

## Josef Goebbels talks about the role of women, from a speech delivered in March 1933:

“German women! German men !

It is a happy accident that my first speech since taking charge of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda is to German women. Although I agree with Treitschke that men make history, I do not forget that women raise boys to manhood. You know that the National Socialist movement is the only party that keeps women out of daily politics. This arouses bitter criticism and hostility, all of it very unjustified. We have kept women out of the parliamentary-democratic intrigues of the past fourteen years in Germany not because we do not respect them, but because we respect them too much. We do not see the woman as inferior, but as having a different mission, a different value, than that of the man. Therefore we believed the German woman, who more than any other in the world is a woman in the best sense of the word, should use her strength and abilities in other areas than the man.

The woman has always been not only the man’s sexual companion, but also his fellow worker. Long ago, she did heavy labor with the man in the field. She moved with him into the cities, entering the offices and factories, doing her share of the work for which she was best suited. She did this with all her abilities, her loyalty, her selfless devotion, her readiness to sacrifice. The woman in public life today is no different than the women of the past. No one who understands the modern age would have the crazy idea of driving women from public life, from work, profession, and bread winning. But it must also be said that those things that belong to the man must remain his. That includes politics and the military. That is not to disparage women, only to recognise how she best uses her talents and abilities.

Looking back over the past years of Germany’s decline, we come to the frightening, nearly terrifying, conclusion that the less German men were willing to act as men in public life, the more women succumbed to the temptation to fill the role of the man. The feminisation of men always leads to the masculinisation of women. An age in which all great idea of virtue, of steadfastness, of hardness, and determination have been forgotten should not be surprised that the man gradually loses his leading role in life and politics and government to the woman. It may be unpopular to say this to an audience of women, but it must be said, because it is true and because it will help make clear our attitude toward women.

The modern age, with all its vast revolutionary transformations in government, politics, economics, and social relations has not left women and their role in public life untouched. Things we thought impossible several years or decades ago are now everyday reality. Some good, noble, and commendable things have happened. But also things that are contemptible and humiliating. These revolutionary transformations have largely taken from women their proper tasks. Their eyes were set in directions that were not appropriate for them. The result was a distorted public view of German womanhood that had nothing to do with former ideals.

A fundamental change is necessary. At the risk of sounding reactionary and outdated, let me say this clearly: The first, best, and most suitable place for the women is in the family, and her most glorious duty is to give children to her people and nation, children who can continue the line of generations and who guarantee the immortality of the nation. The woman is the teacher of the youth, and therefore the builder of the foundation of the future. If the family is the nation’s source of strength, the woman is its core and centre. The best place for the woman to serve her people is in her marriage, in the family, in motherhood.

This is her highest mission. That does not mean that those women who are employed or who have no children have no role in the motherhood of the German people. They use their strength, their abilities, their sense of responsibility for the nation, in other ways. We are convinced, however, that the first task of a socially reformed nation must be to again give the woman the possibility to fulfil her real task, her mission in the family and as a mother.

The national revolutionary government is everything but reactionary. It does not want to stop the pace of our rapidly moving age. It has no intention of lagging behind the times. It wants to be the flag bearer and pathfinder of the future. We know the demands of the modern age. But that does not stop us from seeing that every age has its roots

in motherhood, that there is nothing of greater importance than the living mother of a family who gives the state children.

German women have been transformed in recent years. They are beginning to see that they are not happier as a result of being given more rights but fewer duties. They now realise that the right to be elected to public office at the expense of the right to life, motherhood, and her daily bread is not a good trade. A characteristic of the modern era is a rapidly declining birthrate in our big cities. In 1900, two million babies were born in Germany. Now the number has fallen to one million.

This drastic decline is most evident in the nation's capital. In the last 14 years, Berlin's birthrate has become the lowest of any European city. By 1955, without emigration, it will have only about three million inhabitants. The government is determined to halt this decline of the family and the resulting impoverishment of our blood. There must be a fundamental change. The liberal attitude toward the family and the child is responsible for Germany's rapid decline. We today must begin worrying about an aging population. In 1900 there were seven children for each elderly person, today it is only four. If current trends continue, by 1988 the ratio will be 1:1. These statistics say it all. They are the best proof that if Germany continues along its current path, it will end in an abyss with breathtaking speed. We can almost determine the decade when Germany collapses because of depopulation.

We are not willing to stand aside and watch the collapse of our national life and the destruction of the blood we have inherited. The national revolutionary government has the duty to rebuilt the nation on its original foundations, to transform the life and work of the woman so that it once again best serves the national good. It intends to eliminate the social inequalities so that once again the life of our people and the future of our people and the immortality of our blood is assured."

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**This September 1934 speech transcript contains Adolf Hitler's views on the role of women. Here he offers his views about the importance of the "smaller world" tended by women:**

"The slogan 'emancipation of women' was invented by Jewish intellectuals, and its content was formed by the same spirit. In the really good times of German life, the German woman had no need to emancipate herself. She possessed exactly what nature had given her to administer and preserve; just as the man in his good times had no need to fear that he would be ousted from his position in relation to the woman.

If the man's world is said to be the State, his struggle, his readiness to devote his powers to the service of the community, then it may perhaps be said that the woman's is a smaller world. For her world is her husband, her family, her children, and her home. But what would become of the greater world if there were no one to tend and care for the smaller one? How could the greater world survive if there were no one to make the cares of the smaller world the content of their lives?

No, the greater world is built on the foundation of this smaller world. This great world cannot survive if the smaller world is not stable. Providence has entrusted to the woman the cares of that world which is her very own, and only on the basis of this smaller world can the man's world be formed and built up. The two worlds are not antagonistic. They complement each other, they belong together just as man and woman belong together.

We do not consider it correct for the woman to interfere in the world of the man, in his main sphere. We consider it natural if these two worlds remain distinct. To the one belongs the strength of feeling, the strength of the soul. To the other belongs the strength of vision, of toughness, of decision, and of the willingness to act. In the one case this strength demands the willingness of the woman to risk her life to preserve this important cell and to multiply it, and in the other case it demands from the man the readiness to safeguard life.

The sacrifices which the man makes in the struggle of his nation, the woman makes in the preservation of that nation in individual cases. What the man gives in courage on the battlefield, the woman gives in eternal self-sacrifice, in

eternal pain and suffering. Every child that a woman brings into the world is a battle, a battle waged for the existence of her people. And both must therefore mutually value and respect each other when they see that each performs the task that Nature and Providence have ordained. And this mutual respect will necessarily result from this separation of the functions of each.

It is not true, as Jewish intellectuals assert, that respect depends on the overlapping of the spheres of activity of the sexes; this respect demands that neither sex should try to do that which belongs to the sphere of the other. It lies in the last resort in the fact that each knows that the other is doing everything necessary to maintain the whole community. So our women's movement is for us not something which inscribes on its banner as its program the fight against men, but something which has as its program the common fight together with men. For the new National Socialist national community acquires a firm basis, precisely because we have gained the trust of millions of women as fanatical comrades...

Whereas previously the programs of the liberal, intellectualist women's movements contained many points, the program of our National Socialist women's movement has but one single point, and that point is the child, that tiny creature which must be born and grow strong and which alone gives meaning to the whole life-struggle."

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**Emilie Muller-Zadow, a member of the National Socialist Women's Organisation, explains the basis of party policy and the role of women in Nazi Germany:**

"The place that Adolf Hitler assigns to woman in the Third Reich corresponds to her natural and divine destiny. Limits are being set for her, which earlier she had frequently violated in a barren desire to adopt masculine traits. The value and sanctity of goals now being set for her have been unrecognised and forgotten for a long time; and due respect is now being offered to her vocation as mother of the people, in which she can and should develop her rich emotions and spiritual strengths according to eternal laws.

This wake-up call of National Socialism to women is one more indication that in Germany today it is not arbitrary laws that are being issued, but rather a nation is returning to essential, eternal rules of order. It is therefore not at all surprising that the state and party claim the education of mothers as exclusively their task and insist that all training be carried out only by National Socialists and according to the principles of National Socialism. For the way a mother sees her child, how she cares for, teaches, and forms him, the principles that she instills in him, the attitude that she demands of him, all of this is crucial for the national health, for a German morality, and for the unified overall mind-set of the future nation.

Some think they can argue that the purely practical part of motherhood training – for example the care of newborns – is independent of politics and world-view and is not influenced by them. But this is only partially true. The following may serve as an example: In the post-war period a real mania prevailed in clinics and institutions to keep premature babies or infants with the most serious hereditary diseases alive for a shorter or longer time in incubators and with the most sophisticated measures, even those babies whose chances for a full life every doctor judged as next to nothing. These experiments cost great amounts of the national wealth, while in the homes of the unemployed, normal children died from a lack of bare necessities.

A complete change of opinion has occurred in this area, as now only the functional, realistic principles of the state are in force, a state that examines and treats the individual according to his value. So in the whole project of motherhood training there is scarcely a component whose basic orientation and objectives are not formed by National Socialism. The training of German women for the calling of motherhood cannot be confined to the official courses, which are offered for this purpose by the German Women's Organisation, nor can it be limited to the education of the nation's youth, provided by the League of German Girls. A complete educational development and permeation of the whole nation can only succeed if all responsible maternally-oriented women feel impelled to instruct and actively help their sisters."