smoking flapper on the movie screen to the working women of the Bolshevik revolution, these iconic images encouraged German women to reject the tradition role of housewives and to become part of public life. This kind of power and opportunity afforded to women through both the feminist movement and ideas in the media became fundamental issues for the doctrine of the National Socialist Party before it gained complete power in the 1930’s.
Throughout the Weimar Republic women enjoyed broad political freedoms, including the right to hold office. Since its establishment after the First World War, the Weimar Republic was entrenched with women who received political and social freedoms through the tragedy of the First World War. As noted in *Die politische Rolle der Frau*, between the years 1919 and 1933 over one hundred women served in the Reichstag as deputies, and only one of the political parties present had no women represented: the Nazi party. Much like the American front, German women had to step up and take the place of all of the men who left to serve in the conflict. However, after the war was over Germany suffered economically in the work sector. Not only was there a loss of over a million and a half men dead, but there was an addition of many psychologically and physically handicapped veterans returning home that were incapable of work for the rest of their lives. These events simultaneously gave the opportunity for women to remain in the workforce and public life, and at the same time forced them to remain because of the shortage of viable manpower.

These women were a thorn in the policy of the National Socialist Party. The war had created a situation that was any anti-feminist group’s nightmare; women were empowered and enlightened at the same time. Their votes were vital to gain greater power in the Reichstag due to their prominence in the population in Germany and the low birth-rate. However, they represented part of the antithesis of what Nazi leaders saw as the fundamental problem with post-war Germany; the compromise of the pure blood and longevity of the German race. In the Nazis’ perspective, these women’s choices to get a career and not honor the traditional role of housewife to produce children for the state stole jobs from men and reduced the population in a time when Germany’s birthrate was already drastically low. As stated by Mathew Stibbe, numbers of live births per 1,000 women dropped from 128.0 in 1912 to 90.0 a mere decade
later, continuing to drop until 1933 when it was only 58.9.\textsuperscript{5} This presented a dual challenge to the party in the propaganda campaign: convincing the Feminists and other women that their hard-won right to run for public office and to work outside the home were unnecessary and detrimental to the cause of building Germany back up, and that their absence from the home and preoccupation with equality was taking away from their natural duty to give birth. The National Socialist party also had to prove their perspective that the Feminist doctrine was counterproductive to a prosperous future to the general populous.

The Nazis took several routes to address this problem. The three most prominent were the political posters that were hung throughout the campaign for the National Socialist party for the Reichstag throughout the late 1920’s and the early 1930’s, speeches given by prominent figures of the party during the elections, and the establishment of the National Socialist Women’s League by female members to influence other women and its subsequent acknowledgment by the regime. All of these venues would be a convenient way to not only advocate the vote of those women that were part of this problem, but to encourage the younger generation of women who were born in the Weimar Republic to vote for the National Socialists. Younger women of the Weimar Republic were viewed to have little to no appreciation for the rights won by the older candidates in the Reichstag and in the workforce. In the face of national desperation, they would readily give up their vote for the aspect of food and stability being offered by the party.

One of the most powerful of the propaganda devices used by the Nazis were poster campaigns. The visual art and wording were masterfully structured to create an impression on their intended audience. In the case of the women holding voting rights in the later Weimar Republic, the National Socialists created an entire series of posters for the 1932 elections. The
powerful imagery and sharp fonts of most of the posters was a sharp contrast to a particular series that bore a softer background and elegant lettering with pictures of relieved and confident women. A prominent example of this theme was a poster that was hung during the elections in July (figure 1). Instead of a harsh contrast of red on black with the warlike and violent image of the Eagle grasping the swastika that was common on the other posters, this one has a simple white-washed background with red lettering. It depicts the heads of two women who both have different expressions that add to the strength of the message: “We women vote for list 2: The National Socialists”. The first woman with blonde hair looks upon the audience with a confident smile, implying her faith in both her vote and the party. Below her is the imploring gaze of the second brunette staring into the distance, as if wondering about the future of the state. The emphasis on their European features and their belief in the Nazi regime was intended to gain the votes and approval of women throughout the republic.

Title: Unknown
Propaganda Type: Election Poster
Dated: July 1933
Text: “We Women vote for list 2, National Socialists”
Source: Permission for reproduction obtained from Dr. Tom Bryder, Professor of Political Science at the University of Copenhagen, personal archival research collection
Another series of posters would be produced in order to fight the image of the independent woman and pop culture that was abundant abroad. More specifically, these posters would emphasize the evils of Bolshevik-ruled Russia and the idea of the ‘anti-mother’. One such poster emphasized the evils of Communist ideals as opposed to the National Socialist ideals, specifically addressing mothers in the beginning text. Although directed at the “Red War” and fighting communism, the line noting “Race or Half-Breed” and the emphasis of mother associated with Germany is a clear indication of the rhetoric revolving around the reproductive responsibilities of women and the perceived need of them to protect it against such poisonous ideologies as the Communist regime.

In October of 1931 the NS-Frauenschaft (National Socialist Women’s League) was established, later becoming extremely active towards the beginning of Hitler’s campaign for presidency, and later Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933. This was not the first female National
Socialist group to be created, but it was introduced as a way for all the women’s organizations in Germany to come under central control of the Nazi regime. Their main rhetorical goals were to win over the female vote through legal means and to subordinate all females to duties that would serve the all-male government. This group was encouraged by the regime to gather together to do everything that involved their roles as homemakers, but were specifically forbidden to do anything political. In 1933 an official set of guidelines were established for the group and the fundamental beliefs of the role of women were firmly stated. The Principles and Organizational Guidelines of the National Socialist Women’s League consisted of seven rules. The first called for “an awakening, a renewal, and reeducation of women” specifically stating that the women’s position in society and state must be “directed towards the physical and spiritual task of motherhood”. However the second rule indicated specifically the stance of the Third Reich towards the women of the Weimar Republic:

We recognize that the great transformational process of women’s lives over the last fifty years, due to the machine age, has brought about a certain necessity, and we accept the education and official integration of the female work force in the interest of the nation, unless this prohibits them from performing their duty within the Volk in terms of marriage, family and motherhood.

These ideals seem completely contradictory to the Nazi regime, but they were intended to both appease those women who had been part of the workforce and at the same time encourage them to accept the premises of the party. However, the final line indicated the true nature of what the National Socialists expected and encouraged in women, condemning the feminist ideals that were so predominant before.
Ultimately the anti-feminist rhetoric used in campaigning proved to be effective because of the inability of the feminist movement to prove itself a necessity in the face of depression. The fight against the women in public office, the workforce, and the feminist movement was heavily emphasized in the campaigning speeches of the Nazi officials. Hitler himself, campaigning for presidency against Hindenburg in 1932, promised that he would oust 800,000 women from the public sector within to make way for unemployed men. Although this may sound like an unappealing tactic, throughout 1930 in the depression over 1/3 of Germany’s male population had been laid off from work. Nazis used this relentlessly in their debates, claiming that women remained at their posts because their purportedly received only 66% of the wages men earned. The threat and turmoil that the depression had caused to the public encouraged the people, especially women, to turn to more practical issues of survival over the equality platform that had been such an issue only a few decades before. Ultimately the Nazis' emphasis on the economic crisis and how it was partly the fault of the feminists was used as a means to gain votes from women. This momentum continued six months later, when Hitler took control of the government and declared himself dictator.

The Campaign for the Aryan Mother

Hitler understood that women were the key to the future of the Nazi regime. He and other officials recognized that the low-birth rate and the previous freedoms enjoyed by the female population were counterproductive to his ideals and would prove a challenge to overcome. Therefore the propaganda tailored for women was carefully developed to promote the Nazi philosophy of women’s place in society; genetically ideal women coupling with equally ideal men, giving birth, raising those children and instilling unwavering loyalty to the Führer and the Reich. Everything from radio addresses made on Hitler’s birthday, posters hung in public
view, to storybooks handed out all concentrated on the development of the ideal family and the responsibility of the Aryan women to serve their country by producing the next generation of Nazis.

The Ministry of Propaganda and the People’s Enlightenment under the leadership of Goebbels and the Führer were careful to emphasize that women were not equal to, but partners, of men. What this entailed was that women were not necessarily unequal, but naturally fitted for other duties (primarily of the home). “We do not see the woman as inferior, but rather as having a different mission, a different value, than that of the man.” said Goebbels in his first address after his appointment as Minister of Propaganda.12

Many of the German leaders would emphasize the difference between the freedoms enjoyed by women throughout the Weimar Republic, and how those were destructive to the German Nation’s future. Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, the leader of the Nazi Woman’s league emphasized this in her speech *To Be German is to Be Strong*, given at the New Year’s celebration of 1936. “In the bad 14 years between 1918 and 1933, motherhood was often robbed of its deepest meaning and reduced to something superficial, something that was even held in contempt.” She continued to emphasize the importance of the child by saying, “Instead of a child being seen as the deepest affirmation of the woman and of life, it was seen as a burden.” Later on in the speech, she gripped the attention of her audience as she stated the purpose and the intended path of those in the organization:

It is therefore our task to awaken once again the sense of the divine, to make the calling to motherhood the way through which the German woman will see her calling to be
mother of the nation. She will then not live her life selfishly, but in service to her people.\textsuperscript{13}

The station of women versus men was brilliantly constructed in many of the speeches given through the years of 1933 to 1939. The National Socialists understood that it was a delicate balance that had to be achieved in order to reinforce the traditional role of the mother in their program. For example, the oath to Adolf Hitler given by Rudolf Hess to a mass of nearly a million German Nazi officials on February 25\textsuperscript{th} 1934 is prudently structured in an equality of the mention of both men and women at the beginning, and then slowly slips into emphasizing the importance of the male youth produced by the female citizens.

The oath to Hitler was not only taken by millions, but it was broadcast as far as possible to the corners of Germany on a holiday recognizing the fallen soldiers of the War. The regime knew that this would reach thousands of homes and including the female public, and therefore the address was carefully structured to fit the entirety of this audience. He began by stating: “German men, German women, German boys, German girls, over a million of you are gathered in many places in all of Germany!”\textsuperscript{14} Note how the male counterparts are mentioned first to the female ones mentioned directly afterwards. Hence he gave due credit to both to please and directly address the female public, but at the same time the importance of the male figure remained at the forefront and reinforced the partnership of the female counterpart to every male. This emphasis continued throughout the speech, in the reflection on the holiday and the role of the mother: “We do not want to forget the mothers, women and children who gave their dearest, often their provider, and bear their fate with quiet heroism…the quiet sacrifices of mothers and women are holy examples for their loyalty to us Germans.”\textsuperscript{15} Once again the oath reinforced the
importance of the male by stating the sacrifice of the “provider” by the women, and the holiness of mothers in their example as loyal citizens of Germany.

Women that would take this oath were reassured with the emphasis on their role as partners to their powerful male counterpart and providers of the future generation. Goebbels made other statements that would reinforce this belief: “Although I agree with Treitschke that men make history, I do not forget that women raise boys to manhood.” Their important role in the plan as females and their loyalty to the Führer that would pass onto their children was a vital part of this oath. This loyalty was considered essential in their role as caretakers and mothers of the next generation of Germans.

Aryan Mothers and Marriage Protocol for Favorable Genetic Product

Marriage, the first socially acceptable step towards making children in the Nazi belief, was a vital aspect of the propaganda directed towards the women considered of marriageable age in the 1930’s. The Nazi Racial Bureau released ten basic rules for these young women to follow when choosing a husband. The first rule, “Remember you are German,” echoed the racial policy of the party and their emphasis on racial purity. The next two rules emphasized the importance of purity for women by stating that women had to remain pure in mind, spirit and body; “Remain pure in mind and spirit!” and “Keep your body pure!” These rules were encouraged amongst the women through the regime, but also socially enforced by the propaganda that was directed at the men such as this statement in Das Wissen der Nation, or handbook to address racial issues: “Every Aryan hero should marry only a blonde Aryan woman with blue, wide-open eyes, a long oval face, a pink and white skin, a narrow nose, a small mouth, and under all circumstances virginal.” “If hereditarily fit, do not remain single!” stated the
second rule, emphasizing the importance of the woman to marry against the ideals promoted by the feminists throughout the time before and during the Weimar Republic.\textsuperscript{20} The next three are an odd pair, yet very exemplary of the contradictory ideas of the Nazi regime: “Only marry for love!”, “Being a German, only choose a spouse of similar or related blood!”, and “When choosing your spouse, inquire into his or her forebears!”\textsuperscript{21} So although the first of these three encourages the whims and fancies of romance, it warns very sternly with the following rules that they must be genetically fit for the children that will be produced from the union. Greg Zeimer emphasized this genetic requirement in \textit{Education for Death}:

‘When does the Nazi Party become interesting in the German child? I asked a high official in the imposing office of Bladur van Schirach… ‘Before it is conceived,’ was the quick answer… He saw my astonishment and explained in detail that there would be little use in the driving out the impure Jew if Germany did not make a scientific effort to prevent undesirables from being born. Hitler wanted a super-race; this could result only from mating of healthy individuals.’\textsuperscript{22}

These kinds of rules were enforced by the \textit{Gesundheitstamt}, or health office, that would regulate marriages by examining those applying for marriage. Those who were genetically fit for marriage were granted incentives of child education, marriage loans, and the right to marry and breed.\textsuperscript{23} Women that fit these credentials and performed well by producing many strong and healthy children were awarded a medal called the \textit{Mutterkreuz}, the regime’s way of honoring prolific mothers (see figure 3).\textsuperscript{24} The Honor Cross of the German Mother was designed after the Iron Cross (the highest military honor possible) and was granted to women who gave birth and raised four or more children.\textsuperscript{25} Each of these children were scrutinized closely, especially their heritage. In the guidelines for the choice of mothers who can be nominated the children were
expected to “meet the requirements of being able to function as capable racial comrades within the people’s community.” Among those who were disqualified were women with prison records, anyone who conducted themselves outside the honor of German mothers (getting abortions, prostituting, dissent, and other non-punishable offenses that were socially unacceptable), those with a history of hereditary illness, and even those who behaved in an asocial manner or were part of an asocial family.

The next rule emphasized the important of physical beauty, “Health is essential to the outward beauty as well!” This point was emphasized constantly by the regime in speeches such as this quote taken from Joseph Goebbels in Munich in 1939:

Woman has the task of being beautiful and bringing children into the world, and this is by no means as coarse and old-fashioned as one might think. The female bird preens herself for her mate and hatches her eggs for him. In exchange, the mate takes care of gathering the food and stands guard and wards off the enemy.

Another testimony, a personal memoir of Greg Ziemer in *Education for Death*, attested to this emphasis on the physical appearance of females for mating:
She (the Principle of the school) told me that the Führer wanted the girls to feel that their bodies were more important for the State than their minds. He wanted girls to be proud of their bodies. He wanted them to get interested in the bodies of their sweethearts. If a girl had a healthy body, fit for childbirth, she should be proud to display it to advantage.26

The seventh rule emphasized dedication to the marriage, and therefore a stronger structure within the family by stating: “Seek a companion in marriage, not a playmate.”27 This not only reinforced the nuclear family structure by avoiding marital instability, but in essence reinforced the structure of the state. Last but not least, the very point of marriage in the National Socialist program: “Hope for as many children as possible! Your duty is to produce at least four offspring in order to ensure the future of the national stock.”28 Bearing children was one of two roles of the Aryan mother in Germany according to the Führer, and hundreds of speakers backed up this concept, women and men alike. Gertrude Scholtz-Klink stated as much in her address at the Nuremberg Rally in 1938:

If a people is guided by a worldview that puts its faith in the future on a banner, and this people does all in its power to ensure this future, then the source of its future has every right to protection and help: mothers who have many children.29

These rules in essence were directed at women and enforced by the party through means of institutions such as the Gesundheitsamt and speakers for the organizations that would influence women. This kind of policy was directly tied with the goals of the Nazi party and therefore a means by which they tried to influence young German women of their potential of becoming “Mothers of the Nation”.
The Portrayal of Hitler as the Loving Uncle

Leaders are more effective when the people following them can relate to them on a personal level. Veterans could relate to Hitler because he was one of them. Males and Nazi officials alike could relate to him because he was one of them. But how were an entire nation of women, expected to take the role of mother and nurturer, supposed to relate to a terminally single political figure that was asking so much of them? The campaign that implied in effect that women should have children for the Führer, yet without his own the people could be left without an idea of how he reacted and treated them. This was a question that was well-addressed and constant in one propaganda genre revolving around Hitler. The regime used the presence of children around and adoring him to convince not only the German nation of his gentile nature in face of volatile propaganda from abroad, but German mothers of his dedication to the future generation they were expected to bear.

Heinrich Hoffman, Hitler’s personal photographer and close friend, produced a series of books that sold in great numbers throughout Germany in the 1930’s. The first of these was in response to volatile propaganda being spread abroad about the Führer, and was entitled Hitler wie ihn Keiner Kennt (The Hitler Nobody Knows) published for a major Nazi rally in 1933. It explored the personal life of Hitler and included an expanse of over one-hundred photographs of the Führer lounging around with his favorite dog, baby pictures of him including information about his mother and father, and his rise to becoming the benevolent and caring servant of the German people. Throughout this book there are several photographic examples that Hoffman took of Hitler playing with and speaking to children. In each of the photographs, Hitler is almost dramatically emphasizing body language of empathy, love, and kindness towards each of the children with whom he is speaking or interacting. It is reputed by several personal acquaintances
and witnesses that Hitler adored children and often invited them to his personal homes. However, it was the act, use, and publication of the images that created the persona that women could relate to and take comfort in and in essence became a large part of the propaganda campaign. One image in *Hitler wie ihn Keiner Kennt* (see figure 4), features Hitler on vacation and leaned down to a very young boy dressed in traditional lederhosen while a small girl smiles upon the scene from behind. These scenes were exactly what the Reich was trying to communicate to the female population of Germany. By showing to the broader audience that Hitler was being kind, gentle and interested in children it emphasized his connection with the maternal plans of his government. This book made both Hoffman and Hitler extremely rich, and gave the German people a way of seeing into the personal life of their leader, therefore reinforcing his connection to the plight of the country. So to profit further on this idea and to exploit that route of personalization, more books were released with themes at other major rallying events.
*Jugend um Hitler* (Children around Hitler) was released the following year in 1934 after the blow-out success of its predecessor (see figure 5). This book was also extremely lucrative for the producers and popular amongst the German people, and widely promoted the concept of Hitler as the loving caretaker of the children of Germany. This goal of promoting Hitler as the family-friendly and child-loving political leader was apparent even on the cover portraying Hitler surrounded by children in tradition Bavarian dress. Each of the children look happy and Hitler is smiling as he holds a bouquet given to him by the group. Even Hoffman, the author, stands in the background smiling as he looks onto the scene reinforcing his authenticity to the audience as a first-hand witness of Hitler’s behaviors, lifestyle and personality.

The text included 120 photographs taken by Heinrich Hoffman and captions written by Baldur V. Schirach, the appointed leader of the Hitler Youth. These photographs were masterfully organized and placed into the book with little to no context other than the story that Schirach would provide about the benevolent and friendly nature of Hitler with children. One such example is a photograph depicting Hitler holding the hand of a small and cheery young girl
walking down a pathway towards the photographer (see figure 6).

From: Jugend um Hitler (Children around Hitler)
Subject: Hitler meeting Bernile Nienau for the first time amongst a crowd of well-wishers and inviting her for strawberries and sweet cream.
Propaganda Type: Photograph from a storybook sold at major Nazi political rallies
Author/Photographer: Heinrich Hoffman
Date: 1934

This photograph amongst many others would tell a greater story about the leader himself and the dedication of himself and those around him to preserve the efforts of the racial renovation of the Germany state.

The text below the photograph in Jugend um Hitler explained that the Führer had been told that the little girl, amongst a body of well-wishers, was celebrating her birthday on that day. Delighted by her, Hitler personally picked her from the crowd and took her for “cake and strawberries with thick sweet cream” at his personal retreat of Berghof. This little girl, Bernile Nienau, was reputed to quickly find a place in Hitler’s heart as his young sweetheart. Bernile often shared letters with Hitler including drawings, sentiments, and pressed flowers attached to unpublished photographs of the two together. Hitler invited her and her parents often to Berghof and his other estates when he could see her, though it was not often with his busy schedule. Throughout these visits Hoffman took many photographs of the two holding hands, speaking, and embracing like a loving uncle and niece. His photographs published in the book reinforced the image of the leader as a figure filled with fatherly love for the children of his country and
especially those deemed racially pure. After many visits, however, one of Hitler’s staff members researched Bernile’s hereditary past and discovered that her maternal grandmother was Jewish. In light of her impure roots, Hitler was reputedly asked and pressured by his staff to discontinue the many invitations she once enjoyed and altogether revoke her right to visit by Martin Bormann in late 1938. Regardless if the relationship was genuine or staged; it was the reaction to her ancestry that proves that the imagery was meant for the German people as propaganda.

Hoffman used the photographs in his book to create a persona of loving leader of Hitler for the people, especially the women who were expected to provide these children – but it was vital that these children be Aryan and that the imagery supported the government’s agenda towards women. Therefore Bernile, originally a perfect candidate for the stories and the campaign, became a threat and was ultimately removed from the situation.

The series of photographs with Bernile were only one subject of the many inside the photographs of this book. Each image reinforced the concept and political propaganda of Hitler as a friend of the children. From drying the tears of a boy no older than five dressed in traditional Bavarian lederhosen to bending down to the level of a small girl amongst his fellow officers to accept a small bouquet of wildflowers from her hands, each of these photographs enforced the concept that the leader that was calling upon a nation of women to return home and give birth was a leader that loved and adored Aryan children.

This expression of Hitler as a friend of the children was not just limited to this book, but expressed multiple times in speeches given by his leading officials. In the Our Hitler addresses Goebbels gave over the radio on the Führer’s birthday, he would constantly reference the joy of the children and Hitler’s love of them. German families would huddle around the radio and
listen intently to the words of the Minister of Propaganda on this holiday and in his 1936 address he emphasized this special relationship Hitler shared with the youth:

   His relationship to children never ceases to move and amaze us. They approach him with complete trust, and he meets them with the same trust. Children much have the natural ability to know that he belongs to them with heart and soul. Perhaps they realize dimly that he alone is to be thanked for the fact that for German Children, a German life has once again become worth living.35

Women, as mothers of the nation, were expected to listen to these addresses and other speeches and be reaffirmed in their belief that their leader cared deeply for children as human beings as opposed to just being vessels for a genetically pure generation.

   Frauen Warte, the Nazi Magazine for Women

   The NS Frauen Warte was a bi-weekly magazine that was released throughout Germany for middle-aged female Nazi members. It was a pictorial publication and each edition contained a theme reinforcing the Nazis’ campaign to simultaneously subordinate and celebrate women in the position of mother, wife, and caretakers of the household. By 1939 the magazine circulation across Germany alone was over 1.9 million copies every two weeks.36 Many of the articles are comparable to contemporary women’s interest magazines. They contained articles of assumed interest to housewives and mothers about laundry techniques, meal recipes, how to manage children of all ages and other subjects. The definitive difference between these articles and others of the same nature was the overtone of expected loyalty and dedication to the political party who printed it. Many of the articles stimulated social pressure and compliance to the Reich’s management of the private sphere of the home. For example, a simple cleaning article
would be presented in a way that implicated that the condition of the home reflected the
condition of the family and the condition of the family as the base unit of the nation reflected the
stability of the country overall. Women found themselves pressured from magazines intended
for subjects that normally would be of no interest to a political party. Indeed, this magazine
represented the intrusive nature of the Nazi political party into the private lives of its citizens,
especially women. From front to back, this publication was a carefully composed piece of
propaganda meant to ensure, prove, and dictate the stability of the Nazi doctrine inside of every
home in Germany.

One of the most powerful parts of this magazine was the propaganda artwork that graced
the covers. Everything from portraits of happy Aryan families to brilliant portraits of German
military/industrial power were placed on these covers to correlate with the content within to
strengthen the message to the bearers of the future generation of Nazi leaders. Like the political
posters used during the election of the late 1920’s and 30’s, the cover artwork of the *NS Frauen
Warte* represented a broad range of interests that the regime was attempting to make appealing
for the female populations. Likewise the cover art would correlate with an article inside of the
issue. Together the art and the words would form a powerful combination of influence meant for
the women of the party.

Shortly after Hitler’s consolidation of power in 1934, the second edition for February was
released including an article that detailed the role of women in the German state (see figure 7).
Upon the cover stood a well-dressed Nazi officer holding a large and waving flag of the National Socialist state. Behind him, rows upon rows of lush fields grow with a Nazi factory beyond in the vast green hills. The subtitle at the bottom simply states “The Flag is High!” indicating the strength of the nation to not only lead its people politically through a militarily based government, but to strengthen its ability to feed its people and prosper in the contemporary industrial world. This was a perfect combination to a tumultuous beginning of the Third Reich. The depression was still a large issue and Hitler had to establish himself through the promises he had made for the past two elections. By creating this strong image of a German youth, with the flag in front of an industrial landscape, it was a perfectly timed image to reassure the public of the government’s stability and legitimacy. Within this edition was an article entitled: “We Women in the Struggle for Germany’s Renewal.” This piece detailed a stereotypical view of the dedicated female Nazi in the years prior to the rise of Hitler and their role now after he consolidated power.
“The political struggle of recent years was fought with a passionate bitterness because in the end it would determine the survival of our people as a free nation.”

It continued on to describe the strenuous efforts of the dedicated National Socialist women throughout the years of the Weimar Republic through listening to the Führer for the first time and understanding that to invest in a state that would survive it would require that a woman take the worldwide view and give “the whole person, reason and heart, faith and will….” to the cause.

“A woman does not first investigate into the details, but rather is always ready to give her whole personality,” and passionate supporters sensed “their natural role as the preserves of the race, and the teachers of the youth…”

The article indicates that the two major goals of the entire campaign were already sensed by those women who supported the party before it took power. The author directed at her audience a question implying the takeover of Hitler and the establishment of the Nazi regime:

“Does this state, built by strong male hands, have any place at all for us women?”

Her question invokes the nature of women’s positions in Germany despite the arduous duties described before to support the men as they campaigned for the Nazis’ to assume power in the Weimar Republic.

But this was exactly the point behind this article, it was meant as a way for women to understand their subordinate position as the keepers of the house, but to honor them as keepers of the German race that was valued above all other aspects of the regime. The article ends with the answer of the German woman’s place in the new regime by women seeking a higher good to “Join in!”

“Everything is in turmoil, something new is being born. Display the virtues of simplicity, of truth, of loyalty. Form the image of the German woman!”

Another issue that details specific duties for the mother of the German race to take on was a 1936 publication that focused on the new National Socialist educational system. The front
cover featured the picture of a bright-eyed, smiling Aryan boy in a Hitler Youth uniform (see figure 8).

The future generation was spelled out directly as belonging to Hitler. The caption blatantly states that Hitler owned the Children, not to the mothers or to themselves, but the government, state and leader. The regime emphasized the importance of educating the next generation of children, so it was also important to instill into the mothers the same education. This entailed how the government expected the home life to be maintained for these children. Inside the edition was an article that enlightened German parents how the new state-run education system would work. The article never mentions women directly as responsible for the home environment that the German children were to be raised in, but it was implied throughout the piece. The article states “German Parents” over and over again, implying that although the government expected women to stabilize and run the home, the man of the household had ultimate authority over every matter. The overall goal was to imply the incredible responsibility that parents, or the women, had in maintaining the National Socialist ideals in the household. Because men were expected to be supporting the state, community and industry of the land, it was obviously the responsibility of women to produce a home environment conducive for those ideas to thrive. Four specific pillars of the National Socialist education system were outlined throughout the article: Race, Military Training, Leadership and Religion.
The first of these, Race, is by far the strongest emphasized and the basis on which the entire Nazi system was run. The article emphasized that only pure Germans can “have such an understanding of his people…. He must know that without his people he is a miserable nothing…..” Because of the importance laid out in this official document upon race, the pressure on women to produce pure children became clear. This required not only fidelity to her husband at all times, but also pressure to create a household conducive to these beliefs in their children of their racial purity and the superiority that implied. Many of the themes spoken about in this article were emphasized by dozens of other publications of the NS Frauen-Warte, and the cover art emphasized the importance female’s roles in this master plan.

A 1937 edition demonstrated the role of mothers in producing the Aryan and pure child simply by the graphics on the front (see figure 9). A beautiful blonde mother protectively holds her cheerful blonde-haired blue-eyed babe in her arms as an Aryan soldier stands protectively next to them with a sword drawn. This picture demonstrated not only the physical characteristics
of the ideal Aryan family, but the traditional roles they were expected to take. Women are portrayed through the girl as the producers, protectors, and caretakers of the next generation. Men are portrayed as the protectors of the family unit as the base structure of the state (the farmer). A simple image that seems to portray so much was commonplace in the cover art of this magazine.

Referencing the article before, the next pillar was military training. The concept, almost Spartan in nature, is discussed as a vital part of the Nazi youth education. The author heavily presses that it is of the utmost importance that parents understand that curriculum should include physical fitness for the welfare of the state. In fact, it was common in the doctrine of the Third Reich that all citizens of Germany were expected to keep their bodies fit and healthy for the
advantage of the state. For men, this meant remaining capable of serving the state through community activities such as farming and political offices or preparing to endure the physical challenges of battle. The article stressed these points because the assumed participants of the curriculum are male, while females are never mentioned:

They will train our youth in simplicity and cleanliness. 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 prepare their bodies for their future tasks.

This principle was encouraged for women as well throughout the Nazi regime. Physical programs were implemented for women to keep their minds and bodies fit in order to be idealistically worthy to give birth to the strong German race. The cover artwork for the Frauen Warte of June 1939 is a prime example showing four fit women participating in sports with a subtitle lining the bottom reading: “The victory of life is the meaning of the world!” (see figure 10). Both the pillar of education and the other principles expected of women were supportive of the idea of a strong, healthy race of Aryans that would be prepared in both mind and physical body to support the regime at any time they would be called upon.
Many of these standards were expected of women - lead by examples of the young soldiers and/or mothers they were training. Vibrant offspring were expected of healthy mothers that would pass on both the pure genes and the active lifestyle to her offspring to produce a strong German state.

The next pillar listed in the article, Leadership, was specifically meant as a means of indicating the vital importance of the role of females within the home as obedient members of the party. The author indicated in the article that household acceptance of the Reich and obedience to the Führer was essential for family well being. The parent’s role was emphasized as “to exhibit such authority to our youth by strengthening family authority and establishing in our homes a healthy and natural obedience on part of our children.”43 Since men were obviously expected to be serving the state in community, political office, industry, or the armed services, these responsibilities were directed towards women. The system established by the Reich was designed to create a semi-educated, obedient and strong motherhood that would instill the values of the Nazi party into their offspring. From age eight to ten, girls were required to join the
Jungmädel, or the Girl Youth Club (essentially the female counterpart of the Nazi Youth). Once they reached the age of fourteen they would join the BDM (*Bund Düestche Mädel*) the German Girl’s league. Both of these groups would meet weekly to receive political lessons, sing from their official Nazi song books, participate in sports activities, and do assigned charity for the community. Once women reached the age of eighteen, they were expected to either marry, work a year for the Labor Service, or volunteer for a year of service. Oftentimes afterwards they would join local Nazi groups where they settled with their families. They also would join the official women’s group, the *NS Frauenhaft* (in 1936 11 million of the 35 million women in Germany were members).

This system was established to both educate and place women into the ideal position for the Reich – a mother of many children that could seek her out for information. This information, of course, was the information they had been hand-fed since they were the same age and subsequently would pass on. As one official stated, “the good of the whole state depends on whether women understand how to discharge their household duties….and how to look after their children well and to bring them up.” It was with these meetings and the systematic flow of information that women became mothers of the party in their own home. Through this system, the Nazis were creating a tradition that would have assured their doctrine and way of life if the party had survived.

Finally, the last pillar the article emphasized was Religion. The concept of Christianity within the Nazi state was something that was enforced in the education system and expected to be upheld within the home. “We want no shallow and superficial piety, but rather a deep faith that God guides the world,” it stated. Later on, it emphasized that “We want parents to support and strengthen this (a deeply religious education system) by honesty and good example.”
These statements enforced a belief that the household that women were expected to create a deep and abiding faith in God outside of the school’s lessons. While an incredibly touchy subject that has been studied intensely by other historians, it was common that the Nazis spoke of themselves as Protestant. Regardless of contemporary knowledge of their actions, the propaganda of the Third Reich stressed the importance of religious piety within every household. Establishing a deep and abiding faith in God was important to the party and therefore was considered important for women to exemplify in the home.

The overall article about the pillars of National Socialist education emphasized the importance of parents in the household, but did so through the expected role of women. Because the article was printed in the official magazine of female Nazis, it may have indicated parents to establish the overall dominance of men in the world, but it was created for a female audience. This magazine is a perfect example of what the Nazi regime wished to gain from their campaign towards women. The articles in the magazine would discuss neutral items, from household tips to recipes, but primarily conveyed the important message to women of their place in Nazi society. Therefore the continued efforts and funds into the publication of this work and its carefully constructed messages present a clear case of what the Nazi party expected of women: obedience, motherhood, and participation.

Equality in Separate Spheres

According to the campaigns the role of women in the Nazi state was supposed to be equal to or greater than the role of the male counterparts in the society. Many leading officials in the party, not to mention other women, emphasized this point throughout the elections of the late 20’s and 30’s to shortly before the war. These speeches and statements make it readily apparent
that the Nazis truly held to their racist policies so strongly that the policies became inherently sexist. Hitler aptly stated the perspective of the regime on women at the same rally addressing the *NS Frauenschaft*:

> It is said that man’s world is the state, that man’s world is his struggle, and his readiness to serve his community, so we might perhaps say that woman’s world is a smaller one. For her world is her husband, her family, her children and her home…. These two worlds must never stand in opposition to one another.\(^{48}\)

Throughout many of the speeches rises a pattern of rhetoric designed to specifically honor a 19\(^{th}\) century social idea, the separation of the sexes between social spheres. The idea is presented that the traditional role of a female is seen as a homemaker, caretaker of the home and children, and the public arena specified for men. Although this idea was shaken, stirred and completely tossed aside throughout the Weimar Republic and late 19\(^{th}\) century, the Nazis completely altered it and yet left it recognizably the same. Alfred Rosenberg, an early proponent of the regime, wrote this in 1935 to illustrate the point: “The German idea today, in the midst of the collapse of the of the feminized old world, demands: authority, a fine model of strength, the setting of limits, discipline, autarky, protection of the racial character, recognition of the eternal polarity of the sexes.”\(^{49}\)

What the regime created was a hybrid of this social structure by indicating biologically women and men were meant for separate duties in life, yet the state had the right and duty to interfere within the private sphere of the home. So speeches directed at women and the public indicated that the biological duties of women lay in their strengths which were within mothering and homemaking. However, the state created policies that directed women what to teach their
children, compulsory children’s organizations; even state honors, such as the *Mutterkreuz* medal, were withheld from women if they did not represent the spirit of the ‘German Mother.’ A state that indicates a woman’s strengths lie in her ability to manage her household, yet systematically regulates what can and will occur in that household is hypocritical, and yet it worked.

Flattering rhetoric was constantly used in speeches directed towards women to encourage them to think positively about their newly created positions. In fact, many women saw these promises and statements as an advanced status for housewives and women from the destitute positions the depression forced on them. Carefully constructed statements gave them a positive perspective on giving up the right to vote or hold office to return home and give birth to as many children as possible. Oftentimes women were praised for naturally holding an entirely different kind of intellect and state of mind. Hitler often postulated that men arrived to knowledge through intellect and women acquired knowledge by emotions, instincts, feelings and faith. He emphasized this by stating;

> We know that unfathomable intellect can be all too easily led astray, that seemingly intellectual arguments can lead men of low intellect to waver, and that it is precisely then that a woman’s most profound inner instinct of self-preservation and preservation of the ethnic nation awakens. Woman has shown us that she understands what is right! ....Throughout the ages, woman’s feelings and, above all, her nature have complemented man’s intellect.

Even women reflected this sentimental propaganda that categorized them as biologically different. A famous advocate of Hitler’s rise to power, Irene Seydel, was a popular speaker for
women throughout Germany. In 1932, she made this statement to a large female audience in Westphalia speaking of the influence of the Reich on women:

> From my own experience I can tell you about women who have responded to our (Nazi) appeal and begun to see things clearly because they discovered they could once again serve the Fatherland. Women have something to offer their *Volk* – the purity of their hearts and the power of their spirits! Women long to hear that politics emanates from love, and that love means sacrifice….  

She and other women speakers glorified the position that the Nazi regime was creating for women. The Nazis before the election and after consolidating power in 1933 carved out a social structure for their population based on their gender. To convince women of this path officials and proponents of the party exonerated the position of motherhood and complimented females who recognized their ‘biological strengths.’ Although they were proposing a similar policy to a 19th century idea of separate social spheres that would allow females great control of their private lives, the government simultaneously controlled both spheres.

**Conclusion**

Because of its racist policies, the role of Aryan women in the propaganda of the National Socialists during the Weimar Republic and afterwards was prominent. Without the women who were deemed genetically fit, the idea of the superior race and the entire philosophy would fall into oblivion. This was not sexist in nature because Aryan women were not considered less in Nazi society, but they were seen as having a different responsibility and place in the culture. As Adelheid von Saldern eloquently put it, “Aryan women might allegedly be ‘inferior’ to Aryan men but both were members of a supposedly ‘superior race’.” They were identified by Nazi
officials by their sexual fertility and the key to a brighter and more racially pure future. Hitler aptly put in his speech at the Nuremberg Party rally of 1934: “What a man offers in heroism on the field of battle, woman equals with unending perseverance and sacrifice, with unending pain and suffering. Every child she brings into the world is a battle, a battle she wages for the existence of her people….” Women were expected to become the mothers and the builders of the next generation that would continue the Nazi legacy.

The propaganda campaign for these women was not a simple ordeal, but carefully built to cater to a myriad of women – from those who had enjoyed the political freedoms of the Weimar Republic to those who had no appreciation for these freedoms and placed their faith into the party, based on either belief or desperation for change from the destitute condition of their country after WWI. These women were bombarded with films, posters, speeches, books, magazines, official notices and radio programs (to name a few) that pressured them into the ideology of producing as many children as possible and separating themselves from the sphere of public life into the home. Simultaneously the Reich was justifying the separation of the private sphere of the home and the invasion of the public and political sphere. The in depth policies that sought to place women within the home, out of the reach of political and public activism, also sought to invade and force policies within the private life of home. These policies and propaganda pieces would inform them on how to raise their children and conduct their households in order to assure the preservation of the Reich’s ideals. Analyzing these surviving pieces gives invaluable insight into the perspective of one of the most dominating and epic political regimes of the world. Their techniques, strategies and efforts to overhaul a nation and its previous perspective of women are clearly apparent in the propaganda throughout the 1930’s and the height of the Third Reich’s power. This campaign rings out clearly as the essence of
totalitarian racism and the inherent sexism of the system’s policies. Each of these propaganda pieces indicates a part of a culture that meant to use women as a means of producing and sustaining a perfect race and powerful political movement.

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After completing her degree at Utah State she plans to stay on with the faculty here to complete an M.S. in History under the direction of Dr. Cole.