The role of women in Nazi Germany



The Weimar Woman

Under the Weimar Republic, German women had been the envy of many due to the progress she had made in society. German women over the age of 20 were allowed to vote and one-tenth of the Reichstag (German Parliament) was female. Her British counterpart had to be 30 to be able to vote, while her French equivalent had to wait until 1944 to be granted the opportunity to vote.

Moreover, many women in Germany had made inroads in the world of work, especially in the civil service, as many women had become Teachers, Lawyers and Doctors and had began earning a salary equivalent to a man’s. By 1933 there were 100,000 female teachers and 30,000 doctors.

This new found independence prompted more social freedom as women began to go out unescorted, wore fashionable clothes and make-up and also smoked and drank; much like women in America’s up and coming cities. Obviously, there were people critical of this type of behaviour, but it was fair to say that German women had made significant progress under the Weimar government.

The Nazi Woman

That was to change altogether as Hitler and the Nazi party entered the Reichstag in 1933. The Nazis had a very different view on what a woman’s role was, a far more traditional view, based on nature’s subtle differences in male and female anatomy. Women were too able to produce offspring and men were not, therefore the Nazis believed that a women’s job was to reproduce.

This was partly to do with the fact that German birth rates had dropped from 2 million births per year in 1900, to under 1 million by 1933. The Nazis wanted Germany to have a large population, a nation full of fit strong men and women capable of fighting for Germany. Women’s role was to boost the population.

Therefore, under the Nazis women were encouraged and ultimately forced out of the work place and forced into the homes. They lost much of the progress they had made under Weimar and went back to the traditional woman’s role of mother and wife. The Nazis respected Women, but only as a wife and mother.

Are you the ideal Nazi Female?



* Does not wear make-up
* Has blonde hair, is heavy hipped and athletic
* Wears flat shoes and a full skirt
* Does not smoke
* Does not go out to work
* Does all the household chores, cooking and cleaning, brings up children
* Takes no interest in politics

How did the Nazis encourage (force) Women into the Nazi Ideal?

* + The Nazis launched a massive propaganda campaign promoting motherhood and large families.
  + In 1933 the Law for the Encouragement of Marriage gave newly married couples loans to set up a new family. The loan did not have to be paid back providing the couple had 4 children. Working women did not receive the loan.
  + Medals were awarded to women who had lots of children on Hitler’s mother’s birthday. 4 – Bronze, 6 – Silver, 8 – Gold!
  + Divorce was possible for men and women that could not have children.
  + *Lebensborn* (Life Springs) encouraged single women to have children with a racially pure SS man and donate a child to Hitler.
  + The German Woman’s Enterprise organised classes and radio talks about household and motherhood skills.

A woman’s work is never done.

**Kinder, Kuche, Kirche** – ‘**children, kitchen, church’** became the Nazi ideal for women. They were forced out of the civil service jobs they had worked hard to acquire and banned from becoming Teacher, Lawyers and Doctors. In removing women from a job it freed up a job for a man. The Nazis policy on women cleverly managed to help solve the unemployment problem and population problem in one move.