



## **A clever housewife knows how to remove a stain - Women's magazines in Nazi Germany**

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## INTRODUCTION

As long as I remember, I have been interested in war history. I have studied political history (and journalism) in two universities and read hundreds of books about the Second World War. Still I don't understand the basic question of it: how was it possible that such a huge, overwhelming war broke out in Europe at the end of the 1930s? To me it seems like quite recently, since my parents were born during the wartime. The war affected almost everybody in Europe, and the scars of it are still among us, both in Germany and in Finland.

How could it happen that the fragile democracy of the Weimar Republic turned into a Nazi killing machine? And was it just the men that took part in the acts of war and the Nazi Party, as is usually pictured in the history books? What was the role of German women in the Third Reich - were they just silent bystanders or actually active perpetrators? I had the privilege to examine these questions for almost a year at the Freie Universität in Berlin, by attending lectures and reading books in the university library.

I agree with writer Christa Wolf that there are "rows of book spines in the libraries" about the Nazi era which "are no longer measured in yards, but in miles". And yet: "The war is still unexplained, insufficiently discussed." It is incomprehensible how *little* we still know about the Second World War. Many topics and angles seem to have been avoided in the studies. "We have agreed to write about a certain aspect of the war", Wolf continues. The contribution of women in the war was for a long time such an untold history. (Martin 1993, 13)

It is apparent in the light of recent studies that the role of women in Nazi Germany was more significant than has been believed before. In this respect it really makes sense what historian Wendy Lower (2013, 14) has stated: "The systems that make mass murder possible would not function without the broad participation of society." In other words, National Socialism would not have functioned and reached its large extension without the contribution of women.

Wendy Lower (2013, 203) has also noted that many stories of the wartime and of female witnesses have come out only recently. There are at least two reasons for this. The historians have traditionally concentrated on male war history, and the experiences of women have often been underrated. For the second, many elderly women have been willing to share their memories only now, at the end of their lives - partly, because they have earlier been ashamed of them. Also, according to Lower, we will never know *all* there is to know about Nazism, the Second World War and the Holocaust. At least we have to research more.

In this research I try to study the participation of women in the Third Reich by reading German women's magazines. The journals were very popular during the whole Nazi era 1933-1945, and especially after the economic upturn in Germany at the end of the 1930s. Thus the magazines were an important part of the everyday life of women. But in what way did the journals reflect the society and the role of women in it? How much propaganda was there in the wartime magazines? Is it also possible to read the women's magazines "between the lines" and find subtle propaganda? On the other hand, how many completely neutral, even escapist stories did the periodicals offer?

After some hesitation I decided to focus mainly on the women's magazine NS-Frauenwarte. It had the status of the only Nazi Party approved magazine for women, and it was by far the most popular women's journal in the Third Reich with more than 1,4 million readers. It has even been considered as the prototype of a women's magazine in the Nazi era (Wittfeld 2014, 71-72), which of course sounds quite unpleasant. But I agree with historian Jill Stephenson (1975, 7), who has pointed out that one cannot defend the Nazis, but this should not place a taboo on analysing parts of the Nazi system - to explain it is not to justify it.

The NS-Frauenwarte is interesting not only because it was the "official" women's magazine in Nazi Germany but also because of the content of it. What surprised

me at first was how *few* political and propaganda-based articles it actually had. Frauenwarte contained a lot of neutral and innocent (or seemingly innocent) material, like recipes, fashion, sewing patterns and advice columns. There was even pure entertainment, like movie reviews and light short stories. So, partly it had similar content that is still published in the women's magazines even today.

What makes the NS-Frauenwarte also interesting is that it was a surprisingly well-edited journal. The articles were well-written and the layout was professional. The professor of history Karl Christian Führer, who is among the few who have researched the popular magazines in Nazi Germany, also agrees with this view (2016). The Nazis were skilled communicators and certainly paid an effort to the Frauenwarte.

My study will proceed in the following order: In the beginning I will articulate the fact that the war history of women has been mostly silent history. Also the wartime women's magazines have been under-researched. Next, I will examine the role and position of women in the Third Reich, in order to place the magazines in a historical context. The Nazis praised motherhood and family, and also women's contribution to the war effort. The ideal woman shown in the German women's journals was practical and prudent, natural and healthy-looking, unlike the Hollywood film stars.

Next, I will introduce the Nazi women's organisations, since the NS-Frauenschaft organisation was in charge of the NS-Frauenwarte magazine. I will tell about the establishment of the Frauenwarte and about the media field under the Nazi regime, also in terms of propaganda and censorship. Additionally, entertainment had an important role in Nazi Germany. Thus, I will view the women's magazines as a form of propaganda and pleasure. I will also report the surprising fact that many people actually enjoyed their lives in Nazi Germany, due to different reasons.

Finally I will take a closer look at the content of the NS-Frauenwarte, both the

political and the unpolitical articles. In the end of the study I will also introduce the Finnish women's magazine Kotiliesi during the wartime. Surprisingly enough I found a lot of similarities between the Frauenwarte and the Kotiliesi.

## **1. WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE WAR HAS BEEN SILENT HISTORY**

It has only been noticed during the last decades, that the role of women in many areas of history has been kept quiet about. Women's history has been silent history. Some historians have even begun to talk about *herstory* instead of history, so male-dominated history has traditionally been.

This has been very much the case with war history. The history of the Second World War has been viewed as a male phenomenon, that is, something about and for men - even though it was as much a war against women civilians as it was against male combatants. "World War II was a new kind of war experience for women. The war against the civilian population became a strategic goal in itself", comments historian Elaine Martin (1993,12-13). Also, the women contributed powerfully to the war efforts.

Finally, at the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s journal articles and books began to appear that focused exclusively on women in the war and women in the Third Reich. Still, there has not been enough research, and some fields of war history are totally or partly under-researched. Martin (1993, 13-15) also reminds that literature and studies by women have been avoided by the canon-makers.

Like the studies of war history in general, have the studies of Nazi Germany focused on men. As historian Wendy Lower (2013, 11-14) points incisively out: "Just as the agency of women in history more generally is under-appreciated, here too the agency of women in the crimes of the Third Reich has not been fully

elaborated and explained.” She continues: “Nearly all histories of the Holocaust leave out half of those who populated that society, as if women’s history happens somewhere else. It is an illogical approach and puzzling omission.”

Historian Claudia Koonz (1991, 15-22) agrees with this view. Half of the Germans who made dictatorship, war, and genocide possible have largely escaped observation. Also according to researcher Martin Klaus (1983, 10-11) the role of women and girls in the war, in German fascism and in National Socialist organisations was left to the edges of historical research and ignored for a long time. And yet many of these women are still alive - they form one generation of German women, mothers and grandmothers.

Historian Marion Wittfeld (2014, 86) confirms that gender-specific approach is particularly important in the study of the Nazi era, because it will reveal new information about the wartime.

Also, it was thought for long that the role of women in the Third Reich was just a minor one. Women were seen as victims of the war, or as heroic “Trümmerfrauen”. (“Trümmerfrauen”, the “rubble women” were the thousands of women who shoveled away the ruins of the houses in Germany right after the war. There are still many statues and plaques for these women all around Germany.) “In the aftermath of the war, the ordinary German woman was depicted popularly as the heroine who had to clean up the mess of Germany’s shameful past, the victim of marauding Red Army rapists. This sympathetic image of the war time women has largely remained”, writes Wendy Lower (2013, 10-11).

Lower (2013, 10-11) has tried to demystify the innocent role of the German women. For her it is a cliché that the women in Nazi Germany were totally unpolitical - on the contrary: “Among the myths of the post-war period was that of the apolitical woman. After the war many women testified in court or explained in oral histories that they were ‘just’ organising things in the office. They failed to see - or perhaps



preferred not to see - how their seemingly small contribution to everyday operations in the government added up to a genocidal system.”

After the war the German women were consequently victimised, not usually accused for their criminal agency. However, the historians of today have come to the conclusion that it is impossible that the entire population of German women (almost forty million in 1939) could be considered a victim group. German mothers and wives were clearly not just victims. (Bock 1998, 93; Lower 2013, 11)

The Nazis thought that women's place was at home or at service of the war industry - and not to take part in the politics. Nevertheless, the German women were active participators in the Nazi regime. According to historian Gisela Bock (1998, 93) it is a wrong assumption that the ordinary German women, lacking power because of male domination, were not responsible for the dictatorship and crimes. Some scholars even say that exactly this made them perpetrators - women supported men's racist activities by focusing on motherhood and family.

Also the history of entertainment in Nazi Germany has lacked research. Only during the past couple of decades have historians begun to study the role of entertainment, leisure and consumption during the war. They all had an important significance - they satisfied the human desire for fun, and were also a form of propaganda. Films, radio, music, sports, leisure organisations and tourism (and even smoking) during the Nazi era have been recently researched - but only to some extent. More studies are still needed. (Swett, Ross and d'Almeida 2011, 2-5; Wiesen 2011, 19)

Professors of history Pamela E. Swett, Corey Ross and Fabrice d'Almeida (2011, 2-5) have a good point to this. According to them it is quite understandable that the theme of entertainment has not been central in the historiography of the Third Reich. Remembering the brutal Nazi crimes it has seemed a bit trivial to ask about how Germans enjoyed themselves during the war, the professors admit. On the

other hand, entertainment and pleasure are not *just* amusements and leisure for their own sake but have social and political functions, and in this respect they are well worth to study.

The same applies to women's magazines of the Nazi period. They have been underestimated, partly because the study has seemed somehow trivial (and partly perhaps, because they concern women's history). They should not be forgotten, since the popular magazines had a huge amount of readers and thus were a powerful media.

"They have attracted little scholarly attention, some are even totally forgotten. This neglect is surprising. Popular magazines clearly merit close attention when we address the history of pleasure and its political and social functions in the Third Reich", writes historian Karl Christian Führer (2011, 132). According to him (2011, 148-149) the magazines provide a rich source for analysing both Nazi policy on media and popular culture - a source which should be much more thoroughly investigated.

As the studies of the women's magazines in Nazi Germany are limited, it was quite challenging to find enough research material for this work. I have tried my best to draw some conclusions out of the material.

## **2. GERMAN WOMEN DURING THE NAZI ERA**

### **2.1 WOMEN WERE LESS ACTIVE THAN MEN IN THE NAZI MOVEMENT**

To understand better the women's magazines of the Nazi period, we should first take a look at the position and role of women in the Third Reich.

As historian Gisela Bock (1998, 85 and 94) interestingly points out the statistics, in

1939 there were more than 35 million women in National Socialist Germany (Wendy Lower talks even about almost 40 million women), 18 million of them were married. In the same year 37 percent of the employed were women, and 53 percent of those women were employed in factories, agriculture, and other jobs.

“Actually the number of women in the labor force increased, throughout the Nazi period the employment rate among women was higher in Germany than in most other western countries. Also the proportion of female university students and women in the professions increased”, Bock (1998, 95) describes.

This was not the case in the beginning of the Nazi time. At first Nazis had even campaigns against employed married women and took steps to reduce the academic content of girls' school curricula. But in the later 1930s women were given the opportunity to work and to study, whether they were married or single - the motive was the serving of the needs of the Nazi State. (Stephenson 1975, 196-197)

The professional occupations to which women were most suited, in the Nazi view, were those which had a direct practical application, like teaching professions. Also those in medicine like nursing were thought to be useful, and nursing naturally had particular importance during the wartime. (In the magazine NS-Frauenwarte was even suggested in 1935 that architecture was a practical occupation and thus quite suitable for women.) (Stephenson 1975, 168-169)

The Weimar republic era had strengthened the position of women in Germany. The relationship of women and the Nazis was more complicated, since the Nazi Party and ideology were utmost male-dominated. During the National Socialist period women played a minor role politically. There were women leaders in the Nazi women's organisations, but they were mostly just figureheads and didn't have much political power in reality. The Nazis even called to abolish the female vote in 1933. On the other hand, young German women were not supporters of the

suffragettes - they actually considered the movement old-fashioned. (Lower 2013, 19-24; University of Heidelberg)

“Of course Nazi rule meant, in a general sense, male domination and female subordination, but the core of Nazi rule was not patriarchy but racism. The Nazi regime attributed greater importance to pursuing racist policies than to keeping women in their traditional sphere. Still gender hierarchy continued to play a prime role in German society at large”, Gisela Bock (1998, 94-96) explains.

How active were women in the Nazi movement then? Fairly active, after all. According to Wendy Lower (2013, 11) one-third of the female population - about 13 million women - were actively engaged in a Nazi Party organisation, and female membership in the Nazi Party increased steadily until the end of the war. (There is also a slightly different opinion to this amount. According to historian Lisa Pine (1997, 72-73) one German woman in every five was a member of a Nazi women's organisation.)

Still, women were actually quite reluctant to join the Nazi women's organisations. “The Party and its women's groups were middle-class in orientation and appeal, but this did not mean that all, or even most, middle-class women were attracted to them. There were enthusiasts, and there were also women who joined because they regarded membership as a useful insurance policy. But many just paid their subscription and were inactive members. Women from the ‘educated classes’ generally held aloof from the women's organisation. German women were, contrary to the popular view, peculiarly resistant to National Socialism, much more resistant than men”, notifies historian Jill Stephenson (1981, 17-18).

Later the same middle-class women who had resisted involvement in the Nazi Party in the 1930s, refused to volunteer for essential war-work. The partial failure to mobilise women to contribute the war effort in Nazi Germany contrasted greatly with the success enjoyed by Germany's enemies. (University of Heidelberg)

It is also a fact that fewer women than men were involved in direct and violent participation in the Holocaust (Bock 1998, 92). However, this does not mean that the women were *not* active in the Third Reich. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the German women were hardly just victims of the war.

“Most German women complied with Nazi rule as bystanders or, less passively, as followers. A minority were victims and a smaller minority were resisters or rescuers. A larger and more powerful minority, including women of all social classes, actively participated in racist and genocidal policies”, writes Gisela Bock (1998, 91).

Jill Stephenson (1975, 196) has another interesting point of view to this: Men monopolised positions of power in the Nazi State, but the great mass of men was excluded in the same way as women. And male and female opponents and victims of Nazi racist policies were discriminated against and persecuted on an equal basis. (According to Bock (1998, 90) the proportion of women among all victims varies from 9 to 20 percent.)

## **2.2 GLORIFICATION OF MOTHERHOOD AND NATURAL BEAUTY**

German historian Martin Klaus (1983, 48) describes that the ideal girl of the Nazi era was “an Aryan, who knew the National Socialist values and norms, was committed to work for the society, was sporty, took care of her body and health, was decent, clean and properly dressed, and was independent in her duties, especially in her household duties. Future desires for her were marriage and motherhood.”

The Nazis idealised motherhood. It had an important role in the Nazi society. Or, to be precise, all these together: motherhood, children, family, and home. “The *kinderreich* family was the Nazi ideal. Family issues formed a substantial part of

National Socialist education, socialisation and propaganda”, notes Lisa Pine (1997, 179-181).

Also according to Stephenson (1975, 191) family was the essential basic unit of the German society, to be maintained and protected by every possible means. On the other hand, the Nazi glorification of women as mothers and housewives concerned mostly middle-class or upper-class women - working class women could not quit their jobs to be housewives, reminds historian Leila J. Rupp (1978, 44-45).

The glorification of motherhood could be seen in several contexts. After the outbreak of the war in 1939, Rudolf Hess, the deputy head of the Nazi Party, opened an exhibition honouring the German woman as wife and mother, an exhibition that toured the Reich. And as late as 1944, local sections of the Party held elaborate celebrations to honour Germany's mothers on Mother's Day. The Party did also sponsor slide shows on women's contributions to the war effort. (Rupp 1978, 108)

The Nazis turned Mother's Day into a festival of national celebration. In 1933 it was declared an official holiday. The Mother's Day issues of the NS-Frauewart magazine are most astonishing to read - page after page glorification of the German women and their achievements. Still in 1944 the Mother's Day edition is full of smiling, satisfied mothers, women with cute babies, photos with newly-combed children. “Mothers hold up the nation” and “The company of children makes you happy” are the main slogans.



The German mothers had never been valued like this before. Some scholars even speak about “the Nazi motherhood cult”. Adolf Hitler proclaimed that mothers were

the most important citizens. In Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* was introduced the idea of the traditional "three K's" for women: *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* (nursery, kitchen, church). The aim was to return to the large family of the later nineteenth century, to the high birth rate of that period. Mothers, who had at least four or more children, received the Cross of Honor, *Mutterkreuz*. Families with several children got also financial support from the state. Also breastfeeding was rewarded, and midwifery as a profession exploded. What counted most was the number of (healthy) Aryan babies. (Lower 2013, 23-30; Pine 1997, 179-181; Stephenson 1975, 48-49)

Thus, the Third Reich's aggressive population policy encouraged "racially pure" women to bear as many children as possible - with the agenda of increasing the population. The 1936 Lebensborn ordinance prescribed that every SS member should have four children, in or out of wedlock. The state also encouraged matrimony through marriage loans and increased punishments for abortion. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Despite all the propaganda for motherhood, it did not show the results that the Nazi regime hoped for. After the year 1935 birth rate in Germany went down and divorces increased. Unlike was expected, the women were not constantly pregnant. (Lower 2013, 23-30) (Already in the 1920s, Germany had the lowest birth rate in Europe. Women were more willing to work than give birth to children.)

As the war went on, the more the propaganda praised the courage of women. The message was: to send one's husband or son to war, to face terrors of the air raids, to bring up children alone - all this required tremendous courage. Girls were taught to embrace the role of mother and obedient wife at school. However, later on the Nazis partly abandoned the domestic ideal for women. The need for labor forced the state to encourage women into the workforce and even into military duties. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Gradually women were encouraged to be both mothers and workers for the war

effort. The Nazi propaganda compared the situation of a woman working in a factory to that of the soldier. Women in the factories were fulfilling their duty, just as soldiers fulfilled theirs at the front. A new feature was also the image of a young athlete-worker. Both the ideal of a married woman and the ideal of an athletic young woman prevailed until the end of the war. The ideal Nazi woman was not helpless but strong, vigorous, and able to do hard physical work. (Rupp 1978, 44-45 and 129-135)

As such, the praise for women during the wartime is a well-known and typical phenomenon in many countries. According to Rupp (1978, 66) the American magazine *Life* paid intentionally tribute to the American housewife just before the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. "Much of this kind of glorification of women's role as mother and housewife appeared in women's magazines", Rupp verifies.

Even Soviet women's magazines, like the 1914 established magazine *Rabotnitsa*, created an image of a physically strong, rational and heroic woman, who took care of her family and also contributed to society. In the articles of the *Rabotnitsa* women were described as capable for demanding war tasks, and their physical and spiritual parity to men was manifested. (In the Soviet Union women took part in the actual acts of war, so it was justifiable that the image of an ideal woman became quite masculine.) (Aunila 2014)

Concerning the appearance of women, for Nazis the ideal woman was natural, and she did not use much cosmetics. Make-up industry was seen, again, as a Jewish plot. "The Nazis had their own female aesthetic. Beauty was a product of a healthy diet and athleticism, not of cosmetics. German women were not supposed to paint their fingernails, wear lipstick, dye their hair or be too thin. Nazi leaders condemned the entire cosmetics boom of the 1920s as Jewish commerce, as cheapening of German femininity", Lower (2013, 25-26) describes. This could also be noticed in the women's magazines of this era.



The Nazi Party's puritans even conducted a vigorous campaign against cosmetics like lipstick and painted nails. In the Nazi view the women's magazines were not supposed to write about luxury and film divas - the NS-Frauenwarte glorified the natural beauty of the women. The magazines of Nazi Germany usually tried to avoid anything that might cause moral offence, like sex and glamour. The Nazis also condemned both tobacco and alcohol. In some cafés were posters with the slogan: "The German woman does not smoke." (Frei and Schmitz 1989, 71; Führer 2011, 141; Stephenson 1975, 190-191)

The Nazis condemned also foreign influences - of Paris, London and the United States - in women's clothing. Foreign styles were seen as decadent, unpatriotic and morally risky. Because of this, the Nazis even made attempts to create their own "German style". The German Fashion Bureau was opened in Berlin in the spring of 1933, under the honorary presidency of Magda Goebbels (wife of Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels). And yet, the women's magazines continued to publish fashion articles featuring clothes which were considered fashionable in Paris and London. Hence, the idea of "German style" for German women was eventually dismissed. (Stephenson 1975, 190-191)

## **2.3 NATIONAL SOCIALIST WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS**

According to Gisela Bock (1998, 91) the Nazis had a "frenetic drive" to organise the Germans - besides for example the SS there were the women's leagues and the BDM, Der Bund Deutscher Mädel (The League of German Girls).

Actually the possibilities for women were not so many. Women who wished to participate in any kind of organisational life had to join either the NS-Frauenschaft (the National Socialist Women's League) or the Deutsches Frauenwerk (the Association for German Women). The NS-Frauenschaft was founded in 1931 as a fusion of several nationalist and National Socialist women's associations. By 1941

the number of members of these two organisations had risen to approximately 6 million. (Pine 1997, 72-73) The organisations were under the NSDAP's (the Nazi Party) direct control.

As was explained earlier, the Nazi leadership regarded the training of women for their household and familial duties highly important. The NS-Frauenschaft organisation played a major role in this educational aim. The Frauenschaft had its own school in Berlin, Hochschule der Frau. The school held regular ten-day courses, where women learned about the German heritage, health issues etc. The members of the organisation were obliged to attend a monthly meeting, *Pflichtabend*, to disseminate National Socialist ideology. Emphasis was on family and childcare. So called Mother schools were also arranged in the working class areas, partly for propaganda reasons: to keep women away from the influence of communism. (Pine 1997, 72-73)

Moreover, the Frauenschaft had many other activities. The organisation for example put up exhibitions of "women's work", collected scrap metal and other materials, and arranged welcoming parties in different cities for important Party members (Stephenson 1981, 155).

Reichsfrauenführerin Gertrud Scholtz-Klink was head of the women's organisations. She urged the women to combine housework and war work. It turned out to be more difficult than she had expected. In 1940 Scholtz-Klink spoke frankly to the leaders of the Frauenschaft, explaining the failure of voluntary registration. She reported that "middle layer of women sat tight in their middle-class happiness and resisted the call". To make it easier for the women to volunteer, Scholtz-Klink even suggested that men could warm up their food themselves at home without losing a shred of their dignity. She reminded that thousands of soldiers did it every day without losing their masculinity. (Rupp 1978, 105-107)

Der Bund Deutscher Mädel (BDM) was the only female youth organisation in Nazi

Germany. It was the girls' wing of the boys' youth movement, the Hitlerjugend. BDM was established already in 1930, but it did not attract a mass following until the Nazis seized the power in 1933. After 1936 membership in the BDM became compulsory for girls over 10 years old. (Lower 2013, 23) In the beginning the aim of the BDM was educational: to prepare German girls for their future roles as mothers, no matter what their social class was (Pine 1997, 79-87).

However, during the Nazi era the role of women and girls changed, since the women's labor input was also needed for the nation's survival battle. Every man and woman had a patriotic duty, *Wehrpflicht*, to work for Germany and for the Führer. Motherhood came on the side. So the aim of the BDM became to be an active organisation and community with values like "loyalty, honour, honesty, and purity". (Klaus 1983, 42-44; Stephenson 1975, 196) As BDM was part of the Hitlerjugend (the Hitler Youth), most of the girls' activities actually resembled those of boys, for example sports activities (Bock 1998, 89).

The Nazi women's organisations needed their own information channels. The NS-Frauenschaft published three periodicals, of which the most famous and prominent one was the magazine *NS-Frauenwarte*. Also the girls' organisation BDM had its own magazine, which was called *Das Deutsche Mädel*. As we will see later, the *NS-Frauenwarte* had only a few political articles and only positive propaganda, so in practice it was not solely an advocate for the NS-Frauenschaft. (Still, Reichsfrauenführerin Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, the head of the women's organisations, had frequently her portraits and pamphlets in the magazine.)



The *NS-Frauenwarte* was to a large extent a "women's magazine" on the American model, with patterns for sewing, fashion, recipes, reader competitions, and excerpts from novels. The magazine *Das Deutsche Mädel*, instead, was more

political and projected an image of a sporty, strong, healthy, capable, active German woman. "The image of women as strong and athletic is most apparent in publications of the Labor Service and the BDM. The contrast between the NS-Frauenwarte and Das Deutsche Mädel, the journal of the BDM, is striking", writes Leila J. Rupp (1978, 44-45).

### **3. ENTERTAINMENT AND JOY OF LIFE IN THE THIRD REICH**

What also interests me, and what has often been silent about, is that many people actually enjoyed their lives in Nazi Germany. There are several studies in which Germans talk about their childhood and youth in the Third Reich as a wonderful time. For example researcher Martin Klaus (1983, 9-11) has studied memoirs and private writings, such as diaries or letters, of Germans who have lived during the wartime. He has also interviewed some of these people. Many of them told that they had happy days in the 1930s - and some even confessed that it was the best time of their lives ever.

Also Wendy Lower (2013, 9-10) writes about German women, who had "good memories of what was supposed to be a bad time". According to Lower, in Nazi Germany there were "ample rations, first-time romances, servants at one's disposal, nice villas, late-night parties and plenty of land. Germany's future seemed limitless, and the country reigned over Europe. For many women (and men), in fact, this time before Germany's military defeat marked a high point of their lives". How can one explain this? How is it possible to live a satisfying life in a totalitarian society with continual acts of terror?

Professors Pamela E. Swett, Corey Ross and Fabrice d'Almeida (2011, 1-15) have an interesting perspective to this. They state that although Nazi Germany is usually (and with good reason) associated with pain, fear and violence, also pleasure had an important role in the Third Reich. More than any other representatives of a

dictatorship in the 20th century the Nazis talked about “Freude”, which combined a sense of pleasure, happiness and joy. According to the professors pleasure and power were inseparable for the Nazis, even mutually reinforcing.

“Strength came through joy and joy through strength. A contented people was a more productive and thus stronger people; and only a strong people could expect to achieve lasting contentment in the eternal struggle between the races. Pleasure in the Third Reich was both a means and an end”, the professors write. They also continue: “The Nazis understood better than most political movements of the day how to channel emotions for the purpose of mobilisation, largely through the accumulation of small pleasures and satisfactions that created a diffuse sense of well-being and group cohesion.”

Thus it is not a wonder that the Nazis also put great effort on the women’s magazines. The popular journals offered “small pleasures”. The magazines may also be seen as a larger phenomenon than their actual content indicates. They were entertainment and in this respect reflected the surrounding society and its seek for pleasure - the journals offered pleasure in a way that helped the purposes of the Nazi regime (Führer 2011, 132).

The Nazis invested heavily in different types of entertainment. They employed film, music and radio (and even television!) both to propagate their ideological vision and to give the public familiar forms of satisfaction. (Wiesen 2011, 19) The seek for pleasure and joy could even be seen in the names of organisations. The National Socialist trade union organisation *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, DAF (The German Labour Front) had a large sub-organisation called *Kraft durch Freude*, KdF (Strength through Joy). (Rupp 1978, 129-132) The state-operated leisure organisation offered the workers cheap or free holidays and subsidised sporting facilities.

The desire for entertainment of the Nazis reached even strange and dark spheres: at the concentration camps the prisoners were supported (or forced) to perform,

sing and play music for the SS-guards and in some cases also for the fellow prisoners. Historian Claudia Koonz (1991, 467) has interviewed a survivor of the Holocaust. She described how the Nazis were obsessed with music in Auschwitz. "Those who could sing or dance had to play in the orchestra or entertain the SS. They always wanted to have fun", the survivor recalled.

According to professors Swett, Ross and d'Almeida and professor Gisela Bock (2016) the pre-war years of the Third Reich have often been remembered as "good times" or "happier times" sandwiched between the depression and the Second World War. The Germans enjoyed the economic upturn, high employment rates and rising standard of living - people had finally more money, they had pleasures and entertainment. The country was no more in a state of confuse, there was discipline and order. What more can one actually want, many Germans thought. And many learned to look away, closing their eyes from the horrors of the Nazi regime. Some scholars have talked about how people in Hitler's Germany were "taught to look the other way".

This was also the case with the women's magazines. "In a broader sense Nazi Germany's popular magazines were very much part of this 'training to look away'. The pleasures they offered were therefore anything but innocent and harmless", historian Karl Christian Führer (2011, 148) notifies.

By reading the women's journals of the Nazi years it is actually quite easy to understand the mechanism of the "looking away". In these magazines the world seems simple and convenient; pretty women smile, home is clean, clothes are nice and practical, cute children play with dolls, cooking is easy. There seems to be no task that German women cannot beat. In the evening housewives can relax and read the escapist short stories. The war is far away, the Nazi prisons and concentration camps seem to be non-existing.

Indeed, many Germans lived quite ordinary life even during the Third Reich. This

can also be seen in the consumption patterns. S. Jonathan Wiesen (2011, 19) describes the era like this: "The recent interest in mass consumption during the Nazi years shows that daily life and pleasure-seeking in the Third Reich was still about working, shopping and finding diversions. People went about their daily business - many aspects of life remained 'normal'."

Wendy Lower (2013, 10) is more straightforward, she considers the German women selfish. According to her the women kept mostly silent about the Nazi terror and the victims of the Holocaust. Instead they were "immersed in their own plans, getting married, wanting respectable occupations and pay cheques. They wanted to have friends, nice clothes; they wanted to travel, to experience more freedom of action. But when they admired themselves in their new Red Cross uniforms, or proudly displayed their certificates for completing a childcare course sponsored by the Nazi Party or celebrated their new typing job in a Gestapo office, they became part of the Nazi regime, intentionally or not."

#### **4. GERMAN MEDIA FIELD UNDER THE NAZI REGIME**

In this chapter I will examine Germany's media field and popular magazines after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. I start with the most crucial point: magazines were an important part of everyday life in Nazi Germany. They had millions of readers and enjoyed wide popularity. Thus they were a major part of the Nazi propaganda machine. Women's magazines were a form of entertainment, pleasure and propaganda beside movies and radio programs.

"Looking at statistical findings on the use of mass media in the Third Reich, German society during the 1930s must be regarded as a society of readers, despite increasing audiences for the cinema and the radio", observes historian Führer (2007 and 2011, 132-137).

All the print media was tightly under the authority of the Nazis - either visibly or more behind the scenes. Right after 1933 the Nazis stopped printing all those newspapers and magazines they didn't approve. The "unpleasant" papers and publishing houses were either bought by the Nazis or turned down. However, most of the German print media continued to be published even during the Nazi time - until the war broke out and shortage of paper made restrictions to the publishing. This was the case with the women's magazines, too. Almost all of them stayed on the market also after 1933. The Nazis established only a few new magazines, like the NS-Frauenwarte. (Frei and Schmitz 1989, 72; Wittfeld 2014, 71-73)

So, during the Nazi era part of the journals were directly party-related, but majority was published by private publishing houses, just like before. However, all the print media was controlled by the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, RMVP (*Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* or shorter *Propagandaministerium*). (Wittfeld 2014, 71-72) It supervised and regulated the culture and mass media of Nazi Germany.

The Ministry of Propaganda distributed strict orders for the press in matters of content. The orders were directed to the chief editors and were confidential. The RMVP gave also orders that the editors of the magazines should be German citizens, over 21 years old, with Aryan heritage and reliable political background. All the orders didn't concern all the papers and magazines. When the war started in September 1939, the women's magazines got instructions to strengthen a peaceful and secure atmosphere, and to emphasize the duties of women. Such duties were for example keeping up the good spirit at home, and aiming to be the "soldiers of the homefront". (Führer 2011, 149; Wittfeld 2014, 73-86)

The women's magazines were supposed to be unpolitical and offer moments for relaxing, but also to motivate women to support the war effort. According to the RMVP the women's journals should contain for example simple sewing patterns, recipes and practical advice for how to be an economical and sparing housewife.



The propaganda in the magazines was to be subtle, and the magazines were supposed to give an “unkriegerisch” feeling for the readers. Sometimes the orders were even quite precise. In summer 1941 there was a shortage of nylon stockings, so the RMVP advised the periodicals to show that bare legs could look chic and modern! In general, the women's magazines did have very little straightforward propaganda or antisemitism. (Wittfeld 2014, 73-86)

Historian Marion Wittfeld (2014, 86) points out that gender had an important significance in the orders of the Ministry of Propaganda. “The gender-specific orders showed that also gender was a crucial factor in the Nazi propaganda”, she describes.

What is also notable, is that the women's magazines were not censored like the wartime German newspapers. Compared to the highly censored daily newspapers, the journals were less tightly controlled. They enjoyed more leeway. Surprisingly, there maintained some pockets of freedom in the Third Reich (Wiesen 2011, 32). On the other hand, the content of the women's magazines was so seemingly harmless that perhaps the authorities did not have so much need for censorship. Or, one could say, the magazines censored themselves. Still they were very much part of the Nazi propaganda machine, they “breathed the air of the state”. (Führer 2011, 146)

With few exceptions all the magazines were published in Berlin. According to Führer (2011, 134-136 and 2016) the Nazi regime collected precise data about the circulation figures of the popular magazines. However, the figures are only available until the war. After 1939 there are no circulation figures for any journal or newspaper; the figures seem to have been destroyed during or after the war. In 1934 there were all in all more than 6000 different journals in Germany, but the vast majority of these achieved only minor circulation figures. Yet the leading group of the high-selling periodicals (approximately 20 magazines) had a combined circulation of nearly 10 million distributed copies.

At the same time the daily newspapers sold more than 14 million copies per issue, so magazines and journals were close behind. All together this is a huge number, and it is reasonable to say that the print media was a major media force in the Third Reich. All newspapers and magazines had moderate prices, which helped to secure a wide readership.

The German magazine readers also had a unique feature, “the reading circles”, *Lesezirkeln*. The members of the circles could have journals for rental for a certain length of time. Each magazine circulated from hand to hand and had dozens of readers. The newer the magazine was, the higher was the rental cost. Older journals could be read cheaper. So Germans often read magazines that they had not actually bought. In this respect the circulation figures do not even give the right picture of the popularity of the magazines. (Führer 2011, 134-136)

Historian Führer (2011, 137-141) divides the German journals into four categories: pictorial magazines, family magazines, radio program guides, and women’s magazines. In practice they all had much in common and were edited on the basis of an only slightly varied formula mixing entertainment, advice and non-fiction reporting.

At the end of the 1930s the pictorial magazine *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung BIZ* was the leader among popular magazines (1,5 million sold copies in 1939). Among women’s magazines the most popular ones were *Das Blatt der Hausfrau* (more than 600 000 sold copies), *Deutsche Moden-Zeitung* (305 000) and *Modenshau* (295 000). The NS-Frauenwarte had more than 1,4 million subscribers - but the figures are not quite comparative, as we will see in the next chapter.

By the end of the 1930s the circulation figures of almost all magazines rose considerably. Major reason for the rising figures was the quick recovery of Germany’s economy in the 1930s. The NSDAP engineered a highly remarkable

economic upturn after 1933; one could even talk about an “economic miracle”. Rearmament boom led to a shortage of labour and raising wages. Many average Germans finally had more money in their pockets during the period of the Four-Year Plan, starting in 1936. This caused also an increase in media consumption after 1936. (Führer 2011, 137-141)

The magazines greatly profited from the additional spending power of the buying public. For example BIZ sold 1,2 million copies in 1936 and already 1,5 million copies in 1939, as mentioned. Between 1936 and 1939 the magazines actually overtook the daily newspapers in terms of popularity. (Führer 2011, 137-141) According to Führer (2011, 145-146) the increasing circulation figures prove that many Germans were actively seeking “the positive glow” offered by the magazines.

After the war broke out in 1939, a severe shortage of paper and other resources complicated the operation of the magazines in many ways. The shortage of paper forced to close down several journals and to cut down pages in practically all magazines, including the NS-Frauenwarte. As a result of this, after 1940/1941 readers had less and less choice, and by 1943 only a handful of the most prominent journals still existed. On the other hand, this did not decrease the reading of the magazines, on the contrary - those that were still published, became more popular than ever. (Führer 2011, 149; Wittfeld 2014, 72)

## **5. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NS-FRAUENWARTE**

The magazine NS-Frauenwarte was put out by the National Socialist women's organisation NS-Frauenschaft. The organisation published three periodicals: *NS-Frauenwarte*, *Die deutsche Hauswirtschaft*, and *Frauenkultur im deutschen Frauenwerk*. The Frauenwarte was the most prominent one of these. The Frauenschaft had a press and propaganda division, which took responsibility for the journals. It also produced radio programs, distributed films, slides and posters,

and developed a photographic archive. The press and propaganda division was under the command of the Ministry of Propaganda. (Rupp 1978, 105-107)

The NS-Frauenwarte came out biweekly. On the cover of it stood festive words: *Die einzige parteiamtliche Frauenzeitschrift*, the only party-authorized women's magazine. The first issue of the Frauewarte was published in July 1932, and it continued to come out almost till the end of the war. The last number was published early 1945. (Stephenson 1981, 69-70)

Historian Jill Stephenson (1981, 69-70 and 119) describes how the new Nazi women's magazine was waited for a long time from the NS-Frauenschaft. Nevertheless, in the beginning it faced severe difficulties. Apart from its staff's accommodation problems, "in an insect-infested room on the fifth floor of an already cramped building", there were personality clashes between the editors of the magazine and the leaders of the Frauenschaft. The editor in chief was first Elsbeth Unverricht and later, for seemingly long period, Ellen Semmelroth. (Otherwise there is not much information available about the editorial staff.)



When the difficulties were defeated, the circulation figures grew rapidly. In 1934 NS-Frauenwarte had barely 300 000 subscribers. In 1938 the circulation figures were already at 1,2 million, and in 1939 over 1,4 million. This is a huge number, and it made the Frauenwarte the biggest women's magazine in Germany. The next popular women's journal, *Das Blatt der Hausfrau*, was far behind with 600 000 subscribers. (Frei and Schmitz 1989, 72-74; Stephenson 1981, 155)

However, the circulation figures are not quite comparative. After 1933 all National Socialist mass organisations provided members with free copies of their respective official mouthpiece. These journals reached wide circulation despite the fact that they were rarely sold at newspaper stands. This was also the case with the NS-Frauenwarte. (Führer 2011, 134 and 2016) Frei and Schmitz (1989, 72) also mention the low price of the magazine and massive promotion campaigns. Anyhow, with the enormous circulation figures the Frauenwarte was certainly a very powerful publication.

The NS-Frauenwarte had articles on a wide range of topics of interest to women. Regular offerings were patterns for women's and children's clothes and handwork, recipes, competitions for readers, short stories, not to mention many kind of housekeeping advice. The articles included also such topics as the role of women in the Nazi state, the achievements of German female scientists, Germanisation efforts in Poland, the education of youth, the importance of play for children, and claims that Great Britain was responsible for the war, and so on. (Führer 2011, 144-145; Wikipedia)

"During the war Germans favoured magazines that not only provided entertainment and information but also served practical purposes by carrying a broad range of household advice. Editorial matter strongly favoured modesty and common sense, casting a positive glow on domestic chores", historian Karl Christian Führer (2011, 133 and 145) describes. Professors Swett, Ross and d'Almeida (2011, 11) confirm

that the readers were most interested in the advice articles. “It becomes clear that escapism was not the primary form of pleasure taken from the popular magazines.”

According to Führer (2011, 144-145) the focus on practical matter became also the officially promoted editorial norm in Nazi Germany. More glossy and more escapist magazines were condemned by the Nazis. They regarded “painted nails and a movie star smile” as nonsense. Beside the NS-Frauenwarte domestic themes dominated also the other successful women’s magazines, like *Das Blatt der Hausfrau*. The journals did not have much glamour and celebrity gossip but decent and practical content.

Despite containing some propaganda, the NS-Frauenwarte was predominately a women's periodical. As was explained earlier, it was to a large extent a women’s magazine on the American model. This is a notable fact: under Nazism the popular magazines looked very much like they did in other countries and under radically different political systems (Swett, Ross and d’Almeida 2011, 8). Even today most of the women’s journals have similar content and formula.

The Frauenwarte was published for more than ten years, between 1932 and 1945. During the decade it changed from a bit amateurish publication to a professional women’s magazine. Also the look and the layout of the magazine improved during the years. The Nazis were skillful communicators and paid a lot of effort to the magazines. The NS-Frauenwarte was hardly inferior to the international women’s journals of this period. It is hard to admit, but some of the articles are interesting to read even in today’s perspective.

At the end of the war pages were slightly cut down and colour covers disappeared, but otherwise it is quite difficult to notice by reading the Frauenwarte that the war had turned toward the defeat of Germany. I will deal more closely with the content and the propaganda of the Frauenwarte in the coming chapters.



In principal, the propaganda in the NS-Frauenwarte was mostly positive. The magazine glorified German women and mothers. The underlying sentiment was that woman's world was about husband, family, children and home. The only "direct" propaganda that the Frauenwarte practically had, was the presentation of Hitler's birthday and the Memorial Day, *Heldengedenktage*. Political themes did not concern the women's magazines in general in the 1930s and 1940s. Readers of the magazines could avoid all but the most superficial antisemitic propaganda. (Frei and Schmitz 1989, 72-74; Swett, Ross and d'Almeida 2011, 11)

The NS-Frauenwarte also urged women to join the war effort from the beginning of the war (Rupp 1978, 106-107). Despite an enormous campaign in the Frauenwarte women were reluctant to volunteer for war-work, at least in large numbers. "The campaign had little effect, since it would reach only the million or so subscribers, who were already involved in Party work", Jill Stephenson (1981, 180) notifies.

## 6. WOMEN'S MAGAZINES AS "FEEL-GOOD" MASS MEDIA

According to Wendy Lower (2013) those who grew up in the Third Reich, faced a strong ideological pressure. It was very difficult to avoid - or to resist. This is probably true. Even if the girls and women were not active in women's organisations, they faced propaganda constantly in their everyday life. The Nazi propaganda clearly had a considerable impact on almost every German, one way or the other. Because of the continuous propaganda many people turned to support Nazism, or resisted it only by trying to prevent their children from joining the youth organisations, BDM or Hitlerjugend. (Pine 1997, 79-87)

What kind of propaganda did the NS-Frauenwarte and other women's magazines of the Nazi era have? This is the main observation: negative, aggressive propaganda was almost totally absent in the popular magazines, concerning either antisemitism or enemy countries. Mostly the journals had only positive propaganda celebrating the German women and glorifying the achievements of National Socialism and the Third Reich (or neutral articles like advice columns).

This was not the case accidentally. As was told earlier, the mass media was tightly controlled in Nazi Germany. All magazine editors were given strict orders in the matter of content from the Ministry of Propaganda, RMVP. According to Führer (2011, 143-144) the Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels was also called the "Minister of Entertainment" - and with good reason. Goebbels used his power on Nazi Germany's mass media to ration its political content. There was not supposed to be *too much* propaganda. He felt that the public would quickly turn away from too much proselytising. For propaganda reasons, he also lifted his wife Magda Goebbels to be an exemplary mother of the Third Reich.

Historian Karl Christian Führer has compared the popular magazines and newspapers of the late 1930s, which is very interesting. For example in 1938, when Hitler had several political triumphs and the antisemitic policy took radical



turns, the magazines wrote about the creation of the *Grossdeutsches Reich*, but remained almost silent on the November pogroms. Late 1938 during the *Judenaktion* all German dailies transformed themselves into crude anti-Jewish propaganda sheets, but in marked contrast, top-selling magazines including all women's magazines remained totally untouched by this campaign. (Führer 2011, 146-147)

“Since anti-Semitism was at the very heart of the National Socialist worldview and a matter of the highest political importance, the low profile of Nazi Germany's journals and magazines in this matter cannot be put down to accident. This absence of negative propaganda points to the specific task that popular journals served as part of the mass media of National Socialist Germany. Unlike daily newspapers they must be regarded as a tool to generate only positive emotions and an optimistic outlook, both with regard to the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the reader's personal prospects”, Führer (2011, 133 and 147-148) notifies.

Führer describes (2011, 147-148) the character of the popular magazines aptly as “feel-good” mass media. “They offered distraction and escapist entertainment while practical hints promised a cozy home and a better life for everyone”, he writes. According to Wittfeld (2014, 78-82) keeping up the good spirit and positive atmosphere was considered particularly a women's duty. It was the psychological task of the wartime women. (One of the underlying ideas was that when women at the home front were in positive spirit, the men had more spirit to fight at the front.)

Also many German movies of the Nazi period served the same function - they did not have much negative propaganda but offered entertainment and moments for temporary recreation and emotional rest (Wittfeld 2014, 85-86).

The women's magazines were also supposed to motivate the women to contribute for the war efforts. Rupp (1978,129-132) explains that the Nazi propaganda compared the situation of a woman working in a factory to that of the soldier. Both

had set aside their normal occupations for the duration. The message was that women in factories were fulfilling their duty, just as soldiers fulfilled theirs at the front. The propaganda indicated that factories were no longer dirty places but comfortable, safe, sunny, airy and clean. The wartime women's magazines showed factory women "relaxing around a fountain in a garden during a break".

The positive propaganda was also targeted abroad. The German women's journals were read in other countries too, and thus the magazines supported the export of German fashion. This brought precious currency to the war industry. At the same time, the magazines gave a positive impression of Germany abroad. This is one reason why some of the women's magazines were still published during the war, despite shortage of paper and other resources. (Wittfeld 2014, 72)

In my opinion, the positive propaganda can sometimes be very difficult to notice or to define. One can wonder, if the neutral sewing patterns, advice columns and baking recipes are also some kind of propaganda or are they really just neutral advice articles? At least they manifest the idea of a capable, practical woman.

## **7. CONTENT OF THE NS-FRAUENWARTE MAGAZINES**

### **7.1 SUBTLE OR POSITIVE PROPAGANDA**

In the following I will get through the editorial content of NS-Frauenwarte journals. First there are some examples of the propaganda. As has been mentioned, straightforward, negative propaganda was rare. However, there were some articles concerning the Allied bombings in Germany - how the enemy ruined beautiful German cities and national treasures. About a Renaissance castle by the Rhine the magazine writes in 1943 that "also this piece of jewellery has today serious damage, and the Anglo-Americans are guilty of this".



There are also few articles on Jews, for example one with caricatures of Jewish figures. The idea of this article is to point out that the criticism for Judaism is a world-wide phenomenon, "through all time periods and all nations", and it has spread even in England. The article states that the "Judenfrage" is not invented by the National Socialists, "even though that is often said in foreign countries". This is of course true, but the article can also be seen as an attempt to take the guilt away from the Germans - and to ease the pressures of the German women.

Straightforward, political propaganda was usually seen on such occasions as Hitler's birthday or the Memorial Day, *Heldengedenktage*. In April issues of the NS-Frauenwarte Hitler was on the cover of the magazine, giving his regards to the German women and the German "Volk".



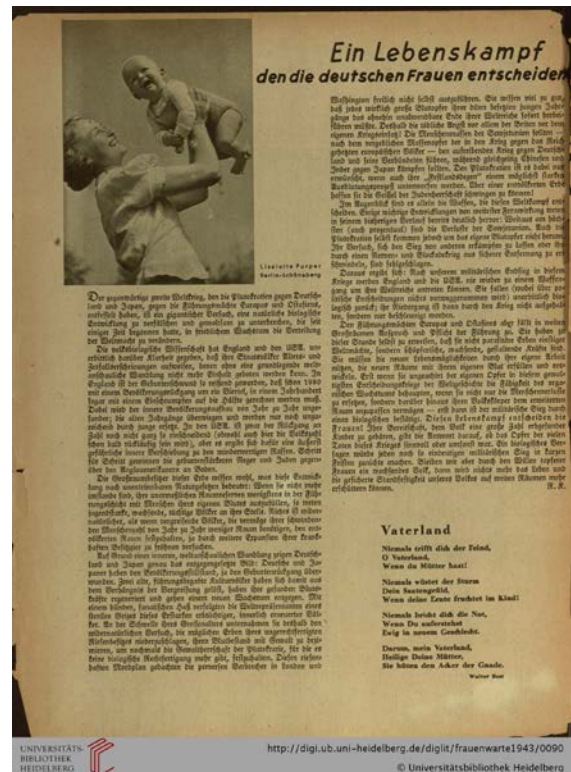
Normally the propaganda was more subtle. It is, of course, not accidental that practically all the women and children performing in the magazine have pretty faces and look very Aryan with their blond hair and blue eyes. There are also articles on the traditional German folklore, "Volkskunst", which the Nazis glorified, and articles to praise the German nation.





In 1944 there is a quite striking page in the magazine. First the editor-in-chief Ellen Semmelroth writes about the victims of the war. Then the head of all women's organisations, Reichsfrauenführerin Gertrud Scholtz-Klink comforts the women, who have lost their husband or sons. "It is natural that first you need some time in peace", she notices, and proceeds: "But you have to continue your life as bravely and fearlessly as those did who battled and died."

On the same page is also a poem called “For my fallen man”, “Meinem gefallenen Mann” - and a photo of a widely smiling woman and child! The message is clear: even the losses of the war are for the benefit of the fatherland.



Of course there are several articles in every issue of the *Frauenwarte* to praise the German women, family life and large families, *Grossfamilien*. The achievements of women are shown in many perspectives. German women succeed both at home and at work; as female scientists, in factories and other service of war efforts, as farmers when the men are on the front - and naturally as mothers.

## 7.2 ADVICE ARTICLES

What is possibly the most interesting part of the wartime women's magazines, are the advice columns. Advice articles were important ingredient of the journals. The combination of practical guidance and entertainment was in the core of the them. As was described earlier, the focus on practical matter also became the officially promoted editorial norm in Nazi Germany. All the women's magazines of the Nazi era had a decent and practical content and lacked glamour and celebrity gossip.





women found pleasure in this sort of self-help”, notify Swett, Ross and d’Almeida (2011, 11).

Also Führer (2011, 133) points out that practicality as offered by these magazines promised “self-improvement and a better personal life”. According to him (2011, 145) it did not even matter whether the reader actually followed the tips or not. “Advice articles served as a means by which to fantasize about better selves and a more satisfying personal life. If readers actually followed any of this advice is not important since these practical hints became meaningful in the very act of reading through them.” (In this sense the advice columns could also be seen as some sort of escapism, as dreaming of better life.)

Wittfeld (2014, 78-81) brings out the virtues of economy and parsimony, *Sparsamkeit*, which were also the underlying message of the advice articles. The sewing patterns and food recipes were supposed to be simple and not too far away from the reality, the scarce facilities of the wartime.

According to Pine (1997, 79-87) one important element in the education of women, was the encouragement to save money and materials. It was also the responsibility of housewives to ensure that their families were getting healthy nourishment, even with limited resources. The health of the family - and therefore of the nation - depended upon correct nutrition.





one has to keep in mind that also men read the women's magazines, even during the wartime.)

In the beginning of the war the fashion pictures show even quite glamorous women, dressed in pretentious dresses "for afternoon walks", or changing their garderobe for "autumn mode", "Herbstmode".

As the war years went by, the fashion articles became more modest and practical, often showing how to reshape old clothes. This is the case both with women and children. In the early 1940s kids are dressed in nicely decorated clothing, including comfortable pajamas, later in functional garments made out of used materials. Still, there really are fashion articles almost till the end of the war - this is certainly some kind of escapism for women.











“In serials and short stories all the major characteristics of everyday life in Nazi Germany were missing. The society was strangely de-politicized. Fiction published in popular magazines rarely served propaganda purposes. So in choosing their fictional offerings the editors of magazines thus acted not only with readers’ tastes in mind but also according to the interest of the regime”, Führer (2011, 143-144) describes.

On the contrary, the reader competitions were not so unpolitical. The themes of the competitions were often from the German history. The readers could identify great historical figures or German poets and win for example money, books or a portrait of Adolf Hitler. The prizes of the wartime reader competitions reflected the scarcity of the era: in some magazines the top prizes could even be cheese or butter portions (Wittfeld 2014, 83).

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In the June 1941 issue of the NS-Frauenwarte there was a reader competition identifying landmarks from ten countries under German occupation - landmarks like

the Eiffel Tower, the Acropolis or the Grande Place in Brussels (Harvey 2011, 182-185). This was of course very political, glorifying the idea of the “Grossdeutschland”.

## 7.6 ADVERTISEMENTS

The NS-Frauenwarte journals had also advertisements. It is a bit striking to notice that many of the advertising companies are familiar and still exist - and have advertisements in popular magazines even today. Brands like that are Nivea creams, Bosch refrigerators, Bayer painkillers, Vim cleaning products, Hansaplast plasters, UHU glue, and so on. Especially the food and beverage company Nestle was visible in the NS-Frauenwarte, it advertised in almost every issue of the magazine.

**Was ist ein Bayer-Arzneimittel?**  
Ein-Bayer-Arzneimittel ist ein Heilmittel aus den weltberühmten «Bayer»-Forschungslaboren. Tausende von Ärzten verordnen «Bayer»-Arzneimittel und erzielen damit glänzende Erfolge. Jede «Bayer»-Arzneimittelpackung ist kenntlich am «Bayer»-Kreuz.

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**Einnach-Cellonhan**  
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**D.D.D. Hautmittel**  
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**Garantol**  
Garantol kommt seit über 13 Jahren.

**VIM**  
„Womit putzen Sie den fettigen Fleischwolf?“ „Genau wie Sie die lackierte Tür – mit VIM!“

**Einkachgläser**  
Einkachgläser prägen Ihre ein-Sollten nur von SIEMENS sein.

<http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/frauenwarte1941/0020>

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Einkauf ist das Beste.

**Marienbad**  
Marienbad ist das Beste.

**Schweiß**  
Schweiß ist das Beste.

**FOTOS**  
Fotos sind das Beste.

**UHU**  
Uhu ist das Beste.

**Migetti**  
Migetti ist das Beste.

<http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/frauenwarte1942/0041>

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Like usually those days, the advertisements appeared only on the last pages of the journals. And as the war came closer to the end, the advertisements quite understandably decreased in number.

In general, the advertisements reflected the content of the wartime magazines and the limited resources. Dr. Oetker (also a still existing label) advertised in periodicals in the following manner: "What can we bake with 50 g of fat and only one egg?" (Pine 1997, 79-87)

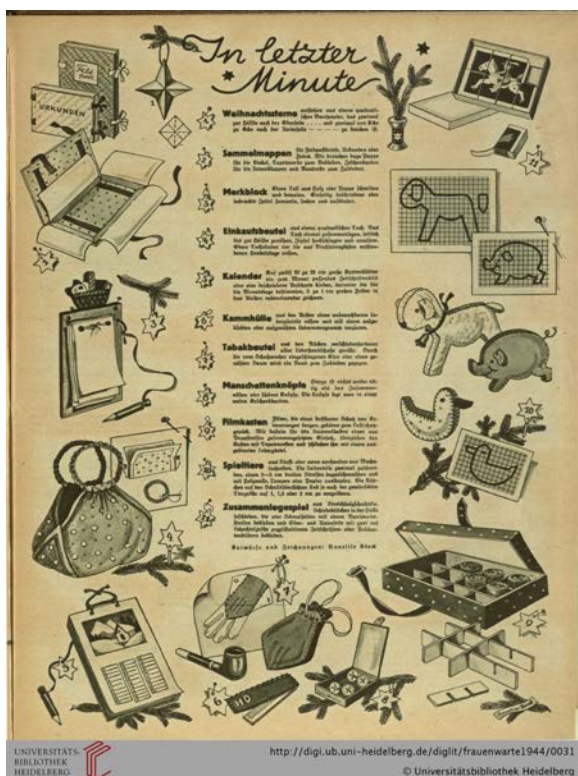
As the Nazis disliked any kind of luxury in the women's magazines and looked up to the role of a modest and clever housewife, even advertisements mostly promoted minor lifestyle accessories such as face cream instead of expensive consumer-goods (Führer 2011, 145).

## **7.7 LAST ISSUES OF THE NS-FRAUENWARTE**

The last issues of the NS-Frauenwarte came out early 1945. Germany's loss in the war was quite obvious already in 1944, but at least in the spring 1945. How did this show in the Frauenwarte? It did not show much. The pages were reduced and there were some articles implying to the hard times, like the one explaining how to keep your gruel warm longer (during an air-raid?) by wrapping the kettle with newspapers.

Still, it is surprising how little the outside world was described in the magazine. By reading it one could have the impression that Germany was still invincible. The Christmas edition of 1944/1945 is full of beautifully decorated Christmas trees, last minute's home-made presents, sewing patterns for pretty belts - and even advice for what to do if the ginger breads, *Pfefferkuchen*, are too hard!





In the last issues of the NS-Frauenwarte there are still slogans like “I still believe in Germany’s victory” and “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles”. Maybe one could say that in the misery of the last months of the war, the German women needed this kind of escapism.

## 8. COMPARING NS-FRAUENWARTE TO KOTILIESI MAGAZINE

In this chapter I compare the NS-Frauenwarte with the Finnish women’s magazine Kotiliesi from the same period. The content of these two journals is surprisingly similar. Many of the articles are about brave women at the home front - or alternatively completely neutral stories. Sometimes when one reads the advice articles or short stories in both magazines, it is difficult to believe that they have been published during the war.

The Kotiliesi was established in 1922, and is still today published biweekly by a



large media group, Otavamedia. It has been one of the most well-known and well-respected Finnish women's magazines / family magazines since the 1920s. In 1925 the magazine had already 80 000 subscribers, and the figures kept growing. In 2014 the circulation was just under 100 000 copies (with 320 000 readers), which is a considerable number in Finland.

The first editor-in-chief was Alli Wiherheimo. She continued in her duties for no less than 41 years, for the years 1922–1963 (which includes also the years of the Second World War).

The Kotiliesi has always been unpolitical, although probably considered somewhat conservative. (Kotiliesi means *cooking stove* in English.) The main contents of the magazine are family life, recipes, health, needlework, sewing patterns and mode, home decoration, parenting children, advice columns and short stories.  
(Homepage of the Kotiliesi)

During the war in Finland was published three women's journals: Kotiliesi, Eeva and Hopeapeili, of which Kotiliesi was by far the most popular one. (Aunila 2014) Thus, just like the NS-Frauenwarte in Germany, the Kotiliesi was the most popular wartime women's magazine in Finland.

Concerning the role of Finland in the Second World War, can be shortly described that Finland had three major conflicts. First was the Winter War in 1939–1940 against the Soviet Union. During the Continuation War in 1941–1944 Finland had cooperation and a military treaty with Germany, but the country did not belong to the Axis Powers. Some German troops were settled in Finland. However, the spirit in Finland was that it had an independent war against the Soviets.

The Lapland War in 1944–1945 was about the expulsion of the German forces from the Finnish territory, after a stipulation from the Allied Forces.

Unlike the two other women's magazines in Finland, the Kotiliesi set itself voluntarily and without reservations in the service of the war propaganda. It had a lot of stories glorifying women helping the war effort - as did the NS-Frauenwarte. And also the Kotiliesi had the mission to educate women in childcare, making healthy food, housekeeping, and giving other kind of useful and practical advice. (Aunila 2014)

The ideal woman shown in the Kotiliesi was modest and natural, non-glamorous. Dressing up and showing up were not appropriate for her, they were linked to vanity and immorality like tempting men. The ideal woman was part of the war machinery. Her duty was to give birth to children and look after the house and family while the men were fighting for the homeland. Like the Frauenwarte, also the Kotiliesi wrote about mourning mothers, who had lost their loved ones on the front. (Aunila 2014)

In the 1930s several members of the cultural elite, including the editor-in-chief of the Kotiliesi magazine Alli Wiherheimo, wanted Finland to support or even follow the rising National Socialism in Germany (Aunila 2014). This is a subject that has been seldom discussed in Finland. The Nazi sympathies of the editor-in-chief Alli Wiherheimo has mainly been kept silent.

Since the Kotiliesi has always been considered unpolitical, it was a surprise for me to realise *how* political the journal actually was during the wartime. The Kotiliesi even connected voluntarily the authorities to the production of the magazine. Alli Wiherheimo wanted the journal to have an editorial board with respected members from different administrative sectors. The task of the board was to give useful advice and instructions to the editorial staff - in practice instructions for propaganda. (Aunila 2014)

I was also surprised to notice to what extent Finland was presented in the NS-Frauenwarte. In the 1941 issues there are at least two cases. First there is a very

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During the war, both Germany and Finland had the **ideal of large families**. The *kinderreich* family, *Grossfamilie*, was the Nazi ideal (see pages 13-15). Families with many children were supported by the state in both countries. The underlying idea of this naturally was that the nation needed more people in order to grow more powerful. The Kotiliesi followed this ideology very strongly. There was a campaign in Finland (supported by the Kotiliesi) that women's duty was to give birth to at least six children (Aunila 2014). (In Germany the target was less, only at four children!)



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As was told before, both the magazines admired **active women**. According to them women should work hard on the benefit of their country, contribute to the war effort, and also be good mothers and take good care of their homes. The ideal Nazi woman was strong, vigorous, natural and able to do hard physical work (see pages 13-17). The same can be said about the ideal Finnish woman during the wartime.

In this Kotiliesi article peasant women are cooking food for volunteer harvesters. "The matron is used to feeding large amounts of people, last summer she did it twelve times", is explained in the article.

In the Frauenwarte article women from the German Red Cross are nursing and helping wounded soldiers, "victims of the war".



In addition to these there are completely neutral **advice articles**, and still surprisingly similar. In both magazines there is advice for example for gardening, childcare, making homemade soap, practical home decoration, and shoe care.

“What can you do if your shoes get wet?” asks the Kotiliesi. “Put sheets of newspaper inside the shoes”, the NS-Frauenwarte resolves the problem. The magazine also warns that one should not put wet shoes too close to the oven. That could damage the shoes.

In the Kotiliesi there is an additional advice: “Don’t wear your shoes at home. The soles of the shoes will only wear out in vain.”

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As was mentioned on the pages 41-42, there were sewing patterns in every NS-Frauenwarte for both women and children, sometimes even for men. During the war years the patterns became less glamorous and more modest and practical, typically showing how to reshape old clothing. In the Kotiliesi the sewing patterns were perhaps even more practical than in the Frauenwarte, often patterns for quite simple working clothes.





Also typical for both magazines are recipes that readers have sent as advice for other readers.

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## 8.1 CONCLUSIONS OF THE COMPARISON

What kind of conclusions can be made out of the similarities of these two magazines? In a way, it is not a wonder that the Kotiliesi resembles the NS-Frauenwarte. Both the magazines absorbed the positive propaganda of the wartime – the Frauenwarte compulsorily, the Kotiliesi more willingly.



I am also sure that the editorial staff of the Kotiliesi read and looked up to the Frauenwarte. As was told earlier, the editor-in-chief of the Kotiliesi was sympathetic to National Socialism. The Finns used to admire Germany even before the war, and during the war admiration only increased. As the Soviet Union attacked Finland again in 1941, Germany was seen in the role of a saviour.

It was also mentioned earlier that the NS-Frauenwarte was to a large extent a women's magazine on the American model, and so was the Kotiliesi. Beside the propaganda and the appraisal of the women there was a lot of neutral content like recipes, different kind of advice for the household, sewing and knitting patterns, and so on.

Actually, the content of typical women's magazines has changed surprisingly little through the years. Women's magazines seem to have "universal" aspects. With a little adjustment many of the articles of the Frauenwarte and the wartime Kotiliesi could basically have been published either in 1945 or 2015.

## **9. NOTES FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

As has been noted in this study, the popular magazines during the Third Reich have been so far under-researched. In this respect there are plenty of possibilities for further studies. It would be interesting for example to close-read the texts of the NS-Frauenwarte, or to compare the Frauenwarte and the "unpolitical" magazines (like the Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung) of the same period.

One possibility is to study more closely separate contents of the Frauenwarte, for example the short stories. "Alongside the escapist movies which Joseph Goebbels cherished, magazine serials should be scrutinized for subtle meanings and hidden agendas", states historian Karl Christian Führer (2011, 149).

A closer examination of the pictorial content of the Frauenwarte, the covers and the photos, could also provide fascinating results. Especially the covers of the magazines are quite unique.

I personally would like to make more precise comparison between the NS-Frauenwarte and the Finnish Kotiliesi magazine, concerning both the political and the unpolitical content. The similarity of the magazines is an interesting, and again, under-researched phenomenon, even in Finland.

What also interests me is to analyse closer the content of the advice articles in the Frauenwarte, even the recipes or the sewing patterns. They seem so neutral and innocent, but do they hide some kind of propaganda, too? In a way they also glorify the women - how the women cope with life and manage everything with the scarce resources of the wartime.

It could also be interesting to compare the content of the German women's magazines with the actual acts of the Second World War. In what way did for example the battle of Stalingrad affect the NS-Frauenwarte? Did the great turning points of the war show at all on the pages of the journal? Or did they just strengthen the domestic and positive content? I have no answer to these questions yet.

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## Frauen und Mädchen stricken und nähen für Soldaten

Die Frauen und Mädchen stricken und nähen für Soldaten. Sie stricken Handschuhe, Socken, Mützen und Strümpfe. Sie nähen Kissen, Decken und Kleider. Diese Dinge sind für die Soldaten sehr wichtig. Sie helfen ihnen, sich warm zu halten und sich besser zu fühlen. Die Frauen und Mädchen tun dies aus Liebe und Dankbarkeit für die Soldaten, die für unser Land kämpfen.

**1. Handschuhe:** Stricken Sie Handschuhe für die Soldaten. Sie brauchen sie, um ihre Hände warm zu halten. Stricken Sie sie aus Wolle oder Baumwolle. Sie sollten nicht zu eng sein, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sollten auch nicht zu dick sein, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind.

**2. Socken:** Stricken Sie Socken für die Soldaten. Sie brauchen sie, um ihre Füße warm zu halten. Stricken Sie sie aus Wolle oder Baumwolle. Sie sollten nicht zu eng sein, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sollten auch nicht zu dick sein, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind.

**3. Mützen:** Stricken Sie Mützen für die Soldaten. Sie brauchen sie, um ihren Kopf warm zu halten. Stricken Sie sie aus Wolle oder Baumwolle. Sie sollten nicht zu eng sein, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sollten auch nicht zu dick sein, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind.

**4. Strümpfe:** Stricken Sie Strümpfe für die Soldaten. Sie brauchen sie, um ihre Füße warm zu halten. Stricken Sie sie aus Wolle oder Baumwolle. Sie sollten nicht zu eng sein, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sollten auch nicht zu dick sein, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind.

**5. Kissen:** Nähen Sie Kissen für die Soldaten. Sie brauchen sie, um sich bequem zu fühlen. Nähen Sie sie aus Baumwolle oder Leinen. Sie sollten nicht zu eng sein, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sollten auch nicht zu dick sein, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind.

**6. Decken:** Nähen Sie Decken für die Soldaten. Sie brauchen sie, um sich warm zu halten. Nähen Sie sie aus Wolle oder Baumwolle. Sie sollten nicht zu eng sein, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sollten auch nicht zu dick sein, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind.

**7. Kleider:** Nähen Sie Kleider für die Soldaten. Sie brauchen sie, um sich gut zu fühlen. Nähen Sie sie aus Baumwolle oder Leinen. Sie sollten nicht zu eng sein, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sollten auch nicht zu dick sein, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind.

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## Geändert und sparsam im Stoffverbrauch

Die Frauen sind geändert und sparsam im Stoffverbrauch. Sie tragen Kleider, die weniger Stoff verbrauchen. Sie tragen auch Mäntel, die weniger Stoff verbrauchen. Diese Dinge sind für die Frauen sehr wichtig. Sie helfen ihnen, sich gut zu fühlen und auch noch Geld zu sparen.

**1. Kleider:** Tragen Sie Kleider, die weniger Stoff verbrauchen. Sie sollten nicht zu lang sein, aber auch nicht zu kurz. Sie sollten auch nicht zu eng sein, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sollten auch nicht zu dick sein, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind.

**2. Mäntel:** Tragen Sie Mäntel, die weniger Stoff verbrauchen. Sie sollten nicht zu lang sein, aber auch nicht zu kurz. Sie sollten auch nicht zu eng sein, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sollten auch nicht zu dick sein, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind.

**3. Schuhe:** Tragen Sie Schuhe, die weniger Stoff verbrauchen. Sie sollten nicht zu eng sein, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sollten auch nicht zu dick sein, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind.

**4. Accessoires:** Tragen Sie Accessoires, die weniger Stoff verbrauchen. Sie sollten nicht zu groß sein, aber auch nicht zu klein. Sie sollten auch nicht zu dick sein, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind.

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## Cillex selbst gearbeitet

Die Cillex selbst gearbeitet. Sie sind aus Wolle oder Baumwolle. Sie sind nicht zu eng, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sind auch nicht zu dick, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind. Sie sind für die Frauen und Mädchen sehr wichtig. Sie helfen ihnen, sich warm zu halten und sich besser zu fühlen.

**1. Schuhe:** Cillex Schuhe sind aus Wolle oder Baumwolle. Sie sind nicht zu eng, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sind auch nicht zu dick, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind. Sie sind für die Frauen und Mädchen sehr wichtig. Sie helfen ihnen, sich warm zu halten und sich besser zu fühlen.

**2. Socken:** Cillex Socken sind aus Wolle oder Baumwolle. Sie sind nicht zu eng, aber auch nicht zu locker. Sie sind auch nicht zu dick, damit sie nicht zu heiß sind. Sie sind für die Frauen und Mädchen sehr wichtig. Sie helfen ihnen, sich warm zu halten und sich besser zu fühlen.

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## - Leserinnen helfen einander -

Die Leserinnen helfen einander. Sie teilen ihre Rezepte mit. Sie helfen den anderen, sich gut zu fühlen. Sie helfen ihnen, sich warm zu halten und sich besser zu fühlen. Sie helfen ihnen, sich gut zu fühlen und auch noch Geld zu sparen.

**1. Suppen:** Die Leserinnen teilen ihre Suppen-Rezepte mit. Sie helfen den anderen, sich gut zu fühlen. Sie helfen ihnen, sich warm zu halten und sich besser zu fühlen. Sie helfen ihnen, sich gut zu fühlen und auch noch Geld zu sparen.

**2. Stews:** Die Leserinnen teilen ihre Stew-Rezepte mit. Sie helfen den anderen, sich gut zu fühlen. Sie helfen ihnen, sich warm zu halten und sich besser zu fühlen. Sie helfen ihnen, sich gut zu fühlen und auch noch Geld zu sparen.

**3. Brote:** Die Leserinnen teilen ihre Brot-Rezepte mit. Sie helfen den anderen, sich gut zu fühlen. Sie helfen ihnen, sich warm zu halten und sich besser zu fühlen. Sie helfen ihnen, sich gut zu fühlen und auch noch Geld zu sparen.

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