

## NAZI POLICIES TOWARDS WOMEN

### 1. What was the Nazi view on the role of women?

- The Nazis believed in the idea of 'separate spheres' for men and women.
- Whereas men were expected to work and fight for the Reich, women were expected to work and fight for the family.
- The attitude towards women was summarised by the slogan Kinder, Kirche, Kuche (children, church, kitchen).
- This policy had the support of churches and traditional rural groups, but ran contrary to ideas of female emancipation - women had been given the vote in and got careers in the Weimar period.

#### Discussion points:

Should men and women have different roles or not? Are men and women the same? If not, what are the respects in which they are different (beyond the obvious!)?

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#### Task: Read the following speech which Hitler delivered at the Nuremberg rally on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1934 and answer the questions which follow.

"If one says that man's world is the State, his struggle, his readiness to devote his powers to the service of the community, one might be tempted to say that the world of women is a smaller world. For her world is her husband, her family, her children, and her house. But where would the greater world be if there were no one to care for the small world? How could the greater world survive if there were no one to care for the small world? How could the greater world survive if there were none to make the cares of the smaller world the content of their lives?...Providence has entrusted to women the cares of that world which is peculiarly her own, and only on the basis of this smaller world can the man's world be formed and built up. These two worlds are never in conflict. They are complementary to each other, they belong together as man and woman belong together...Every child that a woman brings into the world is a battle, a battle waged for the existence of her people. Man and woman must therefore mutually value and respect each other when they see that each performs the task which nature and providence have ordained. And from this separation of the functions of each there will necessarily result this mutual respect...Woman, because she springs from that root which is the prime cause of life, is also the most stable element in the maintenance of a people. She it is who in the last resort has the infallible sense for all that is necessary if a race is not to perish, for it will be her children who will be the first victims of that disaster. Man is often far too mentally unstable to find his way immediately to these fundamental truths...We National Socialists have for many years protested against bringing women into political life; that life is in our eyes unworthy of her..."

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1. How would you define the word 'sexist'?
2. How might Hitler's views on women be described as being 'sexist'?
3. How do you think Hitler would respond to these charges?

## 2. Why did Hitler have these policies?

- **Ideological:** Hitler's belief in a peasant-based Volksgemeinschaft involved the rejection of 'modern' and 'Bolshevik' ideas about female emancipation.
- **Pragmatic:** The birth rate was declining steadily in Germany. This meant that it would be impossible to conquer and populate lands in the east – a policy which he considered essential for the continued economic growth of the Reich.

### Key Point:

- Like many of Hitler's policies, the outbreak of war had a crucial impact on his policy towards women.
- Before the war, he was keen to keep them out of work and having babies to provide soldiers for the Reich.
- After 1936, re-armament and total war meant that the short-term importance of getting them into the factories to replace men at the front became much more important.
- The need for labor prompted the state to prod women into the workforce (for example, through the Duty Year, the compulsory-service plan for all women) and even into the military itself (the number of female auxiliaries in the German armed forces approached 500,000 by 1945).

## 3. What did Hitler do?

### To reduce the amount of women in employment

- Married women were excluded from the civil service and other professions.
- Employers were encouraged to employ men in favour of women.
- The numbers of women allowed into university was restricted.

### To increase the amount of marriages / births

- Divorce was made easier for childless couples.
- Aryan women were offered an interest free marriage loan;  
The amount to be repaid fell by a quarter with each child born.  
It was only granted if women agreed to stay out of work.
- There were generous welfare payments for mothers.
- Motherhood skills were taught by the "Women's Enterprise" (DFW).
- Medals ("Honour Cross of the German Mother");  
Any women having more than 8 children received a gold medal from Hitler personally.
- Abortion was restricted and the use of birth control for Aryans was condemned.

### To increase the 'quality' of births

- Advice was given on which types of partners women should marry
- 1933 Sterilisation law was passed against all those with a hereditary disease / mental health problems (inc. alcoholism / feeble-mindedness)  
320,000 people sterilised by the Nazis 1933-45
- Lebensborn programme: SS men were offered to fertilise young single women so that they could "donate a baby to the Führer". In an extension of the SS Marriage Order of 1932, the 1936 Lebensborn ordinance prescribed that every SS member should father four children, in or out of wedlock.

### Task:

1. Highlight 5 key facts from this list which you consider particularly important for revision.
2. Produce a poster from EITHER a Nazi OR an anti-Nazi perspective highlighting one of these policies.