

October 28, 1939: Heinrich Himmler's Minority View on Conventional Sexual Morality

- http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1560: Heinrich Himmler: SS Befehl für die gesamte SS und Polizei (Berlin, den 28. Oktober 1939) English. Himmler's Secret Directive to all Members of the SS and the Police on the Care of all Legitimate and Illegitimate Children of "Good Blood" (October 28, 1939)
- Source of German text: Reprinted in Norbert Westenrieder, *Deutsche Frauen und Mädchen!*" (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1984): 42
This original copy can be found in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde under the NS 2 collection which contains documents from the Main Office of Race and Resettlement

On October 28th 1939 Heinrich Himmler, commander of the Schutzstaffel and an avid proponent of Nazism's racial conception, gave an order to his army of police and SS soldiers that encouraged extra-marital affairs and the producing of illegitimate offspring for the sake of promoting the overall population of "good" Germans. With the start of what will become World War Two having occurred in the month prior to this directive (September 1st, 1939), the command of the Reichsführer-SS strategically begins with a reminder that with every war there are men who shall fall and as a result, there are children who shall not be begotten. He goes on to assert the importance of children and the moral obligations that Germans of good blood face in providing the nation with an abundance of healthy offspring, especially during wartime when the livelihood of many soldiers is bleak. The SS men are then **motivated** to supply as many children of pure blood as biologically possible, even if through illegitimate means, with the following, newly implemented regulations from the Reichsführer-SS that a) promise guardianship over children of good blood whose fathers die in the war, and b) that the SS will help care for *all* good-blooded children born during the war until fathers return, after which aid will be provided financially (Westenrieder 1984, 42). At the end of his directive Himmler puts forth a call for help from the SS and potential mothers to "regenerate" the German population, regardless of their traditional "bourgeois" conventions, in the name of the Führer and the greater German nation.

During the Third Reich, Nazi eugenics policies coincided with one of two courses of action: either towards the annihilation of racially inferior populations or towards the encouragement of the racially pure Aryan population, with Himmler's October 28, 1939 statement falling under the latter of the two categories. In previous years the Third Reich attempted to raise the birth rate of good Germans through financial incentives such as marriage loans, adjustments of agrarian debt, tax remissions, etc., but all proved insufficient to actually maintain the population in the long-run (*Germany and The Family* 1935, 9). Hence the introduction of more radical birth policies including that of Himmler's decree and his correlating Lebensborn e.V. Program established in 1935. As the leading member of the SS, Himmler sought to use his racially pure elite unit to populate Nazi Germany with a new race of Aryan super humans. However his utopian attitude toward reproduction was no match for the "bourgeois" stronghold that maintained much of the loyalty to conventional sexual morality. Based on SS General Sepp Dietrich's 1945 interrogation, it is clear that this secret directive given by Himmler generated significant opposition not only amongst his SS members (*New York Times* 1945, 5). Later authors such as Amy Carney, Claudia Koonz, and Wolfgang Bialas show Himmler's order was also unpopular with soldiers of the German army outside of the SS as well as married German women. In fact, only a few months later in January of 1940, Himmler had to issue a response defending his radical sentiments in an effort to clear up the controversy

surrounding his previous 1939 statement (*Aus deutschen Urkunden* 1946, 174-175, source of GHDI document: "Himmler's Response to Complaints regarding his "Procreation Decree" of October 28, 1939 [January 30, 1940]). Ultimately Himmler's attitude towards marriage and reproduction was a minority view throughout the nation; nevertheless he took the Nazi racial purification goal very seriously and continued to push his views discretely through policies and programs, such as his Lebensborn e.V. project.

Annotated Bibliography

Our Correspondent. "Germany And The Family." *Times*. August 28, 1935. Accessed February 14, 2016.

- This newspaper article appeared only a few months before the formation of the Lebensborn Project and several years before Himmler would issue his October 28th, 1939 directive; giving valuable insight on the conditions preceding the encouragement of extra-marital affairs and illegitimate children. Basically, Germany tries raising the birth-rate initially with financial incentives, as shown by this article, including marriage loans and adjustment of agrarian debt; nevertheless the birthrates were still too low to continue raising the population. Hence Himmler's Lebensborn project and directives were conceived after a process of cumulative radicalization that sought to increase the population at all costs. What this article suggests is that Nazis didn't initially want to alter the traditional concept of family, but choose to after meager financial/welfare attempts failed to produce a sufficient number of children.

"Population in the Reich." *Times*. October 5, 1942. Accessed February 14, 2016.

- In line with the previous newspaper article, this one reiterates the idea that initially the Nazi methods of increasing the birth rate were somewhat "commendable" but ultimately shifted toward more experimental expenditures. Although it doesn't directly reference Himmler's October 28th, 1939 directive, the article does mention his encouragement of illegitimacy and children born "with or without wedlock" which was first promoted by that directive. However, this article being from an Allied power in the early 1940s is definitely biased, assuming Himmler's encouragement of extra-marital affairs was a welcomed idea. When looking at the multitude of later research it's clear that assumption was false.

Rediess, "SS für ein Grossgermanien. Folge 3 : Schwert und Wiege" (Norway: Der Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer Nord, 1943)

- Mentioned publically in the following *Times* newspaper article below, this report regards the Lebensborn project in Norway; it was written by a German official and essentially reveals that the project was not as popular as it could have been. Despite this, it is well known that Nazis targeted Norwegian women and that Norway housed the second highest number of Lebensborn homes after Germany itself. This publication is entirely in German, but based on some translation it appears to list the regulations of the Lebensborn facilities and their purposes – all of which are to establish a new population of Aryan children in Norway who will later become the link to the German nation. Although the project was hugely a failure, this report like many others, show the Reich's high enthusiasm for the project and the determination to raise the Aryan birth-rate.

Our Correspondent. "Nazi 'Selective Breeding'." *Times*. December 14, 1943. Accessed February 14, 2016.

- This newspaper article from 1943 is regarding the Nazi attempt to “breed” amongst the Aryan female population of Norway. The article claims this experiment failed to produce a significant number of offspring, with only 2,610 births among the 1,000,000 German men who spent time in Norway at one point of another. Nevertheless, it’s clear that Norwegian women were targeted by Nazis for their Aryan attributes; one could assume even more women were susceptible to German soldiers than reported in this piece simply based on the manners German men approached the women (as stated in the article) as well as later reports on the discrimination faced by illegitimate Norwegian-German children. The most important part of this document however is its reference to Nazi report on the Lebensborn Program, edited by officer Rediess.

“SS General Belittles Nazi Chiefs When Questioned by U.S. Officers: Dietrich Charges Himmler Was Swindler, Goering Lazy Clown, Army Staff Incompetent and Hitler 'Sucker' for All.” *The New York Times*. June 29, 1945. Accessed January 28, 2016.

- Sepp Dietrich was a notorious SS general whose connections with Hitler were almost as stronger as those of Himmler. In this recorded interrogation from after WWII, Dietrich sheds his personal views on some of the powerful Nazi men surrounding him, including Heinrich Himmler. He basically belittles Himmler as a “wannabe” führer and mentions his obsession with raising funds for his Lebensborn Project. This testimony further alludes to Himmler’s unpopularity as well as the unpopularity of his extra-marital project; however instead of the reason being its controversy to tradition, Dietrich reveals Himmler’s directives about marriage and the Lebensborn Project may have been unpopular for the financial obligations they would have required.

“Super Babies: Illegitimate children of SS men are housed in a German chateau” *Life*. August 13, 1945.

- In this article are mostly pictures showcasing the illegitimate German children, or “bastards” as the author prefers, with the Hohenhorst Lebensborn home in northern Germany. A clear insinuation of the unknown author’s negative attitude towards these children is in the opening caption which states “The Hohenhorst bastards of Himmler’s men are blue-eyed, flaxen-haired and pig-fat. They eat porridge whether they want to or not.” he also states that these children pose a “future problem” for the Allied states. Nevertheless, the Lebensborn children are also depicted as quite spoiled for orphaned “bastards” and very well taken care of. The most significant aspect of this article is that it reveals that people in the United States, and most likely other Allied countries, were well aware of Nazi policies that “encouraged [SS men] to father ‘super babies’ through the Lebensborn program, even before the war was over in September of 1945. The article’s use of the word “super” to label these children and its emphasis on their privileged care by the state may allude to Allied knowledge of Nazi attempts to raise a population of super-humans, however this is never explicitly stated in the article. Likewise, the reader gets the sense that there was already some resentment towards these children despite their inability to control their birth situation.

Great Britain Foreign Office. “Himmler’s Response to Complaints regarding his ‘Procreation Decree’ of October 28, 1939 (January 30, 1940).” *Aus deutschen Urkunden, 1935-1945*. (Herausgegeben vom Bundesvorstand des BVN, 1946)

- This is a response made by Himmler after his October 28th, 1939 Directive (source) regarding illegitimate children and extra-marital affairs was received with quite a bit of controversy. Based on this document it’s obvious that the October 28th decree was not welcomed with much enthusiasm by the SS men, whose values and morality stands in the way of accepting

such obligations. However Himmler essentially tries to undermine the traditional mentality of his men with this response by claiming that their adultery would be for the good and necessary for the German population at whole. Himmler took Nazi racial goals very seriously as the Reichsführer-SS; he wanted to encourage infidelity and illegitimate births as much as possible among the SS in particular, in order to raise the Aryan birth rate in Germany and ultimately fulfill the Nazis' eugenics policies.

Thompson, Larry V. "Lebensborn and the Eugenics Policy of the Reichsführer-SS" *Central European History* 20, no. 2 (March 1971): 54-77

- This article goes over many of the positive eugenics policies Himmler experimented with as a means of raising the birth-rate among his SS army. It also shows how Himmler was not as successful in convincing the SS in unconventional means of reproduction, he simply could not compete with the "bourgeois morality" that prevailed among his men. Many SS members stood firm in their beliefs against adultery and other conservative values regarding the creation of life, and likewise army men abroad also contested the proclamation as a means to seduce their wives, sisters, etc., while they were away. However instead of revoking his claims for illegitimacy, Himmler ends up making his later encouragement more discrete in the guise of programs like the Lebensborn, which was promoted more as a welfare system than as an advocate of illegitimacy. Another significant aspect of this article is the author's analysis of the irony reflected in the SS's "bourgeois morality" towards adultery, and on the other hand, their complete acceptance with the antisemitic/genocidal policies of the regime.

Westenrieder, Norbert *Deutsche Frauen und Mädchen!* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1984): 42

- Multiple sources containing Himmler's October 28th, 1939 directive have cited this book as their primary source. Westenrieder presents a print from a microfilm of an original copy of Himmler's decree; its typed appearance suggests that the decree was probably a multi-copied and distributed flyer. This author was born in 1947 after the demise of the Nazi regime and was well known for his non-fiction works and documentaries depicting everyday life in Nazi Germany. Much as the title implies, this book gives an in-depth look at the roles, functions, and lifestyles of everyday females living under the Third Reich using historical primary documents as a means to back his arguments.

Heineman, Elizabeth D. *What difference does a Husband make?: Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (London: University of California Press, 1999)

- As seen by the title of this book, Heineman definitely interprets Nazi ideology as it would relate to the typical German female and most importantly the concept of marriage. Analyzing both pre-war/post-war definitions of German marriage, Heineman argues German women are increasingly seen as "breeding machines" meant to perpetuate the Nazi population at almost any cause as more and more men died on the front lines. Although she does not reference Himmler's directive directly, she alludes to it and his policies as a whole on page 32 where the author argues Himmler wished to overturn elitist mentality; his views on illegitimate marriages caused widespread opposition from married couples who saw themselves as superior.

Carney, Amy B. "'As Blond as Hitler': Positive Eugenics and Fatherhood in the Third Reich." Master of Arts Thesis, Florida State University, 2005.

- Carney focuses on the Nazis' value of fatherhood, specifically its "reproductive" capabilities and biological function – Nazis were not concerned with how German men raised their children but more so the number of children they could father with as many women as possible. In this essay, Carney mentions Hitler's October 28th, 1939 order and the negative

response it generated from men outside of the SS army. The author interprets Himmler's decree as another means of the Nazi party "highlighting the necessity of... biological duty"; Nazis and Himmler attempted to make biology the number one concern among the male population and therefore becoming the new base of German morality. Once again, in this article Himmler's ideology is showcased as a minority among the German population.

Manvell, Roger, and Heinrich Fraenkel. *Heinrich Himmler: The Sinister Life of the Head of The SS and Gestapo*. (London: Greenhill Books, 2007)

- This book is a biography dedicated to the life of Heinrich Himmler, the Nazi Party's Reichsführer-SS and author of the source being examined throughout this narrative. Based on the title alone, it's clear that there is some bias being put forth by the authors, nevertheless the book definitely adheres to the details of Nazi career. Unlike the following bibliography, this one actually references Himmler's October 28, 1939 directive and claims that it was "celebrated" by the SS and the masses; however they do not back their claim up with any evidence, and several sources listed before/after this one claims the opposite. Himmler was a man of detail as noted in the book, and speculated every last detail of his Lebensborn Project as well as the ancestry of his men. A surprising fact of this revelation is that Himmler himself knew he was not of Aryan-blood, hence his obsession with the purity and offspring of his men.

Longerich, Peter. *Heinrich Himmler: A Life*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012)

- This biography is unique in that it looks at the life of Heinrich Himmler as a whole, from youth to death, as a means to better understand his personality as well as his later motives during the Nazi regime. The author reveals much about the childhood of the Reichsführer-SS; that Himmler was born to a good family and that his personality was somewhat unpopular to many nevertheless he was constantly trying to take part in school organizations. Later it is revealed that Himmler was always focused on preserving the "decency" and that he brought a lot of his personal "idiosyncrasies" to the SS whom he saw as more of an extension of himself than anything else. The most significant aspects of this biography however is the attention it gives to Himmler's policies regarding illegitimate children and marriage, although it never directly references the source being explored, it does mention the Lebensborn program throughout his section "Illegitimate births" under Section III.

Ward, Lindsey. "The Women Who said 'Yes' to Hitler: An Examination of Guilt in the Third Reich" Graduation Honors Thesis, Carroll College, 2011.

- Unlike most of the articles regarding German reproductive policies as a victimization of German and Europe women, Ward showcases how women actually took a lead role in the perpetuation of Nazi policies, including those with a biological stance. In chapter two of the thesis, she focuses on Women as "warriors" of the battle with childbirth – basically suggesting that women were elevated within German society depending on the number of children (specifically Aryan) that they could bear. Motherhood becomes just as important as fatherhood in the Reich, therefore the stigma of illegitimate children was somewhat lifted during the Reich even if not every German agreed with it, especially through the establishment of Lebensborn homes. Using this article, Himmler's directive towards the SS men and his later establishment of the Lebensborn program can also be understood as equally empowering to German women.

Joshi, Vandana "Maternalism, Race, Class and Citizenship: Aspects of Illegitimate Motherhood in Nazi Germany" *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, 4. (Oct. 2011): 832-854

- The significance of this article lies in the author's comparison of the types of illegitimate mothers living in the Third Reich and the adversity of their treatment by the Nazi policies regarding illegitimate/extra-marital policies. Early within the text, the author directly links Himmler's October 28 directive with the Lebensborn project, explaining how Nazis promoted SS men to leave not just a military legacy but an Aryan one – hence illegitimate mothers belonging to the Lebensborn program are automatically treated superior to the other two types of illegitimate mothers. Illegitimacy as the author was only acceptable in light of the racially pure, however other cases of illegitimacy prompted by the Nazi regime like that between German women and the POWs (prisoners of war) who were sentenced to work in the countryside by Nazi officials were completely taboo. In essence the respectability of the Lebensborn mothers, or unwedded mothers with Aryan children, was constantly upheld regardless of the circumstance while the remaining illegitimate mothers were subjected to the same ideological shame that generally ensued after childbirth before the regime ever came into play.

Koonz, Claudia. *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995)

- Upon the mention of Himmler's October 28th, 1939 directive advocating the birth of illegitimate children among SS, on pages 398-399 the author suggests this is just one of the many policies that essentially turned German women into nothing more than society's breeders. However like most articles on the subject, this author too argues that such strategies were ineffective – especially in the way Nazi women would be conveyed and “absorbed” into the life of motherhood. This book is unique in that it brings into picture female leaders among the Nazi regime who were angered by programs like Lebensborn that prioritized unwed mother. It showcases the Nazi paradox in which the regime encouraged women to pick up more active roles but then disregarded those roles through statements/policies like the one Himmler put forth and Lebensborn.

Bialas, Wolfgang, and Lothar Fritze, eds. *Nazi Ideology and Ethics*. (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014)

- This book revolves around all the broad definitions of the Nazi mentality, with one article in particular (“A Question of Honor” by Regina Mühlhäuser) that focuses on the sexuality/sexual actions of German soldiers. On page 169, the author directly references Himmler's directive on October 28, 1939 as the duty of German women and girls, not members of the SS, to become mothers of Aryan children and raise the German birth rate. This book emphasizes Himmler's directive in relation to German women, arguing that his policies were meant to “enlighten mothers” and break their traditional bonds over that of the SS members. Once again the author eludes to the opposition Himmler met with his radical ideas and states that the Reichsführer-SS started making his birth policies more secretive to avoid public backlash, like that of the directive on October 28, 1939.

Heinemann, Isabel. *Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut: Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas*. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2014)

- The significance of this book lies in its citation more than the work itself. On page 59, footnote 36 has the label “BA NS 2/276” which locates the original document of Himmler October 28th 1939 decree in the NS 2 collection at Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde. This is the same document that Westenrieder reprinted in his book that was cited by the GDHI website as the original source of the document's publication. In regards to the decree itself, Heinemann simply states that it was the judgment of Himmler to stimulate the fertility of SS

men especially during times of war when the German death rate was substantially higher than normal. Basically his October 28, 1939 decree was just another way to encourage illegitimacy among his men by suggesting there would be no repercussions in the aftermath.

Moore, Allison. *Sexual Myths of Modernity: Sadism, Masochism, and Historical Teleology* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016)

- Chapter seven is the most relevant section of this book since it discusses the sexual myths surrounding the Nazi regime and even directly references Himmler's October 28 directive. The author clears up this notion that Himmler's decree and the Lebensborn program promoted promiscuity within the Reich; these approaches were centered on illegitimacy only as it pertained to Aryan children. These could be seen more or less as "loop-holes" to Nazism's highly valued family unit, which came first and foremost in the regime, however they did not wish to have this system limit on raising of birth-rates. To some extent, Moore interprets the directive other illegitimate policies as a means to uphold the positive eugenics goal of the Reich, since through the encouragement of racially pure births Nazis wanted to mitigate the reproduction of the racially unfit.