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ANTINATALISM, MATERNITY AND PATERNITY IN NATIONAL SOCIALIST RACISM

Gisela Bock

Women's history is a relatively recent development in Germany but it has already begun to ask new questions about the the Third Reich. Did women play an active role in this, as in any other period of German history? If so, does this mean that German women must also share a certain measure of responsibility for Nazism's crimes? Or, as Gisela Bock asserts in the following article, were all women in the Third Reich the "victims" of a "sexist-racist" male regime which reduced women to the status of mere "objects."

In this essay, Bock examines those aspects of Nazi rule which she thinks most directly affected women – the cluster of measures that constituted a racist population policy. Although Nazism has sometimes been seen as a pronatalist regime, Bock argues that the essence of the population policies pursued by the Nazis were primarily antinatalist. The Nazis did not believe that all German women possessed the genetic capacity to produce desirable children and the regime focussed more of its attention on preventing the births of "inferior" or "worthless" children than on promoting population increase. The Nazis sought to purify the next generation of the Aryan race by forced sterilization and compulsory abortions. Of course, men, as well as women, whom the Nazis judged to be genetically inferior were also subjected to forced sterilization, yet Bock argues that women suffered more, both physically and emotionally, from the destruction of their ability to have children. After the war began, Nazi antinatalism took on even more radical and destructive forms, aimed almost exclusively, Bock argues, at women. Nazi doctors conducted brutal experiments on Jewish and "Gypsy" women in concentration camps to find a cheap, quick way of

sterilizing hundreds of thousands of ethnically and eugenically "inferior" women. Bock also argues that sterilization policy was a forerunner of the Nazi "euthanasia actions" after 1939. In turn, the euthanasia program paved the way to the Holocaust itself, producing both the technology and the mentalities required for the systematic industrial annihilation of millions of Jews, the great majority of whom, Bock points out, were also women and children. Bock thus thinks that Nazism drew the gender lines quite brutally. The "racial struggle" that was the essence of Nazism, was waged by "men not just against men – such as in a traditional military war – but also against women as mothers" (p. 132).

* * *

Understanding the policy of the National Socialist regime towards women as mothers within a European perspective requires this issue to be placed in a context which allows the identification of similarities as well as differences between the National Socialist experience and that of other European countries. This can best be approached by examining three broad areas of research: first, those features of National Socialism which come close to, or are at least comparable with other countries' welfare reforms and which allow us to see Nazi Germany as a kind of welfare state (or as a society in the process of "modernization");¹ yet studies of the emergence of the European welfare states usually do not include women- and family-related National Socialist policies such as the introduction of child allowances in 1935/6. Second, there is the extreme opposite of social reform, i.e. National Socialist racism. Its various forms – particularly anti-Jewish and anti-Gypsy policy, race hygiene or eugenics – illustrate that in this respect National Socialism was unique, despite the fact that racism was an international phenomenon. It was unique most of all because, from its rise to power in 1933, it began to institutionalize racism at the level of the state, through innumerable laws and decrees which discriminated against those considered to be "racially inferior." National Socialism transformed racism into a state-sponsored race policy, and put into practice all its forms to a degree unheard of before and after. In this field too, women-related policies are rarely considered, even though women were half of all victims. Third, there is a growing body of research on women under

National Socialism and the regime's policy towards them. Its most salient common assumption is that National Socialism meant pronatalism and brought a cult of motherhood, that it used propaganda, incentives, and even force in order to have all women bear as many children as possible and to keep them out of employment for the sake of motherhood. Whereas research on National Socialist racism usually does not deal with women, research in women's history usually does not deal with National Socialist racism, and female victims of racism are mentioned marginally at best.

Yet, the number of such women – and the issue is, of course, not only one of numbers – is conspicuous. For the purpose of raising the population's "quality" of "race regeneration" or "racial uplift" (*Aufartung*), the National Socialist state pursued a policy of birth-prevention or antinatalism: through compulsory mass sterilization from 1933 on, through non-voluntary abortion from 1935 on, through marriage restrictions from 1935 on, through mass murder and genocide after 1939. Between 1933 and 1945, almost 200,000 women, 1 per cent of those of childbearing age, were sterilized on eugenic grounds. About 200,000 German Jewish women were exiled and almost 100,000 killed. Probably over 80,000 female inmates of psychiatric institutions and several million non-German Jewish women were killed in the massacres during the Second World War, and in addition an unknown number of non-Jewish non-German women. During the war, there were over 2 million non-German women who had to perform forced labour in Germany and on whom, particularly on those from Eastern Europe, hundreds of thousands of abortions and sterilizations were performed.

This chapter explores some of the features of National Socialist welfare policies, race policies and gender policies which focused on women as mothers and potential mothers. The first section deals with National Socialist racism in its form of antinatalism, of the prevention of "inferior offspring" for the purpose of "racial uplift." It shows that compulsory sterilization, though it was performed on both sexes, had in many respects different social and cultural meanings for women and men. The second section deals with National Socialist welfare reforms concerning procreation and the family. It shows that the view of National Socialist gender policies as essentially consisting of "pronatalism and a cult of motherhood" is largely a myth. Whereas Nazi

antinatalism was revolutionary, unique and efficient, Nazi pronatalism used largely traditional means; where it was novel, it resembled comparable family-centred welfare reforms in other European countries. The third section deals with some aspects of motherhood – or rather, of its opposite – in the massacres of the "race struggle" (*Rassenkampf*) during the second half of the regime.

In different ways, the three sections deal with a number of more general assumptions and results. First, just as National Socialist race policy was not gender-neutral, so National Socialist gender policy was not race-neutral. Second, the National Socialist welfare measures were comparable to those introduced in other countries around the same time, but they differed from them in important respects. They did not focus on mothers but on fathers, and most importantly, they were never universalized, because they had a definite limit in race policy which excluded the "inferior" from their benefits. Third, this limit, the inner dynamics of National Socialism and the comparison with other countries show that race policies were more crucial to National Socialism than were welfare policies, and that just as racism was at the centre of Nazi policies in general, it was also at the centre of Nazi policies toward women.

STERILIZATION POLICY OR ANTINATALISM FOR "RACE REGENERATION"

In June 1933, five months after Hitler came to power, his Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick, gave a programmatic and frequently quoted speech on "population and race policy." It was intended to pave the way for the imminent sterilization law which had been prepared for by years of eugenic propaganda. Eugenic and compulsory sterilization had been advocated not only by National Socialists, but also – albeit for different reasons, though always in view of a perfect society – by many members of other political affiliations, including socialists and some radical feminists (not however by the Catholic Centre Party, because of the Pope's encyclical *Casti Connubi* of 1930 which spoke out against all artificial birth control, nor by moderate feminists such as Gertrud Bäumer, who in 1931 had taken a firm stand against eugenics, *Aufartung* and raising the population's "quantity and quality").²

Frick unrolled a "dismal picture." He pointed to the "cultural and ethnic decline," demonstrated by over a million people with "hereditary physical and mental diseases," "feeble-minded and inferior" people from whom "progeny is no longer desired," especially not where they show "above-average procreation." He went on to estimate that 20 per cent of the German population, i.e. another 11 million, were undesirable as mothers or fathers. He concluded that "in order to increase the number of hereditarily healthy progeny, we have first of all the duty to prevent the procreation of the hereditarily unfit." This project of state-run birth control became law on 14 July 1933, introducing compulsory sterilization. The official commentary stressed that "biologically inferior hereditary material" was to be "eradicated (*ausgemerzt*)," specifically among the "innumerable inferior and hereditarily tainted" people who "procreate without inhibition (*hemmunglos*)"; sterilization "should bring about a gradual cleansing of the people's body (*Volkskörper*)," and around 1.5 million people were to be sterilized, 400,000 in the short term. In fact, this was the number of those sterilized over the next decade, half men and half women, as well as an unknown but probably considerable number outside the law.³

All the sterilizations were compulsory; none came about by the free will of a sterilized person. Voluntary sterilization was forbidden by the same law (article 14), and frequently the police were employed, a possibility laid down in the law itself (article 12) and applied in 3-30 per cent of the cases, depending on regional variations. Almost all the sterilized were selected by doctors, psychiatrists, and other officials. Sterilization was decided by specially created courts, on which sat doctors, psychiatrists, anthropologists, experts in human genetics and jurists. Thus, birth control was not outlawed but introduced by law, for people considered to be of "inferior value" (*minderwertig*). Article 1 specified the kinds of "inferiority." They were described essentially in psychiatric terms, as intellectual and emotional "departures from the norm" which had been elaborated and declared as hereditary, since around 1900, by the science and policy of "race hygiene," "social hygiene," "procreation hygiene," "eugenics," "human genetics" or *Erb- und Rassenpflege*. Ninety-six per cent of the sterilizations were based on (in order of frequency) real or alleged feeble-mindedness, schizophrenia, epilepsy and manic-depressive derangement; the others on real

or alleged blindness, deafness, "bodily malformation," St Vitus' dance and alcoholism. The sterilized were from all social classes and occupational groups, and their respective proportion corresponded to that in society at large. The quantitatively and strategically most important group were the "feeble-minded." They made up some two-thirds of all those sterilized, and almost two-thirds of them were women.⁴

The sterilization law did not provide for the sterilization exclusively of Jews, Gypsies, Blacks and other "alien" races but they were, of course, included; moreover, particularly Gypsies and Black people were sterilized both within and outside the 1933 law. None the less, the sterilization policy – and race hygiene as a whole – was a form of racism and an integral component of National Socialist racism. For racism means not only discrimination of "alien" races or peoples, but also the "regeneration" of one's own people, in so far as that was aimed at through discrimination of the "biologically inferior" among one's own people. For the theoreticians and practitioners of racism the "master race" was not already there, but had to be produced. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler had summarized current race theory in the mid-twenties: just as "one people is not equal to another," so "one person is not equal to another within one *Volksgemeinschaft* (ethnic community)," and therefore "the individuals within a *Volksgemeinschaft*" must be differently "evaluated," especially as regards the right to have children. He recommended the sterilization of "millions" of people. Later, a jurist in the Reich Ministry of the Interior summarized: "The German race question consists primarily in the Jewish question. In the second place, yet not less important, there is the Gypsy question.... But degenerative effects on the racial body may arise not only from outside, from members of alien races, but also from inside, through unrestricted procreation of inferior hereditary material." Like all racism, eugenics or sterilization racism used social and cultural criteria to define the "alien," "different," "sick," "inferior": namely emotional, physical, moral and intellectual criteria. The common denominator of all forms of National Socialist racism was the definition and treatment of human beings according to a differing "value" defined and ascribed by other human beings. The value criteria were declared to be "biology," as was the social and cultural field in which they were embodied: descent and procreation. The

common denominator not of all forms of Nazi racism but of its most dramatic forms was the attempt to "solve" social and cultural problems with means that were also called "biology": namely by intervening with body and life. Thus, in 1936 Himmler praised the sterilization law to the Hitler Youth: "Germans... have once again learned... to recognize bodies and to bring up this godgiven body and our godgiven blood and race according to its value or lack of value."⁵

The sterilization law was one of the first manifestations of National Socialist racism on a national and state level. Officials of the Reich Ministry of the Interior declared, referring to the sterilization law, that "the private is political" and that the decision on the dividing line between the private and the political is itself a political decision. In one respect, the sterilization law went even further than the anti-Jewish laws of 1933, since it ordered compulsory bodily intervention and was thereby the first of the Nazi measures that sought to solve social and cultural problems by "biological" means. The sterilization law, just as the anti-Jewish laws, made a political reality of the classical racist demand, proclaimed in Germany specifically by eugenicists: "unequal value, unequal rights" (*ungleicher Wert, ungleiche Rechte*).⁶ For the "valuable" of both sexes sterilization was forbidden, and for the "inferior" of both sexes it was obligatory. For National Socialism, modern antinatalism took precedence over old-fashioned pronatalism, in terms of chronology as well as in terms of principle.

The sterilization law was officially proclaimed as embodying the "primacy of the state over the sphere of life, marriage and family" and this primacy was particularly significant for women. All state interventions in the giving and maintaining of life, in begetting, bearing and rearing children, are important to women, and often more important than for men; their meaning for women may be different from that for men. In fact, sterilization racism, although it affected as many men as women, was none the less anything but gender-neutral. This is apparent above all from the three essential features of sterilization: bodily intervention, childlessness, and separation of sexuality and procreation. Other important gender differences included in the criteria for selecting those who were not to have children and the propaganda for sterilization.

For women, by contrast with men, the intervention meant a

major operation with full anaesthesia, abdominal incision and the concomitant risk. Shortly before the sterilization law was enacted, there was a debate as to whether such intervention on hundreds of thousands of women could be risked. But then the Propaganda Ministry announced that just as many women as men would have to be sterilized. The decision for mass compulsory sterilization of women meant violent intervention not only with the female body but also with female life. Probably about 5,000 people died as a result of sterilization, and whilst women made up only half of the sterilized, they were about 90 per cent of those who died of sterilization. A large number of them died because they resisted sterilization right up to the operating table and rejected what had happened even after operation. An unknown number of people, mainly women, committed suicide because of sterilization.⁷ Hence, the first scientifically planned and bureaucratically executed massacre of the National Socialist state was the result of antinatalism, and women were its chief victims.

Childlessness has a different meaning for women and for men, just as having children does. Therefore, their reactions and forms of resistance to sterilization differed in many respects. Women as well as men protested against their stigmatization as "second-class human beings" - in thousands of letters to the sterilization courts that have been preserved - but women complained of the resulting childlessness far oftener than men, especially young women. Many tried to get pregnant before sterilization, and this resistance was important enough for the authorities to give the phenomenon a special name: (*Trotzschwangerschaften*) ("protest pregnancies"). For instance, one girl said that she had got pregnant in order "to show the state that I won't go along with this." The protest pregnancies were an important reason for extending the sterilization law, in 1935, into an abortion law: now abortions could also be performed for race hygiene reasons. In the case of such an abortion, sterilization also was compulsory.⁸

The separation of sexuality and procreation had a differing meaning for men and women. One doctor wrote about sterilized men in 1936: "Happy that nothing can happen to them any more, that neither condoms nor douches are necessary, they fulfil their marital duties without restraint." In relation to women it was another aspect of sexuality that was publicly

discussed in the professional press. Tens of thousands of women who, as one of them asserted, did not "care at all about men" and had never had sexual intercourse were sterilized because, according to the opinion of the (exclusively male) jurists and doctors, the possibility of pregnancy through rape had to be taken into account. Therefore, the commentary to the law explicitly laid it down that "a different assessment of the danger of procreation is necessary for men and for women," and in sterilization verdicts the following principle regularly appeared, and was prescribed by government decree in 1936: "In the case of the female hereditarily sick, the possibility of abuse against her will must be taken into account." Frequently compulsory sterilization was propagated as a means of preventing the "consequence" of a potential rape, namely pregnancy. The risk of "inferior" women being raped seemed to male contemporaries to be so high as to be a ground for the sterilization of women. In fact, sterilized women became objects of sexual abuse, both in the countryside, where sterilization quickly became generally known, and in cities, where sometimes soldiers or factory workers asked each other "on Mondays": "Did you not find a sterilized woman for the weekend?"¹⁰

The psychiatric diagnoses were largely gender-based. Those for women measured their "departure from the norm" against the norms for the female sex, and those for men against the norms for the male sex. To determine female "inferiority," heterosexual behaviour was regularly investigated, and negatively evaluated when the women frequently changed their sexual partner or when they had more than one illegitimate child. Men were less investigated on this issue, and the findings had no particular weight in the sterilization verdict. Women, not men, were tested as to their capacity and inclination for housework, for childrearing (also in the case of childless women) as well as to their capacity and inclination for employment. Men were assessed mostly for their work behaviour. The decisive criterion came to be *Lebensbewährung* ("conduct of life"), again prescribed by a government decree.¹¹

These were, of course, not genetic but social and cultural criteria, because the sexes are social and cultural entities (like race or ethnicity). These sociocultural diagnoses were the reason why most of the women and more women than men, were sterilized for "feeble-mindedness." Thus, for instance, the sterili-

zation verdict on Mrs Schmidt, mother of ten children, stated that while her "feeble-mindedness" had not actually been proved, she nevertheless "is to a quite unusual extent unclean and neglectful, and shockingly neglects her children and the household. Such uncleanness and neglect is however not conceivable with a more or less mentally normally disposed person." About 10 per cent of the sterilization trials ended with acquittal: in the case of women, when they could prove that they did their work, inside and outside the home, to the satisfaction of the doctors and lawyers of the sterilization court (who often came to inspect the household during the trial). This could not be shown by Luise Müller: she was condemned to sterilization because, according to the court decision, "her knowledge is confined to mechanically acquired information; she can indicate how to prepare various foodstuffs such as pudding, bread soup or rice soup, but only in the way usual at home."¹²

The sterilization policy was not carried on secretly – as was the later extermination policy – but almost entirely in public view. The population was virtually bombarded with antinatalist propaganda in the 1930s, and this propaganda was often directed specifically at the female sex. It contrasted starkly with the earlier feminist view on motherhood and the female sex. One of the official Nazi brochures, distributed in millions of copies in 1934, explained to women that their task was not prolific procreation but "regeneration." The female characteristic of maternalism (*Mütterlichkeit*) became the object of racist polemic and was treated as contemptible "sentimental humanitarianism" (*Gefühlsduselei*). Female gender difference, femininity and maternalism were to come to an end in National Socialist racism – even among "valuable" women. The Berlin doctor Agnes Bluhm, one of the early race hygienists, wrote in 1934 in the journal of the dissolved Federation of German Women's Associations, *Die Frau*, about the "danger arising for women precisely from their *Mütterlichkeit*," since maternalism, "like any egoism, acts against the race." Like many male eugenicists, she polemized against the "female instinct to care for all those in need of help." Of the fact that "woman, because of her physical and mental characteristics, is particularly close to all living beings," it was said that there was "scarcely any worse sin against nature." In one women's magazine¹³ the objection that

with sterilization "the National Socialist state was going against the laws of nature" was stated to be a false conclusion, because

Until National Socialist rule, the German people neglected the laws of nature. . . . It not only disregarded the laws of heredity, of selection and of eradication (*Auslese und Ausmerze*), but directly opposed them, by not only keeping the unfit alive at the cost of the healthy, but even guaranteeing their procreation. . . . Every hereditarily sick German woman will, once she realizes this, take this operation upon herself in order to keep her whole race healthy. "But doesn't that mean she's sinning against life?" . . . What does life mean then? Just go to a lunatic asylum . . .

National Socialists by no means wanted children at any cost and they never propagated the slogan "Kinder, Küche, Kirche" which has been so often, but wrongly, ascribed to them. The biblical "Be fruitful and multiply" was often and explicitly rejected, as well as the assumption that "the State allegedly wants children at all costs." Indeed, this assumption was rejected in the propaganda and instructions from Goebbels' Ministry for Propaganda: "The goal is not 'children at any cost,' but 'racially worthy, physically and mentally unaffected children of German families.'" An expert on large families stressed that "childbearing in itself is, from the race viewpoint, far from being a merit." Instead the point was "whether the biological basis," namely the hereditary value, was there "which alone makes many children into a value for the race."¹⁴ In fact, not just a small minority of (sterilized) women were undesired as mothers, but somewhere between 10 and 30 per cent depending on the author of the estimate. On the other hand, those women who were considered desirable mothers were not a majority, but also a minority of about 10 to 30 per cent. The blood-and-soil ideologue Daré in a well-known publication divided women into four classes: those in the first should be encouraged to marry and have children; children of the second group, though not to be encouraged, were not objectionable; the third group should be allowed to marry, but where possible be sterilized beforehand; the fourth group should not marry and be sterilized at any cost. The head of the Party Race Policy Office considered it as "utopian" and "overoptimistic" to think that "almost all German women are worthy of procreation," and one of the most

important sterilization promoters emphasized that even "those who are not hereditarily sick within the meaning of the sterilization law need by no means be worthy of procreation."¹⁵ Never in history had there been a state which in theory, propaganda and practice pursued an antinatalist policy of such dimensions.

PRONATALISM, SOCIAL REFORM AND THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST WELFARE STATE

What is then the substance of the view which identifies National Socialist birth and gender policy as essentially pronatalist, as encouragement, incentive, or even compulsion to bear children, as a cult of motherhood and as an attack on women's employment for the sake of motherhood? How did National Socialism conceive of gender relations in this area, and what are the links between these issues and its race policy?

Again, current assumptions need to be revised. In Nazi Germany, as in other countries that were hit by the deep economic depression of the 1930s, the early polemics of Nazis and non-Nazis against women's employment remained largely ineffective. There were no Nazi laws against it, nor compulsory or mass firing of women from their jobs. Women's employment increased after 1933 (even though somewhat less than men's), and before as well as during the Nazi regime it was higher than in most western countries. The number of officially registered employed women rose from 11.5 million in 1933, when it made up 36 per cent of all employed persons and 48 per cent of all women between the ages of 15 and 60 years, to 12.8 million in early 1939 (within the German territory of 1937, but if most annexed territories are included, the number is 14.6 million), with the corresponding figures of 37 per cent and 50 per cent. In 1944, 14.9 million German women were employed (including Austria), making up 53 per cent of the German civilian labour force and well over half of all German women between 15 and 60 years.¹⁶

Along with the development from low employment to full employment to labour scarcity, largely because of the expansion of war industry, the number of female industrial workers increased by 28.5 per cent between 1933 (1.2 million) and 1936 (1.55 million), and by a further 19.2 per cent in the following

two years. Not only did the number of employed single women rise, but even more that of married women and mothers. Between the Weimar period and the time before World War II, the number of married women in the labour force, and their proportion of all employed women, rose dramatically, and it almost doubled for married female workers in industry (21.4 per cent in 1925, 28.2 per cent in 1933 and 41.3 per cent in 1939; all married employed women: 31 per cent in 1925, 37 per cent in 1933, and 46 per cent in 1939). In 1939, more than 24 per cent of all employed women had children, and the married ones among them made up 51 per cent of all married employed women. As usual in the case of women, an unknown but considerable number must be taken into account as (more or less gainfully) employed outside official registration. During World War II, altogether about 2.5 million foreign women were brought to work, mostly by force, in German industry and agriculture to substitute – along with male foreign civilian workers and prisoners of war – for German men who were now at the battle lines. The lower their “racial value,” the higher was the proportion of women among these workers and the heavier their work; among the Russian civilian workers, 51 per cent were women, and 58 per cent of all Russians working in the munitions industries were women.

The prohibition of free abortion through the old section 218 of the Penal Code was tightened up in 1933, but the additional stringency (sections 219 and 220) had little effect; what was instead effective was the introduction of legal eugenic and medical indications for abortion in 1935. The number of women on whom eugenic abortions were performed for the sake of the *Volkskörper*, often against their will and without their consent or knowledge and always combined with compulsory sterilization, was about 30,000. Voluntary abortions continued to take place, despite difficult conditions, at hundreds of thousands per year. By contrast with what is frequently asserted, the number of convictions for free and illegal abortion under section 218 did not rise during National Socialism, but fell by about one-sixth by comparison with the Weimar Republic (from 1923-32: 47,487 to 1933-42: 39,902).¹⁷ The number of women who were forced to abort against their will or without their consent and who were compulsorily sterilized is over ten times as high as the number of the women convicted under section 218. During this period,

Gehürzung (compulsory childbearing) did not go beyond what was usual before 1933, after 1945 or in other countries. National Socialist compulsion and terror was reserved for antinatalism, not for pronatalism. National Socialism did not nationalize the birth question, as often asserted, by compelling women into childbearing, but by preventing women from childbearing.

Instead, an increase in births was one of the goals of state welfare measures that were to assist those who wanted to have children, at a time when politicians still believed, or at least hoped, that economic support might influence men's and women's choice to have children. On the level of central government, they consisted mainly in three social reforms that were part of the much-publicized, largely tax-funded *Familienlastenausgleich* (relief of family burdens) which no longer conceived of family subsidies as poor relief but as independent state benefits. In 1933, marriage loans were introduced for husbands whose wife had been employed and gave up her job upon marriage (but from 1936 on, with full employment, she could keep it and was often pressed to do so). They were not paid in cash, but in the form of coupons to be used for the purchase of furniture and household equipment, and they were to be repaid at a modest interest and to be forgone by one-fourth per birth, i.e. up to the birth of four children (unless they were spaced with longer intervals, during which interest had to be paid). One of the main objectives of this loan was to lower the male marriage age and therefore men's need for prostitution. Second, in 1934 and 1939 the income tax was reformed to give heads of household increasing exemption amounts for spouse and children, and the income tax for the childless (couples as well as single men and women) was raised. Third, monthly state child allowances of 10 marks were introduced in 1936, payable from the fifth, three years later from the third child on. Initially, they were a form of poor relief, to be paid only to those below a certain income level; later on, the income limit was abolished. In international comparison,¹⁸ such measures were not, or did not remain, unique: marriage loans were introduced in Italy, Sweden and Spain during the 1930s, and similar tax reforms and child allowances in most European countries between the late 1920s and the late 1940s. All national types of family allowances, including the German ones (but apparently with the exception of the French ones), shared one feature: they were not

to cover the costs of childbearing and raising, and particularly National Socialists warned that this should "not become a profitable business." But it deserves to be underlined that in most other countries child allowances were paid from the first or second child on.

None the less, National Socialist state subsidies differed from others in two major respects. One of them (although it resembled the model of the two other masculinist dictatorships, Italy and Spain) was their combination with sexism: they privileged fathers over mothers. The principle was laid down by a Nazi minister, Hans Frank, when he declared that "the concept of fatherhood has been handed down through age-old processes of natural law" and "the concept of father is unambiguous and must be placed at the centre of the financial measures." Here it was fatherhood, not motherhood, that was glorified as "nature": a nature, however, that did not exclude economic rewards – as in the case of women's nature – but included them. In Germany, this view may have been reinforced by current racial visions of "nordic patriarchalism" (*väterrechtlicher Geist der nordischen Rasse*). It was the prospective husband who was entitled to the marriage loan. Family allowances went not to mothers, but to fathers – different from Britain, Sweden, Norway and in part also from France. German single mothers received child allowances only if the father of their children was known to the authorities. The tax rebates for the head of household brought by far the most substantial benefits, particularly for husbands in the upper income brackets. The husband's tax exemption for children was less significant than that for his wife: it was he who was being paid by the state for her housework (Goebbels had momentarily polemicized against the high rate of the husband's wife rebate).¹⁹

The "relief of family burdens" was meant to balance out, not the differing burdens of fathers and mothers, but the differing burdens of bachelors and fathers, so that – in the words of the State Secretary to the Ministry of Finance, praised by the head of the Party Race Policy Office – "a man will no longer be materially or morally worse off in competition with the so-called clever bachelor, merely because he has done his duty to his nation." The "duty" of begetting was considered more valuable than that of bearing and rearing children, women's contribution to procreation inferior to men's. This was not an

old-fashioned cult of motherhood, but a modern cult of fatherhood. Fatherhood deserved economic rewards from the state, motherhood was seen as incompatible with them. Accordingly, the male leader of the party's welfare organization (*Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt*, NSV) and its section "Mother and Child" condemned the "reward motive" (*Lohnmotiv*) of "selfish love" and stressed that

there is no more beautiful image of selfless service than that of a mother with her children. She continues to care and to give, to show her child love upon love, never thinking whether she is going to get anything in return.... In the very moment she began to calculate returns, she would cease to be a good mother.²⁰

The cult of motherhood was to some extent propaganda and ritual, the cult of fatherhood was propaganda and tough state policy. Of course it was not the family subsidies as such that were anti-woman, but the fact that they were refused to mothers and houseworkers.

None the less, it was the NSV section "Mother and Child" that supported mothers with many children, pregnant women and unmarried mothers, helping them to find employment, establishing kindergartens and offering vacations from home – not, however, as a right, but as poor relief, not as a new civic recognition by the state as in the case of fathers (and as to some degree in the case of the state-run Italian ONMI), but as a traditional handout.²¹ Nazi women's organizations also supported "valuable" mothers, but since they had no funds to offer, they offered courses on baby care. Whereas the NSV's support focused on the poor among the "valuable" and the women's organizations on women of all classes, and whereas single mothers with more than one child risked being taken to a sterilization court, in 1936 Himmler created the *Lebensborn* organization in order to assist those mothers who bore children by men who were thought to belong to the racial elite, mostly SS-men. The *Lebensborn* was not an institution for forced breeding nor an SS bordello. It established well-furnished maternity hospitals (six in Germany, later nine in Norway, one in Belgium and one in France), mostly in the countryside. In Germany, about 7,000-8,000 women gave birth in such homes over the nine years of the *Lebensborn*'s existence (plus, 6,000 in Norway

during the war), and about 55 per cent of them were single mothers. Before being admitted to the maternity homes, they were carefully selected, often by Himmler himself, according to the ethnic and eugenic credentials of the father of their child and of their own. But from 1939 on, the *Lebensborn* homes in Germany were used for those "valuable" children of the conquered territories in the East whose parents had been killed or who had been kidnapped in the course of Himmler's "search for nordic blood."²²

For most women, there were only the cheap honours of Mother's Day and – for those with four children or more – the mother cross; the former was introduced in the 1920s (as in many other countries), the latter in 1939, years after the father-centred reforms, upon the French model of 1920 (in 1944 to be imitated in the Soviet Union). Even though the Nazi state enacted no law in favour of mothers as such, ten years after its beginnings, in 1942, it considerably improved the 1927 law for the protection of those pregnant women and young mothers who were employed – with the exception of Jewish, Polish and Russian women – in order to encourage them to combine employment and motherhood, particularly in war-work, but also in a long-term perspective. Maternity leave of six weeks before and six weeks after parturition remained as established in 1927 and was combined with a maternity benefit amounting to the full wage; agricultural and domestic workers were finally included, and the job continued to be protected against dismissal during pregnancy and four months after. The major innovation of the law was its provision for childcare services. However, maternity benefits were reserved to employed mothers only. Mothers were awarded state recognition and benefits only if they worked in addition outside their home. When in 1942 Robert Ley, the leader of the German Labour Front (the Nazi surrogate union) proposed to extend maternity benefits to non-employed women too, particularly the hard-working working-class mothers, Hitler rejected the proposal on the grounds that the state budget was needed for the "difficult tasks" of the next years;²³ the costs of military and non-military massacres.

The effect of pronatalist propaganda and of those welfare measures which included pronatalist goals was limited. The figures for the birth-rate (in 1933 they were among the lowest in Europe, along with Britain and Austria) increased by about

one-third until 1936 (from a net reproduction rate of 0.7 to one of 0.9); then they remained almost stagnant, reaching no more than the level of the late 1920s, which had long been deplored as an expression of "birth-strike" and "race suicide," and they dropped again during World War II. Most of the increase was due to couples who had not been able to have the children they wanted because of depression and epidemics in the early 1930s and who made up for it when employment and income increased. The proportion of married women with four or more children (*viz.* the number proposed by Nazi demographers as "valuable" women's "duty") among all married women declined from 25 per cent in 1933 to 21 per cent in 1939. Those who married and had children from 1933 on limited their number to one, two or three children and thus followed the trend which had characterized Germany, as well as other industrialized countries, before the Nazi regime. The family benefits contributed not to an increase in births (even less the mother cross) but, at least before the war, to a growing belief in the capacity of the Nazi regime to overcome the depression. Whereas Nazi politicians had hoped that state welfare for children would increase their number, most men and women perceived it simply as a social reform that compensated for their low income and helped them survive with the children they wanted. Some women, including some Nazi women, protested openly against the reinforcement of male dominance through father-centred benefits, but such voices were silent after 1934.²⁴

The behaviour of three particular groups illustrates both the specificity and the limits of the Nazi type of pronatalism as well as some motives for having children which usually remain hidden behind demographic figures. The leading Party functionaries, i.e. those "valuable" Germans who were the real objectives of pronatalism and who were closest to National Socialism, demonstrated that they believed in the pronatalist goals, if at all, only for others, but not for themselves. Nazi demographers deplored that of those functionaries who had married between 1933 and 1937, 18 per cent were still childless in 1939, 42 per cent had one child and 29 per cent had two children. Among the all-male SS members, 61 per cent were unmarried in 1942, and the married ones had 1.1 children on average; the same was true for medical doctors, who were the professional group with the highest membership figures in the party and the SS.

Obviously, there was an inverse relationship between adherence to National Socialism among the elite and the number of their children.²⁵ On the other side, one statistical group had a clearly above-average number of children: those whose claim for marriage loans and child allowances was rejected because of their "disorderly" conduct and their classification as "large asocial families." In respect of such people, Nazi demographers also deplored that up to half of the families with above-average numbers of children were to be considered undesirable.²⁶ The third group are those who produced two minor, but conspicuous, baby booms during World War II, when the average figures were declining, which were often noted and explained by contemporaries. In 1939, employed women, particularly of the working class, were forbidden to quit their job because they were urgently needed for the war economy – unless they were pregnant. Pregnant women and young mothers were also exempted from the labour conscription introduced in 1943. On both occasions, many women preferred to have children instead of working for the war, and this was one major reason why between 1939 and 1941, the number of employed women decreased by 500,000. All three groups illustrate – in different ways and to different degrees – that in Nazi Germany, the refusal to procreate and the use of contraceptives and abortion was not, as had been argued for other countries, an indication of political opposition.²⁷

The second group is a pointer to the second outstanding feature of National Socialist state family benefits: their combination with racism. Race policy distinguished them from those in all other countries. None of the Nazi benefits was meant to be universally applied (not even to men and despite the abolition of the upper income limit), since those classified as *mindertüchtig* were excluded: parents or children who were considered eugenically or ethnically "unfit" – Jews (to whom even family-related tax rebates were denied), Gypsies, the physically, emotionally and mentally handicapped (particularly, but not only, the sterilized), "asocials," political opponents, labourers from eastern Europe. For instance, whereas in other countries and in Germany before 1933, a handicapped child was a reason for extending child benefits beyond the usual age limit, in Nazi Germany it was a reason for excluding it, and its parents,

entirely.²⁸ With respect to the "inferior," National Socialism pursued a policy not of family welfare, but of family destruction.

Government subsidies for marriage and procreation were not in themselves part of sexism and racism. They were a component of the emerging modern welfare states which for the first time in history subsidised the family, the sphere of male reproduction and female housework. But National Socialism combined them with sexism and with racism by privileging men over women and "valuable German" men over "racially inferior" men. The combination of the *Familienlastenausgleich* with racism was specific and unique to National Socialism; its combination with sexism was specific to it, as well as to other European dictatorships, and it distinguished them from the European democracies. Hence National Socialist birth and family policy consisted not of "pronatalism and a cult of motherhood," but of antinatalism and a cult of fatherhood and masculinity. Not a deterministic, but a historical continuity leads from there to the escalation of racism in the 1940s.

FROM ANTINATALISM TO GENOCIDE

During World War II, it was not maternity but its very opposite that came to play a significant role in the race policy of those years, including its murderous forms. The antinatalist "primacy of the state in the sphere of life" was now extended to a number of women who were far from being a minority and, more importantly, it implied the primacy of the state in the sphere of death.

When war was declared in 1939, legal sterilization was curtailed, mainly in order to liberate work-forces for war and mass-acre. But antinatalism took on other forms, directed almost exclusively against women. Early in the war, Polish women were sent back east upon pregnancy, and it seems that many deliberately took advantage of this method to be relieved from forced labour: their gesture was, again, babies rather than war-work. But from 1941 on, Russian and Polish women had to stay despite pregnancy, were encouraged and often forced to undergo an abortion, sometimes also sterilization, and often their children were taken away from them, in a complex interplay between Himmler's race experts, labour offices, employers and the medical profession. Particularly Russian women were

purposefully put to work at "men's jobs" in the munitions industry so as to bring about miscarriages: a policy of war-work against babies. The plans for the conquered Eastern territories (particularly the *Generalplan Ost*) included a large number of carefully elaborated, voluntary and non-voluntary methods of decreasing the number of children born, which aimed almost exclusively at mothers and potential mothers.²⁹

Around the same time, sterilization experiments were pursued in some of the concentration camps, under Himmler's command, particularly in Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, on Jews and Gypsies. Originally they were meant for sterilizing the Jewish "half-breeds" (*Judenmischlinge*) who were exempted from extermination. After the failure of experiments with chemicals and X-rays on women as well as men, the experiments focused on women only, through injections in the uterus. They were performed by Clauber, who since 1934 had gained experience in sterilizing women and was searching for a "bloodless" method, i.e. without operations, complications, resistance and death. His method had advanced so far by 1943 that he considered he was able, with a team of ten men, to sterilize up to a thousand women per day. By now, the new procedure was aimed not only at female Jewish "half-breeds," but also at mass sterilizations of other women, hopefully - in Clauber's words - "during the usual gynaecological investigation familiar to every doctor."³⁰ Jewish and Gypsy women in the camps became the model for the fate that in future was to be earmarked for hundreds of thousands of ethnically and eugenically "inferior" women.

National Socialist sterilization policy before 1939, called "prevention of unworthy life," was also a "fore-runner"³¹ of the "annihilation of unworthy life" ("euthanasia" or "action T4"). It started in 1939, and up to 1945 around 200,000 ill, old and handicapped people, mostly inmates of psychiatric clinics, women as well as men, were killed after having been selected as "incurable" or unable to work. Moreover, all Jewish inmates were killed, even without such selection, and therefore T4 was also the first phase of the systematic massacre of the Jews. Special killing gas was used for the first time in T4. It was for various reasons that National Socialist antinatalism led to this policy of massacre. It grew out of a mentality which saw sterilization not as a private and free choice, but as a "humane" alternative to killing for the sake of the *Volkskörper*, as an "elim-

ination without massacre,"³² as a political substitute for "nature" which "naturally" (i.e. without modern charity and medicine) would have prevented "unfit" people from surviving. Second, it was in sterilization policy that medical and psychiatric experts had already become used to dealing with bodily intervention and death, mostly that of women. Third, the very first victims of the massacre were 5,000 handicapped children up to the age of three years, i.e. precisely those whose mothers (and fathers) could not be identified before birth, since 1937, by means of the abortion and sterilization policy. Finally, many of those who had been active in, or had advocated, the policy of compulsory sterilization, were also active in the massacre of the ill - mostly doctors and other medical personnel - and many of them also played an important role in the genocide of the Jews.

In late 1941, the T4 gas chambers and their male personnel were transferred from Germany to the newly constructed death camps in the occupied eastern territories where they served for the systematic and industrial killing of millions of Jews and Gypsies, women as well as men. This transfer was not only one of technology, but also one of mentality and strategy, and it had significant gender dimensions which have by far not yet been sufficiently explored. Hundreds of thousands of Jews had already been killed before gas was used, mostly through mass shooting. The SS-men involved seem to have had considerable "psychological difficulties," particularly with shooting women and children, as was underlined, for instance, by the commandant of the Auschwitz camp: even Himmler and Eichmann became sick while watching executions which included women and children, and they asked for new methods to be developed. Gas technology was introduced, from late 1941, not only as a means to accelerate mass killing, but also because a "suitable" method, a "humane" alternative to overt bloodshed, was required which would relieve the SS-men of their largely gender-specific scruples.³³ The first mobile gas vans were applied mainly, sometimes exclusively, for the killing of women and children; "men, women and children" is the frequent description of the gas van victims. In the early phase of the massacre of the Jewish ghetto population, the majority of the victims were women.³⁴ When the stable gas chambers in Auschwitz were functioning, from late 1941, it was mostly

Jewish women, and particularly those with children who were selected for death right upon arrival – "every Jewish child meant automatically death to its mother" – whereas most able-bodied Jewish men were sent to forced labour. Almost two-thirds of the German Jews deported to and killed in the death camps were women, and 56 per cent among those Gypsies who were sent into the Auschwitz gas chambers;³⁵ the precise number of women among the other millions of dead will forever remain unknown. A recent study of the Nazi doctors in the death camps found that these men, who turned from healers into killers, were able to function largely because of male bonding, heavy drinking and their adaptation to an "overall Nazi male ideal."³⁶

The leading massacre experts were by no means blind to such gender dimensions of genocide, and in 1943 Himmler exhorted his SS-men in a speech which summed up earlier reflections:

We came to the question: what about the women and children? I have decided to find a clear solution here too. In fact I did not regard myself as justified in exterminating the men – let us say killing them or have them killed – while letting avengers in the shape of children grow up.

Hence, Jewish women were killed as women, as childbearers and mothers of the next generation of their people. But Himmler went even further, placing the female victims at the centre of his own definition of genocide:

When I was forced somewhere in some village to act against partisans and against Jewish commissars,... then as a principle I gave the order to kill the women and children of those partisans and commissars too... Believe you me, that order was not so easy to give or so simple to carry out as it was logically thought out and can be stated in this hall. But we must constantly recognise that we are engaged in a primitive, primordial, natural race struggle.

Here, in the successful attempt to overcome male scruples towards a war of men against women, the National Socialist *Rassenkampf* in its most extreme form was defined as a deadly struggle of men not just against men – such as in a traditional military war – but also, and particularly, against women as mothers. The significance of this largely women-centred defi-

nition of "race struggle" has been recognized by some historians as one element of the singularity of the National Socialist genocide of the Jewish people.³⁷

Female activists in Nazi race policies were a minority among the perpetrators and a minority among women generally, though a remarkably tough and efficient one. The more active among them were usually unmarried and without children. They were from all social classes except for the highest ones, and their participation in racist policies was mostly, as in the case of many men, a function of their job or profession. Whereas the sterilization policy was entirely directed by men, some of the female social workers and medical doctors helped select the candidates. Nurses in the six T4 killing centres assisted the male doctors in selecting and killing. Some women academics co-operated with their male superiors in Gypsy studies and laid the groundwork for the selection and extermination of Gypsies; for this purpose they used their easier access, as women, to Gypsies and Gypsy culture. Female camp guards who supervised women in the concentration camps came mostly from a lower or working-class background and had volunteered for the job in expectation of some upward mobility. Among all women activists, they were closest to the centre of the killing operations and responsible for their functioning; it is misleading to believe that "they did not affect the workings of the Nazi state."³⁸ National Socialist racism was not only institutionalized as a state policy, but also professionalized.

Historians, including some feminist ones, have argued that German women's share of guilt and responsibility for Nazi evil was to have adjusted to Nazism by believing in motherhood and by being nothing else but mothers and wives, a view that has been common, particularly among the left, for a long time.³⁹ But those women who participated in it did not believe in maternalism as a feature of the female sex, were rarely mothers and did not act as mothers; instead they adjusted themselves to male-dominated political, professional and job strategies, to professionalized race policy. More importantly, neither was the image of women as mothers at the core of the Nazi view of the female sex as a whole, nor was that view, to the degree that it played some role, specific to National Socialism. Instead, from the beginnings of National Socialism modern eugenics (race hygiene) had taken precedence over traditional procreative

ethics; within modern eugenics its "negative" (antinatalist) strand had taken precedence over its "positive" (pronatalist) strand, and within its "positive" strand modern welfare policy had taken precedence over the earlier fantasies of "genius-bred-ing." What was left of the latter was the more realistic and successful attempt at curtailing the procreation of allegedly "feeble-minded" people and of "inferior" peoples and, finally, to prevent the latter from living. This race policy, in all its complexity, was at the core of National Socialism, was its novelty and specificity; it shaped National Socialism's multiple views of women. Most of all, it broke with the maternalist image of the female sex. Under National Socialism, the values of maternity and maternalism, like human values in general, had reached an historical and international nadir.

When German women and men were liberated from this murderous regime, they were also liberated from state antinatalism. But paradoxically enough, the Allied Control Commission, the American Military Tribunal and later German jurisdiction maintained that on the one hand, the Nazi sterilization policy was neither a crime to be brought before a court nor part of the regime's racism (because sterilization laws existed also in the United States), and on the other hand, that child allowances (not, however, tax rebates) were part of the regime's racism and therefore payment had to be stopped. Thus in the late 1940s, when some European states, e.g. Britain and Norway, introduced child allowances as the first major reform of their fully developing welfare states, Germany was almost the only European country without child allowances.⁴⁰

Both the East and West German constitutions included a clause on the equal rights of men and women, following the example of the Weimar constitution (which National Socialism had not bothered to abolish). In East Germany, which followed the model of the Soviet Union, equal rights were now interpreted as women's duty to perform extra-domestic work; domestic labour was downgraded (somewhat following Lenin's notorious scornful views on women's domestic work) and propaganda pressed housewives to take on a job and thereby help establish socialism and give precedence to the "We" instead of the "I," to the collectivity instead to selfishness.⁴¹ This policy was reinforced by low wages and, in 1950, by maternity pro-

visions for employed women (maternity leave with full wage replacement); necessitous mothers and widows received welfare grants only if they were incapable of performing extra-domestic work, often "asocial" unmarried mothers had their children taken away, and whereas all mothers received a single grant at the birth of the third and further children, a universal monthly child allowance was paid only from the fourth child on. In reaction to an extreme fertility decline and with the development of a "welfare socialism" in the 1970s, it was resolved that "the services of bearing and rearing children in the family are to be recognized and valued,"⁴² by special female labour law (a forty-hour week for mothers who tended two or more children), temporary support for single mothers who wished to quit their job, and a paid "baby year" for mothers at the birth of second and further children.

Nor was mother-work as such valued by the early West German state, which also guaranteed equal rights in its constitution. Confinement benefit for employed women was improved; when child allowances (*Kindergeld*) were reintroduced in 1954, they functioned upon the older French model of employers' equalization funds and were paid to employed fathers of third and subsequent children. Only in 1964 the federal government took over the responsibility, universalizing and gradually raising the allowance as well as the number of eligible children; even though the law provided for payment either to the father or to the mother, it was usually the father who requested it. Until 1975, the major tool continued to be (breadwinner-focused) tax deductions for wife and children.⁴³ In 1979, the Social Democratic government introduced a (modestly) paid maternity leave of half a year (beyond confinement benefits), and in 1987, the Christian Democratic/Liberal government replaced it by a universal "childraising allowance" of up to 600 marks per month for a period of one and a half years. It differs from Lily Braun's similar ideal, suggested over eighty years before,⁴⁴ in two important features: it does not fully cover needs, and it is payable either to the mother or to the father, depending on who chooses child care instead of employment. Even though few feminists of the new women's movement have struggled for this reform, it would hardly have come about without the coincidence between the rise of the modern welfare state and the growth of women's movements in the twentieth

century. It remains to be seen whether the difficult process of unifying Germany in a free welfare state will also recognize and respect the political and social rights of mothers and women generally.

NOTES

Reprinted from Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (eds), *Maternity and Gender Policies. Women and the Rise of European Welfare States, 1880s-1950s* (London/New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 253-69.

- 1 G. A. Ritter, *Der Sozialstaat. Entstehung und Entwicklung im internationalen Vergleich* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1989), esp. pp. 130-8; P. Flora and A. J. Heidenheimer (eds), *The Development of Welfare States in Europe and America* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1981), esp. p. 83; H. Kaelble, *Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen Gesellschaft. Eine Sozialgeschichte Westeuropas 1880-1980* (Munich: Beck, 1987).
- 2 W. Frick, *Bevölkerungs- und Rassenpolitik* (Langensalza: Beyer, 1933); A. T. Allen, "German radical feminism and eugenics, 1900-1918," *German Studies Review*, 1989, Vol. 11, pp. 31-56, esp. pp. 45-6; G. Bäumler, *Die Frau im neuen Lebensraum* (Berlin: Hebig, 1931), esp. pp. 207-10, 229-30; G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986), ch. 1.
- 3 W. Frick, *Bevölkerungs- und Rassenpolitik*; A. Gütt, E. Rüdin and F. Rutke, *Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses vom 14. Juli 1933* (Munich: Lehmann, 1934) (hereafter GRR), p. 60; G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, ch. IV.3.
- 4 G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, esp. pp. 182ff., 281, 302ff., 400, 421ff.
- 5 Quotes from A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Vol. II (Munich: Eher, 1928), pp. 80-1; W. Feldscher, *Rassen- und Erbpflege im deutschen Recht* (Berlin: Deutscher Rechtsverlag, 1943), pp. 26, 118; B. F. Smith and A. F. Peterson (eds), *Heinrich Himmler: Geheimreden 1933-1945* (Frankfurt: Propyläen, 1974), pp. 54-5. For the Nazi concept of the "production" of the "master race" see H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), ch. 12 with note 54. For the sterilization of Gypsies, Blacks and Jews see G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, pp. 353-63.
- 6 GRR, p. 176; H. Burkhardt, *Der rassenhygienische Gedanke und seine Grundlagen* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1930), p. 93.
- 7 GRR, p. 5.
- 8 L. G. Ittala (Ministry of Propaganda), "Die wirtschaftlichen Folgen des Sterilisierungsgesetzes," *Volk und Rasse*, 1933, vol. 8, pp. 162-4; G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, pp. 372-80.
- 9 G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, pp. 280, 384 (quotes), 97-9, 386.
- 10 Quotes and documents in *ibid.*, pp. 431, 396, 212, 398-9, 393.
- 11 Of 22 April and 22 August 1936; *ibid.*, pp. 401-31, 322-5.

- 12 *Juristische Wochenschrift*, 1935, vol. 64, p. 2143; *Staatsarchiv Freiburg, Gesundheitsamt Lörrach*, no. 534.
- 13 E. von Barsewitsch, *Die Aufgaben der Frau für die Aufzucht* (Berlin: Reichdruckerei, 1933), p. 14; she referred (like many others of the time and like earlier radical feminists such as Helene Stöcker) to Nietzsche's saying "Thou shalt not propagate, but elevate, the race" (see K. Anthony, *Feminism in Germany and Scandinavia* (New York: Holt, 1915), p. 94). A. Bluhm "Das Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses," *Die Frau*, 1934, Vol. 41, pp. 529-38; J. Haarer, "Die rassenpolitischen Aufgaben des Deutschen Frauenwerks," *Neues Volk*, 1938, Vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 17-19; the following quote: M. Hess, "Das Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses," *N.S.-Frauenwarte*, 1935, Vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 33-6. Among the women (and men) who actively opposed sterilization propaganda and activity, the Catholics were the most prominent and they referred to the papal encyclical *Casti Connubi* of 1930 which condemned eugenic sterilization.
- 14 "Richtlinien für eine bevölkerungspolitische Propaganda und Volksaufklärung," *Bundesarchiv Koblenz* (BAK), NS 18/712; *Partei-Archiv*, Nov. 1937, p. 19; W. Knorr, "Kinderreichenauflese durch das Rassenpolitische Amt der NSDAP in Sachsen," *Volk und Rasse*, 1936, Vol. 11, p. 270. Cf. G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, pp. 122-3, 129-31.
- 15 R. W. Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden* (Munich: Lehmann, 1930), pp. 169-71; W. Gross, "Denkschrift zur Frage des unehelichen Kindes als Problem der deutschen Bevölkerungspolitik" (1944), BAK, R 22/485; H. Linden, minutes of a meeting on population policy 1935, *Auswärtiges Amt, Politisches Archiv, Inland I Partei* 84/4.
- 16 D. Winkler, *Frauenarbeit im "Dritten Reich"* (Hamburg: Hoffman & Campe, 1977), esp. chs 2 and 5, pp. 198, 201; S. Bajohr, *Die Hälfte der Fabrik* (Marburg: Arbeiterpolitik, 1979), ch. 4, esp. p. 252; A. Willms, "Grundzüge der Entwicklung der Frauennarbeit von 1880 bis 1980," in W. Müller et al., *Strukturwandel der Frauennarbeit 1880-1980* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Verlag, 1983), p. 35. For the following figures see also R. Hachmann, "Industriearbeiterinnen in der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft, 1936-1944/45" in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Zeitschrift für historische Sozialwissenschaft*, 19 Jg., 1993/ Hett 3, Juli/September, pp. 332-66; C. Kirkpatrick, *Woman in Nazi Germany* (London: Jarrolds, 1939), ch. 7; U. Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter* (Bonn: Dietz, 1985).
- 17 Figures from *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das deutsche Reich*, 1926-1942, vols 45-59; G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, pp. 160-3, 388. There were few convictions for sections 219 and 220. For a comparable situation in fascist Italy, see Detragiache, quoted in Saraceno's contribution to [the original] volume; G. Bock and P. Thane (eds), *Maternity and Gender Policies. Women and the Rise of European Welfare States, 1880s-1950s* (London/New York: Routledge, 1990), note 1.
- 18 The best overview is still D. V. Glass, *Population Policies and Movements in Europe* (first edn 1940; repr. London: Frank Cass, 1967). For

- Nazi pronatalism and its impact see G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, pp. 141-77.
- 19 Quotes from H. Frank, speech of 18 November 1937 (BAK, R 61/130); H. F. K. Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (Munich: Lehmann, 1923), pp. 345f., 274ff.; Goebbels' criticism (1941): BAK, R2/31097.
- 20 F. Reinhard, quoted in W. Gross, "Unsere Arbeit gilt der deutschen Familie," *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte*, 1939, Vol. 9, pp. 103-4; Hilgenfeldt reporting to Bormann about a conversation with Himmler, 16 September 1942 (BAK, NS 18/2427).
- 21 J. Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), esp. p. 164; see Saraceno's article in Bock and Thane (eds) *Maternity and Gender Policies*.
- 22 G. Lilienthal, *Der "Lebensborn e.V."* (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer, 1985), esp. pp. 53, 66-7, 100, 113, 182-3, 242-4. Despite the *Lebensborn* children's privileges, they were not spared being killed if they were "incurably ill."
- 23 Documents in G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, pp. 174-5.
- 24 C. Heinrichs, "Besoldung der Mutterschaftsleistung," *Die Frau*, 1934, Vol. 41, pp. 343-8; I. Reichenau (ed.), *Deutsche Frauen an Adolf Hitler* (Leipzig: Klein, sd. 1933), pp. 7, 15, 37. For the demographic figures see G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, pp. 143-6, 151-7, 168 and 173.
- 25 K. Astel and E. Weber, *Die Kinderzahl der 29.000 politischen Leiter des Gaus Thüringen der NSDAP* (Berlin: Metzner, 1943), pp. 87, 114ff., 157, 161; Koller, "Haben Ärzte im Durchschnitt wirklich nur 1,1 Kinder?" *Deutsches Ärzteblatt*, 1942, Vol. 72, p. 343.
- 26 F. Burgdörfer, *Geburtenschwund* (Heidelberg: Vowinkel, 1942), pp. 157, 184; W. Knorr, "Praktische Rassenpolitik," *Volk und Rasse*, 1938, Vol. 13, pp. 69-73.
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- 28 D. V. Glass, *Population Policies*, pp. 106, 253, 293.
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- 30 J. Sehn, "Carl Clausberg's verbrecherische Unfruchtbarmachungs-Versuche an Häftlings-Frauen in den Nazi-Konzentrationslagern," *Hefte von Auschwitz*, Vol. 2, Oswiecim, 1959, pp. 3-32; R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), Vol. III, pp. 940-6, 1081.
- 31 R. J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors. Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), p. 22.
- 32 H.-W. Schnuhl, *Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), p. 40. For the 1942 decree, mentioned below, see G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, pp. 358-9.
- 33 R. J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, p. 159, also pp. 15, 147; M. Broszat (ed.), *Kommandant in Auschwitz* (Munich: DTV, 1963), p. 127; R. Hilberg, *Destruction*, Vol. I, pp. 332-4.
- 34 R. Hilberg, *Destruction*, Vol. II, pp. 690-1; Vol. III, p. 871; J. Ringelheim, "Deportations, deaths and survival: Nazi ghetto policies against women and men in occupied Poland," in T. Wobbe (ed.), *Nach Osten: Verdeckte Spuren nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Neue Kritik, 1991); J. Ringelheim, "Women and the Holocaust," *Signs*, 1985, Vol. 10, pp. 741-61; E. Kogon et al. (eds), *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1986), e.g., pp. 88, 91, 93-7, 105-8, 122, 131, 134, 158, 210-15.
- 35 L. Adelsberger, *Auschwitz* (Berlin: Lettner, 1953), pp. 126-8 (quote); M. Richarz, *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1982), Vol. 3, p. 61; J. Ficowski, "Die Vernichtung" in T. Zülich (ed.), *In Auschwitz vergast, bis heute verfolgt: Zur Situation der Roma (Zigeuner) in Deutschland und Europa* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1979), pp. 135-6.
- 36 R. J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, p. 462; see also pp. 193-6, 199, 231, 312-13, 317, 443.
- 37 By E. Jäckel, "Die elende Praxis der Untersteller," in "Historikerstreit". *Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung* (Munich: Piper, 1987), p. 118. E. Nolte objected on the grounds that this massacre of women (and boys and old men) was self-evident; therefore it seemed to him superfluous to mention it specifically (ibid., pp. 229-30). Himmler's speeches: F. Smith and A. F. Peterson (eds), *Heinrich Himmler*, pp. 169, 201.
- 38 C. Koontz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987), p. 405. For women's professional and job strategies in the context of race policy see R. Gilensbach, "Wie Lolitschai zur Doktorwürde kam," in W. Ayass et al., *Feindartklärung und Prävention*, Berlin, Rohbuch, 1988, pp. 101-34; H. Friedlander, in E. Katz and J. Ringelheim (eds), *Proceedings of the Conference "Women Surviving the Holocaust"* (New York: Institute for Research in History, 1983), pp. 115-16; G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation* p. 208.
- 39 C. Koontz, *Mothers*, esp. chs 1 and 11. Some leftist writers assume that "among the persecuted and incarcerated, by far the majority were men" (R. Kühn, "Der deutsche Faschismus in der neueren Forschung," *Neue politische Literatur*, 1983, Vol. 28, p. 71). For an influential criticism of this view see A. Tröger, "Die Dolchstoßlegende der Linken: Frauen haben Hitler an die Macht gebracht" in Berliner Dozentenengruppe (ed.), *Frauen und Wissenschaft* (Berlin: Courage, 1977), pp. 324-55.
- 40 See V. Hentschel, *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialpolitik 1880-1980* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp. 139, 202; G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation*, pp. 115-16, 244-6.
- 41 "Das 'Wir' steht vor dem 'Ich'," *Frau von heute*, 1959, Vol. 39, p. 2, quoted in G. Obertreis, *Familienpolitik in der DDR 1945-1980*

(Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1985), p. 146; also pp. 51-73, 119, 136-8, 155, 292-3.

42 E. Honecker, "Neue Massnahmen zur Vervicklichung des sozialpolitischen Programms des VIII. Parteitages" (1972), quoted in G. Oberreis, *Familienpolitik*, p. 292; also pp. 315-18.

43 U. Gerhard et al. (eds), *Auf Kosten der Frauen. Frauenrechte im Sozialstaat* (Weinheim and Basel: Beltz, 1988), pp. 83, 91-2, 195; P. Flora (ed.), *Growth to Limits. The Western European Welfare States Since World War II* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986-7), Vol. II, pp. 278-81.

44 Irene Stoehr, "Housework and motherhood: debates and policies in the women's movement in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic" in Bock and Thane (eds), *Maternity and Gender Policies*, pp. 213-32.

4

VICTIMS OR PERPETRATORS?

Controversies about the role of women in the Nazi state

Adelheid von Saldern

Gisela Bock portrays women as the victims of National Socialism, innocent of its crimes because it can scarcely be believed that they would have participated in the regime which oppressed them. But in her book, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, Claudia Koonz contends that many women were "accomplices" to Nazism because the "emotional work" they performed for men in the "private sphere" of the family contributed to the stability of the Nazi system. In the following article, Adelheid von Saldern suggests, however, that few women can be regarded as simply "victims" or "perpetrators." The majority of German women experienced complex, ambiguous relationships with the Nazi regime which made it possible to be both "victim" and "perpetrator" at the same time. Indeed, von Saldern urges that we abandon the search for "pure types." She insists upon the significance of differences among women as well as between men and women in the Third Reich. Even as "victims," women experienced quite different fates; an Aryan woman, denied an abortion because she was deemed "genetically valuable" was certainly not the same kind of "victim" of Nazi racism as a Jewish or Gypsy woman who was forcibly sterilized, even murdered, because she was a "racial enemy."

Von Saldern also rejects the argument that women could not have been directly involved in the functioning of the Nazi dictatorship because they were confined largely to the "private sphere" of the home and the family. Under Nazism, this "private sphere" was radically invaded by the perverted "public sphere" of Nazi ideology and arbitrary rule. The family was not a safe and sane haven, a "female sphere" insulated from the violence and brutality of the Nazi political system. But the fact that, until quite late in the war, private life appeared to remain relatively intact encouraged many women to tolerate, even