

THE FAMILY IN THE THIRD REICH, 1933 - 1945

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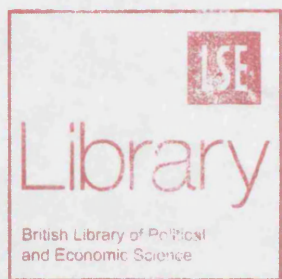
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ABSTRACT

The thesis is a study of Nazi family ideology and policy, and of the impact of the Nazi regime upon different types of family within German society. As such, it tackles an aspect of life in the Third Reich that has until now remained inadequately researched. This thesis advances the study of the subject by adding to existing knowledge, rather than by challenging the literature. It does not claim to answer every remaining question, but rather focuses in more detail on a number of specific areas. It considers the nature of Nazi family ideology, giving an overview of the eugenics movement and of Nazi policies towards the family. This is followed by a consideration of the dissemination of Nazi family ideals, by means of education and socialisation. Beyond these areas, the thesis does not deal with the 'average' or 'ordinary' German family, but focuses on areas that are less well-trodden in the secondary literature. It considers the families at different ends of the spectrum in the Third Reich - the Nazi 'ideal' or 'model' family, the *kinderreich* family, and the 'undesirable' family that did not fit into the *Volksgemeinschaft*. For the latter, 'asocial' and Jewish families are the categories selected for discussion, the former representing the 'socially unfit', and the latter, the 'racially inferior' or 'alien'. The concluding chapter presents an overview of the regime's ultimate legacy for the family in post-1945 Germany, not least the effects of the Second World War. It also gives an overall assessment of the regime's family policy and a discussion of how the Nazi period fits into the framework of the history of the German family.

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PREFACE

My interest in this subject arose from research that I carried out for my MSc dissertation on Nazi and fascist film propaganda. My original plan for the PhD thesis was a study of the film divas of the Third Reich, such as Kristina Söderbaum. However, once I started reading about the role of women in Nazi society in general, I noticed a large gap in the secondary literature on the role of the family, and decided that this would provide the subject of a very interesting research project.

In terms of sources, documents held at the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz have formed the foundation of much of this thesis, in particular from the files of the Nazi Women's Leadership, the *NSV*, the main archive of the *NSDAP*, the Hitler Youth, the Personal Office of the *Reichsführer SS*, the Party Office of the *NSDAP*, as well as *NSDAP* printed sources. Documents from the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich have also been used - in particular, a lengthy manuscript by Robert Kaiser, the leader of the *Reichsbund Deutsche Familie (RDF)*, which is an important document on Nazi family and racial policy, as well as many propaganda leaflets and pamphlets put out by the various Nazi organisations, including the Nazi women's formations and the *NSV*. In addition, the collection of school textbooks from the National Socialist period held at the Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig have been used to examine how schools instilled new National Socialist moral codes and norms into children, thereby removing from parents their traditional role of imbuing their children with values and ideals. A number of newspapers and periodicals from the Nazi era have also been used, including the *NS-Frauenwarte*, *Volk und Rasse*, *Neues Volk*, *Völkischer Beobachter* and *Das Schwarze Korps*, as well as some medical journals, including *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst*. In addition, the Staatsarchiv Bremen provided a wealth of

information on the Nazi treatment of 'asocial' families. Memoirs and testimonies have been used in the chapter on Jewish families, for which archival research was carried out at the Yad Vashem Memorial Foundation in Jerusalem and the Leo Baeck Institute in New York.

I should like to express my gratitude to the British Academy for a three year studentship (1991-1994), as well as for additional funding for research trips to Germany and Israel. I should also like to thank the Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig for giving me a scholarship to carry out my research there, and the University of Luton for providing finances for a research trip to New York.

I should like to thank Michael Burleigh for his expert supervision, Donald Cameron Watt for encouraging me to embark upon this thesis in the first place and John Kent for his help in the final stages of this work prior to submission.

I am grateful to the staff at the British Library of Political and Economic Science, the British Library, the Wiener Library, the German Historical Institute and the Royal Society of Medicine Library in London, the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich, the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, the Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig and the Staatsarchiv in Bremen, as well as the staff at the archives of the Yad Vashem Memorial Foundation in Jerusalem and the Leo Baeck Institute in New York for their assistance.

Finally, a note of personal thanks to my parents, Rose and Michael Pine for their unfailing support; to my friends Pam Shatzkes, Effie Pedaliu and David Brauner, for their

willingness to discuss problems; and above all, to my husband, Andrew Fields, for his love and unstinting support.

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

Anschluß; annexation of Austria in 1938

BDF Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine; Federation of German Women's Associations

BDM Bund Deutscher Mädel; League of German Girls

Blut und Boden; Blood and Soil

DAF Deutsche Arbeitsfront; German Labour Front

DFW Deutsches Frauenwerk; German Women's Enterprise

Doppelverdiener; double-earner

Führer; leader

Gau; principal territorial division of the *NSDAP*

Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei); Secret State Police

Glaube und Schönheit; Faith and Beauty

Gleichschaltung; co-ordination or streamlining

Großfamilien; large family (used pejoratively)

Heimat; home, homeland

Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"; Mother and Child Relief Agency

HJ Hitlerjugend; Hitler Youth

Kampfzeit; time of struggle (of *NSDAP* until 1933)

kinderreich; literally 'rich in children'. Term used to describe 'valuable' families with 4 or more children.

KPD Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands; Communist Party of Germany

KdF Kraft durch Freude; Strength through Joy

Lebensborn; Well of Life

Lebensraum; living space

Machtergreifung; seizure of power

Mischlinge; person of mixed ancestry, e.g. 'part-Jew' or 'part-gypsy'

NSDAP Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei; National Socialist German Workers' Party

NS-Frauenschaft; National Socialist Womanhood

NSKK Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahr-Korps; National Socialist Motor Corps

NS-Lehrerbund; National Socialist League of Teachers

NSV Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt; National Socialist People's Welfare

RDF Reichsbund Deutsche Familie, Kampfbund für erbtüchtigen Kinderreichtum; National Association of the German Family, Combat League for Large Families of Sound Heredity

RdK Reichsbund der Kinderreichen; National League of Large Families

RDH Reichsverband Deutscher Hausfrauenvereine; National Federation of German Housewives' Associations

RM Reichsmark; unit of currency

RMD Reichsmütterdienst; National Mothers' Service

SA Sturmabteilungen; Storm Troopers

SD Sicherheitsdienst; Security Service (of the SS)

SPD Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands; Social Democratic Party of Germany

SS Schutzstaffeln; literally 'guard unit', Nazi elite formation led by Heinrich Himmler

Volk; nation

völkisch; racist-nationalist

Volksgemeinschaft; national community

Volksgenosse; national comrade

Volkskörper; body of the nation

Volkstod; death of the nation

Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft; National Economy/ Domestic Economy

Weltanschauung; world view

WHW Winterhilfswerk; Winter Relief Agency

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Although the Third Reich is an era of German history that has been intensively researched, the vast secondary literature on the subject still contains a number of gaps, which have become increasingly apparent as new areas of research have been undertaken. One of these gaps is the family. This introductory chapter gives a brief survey of the existing secondary literature and an overview of the history of the German family.

A Survey of the Secondary Literature

Most of the older standard histories of the Third Reich largely neglect social issues and do not touch upon the area of women and the family at all.¹ Some of the general social histories of the period do mention the position of women and the family, but often rather superficially.² It is within the context of more specialised accounts that a clearer picture of the position of women in Nazi society is given, although these often neglect the family.³

¹ Important standard works on the history of the Third Reich that largely omit social policy and social issues include M. Broszat, The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Third Reich (London, 1981); K. Hildebrand, The Third Reich (London, 1984); K. Bracher, The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure and Consequences of National Socialism (London, 1971).

² For example, R. Grunberger, A Social History of the Third Reich (London, 1971) devotes a brief chapter each to women, pp. 320-39 and the family, pp. 298-319; and D. Schoenbaum, Hitler's Social Revolution (London, 1966) apports one chapter to women, pp. 187-201, but does not address the family.

³ M. Burleigh & W. Wippermann, The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945 (Cambridge, 1991) includes a chapter on women in the Third Reich, which considers policy towards women within the framework of racial policy, pp. 242-66; U. Frevert, Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation (Oxford, 1989) includes a section on women in Nazi Germany within the broader context of the history of women in Germany over the last two centuries, pp. 207-52.

Jill Stephenson's Women in Nazi Society was the first major study of the position of women in the Third Reich.⁴ It covers a wide spectrum of issues relating to women and the family, from marriage and motherhood to birth control, abortion and unmarried mothers. One of the central tenets of Nazi ideology towards women was that they should fulfil their 'natural' role. In this sense the National Socialists drew a distinction between the sexes. As Stephenson puts it: 'In the Nazi view, the chief difference was that man was essentially productive, and woman fundamentally reproductive'.⁵ This concept formed the ideological foundation of National Socialist policies pertaining to women and the family.

In order to create a strong *Volksgemeinschaft* or 'national community', the main aim of Nazi population policy was to attempt to halt and reverse the decline in the German birth rate. Stephenson shows that there was indeed an increase in the birth rate in the period 1934-1939, as compared with the period 1929-1933. But, she argues, this was not attributable only to Nazi incentives to promote procreation. Couples evidently felt more secure about getting married and having children, given that the economic climate had improved. This, however, did not mean they were necessarily inclined to have large families, for women had discovered during the First World War and in its aftermath, that they could successfully join the nation's work force and not be confined to the household. This trend was not easily reversed by Nazi propaganda.

Stephenson moves on to deal with the issues of women at work and in Nazi organisations, and the position of women in the universities and in the professions. She

⁴ J. Stephenson, Women in Nazi Society (London, 1975). See also her The Nazi Organisation of Women (London, 1981), which deals more specifically with women in party formations.

⁵ Stephenson, Women in Nazi Society, p. 8.

shows how the Nazi education system exacerbated the problems faced by the regime in the early 1940s. Her study highlights many important aspects of Nazi policy and attitudes towards women. It takes the closing years of the Weimar Republic as a starting point from which to consider these issues, thus placing the Nazi era in its immediate historical context, and showing a strong degree of continuity in German domestic policy and attitudes in the years between 1930 and 1935-6. In addition, it shows clearly how Nazi attitudes were not particularly new or original, but were a combination of existing opinions, which were manipulated to fit Nazi aims and ambitions. However, although the book covers a broad range of issues, it does not deal with the family in any detail.

Research on women was subsequently taken further by German and American historians and social scientists. A spate of books appeared in the 1980s on women in Weimar and Nazi Germany, largely as part of a wider feminist literature. As such, these works consider the issue of women and women's emancipation, slotting the Nazi period into this perspective, rather than dealing with the period and subject in a traditional empirical sense. The focus of the arguments tend to be more feminist in orientation than historical.

One such book, When Biology Became Destiny, is a collection of essays dealing with a number of issues relating to women in the Weimar Republic and in Nazi Germany.⁶ The first section of the book, covering the Weimar period, includes essays on women in politics and at work, the German women's movement and the origins and significance of Mother's Day in Weimar Germany. The section on the Third Reich has, among others, essays on women at work and women and the Holocaust.

⁶ R. Bridenthal, A. Grossmann & M. Kaplan (eds.), When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany (New York, 1984).

Gisela Bock's work on compulsory sterilisation in the Nazi state explores the relationship between racism and sexism in Nazi attitudes and policies.⁷ Bock demonstrates that the National Socialists were not solely interested in raising the number of births, but that they were just as keen to exclude certain categories of people from having children, using sterilisation as a principal method. 'Racial degeneration' was alleged to occur when the ill or needy were allowed to procreate indiscriminately. At the same time, healthy 'Aryan' women from financially stable backgrounds who limited the number of children they had, were seen to be committing 'racial suicide'. Nazi policy aimed to impel the 'superior' to have more children and the 'inferior' to have fewer or none. A series of laws was passed in order to achieve these objectives. The simultaneous prohibition of abortion for some women and the compulsory sterilisation of others formed the core of Nazi population policy. Bock's work on these issues has been important in drawing attention to the Nazi policies of pro-natalism and simultaneous anti-natalism.

Claudia Koonz's Mothers in the Fatherland provides a general account of life in the Third Reich.⁸ It begins by giving an overview of women's emancipation groups in the Weimar Republic and then goes on to consider the role of women in the early days of the National Socialist movement, and the relationship between the two in the early 1930s. The general role of women in Germany between 1933 and 1939, Protestant and Catholic women's organisations, women in the resistance and Jewish women are each given a chapter in this book.

⁷ G. Bock, 'Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilisation, and the State', in Bridenthal *et al.* (eds.), When Biology Became Destiny, pp. 271-96. See also G. Bock, Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik (Opladen, 1986).

⁸ C. Koonz, Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics (London, 1987).

Koonz describes the emphasis of Nazi propaganda upon traditional values and the myth of the nation's great past. Indeed, the idealisation of a rural, peasant lifestyle, where the family was protected from the modern, urbanised and industrialised world was a recurrent theme of Nazi art and propaganda.⁹ For example, the propaganda films *'Ich für Dich - du für mich'* (Me for You - You for Me, 1934) and *'Ewige Wald'* (Eternal Forest, 1936) emphasised the importance of 'blood and soil', defining the source of strength of the race in terms of peasant values and the sacredness of the German soil.¹⁰

However, Koonz argues that in reality, Nazi policy quite openly denied the family the opportunity to protect its members against the alienation of modern life. For Nazi social policy emptied the household of its members, by involving each one in different party activities and organisations, thereby weakening familial bonds, rather than strengthening them. Nazi eugenic laws interfered quite overtly with what, in normal times, are private choices relating to marriage and parenthood. In addition, the demand for total loyalty to the *Führer* often undercut the position of authority of the father in a family.¹¹ Moreover, children often grew closer to *HJ* (Hitler Youth) and *BDM* (League of German Girls) leaders, and as a result, less devoted to their parents. Koonz describes how 'as peer bonds replaced ties to siblings and parents, the emotional function of the family yielded to the expanding psychological claims of the state'.¹² Youth leaders actively encouraged children to rebel against their parents and took over a substantial part of the parental role

⁹ On images of the rural mother in Nazi art, see A. Richardson, 'The Nazification of Women in Art', in B. Taylor & W. van der Will (eds.), The Nazification of Art: Art, Design, Music, Architecture and Film in the Third Reich (Winchester, 1990), pp. 54-5.

¹⁰ D. Welch, The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda (London & New York, 1993), p. 48.

¹¹ Koonz, Mothers, p. 178.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 388.

of imbuing children with norms and values. The recollections of members of the *HJ* and *BDM* confirm this.¹³

Yet, Koonz later describes how the family, 'a place apart from the brutal world, offered respite to people at both ends of the moral spectrum'.¹⁴ A brief account follows of how *SS* leaders, concentration camp guards, victims and resisters all needed the psychological knowledge of a home - or, in some cases, at least the memory of one - to muster the internal strength with which to face their circumstances and the insane world in which they were living. For example, Nazi policy for concentration camp guards and commandants encouraged a vision of the family that had been opposed in social policy towards the ordinary German population.¹⁵ Psychologically then, the separate family life of *SS* men - their wives and children - somehow helped them cope with the jobs and atrocities they carried out. Rudolf Hoess, Commandant at Auschwitz, claimed that this was the case in his experience.¹⁶ According to Koonz, 'guards and commandants rationalised their participation in Nazi schemes for genocide and repression by divorcing who they were from what they did'.¹⁷ Franz Stangl, Commandant at Sobibor and Treblinka death camps, when asked what kept him going amid all the horror, answered, 'I don't know. Perhaps my wife. Love for my wife'.¹⁸ However, Bock has pointed out that approximately 60% of *SS* men, and an even higher proportion of concentration camp personnel were unmarried, and that they got their 'ersatz sanity' through their faith in the

¹³ For example, see M. Maschmann, Account Rendered: A Dossier on my Former Self (London, 1964), p. 30.

¹⁴ Koonz, Mothers, p. 419.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

¹⁶ R. Hoess, Commandant at Auschwitz: Autobiography of Rudolf Hoess (New York, 1964), p. 34.

¹⁷ Koonz, Mothers, p. 420.

¹⁸ Interviewed in G. Sereny, Into that Darkness: From Mercy Killing to Mass Murder (London, 1974), p. 209.

Führer and in their orders, or through alcohol, not female love and family sentimentality.¹⁹ Koonz also describes how for victims and resisters, sanity and survival could depend upon maintaining private integrity against Nazi encroachment. However, for the victims of National Socialism, the separation of families often stood in the way of this. They often formed ersatz or substitute families for emotional support. Amongst resisters, once a marital partner had been taken away, solidarity was sought among co-resisters and here too ersatz-familial bonds were sometimes formed.²⁰

A recent German study by Mühlfeld and Schönweiss entitled *Nationalsozialistische Familienpolitik* contributes to the literature on the Nazi period by making a systematic study of Nazi family policy from a sociological standpoint.²¹ The book aims to document the position of marriage and the family in the Nazi *Weltanschauung* and to consider the contents of and assess the limits of Nazi family policy. Mühlfeld and Schönweiss deal with the concept of race both as a moral obligation and as an anthropological category. They argue that social and family policies in the Third Reich were simply instruments for carrying through Nazi racial doctrine, since racial purity was the ultimate aim of the social order that the Nazis tried to create.²²

Mühlfeld and Schönweiss move on to consider Nazi family ideology, discussing familial value patterns and models, and how the Nazi model fitted into this framework. They discuss the treatment of the family as a microcosm of Nazi society, the popularisation of

¹⁹ G. Bock, 'Die Frauen und der Nationalsozialismus', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 15 (1989), p. 576.

²⁰ Koonz, *Mothers*, p. 420.

²¹ C. Mühlfeld and F. Schönweiss, *Nationalsozialistische Familienpolitik: Familiensoziologische Analyse der nationalsozialistischen Familienpolitik* (Stuttgart, 1989).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

the Nazi family model and the demand for identification with that model. They deal with the 'breeding programme' of the *völkisch* family, describing the uncompromising pursuit of its family ideals by the Nazi leadership and 'Aryanisation' through 'biological marriage broking'.

The authors argue convincingly that any analysis of the role of the family in the Third Reich cannot omit the question of race. The family was assigned basic tasks and duties, including reproduction and 'biological' preservation of the race. The family unit was also to be open to social control, manipulation and socialisation. The non-fulfilment of these obligations was identified as socially deviant behaviour. The family was constantly subjugated to the interests of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The state took precedence over the individual for the purpose of creating a 'healthy' *Volk*. Any tendency towards individuality within family life was regarded as a revolt against the natural order and against the *Volk*.²³ The loss of individuality systematised by the Nazi regime found its expression in the slogan: 'You are nothing - your *Volk* is everything'.

'Race' as the shaping principle of social reality is clearly documented by Mühlfeld and Schönweiss. The family was instrumentalised as a social institution for the *Volksgenosse* or 'national comrade', for whom racial order was a moral obligation. But still, the question of whether familial behaviour was changed through socio-politics and legislation remains unanswered. The authors argue that the family was a permanent addressee of the Nazi regime and that it was impossible for the family to ignore Nazi policy. They claim that the regime's family policy was so intense and intensive that people could not act in any way against the regime's new norms. But plainly some German people who

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

were non-Nazis did. They omit any mention of resisters and how they led their lives. The book only looks at the 'ideal' Nazi model, rather than the reality of what actually happened to families that did not fit into the *Volksgemeinschaft*, such as Jewish, 'gypsy' and 'asocial' families. Furthermore, it considers moral imperatives and legislation as the main reasons for which many Germans accepted Nazi norms, but does not elaborate on the effects of the permanent threat of force and physical violence used by the Nazi dictatorship. In a discussion of whether and how peoples' behaviour was affected, it is necessary to give some consideration to which aspects of the regime changed people's attitudes and actions. Was it new legislation, incentives, propaganda, socialisation, violence, the threat of being interned in a concentration camp? For there is some evidence in *SD* reports, that incentives and propaganda were not necessarily successful in matters pertaining to family decisions - for example, people did not have *kinderreich* families in order to get a Cross of Honour or because they had been given a marriage loan.²⁴

Mühlfeld and Schönweiss argue that Nazi family policy was a means of safeguarding power - an instrument by which to obtain and maintain legitimacy.²⁵ Their book, however, shows only the expectations and behavioural requirements of the regime. The reactions to these of the family itself are sketched only indirectly. There is no use of case study examples, no use of diaries or private papers. Although Nazi laws, socio-political measures, racial and biological considerations are clearly laid out, an assessment of reaction is hardly portrayed. The book does not deal with interaction, either within family units, or within society as a whole. For example, the authors state that marital and

²⁴ See, for example, H. Boberach (ed.), *Meldungen aus dem Reich: Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienst der SS, 1938-1945* (Herrsching, 1984), 13, 1943, p. 5207.

²⁵ Mühlfeld & Schönweiss, *Nationalsozialistische Familienpolitik*, p. 10.

family law intervened in the living relationships of the family but they do not explain how. Hence, the direct results of Nazi social and family policy on families and within society are omitted.

A case study article by Wilke and Wagner on family, household and social structures in Körle, in northern Hesse, analyses the changing household structures of that particular village.²⁶ They discuss the social structure of village life and that of the household.²⁷ It is important to note that the individual was constantly subjugated to the needs of the household. The division of labour within a household was organised according to gender roles and then by age and ability.

Having given an account of life in the village and its households in the period before the rise of National Socialism, the authors then show the changes that took place once the *NSDAP* had founded a branch in Körle. Within the household, there were significant alterations in terms of authority structure and the position of family members. The first change to occur was in the relationship between fathers and sons. Most of the older farmers were opposed to National Socialism, whilst members of the younger generation became active in the Nazi movement. After the *Machtergreifung*, they brought their newly-found self-confidence into all aspects of village life, creating problems in every household. Allegiance to Nazi organisations replaced loyalty to the household, which ceased to be the main focus for the thoughts and actions of its younger members, in particular. According to Wilke and Wagner, 'for the deeply committed Nazi villager, the

²⁶ G. Wilke & K. Wagner, 'Family and Household: Social Structures in a German Village Between the Two World Wars', in R. Evans & W. Lee (eds.), The German Family: Essays on the Social History of the Family in Nineteenth- and Twentieth Century Germany (London, 1981), pp. 120-47.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-8.

Führer became the superhuman household head'.²⁸

Whilst conflicts between the generations were real, and did bring about changes, the household structure itself remained intact. However, the household lost its dominant role in the upbringing of children, for education served an ideological function and the *HJ* and *BDM* conveyed ideals that extended beyond the terms of reference of the village. The Nazi youth groups also took up much time that had previously been spent working in the household. Later, young men were conscripted into labour service and the armed forces, where they were exposed to Nazi ideological 'education'. These duties were justified in the same terms as those of the traditional household, except they now superseded them.

The Nazi system and the household shared the belief that the free choice of the individual was unimportant. In both cases, the subjection to strict authority structures and the lack of opportunity for individual development were justified by the claim that everyone's welfare was at stake. This similar rationale meant that the changes brought about by the new regime were easier to accept and adopt, because they were less noticeable in this respect. This was more likely to be the case in rural and remote areas, than in large towns and cities where a very different ethos existed. The main difference in the role of women in such villages was that whereas they had previously given birth to children and worked for the household, they now had an additional duty, which was to work for the *Führer* as well. Outside the household, women and girls could join Nazi organisations, which allowed them beyond the confines of the village. They were able to meet people from different regions and social groups too, but there was still certainly no emancipation of women within the household. This article, by confining itself to the case study of a single

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

village, is important as it demonstrates the type of work that can be done on the effects of the Nazi regime upon different sectors of the German population.

Tim Mason's two articles in History Workshop consider the position of women in Germany after the First World War, the nature and function of Nazi anti-feminism and pro-natalism and women at work.²⁹ Mason's argument and conclusions highlight different perspectives from which to view Nazi family policy. He shows that the Nazi government did stress the importance of the family, but that the goals of their policies were the means to an end, rather than being ends in themselves. In terms of their family policies, the Nazi propagandists tried to minimise the effects of particular, individual measures, so that the increase in the nation's birth rate was attributed to the putative renewal of national pride, unity and self-confidence.

Mason's argument shows that the entire issue of whether, and if so how, the Nazi regime changed attitudes to parenthood is debatable. On the one hand, the Nazi claim to have regenerated the *Volk*, exemplified in the 'hereditarily healthy, Aryan *kinderreich* family', can be seen as false, when the government was clearly unprepared, for example, to introduce a housing policy commensurate to its population policy and propaganda. Armaments expenditure took up such a large proportion of the GNP that a relatively small budget was assigned to welfare needs, especially housing. In addition, the Nazi ideal family - stable and prolific - looked increasingly like a fabrication as the divorce rate rose, unmarried women were encouraged to bear illegitimate children and children were incited to inform the authorities of any politically deviant activities of their parents. The

²⁹ T. Mason, 'Women in Germany, 1925-1940: Family, Welfare and Work. Part I', History Workshop, 1 (1976), pp. 74-113, and 'Women in Germany, 1925-1940: Family, Welfare and Work. Part II (conclusion)', History Workshop, 2 (1976), pp. 5-32.

promiscuity or non-conformity to Nazi ideals of prominent members of the Nazi leadership - such as Goebbels, Heydrich and Himmler - added to this sense of deception.³⁰ Yet, on the other hand, Nazi policy increased what Mason calls 'the reconciliatory function of family life'.³¹ People looked to their families as a way of dealing with the rigours of life outside the home. Hence, wittingly or unwittingly, the regime's pro-natalist policies affected the way in which people behaved in this sense.

Szilvia Horváth's work on Nazi family policy suggests that the regime in no way aimed at the shattering of the family, but instead at its preservation as the place of life production, with the 'German family' defined both in racial and eugenic terms, and in socio-economic terms.³² For example, the term *gemeinschaftsunfähigkeit* was used to describe families which were 'uneconomical', 'unrestrained' and unable to maintain an ordered household.³³ Such families were excluded from the *Volksgemeinschaft*. She also considers the line taken by a number of Nazi ideologues, including Alfred Rosenberg, Alfred Bäumler and Ernst Kriek, of the primacy of the *Männerbünde* or 'male organisations' in the Nazi state.³⁴ Bäumler, for example, abased the family, disputing its function as 'the germ cell of the nation'.³⁵ However, his position clearly opposed that of the majority of the Nazi leadership, who continued to exalt the status of the family throughout the Nazi era.

³⁰ On this, see H. Bleuel, *Sex and Society in Nazi Germany* (Philadelphia, 1973).

³¹ Mason, 'Women in Germany, Part II', p. 24.

³² S. Horváth, 'Reorganisation der Geschlechterverhältnisse: Familienpolitik im faschistischen Deutschland', in *Neuen Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst* (ed.), *Ästhetische Faszination im Faschismus* (Berlin, 1987), pp. 129 & 131.

³³ F. Burgdörfer, *Geburtenschwund: Die Kulturkrankheit Europas und ihre Überwindung in Deutschland* (Heidelberg, 1942), p. 141.

³⁴ On the *Männerbünde* and their opposition to the family, see Horváth, 'Reorganisation', pp. 131-3. On the history of the *Männerbünde*, see J. Reulecke, 'Männerbund versus the family: middle-class youth movements and the family in Germany in the period of the First World War', in R. Wall & J. Winter (eds.), *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 439-452.

³⁵ A. Bäumler, *Männerbund und Wissenschaft* (Berlin, 1934), p. 42.

A number of questions relating to Nazi family policy and propaganda and family life in general between 1933 and 1945 remain unanswered. Each of the works discussed above - whether books or articles, whether historical, feminist or sociological in their approach, whether considering Nazi laws or village life - have helped to fill in a part of the overall picture. In addition, the scope of the work that has been carried out, as outlined above, shows the different type of approaches that can be viably followed.

A survey of the secondary literature demonstrates that although the subject of women in Nazi Germany has been quite widely researched, there are considerable gaps relating to the family. The exception here is that the legal side of family life has been studied intensively, especially the Nazi eugenic and racial laws which directly impinged upon people's freedom in marital and family-related decisions. The secondary literature, then, consists of a number of works which concur that Nazi ideological tenets called for women to bear and rear children, and differ on the extent to which Nazi policy had positive or negative repercussions on women's lives.

In terms of the literature on the history and sociology of the family in Europe, the Third Reich also remains virtually untouched. For example, Shorter's, The Making of the Modern Family is a general history of the family in western Europe over three centuries.³⁶ Goody's The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe deals with changes in kinship systems from the fourth century to the present day.³⁷ Laslett has edited a collection of comparative studies in the size and structure of the domestic group over the

³⁶ E. Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family (New York, 1975).

³⁷ J. Goody, The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe (Cambridge, 1984).

last three centuries in England, France, Serbia, Japan and colonial North America, but this does not touch upon Germany at all.³⁸ None of these address the Nazi period. Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann has given some consideration to the family in the Third Reich, as part of his work on the family in German history.³⁹

Despite the keen interest of historians, and indeed social scientists - not least sociologists - in the National Socialist era, there is a paucity of work on the position of the family in the Third Reich and the impact of the regime upon it. In the English historiography the issue remains largely untouched. The German studies are more far-reaching than their British and American counterparts in considering the subject at all, but even so, the trend of some recent German historians - such as the late Detlev Peukert - to look at *Alltagsgeschichte*, the history of everyday life or history 'from below', has not, as yet, extended to this area. Yet, there is certainly scope for an extension of this kind of history. The perspective of everyday experience adds an important dimension to an understanding of the Third Reich. Between 1933 and 1945 in Germany, life was far from ordinary, and the complexities of the structures of people's lives can help in gaining an understanding of their actions. It is necessary to consider how everyday life was politicised by the regime and to what extent a clinging on to the non-political aspects of daily existence played a part in life under Nazi rule. In this sense, the family context was central.

³⁸ P. Laslett (ed.), Household and Family in Past Time (Cambridge, 1977).

³⁹ I. Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), and I. Weber-Kellermann, 'The German Family between Private Life and Politics', in A. Prost & G. Vincent (eds.), A History of Private Life. V: The Riddle of Identity in Modern Times (London, 1991), pp. 503-37.

The German Family

The family is not a clear-cut concept. Families vary by age, class, ethnicity and gender. They are not static structures that remain constant over time.⁴⁰ Instead, they are complex, fluid social groups. The concept of 'the family' must be used with care, because there is in reality no such thing as a typical family in any society, not even in the Third Reich, when the government tried so hard to impose models of family size, life and behaviour. The family is the most basic social institution, and as such is the source of many human motivations that play a significant part in the larger social life. It is a 'meeting ground of the generations' and part of an 'ongoing biosocial process'.⁴¹

The main familial form in Germany, from the late Middle Ages through to the early nineteenth century was the household or *das ganze Familie* ('the whole house').⁴² The household was not just a residential community, but also an economic one. Hence, in terms of its membership, it included not only blood relations, but also servants, journeymen, apprentices and farm hands. The *Hausvater* ('patriarch') exercised legal, economic and guardianship rights over the entire household. However, it should be noted that even in the pre-industrial era, a substantial proportion of people never married at all, and either lived with other relatives, with other single people, or alone.⁴³ Such people were not members of traditional 'households'.

⁴⁰ M. Mitterauer & R. Sieder, The European Family: Patriarchy to Partnership from the Middle Ages to the Present (Oxford, 1982), p. 2.

⁴¹ C. Kirkpatrick, The Family as Process and Institution (New York, 1955), p. 2.

⁴² Weber-Kellermann, 'The German Family', in Prost & Vincent (eds.), A History of Private Life, p. 503.

⁴³ See D. Gittins, The Family in Question: Changing Households and Familiar Ideologies (Basingstoke & London, 1993), pp. 6 & 20.

A significant change in the development of the family occurred at the end of the eighteenth century as a result of industrialisation, creating a new familial pattern once the Industrial Revolution reached its height. The Industrial Revolution brought changes to both production methods and labour organisation. This included the separation of workplace and residence, which meant the dissolution of the household. In its place, the bourgeois, nuclear family emerged as the dominant family form.⁴⁴ The nuclear or biological family consisted of only a married couple and their own offspring.⁴⁵

Despite the changes in the family form as a result of the great socio-economic upheavals of the nineteenth century, the family continued to be regarded as the basis of the social order as the twentieth century approached. However, some questioning of the *status quo* became evident. Women's organisations were formed which struggled for suffrage, rights to better education, university entry and equality in employment for women. Women from working class or rural families, who had to undertake paid work in addition to household work, began to seek political solutions. In addition, the illusion of the unchanging traditional family, under the dominance of the patriarch, was called into question with the disruption of family life engendered by the First World War.

The First World War brought about a large upheaval in familial life and created a substantial change to traditional attitudes and values. One reason for this was that conscription had created a social vacuum, in the sense that countless families now lacked the patriarchal authority upon which the functioning of family life had previously depended.⁴⁶ Conscription also meant a decrease in family income. The immediate

⁴⁴ Weber-Kellermann, 'The German Family', in Prost & Vincent (eds.), A History of Private Life, p. 504.

⁴⁵ Kirkpatrick, The Family as Process and Institution, p. 14.

⁴⁶ R. Sieder, Sozialgeschichte der Familie (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), p. 212.

aftermath of the war brought problems too, inflation and unemployment among them. At the family level, there were problems of grief for family members who had died in battle, but also the burden of many crippled or psychologically-disturbed men who did return home. The mid-1920s, however, became years of relative stability for the German family, as most people sought an ordered home and a sense of peace and security.⁴⁷

The post-war revolution had created some significant changes. In the new Weimar constitution of 1919, women had achieved suffrage. New educational initiatives on sexual hygiene and birth control were introduced by organisations such as the Association for Sexual Hygiene and Life Reform and the National Union for Birth Control and Hygiene, set up in 1923 and 1928 respectively.⁴⁸ But the impact of these modernising forces generated a conservative backlash. As Weber-Kellermann states: 'In the 1920s, crude birth rates declined faster than at any other point in German history'.⁴⁹ The decline in the birth rate was seen by conservative forces not as a 'rationalisation of sex life' but as a 'national catastrophe'.⁵⁰ Sexual promiscuity, rising divorce and abortion rates and higher numbers of married women at work were considered to be signs of the demise and decline of the family.

Claudia Koonz and Renate Bridenthal show that the impact of the women's movement and its achievements diminished considerably during the course of the Weimar period. Once the right to vote had been achieved in 1919, together with a constitutional promise of equality, progress dwindled and the organised women's movement itself was

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁴⁸ Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 189.

⁴⁹ Weber-Kellermann, 'The German Family', in Prost & Vincent (eds.), *A History of Private Life*, p. 515.

⁵⁰ Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 188.

crippled.⁵¹ In addition, despite the rhetoric of emancipation in the Weimar Republic, patriarchal ideology and attitudes remained dominant in political, social and economic life.⁵² In these respects, National Socialist ideology towards women and the family was not new and a foundation for their policies already existed.

Karen Hausen's work on the origins and significance of Mother's Day during the Weimar Republic demonstrates how this also helped to pave the way for Nazi family policy. The public mind was influenced by the language and ideas associated with the portrayal of Mother's Day, so that by the time Hitler came to power, German society had become accustomed, to some extent, to the concept of a racially pure and healthy *Volk*. The recovery of the *Volk* was promoted by all individuals and movements involved in the introduction of Mother's Day into Germany - business interests at first, but also public non profit-making organisations, conservative and church groups, such as the Protestant *Evangelische Frauenhilfe*. The idea centred upon care and concern for the German family.⁵³ Mother's Day was part of an endeavour to enhance and preserve healthy family life, with mothers being promoted as the quintessence of all goodness. Although Mother's Day was not an overtly political idea, it was intended to have a political effect. Groups promoting Mother's Day certainly hoped to revive national solidarity and strength. Hence, such ideals were not new in 1933. Once in power, the *NSDAP* proposed that Mother's Day should no longer be celebrated as a private family holiday, but rather as a day that glorified the mother as protector of the *Volk*. Hausen shows the

⁵¹ R. Bridenthal & C. Koonz, 'Beyond *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*: Weimar Women in Politics and Work', in Bridenthal *et al.* (eds.), When Biology Became Destiny, pp. 33-65.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 35. See also D. Peukert, The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity (London, 1991), p. 99.

⁵³ K. Hausen, 'Mother's Day in the Weimar Republic', in Bridenthal *et al.* (eds.), When Biology Became Destiny, p. 132.

transition of Mother's Day 'from a private celebration for one's own mother to a completely public cult of motherhood in general'.⁵⁴ Hence, Mother's Day was to take on a more overtly political significance in the Third Reich than during the Weimar Republic.⁵⁵

The position of the family waned with the effects of the economic crisis engendered by the Wall Street Crash in 1929. This time it was largely a financial burden that families faced. The economic crisis eroded the material basis of middle class family life, as savings were lost, and of working class family life as mass unemployment meant that workers lost their jobs and incomes. This placed a considerable strain on the mother to search for cheap provisions, mend broken clothes and maintain the cohesion of the family. Young unemployed family members sometimes left home, wandering across Germany, and even beyond the borders, to relieve the strain on the family of 'unnecessary eaters'.⁵⁶ The economic climate of the early 1930s created many social rifts, for example, between the employed and the unemployed and between generations. Such tensions were advantageous to the *NSDAP*, which capitalised on the 'crisis of the family'. Inter-generational conflict had sharpened considerably as parents had lost their status and prestige through unemployment and impoverishment, and many were no longer in the position to provide their children with protection and security. This was the situation in which the German family found itself when the National Socialists came to power in

⁵⁴ K. Hausen, 'The "German Mother's Day", 1923-1933', in H. Medick & D. Sabean (eds.), Interest and Emotion. Essays in the Study of Family and Kinship (Cambridge, 1984), p. 382.

⁵⁵ This was also the case with harvest festivals and May Day, which was transformed from a celebration of working class solidarity, into the National Day of Labour, when employers and employees all over Germany paraded together and listened to a speech by the *Führer*. On this, see Welch, The Third Reich, p. 56.

⁵⁶ Sieder, Sozialgeschichte der Familie, p. 225.

January 1933. The new regime had to formulate policies not only to ameliorate the plight of the German economy, but also to redress the 'crisis of the family' and the decline in the nation's birth rate.

CHAPTER TWO

NAZI FAMILY IDEOLOGY AND POLICY

The formulation and application of state-sponsored population policies during the Third Reich were the result of a combination of the efforts of both Party officials and professional experts. Demographers and medical professionals used the opportunities afforded to them by the regime to rationalise welfare resources and to plan priorities such as the productivity and health of the nation.¹ Demographic schemes for the comprehensive registration of the population and for the re-classification of society along racial and biological lines were novel techniques of social control. Health officials and population policy planners played a significant part in the formulation of social policy in the Third Reich, which had a considerable impact upon everyday, family life. The National Socialist objectives of an increased birth rate, racial homogeneity and a regimented social life invaded the private domain of the family quite profoundly. Organicist theories of the state, which had evolved over the past two decades, became part of the policy-making process. The state was conceptualised as an organism, in which the family represented a crucial elemental cell.² Both the quality and quantity of German families were therefore of paramount concern to the regime and its policy-makers.

Nazi family ideology

'The family is the primordial cell of the *Volk*, that is why the National Socialist state places it at the centre of its policy.'³ These were the words of Wilhelm Frick, Reich

¹ P. Weindling, 'Fascism and Population in Comparative European Perspective', in M. Teitelbaum & J. Winter (eds.), Population and Resources in Western Intellectual Traditions (New York, 1989), p. 105.

² On the origins and development of this ideology, see P. Weindling, 'The medical profession, social hygiene and the birth rate in Germany, 1914-18', in Wall & Winter (eds.), The Upheaval of War, p. 428.

³ W. Frick, Wir bauen das Dritte Reich (Berlin, 1934), p. 54.

Minister of the Interior, in a broadcast to the nation on 13 May 1934. They sum up the image that the National Socialist government wanted to portray publicly, that is, of a very firm and solid commitment to family life. Indeed, it was claimed that 'the German *Volk* has taken over responsibility for the family... in the national revolution'.⁴ This alleged desire on the part of the National Socialists to protect the family and the social order gained the regime early support amongst Catholic prelates, as this position was very close to their own, although their view of the regime changed as its policies unfolded.⁵

National Socialist ideology pertaining to the family displayed certain manifest inconsistencies. Even Hitler's own writings and conversations presented conflicting thoughts. In *Mein Kampf*, for example, he spoke of the necessity to raise the status of marriage and to 'give it the consecration of an institution which is called upon to produce images of the Lord'.⁶ In addition, he stressed the need for early marriage as the prerequisite for 'healthy and resistant offspring'. He claimed that 'marriage cannot be an end in itself, but must serve the one higher goal, the increase and preservation of the species and the race'.⁷ Indeed, this became one of the central themes of both Nazi propaganda and policy directives concerned with familial values. Yet, as leader of a nation upon which such codes of behaviour were unremittently urged, Hitler did not set the example himself. Publicly, he claimed that he remained single because he was devoted to the community of his nation. Privately, he said: 'It's lucky I'm not married.

⁴ K. Beyer, *Familie und Frau im neuen Deutschland* (Berlin, 1936), p. 7.

⁵ C. Koonz, 'Eugenics, Gender, and Ethics in Nazi Germany: The Debate about Involuntary Sterilisation, 1933-1936', in T. Childers & J. Caplan (eds.), *Reevaluating the Third Reich* (New York & London, 1993), p. 72.

⁶ A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, translated by R. Mannheim, with an introduction by D. C. Watt, (London, 1992), p. 366.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

For me, marriage would have been a disaster.⁸ He let Josef Goebbels, appropriately enough the Minister for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, publicly portray the image of the ideal family man, with his blonde wife Magda and six children, although the reality of Goebbels' personal life encompassed numerous extra-marital affairs. Considering the type of community Hitler was trying to create, imbued - putatively - with a strong sense of commitment to family, his own position was anomalous: 'I am a completely non-family man with no sense of the clan spirit'.⁹

The Nazi leadership considered the Weimar era to have been one in which there was a great lack of understanding about family life. As a result, there had been a drop in the birth rate, from 36 births per thousand inhabitants in 1901, to 14.7 births per thousand inhabitants in 1933. One of the dangers the National Socialists anticipated from the continuation of such a trend, was an increase in the percentage of old people in the *Volk*, with a corresponding decrease in the percentage of young people.¹⁰ This had important implications.¹¹ Firstly, there would not be enough people of an age to work and pay taxes. Secondly, the large proportion of old people, often childless themselves, would be effectively supported by the children of others, who would have to make large payments towards their pensions and sickness benefits. The National Socialist government gave this 'danger' its fullest attention, aiming to reverse this trend. It also allegedly gave the family back its sense of importance.

⁸ Hitler's Table Talk 1941-44: His Private Conversations, introduced by H. Trevor-Roper, (London, 1953), p. 245.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 650.

¹⁰ F. Burgdörfer, *Volk ohne Jugend* (Berlin, 1932) is one of many works that displayed such concerns in both Weimar and Nazi Germany.

¹¹ On what follows, see Frick, *Wir bauen das Dritte Reich*, p. 47.

The National Socialists attributed the dwindling birth rate to the spiritual and ideological setbacks that had affected German society in the years preceding the 'seizure of power'. The senseless, extravagant enjoyment of the individual during the Weimar Republic, had taken precedence over collective moral obligations. Hence, 'duty' towards the community through kinship and family, marriage and childbirth, had been lost in a flurry towards 'internationalism', 'pacifism' and 'racial mixing'. The National Socialists claimed that the Weimar governments had encouraged egocentricity and independence, with taxation laws that showed a hostility to marital and familial life. Bachelorhood and childless marriages had been completely acceptable in Weimar society. The average family had two children, and large families had been seen as abnormal, and as inimical to the good of society. Large families, often living in poverty and hunger had been the subjects of scorn and derision in Weimar society, which failed to recognise, according to the National Socialists, that it was these very families that were fulfilling their biological obligations to the continued existence of the nation.

From 1933 onwards, these Weimar attitudes were completely reversed. As one eugenicist put it: 'The worth of a nation is shown in the preparedness of its women to become valuable mothers.... Germany must once again become a fertile land of mothers and children.... the existence or non-existence of our people is decided solely by the mother.'¹² Whilst men fought on the battlefield, women also had a battle to fight - to produce a new generation of Germans.¹³ The traditional, rural German family was extolled in *völkisch* literature.¹⁴ For example, Horst Becker portrayed the rural family as the 'protective element inside the natural order of the *Volk*'.¹⁵ Parents of large families

¹² A. Mayer, *Deutsche Mutter und deutscher Aufstieg* (Munich, 1938), p. 38.

¹³ R. Wiggershaus, *Frauen unterm Nationalsozialismus* (Wuppertal, 1984), p. 21.

¹⁴ On this, see I. Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie. Versuch einer Sozialgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), p.179.

were to be proud of their 'swarm of children'.¹⁶ Now there was a stigma attached to being unmarried or childless, with peer pressure amongst colleagues to marry and have children becoming increasingly apparent.¹⁷ The National Socialists maintained, nevertheless, that the German people had not lost their natural aptitude for fertility, as was evidenced by the increase in birth rate figures in the years 1934-1939.¹⁸ Research was carried out on ways to increase fertility, for example, by sauna treatments, and to establish the optimal times in the menstrual cycle for a woman to conceive.¹⁹

The family had a key social function in Nazi society because it had a specific duty to fulfil. It was seen as the 'germ cell' of the nation and as the source of '*völkisch* renewal', through reproduction. As such, it became the most important eugenic tool. The eugenic notion of family adopted the two basic Christian ideals of the religious and moral family - pre-marital chastity and monogamy in marriage - but also went beyond these. The family's moral obligation served racial hygiene, as did new Nazi marriage and divorce laws. The fulfilment of a marriage was in child birth and greater satisfaction was to be attained by having larger numbers of children. The continuity and renewal of the race was expressed in terms of this fulfilment. Supporters of the state's racial and population policies used this notion to indicate the veracity of its racial laws. Furthermore, all eugenic measures were legitimised. For example, the executors of racial hygiene 'necessities' such as sterilisation and 'euthanasia' were performing a 'moral duty'. The regime made great play with a 'new' or 'higher' morality, transcending Christianity and liberalism. The legal system appears to have adjusted itself to the new regime so that

¹⁵ H. Becker, *Die Familie* (Leipzig, 1935), p. 135.

¹⁶ Frick, *Wir bauen das Dritte Reich*, p. 54.

¹⁷ R. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (London, 1988), p. 121.

¹⁸ See *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, 59 (1941-42), p. 77.

¹⁹ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 121.

Nazi instrumentalisation of racial policy was made possible and given legal justification. Rationality was bypassed. Law and legal practice were no longer the bases of society, but were used to further political and economic power centres in the Third Reich, with the family being left as a passive subject of these trends.²⁰

The Origins and Development of Eugenics in the pre-National Socialist Period

The eugenics movement in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany was a heterogeneous one.²¹ Although its members were largely from the educated middle class, there were two key distinctions within the movement. Firstly, there was that of political orientation, for eugenics was not solely a right-wing phenomenon. It spanned the entire political spectrum in the years preceding the Nazi 'seizure of power'. Alfred Grotjahn, for example, was a prominent socialist eugenicist, and the *Deutscher Bund für Volksaufartung und Erbkunde*, formed in 1926 in Berlin and chaired by Carl von Behr-Pinnow, was a centre-left eugenics society. Secondly, not all eugenicists readily accepted ideologies of Nordic or 'Aryan' supremacy. Many central figures in the racial hygiene movement, such as Alfred Ploetz (1860-1940), Max von Gruber (1853-1927), Ernst Rüdin (1874-1952) and Fritz Lenz (1887-1976), did indeed embrace these ideologies, advocating the use of racial hygiene to promote the Nordic race. Ploetz and Lenz founded a secret 'Nordic ring' within the eugenics movement in 1911 for this purpose.²² But there were also a number of influential eugenicists, including Wilhelm

²⁰ See W. Schubert (ed.), *Das Familien- und Erbrecht unter dem Nationalsozialismus. Ausgewählte Quellen* (Paderborn, Munich, Vienna & Zürich, 1993).

²¹ On the origins and early development of German eugenics, see P. Weingart, J. Kroll & K. Bayertz, *Rasse, Blut und Gene. Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992), pp. 36-42. See also, J. Noakes, 'Nazism and Eugenics: The Background to the Nazi Sterilisation Law of 14 July 1933', in R. Bullen *et al* (eds.), *Ideas into Politics* (London, 1984), pp. 75-84.

²² S. Weiss, 'The Race Hygiene Movement in Germany 1904-1945', in M. Adams

Schallmayer (1857-1919), Hermann Muckermann (1877-1962) and Alfred Grotjahn (1869-1931), who rejected Nordic supremacy. This conflict manifested itself in the two main centres of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* - the institution in Berlin was rather moderate, rejecting any unscientific notions of 'Aryan' supremacy, whilst the one in Munich was pro-Nordicist and much more right-wing.

Apart from these two important distinctions, the common aims of the eugenics movement were to promote and increase the nation's 'fit' elements, and to 'eliminate' the 'unfit' - i.e. the anti-social and the 'asocial'. This reflected the middle class prejudices of the racial hygienists, and similarly to other eugenics movements in the U.S.A. and elsewhere in Europe, racial hygiene in Germany before 1933, was more concerned with class than race. Advocates of racial hygiene believed that a rational management of the German population, by controlling the reproductive capacities of various groups within it, would lead to the attainment of a healthier and more productive nation. This brand of thinking was the result of three trends. Firstly, industrialisation and rapid social change had led to the rise of a radical labour movement. The increasing power of the new industrial proletariat seemed to threaten the position of the traditional middle and upper classes. An increase in crime, alcoholism, prostitution and deviant sexual behaviour, together with a heightened awareness of the presence of the 'feeble-minded' and the 'asocial', led to a general feeling that action had to be taken to decelerate these trends, and racial hygiene propounded a possible solution. Secondly, the ethos of the German medical profession became increasingly based upon a set of assumptions about the hereditary nature of disease and the role of doctors in the safeguarding of the health of the nation as a whole. Medical professionals believed that a rigorous eugenics

(ed.), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia* (New York and Oxford, 1990), p. 34.

programme could improve the general level of the nation's health by eliminating the transmission of 'hereditary diseases'. The third trend that gained increasing currency at this time was Social Darwinism. The zoologist, Ernst Haeckel (1824-1919), had been a leading figure in the spread of a corrupted version of Darwin's theories, lending a quasi-scientific legitimisation to the idea of the racial 'selective breeding' of human beings.²³

The social, political and economic problems that beset Germany during the Weimar Republic required quite radical solutions, and it was during this time that eugenics - as a means of boosting the level of productivity and 'fitness' within the German population - flourished.²⁴ Two new research centres were set up - the German Research Institute for Psychiatry, founded in 1918, in Munich (re-named the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Psychiatry in 1924), and the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics, founded in 1927, in Berlin. In addition, the *Deutscher Bund für Volksaufartung und Erbkunde* and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* merged in 1931 into a larger, more popular and more influential organisation, the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene (Eugenik)*. Political and ideological differences were put aside, so that its members could try to achieve their goal of using eugenics as a scientific solution to social and welfare problems.

Racial hygiene aimed to arrest the decline of the German *Volk* and state. Class prejudices continued to play a key role in racial hygiene. The 'inferiority' of specific social groups

²³ Burleigh & Wippermann, *The Racial State*, pp. 29-30.

²⁴ On population policy and racial hygiene debates in the Weimar Republic, see J. Flemming, K. Saul & P. Witt (eds.), *Familienleben im Schatten der Krise. Dokumente und Analysen zur Sozialgeschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1988), pp. 28-35.

was considered to be a reflection of their innate characteristics. High fertility amongst the socially unstable sectors of the population was seen as a serious threat to the future well-being of the nation.²⁵ Influential figures such as Lenz aimed to preserve their class from biological extinction. Hence the term 'fit' was applied almost exclusively to the educated and 'socially valuable' elements in society. Essentially, 'performance' and 'success in social life' were the yardsticks by which the 'worth of individuals and families' was measured.²⁶ Indeed, by 1931, the dire economic situation meant that rationalisation and the efficient use of resources became key preoccupations. Muckermann's view that it was necessary to 'reduce the number of hereditarily ill individuals... by means of eugenics', became quite widely accepted in influential circles beyond the medical profession.²⁷ In 1932, a sterilisation bill was drafted by the Prussian Health Council, allowing for the voluntary sterilisation of certain classes of hereditarily ill individuals only. The proposals were welcomed by a number of medical organisations, but as a result of the prevailing political problems, the bill was not passed during the Weimar Republic. However, that a sterilisation bill was introduced at all, demonstrated the achievements of the eugenics movement and the sizeable increase of its influence by 1933.²⁸

²⁵ M. Teitelbaum & J. Winter, The Fear of Population Decline (Orlando, 1985), p. 50.

²⁶ E. Baur, E. Fischer & F. Lenz, Grundriss der menschliche Erblchkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene (Munich, 1923), Vol. 2, p. 192.

²⁷ H. Muckermann, 'Illustrationen zu der Frage: Wohlfahrtspflege und Eugenik', Eugenik, 2 (1931), pp. 41-2.

²⁸ On the campaign for sterilisation during the Weimar era, see P. Weindling, Health, Race and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism 1870-1945 (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 450-7.

Eugenics under National Socialism

With the National Socialist 'seizure of power', the course and scope of racial hygiene changed dramatically. No longer just the concern of a fairly narrow elite of intellectuals and medically trained professionals, racial hygiene became a cornerstone of state policy, in accordance with the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* and Hitler's pathological obsession with the preservation of the 'Aryan' race. The *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene (Eugenik)* lost its independence and became a government organ within the domain of the Ministry of the Interior. The Berlin, non-racist eugenicists quickly lost their influence as the Nazi government imposed its brand of racial hygiene upon the movement. Figures such as Muckermann and Ostermann were removed from their offices and forced into early retirement, whilst many others left the society of their own volition and Jewish members were expelled from the society by 1934.²⁹ An overtly racist line was taken by Germany's leading eugenicists - especially Lenz, Ploetz and Rüdin - whose earlier unattained desires for 'nordification' now became a firm priority on the government's agenda.

On 14 July 1933, the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring was passed. It went much further than the proposal of 1932, by calling for the compulsory sterilisation of individuals suffering from certain 'hereditary diseases'.³⁰ These were: 'congenital feeble-mindedness', 'schizophrenia', 'manic depression', 'Huntington's chorea', 'hereditary blindness', 'hereditary deafness' and 'serious physical deformities'. In addition, chronic alcoholics could be compulsorily sterilised. The law was officially declared to embody the 'primacy of the state over the sphere of life, marriage and family'.³¹ Between

²⁹ Weiss, 'The Race Hygiene Movement', p. 41-2.

³⁰ '*Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses vom 14. Juli 1933*', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1933*, 1, pp. 529-30. See also, Weingart, Kroll & Bayertz, *Rasse, Blut und Gene*, pp. 464-80.

January 1934 - when the law came into effect - and the outbreak of war in September 1939, approximately 320,000 people (0.5% of the German population) were sterilised under the terms of this law.³² The quantitatively and strategically most important group sterilised were the 'feeble-minded'. This category made up some two-thirds of those sterilised, and almost two-thirds of these were women.³³ Many of these people were of German ethnicity, but from the poorest sectors of society, whilst others were from ethnic minority groups or were the inmates of asylums and psychiatric institutions.³⁴ There were no set criteria for establishing 'feeble-mindedness', a term that was applied in a very elastic manner.

One deaf woman who was sterilised, but who became pregnant nevertheless, was made to terminate her pregnancy, and subsequently sterilised a second time before being allowed to marry.³⁵ The sterilisation law was the realisation of Hitler's long-held belief that 'those who are physically and mentally unhealthy and unworthy must not perpetuate their suffering in the body of their children'.³⁶ There were even calls for the sterilisation of all *Ballastexistenzen* or 'valueless individuals'. Ernst Rüdin, the Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Psychiatry in Munich, proposed this treatment for 'all socially inferior psychopaths on account of moral confusion or severe ethical defects' and 'the

³¹ A. Gütt, E. Rüdin & F. Ruttke, *Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses vom 14. Juli 1933* (Munich, 1934), p. 5. On this law and its effects on marital life, see also, J. Schottky, *Ehe und Krankheit* (Vienna, 1940), pp. 27-36.

³² Bock, 'Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany', p. 279.

³³ G. Bock, 'Antinatalism, Maternity and Paternity in National Socialist Racism', in G. Bock & P. Thane (eds.), *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s-1950s* (London & New York, 1994), p. 236.

³⁴ Bock, 'Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany', pp. 281-2.

³⁵ F. Mikus, 'Das war eine grausame Zeit', in A. Ebbinghaus (ed.), *Opfer und Täterinnen: Frauenbiographien des Nationalsozialismus* (Nördlingen, 1987), pp. 70-2.

³⁶ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 367.

great mass of serious and incorrigible... criminals'.³⁷ However, the scope of the law was never formally widened, although the concept of 'feeble-minded' was fairly elastic and could be expanded to encompass a greater range of 'undesirable' people, and a separate law, the Law against Dangerous Habitual Criminals of 24 November 1933, dealt with habitual criminals by castration.³⁸

Hereditary health courts were set up to assess all sterilisation cases. Doctors who appeared as witnesses or experts had to testify 'without regard to professional confidentiality'. This aspect of the doctor-patient relationship was negated by the interests of the overall 'health of the nation'. The law, although not formulated by the eugenicists, was greatly welcomed by them, as well as by much of the medical profession, whose members could actually feel they were being custodians of the nation's health by supplying information about their patients to the courts and by giving evidence or the benefit of their medical expertise at the hearings of the hereditary health courts. As Czarnowski argues, the implementation of such policies demonstrated a very close alliance between science and the state.³⁹

Under National Socialism, eugenicists were expected to aid the regime in carrying out its objective of improving the German race, by 'eliminating' the 'hereditarily ill' as well as the 'socially unfit'. The racial hygienists played a significant part in the realisation of Nazi policy by teaching eugenics to state-employed and SS doctors, providing expert

³⁷ Rüdin at a meeting of the Expert Advisory Council for Population and Race Policy in March 1935, quoted in B. Müller-Hill, Murderous Science: Elimination by Scientific Selection of Jews, Gypsies and Others, Germany 1933-1945 (Oxford, 1988), p. 31.

³⁸ On this, see Burleigh & Wippermann, The Racial State, p. 48.

³⁹ G. Czarnowski, Das kontrollierte Paar. Ehe- und Sexualpolitik im Nationalsozialismus (Weinheim, 1991), p. 231.

testimony in the sterilisation cases brought before the hereditary health courts, composing racial genealogies and at least half-heartedly accepting both the regime's 'euthanasia' programme and the 'Final Solution'. In order to maintain their own positions and obtain finance for their institutes and research, the eugenicists joined the Party and accommodated themselves to the racial policy of the Nazi government. For example, Rüdin, the Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Psychiatry in Munich, joined the Party in 1937.⁴⁰ Even when government policy became much more extreme than they themselves may have thought necessary, the eugenicists continued their work, despite the atrocities carried out by the Nazi government in the name of science. Eugenics was utilised as a 'scientific' justification for its actions. Hence, ultimately, the logic of eugenics was translated by the Nazi regime into a practice for its own ends, far more sinister than those anticipated by welfare-oriented eugenicists of the pre-Nazi era.

Marriage and Divorce

Marriage was of great significance to the National Socialists. Marriages that originated in sexual infatuation were considered to be bad, because the bonds were likely to be easily untied. The puritanical veiling of marriage in moral terms was quite an established Christian concept that was eagerly seized upon by the National Socialists for their own ends. The best marriages, according to Hitler, were those that were 'inspired by sincere mutual love', as they would be the most enduring, and therefore 'constitute a guarantee for the manner in which children will be brought up', which was 'a guarantee of inestimable value for the future of the German people'.⁴¹ Marriage was 'a means to serve nature', in order to perpetuate and immortalise the life of the *Volk*.⁴²

⁴⁰ R. Lifton, The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide (London, 1986), p. 28.

⁴¹ Hitler's Table Talk, pp. 439-40.

⁴² Das Schwarze Korps, 28 Oct. 1937, p. 7.

Hitler believed that 'where marriage itself is concerned, it is, of course essential that both parties should be absolutely healthy and racially beyond reproach'.⁴³ In this respect, marriage had a large part to play in the 'racial preservation' of the nation. 'In the blood alone resides the strength as well as the weakness of man.... People which renounce their racial purity renounce with it the unity of their soul in all its expressions.'⁴⁴ The prohibition of marriages between 'racially pure', 'healthy' Germans and the 'unfit' or 'racially inferior' was a method of preventing this kind of 'renunciation'. It took the form of new Nazi legislation in 1935. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour - one of the Nuremberg Laws, 15 September 1935 - prohibited marriages, and even sexual relationships, between Jews and 'Aryans'.⁴⁵ On 18 October 1935, the Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People or Marriage Health Law was issued, which effectively excluded the 'inferior' and 'alien' from the *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁴⁶ Paragraph 2 of this law required all prospective spouses to produce a 'certificate of fitness to marry', issued by the local health authorities. Such certificates were denied to those with serious infectious diseases or 'hereditary diseases'. These measures demonstrate how, to the National Socialists, marriage was not a free community of two people, but purely an institution for procreation.⁴⁷

The case of Else K. provides a typical example of the marriage health law and sterilisation policies of the Nazi regime.⁴⁸ Else K. had to undergo a medical examination,

⁴³ Hitler's Table Talk, p. 440.

⁴⁴ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 307.

⁴⁵ 'Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre vom 15. September 1935', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1935*, 1, pp. 1146-7.

⁴⁶ 'Gesetz zum Schutze der Erbgesundheit des deutschen Volkes vom 18. Oktober 1935', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1935*, 1, p. 1246.

⁴⁷ See H. Kessler, "*Die deutsche Frau*". *Nationalsozialistische Frauenpropaganda im "Völkischer Beobachter"* (Cologne, 1981), pp. 13 & 51.

in order to ascertain her 'fitness to marry'. She failed her 'intelligence test'. In addition, information came to light about her deceased brother, who had been in an asylum at Langenhagen for 'schizophrenia'. As a result of these two factors, she was sterilised in 1935. Furthermore, she was denied the right to marry the man of her choice, as he was 'hereditarily fit'. A marriage between a sterilised 'hereditarily ill' person and a 'hereditarily healthy' person was not in the interest of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, as the marriage would be childless and 'valuable' offspring would be lost.

On the positive side, incentives to promote early marriages between healthy, 'Aryan' partners included the marriage loan scheme, which was contained in the Law for the Reduction of Unemployment, 1 June 1933.⁴⁹ According to this law, an interest-free loan of up to 1000 RM. could be made to a German couple in the form of vouchers for the purchase of furniture and household equipment. The granting of a loan was conditional upon the woman giving up paid employment. The two main reasons for this were to encourage women back into the home and to create job opportunities for men. It was also hoped that the scheme would lower the male marriage age and therefore decrease men's need for prostitution.⁵⁰ The loans were to be repaid at the rate of 1% per month. A supplementary decree of 20 June 1933 stated that the sum to be repaid would be cut by one-quarter for each child born to the couple, so that in effect, on the birth of the fourth child the repayment was waived altogether.⁵¹ This was aimed at encouraging newly-weds to start having children as quickly as possible.

⁴⁸ On what follows, see A. Nitschke, *Gesundheit im Dienst der Rasse. Zur Geschichte des öffentlichen Gesundheitsdienstes Bremens im Dritten Reich am Beispiel des Bezirksamtes Bremen-Nord* (Bremen, 1993), pp. 8-11.

⁴⁹ 'Gesetz zur Verminderung der Arbeitslosigkeit vom 1. Juni 1933', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1933*, 1, pp. 323-4.

⁵⁰ Bock, 'Antinatalism, Maternity and Paternity', in Bock & Thane (eds.), *Maternity and Gender Policies*, p. 242.

⁵¹ 'Erste Durchführungsverordnung über die Gewährung von Ehestandsdarlehen

Another salient feature of the decree was that it made the granting of a loan conditional upon the political attitude and way of life of the couple. Hence, if one or both of the partners had any affiliations to the *KPD* or its associated organisations, the loan was denied. Conversely, political reliability was assumed in the case of members of the *SS*, *SA*, *NS-Frauenschaft* and other Nazi organisations and the loan was granted. Marriage loans were denied to persons who were or had been 'asocial', for example, tramps, prostitutes, alcoholics and those considered to be 'workshy'.⁵² Marriage loans could also be refused if either prospective spouse was suffering from a 'hereditary mental or physical disease'. A second supplementary decree of 26 July 1933 required all applicants for a marriage loan to undergo a medical examination.⁵³ Hence, suitability for marriage had to be proven. Loans were most commonly denied to prospective marriage partners on grounds of psychiatric disorders and infertility.

Between August 1933 and January 1937 some 700,000 marriages, one-third of all those contracted within that period, were assisted by marriage loans. In 1937, the revocation of the prohibition of women's paid employment as a prerequisite of the loans resulted in a sharp increase in applications. In 1939, 42% of all marriages were loan-assisted.⁵⁴ However, the loans did not have the desired effect of boosting the nation's birth rate. The long-term trend towards one- and two-child families was not altered appreciably by this measure, as the loans were in any case inadequate to cover the costs of a larger family.⁵⁵ Couples granted marriage loans on average had only one child.⁵⁶

vom 20. Juni 1933', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1933*, 1, pp. 377-8.

⁵² J. Noakes & G. Pridham (eds.), *Nazism 1919-1945: A Documentary Reader, Vol. 2, State, Economy & Society 1933-1939* (Exeter, 1984), pp. 455-6.

⁵³ 'Zweite Durchführungsverordnung über die Gewährung von Ehestandsdarlehen vom 26. Juli 1933', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1933*, 1, p. 515.

⁵⁴ Noakes & Pridham (eds.), *Nazism*, p. 451.

In 1938, a reform of the marriage law was introduced, which incorporated a new divorce law.⁵⁷ Under Paragraph 53 of this law, premature infertility became a ground for divorce, as did either partner's refusal to have a child. Paragraph 55 allowed for a divorce if the couple had lived apart for three years or more and the marriage had 'irretrievably' broken down. This action, however, did not stem from any attempt on the part of the regime to ameliorate the position of private individuals. Instead, it was for the benefit of the *Volk*. The logic behind it was that once a divorce had been granted, the two partners involved might re-marry and provide the *Volk* with children.

Abortion

Abortion legislation in Germany had been incorporated into the Penal Code on 1 January 1872, in the form of Paragraphs 218-220.⁵⁸ Paragraph 218 stated that a pregnant woman who purposely caused herself to abort was subject to imprisonment for up to five years, unless there were mitigating circumstances, in which case the sentence was reduced to a minimum of six months. The same punishment was applicable to any person who helped in the procurement of an abortion. According to the provisions of Paragraph 219, any person who administered an abortion for profit could be imprisoned for up to ten years.

⁵⁵ See Burleigh & Wippermann, *The Racial State*, pp. 251-2. See also, H. Focke & U. Reimer, *Alltag unterm Hakenkreuz* (Hamburg, 1979), pp. 122-3; and K. Jurczyk, *Frauenarbeit und Frauenrolle. Zum Zusammenhang von Familienpolitik und Frauenerwerbstätigkeit in Deutschland von 1918-1945* (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), p. 67.

⁵⁶ Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, p. 47.

⁵⁷ 'Gesetz zur Vereinheitlichung des Rechts der Eheschließung und der Ehescheidung im Lande Österreich und im übrigen Reichsgebiet vom 6. Juli 1938', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1938*, 1, pp. 807ff. On this law, see Noakes & Pridham(eds.), *Nazism*, pp. 468-9. See also Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, pp. 42-4.

⁵⁸ On what follows, see H. David, J. Fleischhacker & C. Höhn, 'Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany', *Population and Development Review*, 14 (1988), pp. 83-4.

Paragraph 220 called for the imprisonment of any person who purposely caused a pregnant woman to abort without her knowledge or consent for at least two years, or, if the woman died as a result of this action, for a minimum of ten years.

Social agitation for a liberalisation of these abortion laws had been initiated before 1900, but without success. During the Weimar era, *KPD* and *SPD* representatives introduced demands into the Reichstag for the legalisation of abortion. Despite the opposition of the Catholic Centre Party and a number of nationalist groups, in May 1926, a Reichstag majority voted for the consolidation of Paragraphs 218-220 of the Penal Code into a single paragraph, Paragraph 218. The severity of the sentences was reduced - detention for a period of between one day and five years was prescribed for a woman who induced her own abortion or allowed it to be carried out by a practitioner. The same punishment applied to the practitioner. If an abortion was carried out for profit or without the consent of the woman, a prison sentence of between one and fifteen years was meted out to the practitioner.

On 26 May 1933, the National Socialist government tightened up the abortion laws once again. Paragraphs 219 and 220 were re-introduced.⁵⁹ Paragraph 219 stated that any person who advertised, exhibited or recommended articles or procedures for abortion could be fined or imprisoned for up to two years. Paragraph 220 prescribed the same punishment for any person publicly offering his or her services, or those of a third party to carry out an abortion. Abortion on eugenic grounds, however, was permissible, and in some cases, even mandatory.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ On what follows, see '*Gesetz zur Änderung strafrechtlicher Vorschriften vom 26. Mai 1933*', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1933*, 1, pp. 295-6.

⁶⁰ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, pp. 122-3.

Illegal abortionists were increasingly punished by imprisonment, rather than by fines. In 1936, Himmler created the Reich Central Office for the Combating of Homosexuality and Abortion, headed by Josef Meisinger, to deal with matters of 'public morality'.⁶¹ Abortion and homosexuality were conceptually linked, as both implied individual choice. In 1937, the anti-abortion campaign led by the *Gestapo* intensified, with nine times as many abortionists facing legal charges as in the previous year.⁶² During the war, measures against abortion became increasingly stringent. It was made almost impossible to get an application for a legal abortion approved, which led to an increase in the number of illegal abortions. On 9 March 1943, a new sub-paragraph was added to Paragraph 218, which stated that the death penalty could be imposed upon any person who continuously impaired 'the vitality of the German *Volk*' by carrying out abortions.⁶³

Women and Work

In terms of employment, the National Socialists did not aim to remove women completely from the labour market, although they did continue Brüning's policies against *Doppelverdiener* or 'double-earners'. *Doppelverdiener* were married women who had a job, thereby adding extra income to the family, whilst simultaneously effectively depriving the man of another family a job. For example, married women were dismissed from the civil service as part of the drive against *Doppelverdiener*. The National Socialists wanted to remove women from heavy industry, and to encourage them to do agricultural, social or domestic work - areas more suited to them 'biologically'. Those remaining in industry were encouraged to undertake routine, monotonous tasks at the

⁶¹ Burleigh & Wippermann, *The Racial State*, p.191.

⁶² David, Fleischhacker & Höhn, 'Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany', p. 94.

⁶³ See Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, p. 69, and *Reichsgesetzblatt 1943*, 1, pp. 140-1.

assembly-line, so that their minds would not be distracted from thoughts of their familial duties.⁶⁴

In July 1934, the Women's Section of the *DAF* (German Labour Front) was set up under Gertrud Scholtz-Klink.⁶⁵ It was responsible for the welfare, surveillance and education of some seven million women. One of the primary functions of its large staff was to undertake factory social work. This included the provision of advice to female workers, the settling of disputes and the supervision of hygiene in the workplace. Other important functions were to protect the child-bearing capacity of women, to develop better labour laws and to provide courses in housekeeping and childcare for women. Such benefits to working women were not aimed at their personal health and happiness *per se*, but at ensuring that they were physically capable of and psychologically amenable to providing the nation with children. By the late 1930s, the regime, however, had to try to reconcile its ideology with the necessities demanded by the economy, as women were needed to fill jobs vacated by men who had been conscripted, and as armaments factories accelerated their production in line with government demands. Of course, these needs became increasingly urgent with the outbreak and duration of the Second World War.

The National Socialists at first showed some concern about the implications for family life of women going out to work. By 1933, some 11.5 million women were employed in Germany, of whom 4.5 million were either married women or widows. The Nazis recognised that some of these women went to work voluntarily, striving for independence or a higher family income, although in principle they disapproved of both

⁶⁴ A. Tröger, 'The Creation of a Female Assembly-Line Proletariat', in Bridenthal *et al* (eds.), *When Biology Became Destiny*, p. 256.

⁶⁵ On what follows, see Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, pp. 95-6.



these motives. However, their major concern was for those women who were obliged to go out to work as a result of their poor financial situation, especially mothers with large families to feed and clothe. The necessity for married women to work, and in particular, those with many children, was regarded by Nazi leaders and ideologists as being, 'in the highest sense unjust and anti-social, because it endangers marriage and the family'.⁶⁶ This situation meant that no one looked after the household properly, both parents returned home tired in the evenings, and the children suffered as a consequence, in particular due to the absence of the mother in their upbringing, welfare and education. Many such children ended up in youth welfare centres. The latter reported that most of the youths that came to them stemmed from families in which the mother was deceased, ill or in employment. In about 60% of such cases, the mother was working.⁶⁷ Frick claimed that with so many women in the workplace instead of the home, the sense of family and family life was destroyed. In the early years of the Third Reich, the priority was to encourage women to leave the workplace, both to create job vacancies for unemployed men and to increase the birth rate by promoting family life. Frick claimed: 'The growth of the family is imperative for the German people if we do not want to destroy the foundations of the German essence forever.'⁶⁸

Surveys were carried out on married women with children that went out to work.⁶⁹ For example, in Reinsdorf, information was collected about working women, such as the number of children they had, and in which age group - under the age of one, between one and six years and between six and fourteen years. Data was gathered about who looked

⁶⁶ Frick, *Wir bauen das Dritte Reich*, p. 51.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁶⁹ Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (hereafter BA) R 39/1159, 'Umfrage über verheiratete Frauen mit Kindern, die auf Arbeit gehen' (no date).

after the children whilst the mothers were at work. In most cases, this was the children's grandmother, aunt or a neighbour.⁷⁰ A report from a school at Zörnigall to the Mayor described the negative effects of the employment of mothers on the care and education of their children, stating that only 'the constant influence of the mother' safeguarded the care and development of both pre-school children and school children outside school hours. It stressed that children needed regular meals, especially breakfast - as well as enough sleep - so that they had sufficient energy for their day at school. The absence of mothers could create 'a health hazard for children'.⁷¹ The Mayor concurred that the lasting absence of a mother could not be made up for by kindergarten or other measures, such as supervision of her children by a relative or neighbour.⁷² In Zörnigall, out of 25 working mothers, 17 left their children between the ages of six and fourteen unsupervised, whilst 8 left their children (under six) in the care of a relative or neighbour.⁷³ This situation, even more widespread in the cities, did not correspond with Nazi family ideology, which proved untenable from the late 1930s onwards.

Concern for the well-being of the family in this sense diminished considerably once women were needed in the workforce.⁷⁴ There were some measures taken to mobilise women even before the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1935, legislation was introduced to make a term in the Labour Service compulsory, although this did not become binding on women until 1939, and even then was not uniformly implemented. In

⁷⁰ BA R 39/1159, '*Aus der Gemeinde Reinsdorf gehen nachfolgende verheiratete Frauen auf Arbeit*' (no date).

⁷¹ BA R 39/1159, '*Betr. : Auswirkung der Beschäftigung der Mütter auf Erziehung und Pflege der Kinder*', 18 Feb. 1939.

⁷² BA R 39/1159, '*Betrifft: Beschäftigung der verheirateten Frauen*', 20 Feb. 1939.

⁷³ BA R 39/1159, '*Aus der Gemeinde Zörnigall gehen nachfolgende verheiratete Frauen auf Arbeit*' (no date).

⁷⁴ On what follows, see L. Rupp, "'I Don't Call That *Volksgemeinschaft*": Women, Class, and War in Nazi Germany', in C. Berkin & C. Lovett (eds.), *Women, War and Revolution* (New York and London, 1980), pp. 37-9.

addition, in 1938, the office of the Four Year Plan introduced the Duty Year of compulsory service for one year in agriculture or domestic work for young, single girls. Hence, economic necessity triumphed over putative concerns for the primacy of the family, as women, including married women and mothers, were required to take their part in the workforce.⁷⁵

The *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"*

Welfare in the National Socialist state was aimed primarily at serving the nation, rather than at helping individuals in need *per se*. Erich Hilgenfeldt, the leader of the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt (NSV)* organisation claimed, 'we want to be fanatical servers of the health of the German *Volk*'. Indeed, the *NSV* was seen as 'the strong arm' of the state that 'lovingly' cared for German family life.⁷⁶ All its measures were undertaken with the aim of helping 'to found and to preserve hereditarily healthy *kinderreich* families'.⁷⁷ On 28 February 1934, a special agency of the *NSV* - the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* - was set up to facilitate Nazi population policy. Goebbels inaugurated the agency with the words: 'Mother and child are the pledge for the immortality of the nation'.⁷⁸ The main function of the agency then was to care for the 'immortality of the nation', by taking over the 'direction of health of the German *Volk*'.⁷⁹ As such, mothers as 'the eternal source of life', and children as 'the bearers of our national future' were to be helped.

⁷⁵ See W. Lee (ed.), European Demography and Economic Growth (London, 1979), pp. 166-7. See also, Jurczyk, Frauenarbeit und Frauenrolle, p. 59.

⁷⁶ K. Seiß, Ewiges Deutschland, Jan. 1937, p. 23.

⁷⁷ H. Althaus, Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (Berlin, 1936), p. 22.

⁷⁸ Institut für Zeitgeschichte (hereafter IfZ) Db 36.20, 'Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind. Bericht über das Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind" vom 1. 4. 1934 - 31. 12. 1934', p. 2.

⁷⁹ IfZ Fa 16.

The *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* played a highly significant part in National Socialist policy, in a state where the child was 'the most precious thing'. It was a concrete measure that accorded with Point 21 of the party's programme (February 1920) that: 'the state has to care for the raising of the nation's health through the protection of the mother and child'.⁸⁰ The sphere of work of the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* was split into a number of main functions: welfare and recuperation for mothers; welfare for small children; harvest kindergartens; help and advice centres; recuperation for youth and men. The central tasks of the agency's work were 'population policy, health promotion and educational measures'.⁸¹

Welfare for mothers

Welfare for mothers who had recently given birth but did not have sickness insurance had existed since the end of the First World War.⁸² However, it was only under the Nazi regime that this whole sphere of welfare became a central element of state policy. Welfare for mothers meant, above all, help in the home. Mothers in financial need were given assistance, although this did not usually entail direct financial aid.⁸³ Instead, it meant material assistance, such as the provision of beds, linen and children's clothes or food allowances. During the course of one month in 1934, in Munich-Oberbayern 25,800 litres of milk, 1,500 grocery parcels consisting of coffee, sugar, flour, rice, semolina, rolled oats and pulses, and 172 sets of babies' clothing and linen were

⁸⁰ H. Vorländer, *'NS-Volkswohlfahrt und Winterhilfswerk des deutschen Volkes', Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 34 (1986), p. 365

⁸¹ IfZ Db 36.21, *'Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind. Arbeitsbericht des Hilfswerkes "Mutter und Kind" für das Jahr 1937/38'*, p. 7.

⁸² C. Sachße & F. Tennstedt, *Geschichte der Armenfürsorge in Deutschland. Band 2. Fürsorge und Wohlfahrtspflege 1871-1929* (Stuttgart, 1988), p. 147 and C. Sachße & F. Tennstedt, *Der Wohlfahrtsstaat im Nationalsozialismus. Geschichte der Armenfürsorge in Deutschland. Band 3* (Stuttgart, 1992), p. 129.

⁸³ H. Vorländer, *Die NSV. Darstellung und Dokumentation einer nationalsozialistischen Organisation* (Boppard, 1988), p. 67.

distributed.⁸⁴ *Kinderreich* families were helped and encouraged, if possible, to settle on 'their own soil' in rural areas, in accordance with *Blut und Boden* ('Blood and Soil') ideology.⁸⁵ In the *Gaus* of Ost-Hannover, Weser-Ems, Schwaben and Gross-Berlin, housing subsidies were given to *kinderreich* families, so that they could obtain larger and 'hygienic' homes.⁸⁶ *Kinderreich* mothers, pregnant mothers or those who had recently given birth were assigned assistance in their household chores by home helps, sometimes in the form of *BDM* girls. There were also house visits from welfare workers and/or nurses to help pregnant women avoid miscarriages, illness or premature births, by advising and examining them. Their role was to educate and care for expectant mothers, to prevent problems connected with breast-feeding, to give practical advice on childcare and to observe the general behaviour of the family.⁸⁷ These regular house visits decreased in frequency as the child grew older. National Socialist welfare visits to 'hereditarily ill' or 'abnormal' children were restricted 'to a minimum'.⁸⁸

Single mothers also required special help and care. The *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* sought to help the single mother as much as possible, for motherhood was considered to be 'the highest and most valuable achievement in the service of the nation'.⁸⁹ *NSV* care made no distinction between married and unmarried mothers, so long as mothers were 'racially valuable' and 'hereditarily healthy' and were capable of looking after themselves

⁸⁴ IfZ Db 36.20, '*Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind*', pp. 14-15.

⁸⁵ BA R 89/5242, '*Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind und Hitler-Freiplatz-Spende 1936/37*', p. 10. See also, C. Kirkpatrick, *Nazi Germany: Its Women and Family Life*, p. 101, and C. Meyhöfer, *Das Wohlfahrtswesen im NS-Staat unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Situation in Bremen* (Bremen, 1988), p. 26.

⁸⁶ IfZ Db 36.20, '*Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind*', p. 18.

⁸⁷ BA NS 37/1010, '*Arbeitsanweisung für die offene Fürsorge für werdende Mütter, Wöchnerinnen, Säuglinge und Kleinkinder*', 20 Jan. 1943, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸⁹ H. Bernsee, '*Zehn Jahre Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"*', *Nationalsozialistischer Volksdienst*, 1943, p. 162.

and educating their children in the spirit of National Socialism.⁹⁰ Help for a single mother included efforts to procure her marriage to the child's father so that a family unit could be created. Apart from this, the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* was involved in organising adoptions and foster care, and in the struggle against abortion.⁹¹ It could also recommend applications for pregnant, single women to have their babies in the *SS's Lebensborn* homes, but only in exceptional cases, in which there were special reasons for a secret birth and only if the application was made at least two months in advance.⁹²

Recuperation for mothers

Welfare for mothers also took the form of various recuperation measures. Some moves towards such measures had already been initiated during the Weimar era.⁹³ However, mother recuperation prior to 1933 was not so ideologically-motivated nor so fundamental to state family policy as that of the National Socialist period. Recuperation took the form of either going to stay with relatives, visiting local recuperation centres or being sent away to recuperation homes. The latter were situated in tranquil surroundings, such as in the mountains or by the sea, or at natural springs and spas. The average stay was for 26 days.⁹⁴ The type of recuperation for each mother was decided in accordance with her medical condition, 'state of mind' and social status.⁹⁵ Medical examinations also enabled doctors to recommend the length of recuperation time necessary in each individual case.⁹⁶ The practice of ascertaining the 'hereditary-biological'

⁹⁰ O. Walter, *'Die NS-Volkswohlfahrt im Dienste der Mutterschaftsfürsorge'*, *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil A*, 20 June 1937, p. 278.

⁹¹ BA R 89/5242, *'Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind'*, pp. 10-11. See also, IfZ Db 36.20, *'Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind'*, p. 24.

⁹² BA NS 37/1030, *'Betr.: Unterbringung werdender lediger Mütter in dem Heimen des Vereins "Lebensborn e. V."'*, 21 March 1938.

⁹³ See, E. Goldacker, *Die deutsche Mutterschaftsfürsorge der Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1932), p. 71.

⁹⁴ BA R 89/5242, *'Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind'*, p. 11.

⁹⁵ Vorländer, *Die NSV*, p. 67-8.

value of each woman was a dominant feature of this whole area of work, and the 'hereditarily inferior' were not considered for recuperation benefits. For example, in the period up to the end of October 1941, some one-third of the applications to recuperation homes in the Hamburg area were rejected on the grounds that the women were 'hereditarily inferior' or exhibited behaviour that was 'adverse to the community'.⁹⁷ Any evidence of 'hereditary inferiority', such as her father having had tuberculosis or her sister suffering from 'emotional illness', precluded a woman from recuperation measures, as did any criminal behaviour on the part of her husband. The other main prerequisite for being sent away was that the mother did not possess sufficient financial means of her own to have the opportunity to obtain the necessary recuperation.⁹⁸ In particular, mothers with two or more children, mothers weakened through childbirth or illness, those whose husbands had been unemployed for a long period of time and those who had served the movement during the *Kampfzeit* were given priority for recuperation measures. During a mother's absence from home, her place was taken by a relative, neighbour or household help. Mothers received a 50% reduction on train travel to and from the recuperation homes. A special insurance was also arranged for them, in case of accident or injury during their journey or stay.

The recuperation homes had a strong educational aspect to them, not least because of the strong focus of community life within them. Copies of the educational pamphlet 'Guidelines for the Practical Housewife' were available in the homes and were to be 'made accessible to mothers'.⁹⁹ The course of daily activities was quite politicised, so that along

⁹⁶ Walter, *Die NS-Volkswohlfahrt*, p. 280.

⁹⁷ P. Zolling, *Zwischen Integration und Segregation. Sozialpolitik im "Dritten Reich" am Beispiel der "Nationalsozialistischen Volkswohlfahrt" (NSV) in Hamburg* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986), p. 205.

⁹⁸ On what follows, see IfZ Db 36.20, *Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind*, p. 19.

⁹⁹ BA NS 37/1030, *Betrifft: Schriftenreihe für die praktische Hausfrau*, 29 Dec.

with recuperation, in the form of rest, good, wholesome food and exercise, mothers coming to these homes received a large dose of National Socialist ideology. For example, the definition of the special role of women in the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* was the subject of considerable attention in these homes. The aim of the mothers' rest care was 'to toughen up German women for their tasks in the house and family'. The staff of the recuperation homes observed the mothers carefully and made reports about their behaviour and attitudes. Women were required to leave the homes if they behaved in a 'cantankerous' or 'contrary' manner.¹⁰⁰

In 1936, an estate of three homes, each with a different purpose, was set up by the *NSV* in Hohenlychen.¹⁰¹ The first was a home for breast-feeding mothers, where mothers and children were cared for together and 'educated into a new way of life'. First-time mothers, with no idea about how to care for their new babies, were educated about childcare in this home. In a four to six week period they were instructed in the areas of nutrition and hygiene. They were also taught about breast-feeding and how to wean off their babies. Under medical supervision, these new mothers quickly learned everything they needed to know about caring for and bringing up their children. Educational work about the prevention of diseases was one of the most central tasks of this home, as indeed it was of the *NSV*'s activities as a whole. The second was the recuperation home for mothers, where they could spend a three-week period in the fresh air, becoming fit and healthy as a result of sports activities and good food. It catered for 100 mothers at a time, the majority of whom were very young, often just seventeen or eighteen years old. Here they learned for the first time how to sew, darn and cook properly. Not only were

1937.

¹⁰⁰ Zolling, *Zwischen Integration und Segregation*, p. 209.

¹⁰¹ On what follows, see 'Die Mütterheime der *NSV* in Hohenlychen', *Neues Volk*, Jan. 1936, pp. 28-31.

these mothers strengthened physically, but they were also taught the basic prerequisites for their future everyday life. The third was a recuperation home designed specifically for *kinderreich* mothers, especially in cases in which the mothers were the family breadwinners, where women with a minimum of three children, could rest and be nourished and strengthened. Many of the women who came to this home had 10 or 12 children, and they were often in a poor financial position. In the main, their average weight on arrival did not exceed 80 lb., and it was usual for them to put on 10 lb. in weight during their two week stay. The *NSV* was particularly keen to be seen to be helping the plight of such women, particularly since it was these very women who had given up their time and strength for their family and nation.

The work of the recuperation homes was not purely for the benefit of the individual mothers who visited them, but, more importantly, for the good of the entire *Volk*, for mothers returned home with renewed strength and spirit to undertake their familial duties, which benefited their children, as well as themselves.¹⁰² According to official *NSV* statistics, 40,340 women were sent to recuperation homes in 1934, the number rising to 77,723 in 1938.¹⁰³ In many cases, babies and small children were sent with them. Letters from mothers describing their period of recuperation were proudly utilised by the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* to demonstrate the success of their work.¹⁰⁴ The following extracts were typical of what the mothers wrote: 'We live as in fairy tales.... It is overwhelmingly beautiful here, I cannot put it into words.... This trip, this experience will certainly count as the most beautiful memory of my life'; 'I would like to heartily thank

¹⁰² *'Mutter hat Ferien', Neues Volk*, July 1939, p. 20.

¹⁰³ See E. Hansen, *Wohlfahrtspolitik im NS-Staat* (Augsburg, 1991), p. 159, for a table showing the growth and development of *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* activities between 1935 and 1942.

¹⁰⁴ On what follows, see BA NS 37/1035, *'Aus Mütterbriefen'*.

the *Führer* with the assurance that I am aware as a German woman and mother of my responsibility to look after my children... and to educate them into fit, useful people.' All the letters expressed gratitude to Hitler and to the *NSV*. Women described their recuperation time as 'the most beautiful hours of our lives' and how refreshed they subsequently felt to return to their 'duties'. Men even wrote to the *NSV* to thank the organisation on behalf of their wives. One said: 'She has put on 14 lb., and the strength she was lacking before her trip has considerably come back again.... March forward, *NSV*, flourish, prosper, and the nation will be healthy'. On their return home, mothers were not always plunged straight back into their duties again. If they were still not completely recuperated, home helps were sent to assist them in their household chores for up to four weeks.¹⁰⁵

Welfare for small children

With regard to health policy, special attention was devoted to the prevention of infant mortality by means of wider education of the public in child care. The infant mortality rate of 7.7% in 1933 was reduced to 6.58% by 1936.¹⁰⁶ Prevention of childhood disease was also a central aim of *NSV* work - 'what is prevented in childhood is prevented for life'.¹⁰⁷ It was considered dangerous for the future of the nation for infants and small children to be negatively affected by factors such as lack of care and bad nutrition, hence the promotion of their health was a key function of the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"*. Advice and consultation centres were essential in contributing both to the population policy objectives of the regime and to a heightened awareness of issues such as prevention of illness, the importance of breast-feeding and correct nutrition.¹⁰⁸ For

¹⁰⁵ Walter, *'Die NS-Volkswohlfahrt'*, p. 282.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ H. Rees-Fac, *'Unser Werk für Mutter und Kind'*, *NS-Frauenwarte*, May 1939, p. 729.

example, nutritional information was given to mothers, especially the need for fresh fruit and vegetables in the diet, as well as supplementary vitamin and mineral preparations. Good nutrition and exercise were important for the prevention of illness in children. Children's diets were to be ruled as much by health as by economic factors. There was also a special campaign against rickets, especially in industrial and rural areas, where some 40-50% of babies and small children were becoming ill with it.¹⁰⁹ The distribution of cod liver oil and calcium preparations as preventive treatments was carried out widely.¹¹⁰

General health education was also served by a pamphlet entitled 'The Adviser for Mothers', of which almost 1.2 million copies were distributed in 1937.¹¹¹ Former health care provisions were frowned upon by the *NSV*, which described the lack of monitoring of the health of small children as 'completely unacceptable'. The continual health care of growing children was expanded by means of regular medical examinations and more medical advice being made available to mothers.¹¹² In addition, children under six were sent to day nurseries or kindergartens, where they could be looked after properly, especially if their mothers had jobs outside the home. The day nurseries were clean, spacious, bright and airy, ensuring a 'healthy environment' for the children. Each day, on arrival, the children washed and cleaned their teeth, and then were separated into different age groups and supervised by nurses and welfare workers, as they played,

¹⁰⁸ On this, see Dr. Hoffmann, '*Über Mütterberatungsstunden für Säuglinge und Kleinkinder als wertvollste staatliche Fürsorgeeinrichtung*', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil B*, 20 July 1937, pp. 335-9.

¹⁰⁹ IfZ Db 36.21, '*Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind*', pp. 12-13.

¹¹⁰ Hoffmann, '*Über Mütterberatungsstunden für Säuglinge und Kleinkinder als wertvollste staatliche Fürsorgeeinrichtung*', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil B*, 5 Aug. 1937, p. 364.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹¹² '*Hilfe für Mutter und Kind*', *Neues Volk*, Nov. 1935, p. 21.

exercised, ate, sang and slept.¹¹³ The 'Guidelines for Day Nurseries' in 1936 set out the following amongst its tasks: to sponsor the physical, mental and spiritual development of the children, to educate them in National Socialism and service to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and to instil a sense of care for the German nation and morality. Hence, the nurseries clearly had the function of socialising small children in the spirit of National Socialism. *NSV* kindergartens were considered to be 'essential bases... for the education of young German people'.¹¹⁴ According to official *NSV* statistics, the number of day nurseries rose from approximately 1,000 in 1935 to 15,000 in 1941, although no indication is given about their size and quality.

Harvest kindergartens

In addition to ordinary nurseries, 'harvest kindergartens' were set up in rural areas. These had a special function. They freed agricultural women from their familial responsibilities during the day, allowing them to carry out their harvesting. The necessity for these kindergartens was demonstrated by the lack of available, satisfactory supervision for children during harvest time. The care for children during the harvest period by the oldest, frailest - and often ill - village inhabitants was considered completely inadequate and unsuitable. 'Harvest kindergartens' were first set up in the summer of 1934, to take in healthy, unsupervised children from the age of two upwards. Their number grew from 600 in 1934, to 8,700 in 1941 and 11,000 in 1943.¹¹⁵ Their duties included the following: to promote the physical, mental and spiritual development of the children, to educate the children in the ideas of National Socialism and to maintain contact with the parental home.¹¹⁶ In order to arouse a sense of joy in the family circle, parents evenings were

¹¹³ 'Hilfstelle Mutter und Kind', *Neues Volk*, April 1940, p. 22.

¹¹⁴ BA R 89/5242, 'Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind', p. 14.

¹¹⁵ Vorländer, *Die NSV*, p. 70.

¹¹⁶ BA NSD 30/25 'Richtlinien für Erntekindergärten im Rahmen des Hilfswerkes

were introduced, and to deepen love and responsibility for 'blood and soil', educational work corresponded with the reality of agricultural life. Children were taught to be 'independent' and 'productive'.

The 'harvest kindergartens' were the joint responsibility of the *NSV* and the *NS-Frauenschaft*. Their costs were to be kept to a minimum.¹¹⁷ For example, suitable locations for 'harvest kindergartens' were empty school rooms or even empty barns. They were to be self-financed, if possible, by weekly contributions from the children's parents, the amount of which depended upon their income, and by donations from local inhabitants and employers. Any excess costs were met by the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"*. 'Harvest kindergartens' consisted of one or two large rooms, simply furnished with tables, benches and chairs, and equipped with wash basins and good sanitation. There was also a play area outside, either a garden or a sand pit. The kindergartens provided pillows, blankets, toothbrushes and hand towels for the children, but plates, beakers and spoons had to be provided by the parents. Milk was supplied by local farmers. The kindergartens were run by trained kindergarten workers, who were helped by older school girls and *BDM* girls, provided that they were not needed for harvest work. The children were medically examined and a health questionnaire was filled out for each child.¹¹⁸ Both oral hygiene and general health were regularly monitored. Children with lice or any infectious diseases, were not allowed to attend the kindergartens until they were better.

"Mutter und Kind", p. 3.

¹¹⁷ On what follows, see BA NSD 30/25 *'Richtlinien für Erntekindergärten'*, pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁸ For sample questionnaire, see *ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

From an economic point of view, the 'harvest kindergartens' were crucial. The corresponding measure introduced in industrial areas was the setting up of factory crèches. In the sphere of child care, there was some conflict between the *NSV* and existing kindergartens run by the Churches. The *NSV* wanted to predominate in this area of work, so that National Socialist attitudes - rather than religious ones - could be fostered. Although it did not achieve this aim in Germany, following the *Anschluß*, all private and confessional kindergartens in Austria were taken over by the *NSV*.¹¹⁹

Advice and Help Centres

A network of help centres was set up throughout Germany to offer advice to mothers who sought it. These centres were an important focus of *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* work. Reports about the help centres in Hamburg showed that in the first six months of their existence, they were primarily seen as places for the receipt of applications for financial support and were mainly visited by men.¹²⁰ Clearly, the way in which the centres were regarded by the general public changed as the latter found out that no financial support was forthcoming. By 1935, 25,552 such centres had been set up.¹²¹ They offered advice about all aspects of household management, nutritional questions, health, care of babies and education of children, as well as all types of family problems. The medical profession approved of the work of the mothers' advice centres and their consultation hours. One senior physician described their function as 'the most valuable facility of state welfare'.¹²² In 1937, 3,274,049 people visited these centres, as compared to 2,824,932 the previous year. This high and rising number was considered by the *NSV*

¹¹⁹ Vorländer, *Die NSV*, p. 71.

¹²⁰ Zolling, *Zwischen Integration und Segregation*, p. 201.

¹²¹ D. Kramer, 'Das Fürsorgesystem im Dritten Reich', in R. Baron & R. Landwehr (eds.), *Geschichte der Sozialarbeit* (Weinheim & Basil, 1983), p. 192.

¹²² Hoffmann, 'Über Mütterberatungsstunden', p. 331.

to reflect the population's trust in its work.¹²³ The most important function of the centres was educational. Their staff were in direct contact with the population and as such were able to spread National Socialist ideology quite easily.¹²⁴ There were 28,936 such centres in 1941, of which 8,136 incorporated professional medical advice.¹²⁵ However, not least because of problems connected with the war, the need for more centres was urgently felt in 1943.¹²⁶ The *NSV* aimed to expand the scope of the centres, so that each would have a catchment area of between 3,000 and 8,000 inhabitants. Medical advice was made available every eight days in the big cities, every four weeks in small towns and large villages and every six to eight weeks in small, rural communities.

Recuperation for youth and men

The *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* was also involved in sending small children, school children and school-leavers away for recuperation.¹²⁷ Although this activity had its origins during the Weimar era, it only became a really large scale phenomenon during the Third Reich. The *NSV* claimed special success in its systematic, large scale operation of the sending away of school-leavers, whose health was generally worse than that of school children. In 1937-8, 632,155 children were sent away, whilst 32,983 school children were provided with local recuperation care.¹²⁸ In total, between 1933 and 1938, 3,637,481 children were sent to the countryside for recuperation.¹²⁹

¹²³ IfZ Db 36.21, '*Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind*', p. 7.

¹²⁴ BA NSD 57/8-8, '*Im Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind. Arbeit in den Hilfstellen*', p. 27.

¹²⁵ Vorländer, *Die NSV*, p. 266.

¹²⁶ On what follows, see BA NS 37/1010, '*Arbeitsanweisung*', p. 3.

¹²⁷ On this, see Vorländer, *Die NSV*, pp. 74-6.

¹²⁸ IfZ Db 36.21, '*Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind*', p. 16.

¹²⁹ Sachße & Tennstedt, *Der Wohlfahrtsstaat im Nationalsozialismus*, p. 129.

The *Hitler-Freiplatz-Spende* was a supplementary measure of the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"*, which catered for the recuperation of men.¹³⁰ It was founded in 1933, at first, purely for the recuperation of Party members and members of the various National Socialist formations. Its chief aim in the first three years of its existence was to restore to these men their full working strength, especially if they had been unemployed for a number of years during the Depression. After 1936, the *Hitler-Freiplatz-Spende* became open to ordinary men in need of recuperation. Free places were made available to men at health resorts and spa hotels. School-leavers who were no longer eligible for youth recuperation care were also sent away under the aegis of the *Hitler-Freiplatz-Spende*. In total, 75,540 men were sent away for recuperation in the year 1936 alone. Of these, the majority were still members of the Party and its formations, but the aim for the future was to extend further the opportunities for ordinary men to have recuperation periods. The number of men that had the opportunity to be sent away for recuperation did rise, to 112,805 in 1938, but the number subsequently decreased to 17,581 in 1941.¹³¹ The *Hitler-Freiplatz-Spende*, along with the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* as a whole, made 'a considerable contribution to the preservation of the health of the family'.

During the war, the central focus of the work of the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* became special care for soldiers' families.¹³² A letter was sent to soldiers' wives to tell them not to write to their husbands about anything that might worry them whilst they were at war.¹³³ The *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* undertook a large scale operation of care and welfare for soldiers' wives, who were urged to contact the *NSV* regarding any

¹³⁰ On what follows, see BA R 89/5242, '*Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind*', pp. 29-31.

¹³¹ Vorländer, *Die NSV*, p. 286.

¹³² BA NS 37/1006, '*Betrifft: Rasche und wirksame Betreuung durch die NSV*', 3 March 1942.

¹³³ On what follows, see BA NS 37/1006, '*Liebe deutsche Soldatenfrau!*'.

problems, rather than creating extra concerns for their husbands. The *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* would help in cases of difficulties with family support, with citizen's advice and legal advice, with any educational problems, in the event of a soldier's wife's illness or that of her children, in cases of rent or housing difficulties, and with any problems arising from work or pregnancy.

The *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* - An Overview

'More happiness, more relaxation, healthier mothers and children - that is the aim!'¹³⁴ This was the aspect of the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* stressed most predominantly in Nazi propaganda. However, in terms of its work, the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* agency was one of the most important instruments of educating the nation in the spirit of National Socialism. The *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* was a key element of National Socialist welfare work, helping people and also educating them, in one of the most important aspects of life, namely, the family. It gave material - though not cash - assistance to families in need, but only if they were 'hereditarily healthy' and 'racially valuable', and all its work was carried out with the overriding aim of imprinting National Socialist views upon them. The ideological conception of the *NSV* meant a change from traditional welfare care to one which was primarily understood in population policy terms.¹³⁵ In this sense, the *NSV* provided 'preventive welfare', promoting 'racially pure' and 'fit' Germans and discriminating against the 'inferior', regardless of the level of their need or suffering. In addition, the voluntary organisations of both the Catholic and Protestant churches - Caritas and the Inner Mission respectively - were pushed out of their traditional fields of charity and welfare by the *NSV*.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Rees-Fac, '*Unser Werk für Mutter und Kind*', p. 729.

¹³⁵ Vorländer, '*NS-Volkswohlfahrt und Winterhilfswerk*', p. 359.

The symbol of the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* was a heart and a cradle, simply seen as representing motherly love. However, its deeper meaning was that the cradle symbolised the German future and the heart represented the *Führer's* love and concern for the future of Germany.¹³⁷ The motto of the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* was 'Struggle for the Future of our *Volk*'.¹³⁸ On 28 February 1944, the tenth anniversary of the *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"*, Goebbels gave instructions for a large propaganda spectacle, which included the honouring of those employees who had been active in its programme over the entire ten year period.¹³⁹ The anniversary was a celebration of the achievements of National Socialist welfare as a whole. The *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* claimed that family life was 'very much promoted' by all its activities.¹⁴⁰

Illegitimate Children

Beneath the propaganda veneer of the importance of the family as the source of life of the *Volk*, it seems that traditional values and morality were not necessarily the order of the day in the Third Reich. Family was unquestionably crucial to the Nazi regime as a means of achieving its population policy aims and racial purity, and indeed, was manipulated to serve these purposes, but it was not the only factor involved. In this regard, the views of Hitler on polygamy and illegitimate children are pertinent: 'Let's remember that after the Thirty Years' War polygamy was tolerated, so that it was thanks to the illegitimate child that the nation recovered its strength.'¹⁴¹ Alfred Rosenberg also

¹³⁶ M. Phayer, Protestant and Catholic Women in Nazi Germany (Detroit, 1990), p. 119.

¹³⁷ Rees-Fac, *'Unser Werk für Mutter und Kind'*, p. 729.

¹³⁸ BA R 89/5242, *'Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind'*, p. 22.

¹³⁹ BA NS 37/1011, *Rundschreiben Nr. 174/43*, 23 Sept. 1943, *'Betrifft: 10 Jahre Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind" am 28. Februar 1944'*.

¹⁴⁰ IfZ Db 36.20, *'Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind'*, p. 22.

¹⁴¹ Hitler's Table Talk, p. 352.

noted that at times, in the past, the German nation had maintained its very existence by means of polygamy, especially when the number of women in the population greatly outnumbered that of men. As this was again the case in the early 1930s, he considered it wrong that millions of women should go through their lives being smiled at pityingly by others, robbed of their right to have children, and then die as 'old maids'.¹⁴² He claimed that society in general, and the churches in particular, treated illegitimate children and their mothers with 'repulsive hypocrisy'.¹⁴³ Hitler argued that: 'As long as we have in Germany two and a half million women vowed to celibacy, we shall be forbidden to despise the child born out of wedlock'.¹⁴⁴ He maintained that he had much more respect for a woman that had an illegitimate child than for an old maid.¹⁴⁵ Another commonly held view was that: 'The National Socialist state no longer sees in the single mother the "degenerate".... It places the single mother who has given a child a life, higher than the "lady", who has avoided having children in her marriage on egotistical grounds'.¹⁴⁶

The views of Heinrich Himmler on marriage and the legitimacy of children were perhaps the most extreme propounded by any of the Nazi leadership. He advocated bigamy on the grounds that:

Marriage in its existing form is the Catholic Church's satanic achievement; marriage laws are in themselves immoral. The case-histories of monogamy so often show up the woman as thinking: 'Why should I take as much trouble with my appearance as before I was married?'... But with bigamy, each wife would act as a stimulus to the other so that both would try to be their husband's dream-woman.... The fact that a man has to spend his entire existence with one wife drives him... to deceive her.... The result is indifference between the partners. They avoid each other's

¹⁴² A. Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (Munich, 1934), p. 593.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 592.

¹⁴⁴ *Hitler's Table Talk*, p. 352.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

¹⁴⁶ Bernsee, 'Zehn Jahre Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"', p. 161.

embraces and the final consequence is that they don't produce children.... On the other hand, the husband never dares to have children by the woman with whom he is carrying on an affair... simply because middle-class morality forbids it.¹⁴⁷

Thus Himmler denounced monogamous marriages because they failed to produce the children required by the state. He claimed: 'Whoever vituperates against an unmarried mother makes himself into a paragon of virtue that he quite certainly is not'.¹⁴⁸ He also stated that 'every mother of good blood should be holy to us' - i.e. whether her child was legitimate or illegitimate. He, like Rosenberg, patently despised the 'hypocrisy' and double standards of 'middle class convention' or 'middle class morality', and proposed quite radical ideas in order to usurp it, the most extreme of which was the establishment of the *Lebensborn* agency in December 1935, which set up maternity homes in which single women could give birth to illegitimate children. These homes were, according to Himmler, 'primarily... for the brides and wives of our young SS men, and secondarily for illegitimate mothers of good blood'.¹⁴⁹ The aims of the organisation were to support 'hereditarily-biologically valuable, *kinderreich* families', to care for 'racially valuable and hereditarily healthy mothers-to-be', to care for the children born from such mothers and to care for the mothers after the delivery of their babies.¹⁵⁰ The prerequisite for such care was, of course, fulfilment of the SS's criteria regarding race and hereditary health. The *Lebensborn* did not serve mothers who had been involved in 'indiscriminate relationships' that would lead to the birth of 'racially inferior' or 'hereditarily ill' children.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ F. Kersten, *The Kersten Memoirs 1940-1945* (London, 1956), pp. 176-7.

¹⁴⁸ BA NS 48/ 31 'Bemerkungen des Reichsführers-SS zum Vortrag "Zwei Jahre Lebensborn-Arbeit"', p. 8.

¹⁴⁹ BA NS 48/ 31, 'Bemerkungen des Reichsführers-SS zum Vortrag "Zwei Jahre Lebensborn-Arbeit"', p. 7. On the *Lebensborn*, see also: G. Lilienthal, *Der "Lebensborn e.V.": Ein Instrument nationalsozialistischer Rassenpolitik* (Stuttgart, 1985); J. Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler als Ideologue* (Göttingen, 1970), pp. 28-30; and L. Thompson, 'Lebensborn and the Eugenics Policy of the Reichsführer-SS', *Central European History*, 4 (1971), pp. 54-77.

¹⁵⁰ BA NS 48/ 29, 'Satzung des Vereins "Lebensborn" e. V.', 24 Dec. 1937, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ J. von Wich, 'Heilig soll uns sein jede Mutter guten Blutes. Aus der Arbeit der

The *Lebensborn* organisation was run from its headquarters in Munich, under the personal chairmanship of Himmler.¹⁵² By the end of 1937, it had 13,300 members, of whom 12,500 were from the *SS* and 500 were from the German police. The organisation saw its chief task as 'the support... of mothers-to-be of good blood'. It played a part in the struggle against abortions, by providing discreet delivery homes for illegitimate births and thereby preventing a number of pregnant girls and women from feeling the necessity to terminate their pregnancies. For if the mother and the father of the baby were both 'hereditarily healthy', the child would be 'valuable'. Hence, the *Lebensborn* provided practical protection for such mothers-to-be in its delivery homes, of which six were established in the first two years of its existence. By 31 December 1938, 653 mothers had used the *Lebensborn* delivery homes. The infant mortality rate in the homes was 3%, which was half the national average. The homes were 'tasteful and modern' in decor. Each was run by a resident doctor who advised the women. To prepare the mothers for their future responsibilities, *RMD* courses were held in each *Lebensborn* home, to train mothers in all aspects of household management and childcare. In addition, the *SS* was responsible for the 'ideological education' of the women, which it achieved by holding lectures, film screenings and discussion evenings. Mothers also had the chance to relax during their free time and to form friendships with the other women. A sense of camaraderie developed between the mothers as each was giving a German baby a life.

Once she had given birth, a mother who could not take her baby with her, could leave it to be looked after in the home for one year. If, after that time, the mother was still

SS. Der "Lebensborn" e.V. ein Hüter deutscher Zukunft', NS-Frauenwarte, Sept. 1938, p. 166.

¹⁵² On what follows, see BA NS 48/31, 'Zwei Jahre Lebensborn-Arbeit', pp. 1-13.

unmarried or not in a position to take care of the child, it was given out to foster parents, usually to *SS* leaders who were childless or who had just one or two children. The *Lebensborn* organisation accepted that marriage was the best possible situation in which a man and woman could have children, but it also stated that it recognised that many young men and women engaged in extra-marital sexual relationships for a number of reasons. In such cases, it was the 'hereditary health' and 'blood' of the parents that were important. In this sense, it claimed to protect Germany's future.

The *Lebensborn* statistics for its home "Pommern" provide an interesting account of the organisation's activities.¹⁵³ Between 23 May 1938 and 1 September 1941, 541 mothers gave birth at this home. Of these, 245 were married and 296 were single - i.e. 45% were married. According to the *Lebensborn* statistics, 71% of those having their first child were unmarried, but only 26% of those having their second child were unmarried, and of those having their third or more child, none were unmarried. 42 of the single mothers subsequently got married, of which 37 of these marriages were to the child's father. Out of the 545 births, including two sets of twins, only 7 babies were stillborn or died within 24 hours of birth. Hence, the mortality rate was exceptionally low compared with the national average. The length of stay in the homes was, on average 71 days, 43.5 days for married mothers and 94.5 days for single mothers. The longest stay was 256 days and the shortest was 9 days. 21 mothers had already visited the home to give birth for a second time.

Although Himmler openly expressed his approval of and support for illegitimate children, his views were not shared by all Nazi leaders, nor by medical 'experts', who saw the true

¹⁵³ On what follows, see BA NS 48/ 29, '*Statistik aus dem Heim "Pommern"*', 30 Sept. 1941, pp. 1-3.

bases of the state as 'marriage and family'.¹⁵⁴ Concern about the moral and eugenic implications of the encouragement of illegitimacy came from a number of sources, including Walter Groß, the leader of the Racial Political Office of the *NSDAP*, who warned that illegitimacy was a sign of degeneracy in marriage and the family.¹⁵⁵ In addition, Fritz Lenz, a prominent eugenicist, believed that illegitimate children were attributed with below average intelligence and genetic value.¹⁵⁶ Many doctors saw illegitimate children as a 'moral threat' and a 'health threat' on the grounds of their high mortality rate compared to legitimate children and their 'higher proportion of illness, criminality and waywardness'.¹⁵⁷

It was estimated that approximately 102,000 illegitimate children were born in Germany in 1933, 101,000 in 1934 and 100,000 in 1935.¹⁵⁸ Reiter, the President of the Reich Health Office, carried out a study of illegitimate children in Rostock, from which it was clear that the percentage of 'hereditarily unfit' children was considerably higher amongst the offspring of unmarried mothers with a large number of children. Indeed, it was deemed that 'the more illegitimate children the single mother has, the greater is the probability that she does not possess the intellectual or moral value that must be called for in the German mother'.¹⁵⁹ As a result of Reiter's study in Rostock, Lenz stressed that illegitimate children were 'predominantly feeble-minded, psychopathic and according to their physical condition less favourable than children born legitimately'.¹⁶⁰ The mothers

¹⁵⁴ For example, see W. Winkler, 'Beitrag zur Unehelichenfrage', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil B*, 20 April 1938, p. 41.

¹⁵⁵ See Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, pp. 535 & 539.

¹⁵⁶ F. Lenz, 'Zur Frage der unehelichen Kinder', *Volk und Rasse*, III, 1937, pp. 91-5.

¹⁵⁷ See Winkler, 'Beitrag zur Unehelichenfrage', p. 35.

¹⁵⁸ W. Lange, 'Der erbbiologische Wert der unehelichen Mütter mit drei und mehr unehelichen Kindern', *Volk und Rasse*, X, 1937, p. 376.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ 'Brauchen wir mehr uneheliche Kinder?', *Neues Volk*, April 1937, p. 21.

were considered to be 'limited' in intelligence, 'lacking in self-control' and often 'definitely feeble-minded'. Lenz came to the conclusion that racial hygiene had no interest in encouraging illegitimate births, and on the contrary, had to strive for a decrease in their numbers. In contrast to Himmler, Lenz saw the illegitimate child as 'an absolute evil'.¹⁶¹

A similar study of the 'biological value' of unmarried mothers and their illegitimate children was carried out in Chemnitz. It considered 161 mothers with three or more children, of whom 40 were married at the time of the survey, although their marriage had taken place after the birth of at least one child.¹⁶² Of the 161 women, 47 were considered to be 'feeble-minded', 44 were 'failures at school', one was 'schizophrenic', one was a 'schizoid psychopath' and two had 'congenital deformities'. Hence, 95 of the mothers (59%) were deemed 'hereditarily unfit'. Approximately another 15% of these women lay outside the jurisdiction of the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring. They would, however, have been affected by the Marriage Health Law of 18 October 1935, had they wanted to marry. Paragraph 1 of this law prohibited marriage if either of the partners did not possess a certificate of 'fitness to marry'. However, these women had evaded the examination for 'fitness to marry' because they had not married, but had given birth to their children whilst remaining single. In total then, some three-quarters of these women were 'hereditarily unfit'. The 161 mothers gave birth to 584 illegitimate children, of whom 72 died at birth or in infancy. Of the remaining 512 children, 91 were 'failures at school'. Ten were unquestionably 'feeble-minded', although it was felt that more would come into this category once they were old enough to assess. There were 34 'problem children', 18 that showed 'moral defects', 14 that had speech defects, seven

¹⁶¹ On this, see Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler als Ideologue*, p. 30.

¹⁶² On what follows, see Lange, 'Der erbbiologische Wert der unehelichen Mütter mit drei und mehr unehelichen Kindern', pp. 377-9.

'bed-wetters' and three 'Jewish *Mischlinge*'. Consequently, at least one-third of these children were 'hereditarily unfit'. This study confirmed the view of those who believed that illegitimate children were 'undesirable' as a result of their 'hereditary unfitness', 'racial inferiority' or 'asociality'.

There continued to be concern in the Ministry of the Interior about the number of illegitimate children being born.¹⁶³ In June 1942, Leonardo Conti, the Reich Health Leader and head of the Department of Health in the Ministry of the Interior, stressed that illegitimate children were only to get child allowances if they passed a medical examination and if their father's identity could be ascertained with certainty. The hereditary make-up of a child had to be established through the examination of both its parents, which was not possible if the child's mother was in doubt about the father's identity. In addition, Conti was especially displeased that between 1938 and 1942, 3,255 illegitimate children had been born to German girls whose fathers were foreign workers and were therefore 'racially inferior'.

The SS

The SS had strict regulations pertaining to the family lives of its members.¹⁶⁴ An SS member had to be 'an exemplary National Socialist', not only in his work, but also in his 'entire private life'. Above all, Himmler required 'pure blood' of SS members, not only in their ancestry, but also in their choice of brides. The SS considered German women to be 'the protectors of the most holy source of blood and life that renews our nation everyday'. Marriage and the family were regarded as 'holy', therefore the choice of

¹⁶³ On what follows, see BA Sammlung Schumacher 486, letter from Conti to Himmler, 9 June 1942, pp. 1-2.

¹⁶⁴ On what follows, see BA NS 2/51a *'Die Schutzstaffel und das deutsche Frauengeschlecht'*.

marital partner was not to be taken lightly. 'Getting to know someone for a few hours on the dance floor' was not recommended as the basis for a future partnership. An *SS* man had to find a bride whose 'blood' and 'inner value' was equal to his own. Although the *SS* claimed to consider an illegitimate child to be as valuable as a legitimate one - providing that its parents were both 'racially valuable' - it still maintained that for its members, marriage was the best position.

As early as 31 December 1931, the *SS* had issued an order on engagement and marriage for its members.¹⁶⁵ It introduced, with effect from 1 January 1932, a system of 'marriage authorisation' for all its unmarried members. Marriage authorisation was introduced because *SS* men had been marrying 'unsuitable' women, for example, ones that did not correspond to the racial principles of the *SS* or that were considerably older than themselves. Any *SS* member that wanted to get married had to obtain this authorisation, which was granted or denied purely and simply from the standpoints of 'race' and 'hereditary health'.¹⁶⁶ *SS* doctors were responsible for ensuring that the future wives of *SS* men met these requirements, by carefully checking the answers the women gave on the health forms they had to fill out, especially regarding their own and their families' past history of tuberculosis and psychopathy, as well as their gynaecological history. The *SS* doctors were permitted to carry out further examinations if case histories or test results seemed suspicious. Any member that married without gaining this authorisation was liable to be struck out of the *SS*, especially if the marriage was to a Jew or 'gypsy'.¹⁶⁷ The

¹⁶⁵ On what follows, see BA NS 19/752 '*SS Befehl A Nr. 65*', 31 Dec. 1931.

¹⁶⁶ On what follows, see BA NS 2/179, '*Betr.: Allgemeine, SS-ärztliche Untersuchung für Verlobungs- und Heirats-Genehmigung*', 18 May 1937. For the medical questionnaire itself, see BA NS 2/179, '*Fragebogen zum Verlobungs- und Heiratsgesuch*', which was a complete family and medical history, to be signed by an *SS* doctor.

¹⁶⁷ For example, see BA NS 2/247, '*Betr.; Entlassung des SS-Schützen Johannes Zschorn*', 18 Nov. 1944. Zschorn was dismissed from the *SS* because his wife

scheme was not ideal, however, because once a relationship had reached the stage of applying for the authorisation, it was generally too late for there to be successful intervention in it. In many cases, the marriage was not prevented and the *SS* lost a member. Hence, additional measures were called for, to try to ensure that *SS* men had the opportunity to meet 'racially valuable' girls and women, such as through sports events and community celebrations, at which all present had to meet up to *SS* selection criteria.¹⁶⁸

Himmler also wanted *SS* members to have *kinderreich* families: '*SS* families must... be *kinderreich* families'.¹⁶⁹ He further believed that in 'the battle for births of good blood', the question of having a large family was 'not the private concern of the individual, but a duty towards our ancestors and *Volk*'. He claimed: 'Whoever is old enough to be an officer, a sub-officer or leader of men and who is willing to use his life in the struggle for the preservation of the nation is also old enough to found a family and to be leader and protector of his wife and children'.¹⁷⁰ He demanded a minimum of four children in each *SS* marriage. If, however, due to 'unfortunate circumstances of fate', an *SS* marriage could have no children of its own, the couple were to adopt 'racially valuable and hereditarily healthy children and educate them in the spirit of National Socialism'. The *Lebensborn* organisation was available to *SS* members for the selection and allocation of such children.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the ethos of the *SS* was such that its members also had the 'holy duty' of looking after the widows and children of dead comrades. This obligation

was 'a Jewish *Mischlinge* of the second grade'. See BA NS 19/577, '*Betr.: Genehmigung zur Verlobung und Heirat*', 6 June 1935, on procedures taken against *SS* men who married without authorisation.

¹⁶⁸ BA NS 19/3886, '*Vortrag. Die SS*', (no date), pp. 1-2.

¹⁶⁹ BA NS19/3973, A/4498, 4 June 1935.

¹⁷⁰ BA NS 19/3886, '*Vortrag. Die SS*',(no date), p. 3.

¹⁷¹ BA NS19/3973, memorandum from Himmler to all *SS* leaders, 13 Sept. 1936.

did not apply purely to financial matters, but also meant offering protection and help 'in a tactful way', especially with regard to educating the children.¹⁷²

However, Himmler's requirements for early marriages and *kinderreich* families in the *SS* were not met. According to *SS* statistics, on 1 January 1939, out of a total strength of 238,159 members, only 93,093 (39%) were married, with an average of 1.1 children per marriage. Of the 13,746 *SS* leaders, a higher proportion were married (77.3%), but still with an average of only 1.48 children per marriage. By the end of 1939, out of 265,300 *SS* members, 115,650 (44%) were married, but still with an average of 1.1 children per marriage. Of the 17,531 leaders, 13,788 (78.6%) were married, but the average number of children in an *SS* leader's family had fallen to 1.41.¹⁷³ Hence, Himmler's demands for *SS* families to have a minimum of four children were clearly not being satisfied.

Another cause of concern, both generally and more specifically inside the *SS*, was infertility. Research was carried out both on the causes of infertility and on ways of trying to prevent its occurrence.¹⁷⁴ Anatomical and physical causes of infertility included obstruction of the Fallopian tubes and the existence of sexually transmitted diseases. Tobacco and alcohol exacerbated the problem of infertility. Among possible ways to prevent infertility were the following: sports, in particular, hiking, skiing, swimming and gymnastics; correct nutrition, without an excess of animal proteins, but with plenty of fruit, fresh vegetables and coarse wholegrain bread; correct personal hygiene; avoidance of swimming in busy public baths where the water was insufficiently chlorinated and

¹⁷² BA NS 19/3973, '*Die Pflichten des SS-Mannes und SS-Führers*', p. 6.

¹⁷³ BA NS 19/577, '*Zahl der verheirateten und Gesamtkinderzahl in der SS*'.

¹⁷⁴ On what follows, see BA NS 19/1632, Prof. von Wolff, '*Weibliche Unfruchtbarkeit ihre Ursachen und die Möglichkeiten ihrer Verhütung*', pp. 7-13.

infrequently changed, leading to a risk of infection.¹⁷⁵ Conti called for 'systematic' advice to be given to childless couples, so that they could be helped to have children if it was medically possible.¹⁷⁶ This was to take the form of special centres for advice on infertility.¹⁷⁷ The problem was of such concern, that in 1943, SS leader, Professor Gufinger, proposed both a gynaecological examination of each SS bride and an obligatory examination of the semen of each SS man before marriage authorisation was granted.¹⁷⁸ The latter was suggested because male sterility had been the cause of some 35% of the cases of infertility in couples seeking advice in the Dresden advice centres. Other SS leaders took the issue of preventing childless marriages to its extreme, by proposing that the nation should be educated into a new way of thinking, i.e., that a *Zeugungshilfer* should inseminate a married woman where her marriage was childless because of a sterile husband, and that unmarried women who wanted to have children 'for the nation', should give birth to children for marriages in which the wife was infertile.¹⁷⁹ Needless to say, such proposals were not readily taken up beyond perhaps a very fractional minority.

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Although Nazi policy did not necessarily correspond to Nazi ideology, due to necessities engendered by the economy and the war, the emphasis on the 'hereditarily healthy', 'racially pure' family was always present, especially with regard to the SS. The fact that ideology could not always be translated into policy by the Nazi government does not

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-22.

¹⁷⁶ BA NS 19/1674, letter from Reich Health Leader to Himmler, 3 June 1942.

¹⁷⁷ BA NS 19/1674, L. Conti, '*Erhöhung der Kinderzahl durch Eheanbahnung, Eheberatung und Wahlkinder*', (no date), p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ BA NS 2/240, letter from Gufinger to *SS-Obergruppenführer* von Boysch, 8 March 1943.

¹⁷⁹ For example, *SS-Gruppenführer* Hofmann of the *Rasse- und Siedlungsamt-SS*. See BA NS 2/148, Memorandum, '*Dr Tri/Kt., 15 Oct 1943*', p. 2.

detract from the importance given to the family, even when its reasons for doing so were not always those it professed and even though the family was manipulated to such an extent that its traditional functions of support and security for its members were usurped by its overriding function of producing children.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DISSEMINATION OF NAZI FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD IDEALS THROUGH EDUCATION AND SOCIALISATION

The National Socialist 'seizure of power' created changes not just in politics, but in every area of life. A regime with totalitarian ambitions, its influence extended quite significantly into the sector of education.¹ The primary aim of National Socialist education was the dissemination of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. Education was to be functionalised through an emphasis on subjects relating to racial and nationalistic ideas.² In essence, Hitler's ideas on the education of both sexes were based on the following: an emphasis on physical training; anti-intellectualism; and the significance of 'race'. When it came down to the distinctions between girls and boys, then the former were ideally to become mothers, whilst the latter were ideally to become soldiers. According to Hitler: 'The goal of female education must invariably be the future mother'.³ The National Socialist regime tried to imbue the German population with its family ideology and values by means of socialisation in the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, the dissemination of these values in school textbooks and the 'education' of women.

Socialisation in the BDM

Through the creation of the *Hitlerjugend (HJ)* and its female component, the *Bund Deutscher Mädel (BDM)*, the National Socialist regime formed a *Staatsjugend*. German youth was extremely important to National Socialism for a number of reasons. Firstly,

¹ Other authoritarian regimes also made similar attempts to inculcate their youth by making sweeping changes to their educational systems. See R. Wolff, "'Fascistizing" Italian Youth: The Limits of Mussolini's Educational System', *History of Education*, 13 (1984), pp. 287-98, and C. Esden-Tempska, 'Civic Education in Authoritarian Austria, 1934-38', *History of Education Quarterly*, 30 (1990), pp. 187-211.

² Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, p. 260.

³ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 377.

youth was seen as the dynamic force of the movement, the catalyst for change away from the old, decaying political system, and indeed, away from the social mores of what Nazi leaders such as Himmler deemed as 'middle-class hypocrisy'. Individual young men who had lost their lives in the struggle for National Socialism, such as Horst Wessel and Herbert Norkus, were turned into national political heroes. Their readiness for sacrifice set an example for Germany's proud youth to follow. Secondly, German youth was malleable enough, by and large, to be instilled with the central tenets of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*.⁴ Thirdly, having swept away the values of the past and been inculcated with those of the National Socialist present, contemporary German youth would grow up to become the embodiment of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in the future. Ernst Krieck, a Nazi pedagogue, described the National Socialist youth as the bearer of the principle of the German revolution, out of which would come a new *Volk*, a new form of humanity and a new order of *Lebensraum*.⁵

The regime's desire to attract youth was manifest, but what attracted the young people to its youth groups? The National Socialist youth movement was exciting, giving young boys and girls a sense of peer camaraderie, involvement in their national cause and independence from their parents. Melita Maschmann has described how she wished to escape from her 'childish, narrow life' and 'to follow a different road from the conservative one prescribed... by family tradition'.⁶ Many of her contemporaries joined the Nazi youth movement for similar reasons. At first, they enjoyed the spirit of the

⁴ The *HJ* did not encompass all the youth in the Third Reich, despite its attempts to do so. Some elements of resistance to the *HJ* existed, notably the 'Edelweiß pirates', the 'gangs' of working class youths and the 'swing' movement. On this, see D. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (London, 1987), pp. 145-74.

⁵ E. Krieck, *Nationalpolitische Erziehung* (Leipzig, 1941), p. 48.

⁶ Maschmann, *Account Rendered*, pp. 10 and 12.

youth group camps and sporting activities, and respected the authority and enthusiasm of their leaders. Later, this changed somewhat, as membership became compulsory in 1939, military drills took precedence over sports, leaders grew older and less able to inspire their members, the tiresome dissemination of dogma became more pronounced, and young people were compulsorily separated from their families through conscription to Service Year, Land Year and ultimately to military service. But, certainly at first, many young people were attracted to the *HJ* and *BDM* - some 1.25 million by the end of 1934.⁷

Many girls were attracted to the idea that 'girls did what hitherto only boys were allowed to do', for example, to have more independence from their parents, go on trips and take part in group activities.⁸ Others joined because they wanted to feel important, and not to be excluded from the world of adults.⁹ Entry into the *BDM* allowed girls to escape from their tedious home lives, where they were usually under the constant scrutiny of their parents. Girls from middle class families, in particular, often eagerly seized upon the opportunities offered to them by the Nazi youth organisation, because of their childhood experiences. Shattered prestige and finances were strongly felt by all members of middle class households. In addition, the children of such families were subjected to very strong parental discipline, and girls felt especially intimidated by their fathers.¹⁰ Consequently, they felt insecure, useless, unconfident and insignificant. The *BDM* gave girls an opportunity to break out of the pattern and style of their lives at that time. Indeed, some

⁷ Burleigh & Wippermann, *The Racial State*, p. 202. See also, D. Welch, 'Propaganda and Indocrinaton in the Third Reich: Success or Failure?', *European History Quarterly*, 17 (1987), p. 412.

⁸ M. Hannsmann, *Der helle Tag bricht an - Ein Kind wird Nazi* (Hamburg, 1982), p. 34.

⁹ R. Finckh, *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit* (Baden-Baden, 1979), p. 81.

¹⁰ C. Leitsch, 'Drei *BDM*-Biographinnen', *Dokumentationsstelle zur NS-Sozialpolitik: Mitteilungen* April 1986, p. 77.

girls joined the *BDM* as a sign of their rebellion against the authority of their parents. However, in the place of maternal and paternal influence came societal authority and state force.¹¹

The first prerequisites of a *BDM* member, were that she had to be of German origin and of sound heredity. The 'model' German girl had to be prepared to work hard to serve the *Volksgemeinschaft*, to recognise National Socialist norms and values, and to accept them unquestioningly. She was to be physically fit, healthy, clean, dressed in an orderly manner and domestically capable. Characteristics of cleanliness, rectitude, faith and honour were to be formed by means of discipline.¹² Above all, the *BDM* girl was to be aware of her future duty as a woman, to become a mother. She had to be well-versed in German culture and music. As a future mother, she was to develop a knowledge of traditional German songs, tales and dances, so that she could be a 'culture bearer' to the next generation.¹³ It was important, therefore, that girls took advantage of their 'natural' closeness to the *Heimat*.

Not surprisingly, girls in the *BDM* were educated and socialised quite differently from their male counterparts in the *HJ*, especially, of course, in terms of ideals and aims.¹⁴

There was, however, one main similarity in the way in which they were trained, and this

¹¹ D. Reese, '*Emanzipation oder Vergesellschaftung: Mädchen im "Bund Deutscher Mädel"*', in H.-U. Otto & H. Sünker (eds.), *Politische Formierung und soziale Erziehung im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), p. 212.

¹² J. Rüdiger, '*Der Bund Deutscher Mädel in der Hitler Jugend*', in P. Meier-Benneckenstein (ed.), *Das Dritte Reich im Aufbau* (Berlin, 1939), Vol. 2, p. 398.

¹³ S. Rogge, '*"Mädel, komm zum BDM!"*', in *Hart und Zart. Frauenleben, 1920-1970* (Berlin, 1990), p. 154.

¹⁴ This difference in socialisation was also noticeable in Mussolini's Italian Fascist youth groups. On this, see T. Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialisation of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943* (Chapel Hill & London, 1985), pp. 97-8.

was that both boys and girls had to be prepared to fulfil their obligations - albeit different obligations - towards their *Volk* and fatherland. In the first place, both had 'the duty to be healthy' and 'to remain pure'.¹⁵ Both were trained to be capable of physical achievement, fit for work and compliant to organisational discipline. They were, in effect, by and large, unthinkingly and unquestioningly bound to the norms of their respective organisations, developing initiatives only within the framework of these norms. Apart from that, comparisons of the ideal boy and girl, and of their duties, showed marked differences.

Even the kind of language in which role models were described gives a strong indication of the dissimilarities between the expectations of girls and boys.¹⁶ Girls were to react to circumstances with their emotions, whereas boys were to react with their minds; girls were to store their experiences internally, whilst boys were to use theirs actively and creatively; girls were to be docile and to give of themselves, whilst boys were to affect others, gain victories and conquer; girls were to be passively content, whereas boys were to be active builders or destroyers of cultures; girls were to care for the family and household, whilst boys were to lay the foundations for the state; girls were to view life as a gift, whereas boys were to consider it as a struggle; for girls 'motherliness' - not femininity - was the ultimate aim, whilst for boys it was very clearly 'manliness', in a militarised sense. In certain respects, this kind of language portrayed a very passive role for girls as compared to that for boys, which does not seem surprising considering the ideological tenets upon which the Nazi state was founded. However, this only gives a partial picture, for girls were not to be totally passive. Indeed, the anti-image of the ideal

¹⁵ On this, see BA NSD 43/151-5, '*Du hast die Pflicht, gesund zu sein!*'

¹⁶ On what follows, see H. Rahn, '*Artgemäße Mädchenerziehung und Rasse*', *Nationalsozialistische Mädchenerziehung*, 12, 1940, p. 224.

BDM girl was that of the feminine 'young lady'.¹⁷ Frivolity and luxury were frowned upon by *BDM* leaders, who wanted to create strong and hardy young women. Indeed, the *BDM* even went as far as promoting the books of certain authors, such as Marie Hamsun and Erika Müller-Hennig, who wrote about young people that led 'brave and courageous lives', whilst discouraging the reading of 'sentimental' writers, to the extent of recommending to parents which books to buy for their children.¹⁸

As was the case in all Nazi formations, the ethos of the *BDM* entailed a loss of individuality for its members. They were bound to a community of peers, and above and beyond that, to the community of the *Volk*. The *BDM*, therefore, was not an aggregate of the individual personalities of its members, but rather a community into which individuality was dissolved. As one former member of the organisation put it: 'Everything that was "I" had been absorbed into the whole!'.¹⁹ This community ethos, which was a central part of the character formation of the group's members, was closely tied to National Socialist ideology.²⁰ There may have been a degree to which the individuals involved believed that they were acting on their own initiatives on behalf of the *Volk*, but this feeling was manufactured. 'No one made us think for ourselves or develop the ability to make moral decisions on our own responsibility. Our motto was: The *Führer* order, we follow!'²¹ They were, instead, being manipulated and were very much a part of the socialisation process. The objectives of the *BDM* were in no way directed at fostering the individual development or independence of its members.

¹⁷ A. Klönne, *Hitlerjugend. Die Jugend und ihre Organisation im Dritten Reich* (Hanover & Frankfurt am Main, 1955), p. 69.

¹⁸ 'Eltern, schenkt nur gute Bücher', *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Nov. 1936, pp. 22-3.

¹⁹ Maschmann, *Account Rendered*, p. 61.

²⁰ M. Klaus, *Mädchen in der Hitlerjugend: Die Erziehung zur 'deutsche Frau'* (Cologne, 1980), p. 55.

²¹ Maschmann, *Account Rendered*, p. 158.

Instead, they were an attempt to create devoted 'believers' in the system.²² A foreign observer noted about both *BDM* and *HJ* members that 'their attitude of mind is absolutely uncritical.... They are nothing but vessels for State propaganda'.²³

The organisation *Glaube und Schönheit*, set up in 1938, emphasised especially strongly to girls their true role, and their responsibility to the *Volk*, as future mothers of the next generation.²⁴ *Glaube und Schönheit*, rather than the women's organisations, had particular responsibility for the care and training of 18 to 21 year old girls.²⁵ The psychological impact of the organisation was quite considerable, creating a sense of belief in the glorious future of the German nation, together with feelings of belonging and wanting to belong. Indeed, the idea of being allowed to participate in the building of the future *Volksgemeinschaft* compensated for the loss of individuality, the more unpleasant tasks and more unpalatable activities of the *BDM*, and accounted for the youthful enthusiasm of the group's members, especially its leaders.²⁶

How were girls in the *BDM* trained and educated? The training of girls entailed a variety of components, including physical fitness, health, hygiene, dress codes and sexual attitudes. The body itself no longer remained in the private sphere of the individual, but was subordinated to *völkisch* interests.²⁷ Physical training was very closely linked to health and to racial-biological ideas. To this extent, sport was not an end in itself, but a

²² G. Kinz, *Der Bund Deutscher Mädel. Ein Beitrag zur außerschulischen Mädchenerziehung im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990), pp. 126-7.

²³ S. Roberts, *The House That Hitler Built* (London, 1937), p. 208.

²⁴ Kinz, *Der Bund Deutscher Mädel*, p. 150.

²⁵ BA NS 6/821, Anordnung A 52/41, 'Betr. Erfassung und politische Erziehung der 18- bis 21-jährigen Mädel', 11 Dec. 1941.

²⁶ See Maschmann, *Account Rendered*, p. 52.

²⁷ M. Klaus, *Mädchen im Dritten Reich. Der Bund Deutscher Mädel, (BDM)* (Cologne, 1983), p. 48.

means of training the youth of the future in accordance with National Socialist ideals. Its goal was inner discipline. Consequently, no free or spontaneous sport or dance was allowed. Any expression of individualistic movement that went against the National Socialist sense of order was proscribed. Instead, regulation and discipline were emphasised. Many dance and exercise routines were structured within a certain form, such as a circle, a square, or simply in rows.²⁸ Girls were to keep their bodies firm and healthy by means of exercise, in order to be able to reproduce for the nation in the future. They were instilled with the sense that they were responsible for the preservation of the *Volk*.²⁹ Fit girls would develop into healthy women, bear healthy children, and therefore preserve the health of the *Volk* in the future. In order to promote the idea of unity of body, soul and spirit, Baldur von Schirach, the leader of the National Socialist youth, introduced an achievement badge for physical prowess.³⁰ Physical training was important for health and for the 'pure' preservation of the race. Indeed, this was so central to Nazi beliefs, that the *BDM* actually broke down the old taboo that girls ought not to take part in sporting activities in public, by organising sports festivals in villages and towns, as well as camps, hikes and trips. Schirach recognised the fact that this was a rather revolutionary occurrence.³¹

Dress was an important aspect of girls' training in the *BDM*. Girls were expected to wear their *BDM* uniform on all *Reich* holidays, on Party days, and on all special family and school festival days.³² The uniform, which consisted of a white blouse and a dark blue

²⁸ See *Das Deutsche Mädel*, March 1938, pp. 4-5.

²⁹ See E. Zill, 'Die körperliche Schulung im *BDM*', in H. Munske (ed.), *Mädel im Dritten Reich* (Berlin, 1935), p. 27.

³⁰ See Klaus, *Mädchen im Dritten Reich*, p. 49.

³¹ B. von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend, Idee und Gestalt* (Leipzig, 1934), p. 101.

³² BA NS 28/83, 'Richtlinien für den Bund deutscher Mädel in der Hitlerjugend', (no date).

skirt, was practical and simple. Wearing the uniform was, of course, an outward sign of being part of the rank and file of the movement. It had to be washed and ironed properly, and was to be worn 'with pride'.³³ It was not to be embellished with any jewellery or accessories. Cleanliness and an orderly appearance were part of the requirement too. Even the Persil advertisements at the time corresponded to these ideals, claiming: 'Cleanliness, that is the progress of our time'.³⁴ Simplicity and orderliness were criteria that applied to ordinary clothes as well as to the uniform. There was much antagonism towards the concept of international fashion.³⁵ There was a call for the introduction of a German fashion, quite separate from French, British or American styles. German fashion was to be based on simple lines and forms, with the added advantage of using new materials such as the synthetic silk and spun rayon being produced by the German textile industry in the mid-1930s.³⁶ The different forms stressed by the German style allowed for and encouraged a more rotund shape, rather than a petite outline.³⁷ Nazi fashion excoriated the former styles of the 'vamp', who wore bright nail polish and plenty of make-up, the 'sweetheart', who was petite and blonde, with a 'warbling little voice', and the 'boyish girl' who had very short hair, wore men's clothes, smoked, drank and told jokes.³⁸ Indeed, all these stereotypes - even the 'blue stocking' for her intellectuality - were viewed with 'unmitigated contempt'.³⁹ Girls and young

³³ *Das Deutsche Mädel*, April 1939, p. 22.

³⁴ *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Jan. 1939, p. 31.

³⁵ See, for example, *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Aug. 1937, p. 30, which talks about the foolishness of fashion.

³⁶ *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Jan. 1937, p. 11.

³⁷ Here there were marked similarities to Mussolini's Italian fascist regime, which also called for a separate Italian fashion, and which emphasised women's forms that were physically conducive to child-bearing. On this, see L. Caldwell, 'Reproducers of the Nation: Women and the Family in Fascist Policy', in D. Forgacs (ed.), *Rethinking Italian Fascism* (London, 1986), p. 113. See also A. de Grand, 'Women Under Italian Fascism', *Historical Journal*, 19 (1976), p. 964.

³⁸ *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Jan. 1938, pp. 29-32.

³⁹ C. Kirkpatrick, *Nazi Germany. Its Women and Family Life* (Indianapolis and New York, 1938), p. 103.

women were to be clean and tastefully dressed, without having to owe their good appearance to cosmetics.⁴⁰

In addition to codes of dress, personal health and hygiene were considered significant for both sexes, but in practice were particularly important for girls, as future mothers. Hair care, nail care, dental hygiene and healthy nourishment were actively encouraged. Alcohol and cigarettes were strongly discouraged. In July 1939, Conti set up a Bureau against the Dangers of Alcohol and Tobacco, under his personal leadership.⁴¹ In this respect too, the National Socialists reiterated the preferability of the natural rural lifestyle over urban decadence and depravity. In every sense, the body was governed by the responsibility to the *Volk*, and the idea of future motherhood determined what was acceptable and what was unacceptable for women's bodies.

Given the regime's emphasis on procreation, its attitudes towards sexuality are quite interesting. The way these applied to the youth groups was paralleled in the rest of society. Essentially, sexual life had its main task in serving the preservation of the race and nation. Sexual pleasure, lust and individual needs were strongly rejected, especially as far as women were concerned.⁴² Demands for 'hereditary health', 'racial selection' and 'purity' were completely at odds with any kind of sexual promiscuity. The dangers of the spread of sexual disease through 'Jewish-Bolshevik lasciviousness' caused Hitler a great deal of concern and his government aimed to combat this.⁴³ Prostitutes and homosexuals, in particular, were considered a great threat to the state and to the future

⁴⁰ BA NSD 47/6-1933, '*Schönheitspflege?!*', *Amtliche Frauenkorrespondenz*, p. 8.

⁴¹ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 239.

⁴² See Klaus, *Mädchen in der Hitlerjugend*, p. 107.

⁴³ See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp. 231-33, for his views about sexual promiscuity, 'big-city whores' and syphilis.

of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Girls were warned against the dangers of sexually-transmitted disease and infertility, and against 'cultural poisoning' of the race through sexual relations with non-Aryans.⁴⁴ However, none of this scant attention to sexuality was directed towards the benefit of the individual. Instead, it was yet another aspect of state intervention into the sphere of private life that was totally aimed at the good of the *Volk*.

By and large, the National Socialists' 'new morality' reduced sex to its biological function of reproduction. The ideal, primary aim of girls was childbirth and motherhood inside marriage. Early marriage, in particular, was seen as a way of both discouraging promiscuity and encouraging large numbers of legitimate children.⁴⁵ Despite some of Himmler's ideas on polygamy and illegitimate children, public sexual puritanism was a more common trait amongst the majority of Nazi leaders and of members of the medical profession. Marriage was also considered to be a dutiful, moral obligation by the youth group leaders. The demand that sexual activity should be carried out inside a marriage remained the overall belief in the *BDM*. Its leaders were convinced that 'the family should be the only place for children to grow up in and that the destruction of monogamy must be prevented by women'.⁴⁶ Hence, the desire in the *BDM*, was not to encourage a child 'at any price', but rather very specific norms of motherhood, in line with Nazi aims of 'selection' of the 'desirable' and 'elimination' of the 'undesirable'.⁴⁷ Apart from these attitudes, sexuality was not an issue that was discussed in the *BDM*. In this respect, the girls' youth group differed from the *HJ*. There were virtually no statements concerned

⁴⁴ R. Benze & A. Pudelko (eds.), *Rassische Erziehung als Unterrichtsgrundsatz* (Frankfurt am Main, 1937), p. 47.

⁴⁵ BA NSD 47/19, *Jugend und Elternhaus. Beiträge zur Jugenderziehung unserer Zeit* (1944), pp. 40-1.

⁴⁶ Maschmann, *Account Rendered*, p. 150.

⁴⁷ D. Reese, *"Straff, aber nicht stramm - herb, aber nicht derb". Zur Vergesellschaftung der Mädchen durch den Bund Deutscher Mädel im soziokulturellen Vergleich zweier Milieus* (Weinheim & Basel, 1989), p. 44.

with sexuality from *BDM* leaders, but numerous ones from *HJ* leaders, mainly about the evils of relationships with partners of the same sex and of masturbation. Homosexuality was excoriated both because it was considered 'deviant' and because it was seen to endanger the healthy preservation of the *Volk*. Consequently, homosexuality among boys and young men in their formative years, in particular, was strongly discouraged.⁴⁸

Both the *BDM* and *HJ* were essentially non-sexual in their orientation. Non-sexual camaraderie and friendship were the general expectations about behaviour with fellow members of the *Staatsjugend*.⁴⁹ However, 'there was very probably a good deal of flirting during youth group activities, especially when boys and girls were working together'.⁵⁰ Lust and desire were not acceptable, and physical training and diversion were partly designed to pre-empt or substitute them. The satisfaction of sexual urges was regarded as shameful, reprehensible, and biologically and medically unnecessary. 'Fresh, clean, clear German air' was the alternative to sexual education.⁵¹ To this extent, sexuality was mysticised and was almost completely a taboo area. However, expectations about sexual behaviour did not always correspond to reality, as exemplified by cases of girls having sexual relationships with soldiers and *SS* men, and of their having illegitimate babies in order to present the *Führer* with children. The lack of explanation about sexual behaviour partly explains this phenomenon. Some girls also had relationships with 'racially inferior' men from the eastern-occupied territories, which was partly a response to the allure of the exotic, but was, of course, anathema to the regime. A report from Munich on the 'wild' morals of the youth during the war blamed, among

⁴⁸ BA NS 28/82, '*Homosexualität und Jugend*', *Der HJ-Dichter*, Feb. 1942, pp. 1-6.

⁴⁹ Rüdiger, '*Der Bund Deutscher Mädel*', p. 397.

⁵⁰ Maschmann, *Account Rendered*, p. 150.

⁵¹ Klaus, *Mädchen in der Hitlerjugend*, p. 109. On attitudes towards sexual education, see also BA NSD 47/19, *Jugend und Elternhaus*, pp. 17-28.

other things, the lack of parental education, lax youth group leaders and the decrease in police surveillance over young people.⁵²

Another factor of girls' socialisation in the *BDM* was the creation of a new ethos regarding their working or professional life. National Socialist ideology certainly attached value to work, as service to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and as a 'moral duty' for both males and females. Manual labour, in particular, was considered important, as it would ensure that the nation would be comprised of physically fit, healthy and hardy individuals, who would transmit these attributes to future generations. For boys, all the physical training and drills in the *HJ* would serve them in the future as workers in heavy industry, on the land, or ultimately, in the armed forces. For girls, physical education would prepare them for their work placements - in which they would serve their nation by helping farmers with agricultural work or *kinderreich* families with housework, and later, by assisting in the cleaning and preparation of houses in the newly conquered eastern territories, for the resettlement of ethnic Germans once the existing inhabitants had been removed by the *SS* - and, of course, ultimately to become mothers.⁵³

It was generally accepted that girls would give up their jobs once they were married, in order to take care of their households.⁵⁴ The work ethos, and therefore the training given to girls, was to be understood in this sense. Household instruction had been of prime significance in girls' training since the genesis of the *BDM*, in the early 1920s. Even then, Adolf Lenk, the founder of the National Socialist youth movement, claimed that members of the girls' groups had the task of becoming good German housewives.⁵⁵

⁵² BA R22/3379, cited in Klaus, *Mädchen in der Hitlerjugend*, p. 112.

⁵³ On helping in *kinderreich* families, see *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Nov. 1940, p. 7.

⁵⁴ *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Feb. 1938, p. 7.

⁵⁵ D. Reese, *'Bund Deutscher Mädel - Zur Geschichte der weiblichen deutschen*

Subsequent measures carried through by the youth leadership of the regime aimed to give girls a wider knowledge of household activities. For example, there was a scheme to place girls of school-leaving age in a family for one year before they entered professional or working life, in order to gain experience in a family household.⁵⁶ Households in the countryside, or those with large numbers of children were considered especially useful for this purpose. These measures culminated in the introduction of the Service Year - compulsory work placements for girls under the age of 25 - which came into effect from 1 January 1939.⁵⁷ This scheme enabled women to go out to work again when required to do so, without their families' needs being totally neglected.

Work, then, was a preparation for the tasks and requirements of motherhood. In particular, agricultural work was encouraged, as it was seen as bringing girls - especially those from big cities - closer to the German soil and the 'village community' where traditional lifestyles would also psychologically prepare them for motherhood. Apart from agricultural labour, work in the 'caring professions' was deemed suitable, especially because skills could be acquired - such as looking after new-born babies - that were directly applicable to family life.⁵⁸ During the war, the term 'domestic training' was applied more widely, ultimately changing its meaning to a total preparation to serve in any way required by the state. Short training courses continued, teaching girls to make 'new out of old' and to help soldiers and *kinderreich* families with washing, mending clothes and so on.⁵⁹ Hence, whether in connection with familial or professional

Jugend im Dritten Reich, in *Frauengruppe Faschismusforschung* (ed.), *Mutterkreuz und Arbeitsbuch: Zur Geschichte der Frauen in der Weimarer Republik und im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1981), p. 166.

⁵⁶ BA NS 44/58, 'Das hauswirtschaftlicher Jahr'.

⁵⁷ On this, see BA NSD 47/16-1, I. Berghaus, 'Das Pflichtjahr. Wegweiser und Ratgeber für Mädels, Eltern und Hausfrau'.

⁵⁸ See Rüdiger, 'Der Bund Deutscher Mädels', p. 401.

⁵⁹ BA NS 26/358, 'Mädelerziehung im Kriege', pp. 116-7.

situations, girls in the *BDM* had to learn that the state allocated specific obligations to them, and demanded self-discipline and duty fulfilment from them.⁶⁰

National Socialist ideological training of girls was based on instinct rather than intellect. Thus, apart from the synthesis of physical and domestic training, great attention was given to the spiritual disciplining of the Nazi ethos and the future 'mother function'.⁶¹ Training took the form of the *Heimabend*, which took place each Wednesday evening, weekend educational sessions and household schools.⁶² In addition, the girls took part in an eight to ten day camping trip each year. This was particularly effective, because indoctrination with National Socialist ideology could be undertaken without any parental influence or intervention.⁶³ Furthermore, quite considerable use was made of specific propaganda to disseminate the National Socialist message to young girls. The medium of radio was especially useful, because it could reach a wide audience very easily. In addition, films such as 'Mother's Love' (1940), depicted the strength of the mother and her willingness to undergo hardships for the good of her children.⁶⁴ This showed girls what they were expected to do as future mothers. Apart from this, posters, pamphlets, books, calendars and diaries were all quite widely used, incorporating illustrations, mottoes, stories and extracts from speeches by Hitler and other Nazi leaders. They depicted positive images of happy families, brave German soldiers, national heroes and the glory of the *Heimat*, and also portrayed quite strong negative images of a threatened *Volk*, the 'impure', 'inferior' and 'asocial' influences of the 'Bolsheviks', Jews and 'gypsies',

⁶⁰ See Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend, Idee und Gestalt*, p. 97.

⁶¹ Klönne, *Hitlerjugend*, p. 69. See also A. Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich. Die Hitler-Jugend und ihre Gegner. Dokumente und Analysen* (Cologne, 1984), p. 84.

⁶² BA NS 28/83, 'Richtlinien für den Bund deutscher Mädel in der Hitlerjugend', (no date), pp. 13-15.

⁶³ S. Rogge, "'Mädel, komm zum BDM!'", p. 154.

⁶⁴ *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Feb. 1940, p. 8.

and their alleged aim to destroy the family and the *Heimat*. This was closely linked to fears about the population in decline, the threat of the 'racial poisoning' of the German nation and the regime's fanatical obsession with these phenomena.

Specific training in household management and child care was given in the *BDM* household schools.⁶⁵ Here, education regarding the family was in the foreground of the work. A one-year course provided its participants with everything they would need to know as future mothers. The teaching plan at the 'household schools' involved four main areas of work: practical teaching, which included cookery, baking, gardening and needlework; theoretical training, which consisted of lessons about nutrition, health, care for infants and for the sick; studies about the *Volksgemeinschaft*, which dealt with issues of nation, race and the national economy; and sport, such as hiking and *völkisch* singing and dancing.

Education and socialisation were broadly assigned not just, of course, to the youth movement, but also to the school and the parental home. Yet, these three institutions were not independent, concurrent centres of education.⁶⁶ Instead, they overlapped, and the division of areas of competence among the three, fostered some considerable antagonism between them.⁶⁷ Nazi youth policies in general, and the *HJ* in particular, often deliberately exacerbated generational conflicts within families. Parents objected to both the impingements on family life caused by the youth groups taking their children away in the afternoon and returning them home as late as 10.30 p.m. 'on an almost daily basis' and 'the sneering and threatening tone of the lower leaders and their habit of

⁶⁵ On what follows, see *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Jan. 1937, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich*, p. 50.

⁶⁷ On this, see R. Eilers, *Die nationalsozialistische Schulpolitik* (Cologne, 1963), pp. 121-6.

belittling adults'.⁶⁸

The government tried to improve the parental perception of its youth groups by producing propaganda films - for example, *Der Stammbaum des Dr. Pistorius* (Dr. Pistorius' Family Tree, 1939) - which showed parents coming to terms with the new youth and its activities, and even changing their attitude from one of disgust to one of admiration.⁶⁹ The *BDM* did provide some minimal token involvement of parents in the activities of its members, through the 'parents evening', which allowed parents to see what their children were doing.⁷⁰ However, on these occasions, the organisation tailored its activities as appropriate. Furthermore, Schirach plainly recognised that teachers and youth leaders were fundamentally different.⁷¹ He hoped to encompass the German youth to such an extent that any other influences would be largely eliminated. In a speech on 6 November 1933, Hitler declared: 'When an opponent says, "I will not come over to your side", I calmly say, "Your child belongs to us already... You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community"'.⁷²

Understandably, both parents and school teachers showed some degree of concern about the attitudes towards conventional figures of authority fostered within the *BDM* and *HJ*. A contemporary foreign observer noted that 'it is clear that the relations between many mothers and their children are... strained by the resolute attempt of National Socialism to imbue German children at all costs, with its attitudes and ideals'. These attitudes,

⁶⁸ D. Horn, 'The Hitler Youth and Educational Decline in the Third Reich', *History of Education Quarterly*, (1976), p. 434.

⁶⁹ Welch, *The Third Reich*, p. 64.

⁷⁰ See, for example, *Das Deutsche Mädel*, March 1939, p. 10.

⁷¹ Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend, Idee und Gestalt*, p. 170.

⁷² Quoted in Welch, *The Third Reich*, p. 63.

including intense nationalism, racial prejudice and the glorification of militarism 'disturb mothers reared in a gentler tradition'.⁷³ Youth group members even went as far as denouncing teachers, religious instructors and sometimes their parents.⁷⁴ This had a disruptive influence on family life, as an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust was introduced into the home. Silence and circumspection often governed relationships between family members as a result of the perceived or actual fear of this kind of activity.⁷⁵ Despite tensions between the youth groups and parents or schools, the activities and functions of the youth groups were not seriously hindered, and indeed, the *HJ* benefited from the introduction of the measure that young people had to have served in the *HJ* before they could be accepted for a professional apprenticeship. In addition, during the war, the *Kinderlandverschickungslager* solved the problems for the *HJ* of struggles over areas of competence with parents and teachers, because these children's camps in the countryside offered the possibility of a total youth education by the *HJ*, with a corresponding lack of influence on the youth from either the parental home or the school.⁷⁶

The Dissemination of Nazi Family Values in Schools

The National Socialist *Weltanschauung* which served as the basis of all educational activity in the Third Reich portrayed itself as taking a stance against the political, social and ideological conceptions of the Weimar era.⁷⁷ The *Weltanschauung* was a justification or legitimisation instrument for the dictatorial regime and its actions, and served to conceal - to some extent - the more unpleasant sides of Nazism. The concepts

⁷³ Kirkpatrick, *Nazi Germany: Its Women and Family Life*, p. 268.

⁷⁴ R. Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1990), p. 156.

⁷⁵ On this, see G. Rempel, *Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* (Chapel Hill & London, 1989), p. 106.

⁷⁶ See Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich*, pp. 54-5.

⁷⁷ See K.-H. Dickopp, *Systemanalyse nationalsozialistischer Erziehung* (Ratingen/Wuppertal/ Kastellaun, 1971), p. 25.

of race, community and leader stood at the centre of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*, and were directly applied to principles of education, which was downgraded to a deterministic process of socialisation. It was not directed at the benefit of the individual, but towards the creation of an entire generation of German youth that would be strong, prepared for sacrifice, and willing to undertake its responsibilities towards the *Volksgemeinschaft*, based on mass emotion, not rationality. As such, children were 'pedagogic objects', subjected to the arbitrariness of the system.⁷⁸ In addition, the school system was the target of many reorganisation initiatives on the part of Nazi leaders including Hitler, Rust, the Minister of Science, Education and Popular Culture, Frick, Goebbels and Rosenberg. A special and separate 'elite' school system was developed alongside the existing system. In these elite schools, children were arbitrarily distanced from parental influence and visiting contact between family members was made difficult.⁷⁹ The purpose of these schools was to educate a 'new aristocracy', a ruling elite.⁸⁰ But the concern here is not with these elite schools, rather it is with education in ordinary schools, and its treatment of the family, in particular.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had already laid out certain of his ideas about education and what it should entail. Essentially, education was no longer to remain in the sphere of the individual, or even to rest in the parental home and school as before, but it was to become the task of the state, aimed at the overall benefit to the community. Hitler claimed that the highest task of education in the *völkisch* state was to consist of the

⁷⁸ Kinz, *Der Bund Deutscher Mädel*, p. 97.

⁷⁹ M. Kater, 'Die deutsche Elternschaft im nationalsozialistischen Erziehungssystem. Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte der Familie', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 67 (1980), p. 491.

⁸⁰ On this, see Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, pp. 262-65, which discusses the Order Castles, Napola and Adolf Hitler Schools. See also, H. Scholtz, *Nationalsozialistische Ausleeschulen. Internatsschulen als Herrschaftsmittel des Führerstaates* (Göttingen, 1973).

preservation, care and development of the best racial elements.⁸¹ Education, in the Nazi state, was understood in terms of 'racial selection', so that only the 'elite' would reproduce. This was, of course, reflected in all policy, not just educational policy. But promoting the fecundity of healthy, German parents, as well as simultaneously restricting the birth of 'racially inferior', 'hereditarily ill' and 'asocial' children, apart from being central to population policy, were indeed a focal point of educational activity in the Third Reich. Young 'Aryan' children had to be made aware of the 'differences' between people that fitted into the *Volksgemeinschaft* and those that did not. 'No boy and no girl must leave school without having been led to an ultimate realisation of the necessity and essence of blood purity'.⁸² They also had to be educated to recognise their future duties, of which the most important was to produce a further generation of 'racially pure' and healthy children. Thus, Hitler was convinced that the *völkisch* state had to adjust its entire educational work primarily 'to the breeding of absolutely healthy bodies'.⁸³ Indeed, this was one of the main concerns of the National Socialist state, to which it devoted considerable attention.⁸⁴

Consequently, care of the body took first place in National Socialist education, with the training of mental abilities and 'academic' education being less important, especially for girls.⁸⁵ Character formation was deemed significant, but had to accord to the type of traits the regime wanted to cultivate. Hence, under the National Socialists, traditional

⁸¹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 370.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 389.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

⁸⁴ See, for example, H. Eckhardt, *Die Körperanlage des Kindes und ihre Entwicklung. Ziel und Weg einer biologisch Körpererziehung* (Stuttgart, 1935), which deals with many aspects of the physical development of children. It considers factors such as the correct behaviour, diet and dress of pregnant women, in order to ensure the birth of health babies, pp. 16-7, before going on to advise about the physical development of children, from birth until the age of 18.

⁸⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 377.

norms and values of education were negated. The well-being of 'Aryan' humanity could only be decided by means of 'appropriate' education.⁸⁶ Teaching became a manipulative process, and children were routinely taught about the essence of and necessity for 'blood purity'.

According to Hitler, the state was to educate its children 'to become a valuable link in the chain of future reproduction'.⁸⁷ This idea was taken up quite manifestly in Nazi textbooks, and especially in primers, where representations of Nazi ideals were numerous and blatant. The lack of subtlety revealed itself, for example, in primers, in which the first page consisted of the words *Heil Hitler*, with children portrayed raising their arms in the Hitler salute.⁸⁸ Moreover, a picture of Hitler usually appeared, sometimes alone, but more usually with a child or group of children, on the first page inside the front cover, before the start of the book.⁸⁹ Family themes and Nazi symbols were used in conjunction with each other in some books.⁹⁰ In addition, there were sometimes texts, accompanied by illustrations, about Nazi formations such as the *SA*, in which there was a combination of political and family socialisation, for example, where two small boys were depicted marching proudly alongside their *SA* fathers.⁹¹ There were model poems from children addressed to their *Führer*, which described their love for him as being the same as that for their mother and father, offering to help, obey and make him happy, in the way they helped, obeyed and made their parents happy.⁹² Here, a political message was being

⁸⁶ Kinz, *Der Bund Deutscher Mädel*, p. 109.

⁸⁷ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 370.

⁸⁸ See E. Frank, *Fröhlicher Anfang. Ausgabe für Thüringen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1943), where this illustrated the front cover; and *Bei uns in Nürnberg. Erstes Lesebuch* (Nuremberg, 1934), p. 3.

⁸⁹ An example is *Mein erstes Buch* (Dortmund, 1935), p. 4.

⁹⁰ *Fibel für die Volksschulen Württembergs* (Stuttgart/ Berlin/ Leipzig, 1937), pp. 1-3, depicts children waving swastika flags alongside family scenes.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁹² H. Schulz, *Mühlenfibel. Erstes Lesebuch für schleswig-holsteinisches Kinder*

portrayed, but through familiar, familial channels of consciousness. Another illustrated story, in a primary school reader called My First Book, showed children helping their mother make their home look beautiful, with a swastika flag, roses and a painting of a swastika. This depicted family activity, but with clear political overtones.⁹³ A story about unemployment and its effects on family life was another instance of political socialisation. It told of a mother who was extremely distressed because her husband was unemployed. The family had severe financial problems, and could only afford potato soup for dinner, instead of meat. The father had been shot in the foot during the First World War and had been unemployed ever since. In this story, the Hitler regime rescued the family from the clutches of poverty and misery, by specifically helping the war-wounded man. The story ended with the father returning home triumphantly one day, with the news that he had a job starting the next day, working with 200 other men on the construction of a new bridge. This brought tremendous joy to the family, and meat back to their dinner table.⁹⁴

There were also a number of stories about young children 'helping the *Führer*'. One of them told of a boy who collected old materials for recycling from his home and the homes of his relatives, with his mother's approval.⁹⁵ A different story told of a mother

(Braunschweig/ Berlin/ Hamburg, 1935), p. 65. On a similar theme, see W. Köhler, 'Gebet', in Deutsches Lesebuch für Volksschulen, 3. und 4. Schuljahr (Berlin, 1937), p. 275, a poem in the form of a short prayer, in which children expressed their hope to become 'strong and pure... German children' of their *Führer*.

⁹³ Mein erstes Buch, p.12.

⁹⁴ Deutsches Lesebuch für Volksschulen, 2. Schuljahr (Berlin, 1938), pp. 6-7. See also, Kinderwelt. Lesebuch für die Grundschulen des Freistaates Braunschweig, 2. Band, 3. und 4. Schuljahr (Braunschweig, 1935), pp. 177-9, for a story about the family of an unemployed bricklayer, and how its misery was relieved when he finally found a job.

⁹⁵ 'Hans hilft dem Führer', in K. Eckhardt & A. Lüllwitz, Fröhlicher Anfang. Ein erstes Lesebuch (Frankfurt am Main, 1939), p. 60.

asking her daughters to fetch potatoes from the cellar in baskets to fill up a sack for the *Winterhilfswerk*, whose motto was 'no one shall go hungry, no one shall freeze'. They brought up three baskets of potatoes and asked if that was enough. Their mother told them to bring up another basket, as the sack was not yet full, emphasising that they should be pleased to make sacrifices for the *Winterhilfswerk* cause.⁹⁶ Hence, the family was utilised for political purposes even in primary school readers. Such stories appeared more numerous in the textbooks from 1939 onwards, than in those of the early 1930s, at a time when the government was clearly concerned about shortages of raw materials and the war effort.

Another story, accompanied by an illustration of a family sitting around the dinner table, dealt with the *Eintopf*. This was the one-pot dish that German families were encouraged to eat every Sunday, instead of their usual meal, to save money, and to contribute it to the needs of the state, referred to in propaganda posters as 'the meal of sacrifice for the *Reich*'.⁹⁷ In this story, one of the children told her parents that she used to think that the *Eintopf* meant that there was a large dish outside the town hall, and that all the people went there to eat. Her brother laughed at her, but their father admonished him, saying that the girl at least had now understood what the *Führer* meant. After that, there was a knock at the door, and the collector appeared. One of the children was instructed to go and fetch the money, and to give double that day, as it was the father's birthday. This story both explained the significance of the *Eintopf* and used the family context as a basis for political socialisation.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Fibel für Niedersachsen*, (Hanover, 1939) p. 81.

⁹⁷ Welch, *The Third Reich*, p. 60.

⁹⁸ See *Fibel für Niedersachsen*, pp. 80-1. On the meaning and importance of the *Eintopf*, see *Ewiges Deutschland*, Nov. 1936, p. 25.

In addition to this, the family was portrayed on countless occasions, often in the form of poems and short stories, apparently in their own right, that is, without overt Nazi propaganda attached to them.⁹⁹ Yet, even these seemingly innocent poems about motherhood and the family often had political undercurrents. For example, the choice of words used to describe each family member accorded exactly to Nazi ideals - always the 'goodness' of the mother, the strength of the father, the action and 'pride' of the brother and the passivity of the sister were portrayed, all as a description of 'a good type of family'.¹⁰⁰ Illustrations of a mother surrounded by four loving children were not uncommon, and were frequently accompanied by a short text or poem about the mother and her various duties in waking up early, preparing breakfast for her family, tending the baby, cooking lunch, looking after the children, helping them with their homework and so on, but never being tired or morose, despite all this work.¹⁰¹ Such images clearly mirrored that of the National Socialist idealisation of the mother.

There was much depiction of the elevation of the mother to a very special and prominent position. This was often taken far beyond the realms of what constitutes the usual love that small children feel for their mothers. There were, then, the more ordinary stories of children preparing a special treat for their mother's birthday or for Mother's Day, aimed at young children, but in reading books for older children, depictions of the mother could be found under the sub-heading of 'heroes of everyday life'.¹⁰² This sense of the 'mother'

⁹⁹ See, for example, *Fähnlein Fibel* (Leipzig, 1935), p. 103, and *Bei uns in Nürnberg*, pp. 28-30.

¹⁰⁰ See *Hand in Hand fürs Vaterland. Eine deutsche Fibel von Otto Zimmermann* (Braunschweig/ Berlin/ Hamburg, 1943), p. 65.

¹⁰¹ Examples include *Fibel für Niedersachsen*, p. 51, and a poem by A. Schocke, 'Muttersorgen', in H. Dreyer et al. (eds.), *Deutsches Lesebuch für Mittelschulen. Klasse I* (Frankfurt am Main, 1942), p. 28.

¹⁰² For examples of the former, see *ibid.*, p. 65, and *Lesebuch für die Volksschulen im Elsaß* (Lahr, Schwarzwald, 1940), pp. 53-5. An example of the latter is *Lebensgut. Ein deutsches Lesebuch für höhere Schulen. Dritter Teil* (Frankfurt

being raised to an heroic position was one that the National Socialists clearly wished to instil in children. A story about the significance of the concept *Kraft durch Freude*, or 'strength through joy', centred on the never-ending duties and activities of the mother in her position as carer for the family and household, showing her strength and joy, the qualities of the ideal mother. This message was put across in the form of a short play, in which a father explained to his children the significance of 'strength through joy' as exemplified by the qualities of their mother.¹⁰³ Another short story in an elementary school reading book described a mother's endless chores in the home, and how they were not done for money, since she earned none, but for the love of her family.¹⁰⁴

One schoolbook included a play for Mother's Day, in which four councillors were portrayed, contemplating ways to relieve the 'mother' of her burdens and many duties. Just as they were considering the possibility of finding someone else to take over some of the duties in order to help the mother, a woman appeared at the door. They asked her if she was a wife and mother, to which she responded affirmatively. They then asked her if she took care of her family, to which she replied that she did so from dawn to dusk. However, when it came down to the issue of having assistance to lighten her burden, she firmly rejected the idea, claiming that mothers loved their domain and were happy to toil from early in the morning until late at night for their families. The councillors, after she had gone, concluded their session by deciding that 'mothers do not want to be relieved' of their tasks and duties.¹⁰⁵ The inferences to be made from this play are self-evident.

am Main, 1937), pp. 152-3. See also, K. Müllenhoff, '*Das brave Mütterchen*', in *Deutsches Lesebuch für Volksschulen, 2. Band, 3. und 4. Schuljahre* (Kiel, 1937), pp. 249-50.

¹⁰³ J. Dieterich, *Deutsche Jugend. Eine deutsche Heimatsfibel für Stadt und Land* (Gießen, c. 1934), p. 65.

¹⁰⁴ *Deutsches Lesebuch für Volksschulen, 2. Schuljahr*, Vol. 1, (Berlin, 1938), pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁵ '*Die Mutter muß entlastet werden!*', in *Von neuen Deutschlands*.

For older children too, there were books, either general reading books, or, in some cases, books written specifically for girls, that stressed motherly love and the duties of mothers in caring for their children, through anecdotes or poems.¹⁰⁶ The elevated status of the mother in Nazi society was clearly reflected in the textbooks of the era. However, the position of the father also needed attention. As such, there were short texts, for example, about children preparing for their father's birthday.¹⁰⁷ In addition, poems appeared that honoured the father, representing him as an omniscient being.¹⁰⁸ Either in terms of its individual members, or as a whole, the family was important. Accordingly, it was depicted and indeed epitomised time and again, especially in primary school textbooks, because it corresponded to the breadth of experience of even the youngest pupils, and was a familiar reference point.¹⁰⁹

The rural family, in particular, like bucolic life in general, was accorded a special significance by the National Socialists, who considered the rural family to be pure and

Ergänzungshefte zu deutschen Lesebüchern. Heft 1, 3-5. Schuljahr (Frankfurt am Main, 1935), pp. 38-40.

¹⁰⁶ An example of the former is N. Maaken *et al.* (eds.), *Ewiges Deutschland. Schroedels Mittelschullesewerk für den Gau Niedersachsen. Gedichtsammlung. 3. Band, Klasse 3-6* (Halle a. d. Saale, c. 1942), pp. 160-7, which has an entire section on 'Mütter und Kinder', celebrating the goodness of mothers and the position of children. An example of a book aimed specifically at girls is K. Bojunga *et al.*, *Lebensgut. Ein Lesebuch für deutsche Mädchen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1933), which devotes considerable attention to motherly love. See also, K. Buchholz *et al.* (eds.), *Deutsche Sendung. Lesebuch für Mädchen, 1. Klasse* (Bielefeld/ Leipzig, 1939), which has a large section on 'Family - Kinship - Nation'.
¹⁰⁷ *Deutsches Lesebuch für Volksschulen, 2. Schuljahr* (Bielefeld/ Leipzig, 1936), p. 24.

¹⁰⁸ H. Siedel, 'Der Vater kann alles', in *Ferdinand Hirts Deutsches Lesebuch, 2. Schuljahr* (Breslau, 1933), p. 5. See also, F. Wortelmann, 'Ehre deinen Vater!', in *Deutsches Lesebuch für Volksschulen, 5. und 6. Schuljahr* (Braunschweig, 1937), pp. 9-10.

¹⁰⁹ See P. Hasubek, *Das deutsche Lesebuch in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus. Ein Beitrag zur Literaturpädagogik zwischen 1933 und 1945* (Hanover, 1972), pp. 52 & 54.

ideal, untainted by the depravities of urban life.¹¹⁰ Nazi propaganda presented the peasants as the 'strongest custodians and bearers of the healthy physical and spiritual inheritance of our people'.¹¹¹ As such, 'nearly cultic respect' was accorded to rural women.¹¹² The regime excoriated many aspects of life in the big cities, not least the tendency of young couples to have small families. Urbanisation leading to the death of the *Volk* was a recurrent theme.¹¹³ This came across especially strongly in some textbooks, aimed specifically at pupils in rural areas, to demonstrate to them their own importance and value in maintaining a healthy nation. As such, the rural family was portrayed as the 'archetype of a true family'.¹¹⁴ Textbooks went to great lengths to show that what was regarded as a family in the big cities, often was not a true family, but a distorted image of one. A husband and wife living in a city, without children, but with domestic pets instead, could be described at best as a 'household', but not as a 'family'. A central tenet of National Socialist ideology was that children were the crucial components of a true family, and the greatest blessing for a couple, and, more importantly, for the nation. Children were to be the pride of their parents, and parents were to support their children and set a good example to them. All this was lacking in 'households' without children, or with an insufficient number of children, which deviated from the National Socialist norm. Another aspect of rural family life that was deemed positive by the Nazi regime was the inclusion of the grandparents in the home. In this extended family, both the grandmother and grandfather had their roles and duties to

¹¹⁰ On this, see G. Corni, Hitler and the Peasants: Agrarian Policy of the Third Reich, 1930-1939 (New York, Oxford & Munich, 1990), pp. 19 and 28-9.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹¹² J. Hermand, 'All Power to the Women: Nazi Concepts of Matriarchy', Journal of Contemporary History, 19 (1984), p. 662.

¹¹³ On this, see K-I. Flessau, Schule der Diktatur. Lehrpläne und Schulbücher des Nationalsozialismus (Munich, 1977), pp. 150-1 and p. 164.

¹¹⁴ P. Petersen, Landvolk und Landarbeit. Lehrbuch für ländliche Berufsschulen. Erstes Berufsschuljahr (Breslau, 1939), p. 7.

perform. The former took care of the small children, and looked after the garden and the house whilst the mother worked in the fields, and the latter helped with some of the lighter farm work. In this way, children would be fortunate enough to know their grandparents and would be more aware of their family ancestry.¹¹⁵

All this related back to the issue of German blood. Much use was made of genealogy and family trees to establish purity of race.¹¹⁶ On this theme, there were texts entitled, for instance, 'You and your ancestors', which asked the pupils the following questions: 'Do you know what kind of blood runs through your veins? Do you know your father and your mother, and have you yet seen the ancestry of your forefathers?'¹¹⁷ This particular text went on to discuss how children should be proud, not ashamed, of their ancestors in their old-fashioned clothes. The writer claimed he had traced his own family tree back to around 1500, and that he therefore knew what kind of 'blood' flowed through his veins. He stated that ancestors had a bearing on one's own talents and distinguishing features, a conviction firmly held by the Nazi leadership. Beyond forming a family tree, this writer actually made up a genealogical table, so that instead of just naming his ancestors, he recorded each one's date of birth and death, as well as details of marriage, profession, title and so on. He made this ancestral knowledge sound very important, exciting and colourful.¹¹⁸ It encouraged pupils to take an interest in their own ancestry, and to

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8. See also, W. Peter, 'Der Ahne', in *Ferdinand Hirts Ergänzungshefte zu deutschen Lesebüchern, 1. Heft, 3. und 4. Schuljahr* (Breslau, 1934), pp. 58-9, which is a poem about a rural ancestor. Despite the death of this farmer, he nevertheless remained alive - in spirit - in his fields. This poem not only expressed the importance of 'blood and soil' and the countryside, but also conveyed the sense of continuity between past and present in different generations of a family.

¹¹⁶ See Petersen, *Landvolk und Landarbeit*, pp. 22-3.

¹¹⁷ L. Finckh, 'Du und deine Ahnen!', in Dreyer *et al.* (eds.), *Deutsches Lesewerk*, pp. 25-7.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7.

consider the fact that one day they themselves would be the ancestors of a future family, that is, that they were branches of a family tree which would continue to grow. The implication was that the reader was in some way to be blamed if he was ignorant about his line of descent. In addition to the pupils' books, there were a number of aids to teachers that suggested ways in which these issues could and should be taught.¹¹⁹ Another approach used, apart from actively involving children in their own ancestry, was the presentation of numerous poems and stories about heredity, blood and kinship.¹²⁰

The main benefit to be derived from genealogical activities was awareness, both of an individual's own traits and of his membership of the 'blood community' of the German *Volk*.¹²¹ Of course, the ramifications of this went much further, by suggesting that those of non-German blood, or who could not definitively prove to be of German blood, were 'inferior'.¹²² Fundamentally, the purpose of such texts was to highlight the sense of continuity between children, their parents, their grandparents, their great-grandparents and so on, and the flow from the past into the present and through into the future of a line of ancestry and of blood pulsing in the veins of a family generation after generation. One book sought to demonstrate the transmission of family characteristics through the generations by considering the composer Johann Sebastian Bach.¹²³ It illustrated Bach's

¹¹⁹ For example, F. Hayn, *Politische Sippenkunde in der Schule* (Leipzig, 1936).

¹²⁰ For example, see N. Maaken *et al.* (eds.), *Ewiges Deutschland. Schroedels Lesebuch für Mittelschulen für den Gau Schleswig-Holstein, 3. Band, Klasse 3-6* (Halle a. d. Saale, c. 1942), pp. 153-65, which devotes itself to 'ancestors and descendants' and 'mothers and children'.

¹²¹ See Hasubek, *Das deutsche Lesebuch in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, p. 61.

¹²² On the issue of ancestry, see also, H. Stellrecht, 'Das Erbe der Vater', and L. Finckh, 'Heilige Ahnenschaft', in H. Kickler *et al.* (eds.), *Dich ruft Dein Volk. Deutsches Lesebuch für Mittelschulen, 4. Band, Klasse 5 und 6* (Bielefeld/ Leipzig, 1942), pp. 229-30.

¹²³ L. Kahn Meyer & H. Schulze, *Realienbuch enthaltend Geschichte, Erdkunde, Naturgeschichte, Physik, Chemie und Mineralogie* (Bielefeld/ Leipzig, 1938), p. 148.

family tree, in order to show that there were no fewer than 34 'musically competent' people in his family, of whom approximately half were 'outstandingly gifted'. This particular example was part of a comprehensive chapter dealing with heredity, race and family.¹²⁴ Within this context, blood was the most important symbol, for 'German blood' was the guarantee of the future of the *Volk*.¹²⁵ However, there were other symbols too, such as the family home and family traditions. As such, old furniture was seen as and used as a representation of continuity, so that, for instance, the 'old table' or the 'old chest' linked up different generations of a family. The values of kinship were expressed through such symbols, which also represented the desirability of a good German family.¹²⁶

The Nazi preoccupation with 'the order of nature' formed the basis of a number of texts. For example, in one story a husband and wife decided to exchange roles. The husband took over the cooking, whilst the wife went out into the fields to do his work. After a disastrous day for the man - who had previously thought his wife had the easy option in staying at home and cooking - he finally told his wife that it was better for her to stay at home and cook, whilst he went to the fields and tilled the soil, for 'one ought not to reverse the order of nature'.¹²⁷ The implications of this are crystal clear in relation to National Socialist thinking. In a similar vein - but more related to National Socialist pseudo-scientific racial thought - was a fable whose substance was as follows. A cuckoo met a nightingale in the street. The cuckoo wanted to sing as beautifully as the nightingale, but claimed that the only reason he could not do so was because he had not

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-60.

¹²⁵ See Flessau, *Schule der Diktatur*, p. 165.

¹²⁶ See Hasubek, *Das deutsche Lesebuch in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, pp. 56-8.

¹²⁷ *Deutsches Lesebuch für Volksschulen*, pp. 153-5.

been taught to sing when he was young. The nightingale laughed, and said that nightingales did not learn to sing, but were born with the ability to sing. The cuckoo nevertheless believed that if only he could find the right teacher, his offspring would be able to sing as beautifully as the nightingale. His wife had a clever idea. She decided to lay her eggs in the nest of another bird, so that their young would grow up together with those of another type of bird than the cuckoo, and would therefore learn how to sing. She laid an egg in the nest of a hedge sparrow. When the mother hedge sparrow returned to her nest, she was surprised to see the strange egg, but she decided to take care of it as if it were her own. When the eggs hatched, a young cuckoo emerged among the young hedge sparrows. He was nourished and cared for in exactly the same way as them, but he did not grow into a hedge sparrow. In fact, the older he grew, the more noticeable his differences became. He did not fly like the others, but flew like his real parents, that is, as a cuckoo flew. When he tried to sing, he could not do so. The only sound he could make was that of his own species. Hence, despite growing up in the nest of a hedge sparrow, he grew up to be a true cuckoo. This story was used to pose the questions: 'What is more important? The race from which one stems, or the nest in which one grows up?'¹²⁸ The issues raised in this fable are particularly significant, reflecting both the debate about inherited versus acquired characteristics, and the basic tenets of Nazi racial ideology. The kind of thoughts these would invoke in the children reading it, therefore closely resembled those inspired by much of the rest of their environment. Racial theories influenced by social Darwinism featured quite heavily in National Socialist biology textbooks as well.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ M. Stämmeler, 'Was ist wichtiger?', in Dreyer *et al.* (eds.), *Deutsches Lesewerk*, pp. 27-8.

¹²⁹ On this, see Flessau, *Schule der Diktatur*, pp. 157-61.

History lessons were a way of exciting children's sense of national pride and concern about the continued existence of the German state and *Volk*, and about future glories to match - or even to exceed - those of the nation's great heroic past. 'For... we learn history in order to find an instructor for the future and for the continued existence of our own nationality'.¹³⁰ History was to be looked at 'with the eyes of blood', and its primary function was to serve the 'political, intellectual and spiritual mobilisation of the nation'.¹³¹ National Socialist history textbooks often dealt only with German history, usually in terms of leaders and the nations they led. Great rulers of Germany's past, such as Frederick the Great, were used to stress heroic leadership, ceaseless service to the state, military successes, and, of course, parallels with Hitler.¹³² The ultimate triumphs of National Socialism were given considerable priority in the history textbooks of the period.¹³³ The issues of care and protection of the race found their way into history textbooks quite extensively too. One of the history books for older pupils actually devoted part of its section on *völkisch* culture to the position of women in the *Volksgemeinschaft*. It went through all the standard Nazi ideas about women's position in society and within the family, including the need to re-awaken women's dormant desires to have children, and indeed to have *kinderreich* families.¹³⁴ It also emphasised the function of mothers in educating their offspring, claiming that there was no task more noble or more beautiful than a mother making the developing soul of her child receptive to all the goodness and beauty of its *Volk*.¹³⁵ The implications of this were much the

¹³⁰ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 383.

¹³¹ See Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, p. 261.

¹³² See G. Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich: Race and History in Nazi Textbooks* (New York, 1985), p. 97. See also, pp. 177-8, on the teleological way in which history was presented in Nazi history textbooks.

¹³³ D. Klagen (ed.), *Volk und Führer: Deutsche Geschichte für Schulen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1943), is a typical example.

¹³⁴ W. Hohmann, *Volk und Reich. Der deutschen Geschichtsbuch für Oberschulen und Gymnasien, Klasse 8. Von Bismarck bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main, 1941), pp. 236-8.

same as any of the other output on this subject, but that it appeared in a history book, seems rather incongruous and curious. Yet, themes such as '*völkisch* renewal' were not uncommon in the history books of the Third Reich.¹³⁶ Historical atlases showed the nation's greatness in her most historically important and expansive periods, and especially in the Third Reich, portraying, for example, the size of Germany's increase under Hitler. In addition, they were used to illustrate - by means of maps, charts and graphs - population policy issues, such as the fall in the German birth rate, the ill-effects of urbanisation and the age make-up of the German nation, to show that it was becoming a 'nation without youth'.¹³⁷ All this was bound up - directly or indirectly - with the family and issues that affected it.

Arithmetic exercises were sometimes highly immersed in National Socialist racial or political ideas. The examples that follow are startlingly loaded with National Socialist discrimination against the 'hereditarily ill', or with issues relating to population policy objectives. One exercise gave pupils the following information: 'Everyday, the state spends 6 RM. on one cripple; 4 1/4 RM. on one mentally-ill person; 5 1/2 RM. on one deaf and dumb person; 5 3/5 RM. on one feeble-minded person; 3 1/2 RM. on one alcoholic; 4 4/5 RM. on one pupil in care; 2 1/20 RM. on one pupil at a special school; and 9/20 RM. on one pupil at a normal school'. It then asked questions such as 'what total cost do one cripple and one feeble-minded person create, if one takes a lifespan of 45 years for each?', and 'calculate the expenditure of the state for one pupil in a special school, and one pupil in an ordinary school over eight years, and state the amount of

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹³⁶ For example, see W. Gehl, *Geschichte für höhere Schulen Mittelstufe, Heft 4* (Breslau, 1936), pp. 145-9.

¹³⁷ See B. Kumsteller, *Werden und Wachsen. Ein Geschichtsatlas auf völkischer Grundlage* (Braunschweig/ Berlin/ Leipzig/ Hamburg, 1938), p. 60.

higher cost engendered by the special school pupil'.¹³⁸ This was typical of the way in which data regarding state expenditure on 'hereditarily ill' or 'inferior' people was sometimes used in 'education'. The implications of such exercises are patent. There were also exercises utilising data about the birth rate and other issues relating to population policy.¹³⁹ For example, one exercise stated that, 'in order to promote the founding of families, the state introduced the marriage loan scheme in 1933'. It then gave the figures of the number of loans given out each year between 1933 and 1937, together with the value of each loan, and asked for calculations of yearly state expenditure.¹⁴⁰ Once again, the ramifications of these examples are clear. The association of such figures in the minds of the pupils doing these exercises was presumably to indicate to them that money spent on maintaining 'hereditarily ill' people, or on children attending special schools, could be better spent on marriage loans for 'healthy' and 'valuable' families, or on *NSV* recuperation centres for mothers.

In schoolbooks for older children, there was a change in the way in which the family was treated. Whereas the textbooks for primary school children portrayed Nazi family norms and values by means of fables, stories, poems and pictures, secondary school textbooks dealt with the subject in a much more functional manner, explaining the significance of 'the German family' in sections entirely devoted to this theme. The core of Nazi family ideology was set out under sub-headings such as 'the essence of the German family; its biological position; its legal establishment'.¹⁴¹ The family as the smallest, but most important unit of the German *Volk* was always the first point mentioned. This was

¹³⁸ *Allgemeinbildender Grundlehrgang, 1. Teil* (Breslau/ Leipzig, 1941), p. 226.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 225-7. Here there are several exercises relating to birth rate figures.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹⁴¹ F. Sotke, *Deutsches Volk und deutscher Staat. Staatsbürgerkunde für junge Deutsche* (Leipzig, 1936), pp. 83-6.

followed by an explanation that a true family consisted not just of a married couple, but of children too. A discussion ensued about the duty of parents to provide protection and care for their children, and of children to honour and respect their parents.¹⁴² Amongst the obligations of the family were the development of a sense of awareness about the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the preservation of the nation through the creation of 'healthy' children. That only spouses who were free of physical and mental disabilities or illnesses should reproduce was made perfectly clear. Furthermore, the obligation to know about heredity in general, and about one's own ancestry in particular, was explicitly stated. This particular book concluded its section on the German family with an explanation of why and how the National Socialist state promoted 'healthy' families, and of laws relating to family issues. The messages were conveyed in a simple and straightforward manner. They are unmistakable, both at face-value and at a more latent level, as vehicles of Nazi family doctrine.

There were a number of similar books which portrayed these issues in much the same way.¹⁴³ One of them dealt with the points just mentioned, but then went on to discuss in more detail the three 'laws of nature' that concerned the family - the law of fertility, the law of heredity and the law of selection.¹⁴⁴ The first was described in terms of how each species on earth disappeared unless it reproduced sufficiently, and hence, the National Socialist state struggled against the decrease in the German birth rate, in order to prevent

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁴³ For example, see K. Sinn, *Staatsbürgerkunde* (Leipzig/ Berlin, 1940), pp. 57-9, which deals with the German family, and with the significance of the woman and her position in the nation. See also, P. Koenigs & H. Wolfram, *Deutschland - Sein Schicksal und Auferstehen. Grundlagen zur nationalpolitischen Erziehung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1940), pp. 52-3. This was a manual for teachers, in which the particular issue of the significance of the family for the nation and state was dealt with in the same manner as the textbooks themselves.

¹⁴⁴ J. Fischer, *Volks- und Staatskunde, 1. Teil* (Selbstverlag, 1938), pp. 76-9.

the 'race' from dying out. The text explained how the state did this, for example, by sponsoring the marriage of 'healthy' couples, setting up the marriage loan scheme, creating jobs, trying to suppress all destructive - especially Jewish - influences, and promoting *kinderreich* families. Secondly, according to this text, the law of heredity meant that each species only retained its characteristics if it did not mix with others. Consequently, the mixing of a higher species with an 'inferior' one, would mean an abasement in the 'value' of the higher race. As such, the National Socialist state aimed to maintain the 'purity' of the race, for instance, by implementing the Nuremberg Laws. The text also explained some of the content of these laws.¹⁴⁵ The law of selection, in the natural world, meant the victory of the strong over the weak, and of the healthy over the sick. The National Socialists decided to apply these criteria to human beings in the modern German state - indeed, justifying them because they were natural laws, but distorting them out of their usual applications - and therefore, aimed to prevent the birth of 'hereditarily ill' children. The text went on to elucidate the substance of the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring and of the Marriage Health Law, and to cite some of the words of Hitler and Frick on the subject of marriage and the family. It left its readers with the sobering thought that 'the *Volksgemeinschaft* can only be built, if the smallest community... the family, is in order'.¹⁴⁶

Again and again, the significance of the family found its expression in the textbooks of the period. Often, it was the first item in a book. This was especially the case when the concept of family was utilised to show that the family was one of the building blocks of the state and to depict the line of continuity that stretched from the individual family to the *Volk*, all bound together by the concept of race. This linkage was central to Nazi

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

ideology, and as such, cropped up repeatedly in school textbooks, as well as all propaganda media.¹⁴⁷ Fundamentally, individuals had their roots in the family, and could not live without this network. As such, the family was the foundation of human existence and its ethos. In turn, as the 'germ cell' of the *Volk* - which was a 'blood community' - the family was tied to the National Socialists' racial criteria of health and purity.¹⁴⁸

In addition, there were a number of books that were essentially collections of speeches, writings and lectures of various Nazi leaders on a variety of issues. One such book had a section on the position of women in the National Socialist state, in which there was a selection of texts from speeches or writings of Goebbels, Frick, Scholtz-Klink and Hitler. These covered the most fundamental aspects of Nazi doctrine on women.¹⁴⁹ A similar book, edited by the same author, had a section devoted to the 'family as the germ cell of the *Volk*'. It incorporated four pieces by Wilhelm Stüwe, the leader of the *Reichsbund der Kinderreichen*, on issues including the low birth rate leading to the death of the nation, and the need for large, but 'valuable' families. It also included parts of speeches by Frick on population policy, by Rosenberg on the honour of motherhood, and by Groß, the leader of the Racial Political Office, on *kinderreich* families and their importance to the *Volk*.¹⁵⁰ Together, these extracts formed a fairly comprehensive overview of the essence of Nazi family policy.

¹⁴⁷ See A. Waetzig, *Volk, Nation, Staat: Ein Beitrag zur staatspolitischen Schulung unserer jungen Volksgenossen* (Stuttgart, 1937), pp. 5-6.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴⁹ W. Gehl (ed.), *Der nationalsozialistische Staat: Grundlagen und Gestaltung Urkunden des Aufbaus - Reden und Vorträge* (Breslau, 1934), pp. 155-60.

¹⁵⁰ W. Gehl (ed.), *Der nationalsozialistische Staat: Grundlagen und Gestaltung Urkunden des Aufbaus - Reden und Vorträge, 3. Heft* (Breslau, 1937), pp. 14-18.

Finally, the subjects of cooking, nutrition and household care crept into some textbooks. In such cases, fairly lengthy chapters or parts of chapters were devoted to these areas. In one instance, the section began with a diagram of a cow, illustrating the 22 different cuts of meat from the animal and marking out the nutritional value of each.¹⁵¹ It then went on to assess the nutritional value of meat, stating that this differed according to the type of meat, the age of the animal and how it was fed. It explained why raw meat was dangerous, and described how certain types of sausages, in particular those made from liver or blood, could also engender food poisoning if they were not cooked or smoked properly. It advocated that fish was very healthy, especially shellfish, cod and herring, but that poisoning from fish could occur if it was not fresh. It explained how to tell if a fish was going bad. Milk was deemed to be highly valuable in nutritional terms, especially for children. Advice on the nutritional contents of milk was given, along with warnings against drinking sour milk, and tips for distinguishing between pure milk and processed milk. Similarly, nutritional information was given about butter, cheese, eggs, pulses, fresh fruit, vegetables and sugar. Vinegar was not favoured because it destroyed red blood corpuscles. Consequently, it was to be used very sparingly and the substitution of lemon juice was recommended. Explanations were given of how beer, wine and spirits were made and of their constituents. The lack of nutritional value of wines and spirits was highlighted, as were their consequences for the body and mind. The ill-effects of alcoholism to the individual, the family and the state were also described, for example, the illness of the alcoholic, his expenditure of almost all the family income on alcohol, and the expenses involved for the government in maintaining chronic alcoholics in hospitals, prisons and asylums. Coffee, tea and cocoa were shown to have little or no nutritional value, and the danger of smoking tobacco was underlined. This type of

¹⁵¹ On this and on what follows, see *Kamps Neues Realienbuch für Schule und Haus* (Bochum in Westfalen, 1937), pp. 151-6.

nutritional information was given out to promote an awareness of health, which was a crucial component of the overall National Socialist ambition of creating a fit race.

Following the information about foodstuffs, there was a section about the household. Advice was given about the different rooms of the house, together with instructions for cleaning them. In the first place, nothing was to clutter the floor space of the hallway and stairs. In addition, a light was to be kept on in these areas of the house in the evenings, to prevent accidents from happening in the dark. The kitchen was ideally to face north. It was to be bright, spacious and well-lit. Carpet was not recommended for the kitchen. Precise instructions were given about how it should be painted. Order and hygiene in the kitchen were paramount.¹⁵² The living room was to be bright and large enough for each family member to have 'at least twelve cubic metres of breathing space'. The carpet was to be bright, but not too colourful. The furniture was to be simple and durable. A single good picture on the wall was deemed better than a dozen cheaper, worthless pictures. Pictures were to hang straight. Overall, living rooms were to be comfortable, but not 'over-decorated with all kinds of mass-produced goods'. Bedrooms were to be dry, large, sunny and airy. Flowers, plants, dirty washing and wet clothes were not to be kept in the bedroom. Beds made of iron rather than of wood were recommended as they were easier to keep clean. Bedrooms were only to be heated in cold or damp weather, or if children, old or sick people were using them. But even in these cases temperatures were only to reach approximately 12 degrees. Bedroom windows were to be kept open for the majority of the daylight hours. It was deemed best to keep bedrooms dark at night, but if a night light had to be used, it was not to be allowed to shine directly onto the faces of those asleep. The other rooms of the house

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 158.

were to be regularly cleaned and aired.¹⁵³ Directions about the 'beauty and usefulness' of the German home were also to be found in all types of National Socialist propaganda organs.¹⁵⁴ The German home was to be simple. The regime was against the cluttered 'cosiness' of the home at the turn of the century, with its dark furnishings and many ornaments, just as it was against the 'steel functionality' of the Weimar years. The ideal Nazi home had to correspond to the time, with its distinctive style of furniture, displaying 'good character and good taste'. For example, tables of 'good German oak', were considered to be the most appropriate.

Procedures for cleaning the house were explained in astonishing detail.¹⁵⁵ The kitchen, living room, bedrooms, floors and stairs were to be cleaned daily, whilst once a week was considered sufficient for the rest of the house. Once a year, a thorough cleaning of the entire house was to be undertaken, including all the windows, window frames, window sills, skirtings and so on. Explicit instructions were given about how to do this and with what type of cleaning materials. Methods for polishing furniture and for cleaning glass and china were given, along with instructions on cleaning floors and bringing back the colour to faded carpets. Information was also given about shoes, including what to do with shoes that had got wet and instructions for cleaning shoes on a daily basis. Advice followed on how to deal with vermin. In addition, there were exact instructions about how to wash bed linen and what kind of cleaning materials to use for this purpose. Specific details followed about what kitchen utensils should be made of, as well as precise instructions for washing-up and kitchen hygiene. It was claimed that the

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-9.

¹⁵⁴ On what follows, see '*Deutsches Wohnen*', *Das Deutsche Mädel*, March 1939, pp. 8-9.

¹⁵⁵ On what follows, see *Kamps Neues Realienbuch für Schule und Haus*, pp.159-67.

sign of a good housewife was a scrupulously clean kitchen. Advice about heating and lighting the home completed the section. Another book that dealt with the 'work of the housewife' discussed similar points about food and housework, but in addition, concerned itself with clothing for the family and the role of the housewife in saving and collecting old material.¹⁵⁶ Much of this advice and instruction may seem either obvious or over-fastidious. Yet the fact that it was included in this manner in school textbooks demonstrates the seriousness of the intentions of the Nazi government and its attempted intervention in the private lives and homes of its people. This kind of instruction also appeared in the forefront of Nazi attempts to 'educate' the female part of the adult population.

The 'Education' of Adult Women

The Nazi leadership regarded the training of adult women for their household and familial duties as a highly important undertaking. The *NS-Frauenschaft* played a major role in the realisation of this educational aim. One reason for this is to be found in the history of the organisation of women in the Third Reich. In contrast to the Weimar era, when a number of heterogeneous organisations for women existed, the period of *Gleichschaltung* after the Nazi takeover of power, entailed the disbandment of these groups, or their 'co-ordination' into the two National Socialist women's organisations. Consequently, women who wished to participate in any kind of organisational life had to join either the *NS-Frauenschaft* or the *Deutsches Frauenwerk*. By 1941, the aggregate number of members of these two organisations had risen to approximately six million. Out of a total population of some thirty million women over the age of eighteen, that made one woman in every five a member of a National Socialist women's organisation in 1941.¹⁵⁷ In many cases, women joined these organisations because their membership

¹⁵⁶ Kahn Meyer & Schulze, *Realienbuch*, pp. 46-55.

¹⁵⁷ S. Dammer, *Kinder, Küche, Kriegsarbeit - Die Schulung der Frauen durch die*

created the only opportunity for them to leave the house without their husbands. This gave the *NS-Frauenschaft* leadership a chance to influence these women in the ideas of National Socialism and to 'educate' them, culturally, spiritually and politically. Whereas the Women's Section of the German Labour Front dealt with all issues of female care and of women at work, the main task of the *NS-Frauenschaft* was to make every German woman aware of her duty and responsibility towards the *Volk*.¹⁵⁸ In order to do this, the *NS-Frauenschaft* elite first had the task of educating all of its women leaders in the spirit of National Socialism.¹⁵⁹ These leaders could then pass their knowledge on to their members, hoping to eventually immerse every German woman in the spirit of National Socialism.

Training courses were held for leaders or experts in issues concerning women. For example, courses were set up for nutrition specialists, who would then pass on the benefit of their knowledge and experience to German women. Such courses typically lasted five or six days, and provided an intensive training.¹⁶⁰ One such course was held at Wannsee in April 1939. After arrival in the early evening, supper and a welcoming speech, the course itself started the following morning, with an opening speech on the importance of correct nutrition. A change in eating patterns was needed, because the consumption of carbohydrates was too low, whilst that of fat was too high. In addition, use of fish and sugar was too low, whereas use of meat and butter was too high. This

NS-Frauenschaft', in *Frauengruppe Faschismusforschung* (ed.), *Mutterkreuz und Arbeitsbuch*, p. 224.

¹⁵⁸ BA NS 44/55, Anordnung 9/35, 'Frauenamt der DAF und NS-Frauenschaft', 17 Aug. 1935.

¹⁵⁹ BA NS 22/923, Anordnung 5/37, 'Betr. Schulung in der NS-Frauenschaft', 24 March 1937.

¹⁶⁰ On what follows, see BA NS 44/47, 'Protokoll über den Schulungslehrgang der Gausachbearbeiterinnen für Ernährung in der Reichsschule II der NS-Frauenschaft in Berlin-Wannsee, vom 24. - 29. April 1939'.

was followed by lectures on, among other things, the importance of wild fruits, which encouraged the drinking of fruit and herbal teas. Films were shown and discussed in the evening. The next day there was a lecture on the change in nutrition over the past century, followed by an overview of recent literature on nutrition, with recommendations of the most useful books. In the afternoon there was practical training in cooking techniques together with suggested weekly menus. In the evening the course participants sang songs. The last two days of the course dealt with the issue of illnesses, especially those related to food intake or remedied by particular foods or herbs. After an explanation of the work of the various branches of the Nazi organisations relating to women, the course ended with a general discussion, a speech by the *Führer* and songs.

Another course aimed at nutrition specialists dealt with similar issues, but included a number of other areas in addition, such as consumption patterns in different types of households, the use of substitute foodstuffs, how to feed a *kinderreich* family properly on a low income and how to avoid unnecessary household expenditure.¹⁶¹ Apart from such courses, there was a constant barrage of information to anyone involved in 'educating' women, through circulars on consumer issues, for example, stressing that women should buy fruit and vegetables in season to prevent wastage of surplus goods in any particular season, or shortage in another.¹⁶²

The entire sphere of female education was extremely practical in its approach, calling upon women to excel in functional activities, tasks and occupations. In 1934, the

¹⁶¹ BA NS 44/35, 'Protokoll über den Schulungslehrgang der Sachbearbeiterinnen für Ernährung der Gauabteilungen Volkswirtschaft-Hauswirtschaft vom 20. - 25. September 1937'.

¹⁶² BA NS 44/47, Rundschreiben Nr. FW 85/39, 'Betr. Richtlinien für die Verbrauchslenkung', 27 June 1939.

Hochschule der Frau was set up in Berlin, under the aegis of the *NS-Frauenschaft*. It held regular ten-day courses and monthly courses for women. Here, women learnt about the German *Volk* and state, about issues of health, education, welfare and the economy. This was just one of a number of similar efforts, such as special training courses and 'women's days', that aimed to teach women about the importance of their roles in the house and family, the significance of economic cycles and their contributions towards helping the German economy by means of appropriate household consumption and expenditure, along with an array of course components on German culture, art, history and values.¹⁶³ In addition, members of the *NS-Frauenschaft* were obliged to attend a monthly evening meeting, the *Pflichtabend*, whose main aim was to disseminate National Socialist ideology. Although lengthy absences from these meetings were punishable by fines, they were actually organised in such a way that women did not feel compelled to attend, but went because they wanted to go. There was a community spirit and 'holiday atmosphere' to these meetings, which did not merely consist of lengthy lectures. Yet, the National Socialist message was still transmitted, through songs, poems, a short talk on the tasks of women in the *Volk*, presentations of membership badges and cards, and other similar activities.

The schooling of women was mainly carried out by the *Reichsmütterdienst (RMD)*, an agency of the *Deutsches Frauenwerk*. The *NS-Frauenschaft* was responsible only for its ideological aims and the training of its leaders. The *RMD* was set up on Mother's Day, in May 1934, with the express aim of instructing women in domestic science within the context of national economic policy, and 'political education' or 'the development of a particular attitude'.¹⁶⁴ The guidelines for the *RMD* stated that the training of mothers was

¹⁶³ Dammer, '*Kinder, Küche, Kriegsarbeit*', p. 230.

¹⁶⁴ See J. Stephenson, 'The Nazi Organisation of Women, 1933-1939', in P. Stachura

carried out through the will of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the awareness of the importance of the mother for the *Volk* and state.¹⁶⁵ The task of the *RMD* was the training of physically and emotionally 'fit' mothers to be aware of the duty of motherhood and experienced in the education of their children and care of their household. The family was a central concern of the *RMD*. Care for the sense of family in both practical and emotional terms was regarded as the ultimate aim of the organisation.¹⁶⁶ On 3 July 1935, Frick named the *RMD* as the only organisation to be involved in the schooling of women as mothers. The *RMD* initially had two main areas of work: firstly, the training of mothers, and secondly, the provision of a range of welfare provisions and measures for mothers, which was carried out in conjunction with the *NSV*.¹⁶⁷

Mother schools were set up in 'so-called places of necessity', for example in workers' districts, where it was hoped their propaganda effect would wean women away from the influences of Communism.¹⁶⁸ As such, the first mother school was set up in Berlin-Wedding, a working class district of Berlin. By 1941, there were 517 mother schools in Germany and German-occupied territory.¹⁶⁹ Part of the cost of financing the 'mother schools' was met by the contributions of the women who took part in the courses and the remainder was subsidised by the *NSV* or the German Labour Front. The courses prepared young women for all aspects of looking after a family and running a household.

(ed.), *The Shaping of the Nazi State* (London, 1978), p. 194.

¹⁶⁵ BA R 36/1397, 'Richtlinien des Reichsmütterdienstes im Deutschen Frauenwerk zur Durchführung der Mütterschulung', 1 May 1934.

¹⁶⁶ BA NS 44/55, 'Unser Weg. Die Nationalsozialistische Frauenarbeit von Ihren Anfängen', p. 6.

¹⁶⁷ Dammer, 'Kinder, Küche, Kriegsarbeit', p. 234.

¹⁶⁸ S. Dammer, 'Nationalsozialistische Frauenpolitik und soziale Arbeit', in H.-U. Otto & H. Sunker (eds.), *Soziale Arbeit und Faschismus. Volkspflege und Pädagogik im Nationalsozialismus* (Bielefeld, 1986), pp. 279-80.

¹⁶⁹ G. Scholtz-Klink, *Die Frau im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation* (Tübingen, 1978), p. 190.

On successful completion of a course, a certificate was awarded to the participant, to prove that she had acquired 'the necessary basic knowledge to run a household'.¹⁷⁰

The concept of training mothers was one of the positive measures of National Socialist family policy. The emphasis on child care and family life in the *RMD* was used to convey the regime's desire for *kinderreich* families and to disseminate its racial policy. As such, the home economics instruction and motherhood training of the *RMD* was directed towards bringing up and nourishing healthy children for the nation's future. The central purpose, then, was the propagation of Nazi racial and population policy.¹⁷¹ The declining birth rate, high incidence of infant mortality and the imperfect health system had been regarded as worrying dangers before 1933, and not just by the National Socialists. By attaching special significance to the family and by carrying out policies to improve the situation, the National Socialist government could expect approval. The training of women contributed to this brand of consensus-building policy. Women were to fulfil their tasks for the 'recovery' and 'preservation' of their nation. Schooling of women was partly aimed at re-awakening their dormant desires to have children, and to this end, was especially valuable for working girls, so that they could acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in household management before they got married.¹⁷² In some districts, participation in *RMD* mother schooling was a prerequisite for obtaining a marriage loan.¹⁷³

In 1936, Himmler ordered that all brides of *SS* men had to attend the 'mother schools'. He called for the close co-operation of the *SS* with the *Deutsches Frauenwerk* in this

¹⁷⁰ BA NS 44/55, '*Deutsches Frauenwerk - Reichsmütterdienst - Nr 1 & Nr 2*'.

¹⁷¹ Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women*, p. 163.

¹⁷² BA NS 2/181, '*Die Bräuteschulen des Deutschen Frauenwerke, Mütterdienst*'.

¹⁷³ Dammer, '*Kinder, Küche, Kriegsarbeit*', p. 235.

respect.¹⁷⁴ Some SA leaders followed this example, requiring that all fiancées and wives of their members had to visit the 'mother schools' too.¹⁷⁵ If a bride was unable to take the course prior to her wedding because of professional reasons, she was required to attend the course after her marriage. In addition, special 'Bride Schools' were set up for the fiancées and wives of SS and SA men, at which young women were given a model home to run, complete with children, in order to gain experience in housekeeping and child care.¹⁷⁶ The first of these, Schwannenwerder, was set up at Wannsee.¹⁷⁷ In 1939, five such schools existed. They were ideally situated, in pleasant surroundings, conducive to learning the skills required of a housewife and mother. Here, for the cost of 135 RM. each, young women embarked on a six-week course. They learnt about cooking, washing, ironing and sewing, health and hygiene, infant and child care, in short, everything they needed to know for their future position as mothers.¹⁷⁸ There were instances in which girls who were not engaged to SS members wanted to attend the 'Bride Schools', and were happily accepted, as well as cases in which the refusal of wives of SS men to attend was noted.¹⁷⁹

The work of the RMD increased rapidly. Apart from general instruction about National Socialist ideology and the tasks of women in the state, there was a whole range of other

¹⁷⁴ BA NS 44/55, 'Betr. Zusammenarbeit des Deutschen Frauenwerkes mit der SS zwecks Mütterschulung der SS-Bräute', 22 April 1937.

¹⁷⁵ BA NS 44/58, 'Betr. Besuch der Lehrgänge an den Reichsmütterschulen des Deutschen Frauenwerkes durch die Frauen der SA-Anhörigen', 31 Dec. 1937.

¹⁷⁶ Stephenson, 'The Nazi Organisation of Women', in Stachura (ed.), *The Shaping of the Nazi State*, p. 195.

¹⁷⁷ BA NS 44/62, 'Die Reichsbräuteschule des Deutschen Frauenwerkes - Mütterdienst. Schwannenwerder, Berlin-Wannsee'.

¹⁷⁸ 'Bräute gehen in die Schule - aber sie lernen das Leben selbst', *Völkische Wacht*, Aug. 1939, p. 227.

¹⁷⁹ For an example of the former, see BA NS 2/243, a letter from Gertrud Jürgens of Hanover, to the Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt of the SS, 23 Sept. 1940 and the reply, 14 Oct. 1940. On the latter, see BA NS 2/ 243, 'Betr. Schulungskurse des Reichsmütterdienstes für SS-Frauen', 28. Aug 1943.

activities. In 1937, the *RMD* was split into three parts for its different functions: home economics, for the teaching of cooking and sewing; health care, for courses on infant care, health and home nursing; and education, for the teaching of handicrafts and national ideology.¹⁸⁰ Courses on household management included cookery lessons, instruction on the nutritional value of food, practical guidelines and tips for housework, setting up a home and running a household with a limited income, sewing and mending clothes, organisation of household money, household book-keeping and advice on shopping. Courses on health care covered pregnancy, childbirth, the care and nourishment of babies and young children, advice on the moral upbringing of children, and on their physical and mental development. However, as was the case in the *BDM*, sexuality was negated in the *RMD*, and indeed in the National Socialist women's organisations as a whole. Women were simply to fulfil their biological functions as child-bearers. There was no element of sexual education incorporated into the courses run by the *RMD*.

What kind of impact did the *RMD* have on German women? In terms of figures, some five million women and girls had attended *RMD* courses by 1944.¹⁸¹ *RMD* schooling clearly had some effect on middle class women, as it actually represented a number of their norms and values, but it had little influence in industrial working class areas, or indeed, in areas where the church still retained quite a sizeable influence, despite the confines placed upon it by the regime.¹⁸² The continued existence of the Churches made women, and especially non-working women, difficult to influence in Nazi ideology, because they already had a focus for their loyalty in religion.¹⁸³ The reason for its

¹⁸⁰ BA NS 44/45, 'Rundschreiben Nr. F 74/37', 24 April 1937.

¹⁸¹ Stephenson, 'The Nazi Organisation of Women', in Stachura (ed.), *The Shaping of the Nazi State*, p. 194.

¹⁸² Dammer, 'Kinder, Küche, Kriegsarbeit', p. 239.

¹⁸³ See Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women*, pp. 170-1.

influence amongst some middle class women, was that much of what the *RMD* did was based on pre-existing traditions, and also on long-standing German myths and sagas, although of course, it took these traditions further, and with different motivations. In general, however, it proved quite difficult for the Nazi women's formations to organise - and indeed, later to mobilise - housewives, partly for the very reason that their original propaganda had emphasised the home so strongly. This was why the 'educational' activities were regarded as being so important. The *RMD* even sent out travelling instructors to the countryside and to small towns where women did not have access to the mother schools.¹⁸⁴ The totalitarian ambitions of the regime would be thwarted unless this large sector of the population could be controlled and it was through 'education' and training that it was hoped women would be persuaded to devote themselves to the National Socialist cause.¹⁸⁵

One important element in the education of women, especially in the years immediately preceding and during the Second World War, was the encouragement of women to buy as frugally as possible, and to save money and materials. Priorities of autarky, armaments production and expansion, meant that food production suffered, especially since, despite all its efforts to do so, the regime could not succeed in maintaining a large enough workforce on the land. An extract from a speech by Rudolf Hess, in October 1936, serves as a vivid illustration of the way in which women were to do their shopping:

Hardworking and efficient German housewives know what they have to do in the service of this great German family - the German people - if it has to overcome temporary small shortages. They simply do their shopping in accordance with the interest of the great German family! They do not attempt to buy expressly that which is in short supply at the time, but instead buy those things which are available in abundance and prepare them in such a way that they look really good and taste really

¹⁸⁴ BA R 36/1397, '*Richtlinien des Reichsmütterdienstes*'.

¹⁸⁵ Stephenson, 'The Nazi Organisation of Women', in Stachura (ed.), *The Shaping of the Nazi State*, p. 203.

good to their husbands and children. No good German housewife particularly mourns the quarter-pound of pork which, from time to time, she now fails to get.¹⁸⁶

During the war, people were encouraged to change their habits in order to meet the needs of the state. For example, on 21 March 1941, Conti made a radio broadcast to launch the *Reichsvollkornbrotaktion* or 'wholegrain bread operation'.¹⁸⁷ People were encouraged to change from eating processed white bread to wholegrain bread, for the good of their health and the strength of the nation. But the campaign was not just initiated for reasons of health, it was an austerity measure too, for wholegrain bread was easier and cheaper to produce than highly processed white bread. Those that did not change their habits, were stigmatised as 'selfish'.

Even before the National Socialists had come into power, Strasser had noted the crucial part played by the housewife in the nation's economy, 'through whose hands, when she is shopping, passes the largest part of the German income'.¹⁸⁸ After the introduction of the Four Year Plan in September 1936, there was considerable pressure on women - by means of unremitting propaganda - to adopt parsimonious consumption patterns and to re-utilise old materials in order to ensure the freedom of raw materials for different purposes, which essentially meant the manufacture of armaments. In fact, pamphlets were put out about women's duties and tasks in the war. Housewives were discouraged from doing their shopping in the evenings, as this was when working people had to do their shopping.¹⁸⁹ In addition, they were to help save material by bringing their own

¹⁸⁶ Speech by Rudolf Hess, cited from the *Völkischer Beobachter*, 13 Oct. 1936, in N. Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany: The Führer State, 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1993), p. 165.

¹⁸⁷ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, pp. 236-7.

¹⁸⁸ BA NS 44/55 '*Ausführungsbestimmungen über die Neuorganisation der nat. soz. Frauen in der nat. soz. Frauenschaft*', 1 Nov. 1931, p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ BA NS 44/37, 'R Nr. FW 41/41, *Betr.: Einkaufszeit der Hausfrauen*', 2 May

shopping bags and re-using them. One pamphlet, subtitled 'What the German woman must know today', set out the obligations of women on the home front and the responsibilities of the housewife during the war, as well as giving advice for women on a variety of issues connected with daily living in wartime conditions.¹⁹⁰ Needless to say, there was also substantial concern about information and advice being available to expectant mothers during the war.¹⁹¹

Magazines and radio programmes aimed specifically at women formed an important part of the socialisation process. There were magazine sections filled with 'practical tips' for 'the clever housewife', such as how to open glass jars and how to clean empty bottles.¹⁹² Advice was given on every conceivable issue that related to cooking or the household. For example, a text on how to store potatoes correctly in order to prevent waste, gave the most minute details of where and how potatoes should be kept, 'in the basement, in a dark, dry, cool but frost-free position, not more than 60 cm off the ground'.¹⁹³ Such pedantry shows the lengths to which the government was willing to go, in order to attain its aims. One magazine gave suggested recipes for lunch and dinner for every day of the month.¹⁹⁴ These were always simple meals, mainly but not always meatless. A typical example was fish soup with potatoes and celery for lunch, followed by semolina and compote, with a spinach bake for the evening meal. Some of the recipes were also offered, along with suggestions of what products were especially good to buy each

1941.

¹⁹⁰ BA NS 44/46, R. Hildebrand, *'Frauenaufgaben im Krieg. Was die deutsche Frau heute wissen muß'*. See especially, pp. 8-12, on the role of the housewife during the war.

¹⁹¹ For example, see BA NS 44/48, Rundschreiben F 99/40, *'Betr. Merkblatt für die schwangere Frau'*, 7 Sept. 1940.

¹⁹² *Völkische Wacht*, Aug. 1939, p. 234.

¹⁹³ BA NS 44/47, *'Richtige Vorratshaltung der Kartoffeln'*.

¹⁹⁴ See *Ewiges Deutschland*, Oct. 1937, pp. 30-1.

month - for example, beef, spinach, tomatoes, mushrooms, apples and pears were recommended in October. Cooking instructions aimed to demonstrate how meals without meat were not only satisfying, but also cheaper and healthier.¹⁹⁵

During the war especially, it was the responsibility of women to make sure that their families were getting healthy nourishment, even with limited resources.¹⁹⁶ The health of the family - and therefore of the nation - depended on correct nutrition.¹⁹⁷ Consequently, all sorts of advice was given about what to give school children and working family members for breakfast, how to ensure that the family was getting enough vitamins in winter, and how to use herbal remedies. This resulted from the work of the Reich Committee for Research and Collection of Medicinal Plants founded by the Nazi Party's Office for Public Health, which aimed to supplement the German diet with natural herbs and teas, especially the use of rosehips.¹⁹⁸ In addition, the German housewife was called upon to use apples 'correctly', which meant preserving the earlier crops and only making juice out of apples from later autumnal harvests.¹⁹⁹ She was also provided with information, such as how to prepare and cook rabbit, in order to nourish the family, without wasting any part of the animal.²⁰⁰ Even advertising corresponded to the Nazi drive for frugal behaviour on the part of the housewife. For example, Dr Oetker, the baking products manufacturer, advertised in magazines in the following manner: 'What can we bake with 50g of fat and only one egg? Popular plum biscuits' and 'What can we

¹⁹⁵ See, for example, *Ewiges Deutschland*, Feb. 1937, p. 27.

¹⁹⁶ *'Gesunde Ernährung. So helfen Deutschlands Frauen und Mädel'*, *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Feb. 1940, pp. 6-7.

¹⁹⁷ On this, see BA NS 44/58, *'Von der richtigen Ernährung hängt die Gesundheit der Familie ab und vom wirtschaftlichen Denken der Hausfrau die Gesundheit der Volkswirtschaft'*, especially pp. 5 and 10-11.

¹⁹⁸ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 249.

¹⁹⁹ BA NS 44/35, *'Deutsche Hausfrau, verwendet die Apfel richtig!'*, 9 Aug. 1937.

²⁰⁰ BA NS 44/59, *'Kaninchenhaltung und -verwertung'*.

bake without fat, with two eggs? A fine biscuit roll'.²⁰¹ The drive for parsimony extended to instructing women on how to make ironing starch from potatoes.²⁰² Potato products were apparently a favourite substitute for shop-bought cleaning materials. Dark curtains and materials could be washed in potato water. Potato water was also 'advisable' for wiping down doors and lacquered furniture.²⁰³

A large number of radio programmes broadcast daily, on both national and regional radio, were aimed specifically at housewives.²⁰⁴ Nationally programmes went out entitled for example, 'Preparations for the First Child', 'Healthy Mothers - Happy Mothers' and 'Gymnastics for the Housewife'. Regionally, the following were featured: in Berlin, 'Economical Cooking', 'Cooking with Potatoes' and 'All Kinds of Pasta' (which also explained the possible uses of different kinds of flour); in Breslau, 'Making the House Beautiful with a Brush and Colours'; in Frankfurt, 'All Kinds of Appetising Things from the Potato' and 'Tricks in the Kitchen'; in Hamburg, 'Market and Kitchen' and 'What Shall We Cook Next Week?'; in Königsberg, 'The Housewife at the Centre of the National Economy'; in Leipzig, 'The Potato. A Food for the Nation' and 'How Can a Mother Prevent Illness in her Family?'. Other programmes were especially designed for mothers and children to listen to together. For example, in Berlin, there was a regular programme entitled 'Gymnastics for Mother and Child'. In Leipzig, 'Playtime for the Smallest Children and Their Mothers' was featured. There were also programmes centred on the theme of German culture and the family, for example, 'The Mother as Guardian of House Music' and 'Children Sing *Heimat* Songs'.²⁰⁵ Other programmes stressing the importance

²⁰¹ *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Sept. 1940, p. 21 and *Das Deutsche Mädel*, May 1940, p. 22.

²⁰² *Völkische Wacht*, Aug. 1942, p. 123.

²⁰³ 'Keine Angst vor den Großreinemachen', *Völkische Wacht*, June 1942, p. 88.

²⁰⁴ On what follows, see BA NS 44/45, 'Frauenfunk der Woche. 10.-16. 1. 1937' and 'Frauenfunk der Woche. 25.4. - 1.5.1937'.

of family life were 'Mother with the Children on Easter Morning', 'The Clever and the Foolish Mother - A Comparison', 'Honour the Mother!', 'Dear Son - Dear Daughter!' and 'New Poems about Mother and Child'.²⁰⁶ There was even a 'day of German house music' to help 'prepare the way for the true hour of celebration of the family'.²⁰⁷

By the summer of 1939, with the war imminent, suggestions for radio broadcasts for women were much more concerned with the issues of the 'struggle against waste', how to save money and guidance for consumers on raw materials.²⁰⁸ For example, housewives were informed that a 20% saving of coffee could be made if they ground it themselves, instead of buying ready ground coffee.²⁰⁹ By the winter of 1939, this ethos was emphasised even more strongly in broadcast plans. By 1942, because of paper shortages, the opportunities to give out weekly menu suggestions for the housewife - which the Nazi women's organisations had done previously - became slimmer and slimmer, which meant that radio broadcasts had to compensate for this by giving 'valuable' advice about nutritional problems.²¹⁰ Messages were put over clearly and concisely - for example, when using asparagus, housewives were told not just to cook the tips and throw the rest away as before, but rather to use the rest in soups. They were also informed about using strawberry leaves and raspberry leaves for tea.

²⁰⁵ BA NS 44/63, '*Frauensendungen aller Reichssender im Monat März 1936*', p. 6. See also p. 9.

²⁰⁶ BA NS 44/63, '*Die Deutsche Frau im Rundfunk. Frauensendungen im Monat April 1936*', pp. 8-9, and '*Die Deutsche Frau im Rundfunk. Frauensendungen im Monat Mai 1936*', pp. 7-8.

²⁰⁷ See BA NS 44/44, R Nr. FW 49/36, '*Betr.: Tag der deutschen Hausmusik am 17. November 1936*', 15 Oct. 1936.

²⁰⁸ BA NS 44/46, '*Rundschreiben F 60/39, Betr. Hauswirtschaftliche Themen im Rundfunk (Sommerrahmenplan)*', 29 March 1939. See also enclosures to this circular.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, enclosure to '*Rundschreiben F 60/39*', p. 15.

²¹⁰ BA NS 44/42, '*Rundschreiben Nr. 125/42, Betr. Rundfunkanregungen*', 26 May 1942.

In particular, before Christmas, handicraft programmes went out to teach women how to make Christmas presents for their children, instead of buying them. Education about the centrality of the family was also particularly stressed at this time.²¹¹ Christmas brought the family together in a special way, unmatched by any other time of year. Consequently, it was the responsibility of the mother to prepare specially for this occasion, in such a way that nothing was to detract from the centrality of the family in the Christmas celebrations.²¹² Mothers were especially recommended certain books to use for singing, telling stories and playing with their children. The *RMD* saw it as an important task to advise parents on Christmas presents for their children.²¹³ In order to do this, it organised small pre-Christmas shows in its mother schools, in which a selection of bought and home-made toys were presented, accompanied by personal advice. These shows were in no way to be advertisements for toy firms, but were solely for the benefit of young mothers. There was also a list of suggested books, of which the 'most valuable' were marked with a plus sign.²¹⁴ Telling parents what to buy for their children exemplified blatant intervention in family life.

The *Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft* (National Economy/Household Economy), a specialised agency of the *NS-Frauenschaft*, had been set up in 1934 to promote female socialisation. It had eight main areas of work: explanation about the national economy; consumer representation; nutrition; encouraging the saving of cloth and material; training in home economics; home care of settlers' wives; research work into home economy in

²¹¹ BA NS 44/46, Enclosure to '*Rundschreiben Nr. F 122/39*', 27 July 1939, p. 10.

²¹² BA NS 44/44, '*Ausrichtung für Weihnachten*', 20 Nov. 1936.

²¹³ On what follows, see BA NS 44/35, '*Rundschreiben FW Nr. 116/37, Betr. Weihnachtsschau in den Mütterschulen*', 2 Dec. 1937.

²¹⁴ See also '*Eltern schenkt nur gute Bücher*', *Das Deutsche Mädel*, Nov. 1936, pp. 22-3.

cities and in the countryside; and its magazine, *Deutsche Hauswirtschaft*.²¹⁵ The organisation attached considerable importance to this magazine as it was a means of disseminating its aims and activities to German women.²¹⁶ It regularly featured recipes, household tips and exercises for women, as well as seasonal advice, for example what to bake for Christmas.²¹⁷ It also contained articles on issues such as saving electricity and gas.²¹⁸ The main objectives of the organisation were to discourage squandering, superficiality and the craving for pleasure of housewives and to elevate the position of the family as the most certain means of protection for the nation.²¹⁹ It also hoped to bring about an awareness of the relationship between the individual household and the national economy.²²⁰

The *Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft* distributed educational leaflets and pamphlets, organised demonstrations and exhibitions, and ran courses and advice centres to instruct women about recycling, the use of substitute goods, cooking with limited ingredients and other topics of relevance to their home economy. For example, there were demonstrations about how to use food substitutes such as dried skimmed milk, curds, dried fruits and soya in everyday food preparation. The housewife was also informed about how to use dried vegetables.²²¹ There were illustrated lectures - for example, 'Home Economy Teaching' - which were used to train *BDM* leaders, and were shown in the mother schools and advice centres.²²² Information and demonstrations, films and

²¹⁵ BA NS 44/45, 'Rundschreiben Nr. F 74/37', 24 April 1937.

²¹⁶ BA NS 44/46, 'Rundschreiben Nr. F 155/39', 9 Nov. 1939.

²¹⁷ *Deutsche Hauswirtschaft*, Dec. 1942, p. 181.

²¹⁸ *Deutsche Hauswirtschaft*, Oct. 1942, pp. 144-5.

²¹⁹ BA NS 44/55, 'Die Aufgaben der NS-Frauenschaft', 18 June 1942, p. 2.

²²⁰ On this, see A. Kuhn & V. Rothe (eds.), *Frauen im deutschen Faschismus. Band 2: Frauenarbeit und Frauenwiderstand im NS-Staat* (Dusseldorf, 1982), pp. 226-32.

²²¹ BA NS 44/59, 'Trockengemüse', 17 Dec. 1940.

²²² BA NS 44/46, 'Rundschreiben Nr. F 28/39', 8 Feb. 1939.

slides, were also provided on a number of topics, including: preserving fruit and vegetables; cooking with fish as a substitute for meat; mending and darning clothes; ways of doing the laundry to make clothes last as long as possible; and making Christmas presents instead of buying them.²²³ There were instructions and ideas on how to make toys and games out of cardboard and old wood.²²⁴ Instead of throwing away old clothes, the organisation suggested ways of making new things out of them.²²⁵ For example, sheets for a baby's cot could be made out of old bed covers, children's underwear could be made out of a grandmother's old undergarments and a child's hat could be made out of men's socks. Instructions, complete with diagrams, were also given of how to cut up old jumpers and trousers, to make new things out of the material from different parts of the original garment. Similar examples of how to make clothes could also be found in the various women's magazines.²²⁶ Leaflets giving out weekly recipes and menus were another favoured method of intervention into home life, in particular when the advice being given was for 'tasty but economical' meals.²²⁷ Suggestions for baking on Sunday, for example, gave a recipe for a nut cake without eggs and without fat.²²⁸ Other pamphlets gave information on preserving fruit, sewing, mending and darning clothes. Each pamphlet cost 0.20 RM.²²⁹ There was even a pamphlet on how to do washing in the time of 'total war'.²³⁰

²²³ J. Stephenson, 'Propaganda, Autarky and the German Housewife', in D. Welch (ed.), Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations (London, 1983), pp. 128-31.

²²⁴ BA NS 44/48, R Nr. F 20/40 (Anlage), 23 Feb. 1940, on home-made games like '*Das Apfelbaumspiel*' and '*Das Brotspiel*'.

²²⁵ On what follows, see BA NS 44/47, '*Neues aus Altem!*'.

²²⁶ See, for example, *Deutsche Hauswirtschaft*, Dec. 1942, p. 174-5.

²²⁷ BA NS 44/47, '*Gesunder Küchenzettel für eine ganze Woche*'.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²²⁹ BA NS 44/35, *Rundschreiben Nr. FW 61/37, 'Betr. Broschüren und Druckschriften der Reichsfrauenführung Abt. Volkswirtschaft-Hauswirtschaft'*, 26 June 1937.

²³⁰ BA NS 44/58, '*Vom zeitgemässen Waschen*'.

In addition, by the end of 1938, the *Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft* had set up 148 advice centres in towns throughout Germany. The women who worked in these centres were to be knowledgeable and experienced in all areas of home economy and ideology, and were thoroughly briefed about their responsibilities.²³¹ The centres themselves had to have all different kinds of educational material on view, in the windows, in display cases, on tables and on the walls. The books on display had to be selected from a special list provided by the *Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft*, on topics including the economy, German agriculture, home economy, nutrition and cookery, household management, gardening and health.²³² The advice centres also had educational films on relevant subjects, such as 'All Kinds of Things from Quark', 'Old Material - Raw Material', 'German Grain in the Household', 'The Nourishment of Babies', 'Preservation of Fruit and Vegetables' and 'The Preparation of Fish'.²³³ Slides were used to inform women about health and hygiene issues, such as the physical development of children and the prevention of disease. The cookery courses mounted by the *Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft* proved quite popular, with 1,822,732 women attending them in 1938. In addition, many millions of cookery leaflets were distributed.²³⁴

In contrast to the activities of the *RMD*, which had greater appeal to middle class women, the courses and information provided by the *Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft* were more readily taken up by needier families who could not necessarily afford any

²³¹ BA NS 44/47, '10 Gebote für die Leiterin einer hauswirtschaftlicher Beratungsstelle', 12 Jan. 1939.

²³² BA NS 44/47, 'Fachbücherliste für die Abteilung Volkswirtschaft-Hauswirtschaft', 20 Sept. 1938.

²³³ BA NS 44/36, 'Filmverzeichnis der Reichsfrauenführung', pp. 1-2.

²³⁴ For example, see BA NS 44/46, 'Gemüse - richtig zubereiten!', which gave a set of 12 instructions for the correct methods of purchasing, storing, preparing and cooking vegetables.

luxury goods, or even some of the more basic foodstuffs in any case, so that the suggestions offered by the *Volkswirtschaft/Hauswirtschaft* actually helped them to maintain a fairly nutritious diet on a low income. This was similarly the case for advice on darning and laundry methods given out by the organisation. However, families on a higher income were far less willing to change their lifestyles, in terms of clothing and food, if they could still afford to maintain them.²³⁵ They were unimpressed by the claims that a skilful and frugal housewife could feed even a large family with a small expenditure, and that to do so simply entailed using available income more 'rationally'. This issue of 'rationality' is an interesting area of Nazi policy.²³⁶ On the one hand, there were calls for the utilisation of income more 'rationally', yet on the other hand, any food products that were time-saving, such as custard powder or soup cubes were objected to on the grounds that they involved extra expenditure.²³⁷ Hence, as far as housewives were concerned, it seems that the regime favoured rationality in terms of financial consumption, but not in terms of time expenditure. As such, it was against gadgets, such as electrical appliances, which were 'not required for the improvement of housekeeping... since they unnecessarily increase the costs of the household'.²³⁸ In addition, complicated kitchen equipment and machinery were discouraged because they were, in the end, less 'rational', in the sense that the necessary preparation and clearing up time took longer

²³⁵ Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women*, p. 166. See also, Stephenson, 'Propaganda, Autarky and the German Housewife', in Welch (ed.), *Nazi Propaganda*, pp. 137-8.

²³⁶ On this, see C. Sachse, 'A Flow of People and a Flow of Goods: Factory Family Policy at Siemens, 1918-1945', *International Journal of Political Economy*, 18 (1988), pp. 75-6, in which she shows the conflict between Siemens and the German Labour Front on the issue of rationalisation. To the company, the rationalisation of housework was regarded as a way of improving production, but the German Labour Front was concerned only with the way in which the regime's racial and population policies were affected.

²³⁷ Stephenson, 'Propaganda, Autarky and the German Housewife', in Welch (ed.), *Nazi Propaganda*, pp. 136-7.

²³⁸ BA NS 44/35 'Rundschreiben FW Nr. 97/37', 21 Oct. 1937.

than doing the job by hand or with a simple utensil.²³⁹ However, it was difficult to dissuade the wealthier sectors of the population from buying such equipment - especially in the late 1930s, when many women were joining or re-joining the workforce and desired time-saving devices if they could afford them.

This leads back to the issues of why the majority of women continued to give the Nazi regime their support, even during the war, and why comparatively few were involved in any kind of active resistance to it. The main manifestation of resistance for many German women was simply the lack of active involvement in the Nazi women's organisations or attempting to prevent their children from becoming members of the *HJ* and *BDM*. That women originally supported the National Socialists because the latter promised to solve the political, economic and social needs of the population is clear, but the reasons for continued support through often unbearable circumstances are more complex. Part of the explanation for consensus was apathy and disinterest, but part must also have been that Nazi policy towards women, in terms of 'education', propaganda and coercion, clearly had a considerable - although by no means complete, in terms of its totalitarian objectives - impact on them. Together, these facets of policy manifestly succeeded in securing the sustained support of women for the National Socialist state, even though women were disillusioned with the hardships of the war and did not necessarily approve of all the government's demands and policies. Hence, although education alone cannot explain this effect, it was nevertheless, a crucial component in the activities of Nazi policy, which contributed to the everyday life, behaviour and decisions of women. That socialisation and 'educational' processes took place from an early age and in an unremitting manner, must form part of the explanation for this.

²³⁹ BA NSD 61/1 K. von Herwath, '*Rationalisierung der Haushaltsführung*', *Frauenkultur*, May 1943.

A number of historians have argued that propaganda was most successful when the message being portrayed was a popular one.²⁴⁰ It is indeed true, for example, that the barrage of intense propaganda to promote autarky through household thrift, stringency and the foregoing of basic foodstuffs, not to mention luxury items, did not prove to be as readily acceptable to the population as, say, anti-Communist and anti-Weimar propaganda had been. Yet, clearly, the policy of autarky adopted by the regime must have had a considerable impact on the everyday life of the family. Despite all their attempts, it still proved an insurmountable task for the Nazi agencies to reach every German woman, as they would ideally have liked to do. The National Socialists' utilisation of every possible medium of socialisation demonstrates clearly how serious they were in their objectives. Magazine and radio material was not merely casually directed at women, but was an important aspect of state policy which was absolutely clear in its intention of intervening in the private and family lives of the population. Yet, even substantial use of the radio and national press did not ensure anywhere near complete control. The National Socialists plainly failed in their propaganda and policy aims of influencing and controlling every single woman, man and child, but it is incorrect to assume that their impact on life in German society, and on family life, in particular, was largely insignificant, which is the impression left by the historiography on the Third Reich, either by the very fact of the dearth of research on this area, or by books which seek to show only where Nazi policy and propaganda failed. Given the short life span of the regime, and in particular, the brevity of its peacetime existence, it is hardly surprising that the National Socialists were unable to achieve the kind of totalitarian system that

²⁴⁰ For example, see I. Kershaw, 'How effective was Nazi Propaganda?', in Welch (ed.), Nazi Propaganda, pp. 180-205.

they wished to create. However, to dismiss their failures too readily surely understates both the very seriousness of their intentions and the extent of their impact.

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The family and issues related to the family, made up a substantial part of National Socialist education and socialisation, as evidenced by the activities of the National Socialist youth movement and women's formations, and by the content of the textbooks of the period. It has been contended elsewhere that the family was not particularly significant in this respect, and that the Nazi concept of community was based on the 'male band'.²⁴¹ This line of argument states that 'the Nazis in practice minimised the importance of the family and subordinated it to the exclusive male band with its virile camaraderie' and that the Nazi concept of community was an enlargement of the male band, which the First World War had established as a primary social group, often displacing the family in importance. Such assertions are patently untrue, for although a minority of Nazi leaders did promote the concept of the 'male band', the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* was a 'blood community'. Consequently, it was rooted in pan-Germanism, and as such, harked back to certain specific aspects of German tradition, of which the family was the most fundamental. Taking into account the large number of references to the family, its members and its significance, in schoolbooks alone - not to mention those in Nazi documents, laws, newspapers, pamphlets and so on - the centrality of the family to the regime cannot be disputed and should not be underestimated. That the National Socialist regime was prepared to use even primary school readers for the dissemination of its ideology, distinctly shows the lengths to which it was willing to go in order to influence the society it sought to create.

²⁴¹ This is argued by Blackburn, Education in the Third Reich, pp. 106 and 182.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE KINDERREICH FAMILY

The overall aim of reversing the slump in the German birth rate meant a demand on the part of the Nazi leadership for more and more 'valuable' children to be born. In turn, this necessitated the creation of a policy that actively encouraged large families, and simultaneously stigmatised and penalised single people, childless couples and couples with only one or two children. An important agency in this respect was the *Reichsbund der Kinderreichen (RdK)*, National League of Large Families, an organisation that predated the Nazi 'seizure of power', but became an important tool of the regime, and was subsequently renamed, in April 1940, the *Reichsbund Deutsche Familie, Kampfbund für erbtüchtigen Kinderreichtum (RDF)*, National Association of the German Family, Combat League for Large Families of Sound Heredity. Propaganda, financial measures and other incentives were employed to encourage the formation of *kinderreich* families, yet housing provision for such families does not appear to have been a priority to the Nazi government.

The RdK/RDF

The *RdK* was one of a number of organisations that originated in the aftermath of the First World War, concerned with the declining birth rate and public morality. Issues such as the ageing 'body of the nation', the age make-up of the population in the cities, the predominance of families with only one or two children, and the sponsorship and protection of the *kinderreich* family were of great concern in the years preceding the Nazi 'seizure of power'.¹ The *RdK* had a special display at the International Hygiene

¹ On the declining birth rate and other demographic changes in the period between 1900 and 1930, see P. Marschalck, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Deutschlands im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), pp. 53-67. See also, F. Kudlien, 'The German response to the birth rate problem during the Third Reich',

Exhibition in Dresden in 1930, which dealt with these family-related issues. The *RdK* and other similar groups campaigned against *Volkstod* ('the death of the nation'), emphasising the crucial role of the family to its recovery. They claimed that the life of the *Volk* and its social system were based upon the foundations of the family.² They argued further that the family itself was in a state of crisis and would be threatened even more deeply if it became influenced either by the United States with its 'materialism', or by the Soviet Union, with its 'atomising ideology'.³ Under Lenin, official Soviet policy encouraged the break up of traditional institutions, including the family. Free love was sanctioned and divorce was facilitated. Although this position changed under Stalin, the Soviet example of reducing the importance of the family in the early 1920s was considered worrying by German conservative groups at that time. In Germany, such groups were especially concerned that birth control methods were most widely used amongst the 'most valuable' sectors of the population. This was regarded as having negative repercussions - both qualitatively and quantitatively - on the future of the *Volk*. Such sentiments were shared by the Protestant and Catholic Churches too, but evidently not by the majority of Germans, many of whom were enjoying the freedom of choice afforded to them in their family planning decisions by the establishment of birth control advice centres and by the wider availability of contraceptives, and in their marital status, by divorce. Helene Stöcker had founded the *Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform* in 1905, and by 1932 there were fifteen main birth control organisations in Germany, the largest of which were the *Liga für Mutterschutz und soziale Hygiene* and the *Reichsverband für Geburtenregelung und Sexualhygiene*.⁴ Hence, birth control was part

Continuity and Change, 5 (1990), pp. 225-8.

² F. Burgdörfer, *Familie und Volk* (Berlin, 1930) is a classic representation of these beliefs.

³ Hausen, 'Mother's Day in the Weimar Republic', in Bridenthal *et al* (eds.), *When Biology Became Destiny*, p. 137.

⁴ D. Glass, *Population Policies and Movements in Europe* (Oxford, 1940), pp.

of the way of life of Weimar society.⁵ There was a considerable tension between two trends at this time - one towards greater liberalisation and sexual rationality, the other a staunch defence against the dropping of old taboos.⁶

Although the *RdK* was not, therefore, a brainchild of the Nazi regime, it was only after 1933 that its aims received a wider audience, as they now coincided with government policy.⁷ Rather than becoming a victim of *Gleichschaltung* - as so many other organisations and groups did - the *RdK*, based in Berlin, experienced a maintenance and even an expansion of its former existence. Indeed, it was happy to be given the authority to play its part in the struggle for the future of the nation.⁸ The prerequisite of its success would be to put an end to 'lax sexual and marital morals'.⁹ The *RdK* claimed, 'we want no special advantages, but the removal of all special burdens'.¹⁰ Its official role was to promote the ideal large family as a model for emulation. It had three types of members: full members, who were registered to the organisation, and were preferably 'German, Aryan, hereditarily healthy families with at least four legitimate children'; honorary members, for example, public figures, who were nominated as such by the leader of the *RdK*; and sponsors, who made either single or ongoing special contributions to the

276-7.

⁵ See BA R 36/1364, '*Deutscher Gemeindetag Rundfrage III 424/31*', 4 Sept. 1931, from which data is given of the marital and birth control advice centres at that time. On family planning in the Weimar period, see also, Flemming *et al* (eds.), *Familienleben im Schatten der Krise*, pp. 35-43.

⁶ On such conflicting attitudes towards sexuality in the Weimar period, see D. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (London, 1991), pp.101-104.

⁷ On the activities of the *RdK* before 1933, see, for example, BA ZSg 1 169/7 (4), *Kalender für die deutsche Familie* (1931), which deals with issues such as marriage advice, the 'fitness' of children and 'the mother in the *kinderreich* family'.

⁸ '*Bekanntnis des "Reichsbund der Kinderreichen"*', *Neues Volk*, March 1937, p. 21.

⁹ W. Stüwe, *Bekanntnis des RDK* (Munich/ Berlin, 1936), p. 11.

¹⁰ '*Bekanntnis des "Reichsbund der Kinderreichen"*', *Neues Volk*, March 1937, p. 21. See also Stüwe, *Bekanntnis des RDK*, pp. 18 and 24.

RdK.¹¹

The National Socialist regime was very careful about the type of large families it promoted. The term *kinderreich* was applied specifically to those families that met with its required racial and social criteria. The National Socialists claimed that the word *kinderreich* had been abused in the Weimar Republic to describe any large family, even if it was 'racially inferior', 'hereditarily diseased' or 'asocial'. During the Third Reich, such families were pejoratively labelled *Großfamilien*, whilst the term *kinderreich* was reserved only for 'hereditarily healthy', 'racially valuable', and indeed politically and socially responsible families. In addition, a *kinderreich* family that subsequently had the misfortune to lose one or more of its children through death, was no longer termed *kinderreich*, unless more children were born to make up for the losses.¹²

What kind of organisation was the *RdK* and what were its objectives? The answers to these questions can best be found in a pamphlet put out by the *RdK* itself.¹³ The *RdK* was an association of 'hereditarily healthy', German *kinderreich* families with four (or widows with three) or more children. Its aims were essentially twofold - service to the *Volk* and service to the family. Firstly, the *RdK* wanted to educate the public mind out of its incorrect opinions about *kinderreich* families which had taken hold as a result of the 'moral depravity' of the post-war period. Its leader, Wilhelm Stüwe, claimed that 'the more hereditarily healthy families a nation possesses, the more certain its future is'. Hence, the *RdK*'s task was to save the nation from the moral and numerical decline which could lead to the 'death of the *Volk*'. The *RdK* aimed to replace the trend towards

¹¹ IfZ Fa 21, 'Satzung des Reichsbundes der Kinderreichen Deutschlands zum Schutze der Familie e. V.', 17 Dec. 1933, p. 1.

¹² A. Tille, 'Kinderreich', *Neues Volk*, Sept. 1935, p. 40.

¹³ On what follows, see BA NSD 64/3, *Der RDK: Was ist er? Was will er?*

'selfishness' and 'desire for luxury', with 'sacrifice' and 'service to the community'. In numerical terms, the decrease in the national birth rate was considered to be alarming. In 1933, there had been 960,000 live births in Germany, as compared with 2,000,000 in 1900. The *RdK* saw itself as 'the storm troop in the field of National Socialist population policy'. Its objective was to change the entire position of the *Volk* to one in which the desire for children and for *kinderreich* families was accepted as the norm. Everything in the media that created 'misconceptions' about the population, both from abroad and from the press, theatre, film and literature inside Germany was to disappear. Misunderstandings about *kinderreich* families also needed redressing - for example, that they were generally regarded as pitiable and wretched, as 'the poorest of the poor'.¹⁴ In addition, propaganda of the Weimar period had asserted: 'Many children - stupid children!'. Such 'propaganda lies' had to be refuted and proven wrong.¹⁵ Hence, whereas *kinderreich* families were mocked and scorned during the Weimar Republic, 'to preserve and care for such families' was 'one of the main aims of the new era'.¹⁶ By 1942, the *RDF* claimed to have achieved its aim over the past decade of correcting the erroneous public opinion about *kinderreich* families, and stated that the way was clear for the latter to lead Germany into a glorious future.¹⁷

The second main aim of the *RdK* was to offer advice to *kinderreich* families, on issues such as rent, housing, work creation or any other problems that affected them.¹⁸

However, the *RdK* was not able to give financial help to *kinderreich* families, as this was

¹⁴ BA R/711, 'Betreff: Die erbgesunde kinderreiche Familie', 20 June 1935, p. 2.

¹⁵ P. Danzer, 'Das Ehrenbuch der deutschen kinderreichen Familie', *Neues Volk*, Oct. 1938, pp. 39-40.

¹⁶ 'Kinderreiche Familien', *Neues Volk*, Nov. 1934, pp. 36-7.

¹⁷ BA NSD 64/1, 'Was leistet der Reichsbund Deutsche Familie? Von der Auswirkung seiner Arbeit - Ein Rückblick auf die Zeit seit 1933', *Völkische Wacht*, Aug. 1942, p. 121.

¹⁸ On what follows, see BA NSD 64/3, *Der RDK: Was ist er? Was will er?*

the domain of the *NSV*. The justification for this was that the *RdK* was endeavouring to raise the *kinderreich* family to its correct status, a long-term goal, whereas financial care was a very short-term measure. The *RdK*'s struggle was 'for German morality, for our families and our children, for Germany's hope and future':

The only road to our national salvation is to reawaken the family instinct, to make people realise how much joy there is in having children... This aim cannot be reached either by financial rewards or compensations, but by a change of sentiment. Therefore, the Reich Association of Large Families is not fighting for egotistic interests. It aims at supporting the principles put forward by the *Führer* and to secure for the large family the recognition it deserves if our national health and existence are to be maintained.¹⁹

The *RdK*'s objective of resurrecting the family required the co-operation of not only the leading lights of the Party (Frick, Goebbels and Rust were prominent members of the *RdK*), but also of its agencies, especially the women's formations and municipal authorities.²⁰ The *RdK* claimed that a small number of *kinderreich* families would not secure the *Volk*, but that a large proportion of 'valuable' Germans had to become *kinderreich*. The will for life, the 'biological' desire to have children was considered to be the 'most decisive' factor in the nation's future.²¹

At first, in the period between 1933 and 1935, the *RdK* was a pawn in the conflicting interests of Hess and Frick, over whether population policy was an area of Party or of State jurisdiction.²² However, after mid-1935, its work was promoted in its own right, as

¹⁹ W. Stüwe, 'The Aims and Purposes of the Reich Association of Large Families', *Racio-Political Correspondence*, 1 April 1937, p. 7.

²⁰ On co-operation of the women's organisation, see BA NS 44/35, Rundschreiben FW Nr. 94/37, 'Betr. Zusammenarbeit mit dem Rassenpolitischen Amt bezw. Reichsbund der Kinderreichen', 14 Oct. 1937. On call for co-operation of municipal authorities, see BA R 36/1157, 'Betr. Reichsbund der Kinderreichen Deutschlands (RDK)', 10 Feb. 1936.

²¹ BA R 36/1157, 'Entscheidung tut not! Ein Ruf an die deutschen Bevölkerungspolitiker!', 15 Feb. 1936.

²² J. Stephenson, 'Reichsbund der Kinderreichen: The League of Large Families in the Population Policy of Nazi Germany', *European Studies Review*, 9 (1979), pp. 354-5.

an active campaign to win popular support for large families began. The *RdK*, which was affiliated to the Racial Political Office of the *NSDAP* at the end of 1934, became an important creator of population policy, with a highly significant ideological task assigned to it.²³ Hess ordered that the Party was to 'energetically sponsor the work of the *RdK*' as part of the regime's attempt to eliminate the threat of the nation dying out.²⁴ In particular, all *kinderreich* fathers involved in Party work were to join the *RdK* and thereby participate in the overall attainment of the population policy aims of the National Socialist state.²⁵ In June 1935, the *RdK*'s membership consisted of 300,000 German families, with approximately two million children.²⁶ All new members of the *RdK* from July 1935 onwards were to undergo an examination for 'hereditary fitness'.²⁷

Stüwe aimed to attract the educated and more financially stable families of middle class professionals and white-collar workers - who were seemingly more reluctant to have large numbers of children - than the urban and rural working classes. However, this selective policy was criticised for being too 'middle class' in its attitude.²⁸ Its 'faulty propaganda' failed to fulfil the organisation's task of gaining approval and strengthening respect for *kinderreich* families as a whole. There were complaints that, 'it has become an organisation of lower middle class extent', which was inappropriate, considering that

²³ BA NS 20/143-1, Rundschreiben Nr. 49, '*Betr.: Unterstellung des Reichsbundes der Kinderreichen als betreute Organisation unter das Rassenpolitische Amt der NSDAP*', 14 Jan. 1935.

²⁴ BA NS 6/221, Rundschreiben Nr. 218/35, '*Betrifft: Reichsbund der Kinderreichen*', 15 Nov. 1935.

²⁵ For example, see BA Sammlung Schumacher/212, '*Betr. Reichsbund der Kinderreichen*', 21 April 1938.

²⁶ BA R/711, '*Betreff: Die erbgesunde kinderreiche Familie*', 20 June 1935, p. 5.

²⁷ BA NS 20/143-1, Rundschreiben Nr. 89/35, '*Betr.: Reichsbund der Kinderreichen, Erbbiologische Untersuchungen*', 23 July 1935.

²⁸ On what follows, see IfZ MA 306, '*Notwendigkeit einer Neugestaltung des Reichsbundes der Kinderreichen und einer konzentrischen Zusammenfassung aller die kinderreichen Familien betreffenden Fragen*', 7 Feb. 1938.

statistically *kinderreich* families were most predominant 'in the manual worker sector of the population'. Hence, the organisation needed to make fundamental changes to its priorities.

There was also a considerable amount of concern in the Racial Political Office that the *RdK* contained quite a number of 'asocial, hereditarily unfit elements'. It called for the organisation to be 'cleansed'.²⁹ In April 1940, with its new name, the *RDF*, and its new leader Robert Kaiser, the organisation redoubled its efforts to attain a larger membership of 'valuable', *kinderreich* families and to expound the correct ideals for German families to adopt.³⁰ For example, apart from being 'hereditarily fit' and of German blood, children had to be educated properly about behaviour. Kaiser believed that if a genial child experienced an unfavourable environment its 'value' would decrease. Consequently, an ordered family in which the mother and father both took part in the education of the children would ensure that the latter would develop in the best way possible.

In general, the *RDF*'s functions remained oriented to propaganda. The notion of honour and respect that was associated with being a member of the organisation was supposed to compensate for the fact that its members received no financial support from the *RDF*. One example of the esteem associated with being a member of the *RDF* was the 'Book of Honour of the Family', awarded to promote the aim of raising the birth rate. This granted 'recognition' for the family members of 'valuable' *kinderreich* families. It consisted of a picture of the *Führer*, a short introduction about the importance of the *kinderreich* family and a list of the members of the particular family to whom it was

²⁹ BA NS 20/143-2, Rundschreiben Nr. 200/37, 'Betr.: Auslese für den Reichsbund der Kinderreichen', 19 Feb. 1937.

³⁰ On what follows, see BA NSD 28/1-1940, R. Kaiser, 'Aufgaben des Reichsbundes der Kinderreichen im Kriege', pp. 85-7.

awarded.³¹ However, the organisation was adamant that the Book of Honour was awarded only to those families considered to be of 'hereditary-biological value'. Hence, selection for its award was stringently based upon 'hereditary health' and 'racial' criteria, and also took into account issues such as the political activities, training, work, illness, crime, and the general lifestyle and character of all the members of a family, including how 'productive' they were. Class and income were not among the factors taken into consideration for the conferral of the Book of Honour.³²

The regime was unwilling to undertake major expenditure to assist the large families that were putatively so essential to the survival of the *Volk*.³³ It had taken some steps between 1933 and 1938 to redress the inequalities between *kinderreich* families and single people or couples with no or few children, such as tax reforms, preferential treatment for *kinderreich* fathers at work and child supplements.³⁴ But, the *kinderreich* stood behind the 'old fighters' of the Party and behind the war-wounded in terms of benefits, so that their preferential treatment often never appeared in reality.³⁵ In addition, Nazi family policy relied heavily on words and slogans, on an incessant barrage of pro-natalist propaganda, rather than on actions, for its justification to the population.³⁶ As a result, it failed in its effectiveness, because many people realised that without state aid - which the government was even more disinclined to give as the war involved it in

³¹ See BA R 43 II/1524, pp. 13-14, which show sample pages of this book.

³² Danzer, 'Das Ehrenbuch der deutschen kinderreichen Familie', pp. 40-41. On selection for the Book of Honour, see also, W. Knorr, 'Das Ehrenbuch der kinderreichen Familie', *Neues Volk*, Dec. 1937, pp. 35-6.

³³ See Boberach (ed.), *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, 10, 1942, p. 3770. This states that some reports pointed to the necessity of more generous care for pregnant women and *kinderreich* mothers.

³⁴ F. Stumpf, 'Der Führer hilft der kinderreichen Familie!', *NS-Frauenwarte*, May 1938, p. 748.

³⁵ BA R/711, 'Betreff: Die erbgesunde kinderreiche Familie', 20 June 1935, p. 3.

³⁶ Stephenson, 'Reichsbund der Kinderreichen', pp. 362-3.

other enormous costs - having a large family would plunge them into severe financial difficulties. Interestingly, the main propaganda effect of the Cross of Honour of the German Mother - a cross bearing the inscription 'the child ennoble the mother', awarded in bronze, silver and gold, for four, six and eight children respectively - was to create a general sense of the importance and value of the *kinderreich* family, but not an increase in the birth rate.³⁷ In addition, a report from Stuttgart in 1942 stated that 'the desire for a battle of births' had 'fallen'.³⁸ In 1941, Hitler had claimed: 'Wars drive people to proliferation, they teach us not to fall into the error of being content with a single child in each family'.³⁹ This was plainly not the case. In fact, population policy was regarded as especially important during the war, because 'the best German blood was lost' and could 'only be replaced if all hereditarily fit German national comrades' founded families with 'at least four children'.⁴⁰

An issue of great concern to the *RDF* was the dilemma of many young people about whether or not they should get married in circumstances of war.⁴¹ The *RDF* believed that many young soldiers did not have the courage to do so, their fear of leaving a new family behind being an argument leading them to reject the idea of marriage. However, others were pleased to have a family at this time. One letter to the *RDF* stated that the writer was happy because he knew that he would 'live on' through his offspring, even if he had to die in the war. The *RDF*, therefore, saw amongst its duties, the need to encourage people to marry and have children in order to secure the future eternity of the nation. Hence, it established Letter Centres, which served as introduction agencies for

³⁷ Boberach (ed.), *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, 13, 1943, p. 5207.

³⁸ Boberach (ed.), *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, 10, 1942, p. 3766.

³⁹ *Hitler's Table Talk*, p. 28.

⁴⁰ BA Sammlung Schumacher/212, 'Betrifft: Bevölkerungspolitik', 24 Jan. 1941.

⁴¹ On what follows, see BA NSD 64/1, 'Deutschland muß Kinderland werden!', *Völkische Wacht*, March 1942, p. 44.

young men and women during the war. They were set up to try to counteract the decrease in the number of marriages taking place at this time.⁴² The drop was largely due to the physical separation of young men and women when the former were sent to the front.⁴³ The majority of marriageable men had spent up to five years in the armed forces by the time the marriage initiation centres were established in 1944. This hindrance to the usual way of meeting a partner had made marriage difficult for many young people. Private matchmakers were considered wholly unsuitable for the task of putting prospective spouses in contact with each other because of their 'purely liberalistic principles'. Instead, 'clean and perfect' marriage initiation centres were to bring 'racially and biologically perfect' young people together in accordance with National Socialist values and principles.⁴⁴ The experiences of the first Letter Centre in Dresden - 26,000 letters within the space of three months - showed that it corresponded to a genuine need, so that thereafter, Letter Centres were set up in many large cities throughout Germany. The main function of the Letter Centres was to arrange for correspondence between prospective marital partners. They aimed to introduce people of similar backgrounds, based on professional status. They accepted only people who could prove themselves to be 'hereditarily fit' on the basis of a medical examination and who were therefore suitable for marriage in accordance with the Marriage Health Law.

The Letter Centres served the new foundation of families, with a view to children being born, and if possible, the family becoming *kinderreich*. Hence, older people were only

⁴² On this, see Stephenson, '*Reichsbund der Kinderreichen*', pp. 364-6.

⁴³ On what follows, see BA NS 26/384, '*Betrifft: Briefzentrale des Reichsbundes des Deutsche Familie. Eheanbahnung auf erbbiologischer Grundlage*', 12 April 1944.

⁴⁴ BA NS 6/347, Rundschreiben 108/44, '*Betrifft: Briefzentrale des Reichsbundes Deutsche Familie. Eheanbahnung auf erbbiologischer Grundlage*', 15 May 1944.

allowed to register with the Letter Centres if proof of their genuine desire and ability to have children was available. A note to this effect was sent out with the questionnaires to prospective participants in the scheme.⁴⁵ The questionnaires themselves asked specifically for information such as proof of German blood, whether the applicant had any physical or mental defects, details of his or her membership of the Party and its organisations such as the *SA*, *SS*, *HJ*, *BDM*, *NSKK* or the *DAF*, and information about the applicant's home life, education and siblings. They further asked for particulars of membership of the applicant or applicant's parents in the *RDF*. There was also a medical questionnaire, which asked for details of any Jewish or part-Jewish blood in an applicant's ancestry, whether he or she suffered or had ever suffered from any lung, sexual or nervous diseases, had ever attended a special school for backward children, had ever been in a prison, a mental institution or been served a sterilisation order. The medical form had two further parts - one to be filled in by a doctor, and the other by the Health Office. In addition, a certificate of fitness to marry had to be completed by the doctor. Finally, a character reference had to be provided, to verify that the applicant accorded with the principles of hereditary fitness, had the desire to have children and came from an orderly family.

Hence, even as late as 1944, the *RDF* was persevering in its population policy endeavours. Kaiser was propounding the merits of the *kinderreich* family and striving for its advancement.⁴⁶ He advocated the urgency of a 'victory of cradles', with an all-embracing system of measures.⁴⁷ New psychological premises were needed to build

⁴⁵ BA NS 26/384. Standard note from the *Briefzentrale des RDF* sent out with applicants' questionnaires. On what follows, see BA NS 26/384 for personal and medical questionnaires.

⁴⁶ IfZ, MA 600, R. Kaiser, '*Volk und Familie*', March(?) 1944.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

up the family and to strengthen the desire for fertility. For example, Nazi propagandists were to encourage the population to regard a *kinderreich* cobbler who remained at his humble job with more esteem than a childless professional careerist.⁴⁸ A considerable amount of effort went into the activities of propaganda and 'public enlightenment' to promote family life, especially towards the end of the Second World War, when the need for more children seemed greater than ever to the regime.

Propaganda and the *kinderreich* Family

The aim of propaganda was to create a climate of popular opinion in which absolutely no member of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was to remain childless or with too few children. The formidable task of Nazi propagandists was to promote the ideal of four children as the absolute minimum duty, and an average of six children as the desired norm for each healthy, German family.⁴⁹ In October 1941, Hitler stated: 'The essential thing for the future is to have lots of children. Everybody should be persuaded that a family's life is only assured when it has upwards of four children'.⁵⁰ The emphasis remained on the obligation of each German family to carry out its part in the eternal life of the *Volk*. The aim of propaganda slogans, such as, 'To be called German - be *kinderreich*!', was to ostracise single people and childless couples in public opinion. All forms of media and education were utilised to this end.

One of the most widely-used means of promoting *kinderreich* families was to emphasise that many 'great men' in Germany's past had stemmed from such backgrounds. For example, Goethe was the first-born of six children, Haydn was the second of twelve,

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵⁰ Hitler's Table Talk, p. 74.

Schiller and Beethoven were both the second of six, Dürer was the third of eighteen, Frederick the Great was the fourth of fourteen, Bismarck was the fourth of six, Mozart was the youngest of seven, Bach was the eighth of twelve, and Schubert was the twelfth of fourteen children.⁵¹ Hitler claimed that: 'If we had practised the system of two-children families in the old days, Germany would have been deprived of her greatest geniuses.... the exceptional being in a family is often the fifth, seventh, tenth or twelfth in the row.'⁵² It was maintained that the probability of having highly gifted children grew with the number of offspring a set of parents had.⁵³ Himmler also firmly held the view that German culture would have been much poorer had earlier generations limited their families to even four or five children - the works of Bach and Wagner, for example, would never have existed.⁵⁴ Indeed, for the princes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was 'natural and normal' to have *kinderreich* families - for example, William of Orange had had 13 children - and earlier, in the thirteenth century, Henry the Lion, Prince of Braunschweig had had 16 children.⁵⁵ According to Stüwe: 'The phrase "father of a large family" or "mother of a large family" must again become a title of honour, as it always was during the best periods of German history', before 'the cult of Liberalism arrived, with Marxism and Jewry as its apostles', through which the 'German sentiment was debased and perverted'.⁵⁶ As the ABC of National Socialism stated: 'German women... have no yearning for the factory, no yearning for the office and also no

⁵¹ BA ZSg 1 169/7 (5), '*Bedeutende deutsche Männer aus Familien mit mehr als vier Kindern*', *Jahrbuch für die deutsche Familie* (1932), pp. 110-11.

⁵² *Hitler's Table Talk*, p. 74. On this, see also '*Kinderzahl und Begabung*', *Neues Volk*, Oct. 1936, pp. 12-16.

⁵³ '*Berühmte Deutsche die bei dem heutigen Einkind oder Zweikinder-System nicht geboren wären*', *Neues Volk*, Dec. 1933, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Speech by Himmler at the SS-Junkerschule Tölz, 23 Nov. 1942, cited in Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler als Ideologue*, p. 127.

⁵⁵ M. Fischer, '*Kinderreichtum in deutschen Fürstengeschlechtern*', *Volk und Rasse*, April 1940, pp. 37-8.

⁵⁶ W. Stüwe, '*Our Ideas About Large Families Must Be Reformed*', *Racio-Political Correspondence*, 1 July 1937, p. 7.

yearning for Parliament. A cosy home, a kind husband and a swarm of happy children are closer to their hearts'.⁵⁷

The practice of press reporters and journalists of sensationalising family scandals was excoriated by the Nazi leadership and was stamped out after 1933. But the *RDF* called for further measures in positively making the press into an effective instrument of education in the area of population policy. For example, there were calls for no edition of a newspaper to appear without some reference to population policy or related items, such as photographs depicting the everyday life of 'valuable' families, popular stories about *kinderreich* families, the words of a leading politician, or articles by the nation's leading scientists and doctors on family issues.⁵⁸ An article in the *RdK*'s own newspaper stressed the qualities of *kinderreich* parents, as above all, 'boundless optimists'. It was claimed that 'a pessimistic *kinderreich* set of parents' was 'quite unthinkable'.⁵⁹ Another article stated that 'only *kinderreich* families can be the foundation for the coming century'.⁶⁰

One journal carried an article entitled 'Thoughts on the *kinderreich* family - by a *kinderreich* mother', in which a mother wrote of how she disliked going into a shop and being told 'poor thing!' when she mentioned she had five children.⁶¹ She saw having

⁵⁷ C. Rosten, *Das ABC des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin, 1933), pp. 104-5.

⁵⁸ For example, see BA R 36/1152, 'Förderung der Kinderreichen', *Vossische Zeitung*, Nr. 393, 18 Aug. 1933, which called for issues of population policy to be dealt with daily in newspapers. See also, IfZ, MA 600, Kaiser, 'Volk und Familie', p. 19.

⁵⁹ BA NSD 80/30, 'So sind sie - die Kinderreichen', *Völkische Wille*, 7 Jan. 1937, p. 3.

⁶⁰ BA NSD 80/30, 'Wie die Familie - so das Volk', *Völkische Wille*, 21 Jan. 1937, p. 3.

⁶¹ 'Gedanken zur kinderreichen Familie. Von einer kinderreichen Mutter', *Neues Volk*, July 1936, p. 28.

children as 'happiness and good fortune', and as a way 'to serve the fatherland'. She further maintained that it was better to have many children so that they could interact and play with each other, whereas a single child surrounded only by adults grew up too quickly. Other articles drew attention to the lives and experiences of *kinderreich* families.⁶² One extolled the village of Freisheim as being 'the most *kinderreich* in Germany'. Its 38 households had almost 200 children, which meant an average of over 5 children per family.⁶³ Local newspapers too, instead of always interviewing film divas and inventors, were to diversify their columns by interviewing the fathers of *kinderreich* families. In addition, important historical figures and contemporary personalities were often portrayed in the perspective of their entire family relationship, rather than without mention of this. For example, an illustrated article about Baldur von Schirach and his family in the *BDM* journal, *Das Deutsche Mädel*, showed him at the age of thirty, with his wife and two young children, Angelika and Klaus.⁶⁴

On the radio too, programmes went out every day on themes related to population policy, with leaders' speeches, the fathers and mothers of *kinderreich* families and advice for the family being presented. On festival days or special occasions, such activities were increased. In particular, on Mother's Day, radio programmes consisted almost entirely of programmes about the family. On Mother's Day in 1936, for example, the following were typical of the broadcasts that went out: on national radio, 'Honour the Mother!', 'The Mother's Song', 'Mother and Child' and 'New Poems about Mother and Child'; in Berlin, 'The Soldier's Mother' and 'Dear Son - Dear Daughter!'; in Cologne, 'For Mother's

⁶² For example, see '*Sieben Söhne - der Stolz der Familie*', *Neues Volk*, July 1938, pp. 34-8, which describes an exemplary *kinderreich* family.

⁶³ F. Muth, '*Gau Koblenz-Trier - der kinderreichste Deutschlands*', *NS-Frauenwarte*, Oct. 1938, p. 230.

⁶⁴ '*Baldur von Schirach und seine Familie*', *Das Deutsche Mädel*, June 1937, pp. 24-5.

Day - a Tranquil Hour in Word and Song'; in Königsberg, 'Ceremony for Mother's Day', 'My Dear Son (Mothers' Letters to Famous Men)', 'The Story of a Mother', 'Mother with the Little Ones on Mother's Day', 'Practical Tips for Mother's Day' and 'Don't Forget Mother'; in Leipzig, 'Mothers and Sons'; in Munich, 'Mother. A Contemplative Hour for Big and Small Children' and 'The Secret House - A Cantata for Mother's Day'; in Saarbrücken, 'To Honour the German Mother'; and in Stuttgart, 'My Child Sleeps in the White Cradle - Songs and Words on Mother's Day'.⁶⁵ The *RdK* itself also became heavily involved in supporting Mother's Day as a whole, considering it to be in the foreground of its work for the family.⁶⁶

Film was another medium exploited by the regime for purposes of family policy. The *RDF* called for films to be made on the lives and activities of *kinderreich* families and the content of popular, contemporary films was changed from the Weimar tradition.⁶⁷ It moved away from the portrayal of childless, elegant people living in luxurious surroundings, which, to the National Socialists, was incompatible with the milieu and duties of German families within the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Instead, the healthy, *kinderreich* family, living an orderly lifestyle, became the desired image of Nazi propagandists. Playwrights and novelists were also encouraged to portray the family in accordance with Nazi requirements, by schemes such as prize competitions. Once again, in this respect, the Weimar years were vehemently denounced for producing plays that mocked the position of the family. However, in the early years of the Third Reich, plays about marital conflict and breakdown were still produced because sensationalisation of

⁶⁵ BA NS 44/63, 'Die Deutsche Frau im Rundfunk. Frauensendungen im Monat Mai 1936', pp. 7-10.

⁶⁶ BA NS 20/143-1, Anordnung 28/36, 22 April 1936. On its activities, see for example, BA NS 20/143-1, Rundschreiben, 6 April 1935.

⁶⁷ On what follows, see IfZ, MA 600, Kaiser, 'Volk und Familie', pp. 22-4.

problems in human relationships attracted large audiences. The *RDF* aimed to reduce the role of such plays.⁶⁸ In their place, works depicting the life of *kinderreich* families were sponsored, along with those portraying the National Socialist viewpoint of race, kinship and family. There were calls for all jokes about *kinderreich* families in variety shows and comedies to be stopped. Instead their position was to be shown in a favourable light, whilst people who willingly remained childless were to be the targets of humour and derision.

In addition, Kaiser called for the Party to make population policy and family policy much stronger as ingredients of its propaganda work.⁶⁹ For example, the party press was to include articles on family issues written by the highest party officials. Political leaders were to set a good example to the nation by having large families themselves. Furthermore, the party was to make its presence felt on a local level, so that, for example, at each birth in a 'healthy, Aryan family', a party official of that branch was to personally give his good wishes to the family. The new mother and father were to be made to feel of paramount importance. On other family occasions too, such as silver and gold wedding anniversaries, a party representative was to deliver a personal felicitation. Above all, Kaiser wanted an end to the overloading of *kinderreich* family fathers with party work - to him, the fact that a party member or political leader had a *kinderreich* family was practical proof of his commitment to the advancement of National Socialism and its principles.⁷⁰ The *DAF* was to create a pro-family spirit and ethos in its factories so that *kinderreich* workers were respected, not mocked. Leaders of the Labour Service and officers of the armed forces were to instil into their ranks the sense that not having a

⁶⁸ On what follows, see *ibid.*, pp. 24-5.

⁶⁹ On what follows, see *ibid.*, p. 27.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

sufficient number of children was a failure in their *völkisch* duty fulfilment. It was hoped that individuals in such groups would then feel obliged to comply with their responsibilities in response to peer pressure from their colleagues.⁷¹

The 'Value' of the *kinderreich* Family

A slogan such as 'the *kinderreich* family of today is the face of the *Volk* tomorrow', had implications that stretched beyond its propaganda purpose.⁷² Hence, as mentioned above, a large family did not necessarily imply an ideal family. As Fritz Lenz, a leading eugenicist, put it: 'As things are now, it is only a minority of our fellow citizens who are so endowed that their unrestricted procreation is good for the race'.⁷³ In fact, a large family that did not conform to Nazi requirements was seen as a potentially severe threat to the future of the German *Volk*. To be a 'valuable', *kinderreich* family entailed fulfilling certain stipulations. In order to establish the 'value' of a large family in the Third Reich, a consideration of these criteria is crucial. In the first place, any family 'alien' to the *Volksgemeinschaft* was regarded as detrimental and hazardous to the *Volkskörper*. This fundamental criterion at first ostracised the families of Jews and gypsies from the community and ultimately led to their persecution. The remaining criteria were applied to families inside the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Firstly, what did the social position of a large family say about its 'value'? A study of large families was carried out in Leipzig, under the aegis of the Racial Political Office in Saxony, to establish, among other factors, their social position.⁷⁴ For this purpose, the

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁷² W. Knorr, '*Kinderreichenauslese durch das Rassenpolitische Amt der NSDAP in Sachsen*', *Volk und Rasse*, VII, 1936, p. 269.

⁷³ Lenz at a meeting of the Expert Advisory Council for Population and Race Policy, 25 June 1934, quoted in Müller-Hill, *Murderous Science*, p. 30.

⁷⁴ W. Knorr, *Die Kinderreichen in Leipzig* (Berlin, 1936).

city's families were divided into five professional groups.⁷⁵ The first group consisted of high-ranking officials, academics, factory owners, proprietors of large shops and businesses, and officers. The second group was made up of middle-ranking officials, school teachers and businessmen; the third, of craftsmen and small traders; the fourth, of low-ranking officials and skilled workers; and the fifth, of blue-collar workers, casual labourers and pedlars. The inverse relationship between the social position of a family and its size was found to be strikingly consistent. In the highest professional group, 31.3% of couples had no children, whereas only 3.4% had five or more children. In general, the percentage of childless couples in any given professional category decreased with the lowering of their social position, whilst the percentage of families with five or more children in any group increased with the lowering of their social status. Despite Nazi propaganda about the *Volksgemeinschaft*, in which all its members were supposedly equal, there was certainly considerable dismay that of the *kinderreich* families in Leipzig, some 75.4% belonged to Groups Four and Five, 16% to Group Three, leaving only a handful of them stemming from 'the socially leading sectors' of the population.⁷⁶

A second consideration was whether *kinderreich* families originated from the city or the countryside. The Nazi leadership tended to consider big cities as 'asphalt jungles'. Hitler had stated in *Mein Kampf* that 'the fact that our big city population is growing more and more prostituted in its love life cannot be denied... it simply is so'.⁷⁷ Children from the cities were seen to be the 'sad product' of the spreading contamination of sexual life. 'The vices of the parents are revealed in the sicknesses of the children'.⁷⁸ Hence, those *kinderreich* families that stemmed from the countryside were favoured as being the 'most

⁷⁵ On what follows, see *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

⁷⁷ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 225.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

healthy' and the least affected by the evils of urban living. The study of Leipzig showed that some two-thirds of the *kinderreich* parents originated in the countryside, and the birth place of these couples' parents was, in 90% of these cases, the countryside.⁷⁹ Knorr, the leader of the Racial Political Office in Saxony, utilised more information about the background of *kinderreich* families in order to determine their position. This included whether or not *kinderreich* parents came from *kinderreich* families themselves, the age of the couples when they got married, the age difference between the spouses, and the time lapse between the marriage and the birth of the first child. Not surprisingly, it was found that the age of marriage of couples who were to have *kinderreich* families was lower than that of the average population, and that the age difference between the man and wife was small. In some three-quarters of *kinderreich* families, the first child was conceived or born before the marriage took place.⁸⁰ Although Himmler would have approved of this, it was frowned upon by Knorr, who saw illegitimate children as being of 'lesser value'.

Thirdly, the mental vigour of members of *kinderreich* families was a factor by which they were assessed. According to the Leipzig study, the percentage of children from such families at special schools for backward children was almost four times as high as in the average population.⁸¹ There was also seen to exist in *kinderreich* families a greater burden through 'feeble-mindedness' than amongst the average population. Hence, certain families did not appear to have 'valuable' aptitudes. Knorr considered about one-quarter of large families to be 'asocial criminals, pimps, welfare swindlers or idlers'.⁸²

⁷⁹ Knorr, *Die Kinderreichen in Leipzig*, pp. 19-20.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁸² Knorr, '*Kinderreichenauslese*', p. 271.

This situation presented problems for the Nazi leadership about the continued existence of the *Volk* in qualitative terms. The conferral of the Book of Honour to 'valuable', *kinderreich* families helped in the process of de-selecting 'asocials', because if a family was refused the Book of Honour, it was obliged to leave the *RdK*.⁸³ The 'asocial question' also had repercussions on the issue of welfare care. Families of below average 'value' were a potential threat to the future of the nation and supporting such 'asocial' families would result in the 'cultivation of a sub-humanity'.⁸⁴ In addition, they were not to be afforded welfare benefits at the expense of other truly 'valuable' families that might be left unaided as a result. The regime essentially wanted to ensure that 'asocial' and 'workshy' people did not create a burden for the rest of the community by bringing children into the world unrestrainedly.⁸⁵ Knorr was concerned that the 'asocial' elements of society saw Nazi population and welfare policy as a source of income, and therefore were reproducing indiscriminately in order to obtain the benefits provided by the regime.⁸⁶ There was a great deal of concern about instances of misuse of child benefits in large families.⁸⁷ In such cases, continuous child benefits were ceased in 1939.

The issue of 'hereditary health' was also raised in connection with the 'value' of large families and whether or not they deserved sponsorship by the state. Knorr called for a division of society into three groups. The first group incorporated all those who were affected by the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring of 14 July 1933. The second group consisted of those people whose threat was not eliminated by the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring, because they were not

⁸³ BA NSD 28/ 1-1940, Kaiser, '*Aufgaben*', p. 87.

⁸⁴ Knorr, '*Kinderreichenauslese*', p. 271.

⁸⁵ Knorr, '*Die Kinderreichenauslese in Leipzig*', pp. 46-7.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁸⁷ BA NS 6/232, Anordnung Nr. 96/39, '*Betrifft: Kinderbeihilfen an kinderreiche Familien*', 3 May 1939.

medically diagnosed as hereditarily diseased - for example, they could pass 'intelligence tests' - but were nevertheless 'undesirable' because of their 'asocial' disposition, such as 'moral feeble-mindedness'. Knorr concurred with Lenz on this issue, who believed that 'those who do not suffer from hereditary disease within the meaning of the law are not necessarily hereditarily healthy and fit to breed'.⁸⁸ Typically, such families did not display intellectual weaknesses, but rather 'moral' ones that rendered them 'socially unfit', such as a 'lack of awareness of duty and responsibility'.⁸⁹ The third group was made up of the 'hereditarily fit', who were certainly to be sponsored. Knorr claimed that family allowances should not be granted at all to the first two groups, but especially the second, as its insidious threat was the greatest, since those in the first group were compulsorily sterilised. Financial help given to 'asocial' families of the *Lumpenproletariat* was wasted, because of their innate lacking of 'valuable' aptitudes. Whereas *kinderreich* families spent their benefits wisely, 'asocial' families squandered it thoughtlessly and irresponsibly.⁹⁰

Work creation schemes initiated by the state on behalf of men with large families, were greatly welcomed by unemployed *kinderreich* family fathers as giving them the opportunity to find a job again, whereas unemployed fathers of 'asocial', large families displayed no desire at all to go to work. Similarly, housing provided for 'asocial' families was neglected by them and became dilapidated within the space of a few years.⁹¹ Indiscriminate assistance given to such families reduced the amount of aid available to 'valuable', *kinderreich* families. A 'hereditarily fit' family demonstrated its inner substance, regardless of its financial position, by the achievements of its members,

⁸⁸ Lenz at a meeting of the Ministry of the Interior in 1934, quoted in Müller-Hill, *Murderous Science*, p. 30.

⁸⁹ W. Knorr, 'Auslese kinderreicher Familien', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil B*, 20 Nov. 1937, p. 551.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 550.

⁹¹ Knorr, 'Kinderreichenauslese', p. 272.

whether it be those of the children at school, those of the father in his job, or those of the mother in ordering her household.

In 1936, the Racial Political Office in Saxony introduced a new method for the 'selection' of the most 'valuable', *kinderreich* families. This was the setting up of a *kinderreich* card index. This was based on a number of specific criteria, designed to lead to an overall assessment of the 'value' of families.⁹² By use of these index cards, 'valuable', *kinderreich* families in economic distress could be given help, whilst the 'asocial' and the 'hereditarily unfit' were excluded from welfare benefits. The system allowed for the separation of the 'desirable' and 'undesirable' in terms of 'hereditary value', and for 'the selection of the best'.⁹³ The information collected on the cards allowed the authorities to know everything that they needed to know about each family with four or more children.⁹⁴ For example, the academic achievements of just one son did not give a true picture of the whole family's aptitudes. Therefore, the academic careers of the parents and all the children were recorded. In addition, the information collected by the Racial Political Office was passed on to other organisations.⁹⁵ For example, the *NSV* acquired the addresses, dates of birth, and particulars about the professional status and unemployment record of these families' members, the *NS-Lehrerbund* (National Socialist League of Teachers) obtained information about the school achievements of the children, and the state health offices received particulars about the 'hereditarily unfit'. The *NS-Frauenschaft* was given details about the orderliness of households, living conditions and family life, and the police were made aware of criminal behaviour. The index cards

⁹² Knorr, *Die Kinderreichen in Leipzig*, p. 52. The index card clearly shows the criteria used, including social position and illness.

⁹³ Knorr, 'Auslese kinderreicher Familien', p. 549.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 554.

⁹⁵ On what follows, see Knorr, 'Kinderreichenauslese', p. 274.

had other important practical uses too.⁹⁶ Firstly, the membership of the *RdK* could be 'cleansed of undesirable elements'. Secondly, work could be provided for *kinderreich* family fathers. Thirdly, the cards served as necessary documents for the selection of *kinderreich* families for housing, the award of grants to gifted children and other special measures on the part of the *NSV*. Finally, the index cards were able to ascertain whether or not a family was 'hereditarily fit' more effectively than just a medical examination, because the term 'hereditarily unfit' covered a wider spectrum of factors that evidenced 'asocial' behaviour, rather than medical condition alone.

Financial and Other Measures to Promote *kinderreich* Families

As *kinderreich* families were of such importance to the future of the *Volk*, the National Socialist state did undertake some measures to support them, in accordance with its ideology. In the first place, there were systems of continuous child allowances and one-off grants for *kinderreich* families.⁹⁷ For example, between October 1935 and July 1937, one-off child supplements of, on average 390 RM. were given to 400,000 *kinderreich* families, whilst between August 1936 and July 1937 continual child support was given to 240,000 such families, to improve their financial situation.⁹⁸ The one-off grants were introduced in September 1935.⁹⁹ On the condition that the parents were 'hereditarily healthy' German citizens and had four or more children under the age of sixteen, a grant of up to 100 RM. was given per child, up to a maximum amount of 1,000 RM. This was given in the form of coupons, which could be used to buy furniture, linen

⁹⁶ On what follows, see Knorr, '*Auslese kinderreicher Familien*', pp. 554-5.

⁹⁷ On this, see BA R 36/1153, '*Laufende Kinderbeihilfen an kinderreiche Familien*' (Berlin, 1936), and '*Einmalige Kinderbeihilfen an kinderreiche Familien*' (Berlin, 1936), both edited by the Reich Ministry of Finance.

⁹⁸ F. Reinhardt, '*Frühe und Kinderreichtum im nationalsozialistischen Staat*', *Neues Volk*, July 1937.

⁹⁹ '*Verordnung über die Gewährung von Kinderbeihilfen an kinderreiche Familien von 15. September 1935*', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1935*, p. 1160.

and other household items.¹⁰⁰ Introduced in April 1936, the continuous child supplements were cash grants of 10 RM. per month for the fifth and subsequent children of a family, provided they were under sixteen years old.¹⁰¹ In 1938, there was a change in these benefits which, among other things, extended the allowances up until the age of 21.¹⁰² By 1941, the state had spent 325,000,000 RM. on one-off grants to 1.1 million families, and 600,000,000 RM. on continuous supplements to 2.5 million families.¹⁰³ Much of the cost of these benefits was shouldered by single people and childless couples, who became worse off as a result of various tax reforms aimed at levelling out the imbalances between the *kinderreich* and the childless.¹⁰⁴

Another benefit for *kinderreich* families was an order of 10 October 1939, in which the Reich Treasurer stated that children under ten were now exempt from paying contributions to the children's groups of the *HJ*, from wearing uniforms and from having to obtain journals. Furthermore, they were not to be approached for any kind of collection.¹⁰⁵ Mothers with four or more children who were not in a position to pay a membership fee, but who wanted to be involved in the *Deutsches Frauenwerk*, could join without paying a subscription.¹⁰⁶ However, such measures were fairly minimal in their scope and effects, failing to substantially alleviate the problems of *kinderreich* families.

¹⁰⁰ Glass, *Population Policies and Movements*, p. 291.

¹⁰¹ *Verordnung über die Gewährung von Kinderbeihilfen an kinderreiche Familien von 19. April 1936*, *Reichsgesetzblatt 1936*, p. 252.

¹⁰² On this, see Glass, *Population Policies and Movements*, pp. 296-7.

¹⁰³ K.-J. Ruhl, *'Die nationalsozialistische Familienpolitik (1933-1945). Ideologie - Massnahmen - Bilanz'*, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, Aug. 1991, p. 484.

¹⁰⁴ For example, *'Einkommenssteuergesetz vom 16. Oktober 1934: Strafflegung der Einkommenssteuer und der Kinderzahl'*, *Reichsgesetzblatt 1934*, p. 1005.

¹⁰⁵ BA NS 22/827, Anordnung 76/39, *'Betreff: Finanzielle Entlastung kinderreicher Familien'*, 10 Oct. 1939.

¹⁰⁶ BA NS 44/45, Rundschreiben Nr F 85/37, 12 May 1937.

There were also concerns, for example, from the head of the administrative district of Wittenberg, about *kinderreich* mothers working in industry.¹⁰⁷ In Wittenberg, more than 670 mothers with several children under the age of fourteen were working in industrial and manual jobs, which daily took them away from their children, family and household for more than ten hours. The consequences for family life and the development of the children were considered to be 'damaging' and 'destructive'. Above all, this pattern of behaviour was incompatible with National Socialist principles regarding the family, and therefore damaging not only to family life, but to the entire *Volk*. Fundamentally, he felt that *kinderreich* mothers of small children should not be employed in industrial and manual jobs.

A scheme was set up during the war that placed school girls in *kinderreich* families to help *kinderreich* mothers with the running of the household and the care and education of the children.¹⁰⁸ The placements lasted three months, during which time the girls either lived with the family, or went to work there on a daily basis. The working hours were from eight o'clock to five o'clock, although the mother was allowed to ask the girl to work until seven o'clock in exceptional circumstances. Breaks for meals were to be ensured, as was one afternoon off each week, and a free Sunday every fortnight. The girls were also to be given time to take part in their prescribed *BDM* service. The mothers were to treat the girls well and not to over-burden them with work. The scheme was supposed to be advantageous to the girls, undertaking this task 'with great readiness and joy', who would learn about household tasks and child care, and to the mothers who would have some assistance in their daily chores and duties. In farming households, the

¹⁰⁷ On what follows, see BA R 39/1159, '*Betr. Industriearbeit kinderreicher Frauen*', 24 March 1939.

¹⁰⁸ On what follows, see BA NS 37/1010, '*Betrifft: Einsatz von Schülerinnen in kinderreichen Familien*'.

girls were not to work on the farm, but only in the house and garden, and above all, in caring for the children.

There were also various initiatives on the part of municipal governments to promote *kinderreich* families and to lighten their financial burdens. In Berlin, for example, the local authorities gave special sponsorship for the third and fourth children in a family, of 30 RM. per month in the first year and 20 RM. per month thereafter, as a way of encouraging large families.¹⁰⁹ In Freiburg, a monthly discount on gas, electricity and water rates was introduced in May 1937 for *kinderreich* families on a low income. This entailed a reduction of 15% for families with four children under the age of eighteen, 25% for those with five or six children, 35% for families with seven or eight children and 50% for those with nine or more children.¹¹⁰ In addition, the municipal authorities agreed to pay the cost of schooling one child in each of the fourteen secondary schools each year, 'in order to break the educational monopoly of the well-off' and to give 'talented children from less well-off, hereditarily healthy, *kinderreich* families' the opportunity to attend one of these schools.¹¹¹

Other initiatives included the following.¹¹² In Solingen, the press honoured the *kinderreich* family with the notice, 'the city of Solingen is proud of its *kinderreich* families'. The municipal administrations of Leipzig and Chemnitz took upon themselves the financial sponsorship of the fourth and every subsequent child in a family, as well as making them a gift of 10 RM. In Neuwied, the authorities gave a savings book to the

¹⁰⁹ BA R 36/1156, 'Nr III 1169/34, Die Stadt Berlin...Sonderaktion', 6 April 1934.

¹¹⁰ BA R 36/1149, 'Erleichterungs- und Förderungsmaßnahmen für kinderreiche Familien', 14 May 1937.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² On what follows, see BA R 36/1150, 'Gemeindliche Maßnahmen zur Förderung des Kinderreichtums'.

parents of a fifth or further child, in the name of the new-born child, with a contribution of 30 RM. which was to be given to the child at the age of ten for the purchase of a youth group uniform. In Salzdorf, all municipal-owned housing was to be rented only to *kinderreich* families. Magdeburg's local authority intended to house *kinderreich* families in new accommodation and to provide financial assistance of 10 RM. per month to each family with four or more children if its income was not overstretched. In Essen, all vacant property of two, three or four rooms was to be placed at the disposal of the homeless police to designate to families - excluding 'asocial families' - as appropriate. In Künzelsau, the local authority took over the sponsorship of every fourth and subsequent child in a family, regardless of parental income, together with a present of money in a savings book - 10 RM. for the fourth child, 15 RM. for the fifth and 20 RM. for the sixth and subsequent children.¹¹³ It also provided uniforms for the children on their entry into the National Socialist youth organisations.

In Leipzig, monthly 'honour tables' of *kinderreich* families were published in the newspaper by the city's administration.¹¹⁴ As prerequisites for this, the parents had to be Aryan, of German origin, living in Leipzig, hereditarily healthy, socially fit (i.e. not 'asocial') and the children had to be born in Leipzig and legitimate. Being recorded in the 'honour tables' was often accompanied by a greeting of flowers to the mother and a savings book for the new-born baby, or a similar gift to the value of 10 RM. If *kinderreich* parents were not in a strong enough financial position to bring up their family adequately, the city authority advised, educated and supported the family until the parents were again in a position in which they were able to exist without this help.

¹¹³ BA R 36/1156a, 'Betr.: Ehrenpatenschaften', (no date).

¹¹⁴ On what follows, see BA R 36/1150, 'Gemeindliche Maßnahmen zur Förderung des Kinderreichtums', 25 Aug. 1938.

Chemnitz gave municipal workers with five or more children an hourly wage supplement and a reduction on gas, water and electricity payments. In Zwickau, members of the *RdK* received a 50% discount at certain theatre performances, were entitled to use the municipal swimming baths at very reduced rates and the libraries at no cost. All these benefits were supposed to act as incentives for 'hereditarily fit' families to become *kinderreich*. They were seen as forms of compensation for families with large numbers of children, which had been discriminated against during the Weimar period.¹¹⁵ The fact that the desire to be a *kinderreich* family did not become widespread, in reality, was partly due to the fact that these were not, by and large, satisfactory incentives.

The Housing of *kinderreich* Families

Kinderreich families experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining suitable housing throughout the Nazi period, despite the regime's alleged concern for their welfare. The poor situation regarding housing for large families actually stemmed from before the First World War when the accommodation of *kinderreich* families compared to smaller families meant less living space per head.¹¹⁶ This was because the housing built at that time took into account the number of families to be housed, rather than the number of people in each family. As a result, the living space of *kinderreich* families was necessarily reduced. In the Weimar period, the problem for *kinderreich* families continued, because new homes were given to those who could afford to pay the highest rents. There was, on average, only half as much room per head in a *kinderreich* family as in the rest of the population. There were also numerous individual cases of families with

¹¹⁵ W. Groß, 'Deutschland muß wieder Kinderland werden!', *Neues Volk*, April 1937, p. 6.

¹¹⁶ On what follows, see BA R 41/711, 'Wohnungsbeschaffung für *kinderreiche Familien*' (no date).

eight or more children living in an attic or cellar. Such wretched conditions caused all manner of illnesses and 'moral decay'.

The National Socialists did propose solutions to the problem of housing the *kinderreich*, for example, to provide *kinderreich* families with their own home including a garden, but these did not, in the main, become reality. One of the biggest problems for *kinderreich* families trying to find suitable accommodation was that they were frequently discriminated against, both by landlords and by other tenants, who did not want their peace disturbed by large numbers of children living in such close proximity to them. There were attempts by the Racial Political Office to stop this type of discrimination, as it was supposed to be in the nation's interest to promote *kinderreich* families, which included making suitable accommodation available to them.¹¹⁷

In the first years following the Nazi 'seizure of power' there was still a considerable shortage of homes for *kinderreich* families. In Bremen, for example, 3,000 extra homes were needed.¹¹⁸ In addition, much of the available accommodation was unsuitable for *kinderreich* families in terms of hygiene. The sharp rise in the number of extra houses needed was, above all, the result of an increase in the number of marriages. If this trend continued, there were fears that Bremen would experience a housing problem of unprecedented magnitude.¹¹⁹ Between 1 July 1933 and 30 June 1934, some 1,500 flats were built, but in the same space of time, approximately 4,000 marriages took place. Since the number of marriages was two or three times that of the number of new flats,

¹¹⁷ BA NS 20/143-1, Rundschreiben Nr. 28., 'Betr.: Hausbesitzer und kinderreiche Familien', 18 Sept. 1934.

¹¹⁸ H. Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der Freien Hansestadt Bremen. Band 4. Bremen in der NS-Zeit 1933-1945* (Hamburg, 1985), p. 373.

¹¹⁹ Staatsarchiv Bremen (hereafter StAB) Senator für das Bauwesen 4, 29/1-733, '1000 Wohnungen für unbemittelte Familien mit Kindern', Jan. 1935, pp. 1-2.

only one couple in every two or three could expect to obtain a new home.¹²⁰ Hence, because of the effects of the regime's population policy, the building of small homes became increasingly urgent. The building of one thousand homes for families on a low income with children - and especially for *kinderreich* families which suffered most acutely from housing problems - was planned in Bremen. However, only 499 of these were actually built.¹²¹ Consequently, it was difficult for *kinderreich* families to find appropriate housing.¹²² The Office of Housing and Accommodation that administered some 4,000 city-owned homes for renting, comprising of 1,000 old and 3,000 new homes, had applications from approximately 200 *kinderreich* families, some of which were housed in accommodation of insufficient size, and the remainder of which were living in 'unhealthy' accommodation in the old part of the city and in basements. Private landlords did not like to rent their property to *kinderreich* families, partly because the latter were still strongly associated with burdensome, 'asocial' families who let their homes become dilapidated within a very short space of time. In order to ameliorate the housing shortage for 'healthy and perfect *kinderreich* families', a number of measures were put through. In city-owned accommodation, especially one-family and two-family terraced housing, about 100 childless families were given notice to leave and to find accommodation in the private sector. Later these measures were extended to families with one or two children. The other 100 *kinderreich* families were placed in small homes of their own, so that the children could grow up in a 'healthy atmosphere'. There were, in

¹²⁰ StAB Senatsregistratur 3- W.11. Nr. 49b. 48, '*Betr. Unterbringung kinderreicher Familien und Wohnungsknappheit*', 10 Aug. 1934, p. 4.

¹²¹ U. Steinbacher, *Die Bremer Siedler. Arbeits- und Wohnverhältnisse in Bremen zwischen Weltwirtschaftskrise und II. Weltkrieg. Staatliche Lösungsversuche mit der "vorstädtischen Kleinsiedlung"*, doctoral thesis, Ossietzky University, Oldenburg, p. 68.

¹²² On what follows, see StAB Senatsregistratur 3- W.11. Nr. 49b. 48, '*Betr. Unterbringung kinderreicher Familien und Wohnungsknappheit*', 10 Aug. 1934, pp. 1-3.

addition, 192 single family houses in Rablinghausen on the outskirts of the city exclusively for *kinderreich* families.¹²³

In Berlin, a 'colony' for *kinderreich* families was set up in 1934.¹²⁴ This was an estate of new houses, with shops and a school on site. The houses were built for the comfort of the inhabitants, with plenty of light. The children - and there were many - played in 'a paradise of greenery and flowers'. On the edge of the settlement were large fields for sports and exercise. There were no cars allowed in the colony area, so children were free to play in the streets unsupervised. The children went on errands to the shops to purchase anything from soap to potatoes, and after 'uncle shopkeeper' had helped them buy what they needed, he often gave them a sweet or a stick of liquorice. The streets teemed with children, especially during out of school hours, and housewives exchanged their daily experiences and adventures. The atmosphere was friendly, as everyone knew each other and greeted each other. It was 'like a large family'. One colonist lived there with 16 children and was the 'pride' of the inhabitants, although there were also families there with 'only' six children. The colony was founded upon the concept 'healthy nation, healthy offspring'. It was considered idyllic and 'exemplary', because it protected children from the dangers and bad influences of the big city, whilst at the same time easing some of the burdens experienced by *kinderreich* families.

However, as a whole, the National Socialist regime's housing policy was not commensurate with its policy to promote large families. In almost all of Germany's big cities, there prevailed 'a severe lack of rented accommodation' that was suitable in size

¹²³ On this, see StAB Senatsregistratur 3-W.11. Nr. 68. 91, '*Betr. Kleinsiedlung in Rablinghausen*', 27 Aug. 1935.

¹²⁴ On what follows, see '*Die Kolonie der Kindereichen*', *Neues Volk*, Sept. 1934, pp. 14-17.

and number of rooms for a *kinderreich* family.¹²⁵ The small families of the middle class had the best living quarters, whilst large families of equal status suffered, paying high rents for accommodation of a lower standard. By 1940, there was a move away from special blocks for *kinderreich* families.¹²⁶ There were plans too, for the entire position regarding housing for *kinderreich* families to be changed 'after the war', with the number of rooms and size of accommodation corresponding more appropriately with family size.¹²⁷ However, it seems that this was not a priority at the time.

Another problem was that a ban on raising rents meant that property owners tended to deny housing to *kinderreich* families, as they were the category of renters that utilised the accommodation most and used up a large amount of water. As a result, *kinderreich* families suffered because they often could not get suitable and reasonable housing. This problem was especially great in places where there were already considerable housing difficulties, notably in Berlin. Hence, this pricing policy actually contradicted state population policy.¹²⁸ Legal measures were proposed to redress this situation.¹²⁹ In purely monetary terms, a landlord was undoubtedly in a better position by renting accommodation to single people or childless couples. In addition, this enhanced the comfort and peacefulness of the other inhabitants in the building. However, many landlords were aware of their responsibility to the *Volk* not to discriminate against *kinderreich* families. It was the landlords that acted out of purely selfish motives and

¹²⁵ BA NS 6/252, '*Die Wohnung der kinderreichen Mittelstandsfamilie in den größeren Städten*', Aug. 1940, p. 1.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹²⁷ See BA NS 6/252, '*Betr. Anregungen für die Wahrung bevölkerungspolitischer Grundsätze für den Wohnungsbau nach dem Kriege*', 12 Oct. 1940.

¹²⁸ See BA NS 6/246, letter from Göring to the Deputy Führer, 9 Aug. 1938.

¹²⁹ On what follows, see BA NS 6/246, '*Allgemeine Begründung zum Entwurf der Verordnung zur Erleichterung der Wohnungsbeschaffung für kinderreiche Familien*' (no date).

without responsibility towards the greater good of the nation that had to be somehow coerced into renting their property to *kinderreich* families. A decree of 1938 stated that a landlord in whose property a certain proportion of the inhabitants were not made up of children under eighteen could be ordered to rent out any free space to *kinderreich* families. The choice of tenants was up to the landlord, but if suitable tenants could not be found, the landlord had to report to the authorities which would find him *kinderreich* tenants.¹³⁰ An unfounded rejection of the family on the part of the landlord was prohibited. However, the requirement to report vacant accommodation did not apply to public corporations that rented their property to their own employees, to the first time renting of a new property, or to company, police or army accommodation.¹³¹ Hence, in Munich, for example, where the housing position was 'catastrophic', the situation was worsened by the *DAF* buying up housing blocks for its administrative requirements and exacerbated further by the moving in of an extraordinarily high number of officials, Party members and soldiers.¹³²

During the Second World War, families of part-Jewish heredity were removed from their homes to create accommodation for *kinderreich* bomb victims who had lost their homes as a result of air-raids.¹³³ There was also some planning for accommodating the *kinderreich* families of the war-disabled or those in which the fathers died in service.¹³⁴ Such policies ameliorated the position of *kinderreich* families to some extent. However,

¹³⁰ BA NS 6/246, '*Verordnung zur Erleichterung der Wohnungsbeschaffung für kinderreiche Familien*', 1938, File p. 12.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹³² BA NS 6/246, 30 Sept. 1938, File pp. 20-1.

¹³³ See BA NS 6/200, '*Wohnungen von Judenmischlingen für kinderreiche Bombengeschädigte*', 16 Oct. 1943 and '*Inanspruchnahme der Wohnungen jüdischer Mischehen durch Fliegergeschädigte*', 20 Nov. 1943.

¹³⁴ BA NS 6/246, '*Betr. Wohnungsbeschaffung für kinderreiche Familien*', 15 May 1942.

the main problem was that they needed larger accommodation and could not afford it. To this end, substantial family supplements and a thoroughgoing housing policy were required, but these were not forthcoming. What *kinderreich* families received were piecemeal initiatives and insubstantial attempts to make them feel significant. For example, on a housing estate in Chemnitz, in which many *kinderreich* families lived, a statue was built, depicting an SA man standing in the midst of his five children playing. For the children from the *kinderreich* families who played outside, this statue was intended to be a symbol of the strength and eternity of the life of the *Volk*.¹³⁵ This kind of tribute did nothing, however, to redress the real problems of the many 'valuable', 'hereditarily fit', *kinderreich* families - putatively so important to the regime - that continued to live in squalor and poverty.

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The failure of the Nazi government to develop a housing policy commensurate with its population policy was a reflection of its unwillingness, as a whole, to undertake any truly comprehensive, major expenditure to assist the plight of many of the *kinderreich* families it allegedly considered so essential to the nation's future. State investment in house building decreased from 1330,000,000 RM. in 1928 to 250,000,000 RM. in 1938.¹³⁶ This did not do much to encourage *kinderreich* families, for even young, childless couples in cities and industrial areas found it difficult to obtain a suitable home, as capital and the production capacities of industry were concentrated upon rearmament. Nazi propaganda and piecemeal initiatives to encourage the founding of *kinderreich* families were insufficient to change the inclination of German couples to limit the size of their families. The proportion of married women with four or more children decreased from

¹³⁵ BA NSD 64/1, '*Jung-Deutschland: Ein Denkmal des Kinderreichtums in Chemnitz*', *Völkische Wacht*, Aug. 1939, p. 233.

¹³⁶ D. Klinksiek, *Die Frau im NS-Staat* (Stuttgart, 1982), p. 93.

25% in 1933 to 21% in 1939.¹³⁷ This reveals the patent failure of the regime to persuade its population to have *kinderreich* families.

¹³⁷ Bock, 'Antinatalism, Maternity and Paternity', in Bock & Thane (eds.), Maternity and Gender Policies, p. 245.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE 'ASOCIAL' FAMILY IN THE THIRD REICH

The National Socialists' desire to create a perfect and 'pure' *Volksgemeinschaft* meant the exclusion not only of the 'racially alien', but also of an extremely diverse group of people - largely of German ethnicity - who were described as 'asocial' or 'socially unfit'. The term 'asocial' was used to categorise marginal groups of the German population that deviated from the norms of National Socialist society. The National Socialist government used the term 'asocial' to encompass a wide range of 'undesirables', because, necessarily, any kind of non-conformity to National Socialist norms was seen as potentially threatening to it, as a dictatorial regime. 'Asocials' were considered dangerous because of the very fact that they were not incorporated into the *Volksgemeinschaft* and because they rejected integration into it. Hence, Nazi attitudes towards and concerns with 'asocials' were inherent in the very nature of the regime itself and of the society it sought to create. An array of discriminatory policies against 'asocials' was implemented by the Nazi regime. Hashude, an experimental 'asocial colony' set up in Bremen for 'asocial families' was a significant element in the National Socialists' strategies for dealing with 'asocials'.

The Definition and Categorisation of 'Asocials'

The kind of terminology the National Socialists used to describe people they considered 'undesirable' had a considerable impact upon the majority of the population, whose reactions towards 'asocials' then gave legitimisation to the way in which the latter were treated and discriminated against as a social minority. For example, someone who deviated from political or social norms could be considered as 'morally depraved', a person who relied on welfare benefits as a 'social parasite' and an unemployed person as

'workshy'. Similarly, the homeless were portrayed as 'epidemic carriers' and prostitutes were 'infectious sources of sexual diseases'.¹ The concept of the 'asocial' was depicted as the anti-type to the ideal 'national comrade'.² This type of language - which featured prominently in propaganda - informed the minds of the majority of the population against the lowest strata of society, the *'Lumpenproletariat'*. 'Asocials' were essentially portrayed as the 'dregs of society', unworthy of welfare benefits, which could be better spent on more deserving causes. Their 'inferiority' was marked by, among other things, 'weakness of character', 'lack of restraint', 'loose morals', 'disinterest in contemporary events', 'idleness' and 'poverty of mind'. In addition, they were 'harmful to the *Volk*' and 'workshy parasites'.³ Failure to be in regular employment was particularly excoriated by a regime which considered work and 'performance' to be such important factors in the way of life of the nation. Scientists who examined 'asocials' described them in terms such as 'biological Bolsheviks'.⁴ Such terminology was used as a justification for the persecution of 'asocials'.

Consequently, most people were at best, indifferent to the fate of 'asocials', and at worst, pleased that policies such as 'beggars' week' - a nationwide campaign against vagrants, from 18-25 September 1933 - drastically cleansed urban environments by removing these elements from the streets. The raids resulted in the detention of 100,000 beggars and vagrants in police 'protective custody'. However, the majority of those arrested were released within a few days or weeks as the existing prison system had no space for them.⁵

¹ K. Scherer, *'Asozial' im Dritten Reich. Die vergessenen Verfolgten* (Münster, 1990), p. 68.

² J. Noakes, 'Social Outcasts in the Third Reich', in R. Bessel (ed.), *Life in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 1987), p. 94.

³ W. Ayaß, *'Bettler, Landstreicher, Vagabunden, Wohnungslose und Wanderer', Dokumentationsstelle zur NS-Sozialpolitik: Mitteilungen*, Nov./Dec. 1985, p. 70.

⁴ Scherer, *'Asozial' im Dritten Reich*, p. 58.

⁵ W. Ayaß, 'Vagrants and Beggars in Hitler's Reich', in R. Evans (ed.), *The German*

Despite this fiasco, the regime's determination to take a stand against 'asocials' meant that from 1934 onwards, measures against them became increasingly harsh. The provisions of the Criminal Code dealing with vagrants and beggars were made much tougher. For example, homeless people had to carry Vagrants' Registration Books, which recorded their stays in approved overnight shelters. If they did not possess such a book, they were categorised as 'disorderly wanderers' and could be arrested and imprisoned. In December 1937, Himmler decreed that individuals who would 'not adapt themselves to the natural discipline of a National Socialist state, e.g. beggars, tramps, (Gypsies), whores, alcoholics with contagious diseases' were 'asocial' and could be taken into 'preventive custody'.⁶ This meant that people were interned in concentration camps just for being 'asocial', rather than for committing a specific criminal offence. Such people constituted part of the compulsory labour force in the economic enterprises of the SS's second generation of concentration camps, such as Flossenburg and Mauthausen.

In June 1938, Himmler and Heydrich ordered a wave of arrests known as the 'Reich Campaign Against the Workshy', in which some 11,000 people were rounded up, the majority of whom ended up in concentration camps, conveniently set up near stone quarries.⁷ It has been claimed that the reasoning behind this action lay in the need to strengthen the workforce in Germany at that time.⁸ This, however, can only be part of

Underworld: Deviants and Outcasts in German History (London, 1988), p. 213.

See also, Ayaß, *'Bettler, Landstreicher'*, pp. 60-1.

⁶ See Burleigh & Wippermann, The Racial State, p. 173.

⁷ On the 'Reich Campaign Against the Workshy', see Ayaß, *'Bettler, Landstreicher'*, pp.71-4. See also, W. Ayaß, *"Ein Gebot der nationalen Arbeitsdisziplin". Die Aktion "Arbeitsscheu Reich" 1938*, in W. Ayaß *et al.*, Beiträge zur nationalsozialistischen Gesundheits- und Sozialpolitik, 6: Feinderklärung und Prävention. Kriminalbiologie, Zigeunerforschung und Asozialpolitik, (Berlin, 1988), pp. 43-74.

⁸ H. Buchheim, *'Die Aktion "Arbeitsscheu Reich"*, Gutachten des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, München, Vol. 2 (Munich, 1966), pp. 194-6.

the explanation. The 'Reich Campaign Against the Workshy' was a ruthless measure against the 'sub-proletarian' strata of society, whose victims were unable to defend themselves against brutal discrimination. It was clearly the high point in the 'asocial' policy put into force by the regime. Indeed, considering the fact that two-thirds of the total of some 110,000 non-Jewish Germans put into concentration camps between 1933 and 1943 were 'asocials'⁹, it is manifestly the case that the Nazi regime discriminated against them as a group. Following the 'Reich Campaign Against the Workshy', there were moves towards a special Protection Law, to prevent 'asocials' that were not dealt with by the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring, from reproducing, by means of compulsory sterilisation. The first draft of this law was formulated in 1940, and the regime hoped to put it into effect as quickly as possible. In the event, a considerable delay was caused by disunity and wrangles over areas of competence between the many agencies and individuals involved.¹⁰ The final draft of February 1944 was eventually due to be introduced on 1 January 1945, but the loss of the war and the collapse of the Hitler government prevented this.¹¹

Who was 'asocial'? The term 'asocial' was applied in an elastic manner to include the following groups: 'gypsies', 'vagabonds', 'persons of no fixed abode', 'prostitutes', 'alcoholics', 'unmarried mothers', 'homosexuals', '*Großfamilien*', 'criminals', 'idlers', 'good for nothings', 'wastrels', 'grumblers' and 'grouzers' as well as anyone else that did not,

⁹ Bock, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus*, p. 364.

¹⁰ On this, see P. Wagner, 'Das Gesetz über die Behandlung Gemeinschaftsfremder. Die Kriminalpolizei und die "Vernichtung des Verbrechertums"', in Ayaß et al., *Beiträge zur nationalsozialistischen Gesundheits- und Sozialpolitik*, pp. 75-100. See also, D. Peukert, 'Arbeitslager und Jugend-KZ: die "Behandlung Gemeinschaftsfremder" im Dritten Reich', in D. Peukert & J. Reulecke (eds.), *Die Reihen fast geschlossen. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alltags unterm Nationalsozialismus* (Wuppertal, 1981), pp. 418-22.

¹¹ Bock, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus*, p. 366.

could not or would not perform their duties to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. These groups, although they were all categorised as 'asocials', were not considered on the same level as one another. For example, family fathers who left the responsibility for themselves and their families to public welfare organisations were regarded, in some respects, differently from 'chronic alcoholics' and 'habitual gamblers', who, in turn, were distinct from 'asocials' formerly from the middle class who had been dispossessed, and who had 'sunk' to the extent that they no longer had the moral strength to become 'socially fit' members of the *Volksgemeinschaft* again.¹² Hence, there were different grades of 'asociality'. 'Gypsies', 'vagrants', and the seriously ill that undertook criminal actions towards others, including their own families, came at the bottom of the list.¹³ 'Asocials' were treated according to the grade in which they belonged. Some were excluded from benefits, whilst others were physically annihilated.¹⁴

'Asociality' was an extremely wide-reaching category of discrimination, in regard to which self-appointed 'experts' wielded their power to decide on definitions of terms such as 'society', 'community alien' and 'socially unfit', based on their own 'social' and 'biological' - but also racial and eugenic - interpretations. For example, Wolfgang Knorr, an 'expert' in the Racial Political Office of the *NSDAP*, defined 'asocials' as people 'who are conspicuous, not by occasional crime, but by their general inability to be useful in the life of the community'.¹⁵ Otto Finger, a prominent researcher in the field of racial hygiene, termed as 'asocial' anyone failed to satisfy or that contradicted 'the requirements

¹² On this, see BA R 36/1863, '*Behandlung der Asozialen in der Fürsorge (Asozialen-Kolonien)*' (no date), pp. 3-4.

¹³ BA Sammlung Schumacher 399, '*Vorschläge des Städt. Wohlfahrtsamts Augsburg zur Frage der fürsorgerischen Behandlung von Verantwortungslosen und Volksschädlingen*' (no date), pp. 5-6.

¹⁴ Scherer, '*Asozial' im Dritten Reich*', p. 127.

¹⁵ W. Knorr, '*Vergleichende erbbiologische Untersuchungen an drei asozialen Großfamilien*' (Berlin, 1939), p. 50.

of the leading social order'.¹⁶

'Asocial' individuals stood out even in childhood. Early symptoms in pre-school children were bed-wetting, lack of independence, coldness of emotions and laziness.¹⁷ As the children grew older, uncleanliness, indifference towards both affection and punishment, inclination to be cruel towards animals, 'uncomradely' behaviour towards peers, defiance and mendacity were signs of their 'asociality'.¹⁸ They paid no attention in class and soon came into conflict with the school authorities. They regularly had early sexual encounters, which led, in the worst cases, to girls becoming prostitutes. The general inclination towards begging, smoking and drinking led many to become alcoholics and criminals. They grew up to become 'workshy' - the classic symptom of 'asociality' - always finding ways to avoid regular work. Many 'asocial' children went to special schools for backward children on account of their 'mental inferiority' or 'feeble-mindedness'.¹⁹

Amongst the groups termed 'socially unfit', 'gypsies' were a special case, as they straddled the boundaries of the 'racially alien' and the 'asocial'. As such they fell into both groups. But the definition of 'gypsy' needs some clarification. The Sinti and Roma, termed 'gypsies', originated in North India. During the course of their travel westward, the majority of them mixed with the populations of Persia, Armenia and Europe, thereby losing the traits of their origin. As a result, only a small proportion of the 'gypsies' in the

¹⁶ O. Finger, *'Das Asozialenproblem in medizinisch-biologischer Beleuchtung'*, *Neues Volk*, Dec. 1937, p. 19.

¹⁷ Scherer, *'Asozial' im Dritten Reich*, p. 66.

¹⁸ H. Plachetsky, *'Asozialität und Asoziale'*, *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil A*, 5 Dec. 1938, p. 678.

¹⁹ See W. Busse, *'Die Eltern der Hilfsschulkinder'*, *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie*, 108 (1938), pp. 42-71, which is a study of pupils in schools for backward children and their heredity.

Third Reich were 'pure gypsies' from the standpoint of racial origin.²⁰ These 'gypsies' were seen as 'a state within a state', as 'unwanted guests', living in their own 'clans and tribes'.²¹ However, the overwhelming majority of those termed 'gypsies' by the National Socialists were 'part-gypsies', or - and this is how they fitted into the category of 'asocials' - 'people of gypsy type'. Kranz estimated that there were some 18,000 such people in Germany in 1937.²² 'Gypsies' then, were a significant part of the *Lumpenproletariat*, characterised as being 'exceptionally unbalanced, characterless, unpredictable, unreliable, as well as unsettled and touchy, in short, workshy and asocial'.²³ The term 'gypsy' was used as a synonym for 'people of no fixed abode' and for those who lived an 'immoral wandering lifestyle'.²⁴ In fact, 'part-gypsies' were regarded as more dangerous than 'pure gypsies', because 'gypsies' that married members of the host society tended to 'join up with the scum of the earth, with criminals and asocials'.²⁵ Alternatively, 'gypsies' that married formerly 'reasonable' people, often turned their spouses into 'asocials' or 'criminals'. For example, Finger assessed a farmer's son, Wilhelm L. who, after marrying a 'gypsy' at the age of 22, became active in 'a long series of crimes'.²⁶ 'Part-gypsy' offspring were 'psychopathic', 'degenerate' and 'feeble-minded', and, because of the 'gypsy' side of their heredity, were 'masters of theft and fraud', occupying themselves as basket makers, tinkers, hawkers and pedlars, whilst being habitually unemployed. Research and examinations carried out by Ritter on 'part-gypsies' demonstrated that all the 'worst aspects of asocial heredity' were combined in these

²⁰ See BA *Sammlung Schumacher* 399, E. Moddermann, 'Die Zigeunerfrage' (no date), which states that there were only about 100 families of 'pure gypsy origin' in Germany.

²¹ H. W. Kranz, 'Zigeuner, wie sie wirklich sind', *Neues Volk*, Sept. 1937, p. 24.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²³ BA *Sammlung Schumacher* 399, 'Die Zigeunerfrage'.

²⁴ Scherer, 'Asozial' im Dritten Reich, p. 76.

²⁵ Kranz, 'Zigeuner', pp. 23-4.

²⁶ Scherer, 'Asozial' im Dritten Reich, p. 64.

people.²⁷

'Sexual perversion' was considered a mark of 'moral depravity', and all forms of sexual 'deviance' were excoriated by the Nazi leadership. In particular, homosexuality and prostitution were vehemently censured by the regime because of their adverse effects on the German birth rate.²⁸ In a speech to SS officers on 18 February 1937, Himmler claimed that homosexuals 'upset the sexual balance sheet of Germany'. He further stated that 'all things which take place in the sexual sphere are not the private matter of the individual, but signify the life and death of the nation'.²⁹ In addition, homosexuality had a negative effect upon the martial image of the National Socialist state. Nazi homophobia gave rise to numerous articles in newspapers and journals. One such article stated that 'a single homosexual' was 'the source of seduction and misfortune of hundreds of young people'.³⁰ 'Morally inferior' or 'morally feeble-minded' prostitutes exacerbated the spread of sexual diseases and were therefore guilty of 'asocial' behaviour.³¹ In fact, anyone suffering from gonorrhoea or syphilis that transmitted their disease to healthy sexual partners was acting 'asocially'.³² Hence, sexual offenders, pimps, and 'weak psychopaths'

²⁷ See BA *Sammlung Schumacher* 399, R. Ritter, 'Arbeitsbericht' (no date). This is a report on the work of the Racial Hygiene and Population Policy Research Office of the *Reichsgesundheitsamt*. For a summary of the research on 'gypsies' and 'part-gypsies' by, among others, Ritter and Finger, see C.-H. Rodenberg, 'Die Zigeunerfrage', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil B*, 20 Sept. 1937, pp. 437-446. On the persecution of 'gypsies', see W. Wippermann, *Das Leben in Frankfurt zur NS-Zeit, Bd II, Die nationalsozialistische Zigeunerverfolgung. Darstellung, Dokumente und didaktische Hinweise* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986), especially pp. 20-52.

²⁸ On the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, see H.-G. Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland. Eine politische Geschichte* (Munich, 1989), pp. 92-132.

²⁹ Quoted in H.-G. Stümke & R. Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen. Homosexuelle und "Gesundes Volksempfinden" von Auschwitz bis heute* (Reinbek, 1981), p. 221.

³⁰ H. Rodenfels, 'Sittenstrolche und Verbrecher', *Neues Volk*, April 1939, p. 25.

³¹ On the consequences of this, see M. Daum & H.-U. Deppe, *Zwangssterilisation in Frankfurt am Main 1933-1945* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), pp. 151-5.

³² W. Schultze, 'Vorbeugende Maßnahmen gegen die Ausbreitung von

who had unrestrained sex lives and carried out sexual offences without feelings of responsibility were severely denounced. The spread of sexual diseases endangered both the future of the *Volk* and the 'healthy family', so it was considered very important to combat it, as well as taking 'energetic' action against prostitution.³³ Committing prostitutes was proposed as a way of preventing the spread of sexual diseases.³⁴ In addition, motherhood outside marriage was often considered a criterion for 'asociality'. This remained a much disputed area, because Himmler stressed the importance of motherhood, whether the children were legitimate or not. Amongst most of the racial hygienists, however, illegitimate children, especially from 'socially unfit' mothers, were considered to be 'undesirable'. Women who gave birth to a series of illegitimate children were thought to be 'sexually unrestrained', and therefore 'asocial', particularly if their offspring were fathered by different men.

One way of clarifying the term 'asocial' was to place it in juxtaposition to the concept of 'unsozial' or 'antisocial'.³⁵ 'Asocial' referred to a person's general behaviour, whereas 'antisocial' referred to his or her specific actions. The word 'asocial' described a type of person, whereas the term 'antisocial' was more concerned with a type of action. A major dissimilarity between the two, was the passive nature of 'asocial' behaviour compared with 'antisocial' behaviour. Moreover, whilst an 'antisocial' person had average or above average personal ability for achievement, that of the 'asocial' was below average. An 'asocial' person was 'socially unfit', ineducable, unimprovable and, in short, 'an unproductive parasite', whilst an 'antisocial' individual was often 'socially fit', educable

Geschlechtskrankheiten durch Asylierung der asozialen Kranken', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil B*, 5 Oct. 1936, p. 349.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 350-2.

³⁵ On what follows, see F. Brethner, 'Das Asozialproblem', *Neues Volk*, May 1940, p. 6.

and productive.³⁶ Here five different groups came under the definition of 'asocial': those who got into lasting conflict with the police authorities; the 'workshy' and 'scroungers' of welfare and support; 'uneconomical' and 'unrestrained' elements; people who had a disorderly household and failed to educate their children properly; alcoholics and people with 'immoral wandering lifestyles'. The 'offences' of 'asocials' - as compared with those of habitual and professional criminals - carried the stamp of weakness.³⁷ In addition, whereas a criminal actively struggled against authority, the 'asocial' wanderer, more often preferred to passively avoid it. Kranz, one of the hardliners of racial hygiene, estimated in 1940 that there were at least one million 'asocials' in Germany, excluding 'criminals'.³⁸

Examinations carried out by the Research Institute for Psychiatry in Munich demonstrated that inclinations towards 'criminality' were developed from 'endogenous-hereditary foundations'. Studies of the genealogy of criminals showed that they very often married other criminals.³⁹ Examinations of families of people imprisoned at least once for a capital crime showed that in about 40% of cases there were other criminals amongst the relatives. In the majority of these cases, it was possible to speak of 'criminal families', in which the parents or siblings or both were also criminals. In families of people imprisoned only once, with a subsequent fifteen years free of crime, criminals amongst the relatives was found in only 6% of cases. A case study of a 'criminal family', by the name of Gelber, was an example of the hereditary nature of

³⁶ On distinctions between 'antisocial criminals' and 'asocial parasites', see also M. Staemmler, *'Das Problem der erbkranken und der asozialen Familien und ihrer Behandlung'*, *Volk und Rasse*, II, 1938, p. 39.

³⁷ Finger, *'Das Asozialenproblem'*, p. 19.

³⁸ H. W. Kranz, *"Die Gemeinschaftsunfähigen". Ein Beitrag zur wissenschaftlichen und praktischen Lösung des sog. "Asozialenproblems"* 1. Teil (Gießen, 1940), p. 64.

³⁹ On what follows, see F. Stumpfl, *'Die kriminelle Familie'*, *Volk und Rasse*, V, 1933, pp. 167-73.

criminality.⁴⁰ Gelber, the only son of a hat maker, was sentenced repeatedly for theft, begging and vagrancy. His parents had both been sentenced on numerous occasions for begging. He started his criminal life at the age of seventeen and was later placed in mental institutions on four occasions. He married at the age of forty six. His wife was also a criminal, sentenced for theft and for receiving stolen goods. She brought two illegitimate sons into the marriage, both of whom were thieves. Gelber's aunt, his father's sister, was a beggar and a thief too. She had six illegitimate children, of which five were sons. Of these sons, Gelber's cousins, four were criminals. The fifth was never a criminal, but was 'feeble-minded'.

A 'notorious' criminal family was the Schüller clan, whose example was also used to present the validity of Nazi thought regarding heredity.⁴¹ The Schüller brothers were no strangers to the police and courts, as they had been sentenced many times with the aim of preventing them from committing further crimes. Yet, instead of being deterred from carrying out further crimes, they committed even greater wrongdoings. Their case history was used to show that no power could change the traits that a criminal received from his or her parents. In the youngest generation of the Schüller family, there were nine siblings, of whom only one had not committed a crime. Of the remainder, six were serious offenders and two were petty criminals. Their father, Karl Johannes, was an alcoholic who had committed suicide and their mother, Anna Pauline, had been imprisoned for two years. The nine siblings were also 'enthusiastic communists', which made the case against them even stronger. The case of the Schüllers demonstrated not only that bad, criminal traits were hereditary, but also that 'asocial clans' had an

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁴¹ On what follows, see '*Die Sippe Schüller. Eine "berühmte" Familie*', *Neues Volk*, Sept. 1937, pp. 28-32.

extraordinarily high number of - 'undesirable' - children. Once again, there was a call to protect the *Volksgemeinschaft* from this type of 'asocial, burdensome existence', by excluding 'asocials' from reproduction.

In Thuringia, Karl Astel created an archive and card index system for the screening of the 'hereditary fitness' and 'merit' of a family.⁴² Amongst the families that Astel catalogued was that of Gertrud Adam.⁴³ The genealogical tables, pictures and reports from various authorities about her and her family gave an unfavourable impression. Gertrud was the daughter of Egon Stibitzer, who was convicted 21 times. Her mother was 'mentally ill' and died in a mental institution. Her father subsequently remarried. In all, he had eleven children, of whom eight were educated at special schools for backward children. Seven of the eleven were 'hereditarily ill' and one was suspected of being so. Three were criminals. In the entire 'clan' of Gertrud Adam on record, there were 102 people, including: 23 'criminals'; 20 'pupils at schools for backward children'; 16 'hereditarily ill' individuals; 13 people that were 'suspected of hereditary illness'; 3 'known prostitutes'; 4 children in special care or in asylums. Apart from the blood relations, those that married into the 'clan' were also 'criminal' and 'hereditarily ill'. Within this same 'clan', 'teemed many kinds of hereditarily ill criminals, vagrants and prostitutes'. These 'asocials' and 'antisocials' were well known to the various authorities, especially the police and the courts, as well as the employment office and welfare office. They 'fed themselves and their children like animals at the cost of the taxpayer'. They were also a 'burden on the state' and a 'parasite to the taxpayer', because they had to be maintained in special

⁴² On Astel's work, see P. Weindling, "'Mustergau" Thüringen. Rassenhygiene zwischen Ideologie und Machtpolitik', in N. Frei (ed.), *Medizin und Gesundheitspolitik in der NS-Zeit* (Munich, 1991), pp. 81-97.

⁴³ On what follows, see 'Verbrechen als Erbkrankheit', *Neues Volk*, Sept. 1938, pp.7-9.

schools, mental institutions, prisons and so on. Such hereditary 'asociality' and 'antisocial' criminality were a cause of much concern.

The National Socialists believed that because of the lenient treatment towards criminals in the past, perversities of all types had spread like an epidemic in the body of the nation. During the Weimar Republic, a criminal had been regarded as 'a poor misguided person', and attempts had been made to reform and 'cure' criminals, because of the acceptance of the teachings of 'the Jew Freud'.⁴⁴ A criminal was no longer to be seen as a pitiful victim of the environment, but as 'a pest', whose way of behaviour was 'conditioned by his hereditary traits'.⁴⁵ It was also asserted that because criminality was hereditary, it was not possible to 'improve' or 'cure' a habitual or professional criminal.⁴⁶ There also tended to be a conflation of criminality and madness.

Alcoholism amongst 'asocials' was another problem, not only because it was generally considered to be passed down the generations of such families, but also because of the fact that 'alcoholics' tended 'to have especially numerous children'.⁴⁷ According to Nazi 'experts', children of alcoholics often also became alcoholics, because of their genetic make-up. Such hereditary factors were then passed to future offspring. In addition, it was held that children of alcoholics were often 'inferior', 'degenerate', 'depraved' and 'physically or mentally ill'.⁴⁸ As a result, and, in addition, because of the simple fact that

⁴⁴ This was asserted by Rodenfels, *'Sittenstrolche'*, p. 19.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁶ R. Niedenthal, *'Eine Verbrechersippe. Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Vererbung asozialer verbrecherischer Neigungen'*, *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil A*, 20 March 1938, p. 970, gives an example of 'Family B', of whose 25 members, eight were hereditarily 'criminal'.

⁴⁷ W. Skalweit, *'Rassenhygiene und Alkoholfrage'*, *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil B*, 5 May 1936, p. 58.

⁴⁸ C. Rosten, *'Der Alkohol als Keimgift'*, *Neues Volk*, June 1937, p. 28.

an alcoholic spent a substantial part or all of his/her family's income on alcohol, 'the misery of the alcoholic' became the misery of the entire family.⁴⁹ A wider use of sterilisation of alcoholics than that provided for by the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring was proposed as a means of 'eradicating' all such elements for the future.⁵⁰ This was deemed necessary because the individual offspring of any alcoholic family could be burdened with several kinds of 'degeneration' or illness, including 'criminality' and epilepsy.⁵¹ The same applied to the children of drug addicts.⁵² In addition, the close relationship between alcohol, prostitution and sexual diseases was a cause of concern for the future of the *Volk*.⁵³

An issue that generated much controversy was whether or not a former 'heavy drinker' who underwent a sustained period of abstinence was 'cured' or 'curable'.⁵⁴ Chronic alcoholism was not regarded as an illness in itself, but was the result of psychopathic disorders, which could be separated into six groups.⁵⁵ The first category consisted of 'schizoid alcoholics', 'obstinate, morose loners' who were 'scornful of society'. These were not in any sense social drinkers, but were always solitary drinkers. The second group was made up of 'manic depressive alcoholics', who drank only during phases of acute manic depression, but never during the periods in between. A period of abstinence in no way signified an end to the drinking of an alcoholic in this category, because he

⁴⁹ M. Fischer, 'Die Alkoholgefahr', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil B*, 5 Aug. 1935, p. 203.

⁵⁰ See Dr. Hauffe, 'Der Alkoholismus und die Ausmerzung Asozialer und Psychopathen', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil A*, 5 June 1939, p. 178.

⁵¹ Rosten, 'Der Alkohol als Keimgift', p. 29.

⁵² On alcohol and narcotic addiction, and its effects on offspring, see E. Gabriel, 'Rauschgiftfrage und Rassenhygiene', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil B*, 5 Aug. 1938, pp. 209-220 and 20 Aug. 1938, pp. 245-53.

⁵³ Skalweit, 'Rassenhygiene und Alkoholfrage', p. 62.

⁵⁴ Hauffe, 'Der Alkoholismus', p. 177.

⁵⁵ On what follows, see H. Pfannmüller, 'Zur Psychopathie des Alkoholikers', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil A*, 5 April 1936, pp. 12-19.

would resume his drinking when manifestations of his illness recurred in subsequent stages of his life. The third group was composed of 'epileptoid alcoholics', who had a deficiency of a 'hereditary-degenerative nature'. Prostitutes, pimps and vagrants fell into this grouping, as did other 'criminals' with 'moral defects'. Members of this group were recognisable as 'discontented, obstreperous elements'. The fourth category was made up of 'feeble-minded drinkers' who had displayed 'low intellectual abilities' since childhood and who showed weakness of will. 'Feeble-minded' alcoholics could be completely cured by permanent abstinence, although ensuring this depended upon the environment in which the 'feeble-minded' alcoholic lived, because such people were easily influenced. The fifth grouping consisted of 'general psychopaths', who had already displayed great weaknesses of character in their youth, were 'maladjusted and egocentric', whose 'psychological imbalances' led them to alcohol in the first place, and who ultimately became habitual drinkers. Of this group, a proportion could be educated and rehabilitated into 'useful members of society'. The sixth group was composed of 'social drinkers', or people who drank because of the nature of their job - such as waiters, brewers and distillers - whose consumption of alcohol was not related to any underlying psychopathic disorder. To eugenicists and psychiatrists, there was a crucial distinction between 'hereditarily healthy curable alcoholics' and 'hereditarily ill incurable alcoholics'.

'Asociality' was hereditary.⁵⁶ The issue of what made a person 'asocial' lay, according to Nazi racial research, purely and simply in genetic make-up. Hereditary teaching distinguished between the genotype, the genetic constitution of an individual, and the phenotype, the interaction between the genetic composition and the environment. Hence, the former was the sum of all the dormant features in a person, inherited from his

⁵⁶ BA R 36/1864, 'Wer ist "asozial"? Begriffsbestimmung des Rassenpolitischen Amtes', 8 Dec. 1937.

or her ancestors, whilst the latter was the impression the individual gave, once certain features had been offset by environmental factors and influences. Consequently, racial hygienists were very concerned with the issue of whether or not people who appeared acceptable were actually inherently 'asocial'. For example, a woman that did not at first appear to be 'feeble-minded', but was later medically diagnosed as such, was found to have the following background: 'mother - mentally ill; father - alcoholic, criminal; grandfather - criminal, ruffian; grandmother - weakly; grandfather - drunkard, criminal; grandmother - swindler'.⁵⁷ She was a classic example of 'concealed feeble-mindedness'. Nazi eugenicists, because of their desire to selectively breed a perfect race, could not risk the possibility of such people marring their envisaged goal.

People that lay between the categories of 'hereditarily healthy' and 'hereditarily ill' were also a cause for concern. These were people who appeared healthy, but might have been harbouring dormant factors of hereditary illness that could reappear either later in their own lives or in subsequent generations.⁵⁸ The majority of such people were dealt with neither by the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring, nor by the Marriage Health Law, because there was no evidence of hereditary illness. Yet they had to be treated differently from the completely 'hereditarily healthy'. As such, they were neither to be 'eliminated' like the 'hereditarily ill' nor to be sponsored to the same extent as the 'hereditarily healthy'. This meant that they were not selected for special formations like the SS, or for new homes, Adolf Hitler Schools and so on.⁵⁹ Such people were often the offspring of marriages between one 'asocial' and one healthy, 'socially fit' person. Such marriages were not favoured, because at least some of the children arising from

⁵⁷ 'Ist Frieda - Frieda?', *Neues Volk*, June 1939, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁸ Staemmler, 'Das Problem der erbkranken und der asozialen Familien', p. 37.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

them were likely to be 'asocial' or 'hereditary burdens'.⁶⁰ Indeed, research by Kranz and Koller showed that more than a quarter of the offspring from such marriages were 'socially unfit'.⁶¹

Nazi eugenicists were absolutely clear about the fact that the 'valuable' should be sponsored whilst the 'inferior' and 'unfit' should be 'weeded out' and 'eliminated'. Their assessment of both 'antisocial criminals' and 'asocial parasites' as 'hereditarily inferior' gave them a justification - however spurious - for their actions. This desire for racial improvement was not a new invention, but an idea whose roots lay in the nineteenth century, most notably in social Darwinism.⁶² For example, the zoologist, Ernst Haeckel had concluded in 1868, that the death penalty was an example of 'natural selection'⁶³; during the Nazi period, death as a result of compulsory hard labour was another example. What was novel, during the Third Reich, was not only the fact that these ideas had a much wider currency, but also that they were radicalised and actualised by the regime with the help of the medical profession. The decline of Judaeo-Christian concern for the weak was another important factor here too. Hence, *völkisch* regeneration was not just a case of 'racial improvement', but also of 'social betterment'. A policy of suppression of the 'socially inferior' required justification. This was provided by the scientific and sociological experts who legitimised racial hygienic practices and made the population at large believe that such actions were both moral and rational.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁶¹ See Scherer, *'Asozial' im Dritten Reich*, p. 67.

⁶² E. Klee & W. Dreßen, *Nationalsozialistische Gesundheits- und Rassenpolitik. "Lebensunwertes Leben", Sterilisation und "Euthanasie"*, in U. & W. Benz (eds.), *Sozialisation und Traumatisierung. Kinder in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992), pp. 103-4.

⁶³ E. Klee, *"Euthanasie" im NS-Staat. Die "Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens"* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), p. 16.

Above all, the policy of 'elimination' and 'selection' for 'racial regeneration' intervened in what is usually the personal domain of a family. As the 'germ cell of the nation', the family stood at the centre of policy regarding both the 'hereditarily ill' and the 'asocial'. The National Socialists differentiated between families that were biologically and socially 'fit', and those that were not. 'Asocial' families represented a danger to the *Volk* by reproducing indiscriminately. 'Asocials' had a quicker succession of generations because they tended to marry early, and to bring a series of illegitimate children into a marriage with them.⁶⁴ The 'asocial' were seen as a biological threat to the *Volk* because they had relatively more children than the 'valuable' and 'fit' sectors of the population. As such, they were considered to be 'irresponsible'. In addition, whereas professional criminals - although inimical to society because of their deeds - were considered to be biologically quite harmless because they tended not to reproduce much, 'asocial clans', conversely, represented little danger for the present, because of their inactive nature, but were a threat for the future because of their prolific procreation.⁶⁵

Knorr carried out a study of the 'asocial' in Saxony, in which he placed 'asocials' in the following categories:- A: those that were in constant trouble with the police and authorities; B: the 'workshy'; C: the uneconomical and unrestrained who could not maintain an ordered household or educate their children; D: alcoholics, gamblers, drug addicts, vagrants, vagabonds, beggars, hawkers and pedlars; E: those that were hostile to the community or led immoral lives. He found that in groups B-D, which represented the 'typically inactive parasites of the community', families with five or more children predominated, but in groups A and E there was a tendency to have fewer or no children.

⁶⁴ On this, see W. Knorr, *Die Fruchtbarkeit der Asozialen und die der Durchschnittsbevölkerung*, *Volk und Rasse*, VI, 1938, pp. 182-3.

⁶⁵ Brethner, *Das Asozialenproblem*, p. 7.

Particularly in group E, this was the result either of gonorrhoea hindering reproduction, or of a large degree of egoism leading to conscious decisions to have small households.⁶⁶ In addition, whilst the average German man got married at the age of thirty and the average German marriage had two children, the 'asocial' became a father for the first time at the age of twenty, and had six or eight children.⁶⁷ Another problem, was that an 'asocial' man tended to marry a woman of a corresponding type, so that again and again, marriages between 'asocial' couples and the inbreeding of 'asocial families' meant that 'inferior' hereditary factors became stronger and stronger.⁶⁸

The results of such marriages could be seen most clearly, not by considering just one family, but by taking into account several generations of an 'asocial clan'. One case study considered 320 members of such a family - 'Family X' - spanning seven generations, whose records went back to 1745.⁶⁹ Among these 320 people, only a single one was able to support himself and his family permanently through work in a profession. The remainder consisted of wanderers, without homes or professions. For seven generations the family was made up of vagrants, basketmakers, 'idlers' and 'good for nothings', of 'mentally and morally degenerate people', whose wives usually came from similar backgrounds. Three of the women who married into Family X came from actively criminal families from Münster, five had been in prison and one had been certified for mental illness. In these cases, the quality of heredity was equally bad on both sides. There were also six instances of intermarriage between members of Family X. In the area from which Family X originated, its name had a bad reputation as a family of

⁶⁶ See Knorr, *'Die Fruchtbarkeit der Asozialen...'*, pp. 180-2.

⁶⁷ BA NS 20/143-2, see enclosure to Rundschreiben Nr. 294/38, *'Betr. Asozialenerhebung in Sachsen'*, 22 Aug. 1938, p. 2.

⁶⁸ Staemmler, *'Das Problem der erbkranken und der asozialen Familien'*, p. 41.

⁶⁹ On what follows, see I. Andrees, *'Untersuchung über eine asoziale Sippe'*, *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil A*, 5 May 1939, pp. 81-101.

'asocial' vagabonds, roaming the countryside and living in disorder, with dirty and unkempt children, dilapidated homes and without any kind of permanent or regular work. The majority of them were basket-weavers one day, rag-and-bone men the next, or pedlars or umbrella-makers, but never professionals or even wage-earners with a steady income. Of the entire family, only one member had a permanent job, as a factory inspector. Five others were skilled workers - one as a bricklayer, one as a mechanic, two as stove fitters and one as a journeyman tailor - and twelve were unskilled workers. But even these men were not considered to be 'valuable in the usual sense'.

Very little was known about the first generation, as the records about them were too sketchy. The founder of the family was a man called Johannes Adolfus X, but little other information existed about him. More was known of the subsequent generations. The case study went into considerable detail about quite a number of the 320 family members, but here a summary of the lifestyle and characteristics of a selection of them are sufficient. For example, Bernhard X, born on 16 April 1835, was a basket maker and broom maker. He married Elisabeth V, the child of a basket maker. He spent two years in prison for theft, and his whole family was 'unhealthy and sick'. Another family member was Peter X, born on 2 March 1838 in Münster. He was a basket maker, pedlar and hawker. He married twice. His first wife died of tuberculosis in 1870, leaving four children. His second wife outlived Peter, who died of a head injury. She led a 'slovenly' life, giving birth to three illegitimate children whose fathers were unknown.⁷⁰ Anton Friedrich X, born on 1 February 1863, was a scissor grinder, basket maker and pedlar. He led a very disturbed life and was imprisoned nine times for committing bodily harm. He was a notorious alcoholic and 'idler', whose wife was of a similar nature, stemming

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

from a criminal family in Münster. Franz X, born on 2 December 1884, was a basket maker and pedlar. He was imprisoned four times between 1904 and 1909 and was eventually put into a lunatic asylum in 1927. His wife was an illegitimate child and the eldest of nineteen siblings. Her father had been imprisoned on fourteen occasions. Her household was 'completely filthy' and 'her children were so infested that they had to be taken to hospital'.⁷¹ Friedrich X was born on 6 November 1892, in a caravan, and lived his whole life in one. He had a sexual relationship with Helene W, who 'stemmed from a gypsy family' from 1903 onwards, marrying her fifteen years later. He was a travelling showman, but was unable to continue his work because of lung disease. He died of tuberculosis in 1933. His wife was 'illiterate and depraved'. She did not spend her maintenance money on her children, who slept on the floor, but instead used it to buy alcohol. After the death of her husband, she had a relationship with a seventeen year old boy, dismantled her household and 'gave away' her children.⁷² Karl X, born on 8 May 1872, was a basket maker and scissor grinder. He led a 'very disturbed life' and was imprisoned fourteen times for begging, theft and fraud. He was married four times and had nineteen children in all. His family was very poor and often ill, costing the welfare services a considerable amount of money, and lacking 'the most necessary household objects'.⁷³

There was evidence of 'erroneous behaviour' in practically every family member. This family epitomised the 'asocial clans' that 'burdened' and 'devalued' the *Volk*. In Family X, there were numerous instances of alcoholism, crime, tendencies towards vagrancy, begging and avoidance of regular work. Such families were, from a financial point of

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

view, 'a perceptible burden for public welfare', being supported with food, clothing, household items, rent payments and cash, as well as doctors' fees, hospital fees and the cost of maintaining them in prisons, mental institutions, special care and special schools.⁷⁴

This case study ultimately hoped to show that the character defects of such people were hereditary and that therefore any expectations of 'asocials' giving birth to 'healthy' and 'socially fit' children were utterly futile.

In journals relating to population, race and medicine, and in particular, psychiatry, it was not uncommon to find pictures and captions showing 'hereditarily ill' and 'asocial' children juxtaposed against 'healthy, fit' children, or family trees of 'asocial' and 'hereditarily ill' families and 'hereditarily healthy' families.⁷⁵ One such article traced four generations of an 'asocial', 'hereditarily ill' family.⁷⁶ In the first generation, the grandfather was a brutal and violent alcoholic. The grandmother was 'hereditarily ill'. In the next generation, the father was an alcoholic and a receiver of stolen goods, who was shot by one of his sons in an argument. The mother was 'morally feeble-minded' and had been sentenced several times for receiving stolen goods. Her cousin was a 'criminal' and 'incurably mentally ill'. The third generation was made up of: Peter, who was an alcoholic and who had inherited his father's violent temper and brutality; Josef, who was imprisoned several times for theft and for receiving stolen goods; Hermann, a criminal who died of tuberculosis; Amalie, 'mentally inferior', who committed suicide; Jakob, who was imprisoned for patricide; Matthias, an alcoholic and notorious 'ruffian'; Grete, 'mentally inferior', who was a thief and a prostitute; and Wilhelm, a 'communist', who was also 'mentally inferior'. The fourth generation, Amalie's children, were taken into care. All three were 'mentally

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁷⁵ For example, '*Nicht länger so! Nur noch so!*', *Neues Volk*, Oct. 1933, pp. 10-15.

⁷⁶ On what follows, see '*Eine erbkrankte Familie*', *Neues Volk*, March 1934, pp. 6-11.

inferior' and had lung disease. In contrast, a 'hereditarily healthy' family was considered, whose East Prussian ancestry could be traced back over three centuries, to 1662.⁷⁷ This family was 'hereditarily healthy', *kinderreich* and 'valuable' to the nation in every respect and in every generation.

Another article compared the 'hereditarily healthy' and 'hereditarily ill' families in a remote mountain village.⁷⁸ Of 1,100 inhabitants, the village doctor maintained that 4% of the adult population was 'unfit for life'. The causes of this were mainly held to be marriages between blood relatives and misuse of alcohol. In this village, marriages between blood relatives were common occurrences amongst both the higher and the lower social echelons. The main reason for intermarriage amongst the better-placed was the desire to preserve the family property intact, as it would have been reduced by marriages outside the family. Despite this inbreeding, the families of these land owners and farmers remained healthy. Conversely, inbreeding amongst the socially lower classes, made up of basket weavers and other 'asocials', led to the birth of 'undesirable' children - traits such as dwarfism, idiocy and 'congenital feeble-mindedness' were not uncommon. Amongst these 'asocials', many were illegitimate offspring, who had no sense of family and whose unrestrained sex lives brought more 'feeble-minded', 'hereditarily ill' or 'criminal' children into the world. Apparently, intermarriage was acceptable amongst the middle and upper classes, but not amongst the lower strata of society.

One of the major concerns of Nazi eugenicists was how to eliminate the danger posed by 'asocial' families before it became an 'insoluble problem'. In many respects, 'asocials' were

⁷⁷ See '*Eine erbgesunde Familie*', *Neues Volk*, June 1934, pp. 8-13.

⁷⁸ On what follows, see '*Erbgesunde und erbkrankte Familien in einem entlegenen Gebirgsdorf*', *Neues Volk*, March 1935, pp. 20-5.

regarded by the racial hygienists as a greater threat than the chronically 'mentally ill', for whilst the latter were institutionalised and therefore outside the life of society, 'asocials' remained influential on society 'in the most far-reaching way'.⁷⁹ Research on families carried out by Knorr, Finger and Ritter, and research on twins carried out by, among others, Kranz, showed that the old methods for dealing with the 'asocial' problem were proving to be ineffective.⁸⁰ Ultimately, the 'experts' decided that there remained only one effective way to proceed, namely, to prevent 'asocials' from reproducing. In this sense, the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring dealt with a percentage of 'asocials', who were sterilised for 'congenital feeble-mindedness'. However, this applied to, at most, 20% of those categorised as 'asocial'.⁸¹ The overwhelming majority of 'asocials' appeared mentally and physically healthy - for example, they could pass 'intelligence tests' - and therefore could not be diagnosed as 'hereditarily ill' and sterilised under the terms of this law.⁸² However, these people did have 'character defects', such as 'lack of restraint in their sex lives' and 'lack of motivation towards achievement'. Essentially, their 'asociality' was seen as 'a complex manifestation of genetic defects'.⁸³ As a result, these people could not be diagnosed medically. Instead, they had to be diagnosed in a 'social-biological' manner and their 'social failure' as a group had to be proven. In this way, the entire 'asocial class' was to be wiped out by a new racial hygiene law that allowed for the special sterilisation of 'asocials' so that vagabonds, vagrants and

⁷⁹ H. Thiele, 'Zur Frage asozialen Psychopathen', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil A*, 5 Sept. 1938, p. 396.

⁸⁰ On research on twins, see F. Stumpf, 'Untersuchungen an kriminellen und psychopathischen Zwillinge', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil B*, 5 Nov. 1936, pp. 409-13. See also, on twin and family research, Scherer, 'Asozial' im *Dritten Reich*, pp. 59-66.

⁸¹ Brethner, 'Das Asozialenproblem', p. 8.

⁸² BA NS 20/143-2, enclosure to R Nr. 294/38, p. 2.

⁸³ K. H. Roth, 'Schöner neuer Mensch. Der Paradigmenwechsel der klassischen Genetik und seine Auswirkungen auf die Bevölkerungsbiologie des "Dritten Reichs"', in H. Kaupen-Haas (ed.), *Der Griff nach der Bevölkerung. Aktualität und Kontinuität nazistischer Bevölkerungspolitik* (Nördlingen, 1986), p. 40.

criminals would gradually become a thing of the past.⁸⁴

Discrimination against 'Asocials'

Indeed, 'asocial' families were discriminated against by the regime in a number of ways, even before the issue of the sterilisation of 'asocials' became a serious option in 1939. One of these, was the denial of the Cross of Honour of the German Mother to 'asocial' mothers. Given that this award was the main symbolic attribute of a woman's value to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the issue of who was eligible to receive it was highly significant. The first and foremost criterion, of course, was proof of German blood. Secondly, any mother who had been sentenced to prison, especially for a crime that went against the meaning of the Cross of Honour (i.e. abortion), was not eligible, nor indeed was anyone who damaged the concept of the German mother by prostitution or race defilement. Thirdly, 'mothers of hereditarily ill and asocial families' were 'out of the question for the award of the Cross of Honour'.⁸⁵ 'Asocial' families were regarded as those that continually got into conflict with the law, the police and the authorities; those whose members were 'workshy', and who sought welfare benefits, especially from the *NS Volkswohlfahrt* and the *Winterhilfswerk*, or that obviously regarded their children as sources of income;⁸⁶ those that were 'uneconomical', for example, parents who senselessly used up a single child allowance on the purchase of luxury goods, instead of buying necessity items; those that neither maintained an orderly household nor educated their offspring to become useful 'national comrades'; those whose members were

⁸⁴ Thiele, *'Zur Frage asozialen Psychopathen'*, p. 396. See above references to the Protection Law which never came into being.

⁸⁵ BA NS 6/232, enclosure to Anordnung Nr. 37/39, *'Merkblatt für die Auslese der Mütter, die für Verleihung des Ehrenkreuzes der deutschen Mutter vorgeschlagen werden sollen'*, 15 Feb. 1939.

⁸⁶ It is to be noted that 'asocial' families were eventually excluded from the welfare work of the *NS Volkswohlfahrt* and *Winterhilfswerk*. BA NS 37/1031, *'Betr. Richtlinien für die Beurteilung der Erbgesundheit'* 14 Oct. 1940.

alcoholics or led 'immoral lives'.⁸⁷ Since 'asocial large families' represented a danger and a threat to the nation, the mothers of such families could not possibly be considered for the Cross of Honour.⁸⁸

Similarly, the Book of Honour of the German Family was to be awarded only to those families in which the parents were not only 'valuable' members of the *Volksgemeinschaft* themselves, but who had raised a number of 'valuable' children for their nation.⁸⁹ As such, it could not be awarded to large families in which the children were a 'burden' to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The distinctions between the 'valuable *kinderreich* family' and the 'asocial large family' were clear. The simplest indication of the inner value of a family could be seen by the state of its accommodation. The *kinderreich* family would have an ordered household, making the best of all available means and funds, whereas the 'asocial family' would turn its living quarters into a dilapidated and filthy mess and squander its welfare benefits on alcohol, instead of making necessary provisions for the children.⁹⁰ 'Asocial' families also often had a higher child mortality rate than that of the average population, because the parents did not look after their children properly. Indeed, child mortality in 'asocial' families was almost the same as that in 'hereditarily ill' families.⁹¹

The issue of welfare provisions for 'asocial' families was one of considerable significance to the Nazi regime. Essentially, it was felt that money squandered on 'asocials' could be

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ On mothers who were denied the Cross of Honour, see also I. Weyrather, *Muttertag und Arbeitskreis. Der Kult um die "deutsche Mutter" im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993), pp. 85-124, and especially pp. 102-8 on the 'asocial' and 'workshy'.

⁸⁹ W. Knorr, 'Die Auslese für das Ehrenbuch der kinderreichen Familie', *Volk und Rasse*, VIII, 1938, p. 267.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁹¹ Dr. Peretti, 'Zum Antrag für das Ehrenkreuz der deutschen Mutter', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil A*, 5 April 1940, p. 8.

better spent on housing 'valuable *kinderreich* families', provisions for the needy, but 'socially fit', or the war effort. Cases were often cited of 'asocial' families scrounging welfare from the state or municipal authorities.⁹² For example, a family with ten children, of whom seven were still alive, had used up a 16,000 RM. cash allowance, and was further provided with food, milk and clothes and extra cash allowances. In addition, there was the cost of maintaining several of the children in schools for backward children. All this expenditure on a family which was 'workshy' and had inclinations towards 'criminality' and 'Marxism', was considered a waste. Such arguments had a popular resonance. There were numerous other cases, of which a selection follow: '32 year old man with wife and 4 children, workshy, costing 8,500 RM. in cash'; '30 year old man, pimp, wife prostitute, 3,000 RM. cash allowance'; '32 year old hooligan, lazy, 6 children, 5,000 RM. cash allowance, only got married in order to obtain a higher benefit'; '40 year old man, 2 children, scarcely employed since 1921, 4,000 RM. benefit'; 'workshy alcoholic, depraved wife, the two youngest children in care, cash benefit 1,324 RM. in two years, other costs, of course, higher'; '48 year old man, widower with one child, until now cash benefit of 4,000 RM., grumbler, ill and criminal'; 'single woman, supported since 1930, leads a slovenly way of life, drinks and has three illegitimate children, who are in special care'; 'married couple with three legitimate children and one illegitimate child, husband workshy, until now cost 3,400 RM. in cash, excluding hospital fees and other non-cash benefits, family members... in conflict with the authorities for grumbling and vagrancy and being workshy'. It was felt that the money wasted on supporting these 'asocials' could have been better spent.

⁹² On what follows, see J. Walbaum, '*Öffentlicher Gesundheitsdienst und Asoziale*' *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil A*, 20 June 1936, pp. 219-22.

The 'asocial problem' was more predominant in the big cities and industrial areas than in the countryside, because the great 'boom' in 'asociality' in Germany was partly a consequence of industrialisation, and because it was in urban areas that the 'socially unfit' tended to live.⁹³ The impetus for persecution of 'asocials' often came from 'below', by means of local initiatives, rather than as the result of national high-level policy decisions. Welfare authorities wished to off-load costs, and ordinary householders wished to be rid of transient nuisance neighbours. The creation of *ad hoc* camps for 'gypsies' in various locations throughout Germany in the mid 1930s, such as Marzahn in Berlin, was one example of this combination of forces.⁹⁴ Another local initiative was a slum clearance scheme in Hamburg, in 1934-35, by means of which whole areas of the city populated with 'criminals', 'prostitutes', 'Communists' and other 'asocials' were demolished.⁹⁵ The 'criminal geography' of the city showed a high incidence of crime, fights, juvenile delinquency and sexual deviance within vicinities inhabited by 'asocials'. The physical destruction of the hereditary properties of these 'asocials' put an end to this. The experimental 'asocial colony', Hashude, in Bremen was another initiative of this kind, its impetus coming from the local welfare authorities.

⁹³ BA R 36/1863, 'Behandlung der Asozialen in der Fürsorge (Asozialen-Kolonien)' (no date), p. 5.

⁹⁴ W. Wippermann, 'Das "Zigeunerlager" Berlin-Marzahn 1936-1945. Zur Geschichte und Funktion eines nationalsozialistischen Zwangslagers', *Pogrom. Zeitschrift für bedrohte Völker*, 18 (1987), pp. 77-80.

⁹⁵ On this, see K. H. Roth, 'Städtesanierung und "ausmerzende" Soziologie. Der Fall Andreas Walther und die "Notarbeit 51" der "Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft" 1934-1935 in Hamburg', in C. Klingemann (ed.), *Rassenmythos und Sozialwissenschaften in Deutschland* (Opladen, 1987), pp. 370-393. See also, K. H. Roth, 'Ein Mustergau gegen die Armen, Leistungsschwachen und "Gemeinschaftsunfähigen"', in A. Ebbinghaus, H. Kaupen Haas & K. H. Roth (eds.), *Heilen und Vernichten im Mustergau Hamburg. Bevölkerungs- und Gesundheitspolitik im Dritten Reich* (Hamburg, 1984), p. 12.

Otto Wetzel, the Mayor of Heidelberg, was one of the main advocates of the concept of the 'asocial colony' as a method of dealing with the problem of housing 'asocial families'. He firmly rejected the solutions to this problem adopted in the past. These included: horrific barrack-type accommodation for 'asocials' on the outskirts of cities, which became the seedbeds of crime; temporary housing, which the 'asocial elements' either left very quickly or failed to keep in order; the accommodation of 'asocials' on ordinary housing estates, which jeopardised the rest of the inhabitants, mainly because of the 'demoralising' effect engendered by the former; the splitting up of 'asocial' families, so that, for example, an alcoholic father was sent to an institution, his wife to a workhouse and the children taken into special care, which was an expensive solution.⁹⁶ He favoured, instead, the idea of a 'closed asocial colony', in which 'asocial families' could be socially engineered, through the imposition of strict control and surveillance, into 'valuable' members of the 'national community'.⁹⁷

Advocates of 'asocial colonies' clearly believed that they were a useful and effective method of dealing with the 'asocial problem', offering the possibility of maintaining family units, separating them from the rest of a city's inhabitants, guaranteeing clean, cheap and durable housing and exerting educational influences and constant surveillance over 'asocial' families. 'Asocial colonies' also seemed favourable because, apart from hereditary factors, the milieu in which a child grew up was considered to have some bearing on its nature. National Socialist 'criminal-biological experts' maintained that children who grew up in atrocious tenement housing or led a wandering lifestyle were reared as thieves, beggars or vagabonds. Such children saw that work was of no value

⁹⁶ On this, see BA R 36/1863, *'Die "Asozialen-Kolonie". Ein Großstadtproblem: Wohin mit den Asozialen?'* (no date), p. 35.

⁹⁷ BA R 36/1863, letter from the Mayor of Heidelberg to the *Deutsche Gemeindetag*, *'Betr. Asozialenkolonie'* 24 Dec. 1935, p. 1.

or importance to their parents. Their 'tendency towards asociality', because of their biological make-up, was 'exacerbated' by an 'asocial environment'.⁹⁸ In addition, the complete separation of 'asocials' in primitive housing led to the exclusion of 'improvable' people, and children, in particular, from the *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁹⁹ Exponents of 'asocial colonies' felt that the conditions of life inside them could minimise these trends. Indeed, some estimates reckoned that after satisfactory educational influence, some 95% of formerly 'asocial elements' could be released 'improved'.¹⁰⁰ 'Educational influence' entailed: compulsory work and surveillance for the men; observation, leadership and control of the work of the women; control of the household in which the family lived; and training and supervision of the children. Another motive for setting up 'asocial colonies' was to reduce public expenditure on 'asocials'.¹⁰¹ Following an initial outlay, local authorities would not have to pay out welfare benefits to 'asocials', nor continue to have to pay rent and outstanding rent which often dated back over many years for 'asocials'. However, the debate continued between those who favoured the 'asocial colony' as a cost-effective solution and those who considered it to be too expensive, wasting resources that could be put to better use.

Hashude: An Experimental 'Asocial Colony' in Bremen

In October 1936, Hashude, an experimental 'asocial colony', was set up by the welfare authorities in Bremen, to establish whether or not 'asocial families' could be socially engineered into 'valuable members of the national community'. Hashude - established on the initiative of SS member Hans Haltermann, the Senator for Employment, Technology

⁹⁸ Staemmler, 'Das Problem der erbkranken und der asozialen Familien', p. 41.

⁹⁹ 'Bremens Wohnungsfürsorgeanstalt', *Bremer Zeitung*, 13 June 1937.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ W. Voigt, 'Wohnhaft. Die Siedlung als panoptisches Gefängnis', *Arch + 75/76*, Aug. 1984, p. 82.

and Welfare - was the most significant experiment in the area of housing 'asocials'. Hashude was termed a 'welfare housing institution', but was, in effect, a kind of prison. It was a unique institution, which represented a halfway house between a municipal housing estate and the system of concentration camps set up by the National Socialist regime. The separation of 'deviant', proletarian groups from the rest of society through internment *per se* was in no way the brainchild of the National Socialists. This idea had its precursors in the compulsory work houses first set up in sixteenth-century England and Holland, which were used to discipline similarly poor sectors of the population. What was new, however, was the use of the 'asocial colony' as a testing ground for the 'fitness' of 'asocials' and to see whether or not they could be engineered into 'valuable' individuals. This meant, in the first place, discovering the extent of the 'waywardness' of the families interned, that is, whether they were 'capable of improvement', 'incapable of improvement' or 'dangerous to the community'.¹⁰² If they could demonstrate improvement, these families were 'released' into 'normal' society, but if they could not, they might well end their days in a concentration camp. Consequently, Hashude was seen as 'a completely new kind of way' to deal with the 'asocial' problem.¹⁰³ It gave 'asocial' families 'a last chance' - based on 'education' and draconian compulsory measures - to become integrated into the 'national community'.¹⁰⁴ If families failed to improve, they were 'to bear the consequences' for they would be regarded as 'dangerous to the nation' and treated accordingly.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² StAB 3 W 11. Nr. 467. 1. 'Betr. : Bremer Erziehungswohnungen - Maßnahmen gegen Asoziale', 2 March 1936, p. 1.

¹⁰³ 'Wohnungsfürsorgeanstalt Hashude', *Bremer Nachrichten*, 13 June 1937.

¹⁰⁴ StAB 3 W 11. Nr. 467. 1. Report by Fichtner on the setting up of Hashude, 11 July 1935, p. 1. See also, 'Die letzte Chance', *Das Schwarze Korps*, 20 Jan. 1938, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ StAB 4, 29/1 - 859. 'Fürsorge für gefährdete, unsoziale und asoziale Familien', *Wohlfahrtsblatt der Freien Hansestadt Bremen*, Jan. 1936, Nr. 1, p. 2.

Haltermann believed that, in many cases, it was possible to 'improve' 'asocial families', provided that attempts to do so included the entire family, not just the father. Indeed, it was not always the father who was at fault. In some cases, it was the mother who created a danger for her whole family because of her behaviour or character traits, such as 'apathy' and 'laziness'.¹⁰⁶ The aim of Hashude was to educate 'asocials' within an institution for the family community, that is, through a 'living colony', largely for the sake of the children. Ultimately, it was hoped that children would be rehabilitated, even if the parents were ineducable.¹⁰⁷ However, educating the whole family together meant that the parents still had to undertake a certain amount of responsibility for their children. This too was part of the aim, for the authorities did not want 'lazy and neglectful parents' to be able to languish whilst others took care of their children.¹⁰⁸

Hashude consisted of 84 family houses, an administration building, a bathing area and a children's home. The building cost of each house was either 4,600 RM. or 5,000 RM., depending on its size. The total cost was approximately 600,000 RM.¹⁰⁹ The architectural and organisational model for Hashude was a 'controlled housing estate' in The Hague in The Netherlands, which had been set up in 1923. This consisted of a central observation point, with five rows of housing emerging radially from it, in the style of the panoptic prison of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁰ The concept of the panoptic prison

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ 'Bremens Wohnungsfürsorgeanstalt', *Bremer Zeitung*, 13 June 1937.

¹⁰⁸ StAB 3 W 11. Nr. 467. 1. 'Betr.: Bremer Erziehungswohnungen - Maßnahmen gegen Asoziale', 2 March 1936, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ For a breakdown of building costs, see StAB 3 W 11. Nr. 467. 1. Kummer, 'Betr.: Bremer Erziehungswohnungen', 6 Dec. 1935, which is an estimate of these expenses.

¹¹⁰ On the panopticon, see: J. Semple, *Bentham's Prison. A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary* (Oxford, 1993); M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth, 1979), especially pp. 195-228; and M. Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain. The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850* (London, 1989).

actually dated back to the 1780s. It was then that Jeremy Bentham developed the idea of the panopticon as the perfect way to mete out a just measure of pain. Although the panoptic prison as a 'mill for grinding rogues honest and idle men industrious' did not evolve in his lifetime, Bentham's idea - somewhat altered - did emerge in the middle of the nineteenth century. The panoptic prison induced in its inmates a sense of permanently being subject to surveillance. It presented, according to Foucault, 'a cruel, ingenious cage'.¹¹¹ Gerd Offenberg, the building director of Bremen, accompanied Haltermann to The Hague to visit its 'controlled housing estate', modelled on the panopticon. He termed it 'a dreadful structure!'.¹¹² In fact, even the director of the Dutch institution 'was not very optimistic' about its success. Offenberg's plan, therefore, was to build an institution that did not look so much like a prison. He claimed that he could not conceive that one could 'make normal people out of asocials in prison-like accommodation'.¹¹³ He did, however, follow the example of stone steps and iron railings because of past experiences of 'asocials' burning and destroying anything that was not solid or securely nailed and screwed down. Moreover, the houses were simply but strongly built to be durable and to discourage vermin.¹¹⁴ Instead of the traditional panoptic style, Offenberg planned two rows of houses, meeting to form an L-shape. The administration building, complete with observation cabin, lay in the angle point. The gate of the administration building was the only point of entry and exit on the estate. Not only was the possibility of panoptic control ensured through this plan, but was actually optimised beyond that of the Dutch system, allowing the front entrances of two-thirds of the houses to be in the field of vision of the observation point.¹¹⁵ In addition, trees were

¹¹¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 205.

¹¹² G. Offenberg, *Mosaik meines Lebens* (Mainz, 1974), p. 192.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ StAB 4, 29/1 - 859 'Bremische Wohnungsfürsorgeanstalt (Erziehungswohnungen)', 30 Nov. 1936, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ Voigt, 'Wohnhaft', p. 85.

only planted in places where they would not obstruct the view of the houses from the administration building. Hence, despite Offenberg's concerns about the Dutch institution being too 'prison-like', the institution he planned was, in the end, more effective in terms of surveillance and indeed, more prison-like in its ethos. It was surrounded by a double hedgerow, between which there was a wire mesh fence. The houses had no back doors, only front doors, so that all comings and goings could be observed. Whilst the institution in The Hague had no system of 'admission' - poor and homeless families themselves had to decide if they would trade off having a roof over their heads for being subjected to constant surveillance - 'asocial families' in Bremen were sent to Hashude without any choice in the matter.¹¹⁶ Indeed, the involvement of the police was often required for those families that did not undertake to enter Hashude voluntarily.

The criteria for being 'admitted' to Hashude included 'unwillingness to work', 'refusal to work', 'lack of thrift', 'lack of restraint (of different types)', 'drinking', 'peddling', 'begging', as well as 'disturbing community life' and 'neglect of children'.¹¹⁷ Haltermann believed that the 'asocial colony' was 'correct', according to National Socialism, and that through it, there was the possibility of improving public life, 'raising the quality of the population' and decreasing crime.¹¹⁸ The legal basis upon which Hashude's system of admission operated, was essentially Paragraph 1 of the Decree for the Protection of the *Volk* and State, of 28 February 1933.¹¹⁹ Under its terms, 'asocials' represented a 'danger to the entire nation'. This threat could be averted by placing such families compulsorily in a

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ StAB 3 W 11. Nr. 467. 1. 'Betr. : Bremer Erziehungswohnungen - Maßnahmen gegen Asoziale', 2 March 1936, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ StAB 3 W 11. Nr. 467. 1. 'Erziehische Aufgaben der Arbeitsfürsorge. Unterredung mit Senator Haltermann', *Bremer Nachrichten*, 1 Dec. 1935.

¹¹⁹ See *Reichsgesetzblatt I*, p. 83. On legal foundations for admission to Hashude, see also StAB 4, 29/1 - 859. 'Rechtliche Grundlagen zur Frage der asozialen Siedlung', 17 Jan. 1936.

closed institution. Families were sent to Hashude at the behest of the local welfare authority.¹²⁰ For example, it was proposed that the widow S. and her four children - two of whom had already been sterilised and one of whom was born illegitimately - should be placed in the institution, because of their 'asocial behaviour'. The family needed help 'to stop being a danger to society'. Kayser, the President of the Welfare Authority, routinely accepted the grounds given and signed the family into Hashude for a year. Friedrich K. was sent to Hashude for being 'very asocial'. Not only did he avoid regular employment, but he had had relationships with prostitutes, was an alcoholic and had been repeatedly sentenced for theft, fraud, misappropriation and other similar offences. It was claimed that the behaviour of the entire K. family was coloured by his activities and character, which represented 'a danger to the national community and especially to his children'. It was, therefore, 'urgently necessary' to deal with him accordingly. Another case was that of Martha O., who wrote to the Mayor of Bremen on 3 November 1939, to appeal against her family being sent to Hashude. The Welfare Authority subsequently informed the Mayor that she had been previously warned to change her behaviour, which, unfortunately, she had not done. Hence, on 1 December 1939, she received a reply to her appeal, saying that after a consideration of reports about her behaviour, it was ascertained that the compulsory measure ordered for her family was 'justified and necessary'.¹²¹

In general, a family's stay at Hashude lasted one year.¹²² The year was divided into two six-month stages. For the first six months, the family was housed in a single family

¹²⁰ On what follows, see StAB 4,124/ 1 - F. 3. b. 10. Nr. 2. These proceedings are found in pp. 5-6 and pp. 12-13 of the file.

¹²¹ See StAB 3 - W. 11. Nr. 467. 9. on the correspondence regarding this case.

¹²² On what follows, see StAB 3 W 11. Nr. 467. 1. Report by Fichtner about the setting up of Hashude, 11 July 1935, pp. 2-4.

house. The new inmates were likely to be 'wasteful', 'cantankerous' and 'contradictory'. They were not allowed any contact whatsoever with other families. During this first phase, they were 'educated' to change their behaviour in such a way that after six months they would be able to lead a compatible life with neighbouring families. If they did not improve, their stay at the first stage could be lengthened, or if they were deemed completely ineducable, they were re-housed in barracks elsewhere in the town. If improvement was demonstrated - that is, at the very least, if the father went to work each day, the mother maintained a clean and orderly household and the children were properly cared for - the family moved on to the second stage, into terraced housing, with greater freedom, where harmonious community living was encouraged as a means of preparing the families for life outside Hashude when they were re-integrated into society at the end of the year (or sooner in exceptional cases).¹²³ The institution then was not intended as a place for permanent housing, but 'only as a filter'.¹²⁴ As soon as the colony's leader was convinced that a family no longer represented a threat to the 'national community', he made a report to the Welfare Authority, which then sought suitable accommodation for the family upon its 'release'. The family could only leave Hashude if suitable housing was available and if the father had a job, otherwise it was feared that the beneficial results of Hashude would be immediately endangered by prospects of homelessness or unemployment leading the family back into its old habits. Welfare workers visited families which left Hashude in order to check up on them and to prevent behavioural relapses. Such after-care was particularly intensive in the first twelve months after release from the institution.

¹²³ On what follows, see StAB 3 W 11. Nr. 467. 1. W. Kayser, 'B15/37 Betr. : *Wohnungsfürsorgeanstalt Hashude, Heimweg*', pp. 9-10.

¹²⁴ 'Die letzte Chance', *Das Schwarze Korps*, 20 Jan. 1938, p. 7.

Two case studies follow, to demonstrate the type of reasons for which families were interned in Hashude. In May 1936, the welfare authorities proposed that the family of Friederike N. should be admitted into Hashude. On 9 May 1936, his wife wrote to Senator Haltermann to request that the family should not be forced to go there. She included the information that her husband had been a member of the SA since November 1933 and that all her children were members of the Nazi youth groups.¹²⁵ On the receipt of her letter, Haltermann made some enquiries into the history of the family.¹²⁶ He found out from the Bremen Housing Office that Friederike N. had not paid his rent on his barrack housing since 1934. In order to prevent the family from becoming homeless, the local authority had been forced to let the family continue living there without paying rent. In the period from 1 October 1935 to 1 October 1936, Friederike N. had 'not paid one penny in rent'. He was described as a completely 'wilful debtor' and 'asocial renter'. The concepts of 'order and cleanliness' were 'unknown to N.'. On these grounds alone, it was necessary for his family to be sent to Hashude. Haltermann finally replied to Frau N. that she and her family were obliged to go to Hashude because of their failure to pay their rent. They were, therefore, 'to bear the consequences of their actions'. She was told that their stay at Hashude would 'certainly be beneficial' for them, giving them the opportunity to prove that they were 'valuable' and to be properly re-integrated into society thereafter.¹²⁷ Hence, her appeal was rejected on 28 June 1937, on the grounds of non-payment of rent, 'the bad condition of the home' and 'the uncleanness of the family'.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ StAB 3 - W. 11. Nr. 467. 6. '*Beschwerde der Ehefrau Friederike N. geb. Thurm gegen die Einweisung ihrer Familie in die Wohnungsfürsorgeanstalt*', 9 May 1936.

¹²⁶ On what follows, see StAB 3 - W. 11. Nr. 467. 6. Letter to Haltermann from the Housing Office re. N. family, 28 May 1937.

¹²⁷ StAB 3 - W. 11. Nr. 467. 6. Letter to Frau N. (no date).

¹²⁸ StAB 3 - W. 11. Nr. 467. 6. '*Beschluß*', the decision on the appeal by Frau N., 28 June 1937.

On 27 October 1938, Heinrich H. wrote to the Mayor of Bremen from Hashude appealing for the release of his family, which had already been there for two years.¹²⁹ He claimed that he should never have been put into Hashude in the first place, because he had never neglected his family, never spent his wages on alcohol, nor been a member of a Marxist party, which were the reasons for his admission. He claimed to have been in employment permanently since 1933, working 'from early in the morning until late at night... as a decent family father should'. As a result of his internment in Hashude, his colleagues at work treated him 'like a convict' and noticeably ignored him. He felt he was treated as 'a second rate person', which he and his wife, as 'decent national comrades' found to be both demeaning and a terrible 'mental pressure'. Reports about Heinrich H. contradicted his statements. For example, *Gestapo* records showed that he was formerly a member of the *KPD* (German Communist Party). In addition, he had rarely worked, and only taken on his current occupation to avoid being sent to Hashude. At one former place of employment, he was guilty of 'purely Marxist wheelings and dealings'. As a whole, Heinrich H. was considered to be 'completely asocial, dangerous to the community, an alcoholic and a rabble-rouser'.¹³⁰ Hence, the response to his application for his family's release was a refusal, on the grounds that the details with which he justified his request did 'not correspond with the facts' about him.¹³¹

The leader Hashude had to have 'a strong character', which corresponded with the National Socialist '*Führer-Prinzip*' or 'leadership principle'. In addition, he had to possess good training abilities, the necessary experience in welfare to deal with the kind

¹²⁹ See StAB 3 - W. 11. Nr. 467. 8. Letter to the Mayor from Heinrich H., 27 Oct. 1938.

¹³⁰ StAB 3 - W. 11. Nr. 467. 8. Report on Heinrich H., 2 Dec. 1938.

¹³¹ StAB 3 - W. 11. Nr. 467. 8. Letter to Heinrich H. from the Mayor, 10 Dec. 1938.

of problems that might arise in such an institution, particularly since whole families, not just individuals, were placed in Hashude.¹³² The leader was responsible for the entire institution and for the maintenance of house rules regarding living and working there.¹³³ The welfare workers who checked the households and advised the housewives were not to be from the 'so-called better circles'. It was preferable to have 'simple, clean, economical wives and mothers' with the necessary experience and desire to do the job.¹³⁴ Hence, simple, practical instruction in household tasks was given to the women, such as how to run a household on a low income.¹³⁵ Success in the education of the housewife and mother was considered a crucial step forward, because the running of the household, the example set to the children and the health of the family depended almost exclusively on the behaviour of the woman.

The main task of the welfare workers was to inspect the households of the individual families on a daily basis, for cleanliness and orderliness. The welfare workers were also to look after the family, in terms of its health care needs, advice for the mother and maintenance of an orderly lifestyle within the family community.¹³⁶ Kayser believed that in order to discern the real reason for 'asociality' in a family, it was necessary to observe and monitor all family members on a daily basis. Furthermore, he maintained that the most valuable result of the institution and its educational initiatives was to give the children an opportunity to live in a protected environment in which their parents' houses

¹³² StAB 3 W 11. Nr. 467. 1. Report by Fichtner about the setting up of Hashude, 11 July 1935, p. 1.

¹³³ StAB 4, 124/1 - F.3.B.10. Nr. 3. '*Dienst- und Aufsichtsplan*'.

¹³⁴ StAB 3 W 11. Nr. 467. 1. Report by Fichtner about the setting up of Hashude, 11 July 1935, p. 6.

¹³⁵ StAB 4, 29/1 - 859. '*Fürsorge für gefährdete, unsoziale und asoziale Familien*', *Wohlfahrtsblatt der Freien Hansestadt Bremen*, Jan. 1936, Nr. 1, p. 3.

¹³⁶ On what follows, see BA R36/1864, W. Kayser, '*Erziehungswerk und Wohnungsfürsorge für Asoziale*', pp. 2-5.

were properly maintained because of daily supervision and inspection. The primary aim was to make the family father get a job in order to support his family and pay his rent, which was 25 RM. monthly in the smaller houses (of which there were 54) and 29 RM. monthly in the larger houses which had gardens (of which there were 30). He was helped to find work by an overseer, who acted in co-operation with nearby employers and employment offices. The majority of the men had jobs, but those that did not, had to work either in a workshop for the Bremen authorities, or within the housing institution itself, or, if they had limited ability to work, doing gardening and other light maintenance work. The chief supervisor was responsible for getting the men to work and ensuring they were willing to work. Supervisors themselves worked every day, but had a free Sunday every fortnight.

The children's home staff was made up of the head of the children's home, another qualified kindergarten helper and an unpaid student trainee. Their task was to look after small children (aged 2-6) from 9 a.m. until midday, after which the children returned to their mothers. They also had to control school children, supervising them after school in the children's home, and further training them in gymnastics, physical education and cleanliness.¹³⁷ The welfare workers and children's home workers worked on Sundays too, but only from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m.

The policing of inmates was the responsibility of guards, who worked in three shifts: from 5.30 a.m. (half an hour before gates were opened) until 3 p.m.; from 9.30 a.m. until 7 p.m.; and from 2.30 p.m. until midnight. This meant that at the most busy and important times of the day, there were always two guards on duty. This was necessary

¹³⁷ StAB 4,124/ 1 - F. 3. b. 10. Nr. 2. 'Betr. : Richtlinien betreffs Beaufsichtigung der Insassen der Wohnungsfürsorgeanstalt', 11 March 1937.

as the porter's position was to be occupied at all times, and because these were times when the welfare workers were in the houses, not in the administration building. Within these times also fell the end of school and kindergarten, lunch time, and the end of the working day - that is, the times when the family members were at leisure.¹³⁸

Altogether, there were twelve members of staff, including a typist to do the paperwork, in an institution of 84 households, with approximately 200 children. In order to get the optimal results from the institution, a weekly meeting was held for the various staff members involved in the surveillance and welfare care of the families to discuss their work, especially future plans, problems and the inmates.¹³⁹ Information was kept on the names of the inhabitants of each house, the number of male and female children in each household, their ages and the father's employment position. These typed notes were further annotated with hand-written remarks, such as 'household dirty', 'husband alcoholic' or 'wife brazen'.¹⁴⁰ These notes reveal quite clearly the desired normative values of the colony.

As a 'living colony', Hashude had strict rules.¹⁴¹ Before admission, family members had to undergo a medical examination. If a family member subsequently developed an illness it was to be reported immediately. Before moving to Hashude, families had to disinfect all their clothes and furniture. Once there, the family father and mother were jointly responsible for the feeding, clothing, cleanliness, education and behaviour of their children. The children's home - which all children had to visit daily - supplemented the

¹³⁸ StAB 3 W 11. Nr. 467. 1. *'Betr. : Bremer Erziehungswohnungen - Maßnahmen gegen Asoziale'*, 2 March 1936, pp. 3-4.

¹³⁹ StAB 4, 124/1 - F.3.B.10. Nr. 3. *'Dienst- und Aufsichtsplan'*.

¹⁴⁰ StAB 4, 130/1 - K. I. 2 - 1. See information sheets, listed by house number.

¹⁴¹ On what follows, see StAB 4, 124/1 - F.3.B.10. Nr. 3. *'Haus- und Wohnordnung der B.E.W. (Hashude)'*.

education of the children. In addition, entry into and involvement in the Nazi youth groups was mandatory. Children could be taken away from parents that neglected their responsibility to educate them. Costs for damage to the houses were to be paid by the individual guilty of causing the damage, or the head of that family. Costs for damage to other parts of the institution were to be paid by the entire membership of the colony. For this purpose, a special fund was set up, to which each working inmate contributed 0.10 RM. each week. The houses had to be cleaned by 11 a.m. at the latest, for daily inspection, and rubbish was to be placed in bins outside the doors at 7 a.m. each day. Quarrels and arguments amongst family members or between members of different families were forbidden. No animals were allowed in the houses. Alcohol was completely prohibited in Hashude, and penalties for bringing it into the compound were severe. Visitors from outside the institution were only allowed with the permission of the head of the colony. Only one family was allowed visitors during the course of any one day. The leader was authorised to open incoming mail for the inmates to check its contents. In summer, the main gate was open between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., and in winter between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. Children under the age of fifteen had to be in bed at times corresponding to their ages, and at the latest by the time of the gate closure. A general lights out was imposed one hour after the gates closed each night. Each house door was to be opened at 6 a.m., remaining open all day, and be closed only at night before the last member of each household went to bed. As Hashude was an 'educational' institution, supervisors and welfare workers had right of entry into the houses at any time for purposes of observation or instruction.

Punishment ensued for the breaking of the institution's rules.¹⁴² This was to be decided upon only by the colony leader or his acting deputy, not by the other staff. Punishments

took the form of partial or complete withdrawal of payment for work, the allocation of special tasks, extra drills, or being locked up in a dark cell for up to three days with little or no food. At worst, serious and repeated flouting of the house rules could lead to being placed in concentration camps by the police - with men serving at Esterwegen and women at Moringen. Just being detained in custody for a protracted period of time was not considered an effective deterrent, for no useful work could be done by the inmate, who might misbehave at Hashude deliberately with the specific purpose of having a 'pleasant change' from his usual tasks. Concentration camp was also the fate of those inmates guilty of spreading 'political contamination' in Hashude. In many cases, the threat of a permanent sentence in a concentration camp served as a highly effective deterrent to the inmates of Hashude.

In addition, there were strict working rules at Hashude which imposed order and discipline upon the inmates.¹⁴³ Every adult, including school-leavers, had to work. Exceptions to this rule were few and had to be sanctioned by the colony leader. Inmates had to report for work at the administration building fifteen minutes before the start of the working day. Illnesses were to be reported to the supervisor at once. Holidays were only approved by the colony leader in exceptional circumstances. Work was supervised to ensure it was carried out correctly. Punishments were meted out by the institution's leader for bad work, evasion of work or preventing of other inmates from doing their tasks. Smoking was forbidden during the entire working day. The necessary equipment for work was to be collected every morning by the worker and returned in good condition at the end of the day. Wilful loss or damage of equipment was punishable.

¹⁴² On what follows, see StAB 4, 29/1 - 859. '*Betr. : Asoziale Siedlung im B.E.W. (Bremer Erziehungswohnung)*', 11 Feb. 1936, pp. 2-4.

¹⁴³ On what follows, see StAB 4, 124/1 - F.3.B.10. Nr. 3. '*Arbeitsordnung*'.

For those who did not carry out their work properly, there was a detention cell in the basement of the administration building. In addition, inmates continually or repeatedly guilty of 'awkward behaviour' or 'idleness' were threatened with being sent to Teufelsmoor, a forced labour camp about 32 kilometres outside Bremen. This camp had the capacity to hold 120 inmates, who were typically sent there for being 'workshy', although it was also used to 'educate' alcoholics. Set up in May 1934, Teufelsmoor had proved to be effective in its aims.¹⁴⁴ Success was shown by the fact that after release from the camp, many inmates, who were formerly 'workshy', strove to find jobs at once, and willingly undertook their duties and responsibilities towards their families themselves, without relying on welfare benefits. Only very rarely did the inmates revert to their former ways - in 1935, there were only three cases in which this occurred, which made up only 3% of the total. Teufelsmoor consisted of two barracks for the inmates and one for the administration. Its personnel was made up of a camp leader, six guards and a cook. Often the threat of being sent to Teufelsmoor had the desired 'moral effect', but for serious and continual deviance from the rules at Hashude, admission to Teufelsmoor ensued. The length of stay at Teufelsmoor was six months, or twelve months in 'difficult cases'. A strong, regimented discipline prevailed, with working days of eleven hours, during which time the workers were not allowed to talk to each other. Visits were not permitted. One letter per month was allowed, but was opened and examined by the camp leader.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ On what follows, see StAB 4, 29/1 - 859. *'Fürsorge für gefährdete, unsoziale und asoziale Familien'*, *Wohlfahrtsblatt der Freien Hansestadt Bremen*, Jan. 1936, Nr. 1, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴⁵ C. Meyhöfer, *Das Wohlfahrtswesen im NS-Staat unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Situation in Bremen* (Bremen, 1988), p. 81.

Hashude was closed down on 15 July 1940.¹⁴⁶ Its closure was putatively the result of factors that lay outside its sphere of effectiveness and whose development was not foreseen at the time of its foundation. Primarily, its closure was the result of the intensification of the shortage of housing in Bremen - especially lower and middle price range homes - in which families could be accommodated after their time at Hashude. In addition, it was claimed that the exacerbation of the position of the housing market by the war left Hashude with no further possibility for fulfilling its task. It had to be closed down so that large 'valuable', 'hereditarily healthy' families could move into the homes on the estate.¹⁴⁷ The iron gate and fencing were taken down, allowing for free movement in and out of the main entrance. The former institution was turned into a normal housing estate. Former inmates could remain there if they proved themselves to be 'valuable', whilst the incorrigible ones were housed in barrack-type accommodation, the condition of which depended on 'the grade of their asociality'. The children's home was handed over to the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt*, as was the office space in the administration building. The kindergarten personnel took on jobs for the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt*, the guards were employed at Teufelsmoor, in place of its original guards who had been conscripted into the army, and the remaining staff were found suitable jobs locally. The leader was transferred to Poland.

After the experimental colony of Hashude had been closed down, the debate still continued between those that supported this type of positive 'asocial' policy and those that opposed it. On the positive side, a table showing the situation of the last former inmates showed that out of 84 households, only 18 families were completely

¹⁴⁶ On what follows, see StAB 3. W. 11. Nr. 467. 10. *Maßnahmen zur Unterbringung und Erziehung Asozialer*', Dec. 1940, pp. 3-4.

¹⁴⁷ On what follows, see StAB 4,124/ 1 - F. 3. b. 10. Nr. 1. *Betr. : Auflösung der Wohnungsfürsorgeanstalt Hashude*', 11 April 1940.

unimproved, whilst 7 had improved somewhat and could stay on once it became an open estate, and the remaining improved 59 would be housed outside, of which twelve especially, were considered 'good families'.¹⁴⁸ If this table was accurate, then Hashude could claim some success in its 'education' and social engineering.

In addition, Hashude had taken in a large section of Bremen's '*Lumpenproletariat*'. By means of its method of rotation - inmates changed, by and large, every year - a kind of human recycling was achieved, turning 'socially unfit' and 'workshy' deviants, into 'valuable' members of the 'national community'. Despite its short-lived existence, Hashude had a 'very durable' influence on countless families, according to its founders.¹⁴⁹ It was a 'filter', as well as an educational establishment, ultimately separating the 'improvable' from the 'incorrigible', a transition stage for the former back into society and for the latter into either 'primitive barracks' or concentration camps.

However, as a result of the prevailing opinion amongst both municipal authorities and Nazi eugenicists that 'asocial' characteristics were 'hereditary' and essentially irreversible, Hashude was regarded as a costly failure. Nature won out over nurture. A report of 18 November 1940, described what had subsequently happened to its last inmates.¹⁵⁰ These included Herr D. (number 54) who had resumed drinking and beating his wife, and Frau W. (number 43) and Frau S. (number 42), who were seen in the ill-reputed parts of the city, in particular, in the bars in the harbour area. Their households were described as 'very neglected'. In addition, accounts from schools stated that 'the children are lazy and

¹⁴⁸ StAB 4, 13/1 - W. 3. Nr. 20. '*Aufstellung über die Bewohner der Siedlung Heimweg*'.

¹⁴⁹ StAB 3. W. 11. Nr. 467. 10. '*Maßnahmen zur Unterbringung und Erziehung Asozialer*', Dec. 1940, p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ On what follows, see StAB 4, 130/1 - K. I. 2 - 1. '*Bericht über die Wohnungsfürsorgeanstalt*', 18 Nov. 1940.

achieve little at school'. One report claimed that the children displayed such idleness and attended so irregularly that 'they must be seen as a source of danger for the order of our school'. It was concluded that if far-reaching care of Hashude's former inmates could not be arranged, that the families who had shown some improvement would 'go downhill again', whilst the 'weak families', that were incapable of betterment, would get worse and worse, creating a major moral danger to those around them.

After its closure, Hashude was described as an 'extraordinarily costly' solution to the 'asocial' problem by its opponents, who claimed that its results were 'dubious'.¹⁵¹ Other big cities comparable in size with Bremen did not, on the whole, undertake the building of institutions like Hashude, especially because they did not have the extensive means for providing housing even for 'hereditarily healthy' and 'valuable' families that were 'worth' sponsoring. In Bremen too, many 'valuable' families lived in bad conditions in unhygienic or unsuitable accommodation. Hence, it was concluded that the 600,000 RM. spent on building Hashude could have been better spent in providing homes for 'healthy' and 'valuable' families. It was felt that experiments such as Hashude were only to be carried out once there was nothing left to do in terms of welfare for the 'healthy' and 'valuable' sectors of society.

Nazi 'Asocial' Policy

After Hashude, Nazi policies towards 'asocials' became increasingly harsh and punitive, as the latter were effectively criminalised. During the war, the solving of the 'asocial problem' was regarded as a more urgent population policy task. The Racial Political Office of the *NSDAP* became increasingly involved in the 'combating of asocials' and was

¹⁵¹ StAB 4, 13/1 - W. 3. Nr. 20. Report including arguments against Hashude after its closure by the leader of the Welfare Office in Bremen, 14 Aug. 1940, p. 1.

open to suggestions from outside 'experts' about how this could best be achieved. One such 'expert' was Freihe, the Mayor of Bückebug, who wrote to Walter Groß, at the Racial Political Office, offering the benefit of his experience and knowledge.¹⁵² As Mayor, Freihe was involved in aspects of population policy, such as the promotion of *kinderreich* families and the awarding of the Cross of Honour of the German Mother. He also had close contact with a number of agencies, including the welfare offices, health office, police authorities and judicial authorities, as well as a personal interest in the combating of 'asocials'. He suggested that the first effective step to be taken was the comprehensive registration of 'asocials'. Previous attempts to do this had not been satisfactory as they had been carried out only by a local party leader in conjunction with the employment offices, yet the only 'asocials' known to the employment offices were the 'workshy' ones, which meant that many 'asocials' were not encompassed in this registration. Consequently, Freihe suggested the close co-operation of a number of authorities and officials. The *NSV* and the municipal welfare offices were best equipped to carry out thorough reports and social assessments. These two agencies needed to work closely with each other and with the police and judicial authorities. A 'police list' could be built up, giving the agencies concerned a full knowledge of the 'criminality' of 'asocial families'. The police, of course, were also involved in the surveillance of 'politically unreliable elements'. Such people, as well as 'grumblers' and 'grouzers', were to be put on the list. The party's district leaders, the employment offices and the state health offices also had their part to play in the 'combating of asocials'. 'Asocial commissions', made up of the mayor of a city, or the head of administration of a countryside administrative district, the district leader of the party, the district office

¹⁵² On what follows, see BA R 36/1863, letter from the Mayor of Bückebug to Walter Groß, 3 Aug. 1942.

leader of the *NSV* and a Health Office doctor, were to register 'asocials' by means of card catalogues and reports.

The Racial Political Office certainly took up a number of these ideas and also formulated other measures proposed by its own 'experts', as well as external 'experts'. Card catalogues were set up.¹⁵³ Owing to an exchange of information between different authorities and agencies, whole families of 'asocials' were registered on lists. From 1936, the Bavarian police recorded the names of beggars, vagrants and the 'workshy'. Municipal and local authorities made up 'lists of alcoholics'. 'Gypsies' and prostitutes were registered too. Homosexuals were recorded by the *Gestapo* on 'pink lists'.

Other forms of discrimination against 'asocials' included compulsory labour and internment in concentration camps. The 'workshy' were to be disciplined through strenuous physical work.¹⁵⁴ As early as 1933, there existed concentration camps for beggars and vagrants in Görlitz (Silesia) and Meseritz (Pomerania).¹⁵⁵ It was not uncommon for 'asocials' in Bavaria to be sent to Dachau, and as the years went by, the network of camps expanded, as did their intake of 'asocials'. For example, in 1938, Flossenbürg concentration camp was set up to intern mainly 'asocials' and 'criminals', imprisoned for petty crimes.¹⁵⁶ There they had to undertake compulsory hard labour,

¹⁵³ E. Schröder, 'Beitrag zur Erfassung der Asozialen', *Der Öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst, Teil A*, 5 Sept. 1937, pp. 486-8 suggested splitting the general term 'asocial' into five groups for the purpose of registration - criminals; alcoholics and drug addicts; prostitutes; those in need of maintenance, for example, children in care; and the 'workshy'. See also, Scherer, '*Asozial*' im *Dritten Reich*, p. 87, on Karl Ludwig Lechler of the Racial Political Office and his cataloguing of the 'asocial'. See also, G. Aly & K. H. Roth, *Die restlose Erfassung. Volkszählen, Identifizieren, Aussondern im Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin, 1984), especially pp. 36-54.

¹⁵⁴ Schultze, '*Vorbeugende Maßnahmen*', p. 351.

¹⁵⁵ Scherer, '*Asozial*' im *Dritten Reich*, p. 106.

¹⁵⁶ Klee, '*Euthanasie*' im *NS-Staat*, p. 65.

quarrying granite. At Moringen, 'deviant' youths were subjected to hard labour and severe punishments for misconduct.¹⁵⁷ In addition, the concentration camps supplied industrial firms with 'asocial' compulsory labour.¹⁵⁸ One example of this kind of co-operation was between Auschwitz and IG Farben.¹⁵⁹ Out of the concept of forced labour, a programme of 'annihilation through labour' and the mass murder of those people who were 'unfit for work' grew into a horrifying reality.

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Nazi discrimination against the 'asocial' spanned a whole course of actions, from the symbolic, such as excluding the mothers of 'asocial' families from the Cross of Honour of the German Mother, through compulsory sterilisation, compulsory accommodation in 'asocial colonies', to internment in concentration camps, forced labour and physical annihilation. The social policy of the regime reacted against all kinds of non-conformist behaviour, by the implementation of force and terror, and in many cases, ultimately, death. What was new in the Nazi state was the penetrating biological argumentation which proposed the 'elimination' of 'asocials' for the future. In this respect, the families of 'asocials' were directly affected, for, in 'asocial clans', negative traits of every kind - from speech defects to the suicide of distant relatives - were used to demonstrate that 'asociality' was hereditary. This was justification enough for members of 'asocial families' to be institutionalised and sterilised for 'congenital feeble-mindedness', or 'annihilated' just for existing at all.

¹⁵⁷ On this, see Peukert, *'Arbeitslager und Jugend-KZ'*, pp. 422-5.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 425-32.

¹⁵⁹ Scherer, *'Asozial' im Dritten Reich*, p. 108.

CHAPTER SIX

THE IMPACT OF THE NAZI REGIME UPON JEWISH FAMILIES

The pathological hatred towards the Jews of Hitler and other Nazi leaders led to a series of measures against Jewish people, culminating in the wartime 'Final Solution to the Jewish question' - that is, the attempted, systematic extermination of the Jewish 'race' in Europe. The 'Final Solution' has been the subject of a vast and complex secondary literature, and the source of considerable historiographical debate.¹ There is also a large and sophisticated literature on the Jews in Germany both before and during the Nazi period.² The focus of this chapter is on an area that has received considerably less attention in the existing literature on both Nazi Germany in general and the Holocaust in particular, that is, the impact of the Nazi regime upon German Jewish families, both

¹ Important works on this subject include Y. Bauer, A History of the Holocaust (New York, 1982); M. Marrus, The Holocaust in History (London, 1987); R. Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews (New York, 1983). For a survey of the 'intentionalist/structuralist' debate, see I. Kershaw, The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation (London, 1985), pp. 82-105. Advocates of the 'intentionalist' thesis include L. Dawidowicz, The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945 (London, 1977) and G. Fleming, Hitler and the Final Solution (Oxford, 1986). Exponents of the 'structuralist-functionalist' argument include K. Schleunes, The Twisted Road to Auschwitz (London, 1972) and U. Adam, Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich (Düsseldorf, 1972).

² On the position of German Jewry during the Weimar Republic, see among others, D. Niewyk, The Jews in Weimar Germany (London, 1980); A. Paucker (ed.), Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland. The Jews in Nazi Germany, 1933-1945 (Tübingen, 1986), pp. 31-93. On the position of German Jewry during the Third Reich, see among others, H. Eschwege (ed.), Kennzeichen J. Bilder, Dokumente, Berichte zur Geschichte der Verbrechen des Hitlerfaschismus an den deutschen Juden 1933-1945 (Frankfurt am Main, 1979); H.-D. Schmid, G. Schneider & W. Sommer (eds.), Juden unterm Hakenkreuz. Dokumente und Berichte zur Verfolgung und Vernichtung der Juden durch die Nationalsozialisten 1933 bis 1945 (Düsseldorf, 1983); K. Kwiet & H. Eschwege, Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand. Deutsche Juden im Kampf um Existenz und Menschenwürde 1933-1945 (Hamburg, 1984); U. Büttner (ed.), Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich (Hamburg, 1992); W. Benz (ed.), Die Juden in Deutschland 1933-1945. Leben unter nationalsozialistischer Herrschaft (Munich, 1989); Paucker (ed.), Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland; W. Pehle (ed.), November 1938. From 'Reichskristallnacht' to Genocide (Oxford, 1991); G. Ginzel, Jüdischer Alltag in Deutschland, 1933-1945 (Düsseldorf, 1984).

before and during the war. The primary sources for this chapter largely consist of memoirs and testimonies. As Arnold Paucker has rightly pointed out, there are problems associated with the concept of 'bearing witness', such as distortion of recall and perception.³ However, in this chapter, in which the aim is to assess the impact of the Nazi regime upon Jewish families in Germany, memoirs and testimonies are not only valid, but also essential sources.

The social composition of German Jewry

'The Jew' as a representation of 'otherness', had more to do with caricature than with the actual experiences of the German population.⁴ Contrary to the Nazi propaganda stereotype, German Jews did not constitute a homogeneous group. Instead, German Jewry was composed of people from diverse backgrounds who were involved in many different areas of social and professional life.⁵ The degree of their religious observance spanned the entire spectrum from strict orthodoxy to complete assimilation into the 'host' society. The number of Jews living in Germany in 1933 was 499,682.⁶ According to a national census carried out on 16 July 1933, the total population of the German Reich was 65.2 million. Hence, Jews made up 0.77% of the entire population.

The majority of Jews living in Germany in 1933 lived in big cities (67.8%). The reason for this was emigration or migration to large, urban areas which seemed to offer either the most promising employment prospects or greater anonymity and religious freedom.

³ A. Paucker, Jewish Resistance in Germany. The Facts and Problems (Berlin, 1991), p. 13.

⁴ H. Rosenstrauch (ed.), Aus Nachbarn wurden Juden. Ausgrenzung und Selbstbehauptung 1933-1942 (Berlin, 1988), p. 9.

⁵ See Eschwege, Kennzeichen J, pp. 15-16.

⁶ Ginzel, Jüdischer Alltag, p. 214. Note that this number did not include the baptised or those that considered themselves Christian because one parent or only one grandparent was Jewish, and who led their lives as Christians.

This was especially the case for many Eastern European Jews who had fled to Germany from the late nineteenth century onwards in order to escape persecution and poverty. The nineteenth century also saw the expansion of cities in general, due to industrialisation and migration from the countryside. Both non-Jews and Jews moved from rural areas to the cities seeking employment. In 1933, 49.6% of the entire Jewish population was concentrated in six major cities: 32.1% lived in Berlin, 5.2% in Frankfurt am Main, 4.1% in Breslau, 3.4% in Hamburg, 3% in Cologne and 2.3% in Leipzig. A further 20.8% lived in other large German cities (with over 100,000 inhabitants), making the total number of Jews living in large cities 354,121.⁷ The rest lived either in smaller, provincial towns, or in rural areas (*Landjuden*).

In terms of occupation, German Jewry ranged from the owners of banking houses, such as Rothschild, Bleichröder and Warburg, of department stores, such as Tietz and Wertheim, of industrial concerns, such as Silverberg, Loewe and Hirsch, across all sectors of the economy to the unemployed.⁸ 240,487 Jews were in employment in 1933. Of these, 61.3% were engaged in trade and commerce, 23.1% in industry or manual labour, 12.5% in the professions and public or private sector jobs, 1.7% in agriculture and forestry, and 1.4% in domestic service.⁹ There was also a noticeably high number of unemployed German Jews, resulting from the loss of jobs in industry and manual labour during the depression years, so that even before the Nazi *Machtergreifung*, a clear worsening of the social position of many Jewish families could be noted.¹⁰

⁷ H. Strauss, 'Jewish Emigration from Germany. Nazi Policies and Jewish Responses (I)', *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, XXV (1980), p. 323.

⁸ Eschwege, *Kernzeichen J*, p. 15.

⁹ Ginzel, *Jüdischer Alltag*, p. 216.

¹⁰ On the social position of Jews in Germany before 1933, see Kwiet & Eschwege, *Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand*, pp. 49-56.

1933-1938: From the *Machtergreifung* to *Reichskristallnacht*

Peter Gay has shown that the Jews were 'at home' in Germany during the Weimar Republic, despite the occasional surfacing of anti-Semitism.¹¹ According to Peter Pulzer, the attitudes of the German Jews to the Nazis represented 'a mixture of illusion and realism'.¹² There existed a tremendous belief in the fusion of the German and Jewish cultures, with many Jews exaggerating both their own 'Germanness' and the extent to which their nation embraced them. Simultaneously, they were familiar with prejudice and discrimination. This led them to underestimate the significance of the Nazi movement. They felt that they had coped with anti-Semitism in the past and would be able to do so again.¹³ Indeed, the very irrationality of the Nazis' objectives made for an inclination not to take them seriously before 1933. The prominent banker, Max Warburg, for example, considered it 'absolutely inconceivable' that Hitler would become Chancellor of Germany.¹⁴ The Jews were 'baffled, shocked and incredulous' when the Nazis gained power, as few had taken this possibility seriously or considered its consequences to any great extent.¹⁵

Many German Jews were very attached to their country, which had formed their cultural tradition, education and language, and for which they had willingly fought in the First World War alongside their fellow countrymen. Grete Rosenzweig describes how 'we had always considered ourselves German citizens in the first place, Jews by religion'.¹⁶ Lisa

¹¹ P. Gay, *'In Deutschland zu Hause... Die Juden der Weimarer Zeit'*, in Paucker (ed.), *Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, p. 33.

¹² P. Pulzer, 'The Beginning of the End', in Paucker (ed.), *Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, p. 21.

¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 22-3.

¹⁴ M. Warburg, *Aus meinen Aufzeichnungen* (New York, 1952), p. 140. On Warburg, see N. Ferguson, *Paper and Iron* (Cambridge, 1995).

¹⁵ J. Boas, 'Germany or Diaspora. German Jewry's shifting perspective in the Nazi era (1933-1938)', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXVII (1982), p. 110.

¹⁶ Leo Baeck Institute, New York (hereafter LBI) ME 535, G. Rosenzweig, 'My

Brauer recounts that: 'We German Jews were so proud to be Germans.... We grew up in an atmosphere of honest devotion to Goethe and Schiller'.¹⁷ Ernest Stiefel describes how 'many Jews were more German than Germans and very patriotic'.¹⁸ As a result, after the Nazi *Machtergreifung*, many Jewish families, faced with the choice of either emigrating to start their lives afresh in another country or adapting themselves to the new situation in Germany, opted for the latter.

At first, as Wolfgang Nelki describes, 'we still lived a normal life, continuing everyday activities', and even as the first months of the Hitler government passed, 'life went on as before and some people thought it would continue to do so'.¹⁹ Many Jews did not believe that 1933 signalled what Reinhard Rürup has described as 'the end of emancipation' for them.²⁰ They shared the illusion that the regime would be epiphenomenal, as indeed did many non-Jewish Germans.²¹

The memoir of Charles Marks describes the changes to his childhood under the Nazi dictatorship:

We led, I believe, the typical life of well-to-do German Jewish families.... My father, in addition to being a proud German, was a conscious Jew. Although not religious, he observed all the high holidays. We were members of the local synagogue.... We had to attend services with him, which to us seemed interminable and a torture.... However, we did not observe Sabbath nor cook kosher. Altogether, I guess my father regarded himself primarily as a Jewish German, rather than a German Jew....²²

Life', p. 14.

¹⁷ LBI ME 69, L. Brauer, 'The Stone was an Opal', p. 5.

¹⁸ LBI ME 208, E. Stiefel, 'The Story of my Emigration', p. 2. On patriotism of German Jews, see Schmid *et al* (eds.), *Juden unterm Hakenkreuz*, pp. 26-7.

¹⁹ LBI ME 205, W. Nelki, 'The Story of my Family: The German Jewish Family of Hermann Nelki', p. 68.

²⁰ R. Rürup, 'Das Ende der Emanzipation: Die antijüdische Politik in Deutschland von der "Machtergreifung" bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg', in Paucker (ed.), *Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, p. 100.

²¹ K. Kwiet, 'To Leave or not to Leave. The German Jews at the Crossroads', in Pehle (ed.) *November 1938*, pp. 140-1.

I was thirteen years old when Hitler assumed power in Germany. I can remember the day when my father... called us into his bedroom and gave us instructions on how to behave under the new situation. He urged us to stay out of any arguments at school, not to get involved in any fights and to turn the other cheek if anybody should insult us.... He said he was a 'good German', nothing would happen to us if we just kept quiet.... Indeed, I do not remember any terrible experiences in the subsequent years. In fact... life seems to have progressed much as before, at least for quite a while. We skied, went to summer camp, went on hikes, vacationed and even retained some of our non-Jewish friends. However, there were several disturbing events: The Jewish students in school had to sit in the back of the class, no Jew was allowed to receive a higher grade than non-Jews, and once a rock was thrown through the window of our house.... I am sure my parents, particularly my father, suffered a great deal in business but we children were not made aware of it.²³

The first official anti-Semitic measure undertaken by the Nazis occurred just two months after Hitler became Chancellor. On 1 April 1933, the national boycott of Jewish shops and businesses set the stage and gave the signal for the economic harassment and persecution of the Jews.²⁴ The boycott was instigated by Party radicals, especially SA members, in their euphoria about the Party's 'seizure of power'. Posters and placards with the words 'Germans defend yourselves, do not buy from Jews!' were displayed outside Jewish shops, and SA men stood in the doorways of Jewish shops and businesses to prevent people from entering them. In terms of the public reaction, the boycott was a failure. Many Germans ignored the placards and the SA men, continuing with their usual activities.²⁵ However, the lives of Jewish people were affected by the boycott, although their responses to it differed. Inge Deutschkron recounts how from the day of the boycott, 'our home did not seem the same secure place as before'.²⁶ Hence, from a very

²² LBI ME 171, C. Marks, 'Years of Transition', p. 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

²⁴ A. Barkai, From Boycott to Annihilation: The Economic Struggle of German Jews, 1933-1943 (New England, 1989), p. 22.

²⁵ On the responses of the German population to the boycott of 1 April 1933, see U. Büttner, '*Die deutsche Bevölkerung und die Judenverfolgung 1933-1945*', in Büttner (ed.), *Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich*, pp. 72-3.

early date, there is an indication that the lives of Jewish families changed. In Deutschkron's case, it meant a sense of unease, insecurity and discomfort with the environment in which she lived, which even pervaded her home, her private living space. Edwin Landau describes the day of the boycott: 'I was ashamed that I had once belonged to this people. I was ashamed about the trust I had given to so many who now revealed themselves as my enemies.... Suddenly the street, too, seemed alien to me; indeed the whole town had become alien to me. Words do not exist to describe the feelings that I experienced in those hours'.²⁷ At home that evening, his wife was preparing for the Sabbath.

And when, as always, I consecrated the Sabbath there, in the circle of my family, and came to the passage in the prayer 'You who have chosen us from among all the peoples', and saw my children, who were looking at me with innocent and questioning eyes, my composure was at an end. The whole weight of the day's experiences struck me, and I broke down, just barely stammering the last words. The children either did not know or did not understand why I was crying so violently, but I knew: This was my leave-taking from everything German, my inner separation from what had been my fatherland - a burial.²⁸

This sense of loyalty to the fatherland was shared by many German Jews. Landau's account is one of many suggesting similar feelings of being let down and betrayed by the 'fatherland'. Furthermore, Konrad Kwiet has estimated that between 300 and 400 Jews committed suicide in response to the boycott.²⁹ Yet there was a feeling amongst many Jews that the boycott was simply a one-off opportunity for the SA men to display their elation at the *Machtergreifung*, and that Hitler 'would have to mellow in the end'.³⁰

²⁶ I. Deutschkron, *Berlin Jews Underground* (Berlin, 1990), p. 1.

²⁷ E. Landau, in M. Richarz (ed.), *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries* (Indianapolis, 1991), p. 311.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

²⁹ K. Kwiet, 'The Ultimate Refuge. Suicide in the Jewish Community under the Nazis', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXIX (1984), p. 147.

³⁰ G. Clare, *Last Waltz in Vienna. The Destruction of a Family 1842-1942* (London, 1982), p.122.

However, the first legal measure taken against the Jews was implemented within a week of the boycott. On 7 April 1933, the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, with its 'Aryan clause', Clause 3, called for the 'retirement' of Jewish officials and legalised the exclusion of Jews from other professions.³¹ For example, some Jewish lawyers were disbarred at this time and judges and other officials were hounded out of their jobs.³² In May 1933, all 'non-Aryan' public sector employees were dismissed. Over the course of the next two years, the range of professions and occupations from which Jews were excluded gradually widened. In addition to this, increasing informal social ostracism meant that Jews were 'encouraged' to give up their membership of clubs and organisations, and that friendships and professional ties between Jews and 'Aryans' began to be severed. In Cologne, for example, as early as March 1933, Jewish athletes were forbidden to use public playing fields and sports grounds.³³ This kind of exclusion took place throughout sporting and club life with 'Aryan clauses' being introduced into club membership rules.

However, in the period from January 1933 certainly until 1935, and in many cases later, there was a general willingness, especially amongst the older generations, to believe that the regime would cease or moderate its excesses and that their own situation would not deteriorate any further. During this time, many families tolerated their loss of rights and finances hoping that each anti-Semitic measure or decree would be the last. For example, one account describes how, in 1935: 'we were making the best of life.... Only

³¹ '*Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums vom 7. April 1933*', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1933*, 1, pp. 175-7.

³² R. Hilberg, *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933-1945* (London, 1993), p. 66.

³³ Rosenstrauch (ed.), *Aus Nachbarn wurden Juden*, p. 30.

very slowly we began to grasp the seriousness of the position, and even then failed to take action early enough, putting it off and putting it off'.³⁴

The Nuremberg Laws of 15 September 1935 certainly had a tremendous impact upon the lives of Jewish families. The Reich Citizenship Law essentially turned Jews into second class citizens, whilst the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour prohibited sexual relationships and marriages between Jews and 'Aryans'.³⁵ At the time, the Nuremberg Laws were seen by Jews less as a threat and more as a definitive clarification of their social and legal position. Many felt relief, believing that this legal separation of 'Aryans' and 'non-Aryans' would put an end to the violent and illegal persecution.³⁶

However, the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws brought about a grave deterioration in the position of most Jews. The laws had a considerable impact upon how Jews came to be regarded by their 'Aryan' compatriots. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour meant intervention into personal life to the extent that not just sexual relationships, but even normal neighbourly contact, and professional or business relationships were affected. For example, Erich Leyens recounts how his mother and sister were 'completely isolated' in their large house. 'None of the old family friends came to visit anymore'.³⁷ Louise Ehrenwerth describes how 'close relationships with many of my former schoolfriends that had been nurtured over the years were

³⁴ LBI ME 532, N. Rosenthal, 'Opus One', p. 58.

³⁵ *'Reichsbürgergesetz' and 'Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre vom 15. September 1935'*, *Reichsgesetzblatt 1935*, 1, pp. 1146-7.

³⁶ On this, see H. Graml, *Antisemitism in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 1992), p. 120. See also, A. Margalio, 'The Reaction of the Jewish Public in Germany to the Nuremberg Laws', *Yad Vashem Studies*, XII (1977), pp. 75-107. On the reactions of the German population to the Nuremberg Laws, see D. Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution. Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 76-80.

³⁷ LBI ME 170, E. Leyens, '1933-1938. Under the Nazi Regime', p. 24.

dissolved'.³⁸ Lenore Davies (née Ritter) recounts how suddenly she became a 'non-person': 'Overnight the girl who has shared your desk at school will no longer talk to you, the neighbours whom you have known all your life, with whom you have been away on holiday, shun you. One thing is certain - you grow up overnight'.³⁹

Claire Dratch (née Bacharach) describes how her life changed after the Nuremberg Laws were passed:

My childhood was happy and carefree. I grew up secure in the love and warmth of my family and my friends.... When did things in my life begin to change? Not at the beginning of the 1930s. At that time the predominantly Catholic population of Seligenstadt valued and respected its Jewish friends and fellow citizens as before. But at the end of 1935, after the announcement of the Nuremberg Laws, the influence of the Nazis began to affect me and my family more and more strongly.... Friends no longer wanted to walk down the street with me. They no longer wished to sit next to me on the train, eventually they did not wish to be seen with me at all.... I was the same Claire Bacharach - but I was Jewish. I was no longer invited to my Christian friends' birthday parties or holiday celebrations. I was Jewish. My parents were afraid to be seen in the town... they hid in the basement.... I had become a non-person.⁴⁰

Such changes in social standing and the decline in the level of acceptance by the 'host' society had direct implications for Jewish home and family life. In considering the impact of both loss of status and financial hardship felt by Jewish families, the issue of domestic servants is relevant in two respects. Firstly, provision three of the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour decreed that 'Aryan' women under the age of 45 could no longer work in Jewish households for fear of 'racial defilement'. This meant that many wealthier Jewish families with domestic servants had to let them go and adjust to a lower standard of living. This decree, according to Tony Kushner, 'was designed to reinforce

³⁸ Yad Vashem Archive, Jerusalem (hereafter YV) 02/14, L. Ehrenwerth, *'Bericht ihrer Erfahrungen von Louise Ehrenwerth'*, p. 1.

³⁹ L. Davies, in B. Leverton & S. Lowensohn (eds.), *I Came Alone: The Stories of the Kindertransports* (Lewes, 1990), p. 65.

⁴⁰ LBI ME 515, C. Dratch, 'Memoir', pp. 2-3.

the social as well as the racial stigmatisation of "Jewishness".⁴¹ Secondly, it created opportunities for Jewish women to work as domestic servants. Jewish women had not been inclined to undertake this kind of work, except as a last resort, before the Nazi period. Indeed, during the 1920s, only 8.8% of employed Jewish women in Germany worked as domestic servants.⁴² After the Nazi *Machtergreifung*, many Jewish women were forced into working as domestic servants in order to maintain their families, to make up for some of the loss of income once their husbands had lost their jobs or businesses. Hence, thousands of Jewish women became maids as a means of survival, an occupation they had previously considered humiliating and lacking in status.

After the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws, German Jews were subjected to increasing persecution and pauperisation. From 24 March 1936, family allowances for large, Jewish families were stopped.⁴³ Hence, whilst *kinderreich* families amongst the healthy, 'Aryan' population were positively fostered, they were discouraged amongst the Jewish community. The opportunities for Jews to pursue a normal professional life were increasingly eroded, as were social and leisure activities. A series of decrees gradually excluded Jews from most sectors of professional life by the end of 1938.⁴⁴ After growing pressure for Jews to liquidate their business concerns, the total exclusion of Jews by decree from entire branches of business began on 6 July 1938.⁴⁵ In July 1938, the

⁴¹ T. Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination. A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford, 1994), p. 90.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁴³ 'III. Durchführungs-Verordnung über die Gewährung von Kinderbeihilfen an kinderreiche Familien vom 26. März 1936', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1936*, 1, pp. 252-4.

⁴⁴ On this, see A. Barkai, 'Der wirtschaftliche Existenzkampf der Juden im Dritten Reich, 1933-1938', in Paucker (ed.), *Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, pp. 153-66; Burleigh & Wippermann, *The Racial State*, pp. 80 and 84-6; Büttner, 'Die deutsche Bevölkerung und die Judenverfolgung 1933-1945', in Büttner (ed.), *Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich*, pp. 73-5; Graml, *Antisemitism*, pp. 123-5.

⁴⁵ 'Gesetz zur Änderung der Gewerbeordnung für das deutsche Reich vom 6. Juli

approximately 3,000 Jewish doctors still practising their profession were now prohibited from doing so. Only 709 were allowed to maintain their practices, but were designated as 'medical practitioners' to Jewish patients only. In September 1938, only 172 lawyers were allowed to continue practising their profession, and similarly were designated as 'legal counsel' to Jewish clients only.⁴⁶

The new circumstances led to changes in the roles of men and women, and in relationships between them. At the outset, men had worked as professionals, traders or craftsmen, with women as housewives or employed as nurses, seamstresses and sometimes domestic servants. But as time passed, the impoverishment of the Jewish community led to an enforced equality between men and women. For example, as Jewish shops and businesses closed down and men lost their jobs, they were no longer in the position to make decisions about where to live and what they could or could not afford. Valentin Senger describes how his mother 'made all the decisions'. In his family, 'Mama brought us up and Papa helped with the little things, like... taking us for walks. It was Mama who made all the important decisions, such as when to go to school and when to leave it'.⁴⁷ It was often women who felt the precariousness of their situation before the men in their families, perceiving the threat of Nazi anti-Semitism earlier and urging emigration.⁴⁸

1938', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1938*, 1, p. 823.

⁴⁶ A. Barkai, 'The Fateful Year 1938. The Continuation and Acceleration of Plunder', in Pehle (ed.), *November 1938*, pp. 107-8.

⁴⁷ V. Senger, *The Invisible Jew: The story of one man's survival in Nazi Germany* translated by Ralph Mannheim (London, 1980), pp. 83-4 and 89.

⁴⁸ C. Koonz, 'Courage and Choice Among German-Jewish Women and Men', in Paucker (ed.), *Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, pp. 285 and 291.

Raul Hilberg describes the impact of the Nazi regime upon Jewish families succinctly: 'The newly isolated community consisted of men without power and women without support'.⁴⁹ The loss of status in society and within their families experienced by many men was often accompanied by a sense of loss of manhood. For example, a Berlin wife asked her husband in their desperate situation: 'Are you a rabbi? Are you a man?'.⁵⁰ By the end of 1937, many former professionals, businessmen and white-collar workers, squeezed into poverty, tried to eke out an existence by hawking and peddling.⁵¹ Others became unemployed, and still others ultimately undertook forced manual labour in work camps for road and railway construction or mining. Their wives let out rooms in their flats or served meals in their homes in order to earn a small income.⁵² The deliberate, enforced pauperisation of Germany's Jews, combined with their effective isolation, led to psychological despair. For example, Carl Schwabe describes his situation: 'I could not maintain my business any longer. I had to carry too many burdens, make too many payments. My nerves were at an end. I put my firm up for settlement.... I suffered terribly. My wife stood by me faithfully. Without her I would not have made it through.'⁵³

Many middle class or formerly affluent families, who had dropped to a lower socio-economic status as a result of progressive impoverishment, were living in financial hardship in large, urban areas. The family - the traditional focus of Jewish life - disintegrated and often failed to provide the support and guidance it had previously furnished. Fathers were preoccupied with the relentless economic pressures being put

⁴⁹ Hilberg, *Perpetrators* p. 127.

⁵⁰ K. Kweit, 'Nach dem Pogrom: Stufen der Ausgrenzung', in Benz (ed.), *Die Juden in Deutschland 1933-1945*, p. 611.

⁵¹ Graml, *Antisemitism*, p. 134.

⁵² Barkai, 'The Fateful Year 1938', in Pehle (ed.), *November 1938*, p. 101.

⁵³ C. Schwabe, in Richarz (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 330.

upon their dwindling businesses by the Party and State. As fathers' incomes dwindled due to the loss of their jobs or to being forced to sell their businesses to 'Aryan' purchasers at extremely low prices, families moved from large, or at least comfortable homes, to much smaller ones. This often meant that children who had had a room of their own, now had to share a bedroom. This loss of privacy was felt most acutely by teenagers. The mental and physical strength of the father was sapped by the stress of life under increasingly difficult circumstances. Fathers lost their traditional position as providers for and protectors of their families. Broken men were seen differently in the eyes of both their wives and their children. Furthermore, frustration, fear and indecision often led to friction in the home between spouses and between parents and children.

Changes in financial status had a significant impact upon family life. For example, Rudolf Rosenberg, born in 1924, describes his family's situation in Berlin.⁵⁴ His father was a retailer and wholesaler of tobacco. In 1935, he was forced to give up his shop, and ran the wholesale side of his business from the family flat. This meant that the whole family slept in one room, so that his father's business could be accommodated. Rudolf did the deliveries on his bicycle, and many loyal customers continued to buy from his father. However, despite the family's united efforts to maintain the small business, by the beginning of 1938 the situation had become too difficult, as people were not allowed to trade with them and the family's source of income was consequently taken away from them.

Liselotte Kahn describes how her husband closed his flourishing medical practice with the result that 'all income for himself and his family was ended at an age when one

⁵⁴ On what follows, see D. Dwork, Children with a Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe (New Haven & London, 1991), pp. 11-13.

normally moves ahead'.⁵⁵ Another woman tells of having to sell up the family business: 'When one's livelihood is gone, what remains? Worry, despair, unhappiness!'.⁵⁶ Children suffered as a result of economic and social discrimination. Changes in the circumstances of their parents affected them quite strongly. Arno Penzias tells of his childhood in Munich 'as an adored child in a closely-knit middle-class family'. He says: 'I began to realise that there were bad things that my parents couldn't completely control, something to do with being Jewish'.⁵⁷

Dorrieth Sim (née Oppenheim) gives an account of her childhood in Germany, which is indicative of the way in which security and happiness gradually disappeared from Jewish family life:

In the summer... we climbed the hills at weekends. At other times, we sailed in our three seater canoe.... Occasionally we would camp on the banks of the Fulda, a great experience for a very small girl. In the winter we skied.... At one time I know we lived in a beautiful flat in a house with a flat roof and a balcony where my parents grew tomatoes and entertained their friends. I had a sandpit there and a wonderful chute which my father made for me. After we left there, our accommodation became more limited and my parents explained to me that being Jewish we had to be very careful about what we did and said and where we went. A suitcase was always kept ready and packed for my father in case he would be sent away.⁵⁸

Liesl Munden (née Heilbronner) from Dusseldorf describes her childhood during the Nazi era, immediately after the *Machtergreifung*: 'at the age of ten, my life went on, having as much fun as I could going swimming and skating in my spare time. I mixed with Jewish

⁵⁵ LBI ME 720, L. Kahn, 'Memoirs, 1900-1970', p. 34.

⁵⁶ LBI ME 532, Rosenthal, 'Opus One', p. 62.

⁵⁷ A. Penzias, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 240.

⁵⁸ D. Sim, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 320-1.

and non-Jewish children and took little notice of what was going on in the world around me.' She tells of how her parents shielded her from 'unpleasant experiences'. However:

A little time later ... I was not allowed to continue having skating lessons because I was Jewish.... Then came a worse experience. I loved swimming. One day a non-Jewish girlfriend and her parents took me to an open air pool where we had been many times before. Now there was a big notice in the entrance hall which said: 'Dogs and Jews are forbidden to enter'. These were only small incidents, but to me - a child - it seemed that the world had come to an end.⁵⁹

She also describes moving from a large flat with a domestic servant, to 'a much smaller flat, where my mother could run the home on her own and my father had a desk for his office in the dining room, which also became my bedroom at night'.⁶⁰ This memoir demonstrates a great change in both the standard of living and the leisure activities of Jewish families living in Germany by the end of the 1930s.

Jewish people were often given a false sense of security by the kind words or deeds of a German neighbour or friend, and throughout the early years of the Third Reich, 'alternated between feelings of optimism and security, as well as feelings of panic and terror'.⁶¹ Lisa Brauer tells of how: 'There were days when we were overwhelmed by desperation, but an understanding word from an Aryan neighbour, a kind inquiry from a Gentile acquaintance gave us always new hope and confidence'.⁶² Hence, 'the majority of Jews steadfastly maintained a normal life in their homeland for as long as possible'.⁶³ As Ernest Stiefel relates: 'The elimination of Jews from the German economy came slowly;

⁵⁹ L. Munden, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 397-8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ LBI ME 205, Nelki, 'The Story of my Family', p. 69.

⁶² LBI ME 69, Brauer, 'The Stone was an Opal', p. 43. On gestures of friendliness and individual expressions of sympathy, see also Kwiet & Eschwege, *Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand*, p. 43.

⁶³ LBI ME 170, Leyens, '1933-1938', p. 14.

most Jews had to sell their businesses only in 1938. Because of this, Jews in Germany did not have an urgency to leave'.⁶⁴ Between 1933 and 1938, many Jews regarded the regime as a setback to which they could adjust and were prepared to accept a restricted life in preference to the uncertainties of emigration.⁶⁵ Many businessmen were deterred from emigrating by the fact that they would lose capital on the sale or liquidation of their assets and would have to pay a massive 'flight tax' (*Reichsfluchtsteuer*) in order to leave Germany.⁶⁶

One woman tells of her family's delay in emigrating to Palestine, despite having the necessary documentation, because her mother could not make up her mind to go and her mother-in-law was also apprehensive. Hence, 'our remaining in Frankfurt am Main depended largely on the procrastination of our mothers'.⁶⁷ Many elderly people were 'frightened of learning another language' and 'feared they could not make a living' if they emigrated.⁶⁸ It was much easier for single people without family commitments or responsibilities for aged parents to leave Germany.

The impact of social ostracism upon Jewish families

With each successive anti-Semitic measure, contacts between Jews and non-Jews were minimised, formalised or banned. This led to the spatial separation and isolation of the Jews from the rest of the community. Marta Appel recounts that: 'With each day of the Nazi regime, the abyss between us and our fellow citizens grew larger.... How much our life changed in those days.... we no longer visited our friends, nor did they come anymore

⁶⁴ LBI ME 208, Stiefel, 'The Story of my Emigration', p. 2.

⁶⁵ Hilberg, *Perpetrators*, p. 119.

⁶⁶ On this, see K. Kwiet, 'To Leave or Not to Leave. The German Jews at the Crossroads', in Pehle (ed.), *November 1938*, p. 142.

⁶⁷ LBI ME 482, A. Oppenheimer, 'A Few Days of my Life', p. 2.

⁶⁸ LBI ME 435, K. Mendels, 'To my Descendants', p. 18.

to see us'.⁶⁹

Liselotte Kahn recounts how as early as in 1933, 'it had become a great guessing game as to which of your friends would have the courage to stand by you and which would suddenly abandon you.... My father had a friend from his schooldays, with whom, through all the years, he had regularly played cards. This old friend, whom we addressed as "Uncle", never once came to play cards again.... On the other hand, the smallest act of friendship touched us now exceedingly'.⁷⁰ Professional and personal ties were torn apart and social life disrupted. The more the Jewish community was endangered, the tenser its relations with 'Aryans' became. Mistrust and precaution replaced the good understanding of the past.

Lisa Brauer recounts her experiences during the National Socialist period. She describes her years before 1933 as happy and fortunate. She came from a 'comfortable and well-kept' home, in which 'there was never very much talk about money, and very little was said about food. Such things we took for granted'.⁷¹ Her father was a doctor whose colleagues and patients admired and respected him. She describes her good friendships with non-Jewish fellow pupils at school and with non-Jewish students at university.⁷² But then, after 1933, 'those peaceful living conditions step by step... slowly and unmercifully deteriorated'. As more and more restrictions were placed upon Jewish professional, economic and social life, she tells of how 'all our living conditions were threatened - but life inside the Jewish family represented still the centre of the world, the hearth giving strength, hope and comfort to the weary soul'.⁷³ This description is one of many

⁶⁹ M. Appel, in Richarz (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 352.

⁷⁰ LBI ME 720, Kahn, 'Memoirs', p. 16.

⁷¹ LBI ME 69, Brauer, 'The Stone was an Opal', pp. 4-6.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

suggesting that the Jewish household provided shelter for its members, in spite of the worsening conditions outside it.

The gradual elimination of Jews from the life of the nation was especially damaging to the younger generation, who, in many senses were worse affected than older people. On 25 April 1933, Nazi legislation introduced a quota on the enrolment of Jewish pupils and students at schools and universities, in order to ostracise Jewish children. The Law against the Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities laid down a ceiling of 1.5% of the total student body in any institution, as the proportion of Jews henceforth to be admitted.⁷⁴ This law formed the first step towards the exclusion of Jewish children from all state schools. A further decree of 15 November 1938 ensured that any Jewish children still in attendance at state schools were made to leave. But between 1933 and 1938, Jewish children had been increasingly forced to leave state schools in any case, as a result of abuse and harassment by fellow pupils and teachers.⁷⁵ As 'racial inferiors', they were made to feel isolated and humiliated. Not surprisingly, the psychological difficulties for Jewish children at state schools had led many to leave the hostile environment and move to exclusively Jewish schools.⁷⁶ The functions of these schools were important. They strengthened the Jewish self-awareness of the children who attended them and, especially after the Nuremberg Laws, stressed manual training, 'particularly agriculture and technical skills', as these were seen to be useful for future emigration.⁷⁷

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁷⁴ 'Gesetz gegen die Überfüllung deutscher Schulen und Hochschulen vom 25. April 1933', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1933*, 1, p. 225.

⁷⁵ See W. Angress, 'Erfahrungen jüdischer Jugendlicher und Kinder mit der nichtjüdischen Umwelt 1933-1945', in Büttner (ed.), *Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich*, pp. 90-1.

⁷⁶ W. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope: Jewish Youth in the Third Reich* (New York, 1988), p. 12. See also, W. Angress, 'Jüdischer Jugend zwischen nationalsozialistischer Verfolgung und jüdischer Wiedergeburt', in Paucker (ed.), *Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, pp. 216-20.

The effects of persecution upon the Jewish community varied. The most assimilated sectors of German Jewry had the most to lose, whilst Zionists and Orthodox Jews, who had not believed in the symbiosis of the German and Jewish cultures, adapted more easily to the new environment. One general response was a revival of Jewish communal activity. This was a rational response to increasing exclusion from mainstream German society and a rediscovery of Jewish identity.⁷⁸ Jewish welfare organisations played a large role both in helping the Jewish community at a time of enforced impoverishment and in maintaining a cultural identity for it.⁷⁹

The situation sometimes brought about tensions within families, but in other cases, families pulled together. According to Deborah Dwork, children noted changes in their family circumstances, but 'were neither bothered nor personally concerned'.⁸⁰ Perhaps this was true at first, but despite the fact that their families remained intact, there were circumstances in which changes affecting their parents were felt by children, even in the early months of the regime. For example, among others, the memoir of Henry Wermuth

⁷⁷ Y. Arad, Y. Gutman & A. Margalio (eds.), Documents on the Holocaust (Jerusalem, 1981), 'Response of the *Reichsvertretung* to the Nuremberg Laws', p. 85.

⁷⁸ Pulzer, 'The Beginning of the End', in Paucker (ed.), Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland, p. 25.

⁷⁹ On Jewish organisations and welfare, see H. Strauss, 'Jewish Autonomy within the Limits of National Socialist Policy: The Communities and the *Reichsvertretung*', in Paucker (ed.), Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland, pp. 125-52, and D. Kramer, 'Jewish Welfare Work under the Impact of Pauperisation', in Paucker (ed.), Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland, pp. 173-88. On the role of the *Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden*, see also G. Plum, 'Deutsche Juden oder Juden in Deutschland?', in Benz (ed.), Die Juden in Deutschland 1933-1945, pp. 49-65. On the role of the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland*, see *ibid.*, pp. 66-74, and O. Kulka, 'The *Reichsvereinigung* and the Fate of the German Jews 1938/1939-1943. Continuity or Discontinuity in German-Jewish History in the Third Reich', in Paucker (ed.), Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland, pp. 353-63.

⁸⁰ Dwork, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

demonstrates how the worry of parents about their situation affected their children: 'The unease I felt early in 1933 when the Nazis came to power must have been a reflection of the atmosphere of adults surrounding me - my parents and relatives'.⁸¹

As the years progressed and Nazi policies placed more and more restrictions upon German Jews, all family members were directly affected. This was especially the case when restrictions were imposed upon normal social life. For example, Nora Rosenthal describes how she used to take the children to a pantomime each year at Christmas time: 'Soon that was to stop, first voluntarily and then by decree'.⁸² The basic structures of their lives changed radically with the traumatic effects of being socially ostracised. For example, Hilma Geffen-Ludomer describes the 'abrupt' transition from a 'nice neighbourly atmosphere', to one in which friends and neighbours no longer talked to her.⁸³

Many Jews deliberately avoided their former 'Aryan' friends from an early date, both in order to spare disappointment and discrimination, and in some cases, so as not to endanger them. Dissociation from 'Aryan' friends, colleagues, neighbours and acquaintances became commonplace, as *judenfreundliches Verhalten* or 'behaviour friendly to Jews' was, as Robert Gellately puts it, 'an area of potential criminality', and many Jewish people did not wish to jeopardise their non-Jewish acquaintances.⁸⁴ This led to the breaking of social ties and growing isolation. According to Monika Richarz: 'This forced avoidance of association led to social alienation and finally to total isolation'.⁸⁵

⁸¹ H. Wermuth, *Breathe Deeply, My Son* (London, 1993), p. 7.

⁸² LBI ME 532, Rosenthal, 'Opus One', p. 55.

⁸³ See Dwork, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁸⁴ Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society*, p. 160.

⁸⁵ Richarz (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 35.

Parents often felt unable to fulfil their natural role as protectors and providers, although in many cases they tried their best to shield their children from the situation. 'How much our life changed in those days! Often it seemed to me I could not bear it any longer, but thinking of my children I knew we had to be strong to make it easier for them'.⁸⁶ One mother describes how she did not mind the effects of social ostracism upon herself so much, but that her heart was 'filled with anguish' when her children had to face all the disappointments and hardships associated with it.⁸⁷ 'It required a great deal of inner strength, of love and harmony among Jewish families, to make our children strong enough to bear all that hatred and persecution. My heart was broken when I saw tears in my younger child's eyes when she had been sent home from school while all the others had been taken to a show'. She describes how each day she and her family had to face 'another degrading and offensive incident'. For example, on Mother's Day, the whole school celebrated the day with a festival in which the children sang. The day before Mother's Day in 1934, her children were ordered to see the music teacher:

'You have to be present for the festival', the teacher told them, 'but since you are Jewish, you are not allowed to join in the songs.' 'Why can't we sing?', my children protested with tears in their eyes. 'We have a mother too and we wish to sing for her.' But she rebuked their protest. 'I know you have a mother, but she is only a Jewish mother.' At that the girls had no reply... but seldom had they been so much disturbed as when they came home from school that day, when someone had tried to condemn their mother.

In many cases, children tried to be brave so as not to upset their parents. For example, in 1937, when Marta's husband was ailing due to all the stress, the couple planned to go away for a while, but she was unhappy about leaving her children. 'To make it even more painful for us to leave them in a time when they so greatly needed someone to help

⁸⁶ Appel, in Richarz (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 352.

⁸⁷ On what follows, see *ibid.*, pp. 353-4.

them against the cruelty of Nazism, my older girl came home the day before we left with her face pale and her lips pressed together in a thin line. I knew this expression in my children's faces. They tried with all their willpower not to let us know about their suffering'. She pretended she had a headache, but eventually her younger sister told their parents that as Jewish children they were no longer allowed to sit with their fellow pupils and had been designated a bench at the back of the classroom.⁸⁸

Reactions of the older and younger generations to their situation could differ quite widely and this often led to conflicts within families. For example, Fred Pelican describes how, 'our parents and the older generation took this way of life for granted, being kicked about, spat upon, molested, manhandled and constantly abused.... we, the younger generation, had a different vision, a vision of escaping from the shackles of blind anti-Semitism'. Hence, there were often marked differences in attitude between parents and their children.⁸⁹

The family of Friedrich X illustrates the tensions introduced into an assimilated Jewish family as a result of the Nazi *Machtergreifung*.⁹⁰ Friedrich came from a Jewish family which was completely assimilated into German society. He knew that he was Jewish, but had no idea what this entailed. In his family, religion was not a topic of conversation, nor were any Jewish customs or traditions observed. In fact, his family celebrated Christmas as Christians did, with a tree and presents. This was not atypical behaviour for liberal Jewish families. After the Nazi *Machtergreifung*, Friedrich's life altered quite dramatically. At first, the change was limited to scornful remarks from his school

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 360-1.

⁸⁹ F. Pelican, *From Dachau to Dunkirk* (London, 1993), p. 1.

⁹⁰ On what follows, see Ginzel, *Jüdischer Alltag*, pp. 19-21.

teachers and derisory comments from his fellow pupils. But then his father lost his job, which meant a sudden decrease in the family's financial position. When Friedrich asked his father the reason, he was told 'Because we are Jews'. Life became increasingly difficult. Friedrich had to give up his bedroom, as his aunt who had lived in a village, now came to live with them. Once again, the reason was 'Because we are Jews'. The situation at school gradually worsened to the extent that Friedrich was not allowed to sit with his 'Aryan' friends any longer, but had to sit on a 'Jewish bench' in the back row of the classroom. Eventually, Friedrich became ill from the stress of continual harassment by both anti-Semitic teachers and pupils. His parents enrolled him in a Jewish school, and he subsequently joined a Jewish youth group, which changed both his life and his relationship with his parents.

In the youth group he felt free and happy. Previously, being Jewish had either meant nothing to him, or, since 1933, had meant misery and anxiety. Now he became proud of his heritage, learning about Jewish history, religion and heroes. Friedrich decided that he wanted to go to Palestine to become a farmer and pioneer. This led to a serious argument with his parents. This originated in the difference of opinion that now existed between his parents' entrenched attitude and his more far-sighted stance. This discrepancy between a more realistic younger generation and a more rooted older generation was not uncommon in the responses of Jewish families to Nazi persecution.

Friedrich's father told him 'We are Germans.... We speak German and we feel German!' In response to his son's desire to emigrate to Palestine, he could not see what interest a German could have in that 'wasteland'. Friedrich endeavoured to make his father not only understand his desire to emigrate, but also to realise that Germany was not his

homeland, and that Hitler's Germany in particular, did not bode well for the future. He pointed out to his parents that their 'Aryan' friends and colleagues had deserted them and tried to bring them to an understanding that they belonged to the Jewish people and homeland. But the gulf between the thinking of the son and the parents was very large and they engaged in countless angry disputes, exacerbated by the very impossibility of comprehending each other's position.

Friedrich went ahead with his plan, despite his parents' displeasure. His youth group sent him to a *Hachshara* (training centre), where he was given the necessary physical and mental instruction to prepare him for his future life in Palestine. In early 1938, Friedrich received the documentation for his emigration. His parents took him to the train station where the atmosphere was one of sadness and hope. The pain of the separation was much worse for the parents being left behind, because at least Friedrich's sadness was somewhat offset by his commitment to and feelings of hope about his new life in Palestine.

It was only after the *Reichskristallnacht* pogrom of 9-10 November 1938, that Friedrich's parents - along with many other Jews - realised the direness of their situation. As their world was literally shattered, Friedrich's father finally came to accept that 'the Germany of Goethe and Heine has ceased to exist'. Emigration suddenly became the key preoccupation of many thousands of Jewish families who daily joined the queues outside various foreign consulates in the hope of being granted a visa. Friedrich's parents had to leave their home, as entire parts of their city were made *judenrein* or 'Jew free'. Ultimately, they were ordered to go to collection points, from which they were sent on transports headed eastwards. Friedrich's mother was sent to the Riga ghetto, after which

her trail was lost; his father was deported to the Lodz ghetto, and then to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he was killed in the winter of 1944.

Mixed marriages

Even before the Nuremberg Laws were passed, it was not uncommon in the summer of 1935 for registrars to refuse to marry Aryans and non-Aryans, and even appeals to the district courts by those 'mixed couples' wishing to marry sometimes met with failure.⁹¹ However, despite the Nuremberg Laws, the number of sexual relationships between Aryans and non-Aryans remained surprisingly high, despite fears of denunciation.⁹² Denunciation was quite widespread amongst the German population, often arising from personal vendettas rather than ideological motivations.⁹³

Some couples stayed together, others fell apart under pressure, for example from the parents of the non-Jewish partner. According to Hilberg, not many mixed marriages ended in divorce initiated by the non-Jewish partner.⁹⁴ Jews in mixed marriages were protected to some extent, because being married to an 'Aryan' meant that they were not subjected to the full barrage of anti-Semitic legislation, lest the non-Jewish partner be hurt. But they could not be certain of their future or their ultimate fate.⁹⁵ There was still the worry of being deported. Later, in February 1943, during a round-up in Berlin, intermarried Jews were rounded up with other Jews whilst at work. For several days their wives protested on Rosenstraße and these men were released. This demonstrates how the persistence of these women paid off.

⁹¹ Graml, Antisemitism, p. 114.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁹³ Gellately, The Gestapo and German Society, p. 142.

⁹⁴ Hilberg, Perpetrators, p. 131.

⁹⁵ On this, see U. Büttner, 'The Persecution of Christian-Jewish Families in the Third Reich', Leo Baeck Institute Year Book, XXXIV (1989), pp. 267-89.

Marcella Hermann, a Berliner, relates the experiences of the family of Kurt-Heinz Aron, a Jew who was married to an 'Aryan' woman, and had one son.⁹⁶ Kurt-Heinz was taken away because he had been out after the 8 p.m. curfew. After two months in a work camp, he returned home, 'dirty, emaciated and limping'. Whilst he took a bath, his wife prepared clean clothes and a meal for him. She was 'horrified' to see blood stains on the clothes he took off and scars all over his body. She sold her jewellery in order to buy the provisions he needed for his recovery on the black market. The small family was only able to live together for a short time. He was imprisoned again for six weeks and then directly transported to another camp. His wife visited Marcella Hermann, begging for some foreign money that she could give her husband. A few hours later she returned to her friend, 'sat on a chair and stared in silence. After a while, she stopped staring and said "It was shameful!" The official in the prison, who I had to report to in order to speak to my husband said "Shame on you, German woman that you have slept with a Jew". This kind of scorn for 'Aryan' spouses of Jews was not uncommon. Her husband was later transported to Auschwitz where he died in October 1943. In November, when she presented her ration card at the counter for 'Aryans', the official greeted her with the words, 'I congratulate you on your Aryanisation, Frau Aron'.

Henry Pollock, a Jew from a 'respectable middle class family', met and fell in love with a Christian girl, Hilde-Kaethe, in 1927. Despite objections from both families, they decided to marry. They lived with Mieke, his mother-in-law, who 'exercised a strong influence on her daughter'. She openly disapproved of Henry, making comments such as 'If you must be a Jew, why don't you have any money?' He did not get on well with her

⁹⁶ On what follows, see YV 02/285, M. Hermann, *'Berliner Erinnerungen, 1940-1944'*, pp. 1-2.

and felt uncomfortable in the house.⁹⁷ He recounts how suddenly, one day in 1935, Hilde-Kaethe said to him: "One day you will marry a dark-haired Jewess and have two dark-haired Jewish boys." I did not understand the genesis of Hilde-Kaethe's remark and merely said: "What's the matter with you, what kind of nonsense are you talking about, marrying someone else and having Jewish boys?" Hilde-Kaethe remained silent and did not elaborate and I forgot the conversation'. But his mother-in-law had somehow managed to persuade her daughter that her marriage was very unfavourable. After the Nuremberg Laws, 'the Jewish son-in-law' had to leave because Mieke could not give up her maid, and the 'racial defilement' decree prohibited the possibility of both an 'Aryan' maid and a Jewish man living in the same household. Hence, Henry moved out into a small room in Berlin-Charlottenburg. 'Hilde-Kaethe visited once and stayed over night - she cried a little, I did not know why, and seemed a little unhappy, which did not stop her from filing for divorce'. She joined one of the National Socialist women's formations, and when he failed to send her the maintenance money due to her, she told him 'my people in the women's organisation have already offered to contact you and you know what consequences that could have'.⁹⁸

Erich Leyens describes how his brother was deported to Dachau after the *Reichskristallnacht* pogrom, but that his non-Jewish wife had a brother who held a high position in the SS. Hence, Erich's brother was soon released. However, his wife's family 'pressured her to divorce her Jewish husband'. She resisted the pressure from her family and stood by her husband. The couple were able to emigrate to the United States.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ LBI ME 265, H. Pollock, 'Memories of a former German citizen (of Jewish faith) during the events in 1935-39 in Germany, England and Canada', pp. 4-9.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-22.

⁹⁹ LBI ME 170, Leyens, '1933-1938', p. 32.

Ernst Gross describes his 'mixed marriage' and how he was able to survive the entire war period in Berlin, without being deported, because of his Christian wife: 'She was a good wife to me and she always remained loyal to me, even in the most difficult times'.¹⁰⁰ Elly Kapper, an 'Aryan' woman married to a Jewish man, describes how the regime and its virulent anti-Semitism did not change her love for her husband. In fact, due to the insufficiency of grocery items available to him on his ration card, she left Berlin for two weeks at a time to work as a seamstress in the countryside, in exchange for provisions to feed her malnourished husband.¹⁰¹

Another account tells of a marriage between Herr and Frau S., an 'Aryan' man and a Jewish woman, who had married in 1914 and had had a son fourteen years later in 1928.¹⁰² In 1938, the couple divorced, as a result of the man being unable to continue his career as a writer whilst being married to a Jewish woman. A law was also introduced that disallowed an 'Aryan' man from maintaining a Jewish ex-wife. However, Herr S. secretly met his former wife and gave her money. Yet, at the same time, he displayed 'the greatest anxiety and insecurity' whenever they met. Their son, Hans, still went to spend weekends with his father, but in preparation for these occasions, Hans, 'who was brunette and looked very Jewish, had to have his hair cut very short and had to wear a hat that covered most of his face'. Again, the father was so anxious on these visits, that Hans came to realise this and suffered tremendously as a result, eventually avoiding visiting his father at all. In the meantime, the situation for Hans was very bad. He could

¹⁰⁰ YV 01/125, E. Gross, *'In "Mischehe" in Berlin 1933-1945'*, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ LBI ME 350, E. Kapper, *'Eine Berliner Mischehe'*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰² On what follows, see YV 02/1074, Anonymous, *'Die Leiden eines jungen "Mischlingskindes"'*, pp. 1-4. On Nazi policy towards the *"Mischlinge"*, see J. Noakes, *'The Development of Nazi Policy towards the German-Jewish "Mischlinge", 1933-1945'*, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXXIV (1989), pp. 291-354.

not understand what was going on around him. It was 'incomprehensible and painful to him' that he could not invite his friends to his house on his birthday. Because he was 'half-Jewish', their parents would not let them go to his house. He also had humiliating and distressing experiences both at school and in the neighbourhood. In these circumstances, it was a relief for Frau S. to manage to secure the emigration of both herself and her son to England, where her sister lived. Herr S. cried when they left, but was pleased that they were emigrating, as he feared for their safety if they remained in Germany. In later years, Hans did not wish to know his father and rejected the latter's attempts at contacting him.

The effect of the regime upon relationships within mixed marriages varied, from families in which couples stayed together despite adversity, right across the spectrum to those in which non-Jewish partners abandoned their Jewish spouses with alacrity.

From Reichskristallnacht to the Outbreak of the Second World War

Nazi anti-Semitic policy shifted gear when on 9-10 November 1938, Goebbels unleashed a pogrom known as *Reichskristallnacht* or The Night of the Broken Glass. 7,000 Jewish businesses were destroyed, almost every synagogue in Germany was burned down, 26,000 Jewish men were sent to concentration camps and 91 people were killed in the course of the pogrom.¹⁰³ *Reichskristallnacht* was allegedly a 'spontaneous popular response' on the part of the German nation to the murder of vom Rath, a German official in the Paris embassy, by a young Polish Jew named Herschl Grynspan. However, the responses of the German population to it were rather mixed, with many people being appalled at the violation of law and order that the pogrom represented.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ On the pogrom, see W. Benz, 'Der Novemberpogrom 1938', in Benz (ed.), *Die Juden in Deutschland 1933-1945*, pp. 499-544.

Reichskristallnacht had a direct impact upon the lives of German Jewish families. With the violent shattering of their homes, they could no longer ignore the impact of Nazi anti-Semitism, with the hope that it would cease. The situation was especially alarming to children whose innocence disappeared very suddenly. Paul Safirstein describes 9 November 1938.¹⁰⁵ 'It was a cold, grey November day. The atmosphere in our family was very depressed, for our life seemed as grey as the day and the future was always uncertain. I remember that my mother was full of bad premonitions. I was thirteen years old, and had very little idea of what could happen... at thirteen, I still saw the world optimistically.'

Alice Oppenheimer's testimony tells of how, in the aftermath of *Reichskristallnacht*, her children seemed to grow up almost at once: 'The arrest of their father, the many excitements of the day, had turned them prematurely into adults'.¹⁰⁶ Another description

¹⁰⁴ On the reactions of the German population to the *Reichskristallnacht* pogrom, see W. Benz, 'Relapse into Barbarism', in Pehle (ed.), *November 1938*, pp. 38-43. See also, Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution*, pp. 84-88; D. Obst, *"Reichskristallnacht". Ursachen und Verlauf des antisemitischen Pogroms vom November 1938* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), pp. 319-54; Büttner, *Die deutsche Bevölkerung und die Judenverfolgung 1933-1945*, in Büttner (ed.), *Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich*, pp. 76-7; I. Kershaw, 'The Persecution of the Jews and German Popular Opinion in the Third Reich', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXVI (1981), pp. 275-81. Kershaw argues that there was a largely negative response to *Reichskristallnacht*, but that within a few weeks, the memory of the pogrom had receded into the background of popular consciousness, i.e. that no lasting impact was made on the formation of opinion, pp. 280-1. Hans Mommsen also argues that although the pogrom 'met largely with public disapproval', mainly due to its violation of public law and order, 'the subsequent steps to exclude Jews from economic life and to socially isolate them took place without any noteworthy resistance or protest'. See H. Mommsen, 'What Did the Germans Know about the Genocide of the Jews?', in Pehle (ed.), *November 1938*, p. 189.

¹⁰⁵ On what follows, see LBI ME 213, P. Safirstein, '9. November 1938. Ich erinnere mich!', pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁶ LBI ME 482, Oppenheimer, 'A Few Days', p. 26.

of *Reichskristallnacht* from a child's point of view gives a similar impression: 'Everything changed last night. When Mama tucked me into bed, I was still a fairy-princess. But this morning it's all different. Now I am just an ordinary ten-year old girl, going on eleven, and pretty scared'.¹⁰⁷ The pogrom was a traumatic experience for both adults and children. The latter, in particular were affected by their parents' distress. For example, Hannelore Zürndorfer remembers that prior to that 'never in my entire life had I seen my father cry'.¹⁰⁸ Lore Gang-Saalheimer was called back to Nuremberg from Berlin by her parents after *Reichskristallnacht*: 'I don't think I realised how bad things were until I got home. My parents were on the platform. My mother was in a sweater and a skirt, no make-up, no jewellery, no anything. My father looked awful.... It was the first time I really felt a feeling of oppression and persecution.... This was a quantum step. This was the real thing'.¹⁰⁹

Margaret Czellitzer describes the state of her house when she returned to it after *Reichskristallnacht*, for the duration of which she had stayed away from home:

I found my radio broken at the garden door, my lovely china smashed all over the kitchen floor, the beds overturned, the mattresses cut into pieces, the paintings as well as all the other valuables stolen... We were all heartbroken, but especially myself, who had discovered for us... that lovely place and built our little house according to my own ideas.... You children loved it, you climbed the high trees to pick the cherries. Your playmates and friends loved to come every weekend and we spent the happiest time in our lives.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ O. Drucke, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 69.

¹⁰⁸ H. Zürndorfer, in R. Schöcker (ed.), *Verlorene Welt. Jüdisches Kindheit im Dritten Reich* (Pfannenweiler, 1988), p. 57.

¹⁰⁹ See Dwork, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹¹⁰ LBI ME 429, M. Czellitzer, 'Story of your Childhood', pp. 3-4.

Another memoir recounts how: 'in our home most of the windows, all the mirrors and lamps were broken, the floors soiled, furniture ruined, the little bird which we loved, was gone'.¹¹¹ Another account describes how when the family returned to their home a few days after the pogrom, 'almost all the clothes and most of the linen had been stolen'.¹¹²

The account of a doctor's wife, tells of how her home was wrecked, and both she and her husband were arrested and separately taken to *Gestapo* headquarters in the early hours of 10 November 1938. Her husband was released first, and she describes her own return home, as follows: 'In front of our broken front door stood my husband, with an ash grey face, and I will never forget the expression of relief on his face when he saw me'.¹¹³ Tremendous suffering and worry was caused by such separations of spouses and family members.

The Jewish men interned in Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen concentration camps following *Reichskristallnacht* were subjected to intimidation and harassment. Their custody was mainly limited to a period of a few weeks, with the aim of encouraging emigration. The experiences of these concentration camps had a tremendous psychological and physical impact upon the lives of these men. They returned home as 'broken men' who found it extremely difficult to reintegrate into their previous family lives.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ LBI ME 535, Rosenzweig, 'My Life', p. 19.

¹¹² YV 033/80, M. Mayer, 'Treuchtlingen', p. 3.

¹¹³ YV 02/549, Anonymous, 'Eine Deutsch-Jüdische Familie - November 1938', p. 5.

¹¹⁴ Benz, 'Relapse into Barbarism', in Pehle (ed.), *November 1938*, p. 31. On the experiences of Jewish males sent to concentration camps in the aftermath of *Reichskristallnacht*, see also R. Thalmann & E. Feinermann, *Die Kristallnacht* (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), pp. 163-87.

An account of *Reichskristallnacht*, by a newly-wed, describes the following scene:¹¹⁵

My terrified father-in-law had opened the door to two SA men who entered our bedroom, telling my husband to dress to be taken to the local prison.... I helped him to put warm clothing on. We did not speak although I could feel myself and my husband trembling. In less than ten minutes both Gunter (my husband) and his sixty-eight year old father had been taken away in the police van... while I tried to comfort my aged mother-in-law, who was crying uncontrollably.

Her father-in-law was released after a few days, as he was a veteran of the First World War. But she found out that her husband had been taken to Sachsenhausen. She went to the houses of all the other women whose husbands had been taken away, asking them to write 'a few loving words on a sheet of paper'. She pleaded with the local police to pass on the paper to the men: 'This I heard later did reach our men relatively soon and gave them much needed strength and comfort'. Her husband spent their first wedding anniversary, in February 1939, in Sachsenhausen, but shortly afterwards she managed to get him released by meeting the requirement that he would leave Germany within three weeks. She describes the state in which she found her husband on his release from Sachsenhausen. He had 'open chilblains and festering boils', but 'more than his body, my husband's mind was deeply affected. Almost every night he experienced Sachsenhausen concentration camp anew in nightmares so alarming that I feared for his sanity'. On Easter Saturday in 1939, her husband, having 'embraced his aged parents for the last time' and having had to be separated from his wife, arrived in England and was sent to the Kitchener Camp. She sold their furniture, paintings, carpets and other valuables 'dirt cheap', in order to obtain a domestic permit in order to emigrate to England and be re-united with her husband. In August 1939, she got her entry visa for England and joined her husband there. However, her parents-in-law were to be sent to Theresienstadt at

¹¹⁵ On what follows, see LBI ME 269, G. Stopplemann, 'Lest you forget. 1938-1942', pp. 1-8.

the end of 1939, where both died, and her parents, having been refused permits to South Africa, committed suicide in 1941 after receiving their deportation orders, by throwing themselves under the wheels of the train in which they were to be transported.

The need for families to pull together during times of tragedy and external threat, and their willingness to do so is evident in many testimonies. For example, Alice Oppenheimer describes how when she and her children were preparing to leave Germany after *Reichskristallnacht*, 'in the hours before my departure, my sister had concentrated all her thoughts and love upon me, set aside her own fear for her husband and son [who had been taken to a concentration camp], helped me to pack what was still left and provided us generously with provisions for the journey'.¹¹⁶

Elisabeth Petuchowski, in her memoirs of her childhood, tells of her grandfather's funeral in November 1938, following his suicide a few days after *Reichskristallnacht*, when his two sons had been taken to concentration camp and his warehouse and shop had been turned into a pile of rubble: 'Unable to accept a future not resembling his past, he put himself to sleep forever. During those November days, no Jew dared to leave his house. So there we were... at 5 a.m., the time set by the police for his funeral... we were horror-stricken. Not at his death - what more could now happen to him? - but at our nightmare'.¹¹⁷

Kate Mendels tells of her brother-in-law, Leopold, being released from Buchenwald concentration camp once the family had obtained permits to emigrate to Australia. 'All of us waited now for Leopold to come home.... At long last there came a figure wearing

¹¹⁶ LBI ME 482, Oppenheimer, 'A Few Days', p. 33.

¹¹⁷ LBI ME 500, E. Petuchowski, 'Memoir of Childhood', p. 14.

a much too long overcoat.... There was silent joy when he could embrace all his beloved ones. A wonderful meal was prepared for him, but he could hardly eat. His stomach was so upset.... With all the loving care which Ella [his wife]... gave Leopold, he soon was mentally and physically his old self again'.¹¹⁸ As the family prepared for emigration:

Many of our customers and friends were standing in the street... and suddenly the policeman Adolphe came along saying 'I see that your things are packed now', and very softly he whispered, 'I wish you the best of luck'. We felt that there were many people who liked us and for our sake were glad we were leaving. One man, a cattle-dealer, whom Karl [her husband] had introduced to so many of our customers, was so grateful he gave us 50 RM., as he did not know what present to buy for us. There were also some very spiteful people, mainly those who owed us money for years and now had the chance to say, 'There is no need to pay any Jew!'. They knew very well that the law was not with us any more.¹¹⁹

The ultimate degradation was that after the pogrom, the Jews had to apologise and pay for the damage inflicted upon them in the form of the *Sühneleistung* or 'atonement payment' of one billion RM.¹²⁰ In addition, any insurance payments made for damage to Jewish property were confiscated by the state.¹²¹

Simple, family occasions, such as birthdays and wedding anniversaries, were also affected. Lisa Brauer was celebrating her birthday with an afternoon party at the end of November 1938. The party was 'in full swing' with her aunts and girlfriends around the coffee table. Suddenly a man who lived in the basement of her building rushed into her husband's office urging him to send all the ladies home immediately. 'Word had been

¹¹⁸ LBI ME 435, Mendels, 'To my Descendants', pp. 16-17.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹²⁰ 'Verordnung über eine Sühneleistung der Juden deutscher Staatsangehörigkeit', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1938*, 1, p. 1579. See also, P. Loewenberg, 'The Kristallnacht as a Public Degradation Ritual', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXXII (1987), p. 319.

¹²¹ Barkai, 'The Fateful Year 1938', in Pehle (ed.), *November 1938*, pp. 119-20.

passed to him that we were holding a secret meeting of "enemies of the state" and we would all be taken into jail, if the house was not cleared at once.... Doubtless, the man had taken a tremendous risk by warning my husband out of sheer kindness and gratitude for this doctor who had often treated him and his ten children without charge'.¹²²

Ill-health resulting from worry was not uncommon. For example, Ella Wolff describes how the Nazi measures aimed at isolating and pauperising Jews affected her husband: 'All these events shattered his health fearfully', and he suffered many heart attacks during the period from the end of 1937 until he finally died in Brussels in July 1941.¹²³ Kate Mendels' account tells of the situation after *Reichskristallnacht* when her husband had been taken away. She says, 'it was so good to have the children around in those terrible days'. Kate went to visit her husband in prison every day. She describes how she could hear his mother crying out for a long while as she walked along, 'it was frightening, this always so strong-willed woman had completely lost her nerves'.¹²⁴

Nora Rosenthal tells of how 'tragedy struck' as her husband committed suicide on *Reichskristallnacht*. Her son had his twelfth birthday on 13 November, 'poor child, what a birthday. We tried to celebrate, how could we? He was old enough to grasp the magnitude of his loss'.¹²⁵ Subsequently, although 'torn by anguish and desperation', the widow tried 'to do everything possible for the children's sake' (that is, to obtain the necessary documents for emigration). The task was made more difficult by the fact that

¹²² LBI ME 69, Brauer, 'The Stone was an Opal', p. 42.

¹²³ YV 02/15, E. Wolff, 'Personal Report on the Life of Dr. Wolff and his Family, first in Berlin, later in Belgium (1933-1945)', pp. 1-3.

¹²⁴ LBI ME 435, Mendels, 'To my Descendants', p. 16.

¹²⁵ LBI ME 532, Rosenthal, 'Opus One', pp. 60 and 65.

Jews were no longer allowed to drive. Their licences were revoked on 3 December 1938.

We had to surrender our driving licence and sell our cars at a ridiculous price.... It was very cold, minus 10-15 degrees, and lots of snow. In those conditions it was no fun to get up at 5 a.m. and spend six hours at the Passport Office in order to get passports for the children.... When you had at last succeeded in getting one document you had to start hunting for the next one in a different part of the town with a different authority. No wonder I was starting to feel the strain, but the doctor confirmed that my complaints were all of a nervous nature.... Meanwhile, my eldest brother-in-law was emigrating which meant less advice and help in business matters and so not much family left to support you.... On 24th March [1939] we vacated the lovely flat which had been our home for fifteen years, with memories of many happy events. It was heartbreaking. For the remaining week [before emigrating to England] we stayed with my sister-in-law, who was to be the only one of the family to see us off. I never saw her again. I could not get myself to tell father when we were leaving. I simply could not face such an emotional farewell. He too I never saw again.¹²⁶

After *Reichskristallnacht*, Inge Deutschkron describes how her father was hidden with one friend whilst she and her mother stayed with another: 'Occasionally we met my father, mostly after dark. On these occasions we could observe other Jews who met with their wives in hallways to exchange laundry packages'.¹²⁷ In November 1938, a law was passed to prohibit Jews from going to theatres, cinemas, concerts, exhibitions and other 'presentations of German culture'. They were also excluded from certain restaurants. Else Gerstel describes how on her silver wedding anniversary in December 1938, she and her husband could not even go out for a meal, because restaurants displayed signs saying 'not allowed for Jews'.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-68.

¹²⁷ Deutschkron, *Berlin Jews*, p. 4.

¹²⁸ LBI ME 184, E. Gerstel, 'Grandma, Times Have Changed', pp. 76-7.

On 12 November 1938, the Decree for the Exclusion of Jews from Economic Life, effective from 1 January 1939, prohibited Jews from any remaining forms of trade from which they had not been previously excluded.¹²⁹ On 3 December 1938, Jews had to deposit their cash, jewellery and other valuables into specially supervised blocked accounts (*Sperrkonten*).¹³⁰ A decree of 21 February 1939, called for Jews to hand over all gold, platinum, silver and gems, with the exception of their wedding rings, to the public purchasing offices within two weeks.¹³¹

At the end of 1938, there were still some 297,000 self-defined Jews in Germany (not counting the 180,000 Jews in Austria, which had become part of the Reich following the *Anschluß* of March 1938). By September 1939, this number had decreased to 185,100. The increasing urgency of the situation of German Jewry is illustrated by the fact that in the years up until November 1938, some 228,000 Jews emigrated, whilst in the ten month period between *Reichskristallnacht* and the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, 112,000 emigrated.¹³² Many parents who could not arrange for the emigration of the entire family used contacts abroad to at least get their children out of Germany after *Reichskristallnacht*. One such family, the Rosenzweigs, sent their daughter Irmgard to England. Grete Rosenzweig describes the situation: 'It was the hardest thing for us yet to put her on a refugee children's train to Hanover where she did not know a soul, and say goodbye to her and send her out into the world without

¹²⁹ 'Verordnung zur Ausschaltung der Juden aus dem Wirtschaftsleben', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1938*, 1, p. 1580.

¹³⁰ 'Verordnung über den Einsatz des jüdisches Vermögens', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1938*, 1, p. 1709. See also H. Genschel, *Die Verdrängung der Juden aus der Wirtschaft im Dritten Reich* (Göttingen, 1966), p. 188.

¹³¹ 'Dritte Verordnung zur Verordnung über die Anmeldung des Vermögens von Juden', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1939*, 1, p. 282. See also, J. Moser, 'Depriving Jews of their Legal Rights in the Third Reich', in Pehle (ed.), *November 1938*, p. 131.

¹³² On emigration, see J. Wetzel, 'Auswanderung aus Deutschland', in Benz (ed.), *Die Juden in Deutschland 1933-1945*, pp. 413-97.

knowing if we would ever see her again. On the way to the station, tears ran down Louis' [her husband's] cheeks, that was the only time that I ever saw him cry'.¹³³

Parents described how difficult it was to send children away, but were glad they found the courage to do so as the situation grew worse. For example, one mother relates: 'I was thankful that I had had the strength to send the children away'.¹³⁴ Marta Appel worked to help arrange for the transportation of children to safe havens. She tells of how, 'it was most heartbreaking to see them separate from their parents. Yet the parents themselves came to beg and urge us to send their children away as soon as possible, since they could no longer stand to see them suffer from hatred and abuse. The unselfish love of the parents was so great that they were willing to deprive themselves of their most precious possessions so that their children might live in peace and freedom'.¹³⁵ Once the children were ready to go, the parents stood 'sad and silent, alongside the train'.

At the railway stations:

Little was said. The parents were tongue-tied by emotion, the children bewildered into silence. Only the teenagers had any clear idea as to why they were going away. The youngest were mostly consoled by fantasy - that they were off on a holiday, or to stay with relatives for just a few weeks. Some were not told anything. It was worst for them. They were angry with their parents for packing them off and refused the final hug as they clambered aboard the train. The hurt was to stay with them always.¹³⁶

¹³³ LBI ME 535, Rosenzweig, 'My Life', p. 20.

¹³⁴ YV 01/69, Wagner, '*Kriegs- und Nazizeit in Berlin*', p. 13.

¹³⁵ Appel, in Richarz (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 359.

¹³⁶ B. Turner, ...And the Policeman Smiled. 10,000 Children Escape from Nazi Europe (London, 1990), p. 1.

Leslie Brent (formerly Lothar Baruch) remembers: 'My mother was very tearful, but my father put on a stiff upper lip. To me it all seemed very bewildering. It is hard to describe my feelings'.¹³⁷ Manfred Drake (formerly Drechsel) also remembers how hard it was leaving his mother: 'My mother and I were very close. I so loved her. She mollycoddled me.... when I came to England I couldn't breathe I was so longing for my mother. I missed her terribly'.¹³⁸ Jakob Petuchowski from Berlin tells of how awful it was for him 'to be torn away from his familiar surroundings and from being spoiled by his loving mother', when he left on the Kindertransport for England in May 1939.¹³⁹

Alan Westley (formerly Weisbard) describes preparations for his departure from Nuremberg with a Kindertransport:

New Year's Day 1939 had not long gone when my mother was busy washing, ironing and packing two suitcases - one for my brother Heinrich, and one for me. I could not understand why she kept crying at irregular intervals, since we were only going on a short holiday. I was also mystified why so much clothing was necessary for a short time away. All my most cherished treasures were to be packed up to take with me, my penknife, my stamp collection and my favourite books, and all the small paraphernalia of a ten year old boy.... Parcels of food were given to us for the journey and lots of hugs and kisses and terms of endearment that are usually only heard on special occasions like birthdays and Bar Mitzvahs.¹⁴⁰

Herbert Hobden (formerly Holzinger) remembers his arrival in a new country: 'Our first day in Birmingham was hell. It suddenly hit me that we were in a foreign country... without relatives or friends, and I was trying desperately to be brave as a thirteen-year-old boy was expected to behave. I spent most of the day in and out of the toilet so that no one could see the tears rolling down my cheeks'.¹⁴¹ Martha Blend

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹³⁹ J. Petuchowski, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 243.

¹⁴⁰ A. Westley, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 350.

recounts that: 'Next morning, waking up in a strange room in a strange house, the reality of the separation hit me with full force.'¹⁴² Lorraine Allard (née Sulzbacher) recounts her feelings of homesickness and 'utter emotional loneliness and hopelessness' on leaving Germany. She describes her English foster-parents as '...very different to my parents in every way. They were not at all affectionate to me or to each other'.¹⁴³

In time, some children were able to form ersatz familial relationships in their new homes. For example, Gideon Behrendt describes the refugee hostel in Leeds as 'home' and his close friends there as 'like brothers to me when I had no family'.¹⁴⁴ Lotte Bray (née Löwenstein) describes her new family in England as 'a kindly English Protestant family', which made her feel 'one of their own'.¹⁴⁵

Ruth Kagan (née Kronberger) describes her foster family in England:

Most of all, I will always remember the wonderful aromas and taste of freshly-baked bread, pies, cakes and jam tarts which Mrs. Nunn baked weekly in her brick oven.... Although, of course, we still longed for our parents, and shed many private tears, life with our foster mother, father and sister became secure and strong - lasting bonds were formed. Not only had our foster family shown great generosity by opening their home to us, but by their examples of kindness, caring and highest ethical standards... did they give us a renewed sense of hope in mankind.¹⁴⁶

Helga Samuel (née Kreiner) recalls her arrival in England:

An extremely kind-looking couple stood there and a welcoming arm was placed around my shoulder... I was driven 'home'.... On arrival at my new

¹⁴¹ Turner, *...And the Policeman Smiled*, p. 112.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁴³ L. Allard, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁴ G. Behrendt, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 31.

¹⁴⁵ L. Bray, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁶ R. Kagan, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 163.

home, the maid opened the door... a cup of tea and something to eat and more kind words to help me to bear it all. I remember crying all that first day - the strangeness of it all - the sadness of having first to part with my mother - then with my sister - now being all on my own - in a strange country - a strange house - strange people - but with wonderfully kind faces.... I had acquired a new 'sister' and 'brother' - everyone was doing their utmost to make me feel happy.¹⁴⁷

She also describes how 'truly wonderful' her new family was to her: 'I was treated like their own, I lacked for nothing in either material things, comfort, love, understanding, protection or kindness'.¹⁴⁸

Another example of a good relationship with a foster family is provided by Steffi Schwarcz (née Birnbaum). She and her sister received from their foster family, 'loving kindness, the simplicity of a good family relationship, the early initiation into English customs - especially at Christmas, and motherly guidance.... To date we are part of their family and this relationship has been passed down to the second generation'. But she also remembers their 'German-Jewish childhood, a cultural home imbued with deep love, harmony between our parents, a childhood so filled with beauty, guidance, and fullness'.¹⁴⁹

Parents wrote to their children from Germany, urging them to be good and grateful to the people who had taken them into their homes. However, despite the kindness of the guardians and foster families, the children often found it hard to be grateful as they were experiencing the loss of their natural families. Moreover, not all the children had good experiences, and many were unhappy in their new homes, not just because they were homesick or missed their real families, but because they were badly treated.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Turner, *...And the Policeman Smiled*, p. 113.

¹⁴⁸ H. Samuel, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 289.

¹⁴⁹ S. Schwarcz, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 298-9.

The War Years in Germany

On 1 September 1939, a curfew was introduced, banning Jews from the streets between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. in the summer and between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. in the winter.¹⁵¹ On 29 September 1939, Jews had to hand over their radio sets. Ernest Stiefel describes the additional difficulties placed upon Jewish families in Germany during the war: 'There was food rationing and Jews had to purchase their groceries and meat at special stores set up for them. Jews did not get any ration cards for clothing'.¹⁵² Rations for Jews, who were issued with special ration cards, were 'absolutely inadequate' with 'no exceptions for the sick, pregnant women and babies'.¹⁵³

Gradually, total social ostracism resulted from Jews being physically separated from the rest of the population. Isolation meant that eventually Jewish families were limited physically to within the confines of their homes. Later, they were forced out of their homes, into 'Jewish buildings', ghettos, transit camps and finally the death camps. Daily house searches by the *Gestapo* brought misery to one family after another as it was seldom the case that visits ended without arrests being made.¹⁵⁴

Frau A. tells anecdotes from her time in Berlin, after her husband had emigrated to England in January 1939. When the war broke out in September 1939, Frau A. was still in Berlin with her mother and her young daughter. Formerly a housewife, she now had

¹⁵⁰ For example, see Samuel, in Leverton & Lowensohn (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 288, which describes the 'unhappy story' of Helga's sister.

¹⁵¹ Burleigh & Wippermann, *The Racial State*, p. 93.

¹⁵² LBI ME 208, E. Stiefel, 'Our Grandmother, Amalie Strauss', p. 25.

¹⁵³ YV 01/53, M. Plaut, '*Die Juden in Deutschland von 1939 bis 1941*', p. 7. See also YV 02/38, '*Bericht einer jungen jüdischen Sozialistin über ihr illegales Leben in Berlin während des Krieges*', p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ YV 01/53, Plaut, '*Die Juden*', p. 13.

to find work to support herself and her family. As a trained children's nurse, she was able to work in the Berlin Jewish hospital. When Frau A.'s daughter was four years old, she asked her mother to buy some cherries. Fruit was not obtainable on Jewish ration cards, so the mother was unable to buy any. Her daughter was so upset that she exclaimed: 'I'm fed up with all this. I shall go into a church and become Aryan!' Frau A. was worried about how her daughter would ever fit into normal life again, for during the war years in Berlin she had learnt to lie 'like a trooper', when necessary, in order to evade restrictions and discrimination. For example, once she was sent by some friends of Frau A. to buy ice-cream, a food reserved for 'Aryans'. When asked in the shop, 'Are you Jewish, little girl?', she answered with a smile 'No', and returned with the bowl of ice-cream and a good story for the friends to laugh about. One day, Frau A. went to buy potatoes, but the shopkeeper, a fanatical Nazi, refused to serve her. Later that day, her daughter stole some beetroot in the hospital garden and they shared 'the booty, raw beetroot with jam - a veritable feast!'.¹⁵⁵

Alfred Schwerin describes how by January 1940, 'the agonies of the parents, who feared for the future of their children with growing concern and trembling heart' had reached 'the limits of the endurable'.¹⁵⁶ Jewish families had to find ways of occupying their time and taking their minds off their situation: 'Being confined to our quarters all the time, not able to go anywhere for entertainment, we had lots of time on our hands. So we studied both English and Spanish. It did not mean just a hobby for us, it set our mind and spirit free and we did not feel so much the restrictions around us'.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ YV 02/29, Mrs. A., 'The Jewish Hospital in Berlin', pp. 9-11.

¹⁵⁶ A. Schwerin, in Richarz (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 405.

¹⁵⁷ LBI ME 69, Brauer, 'The Stone was an Opal', p. 38.

By 1941, the situation for Jews still living in Berlin was becoming increasingly untenable.¹⁵⁸ A police order of 4 July 1940 meant that Jews were only allowed to purchase food in the afternoons between 4 and 5 p.m., when the bulk of available daily supplies was already sold out.¹⁵⁹ They were unable to buy 'luxury' vegetables like cauliflower, spinach, tomatoes and other luxury items, such as chocolate, eggs and sugar. When potato rationing was introduced, the 'Aryan' population received two pounds per person per week, whilst Jews received only one pound. There were raids on Jewish premises to search for forbidden foodstuffs, for which the penalties were severe.

From November 1940 onwards, all 'physically fit' Jewish men and women between the ages of 18 and 45 were conscripted for compulsory labour.¹⁶⁰ One account tells of how 'former bank directors, architects or judges worked as hard in their menial jobs as did former society ladies'.¹⁶¹ Jews were forbidden to use factory canteens, so the Jewish community had to organise numerous special kitchens in the factory areas of Berlin. In August 1941, it was determined that a Jew should not occupy more than 10 to 14 square metres per person, which meant that small two-roomed flats were often occupied by 9 to 12 people. At first, families that were acquainted with one another were able to live together in a flat. But later on, Jews were compelled to live together in one flat or even one room with strangers. Overcrowding and lack of sufficient sanitary facilities often led to quarrels and misunderstandings.

¹⁵⁸ On what follows, see YV 03/1395, K. Cohen, 'The Jews in Berlin at the beginning of 1942', p. 1.

¹⁵⁹ Eschwege, *Kennzeichen J*, p. 126.

¹⁶⁰ On this, see K. Kwiet, 'Forced Labour of German Jews in Nazi Germany', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXXVI (1991), pp. 389-410.

¹⁶¹ YV 01/120, P. Littauer, 'My Experiences during the Persecution of the Jews in Berlin and Brussels 1939-1944', p. 4.

On 1 September 1941, a decree was passed making it compulsory for Jews to wear the Yellow Star.¹⁶² One account has described 19 September 1941, the first day of the implementation of this decree as 'the most difficult day in the twelve years of hell'.¹⁶³ Even without the Yellow Star, the Jews were recognisable by 'their depressed attitude and pitiable clothing'. The attitude of the rest of the population towards them was 'sometimes hostile, but mostly neutral and reserved'. There were a few individual cases in which Jewish families found some fruit, pastry or chocolates on their doorstep, the gifts of non-Jewish friends who wished to express their sympathy without being denounced.¹⁶⁴ Further measures thereafter included a ban on the use of public telephones (12 December 1941), the confiscation of woollen clothing and furs (5 January 1942) and a ban on keeping household pets (15 February 1942). All such measures were aimed at making the daily life of Jews increasingly untenable.¹⁶⁵ Large-scale deportations began in October 1941, to Poland, Riga and Theresienstadt.¹⁶⁶ Waves of suicides occurred, with

¹⁶² 'Polizeiverordnung zur Kennzeichnung der Juden vom 1. September 1941', *Reichsgesetzblatt 1941*, 1, p. 547. See also, Eschwege, *Kennzeichen J*, p. 157.

¹⁶³ V. Klemperer, *Lingua Tertii Imperii. Die unbewältigte Sprache. Aus dem Notizbuch eines Philologen* (Munich, 1947), p. 176.

¹⁶⁴ YV 03/1395, Cohen, 'The Jews in Berlin', pp. 3-4. On gifts and help from non-Jewish friends, see also, I. Rewald, *Berliners Who Helped Us to Survive the Hitler Dictatorship* (Berlin, 1990), pp. 1 & 3. See I. Deutschkron, *Ich trug den gelben Stern* (Cologne, 1980), p. 87, on the mixed reactions of Berliners - some sympathetic, some scornful - to her wearing the Star. On the responses of the German population to the introduction of the Yellow Star, see also Kwiet, 'Nach dem Pogrom', in Benz (ed.), *Die Juden in Deutschland*, pp. 626-7; Boberach (ed.), *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, pp. 220-225; Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution*, pp. 124-30.

¹⁶⁵ See Schmid *et al* (eds.) *Juden unterm Hakenkreuz*, Vol. 2, pp. 81-3 on restrictions on Jewish life in Germany at this time.

¹⁶⁶ On the responses of the German population to the way in which deportations were carried out, with brutal beatings, forced marches and suicides, see H. Mommsen, 'What Did the Germans Know about the Genocide of the Jews?', in Pehle (ed.), *November 1938*, p. 197. He suggests that many Germans had misgivings, but that these were more about the terrible circumstances in which the deportations took place, than about the measure of deportation itself. For example, the Jews of Heidelberg were assembled in the market place and deported from there. On this, see A. Weckbecher, *Die Judenverfolgung in Heidelberg, 1933-1945* (Heidelberg, 1985), pp. 197-8. Kulka and Rodrigue conclude that the

'up to 60 suicides a day' being noted when Jews received notification of their impending deportation.¹⁶⁷ Another testimony also tells of how 'suicides were the order of the day.... Whole families died out in this way'.¹⁶⁸

Leonie Hall describes her experiences during the war.¹⁶⁹ Once forced to wear the Yellow Star, she decided to work as a nurse in the Jewish hospital in Berlin. One day in 1941, the *Gestapo* arrived at the hospital and ordered the head doctor to release 50 nurses who were to be assigned compulsory labour for IG Farben in Rummelsburg. Leonie was amongst them and describes the 'terribly difficult work', for which she had to stand 'knee deep in water' under the constant surveillance of guards who beat her. She succeeded in escaping from there in December 1942 and from then on lived 'illegally'. She ran to her Catholic friend, Chorazy. They got married and he later took her to a Catholic foundation. When Leonie gave birth to her first child, her mother came to live with her. They fled from one house to another, sometimes only for a few days, either with Chorazy's friends or with nuns. Chorazy was fearless of the Nazis and always managed to find Leonie hiding places. However, he was permanently in danger of being arrested, for his relationship with Leonie had been discovered and he was denounced for 'miscegenation'. He was eventually shot by the Nazis shortly before the end of the war.

German popular response to Nazi policy towards the Jews during the war was one of 'passive complicity'. On this, see O. Kulka and A. Rodrigue, 'The German Population and the Jews in the Third Reich. Recent Publications and Trends in Research on German Society and the "Jewish Question"', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 16 (1984), p. 434. I. Kershaw, 'German Popular Opinion and the "Jewish Question", 1939-1943: Some Further Reflections', in Paucker (ed.), *Die Juden im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, pp. 383-4 challenges the views of Kulka and Rodrigue on the responses of the German population.

¹⁶⁷ YV 03/1395, Cohen, 'The Jews in Berlin', pp. 1-3.

¹⁶⁸ YV 01/120, Littauer, 'My Experiences', p. 3. On suicides, see also, Kwiet, 'The Ultimate Refuge', pp. 135-67, and Kwiet and Eschwege, pp. 194-215.

¹⁶⁹ On what follows, see YV 02/166, Leonie Hall, née Warner, pp. 1-3.

In the meantime, Leonie's father, Leo Werner had become ill in 1942 and had been taken to the Jewish hospital in Berlin. Although visiting was strictly prohibited, his wife did visit him and took him food, 'putting her own life in danger'. On one occasion, the *Gestapo* was actually in the hospital when she came to visit her husband. The porter and nurses warned her, but she went in nevertheless. When she wanted to leave, she found that all the exits were blocked by the *Gestapo*. In order to leave without being arrested, she had to dig a hole in the earth outside the hospital, until she could get under the wire fence which separated the hospital from a neighbouring old-age home. It took her two hours, but she succeeded. This is an example of the lengths to which some people went to support their loved ones.

Paula Littauer describes her experiences in Berlin and in Brussels during the period 1939-1944:¹⁷⁰

It was the day of the declaration of war. For me, the outbreak of war meant the shattering of all my hopes and plans. I had prepared my emigration and everything was almost ready so that I could hope to be very soon together with my child. Now that hope was gone.... All of a sudden, Jews were ordered to evacuate their homes, in some cases, fairly spacious flats, within five days.... On 1 July 1940 I received the order to move from my flat within five days.... Although I had spent in my flat the saddest and most sorrowful time of my life - there I had been separated from my husband and my child, from all the things I had lifelong loved and cherished - nevertheless when I parted, it was with a heavy heart. I was alone and I felt that it might conceivably mean the loss forever of a home of my own. And what is a woman without a home?

Paula and her sister managed to emigrate to Brussels, but then the Nazis took over Belgium too, so they feared detection by the *Gestapo* every night, as they lived in hiding for three years. In the summer of 1943, she wrote: 'I regard every day that I am alive and free as a present from heaven. Every night when we are in bed we say to each other

¹⁷⁰ On what follows, see YV 01/120, Littauer, 'My Experiences', pp. 1-2.

"another day gained!", and in spite of the misery of our life, we are happy'.¹⁷¹ She and her sister managed to get papers so that they could work as domestic helps for different families, where they were well-treated, but both worked very hard. Eventually, her sister was arrested one day whilst Paula was out. This affected Paula badly: 'I am quite dejected and can neither eat nor sleep. Now I am all alone and have nobody to talk to'.¹⁷² Her sister was subsequently released due to illness, but Paula herself later ended up in a concentration camp. 'When I saw the many children with and without parents, women without husbands or men without their wives, I thanked God for at least saving my child'.¹⁷³

Eva Wagner describes her experiences in Berlin during the war, with all the deprivations and hardships forced upon her as a Jew.¹⁷⁴ Yet she describes how, despite all the hardship, 'the awareness that my children were waiting for me was victorious over all weaknesses and helped me.... That gave me strength'. Her children had emigrated to Palestine, and she was determined to see them again, and 'to die a normal death in proximity to them'. Hence, whilst she lived in terrible conditions in Berlin with a hard bed, no comforts, no books, and later spent three years homeless, having left Berlin and moved to the countryside, she was 'never quite desolate', knowing that the children were safe, and hoping to see them again. Hence, her children were a source of strength to her. She describes how the hope of seeing her children again made her 'strong and brave through all the difficult years, feeding me when I was starving and warming me when I was frozen.'

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁷⁴ On what follows, see YV 01/69, E. Wagner, '*Kriegs- und Nazizeit in Berlin*', pp. 2-13.

On the eve of the deportations, the German Jews were 'a decimated, over-aged... socially declassified and impoverished population group'.¹⁷⁵ Ilse Rewald remembers how in Berlin, by December 1942, almost everyone had lost close relatives or friends through the deportations. She describes how 'selfless friendships' and 'a spirit of sacrifice' developed. For example, 'I will never forget how a fellow worker baked a cake for me on my birthday, the first one in my life that I had to experience without my mother. She had to save the ingredients for a long time to be able to give me a little happiness'.¹⁷⁶

Elisabeth Freund describes how she felt when she was preparing to leave Germany in 1941:

We will have to part with our whole household. That is bitter, especially for a woman. But I won't make it hard for myself. Three years ago I had to separate from my children - that was hard. Furniture - that's nothing to get excited about. The main thing is to get out of Germany alive.... we must leave the country whose language we speak.... For many generations, our families did their utmost for this country, and we are leaving behind their graves in this soil. Our children can grow into another future.... when we are received in another country in which we are allowed to live with our children undisturbed, then, happy and grateful, we will take pains to work for this new land faithfully, as our parents and ancestors did for Germany.¹⁷⁷

She also recounts the night when Jews in Berlin were taken from their apartments to a transit centre in the middle of the night for the first time: 'Families were separated, married couples were torn apart, children dragged away, parents left behind'.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Kwiet & Eschwege, *Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand*, p. 56.

¹⁷⁶ Rewald, *Berliners Who Helped Us*, p. 4.

¹⁷⁷ E. Freund, in Richarz (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 417-8.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 421.

Camilla Neumann also describes the period of mass deportations from Berlin: 'Now one was no longer sure of one's life even for a minute within one's own four walls, and every meal could be the last.'¹⁷⁹ She describes the situation in which she and her husband

Ludwig found themselves:

... he concealed everything unpleasant from me as much as he could. He did, however, grow visibly thinner, and if we had not had my sister's help the whole time, Ludwig would not have been able to bear it. Because Ludwig was working I had it harder too, for besides the factory I now also had to take care of the household.... Even worse than the additional work was the fact that we could hardly talk to one another anymore. If I had the late shift I did not see Ludwig from Sunday evening until Saturday noon, thus for six days. But every evening there were a few dear lines from Ludwig on my night table, and naturally I too, put a little note for him on the dinner table every day. When he got up in the morning and left, I was still asleep, and when I came home at twelve midnight, he was sleeping. Before I went to bed, I sat and prepared breakfast for Ludwig.¹⁸⁰

Here is an example of a couple pulling together in the time of crisis. However, they disagreed over the issue of suicide. She wished to take her own life, but Ludwig refused.

In addition:

...he asked my forgiveness that he had not done anything about emigration when it was still possible. I could not bear to see that besides all the suffering we were subjected to, he was also tormenting himself with self-reproaches. Therefore, I comforted him and said that we would not have escaped our fate anywhere. At that time this was not yet my full conviction. I only said that to calm Ludwig. Since 1939, when we were still arguing about emigration, there had never been any discord between us.¹⁸¹

In February 1943, when rumours went about that the *Gestapo* were to round up Jews from the factories, Camilla was anxious and woke her husband gently to warn him not to go to work the next day: 'And as always, he tried to calm me and said: "Don't worry so much, it doesn't have to be exactly tomorrow they start".... After a goodnight kiss I went

¹⁷⁹ C. Neumann, in Richarz (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 436.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 438-9.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 439-40.

to bed with a heavy heart. It was our last goodnight kiss'. He was rounded up the next day and she was desolate. 'In a completely indescribable state I now walked along the streets at random.... Things were going around in circles in my head and my only thought was Ludwig.... I was considering how I might help Ludwig, but I saw that I was powerless. This powerlessness made me frantic with rage'.¹⁸²

Changes and constraints imposed by conditions outside the home during the war

Living illegally

Officially, Berlin was declared *judenrein* in May 1943, but there were a few thousand 'U-boats', Jews who continued to live there 'illegally'.¹⁸³ Their lives were extremely difficult, requiring courage, persistence and adaptability. Most of the 'illegals' were individuals, not families. It was easier for one person to be hidden, than for a family. It was hard both physically and emotionally to go into complete hiding, but many children and adults did so. Almost all ties with society, and even with their families were severed. When couples, families or small groups of people did go into hiding together, group tensions were unavoidable, and irritability, nervousness and aggression, as well as sexual tensions, often plagued interpersonal relationships 'underground'.¹⁸⁴ Limitations of space, air and facilities exacerbated the situation. 'Illegals' had to keep moving from one place to another. 'Good connections and an Aryan appearance could of course help alot in individual cases'.¹⁸⁵ But there was always the danger of denunciation.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 443.

¹⁸³ See A. Seligmann, 'An Illegal Way of Life in Nazi Germany' *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXXVII (1992), pp. 327-61. On Jews living underground, see also, Kwiet & Eschwege, *Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand*, pp. 150-9; W. Benz, 'Überleben im Untergrund, 1943-1945', in Benz (ed.), *Die Juden in Deutschland 1933-1945*, pp. 660-700.

¹⁸⁴ Kwiet, 'To Leave or Not to Leave', in Pehle (ed.), *November 1938*, p. 151.

¹⁸⁵ YV 01/58, E. Hannack, 'Berlin bis 1944', p. 22.

¹⁸⁶ According to Kwiet and Eschwege, 75% of 'U-boats' were caught by the *Gestapo*. See Kwiet and Eschwege, *Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand*, p. 169.

Edith Ehrlich was one of the few thousand Jews who survived the Nazi era by going underground, living illegally in Berlin.¹⁸⁷ After *Reichskristallnacht*, her family discussed emigration: 'The money we had available was 800 dollars, which was sufficient for two people to travel to Shanghai. We decided that my father and brother should emigrate, and that I would stay behind in our family home. The deportations to concentration camps started en masse on October 16th 1941. I decided there and then that I would try to live illegally rather than be deported'. By that time, emigration had been officially halted. On February 16th 1942, she went home earlier than usual and noticed a *Gestapo* van outside her house. She decided that this was the time to go underground, and left the scene at once, without collecting any of her possessions. She recalls that: 'I was aware that had I returned home later, I would have been caught by the *Gestapo* who were waiting for me in the flat. That was the first lucky incident that saved my life'. After that, she went to a friend's house for one night, but was known in that house so could not risk staying there any longer. She slept in doorways, the toilet and the waiting room of Berlin Zoo train station, and managed to survive. During the days, she was able to do housework for families in the Charlottenburg and Kurfürstendamm neighbourhoods of Berlin. Her main consideration was not the money, but food, for she had to eat in order to survive.

She describes how the increasing bomb attacks on Berlin, though hard, were advantageous for those who, like herself, lived illegally: 'There was a lot of unrest and commotion, and people were concerned with their own safety and did not take much

¹⁸⁷ On what follows, see LBI ME 205, Nelki, 'The German-Jewish Family of Hermann Nelki', to which is attached the story of Edith Ehrlich, a close family friend, who survived illegally in Berlin, pp. 109-115.

notice of others. We became more invisible'. Her 'blond hair and light colouring' saved her for many years, but in June 1944, two young Jews working for the *Gestapo* caught her. The *Gestapo* had promised them that for every illegal Jew caught, one member of their family would be crossed off the lists of people to be sent to the concentration camps. Edith was taken to a collection camp in the north of Berlin, from which Jews were sent to the concentration camps. She managed to survive by making herself so useful in the camp - at first by cooking and cleaning, then by assisting the camp dentist with his work - that her name was twice crossed off the list of people to go to Auschwitz. After the war, she found out that her brother and father were both well and planning to emigrate to the United States: 'I applied for a visa to the U.S.A. as well and could hardly wait to see them again.... Unfortunately my father died just before he was to leave Shanghai, so I never saw him again'.

Alfred Meyerowitz was another of the Jews who went into hiding in 1943, separately from his wife.¹⁸⁸ A non-Jewish friend of his, Herr Sommer, allowed him to use a small room in his car workshop on the top floor of his factory, where he had to live in complete silence, due to the imminent danger of the *Gestapo*, who controlled and searched the building regularly. He even stayed there during the air-raids, preferring the possibility of being bombed to being discovered and handed over to the *Gestapo*. After the destruction of their home by bombing, the Sommer family moved to their summer house in Birkenwerder. Despite their own difficulties, they decided to take Alfred with them and to hide him on their estate. He hid at the back of a shed which was filled with machinery and appliances. 'In the meantime, my wife had further problems finding a hiding place where she could stay for longer than a few days or weeks. It was also now

¹⁸⁸ On what follows, see YV 033/78, A. Meyerowitz, '*Lebenslauf*', pp. 1-5.

more difficult for us to see each other. My wife, whose mother had had a summer house on the same estate, was known in Birkenwerder and therefore could only go about in complete darkness.... She could also only leave in the dark, before daybreak, in order to reach Berlin on the first early workers' express train'. Alfred managed to survive the Nazi era by remaining in hiding in the Sommers' shed: 'I had completely lost my sense of time, but unforgettable to me was the experience, when very early one April morning, suddenly the door of the shed was ripped open and Herr Sommer shouted out "Alfred, you can come out, the Russians are here!"'.

The camps

At Theresienstadt, certain 'prominent' people, including veterans of the First World War, were given 'better, larger and more secluded quarters', which made it possible for those married couples to live together. That 'great advantage' was denied to the rest of the inmates, for 'in general, the sexes were segregated and this remained so up until the end.'¹⁸⁹

Karl Ochsenmann describes his experiences in the camps at Westerbork, Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen. He tells of how at first, in Westerbork, families could eat together and the feeling of togetherness was not completely lost, but how later, this changed and led to feelings of increasing demoralisation amongst the inmates.¹⁹⁰ At Bergen-Belsen, '... a healthy physical and moral development of youth was impossible. Family units were destroyed. Parents were not in a position to care about their children's education. After the whole day at work... mothers and fathers came back to their barracks in the evenings apathetic and full of despair.... The children... loafed around, often unwashed and

¹⁸⁹ YV 01/121, J. Jacobson, 'Terezin. The Daily Life 1943-1945', p. 9.

¹⁹⁰ YV 01/66 K. Ochsenmann, '*Jüdische Jugend in den Lagern*', p. 2.

uncombed, in shabby clothes with torn shoes'.¹⁹¹

In the transit camps, confinement, hunger and illness led to a sense of shame and degradation amongst parents and a grave deterioration in family structures. In the circumstances of these camps, where adults were forced to obey orders and subjected to arbitrary insult and assault without respite, traditional family relationships altered dramatically. The concept of parental power disappeared. In Belsen, parents were 'nothing anymore', in the sense that children no longer had feelings of respect for them.¹⁹² The radical change in children's perceptions of their parents resulted from the fact that camp inmates were in a situation of absolute powerlessness. Hence, a father became 'just another person'.¹⁹³ Parental authority diminished and filial respect dwindled.

Yet, in some cases, parents were still, in certain senses, able to provide emotional support and a semblance of normality, especially for younger children who were less aware of the powerlessness and abasement of their parents. Esther Levi describes how in the transit camp, her situation 'remained familiar' because her mother was always there and the pattern from home was preserved in this sense.¹⁹⁴ Even for older children who recognised their parents' lack of power, the very presence of one or both parents and the fact that the family was still together, created a feeling of comfort, and despite the hardships, love and tenderness still remained as a part of life. Where possible, families ate together and some semblance of normal life was maintained in the abnormal situation in which these families found themselves. However, parents often felt unable to fulfil

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁹² M. Krieg, in Dwork, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁹³ F. Frenkel, in Dwork, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

¹⁹⁴ E. Levi, in Dwork, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

their role as parents, as they watched their children become ill from hunger and overcrowded and unhygienic living conditions.

In the concentration camps, the context of family relationships was completely transformed, although, for example, female inmates at Belsen often displayed a 'practical and community minded attitude, chiefly for the sake of their children'.¹⁹⁵ Children grew up prematurely.¹⁹⁶ As Dwork points out: 'The young people were no longer in a position to be the children of their parents, and the adults were defeated in their attempts to protect their progeny'.¹⁹⁷ Inmates remained together with their families and friends as much as possible. In cases in which they were unable to be with their loved ones, people formed new relationships and created ersatz families. For example, in the twins block at Auschwitz, where children were separated from their parents, older girls became 'mothers' to smaller children, as it made life better for the latter to have 'mothers'.¹⁹⁸

Alexander Ehrmann and his brother vowed 'the two of us always will stay together'.¹⁹⁹ In spite of differences of opinion or arguments, remaining family members tried to stay together, as that bond was perhaps the only thing upon which they could rely. It helped them to cope with the completely abnormal situation imposed upon them by the camp system. As the inmates' desperate goal became just to survive another day, family members who were able to remain together helped each other - for example, Frieda Menco-Brommet and her mother were able to survive: 'we owe it to each other and to ourselves that we are alive because she was physically much stronger than I was.... But I

¹⁹⁵ H. Levy-Hass, Inside Belsen, translated by R. Taylor, (Brighton, 1982), p. 30.

¹⁹⁶ G. Eisen, Children and Play in the Holocaust: Games Among the Shadows (Amherst, 1990), p. 22.

¹⁹⁷ Dwork, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-9.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

was mentally much stronger than she. So we helped each other'.²⁰⁰ This kind of symbiotic, supportive relationship, as a survival technique, existed not only between family members, where possible, but also between friends.

The concentration camps aimed to completely destroy the social existence of their inmates, by depriving them of all their usual support systems, including the family.²⁰¹

Johanna Rosenthal describes the situation at the Kaiserwald concentration camp in Riga:

'That evening, as at all other purges, many families were torn asunder. It was really extraordinary how well they managed to tear families asunder'.²⁰² One of the objectives of the way of life in the camps was to eliminate the sense of individuality of the inmates, so that no individual or group act of resistance could occur. Prisoners were often transferred between barracks and labour camps to prevent them from becoming too intimate with one another.²⁰³

The splitting up of families was part of the Nazis' attempt to sap away any vestiges of morale their victims may have had, part of the process of isolation and dehumanisation.

Concentration camp and death camp inmates formed substitute families, mutually depending on one or more people in the same situation to keep living.²⁰⁴ For example,

Richard Glazar, a survivor of Treblinka described how important relationships were to survival: 'Karel arrived in a transport the day after I had come. His whole family were killed at once... but he was... selected for work. From that moment we were never apart... they used to call us the twins'.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ F. Menco-Brommet, in Dwork, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

²⁰¹ B. Bettelheim, *Surviving the Holocaust* (London, 1986), p. 36.

²⁰² YV 01/119, J. Rosenthal 'From Germany to the Riga Ghetto and the Kaiserwald and Salaspitz extermination camps', p. 2.

²⁰³ Bettelheim, *Surviving the Holocaust*, p. 65.

²⁰⁴ Koonz, *Mothers*, p. 407.

Once families had been separated, individuals had to formulate their own survival techniques.²⁰⁶ Women cleaned in order to prevent the spread of disease. They also did housework 'as a kind of practical therapy' and to gain control over their space. In some senses, 'women's traditionally domestic roles as wives, daughters and mothers aided them under conditions of duress'. Women also formed 'little families' within their work groups or barracks and 'bonded together for mutual help'. Women formed networks of survival through their ability to create or recreate 'families'.²⁰⁷ For example, Charlotte Delbo tells of having a substitute mother who persuaded her not to give up and thus aided her survival.²⁰⁸ As Ringelheim argues: 'Women were able to transform their habits of raising children or their experience of nurturing into the care of the nonbiological family'.²⁰⁹ As isolation and separation of families were deliberately fostered by the concentration camp system, the creation of new 'families' helped inmates by allowing them to have a system of mutual support and a source of material and psychological strength in place of their real families.

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The differing experiences and reactions to Nazi persecution of German Jewish families was largely the result of their various backgrounds, circumstances and attitudes. Both anti-Semitic legislation and informal social ostracism escalated quite considerably

²⁰⁵ Interviewed in Sereny, Into that Darkness, p. 180. See also p. 186 and p. 191 for his accounts of the importance of close bonds to survival.

²⁰⁶ On what follows, see S. Milton, 'Women and the Holocaust: The Case of German and German-Jewish Women', in Bridenthal *et al* (eds.), When Biology Became Destiny, pp. 311-13. See also Koonz, Mothers, pp. 380-1.

²⁰⁷ J. Ringelheim, 'The Unethical and the Unspeakable: Women and the Holocaust', Simon Wiesenthal Annual, 1 (1984), p. 80.

²⁰⁸ C. Delbo, None of Us Will Return (Boston, 1968), pp. 73-4.

²⁰⁹ J. Ringelheim, 'Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research', Signs, 10 (1985), p. 747.

between 1933 and the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws in September 1935. This affected Jewish professional and social life, and, by extension, affected family life too. In the period leading up to *Reichskristallnacht*, the situation for Jewish families worsened further still. The pogrom of 9-10 November 1938 meant a major disruption to family life for many, with homes being smashed to pieces and adult males being taken away to concentration camps. Thereafter, the total 'Aryanisation of the economy' removed the source of income from families which still owned businesses or whose members were still employed at that time.

Continued intimate family living despite the dangers was fatal to many families during the Nazi regime. Some families clung to their old living patterns and possessions even more resolutely as their desperation mounted. The more severely their freedom to act was reduced, the less able they were to contemplate independent action.²¹⁰ According to Bettelheim, survivors of the regime tended to be those who managed to re-evaluate their situation as realistically as possible - difficult and painful as that was - and to react in accordance with the new reality. This meant not attempting to continue a 'peaceful' family life as before, not taking pride in possessions or profession and not retiring into an increasingly private world.²¹¹

There is no clearcut correlation of the effects of persecution upon Jewish families and their responses to it in the period up to 1939. In many cases, there is evidence to suggest that families pulled together, and that in particular, the Jewish home provided a shelter against the discrimination and growing problems that individual family members had to face outside it. Yet, in other cases, the Jewish home seemed unable to shield its members

²¹⁰ Bettelheim, *Surviving the Holocaust*, pp. 127-8.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131. See also, Hilberg, *Perpetrators*, pp. 175 and 188.

from the situation, and tensions between spouses and between parents and children arose. Parents often felt unable to maintain their position as protectors of and providers for their offspring, and children sometimes experienced a loss of respect for their parents for not fulfilling this role. This type of scenario was lived out even more strikingly in the transit camps, concentration camps and death camps, where children saw their parents in a different light imposed by the abnormal circumstances and by those in charge.

CONCLUSION

The present thesis has extended the knowledge of the family in the Third Reich in two ways. Firstly, it has expanded upon issues already covered in the secondary literature and secondly, it has explored different angles and offered new perspectives, in particular, by considering family socialisation and Nazi policy towards 'asocial' clans and 'inferior' families.

The starting point for this thesis, the nature of Nazi ideology towards the family, as the 'germ cell of the nation', paved the way for a discussion of the extent to which this ideology was reflected in Nazi family policy. Nazi family ideology was composed of a blend of conservative and *völkisch* values that were already prevalent within certain sectors of Weimar society, and were, in effect, a backlash against moves towards greater liberalisation within society during the Weimar period. Although Nazi ideology was not particularly original, it was largely consistent in terms of the family ideal it sought to promote, that is, the rural, *kinderreich* family. Inconsistencies occurred, however, in the relationship between Nazi family ideology and policy. In some senses, policy matched ideology quite closely, especially in the early years of the regime, but in other respects, there were considerable discrepancies between the two.

In evaluating the inconsistencies between Nazi ideology and policy, a number of issues have emerged. Firstly, although Nazi leaders and propaganda called for an increase in the number of *kinderreich* families - mainly as a way of raising the national birth rate - there was no sustained attempt to provide for such families beyond rather piecemeal measures and symbolic tributes. In particular, the lack of an adequate housing policy for such families meant that the Nazi model, *kinderreich* family remained in the minority

within the overall number of German families. Secondly, inconsistencies between ideology and policy arose as a result of the needs of the economy between 1936 and 1939, and after that, the war effort assumed priority. There was a fundamental clash between the programmatic desire to uphold the family and the regime's drive to exploit modern technology in industry, business, and war, especially as women were mobilised for labour.¹ This apparent contradiction between traditional family values and the increasing role of women in work and industry exemplifies the National Socialists' 'reactionary modernism'.² Thirdly, the desire to increase the birth rate meant that certain prominent members of the Nazi leadership elite, for example, Himmler and Bormann, promoted ideas that did not correspond to the Nazi ideal of the solid, rural *kinderreich* family. They wanted to raise the status of illegitimate children and promote polygamy, whilst Rosenberg advanced the idea of the *Männerbund* over the family. However, the majority of Nazi leaders and population policy experts favoured a more traditional concept of family over any of these notions. They remained concerned with both the quality and quantity of progeny, and the establishment of the *Lebensborn* homes was arguably the most outlandish example of 'positive' population policy.

Familial issues formed a substantial part of National Socialist education and socialisation, as evidenced by the activities of the Party's youth groups and the women's formations. The *HJ* and the *BDM* socialised German youth in a gender-specific manner, stressing the differences in boys' and girls' future roles in the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The various 'educational' activities of the *NSF* and *DFW* were also intended, *inter alia*, to encourage

¹ J. Stephenson, 'Modernization, Emancipation, Mobilization: Nazi Society Reconsidered', in L. Jones & J. Retallack (eds.), Elections, Mass Politics and Political Change in Germany, 1880-1945 (Washington D.C, 1992), p. 230.

² On this, see J. Herf, Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 1-2.

women to have large families and to instruct them in the correct manner of rearing children and managing the household. An analysis of the content of school textbooks of the period has also demonstrated the lengths to which the regime was prepared to go in order to instil its ideals into German youth. The original research carried out at the Georg Eckert Institute for International Schoolbook Research has produced a different perspective on Nazi policy towards the family and created an enhanced knowledge of this particular aspect of education policy.³

The Nazi regime categorised families into different types, and treated them accordingly. This aspect of policy was consistent with Nazi racial ideology. The family, as the 'germ cell of the nation', had to be 'Aryan' and 'hereditarily healthy', as well as politically reliable and 'socially fit'. As such, the rural, *kinderreich* family was the Nazi ideal, and, rhetorically at least, such families were accorded paramount importance in the National Socialist state. The Cross of Honour of the German Mother and the Honour Books awarded to large families provide the best examples of their symbolic significance. However, the Nazi regime did not go much beyond propaganda initiatives and piecemeal measures in terms of policies designed to increase the number of *kinderreich* families. The actual decrease in the number of such families during the Nazi era demonstrates that German couples were not persuaded by the regime to change the extant trend towards smaller families.

Families that did not fulfil the regime's racial and social criteria were excluded from the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The failure of such families to conform to Nazi requirements meant that they were excluded from welfare benefits, discriminated against, persecuted, and

³ L. Pine, 'The dissemination of Nazi ideology and family values through school textbooks', *History of Education*, 25 (1996), pp. 91-110.

ultimately 'weeded out' and 'eliminated'. The destruction of the 'hereditary properties' of 'Communists' and 'asocials' in Hamburg in 1934-5, the creation of *ad hoc* camps for 'gypsies', such as Marzahn in Berlin, and the establishment of the 'asocial colony', Hashude, in Bremen, exemplify the kind of measures to which such families were subjected. The original research on Hashude, in particular, has revealed an aspect of Nazi policy towards 'asocials' that has been neglected in the existing secondary literature.⁴ The perceived 'congenital' nature of 'asociality' justified measures not just against individuals, but against entire families, which were labelled as 'asocial clans'. Hence, as Gisela Bock puts it: 'With respect to the inferior, National Socialism pursued a policy not of family welfare, but of family destruction'.⁵

The discriminatory and increasingly draconian measures applied to Jewish families throughout the Nazi period, even before the 'Final Solution', demonstrate the consequences of failure to conform to Nazi racial criteria. In addition, the chapter on Jewish families, which includes an analysis of memoirs and testimonies from the Yad Vashem Archive and the Leo Baeck Institute, has highlighted the nature of the Holocaust from a more personal perspective - a consideration of how Nazi policies affected families and family life - one which is often overlooked in books dealing with the subject.

In the final analysis, the National Socialists recognised the family to be important, but as a vehicle for their own aims, rather than as a social unit *per se*. Their expressed intention of honouring the family was not for its own sake and in reality the Nazi regime utilised the family for its own ends. Marriage and child birth became racial obligations rather

⁴ L. Pine, 'Hashude: The imprisonment of 'Asocial' Families in the Third Reich', German History, 13 (1995), pp. 182-197.

⁵ Bock, 'Antinatalism, Maternity and Paternity', in Bock & Thane (eds.), Maternity and Gender Policies, p. 247.

than personal decisions, as the National Socialists systematically reduced the functions of the family to the single task of reproduction. They aimed to 'shatter the most intimate human group, the family, and to place it as a breeding and rearing institution completely in the service of the totalitarian state'.⁶ As Czarnowski has argued, relationships within the family were emptied of their emotional content and women were to be 'the producers of perfect products', that is, 'hereditarily healthy' children.⁷ Nazi educational and youth policies took away from the family most of its role in socialisation.⁸ The youth groups, in particular, created an increasing and deliberate restriction of family rights and tasks. They stressed independence from parents, as well as exploiting inter-generational antagonisms. Military and labour service, as well as pressures on party members to work long hours, often away from home meant that the regime engendered a whole host of pressures that were inimical to family cohesion.⁹ A contemporary joke about the position of the family in the Third Reich stressed the absence from home of family members: 'Father is in the party, mother in the *Frauenschaft*, son in the *HJ*, daughter in the *BDM*. Where does the ideal National Socialist family meet then? At the Reich Party Day in Nuremberg!'.¹⁰ Hence, as Weber-Kellermann argues: 'In the name of restoring tradition, the Nazi state did more than any other regime to break down parental autonomy and to make the family simply a vehicle of state policy'.¹¹

⁶ B. Beuys, *Familienleben in Deutschland. Neue Bilder der deutschen Vergangenheit* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1980), pp. 472-3.

⁷ Czarnowski, 'Familienpolitik als Geschlechterpolitik', in Otto & Sunker (eds.), *Soziale Arbeit und Faschismus*, p. 250.

⁸ Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie*, p. 184.

⁹ Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich*, pp. 307-8. On the negative implications of Nazi organisations for the family, see also, Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women*, p. 217.

¹⁰ Beuys, *Familienleben in Deutschland*, p. 478.

¹¹ Weber-Kellermann, 'The German Family', in Prost & Vincent (eds.), *A History of Private Life*, p. 517.

Contrary to their rhetoric about the restoration of the family, the National Socialists in fact atomised family units, allowing for intrusion and intervention in everyday life. As Gellately has shown, 'the regime found it possible to infiltrate all kinds of social spaces, eventually overriding conventions so as to breach the private spheres of family, personal, and sexual life'.¹² This was because it wanted complete power and a monopoly of loyalty. Consequently, the family could not be left to its own devices as it was a potential threat. Total power necessitated the destruction of all other possible power bases or sources of resistance - hence, the Nazis needed to break down all traditional loyalties, including the family, as it was 'an obstacle to the establishment of total power'.¹³

This also meant that individuals were not necessarily able to seek refuge within their families from the dehumanisation of life under the Nazi dictatorship. The Nazi government was disinclined to allow the family to be a shelter from mass society.¹⁴ Under National Socialism, family rights were suppressed as the regime aimed to control, define and categorise both sexuality and the family. This was a stark contrast to the liberal conception of family as the last place of refuge for the individual against the encroachment of state intervention.¹⁵ The legacy of the National Socialist era for German families was the ultimate destruction of the private sphere, in every sense. Despite its allegations about the negative implications of the Weimar period for the family, and its claims to re-establish the true meaning of the family after the 'liberal capitalists' and 'Marxists' had destroyed its 'moral foundations', the Nazi regime, in

¹² Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society*, p. 159.

¹³ Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*, p. 389.

¹⁴ R. Coser (ed.), *The Family. Its Structures and Functions* (London, 1974), pp. 413-14.

¹⁵ J. Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* (London, 1980), p. 5.

reality, itself undermined the German family in an unprecedented way. It did so both by adding the dimension of 'race' to extant values and by employing mechanisms of control.

EPILOGUE

The Second World War created a change in the fortunes of the family. Fathers and sons were conscripted into the army, navy and airforce, and women were encouraged back into the work force to replace them. The latent contradictions in Nazi family policy became overt as new demands were placed on German citizens. Nazi propaganda at this time targeted the lower middle class women who had accepted the motherhood and family propaganda in the early years of the regime. Idealised and romanticised images were now used to persuade these women of the need to take on industrial jobs in the best interests of the *Volk*. However, this type of propaganda did not always work. At the start of the war, the government had given generous income supplements to women whose husbands had been called up, and the women who had left their jobs were not necessarily inclined to go back to work. In addition, since many upper class women managed to get exempted from Service Duty, it seemed to others that the *Volksgemeinschaft* was not real and that the classless society the Nazis claimed to have created did not exist.¹ Hence, the number of women employed in Germany actually fell between 1939 and 1941 and in 1942 was still lower than in the pre-war period. Whereas in Britain, some two-thirds of women worked, in Germany only 46% were employed.²

The war had far-reaching implications and consequences for family life, creating almost impossible circumstances for intimate and stable family life to be conducted. Men at the front suffered physical mutilation and psychological scarring, unsure if they would

¹ See L. Rupp, "'I Don't Call That *Volksgemeinschaft*": Women, Class and War in Nazi Germany', in C. Berkin & C. Lovett (eds.), Women, War and Revolution (London, 1980), pp. 37-53. See also, E. Kolinsky, Women in West Germany: Life, Work and Politics (Oxford, 1989), p. 23.

² M. Roseman, 'World War II and Social Change in Germany', in C. Emsley, A. Marwick & W. Simpson (eds.), War, Peace and Social Change in Twentieth Century Europe (Milton Keynes, 1989), p. 304.

survive the war to resume family life. Many women were used to their husbands making the decisions and dealing with family finances. The conscription of farmers and male farm labourers created additional hardships for rural women, who now had to cope with both their sources of livelihood and their families single-handed.³ In the cities and industrial areas, women bore the strains of industrial work and maintenance of their families on their own, struggling for survival under circumstances of rationing, bombings and fear.⁴ Their daily life was dangerous, demanding them to be 'both mindless and brave'.⁵ There was much solidarity amongst women, who found themselves in similarly desperate situations. Female relatives helped each other with their work, shopping and with looking after children. In the absence of relatives, women turned to female colleagues, friends and neighbours for help and support. Networks of support among women were very widespread and provided much-needed mutual relief.⁶ Air raids disrupted normal life and many families were made homeless and dispossessed. Many women and children were evacuated from the cities to rural areas, and families were separated in the process.

As a consequence of the war, water and gas supplies to many homes had been destroyed, and food and clothing were in short supply. These problems were worse in urban areas than in the countryside, but the aim everywhere was 'to get through'.⁷ Women cut

³ On this, see J. Farquharson, The Plough and the Swastika. The NSDAP and Agriculture in Germany, 1928-1945 (London, 1976), pp. 188-92 & 196-202.

⁴ On the bombing of German cities, see G. Kirwan, 'Allied Bombing and Nazi Domestic Propaganda', European History Quarterly, 15 (1985), p. 348.

⁵ A. Tröger, 'German Women's Memories of World War II', in M. Higonnet *et al* (eds.), Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars (New Haven, 1987), p. 297.

⁶ S. Meyer & E. Schulze, *"Als wir wieder zusammen waren, ging der Krieg im Kleinen weiter."* Frauen, Männer und Familien im Berlin der vierziger Jahre', in L. Niethammer & A. von Plato (eds.), "Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten" Auf der Suche nach den Erfahrungen des Volkes in nachfaschistischen Ländern (Bonn, 1985), p. 310.

clothes out of old military uniforms, formed knitting needles out of bicycle spokes and made yarn out of potato sacks. Food rations were meagre and shortages were severe, especially in the winter of 1946-7.⁸ One Berlin woman recalled the situation: 'During the war we were bombed, but had assurances of getting food supplies; when the war ended, there were no more bombing raids, but there was also nothing to eat'.⁹ Hence, the immediate post-war period brought about feelings of joy and relief, but also disappointment.

The German economy was shattered, and some two-fifths of the population was displaced and dispossessed. There was a tremendous housing shortage, as about one-quarter of all homes had been destroyed by the effects of the war. In the cities, over 50% of housing had been destroyed. In 1946, there were some six million dwellings too few for the needs of the German population.¹⁰ People whose homes had survived the war had to make rooms available to refugees or homeless families. This resulted in tensions and arguments between families and family members. As Weber-Kellermann suggests: 'The eventual defeat in the war, and the destruction that accompanied it, destroyed both the material base for and the ideological justification of the Nazi model family'.¹¹

⁷ Sieder, *Die deutsche Familie*, p. 240.

⁸ On this, see Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 257.

⁹ Cited in S. Meyer & E. Schulze, *Wie wir das alles geschafft haben: Alleinstehende Frauen berichten über ihr Leben nach 1945* (Munich, 1984), p. 92.

¹⁰ C. Kleßmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung: Deutsche Geschichte 1945-55* (Göttingen, 1982), p. 39.

¹¹ Weber-Kellermann, 'The German Family', in Prost & Vincent (eds.), *A History of Private Life*, p. 523.

The ultimate legacy of the Nazi dictatorship to family life was disastrous. Almost four million men had died in battle and 11.7 million were prisoners of war in 1945. This meant that millions of women had to be self-reliant. Many were raped; others had sexual relationships with members of the occupying forces in exchange for food and cigarettes.¹² Lack of food and sleep brought emaciation and chronic exhaustion to many women who had to work as rubble clearers or in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs, and who often gave up their food for their children. The search for food included foraging expeditions and resort to the black market. Women had to be resourceful and good at improvisation, as they were forced to prepare meals with few ingredients and sometimes without energy supplies. A study of 498 Berlin families in 1946-7 concluded that : 'The burden of day-to-day work carried out by most women has become not only more complex and difficult, but is also increasing disproportionately to the scant opportunity they have to recover their strength through eating and sleeping'.¹³

The home-coming of husbands and fathers had been long-awaited for families that had been separated for between three and nine years. Women hoped that with the return of their husbands, their lives would be made easier. However, when men returned home, many women could scarcely recognise their emaciated and/or maimed husbands. The women faced perhaps their hardest task, 'to furnish the understanding, the emotional balance, the rebuilding of confidence, the encouragement needed by so many totally beaten and desperate men'.¹⁴ The process of recovery and rehabilitation was a lengthy one, and its strain frequently resulted in the physical and psychological exhaustion of

¹² Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 258.

¹³ H. Thurnwald, *Gegenwartsprobleme Berliner Familien. Eine soziologische Untersuchung* (Berlin, 1948), p. 86.

¹⁴ U. von Kardorff, *Berliner Aufzeichnungen. Aus den Jahren 1942 bis 1945* (Munich, 1962), p. 293.

women. Many men were unable or unwilling to adjust to their new situation which exacerbated the already difficult circumstances of their families. For example, they often refused to change their attitudes and expectations, and despite their powerlessness, acted like domestic tyrants. This often resulted in conflicts and arguments between spouses.¹⁵ High divorce rate figures show that it was not easy for married couples to reformulate their relationships after years of separation as too much had changed.

Years of separation took their toll on family life. Both men and women were confronted with changes in the physical appearance of their partners.¹⁶ Feelings of reserve and alienation made it hard for many married couples to communicate with each other. In addition, it was difficult for them to recount painful experiences to each other. Other problems also contributed to the destabilisation of families, such as sexual distance between spouses and difficulties in the relationships between children and their recently returned fathers.¹⁷ Many children were unable to recognise their fathers on their return home. Younger children, in particular, had often had no knowledge of their fathers, sometimes having only seen photographs of them. Elder sons, in the absence of their fathers, had become the confidantes of their mothers and ersatz fathers to their siblings. With the home-coming of their fathers, there inevitably ensued a conflict about the recognition and maintenance of this status. Many fathers were unwilling to accept it and many sons were unwilling to give it up. Older children, in general, resented their fathers for treating them again as children, when they had been forced to grow up faster as a consequence of the war. They rebelled against and felt alienated from their fathers,

¹⁵ Meyer & Schulze, *"Als wir wieder zusammen waren"*, in Niethammer & von Plato (eds.), *"Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten"*, p. 318.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

¹⁷ Sieder, *Die deutsche Familie*, pp. 237-8.

which put mothers in the difficult position of trying to maintain some element of harmony and balance within the family.

The legacy of the war and of the Nazi regime meant that it was only in the 1950s that everyday family life began to regain any true sense of unity and accord. In 1953, the German Federal Republic set up a Ministry for Family Concerns, reflecting the family's status as a source of renewal and stability. The concept of the *Fluchtberg Familie*, the family as a castle and a place of refuge from the outside world came into being.¹⁸ The events of the war and the post-war years had posed an exceptional threat to the family. But, by the early 1950s, the family had regenerated, stabilised and strengthened itself. Once again, it became a source of emotional support to its members, something it had not been permitted to be under the Nazi dictatorship.

¹⁸ Frevert, Women in German History, p. 265.

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