

# Prikaz žena u nacističkoj propagandi

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FACULTY OF CROATIAN STUDIES

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# Portrayal of Women in Nazi Propaganda

Bachelor's Thesis

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## Abstract

Propaganda is considered a crucial factor in the success of the Nazi regime in Germany, with the historian Robert Edwin Herzstein stating that propaganda is “The War That Hitler Won.” (As cited in Bytwerk, 2004) A part of this propaganda war was centered on women and their contributions to the Third Reich, yet it is rarely discussed in this context. Looking into this part of the Nazi propaganda can be important to uncover the reasons for complicity and cooperation, what effects this type of propaganda had on women of the time and methods that were successful.

Research so far was mostly focused on the widespread effects of Nazi propaganda, with a small amount being specifically about women. This was possibly due to the age of the material and the relatively recent arisal of feminism.

The goal is to examine the key messages perpetuated through the Nazi Party propaganda, the image women were expected to embody and roles they were expected to take within the society. The ideal of the ideal Nazi woman was relatively uniform and stable throughout the duration of the Third Reich, conveyed through various forms of media and perpetuated by not only the men, but by women in the regime too.

Keywords: Nazi, propaganda, women, motherhood

## 1. Introduction

From the beginning of his ascent to power, Hitler maintained the notion that the reversal of Germany’s devastating demographic decline was one of the keys for its survival. His plan was to create *Volksgemeinschaft*, meaning ‘people's community,’ ‘folk community,’ ‘national community’ or ‘racial community,’ which would consist of a socially cohesive, monolithic, and racially pure community. (Mouton, 2007)

Gellately and Stolfus (2001) stated that the Nazi leaders found support for the creation of this community in German traditions (as cited in Mouton, 2007) and it soon assumed its presence in civic, political, and private life of the German people. (Mouton, 2007)

One of the pillars of *Volksgemeinschaft* was rejuvenating German families by restoring patriarchy and traditional familial order. Then, a German woman could “answer her natural calling to bear children,” mother and strengthen the Aryan race, “a supposed master race of non-Jewish Caucasians usually having Nordic features.” (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Many women were unable to attain this ideal of full-time motherhood due to the necessity to work for working-class women, as unemployment was a mark of poor work ethic and asociality. (Mouton, 2007)

Targeted propaganda, financial incentives and creation of honorary programs were all designed to encourage women to bear children. (Koonz, 2014) Mother’s Day was also revamped and a Mother Cross was created to honor worthy mothers. At the same time, abortion was made a capital offense (Mouton, 2007) and using contraception was considered, according to Proctor (1989), *Rassenverrat*, or ‘racial treason’, since it was deemed as an attempt to “curb artificially the natural fertility of the German people.” (As cited in Mouton, 2007)

Motherhood was promoted through propaganda campaigns as necessary to boost the birthrate and improve the health of the nation. On the other hand, opposition to motherhood was shown as central to the nation’s problems. Motherhood was not just a responsibility, but a calling, and women were considered selfish if they did not want to bear children. (Garden, 2016; Mouton, 2007) The Editor of the Social Democratic Party women’s newspaper *Die Gleichheit*, Clara Bohm-Schuh, claimed “that education should instill the ‘will to maternity’ in the younger generation.” (As cited in Mouton, 2007)

Motherhood was presented to women as the equivalent to military training for men. (Krimmer, 2018; Mouton, 2007)

The Nazi created a standard against which all women were judged. They had to be peaceable, orderly, frugal, clean, and good housewives. They had to keep their homes neat and tidy, wear feminine clothes, be faithful wives and bear only legitimate children. The ideal mother did not only have a certain number of children, she was also defined by other social, political, and racial qualities. The goal of the propaganda campaigns was not to only increase the number of healthy children born, but to decrease the number of unhealthy children born. (Mouton, 2007)

This propaganda especially intensified during the Second World War, drawing a connection between war fatalities and the need to raise the birthrate. Newborn children were shown to

replace fallen soldiers on posters. The posters also mostly picture women with several children, de-emphasizing the paternal role with the absence of the father in these idealized portrayals. (Mouton, 2007)

Mother was seen as a woman's most valuable contribution to the German society, able to unite the nation and prolong its survival. (Mouton, 2007)

## 2. Propaganda

Propaganda did not always have a negative connotation associated with deception, lies and manipulation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was mostly used to manage information to promote a particular goal of the propagandist. It emerged from a need to prioritize, organize, correlate, and transmit information to the public, using technology and modernity to do so. It was especially necessary at the time of full mobilization to attain a national goal in the interest of bolstering morale and mobilizing society. It did not serve to just provide information; it performed a wide variety of functions on behalf of its recipients. Therefore, propaganda does not just provide information, it also withholds it. (Kallis, 2005)  
Propaganda is not science, it is art. (Bytwerk, 2004)

Although the term is frequently used interchangeably with 'brainwashing,' this fails to account for the ability to resist propaganda messages by the recipient, regardless of how well the message is presented. (Kallis, 2005)

Joseph Goebbels, the chief propagandist for the Nazi Party, was appointed minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment in 1933. He believed in the duality of *Stimmung*, sentiment or morale, and *Haltung*, or observable behavior. *Haltung* was the one more difficult to change, while *Stimmung* was more volatile and susceptible to short-term news. According to him, effective propaganda had to constantly manage both, albeit using different strategies and tools. During the beginning victories of the Germany army in 1940 and 1941, Nazi propaganda focused mostly on *Stimmung*, to affect deeper attitudes towards the war. In contrast, after the Stalingrad defeat in 1943, propaganda was mostly focused on attempting to curtail the effects of short-term morale disintegration. In 1944 and 1945, after much of the population lost their belief in victory and Hitler's infallibility, Goebbels tried to bolster *Haltung*, even in the face of the crumbling morale. (Kallis, 2005)

Hitler considered the psychology of the masses crucial, crediting the failings of the First World War propaganda to failure to understand the masses, knowing they are not absolutely malleable. He and Goebbels flattered the masses: they did not need to do the arduous work of understanding the complex world around them, as their leaders would do it for them. They were not without value, but they were also not particularly good at discerning what is good for them. Hitler separated 'big' and 'little' lies, believing that smaller lies are often more readily believed but also misunderstood. The bigger the lie, the harder it is to disprove it such as the inability of Jews to prove they are not engaged in a mass conspiracy. (Bytwerk, 2004)

The Nazi Party itself was organized into 40 *Gaue*, or regional groups. These were further divided into *Kreise*, counties, and *Ortsgruppen*, local groups. Local groups were then subdivided into cells of four to eight blocks, comprised of forty to sixty households. Propaganda leaders were appointed at *Gau*, *Kreis*, and local group levels, with subordinates responsible for active propaganda, such as speeches and public meetings, and media. Goebbels introduced *Die Lage*, a publication for party leaders, in 1943, with the intent to provide material for propagandists. (Bytwerk, 2004)

## 2.2 Media

Separating mass information and mass entertainment is impossible, as shown in the enlisting of cinema in wartime Germany. In the history of Nazi propaganda, film holds a special place. Shortly after being appointed minister of Propaganda, Goebbels declared the establishment of the *Filmkreditbank*. *Filmkreditbank* was a credit mechanism envisioned to help the German film industry after years of economic crisis and overseas competition. *Reichskulturkammer*, or Reich Culture Chamber – RKK, was established later in the same year, bringing radio, press, art, literature, theatre, and music under the direct control of the Nazi regime. Jewish artists were openly disparaged, forcing many of them to emigrate. (Kallis, 2005)

In the press, the driving financial force was Max Amann, *Reichsleiter* or national leader. In February of 1933, an order for the 'Protection of the State and the Nation' was put in effect. This resulted in the termination of more than 230 left-wing publications. By 1935, the number of readers and subscriptions was plummeting, advertising revenue declined and competition was increased. Amann was thus authorized to comprehensively reorganize and change the face of the German press. More than 500 publishing houses were forced to close,



merge with or be absorbed into *Eher Verlag*, the central publishing house of the Nazi Party, which controlled almost 1000 publishing houses by the end of the war. (Kallis, 2005)

Radio as a medium was located somewhere between the established medium of press and the less entrenched and socially widespread than the cinema. Less flexible, but more versatile than the press, it had significant potential for totalitarian integration and manipulation. It was regulated by one central authority, *Reichsrundfunkgesellschaft*, or Reich Radio Company – RRG. Reorganizing RRG was the first step in centralizing German broadcasting, starting in 1933. In 1934, all regional companies were renamed to ‘*Reichssender*’. Political speeches and ceremonies were broadcast across Germany from the regional *Sender*. Spring of 1937 was the beginning of Goebbels’ personnel and institutional changes, with many high-ranking personnel being replaced by Goebbels loyalists. (Kallis, 2005)

### 3. The Ideal Woman

#### 3.1 Motherhood

As mentioned previously, the ideal German woman was also a mother, as the Nazi Party wanted to ensure that the German race would be more populous and superior to other races. Their propaganda centered on growing a large population of Aryans and couples were encouraged to have as many children as possible. As such, women were vital in carrying out the Nazi Party plan and they wanted to ensure mothers would be taken care of in every way possible. (Brashler, 2015; Kravetz 2019)

Women were placed above the rest of the society in Nazi propaganda, characterized as strong and honorable for having many children, culminating in a ‘cult of motherhood’ that praised mothers above all other women. (Brashler, 2015; Schuring, 2014)

Women who had no or just one child were often portrayed and ridiculed as being selfish and unpatriotic, with one woman arguing in *Frauen-Warte* (1940), a Nazi magazine for women, “What would our faith in Eternal Germany mean if mothers were not willing to conceive and sacrifice?” (As cited in Brashler, 2015)

Motherhood was seen as making a sacrifice for the war and Germany overall, inspiring German soldiers to fight harder with the knowledge that they are protecting their children back home. *Frauen Warte* would go on to publish multiple articles consistent with this rhetoric, how sons

are important for Germany as a whole, not just for the father, that their children would carry the torch into Germany's bright future even after they were gone and reminding women of the noble and honorable act of having many children. (Brashler, 2015; Garden, 2016)

### *3.2 Children for the Führer*

The goal of the Nazi propaganda was to convince women that, just as men were going to the war for him, they had to bear children for the Führer. Hence, they were constantly praised and celebrated, although the Nazi Party felt motherhood often had to be taught. Mothers were important for the race as they were an "eternal source of blood" and had to adhere to rules on raising children focused on race. It was believed each woman should have at least 3 children, to help the German population to rebound. (Brashler, 2015)

Even Hitler dedicated his speeches to women and asserted motherhood was the noblest purposed and appointing women to any other task would be degrading to them. (Brashler, 2015; Schuring, 2014)

A slogan "Bear a Child for the *Führer*" was created, to motivate women to bear children, even illegitimate, without becoming society's outcasts. Children were for the *Führer*, for Germany. Sons would aid in its protection and daughters would become wives and mothers. (Brashler, 2015)

### *3.3 Lebensborn*

As well as motherhood, the Nazi Party had a hand in propagating marriage between Aryan women and men only, mostly worried with intermarriage to the Jewish 'race.' According to them, marriage was not about the friendship between the couple of the marriage itself. Bearing children was the only goal of marriage and the aforementioned matters were just a bonus. (Brashler, 2015)

In "racial science" courses, women had to memorize the "Ten Commandments for Choosing a Partner."

1. Remember you are a German!
2. Remain pure in mind and spirit!
3. Keep your body pure!
4. If hereditarily fit, do not remain single!

5. Marry only for love!
6. Being a German, choose only a spouse of similar or related blood!
7. When choosing your spouse, inquire into his or her forebears!
8. Health is essential to outward beauty as well!
9. Seek a companion in marriage, not a playmate!
10. Hope for as many children as possible!

(Koontz, 2014)

Thus, the leading member of the Nazi Party of Germany and *Reichsführer* of the *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squadron; SS), Heinrich Himmler created the *Lebensborn* in 1935. *Lebensborn*, meaning “Fount of Life” provided places for SS men, their families and single pregnant women carrying children of the German soldiers to be taken care of. In 1939, he ordered the SS men to father more children, calling on women to forego their bourgeois moral standards and bear children out of wedlock, as *Lebensborn* would provide for them. (Brashler, 2015) If they agreed to bear illegitimate children for Germany, they were forbidden from using lipstick, nail polish or plucking their eyebrows. (Guenther, 2014) Women entering *Lebensborn* also had to prove the racial purity of both them and the child’s father. This was to encourage women to keep Aryan babies, at least until birth. Some mothers would be found “morally unsuitable for motherhood” by doctors or administration and their children would be given to more appropriate adoptive couples. Therefore, *Lebensborn* doubled as a campaign against abortion, hoping the German women will bear as many ‘pure’ Aryan children as possible. (Brashler, 2015)

### ***3.4 Worthy Germans***

As opposed to ideal women, the Nazi Party also propagated the view that certain people were less worthy of being called Germans as opposed to others. (Brashler, 2015) One such attempt was an advertisement for *Neues Volk*, or *The New People*, a Nazi monthly publication, that reminded the German populace that “genetically ill person will cost our people’s community 60,000 marks over his lifetime. Citizens, that is your money.” (as cited in Brashler, 2015)

Himmler was worried about women not wanting to become mothers all the way in 1926 and said, according to Clay, Catrine, and Leapman (1995), in his speech in 1937, that a nation filled with children would “become a world power” but a nation that was barren would die. (As cited

in Brashler, 2015) A good German woman will raise as many children as possible. His feelings about intermarriage are best summed in the slogan “After the victory on the battlefield comes the victory in the cradle.” (Brashler, 2015)

Consequently, most of the Nazi prewar propaganda was directed to women, tempting them into motherhood with idealized imagery and financial benefits as mothers of a greater German population. Speeches and rallies were also held, specifically to show the support the Nazi Party has for women, putting mothers on a pedestal. Goebbels, stated that women were a principal part of Germany, and the party had too much respect for them to allow them into the public sphere and politics, considering motherhood was their desire and purpose. (Brashler, 2015)

## 4. The Ideal Mother

### 4.1 The “New Woman”

In the previous section, it was mentioned that Goebbels participated in spreading the message of the ideal woman. (Schuring, 2014) He also reminded the women that they could not be fulfilled by the autonomy they had enjoyed in previous years and their primary role was that of motherhood. The ideal German woman was not the “New Woman.” “New Women” came into existence during the Weimar Republic and the term was used to describe women who were more outspoken and independent. They wore what was considered masculine clothing and were sexually liberated. They were devoted to themselves and not to their families. This image of a woman was heavily demonized by the Nazi propaganda, who wanted to terminate women’s journey towards independence and equality. (Brashler, 2015)

During the Weimar Republic, Germany’s culture was developing and was considered progressive for the time, with Germany giving women the right to vote before the USA and France. The idea of a “New Woman” appeared partly due to women starting to work outside of the home, being financially independent, which then led to them coming out and asserting their independence on the political stage as well. In film and literature, the characterization of women leaned more into experimentation and sexual promiscuity. Men were especially uncomfortable with this aspect of the “New Woman.” (Brashler, 2015)

While many women chose to stay wives and mothers, it is an important part of the idea that they had this choice at all. The Weimar Republic government was heavily promoting traditional

gender roles and most women and girls were being prepared for marriage. (Brashler, 2015; Kravetz 2019)

#### *4.2 Nazi feminism*

The Nazi Party had their own version on feminism, centered on motherhood. They asked women to focus on serving the nation and not their personal desires. The ideal German woman was educated, well-dressed, hard-working, and nurturing. And, above all, she was a mother. According to Hitler, women were supposed to stay at home, be subservient and bear new warriors for Germany. Women in the workforce were trying to take man's place. (Brashler, 2015; Garden, 2016)

Conversely, women were also idealized and put on a pedestal, a key part of the Nazi propaganda tactics. They intended to take away the independence they worked so hard for, glorifying their roles as mothers, and thus giving them a place in society. Women were proclaimed to be of highest importance, essential to the future of Germany yet not allowed independent thought. In speeches they proclaimed that woman had a more significant role in society – motherhood, a role only they could take on, consequently trying to push them out of the political sphere. Hitler claimed that both men and women had their place in fighting for a better Germany, once again reminding women that they were important in the eyes of the Nazi Party. (Brashler, 2015; Schuring, 2014)

Goebbels spoke at the opening of a women's exhibition in Berlin in 1933, emphasizing the role of women in raising boys to men, a crucial role because men make history. He praises and flatters women throughout his speech, frequently calling them "strong" and "special," highlighting the attributes that separate them from men. Women are not less or not as important as men, they are simply different and that difference is worth celebrating. They used words such as "respect," "important" and "vital," to give women a feeling of importance and power. This was all in service of indoctrinating women and girls into the idea of motherhood being paramount to their gender. (Brashler, 2015; Schuring, 2014)

Women also had their part in spreading this rhetoric, as Gertrud Scholtz-Klink said in her speech, that was printed in *Frauen Warte* in 1936, "Women should first care for those who need her help as mothers of the nation." (As cited in Brashler, 2015) While she was

perpetuating the belief that women should not participate in the public sphere, she herself was working within the Nazi Party, outside the home. (Brashler, 2015; Schuring, 2014)

Apart from speeches and rallies, the Nazi Party also used pictures and posters to spread the message of distinct gender roles – work for men and motherhood for women. These posters were located everywhere where there would be a possibility of women seeing them, including government offices. Both men and women were depicted as strong, sometimes with visible muscle, oftentimes in front of an idyllic countryside. Women were first depicted with usually two children, which later evolved into depictions of four or six children later in the war. (Brashler, 2015)

### *4.3 Women in the workforce*

Despite women being heavily encouraged into viewing motherhood as their one and only purpose, it was still expected of them to work, especially after the war had started and they had to take men's places in factories. These positions were considered temporary, sacrificing the ideal of motherhood for patriotism, but only while the men were at work. In an ideal world, women would stay at home and men would work. In one of the articles in *Frauen Warte* in 1941, women and children were described as “most precious good of the people” and they need to be taken care of. (As cited in Brashler, 2015)

Women were never intended to stay single and childless, but it was expected of them to contribute before starting on that road. The opportunities presented to them usually involved occupations that would help prepare them to be wives and mothers. (Brashler, 2015)

One such occupation was nursing. A woman's main purpose was caregiving and thus they would be perfect for caring for German soldiers, due to their ‘motherly’ and ‘maternal’ nature. In line with this image, an important part of being an ideal Nazi Woman was ensuring they were not seen as being too masculine, including the clothes they wore, which will be further explored later. (Brashler, 2015)

#### *4.3.1 Nurses*

As mentioned previously, nursing was advertised as an occupation perfect for women, due to its maternal and caregiving nature. Novels and films of the Second World War and the postwar period praised army nurses as angels in white, ethereal, and self-sacrificing mother figures. This was considered a result of women's true nature. Nurse and historian Liselotte

Katscher summarized it as nursing being seen as “the most feminine of all professions.” All the qualities as nurse should possess were the essential qualities of the previously discussed ideal woman. Therefore, the Nazi propaganda heavily focused on portraying nursing as an occupation that is most dignified for a woman. Despite that, it was highly suggested that nursing is not really a profession at all. Nurses were to, as wives at home, be obedient to doctors and not to engage in independent decision-making. (Krimmer, 2018)

There was effort to redefine nurses to be more visible in Nazi Germany, although it is suggested it was for pragmatic reasons only. Once the German military had more need of them, many objections and restrictions on nurses loosened: such as serving on the front lines or having to quit once they were married. To many women, nursing offered not just tangible benefits, but an ability to help with something larger than themselves. (Krimmer, 2018)

The main nursing propaganda was the *Mythos der Frontschwester*, or myth of the frontline nurse. Nurses were the female equivalent of the soldier, subject to the same code of honor and in service due to their sense of patriotism and camaraderie. Although the ideal of the nurse was first imagined as an apolitical figure, during the Third Reich it was heavily politicized. Nurses were sorted into categories based on their political and racial profiles, and, from 1938, all Red Cross nurses had to swear an oath to the *Führer*: ““I swear unconditional loyalty and obedience to my *Führer* Adolf Hitler. I commit to fulfill my duties as a National Socialist nurse faithfully and diligently wherever I am assigned. So help me God.” (Krimmer, 2018)

The nurse training included political training, such as instructions in human genetics and racial hygiene. The ideological portion of the training took up around 20% of the nurses’ curriculum. Due to this, Second World War nurses are considered to be political agents of the Nazi ideology and war of aggression. (Krimmer, 2018)

#### ***4.3.2 Gertrud Scholtz-Klink***

*Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft*, or National Socialist Women's League, was the women's wing of the Nazi Party and one of the propaganda manufacturers during the Third Reich. It was founded in 1931 and led by Gertrud Scholtz-Klink from 1934 until the end of the war 1945. She was the creator of female focused propaganda, promoting pronatalist policies, discouraging

them from engaging in the political sphere and encouraging gender-suitable work. Despite this rhetoric, she was still the highest-ranking female political figure and a divorcee. (Frasier, 2021)

According to Scholtz-Klink, feminists betrayed women by demanding motherhood and they threatened men by demanding entry into male-dominated fields. Her intention was to recruit mostly middle-class housewives and integrate as many of them in the Nazi framework. Therefore, her project organized and emphasized state subsidies, leisure activities, official ceremonies, radio programs, degrees in home economics and other "feminine" subjects, sports, and bonuses in the form of household products. Despite the emphasis on femininity, the real objective was female docility and keeping mothers in homes if it was advantageous. Scholtz-Klink organized courses and lectures that served to indoctrinate women in race, national aims, and National socialism. She did this by underplaying ideology and focusing on the task at hand. (Koonz, 2014)

Despite her high rank, Scholtz-Klink stayed as far away as possible from the male parts of the Party. Men around Hitler did not know who she was, never acknowledged her as equal and even frequently misspelled her name in official correspondence. (Frasier, 2021; Koonz 2014)

## *5. Frauen Warte*

As mentioned previously, *Frauen Warte* was a bi-weekly magazine intended for the average middle-aged Nazi woman. It served as a tool reinforcing the Nazi Party's campaign to celebrate and subordinate women. Articles usually consisted of themes related to managing a household, such as laundry, meal recipes and childcare. Through its articles, they outlined four specific pillars of the National Socialist education system: race, military training, leadership, and religion. (Johnson, 2009)

Race had the strongest emphasis, focusing on racial purity and producing pure children. Women were expected to be loyal to their husbands, take on traditional gender roles and create a household that would further these goals of racial purity and superiority. (Johnson, 2009)

Military training was considered a vital part in the education of Nazi Youth. All citizens had to be physically fit and healthy to benefit their state. There were programs implemented to



encourage women to keep their minds and body fit to bring in strong German children. (Johnson, 2009)

Leadership was centered on women's roles in the household. Obedience to the Reich to the Führer was essential for the well-being of their families and they were to instill these values into their children as well. Girls were required to join *Jungmädel*, or the Girl Youth Club, from eight to ten years old and *Bund Deutsche Madel*, German Girl's league – BDM, at the age of fourteen. They would receive weekly political lessons, sing official Nazi songs, participate in sports, and do charity work. After reaching eighteen years of age, they were expected to marry, or work or volunteer a year for the Labor Service. (Johnson, 2009)

Lastly, religion and the concept of Christianity was enforced in the education system and expected to be upheld at home. The Third Reich stressed the importance of piety within every household that women were to exemplify. (Johnson, 2009)

These articles presented a carefully constructed message of what was expected of women: obedience, motherhood, and participation. (Johnson, 2009)

## 6. Women's fashion

Part of the ideal German woman was also the way she dressed, with Goebbels issuing an order in 1933 to ban French fashion in accordance with the Nazi Party rhetoric. Earlier in the same year, a book addressing the ideological pillars of Nazism, *The ABC's of National Socialism*, was published. Among the things addressed was the role of women in the German society. The author criticized German women for buying foreign, especially French, luxury products and spending money on unnecessary things in Jewish department stores instead of saving it or using it for the household. The Nazi Party propagated the need for German women to return to their traditional, pre-emancipation roles in order to reinvigorate Germany. (Guenther, 2004)

### 6.1 Kinder, Küche, Kirche

Deputy *Führer* Rudolf Hess stated that one of the greatest achievements of the Nazi Party was that it allowed more women to become mothers than ever before and to “do their part in the preservation of the life of the Volk.” Consumption practices were intertwined with patriotism, housewives were to make their purchases according to national economic interests. They were to avoid foreign products and always demand domestic ones. (Guenther, 2004)

Women's activities were centered around their families and homes, summed up in the slogan *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* (children, kitchen, church). Various forms of media were used to further this idea, such as the magazine *Mutter und Volk*, which promoted the charms of motherhood in every issue, or *Deutsches Familienblatt* and *Deutsche Frauen-Zeitung* which published advice of marriage. (Guenther, 2004)

### *6.2 Natural beauty*

The ideal Aryan was portrayed as healthy, strong, tanned, and fertile. She did not drink, smoke, or use cosmetics. It was claimed that she did not need these vices if she was leading a fulfilling life, going as far as to call wearing makeup "un-German." (Guenther, 2004; Kravetz 2019)

The primary focus was on health, physical fitness, and fertility. "Natural" or "healthy" beauty became a new slogan. In contradiction, to achieve this "natural" beauty, sun lamps were advertised to achieve tanned skin. Women magazines gave out advice on tanning and contained ads for deodorants, antiseptics and body powders used to combat the results of physical activity. Makeup was advised to woman who needed help achieving the look of natural beauty, with German Labor Front's Bureau for Beauty's pamphlets on applying makeup. Despite the anti-American propoganda, companies such as Elizabeth Arden, Palmolive and Pond's were advertised in women's magazines. (Guenther, 2004)

### *6.3 The dirndl*

An important part of the Nazi Party's ideal woman propoganda was the image of the farmer's wife as "Mother Germany." She was the portrayal of the "natural" beauty idea, strong and hard-working, wearing the traditional dirndl. By this time, the dirndl was not worn much anymore, and the propoganda promoted its resurrection. It was considered an expression of Aryan character, and held up as an example of culturally and racially pure clothing. (Guenther, 2004)

Books, pamphlets, and photo essays were published and classes and lectures were held, espousing the virtues of this traditional dress. Women from the rural areas were especially encouraged to return to this traditional style of clothing and reject modern and international fashion fads. However, this has proven to be quite difficult for them, as their clothes were utilitarian, made to protect, not decorate. They also rarely owned more than three dresses,

which made it even less likely they would be able or willing to invest in a new dirndl. (Guenther, 2004)

#### **6.4 The uniform**

In opposition to the traditional dirndl dress stood the uniform of the urban German woman. The uniform reflected the Nazi Party's love of militarization and organization. It also represented the erasure of social distinctions, which was one of the Nazi Party's promised goals. Different uniforms were designed for different organizations and ranks. Cosmetics were once again deemed unnecessary as young women glowed with health and love of their country. (Guenther, 2004; Kravetz 2019)

These uniforms were inviting to girls since they served as evidence of belonging. The price was rather steep for that time, but the Nazi Party nonetheless promoted it as a tool to convey egalitarianism and dispel class distinctions. (Guenther, 2004)

### **7. Women in film**

Nazi war propaganda took many forms, with one of them being film. Women in film usually have the role of romantic interests yet, in film set during the war, they take on a different role. It was understood that their husbands might be called up to battle, and as such they must be prepared to take their place in everyday life and be prepared for the possibility of loving loved ones. Ordinary women are to hide their feelings and accept that life must go on despite its hardships. (Garden, 2016)

A common theme in war films was the concept of extreme sacrifices expected of women civilians, whether it was their honor, life, or something else. Self-sacrifice was often touted, not just in film, as something women must do to aid their country or their families. Moreover, the films served as a teaching tool, providing guidance to women, and showing them how they should support their husbands and their country – firstly by bearing more children and later by assuming the task of men after they had gone to war. (Brashler, 2015; Garden, 2016)

Women were also shown as taking up roles usually reserved for men and providing invaluable contribution to the war effort. Such characters often portrayed camaraderie between characters of different social classes which helped them deal with the setbacks in life. (Garden, 2016)

Lastly, while the Allied films frequently presented female spies operating as government agents, saboteurs, or Resistance leaders, in German films they would almost always be shown working against Germany. (Garden, 2016)

## 8. Conclusion

As shown in the chapters before, Nazi propaganda for women seemed to have one main goal in mind: motherhood. Women were taught and advertised to throughout their whole lives on motherhood being their primary purpose and everything else falling by the wayside. This propaganda had a twofold purpose, replenishing the population lost due to failing birthrates and securing pure, Aryan children. Keeping women in their homes kept them out of the public and political life as well.

In a circular fashion, women went from being wives and mothers, to being independent as a “New Woman” at the beginning of the twentieth century, back to being wives and mothers through the propaganda of the Nazi regime. Every aspect of their lives, from their appearance and health, to their education and occupation was subjected to being molded to the wishes of the regime.

As much as the Nazi propaganda machine was focused on the war and the duties of men, it dedicated its time to the duties of women and children as well, spreading the message of equal contribution. This message served to keep the power in the arms of men and convince women it is not a part of life they were meant to participate in. Paradoxically, it served to both lift women up and keep them down.

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