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**Liberal Women and National  
Socialism. (Dis)continuities  
in Conceptions of Race, Space,  
and Social Policy, 1930–1939**

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## Eric Kurlander

### Liberal Women and National Socialism. (Dis)continuities in Conceptions of Race, Space, and Social Policy, 1930-1939

#### 1. Introduction

In March 1933, the liberal Gertrud Bäumer published a critical editorial in her feminist monthly, *Die Frau*. What would the Third Reich do for women, she asked, “the last ‘class’” who had struggled so hard for their rights and for whom “everything is once again open to question?” In dismissing everything in the Weimar constitution as an “error of baseless liberalism” and viewing “man as the single carrier of all decisive state power,” the Nazi movement was simply wrong.<sup>1</sup> And yet Bäumer and some liberal colleagues were also cautiously optimistic about aspects of Hitler’s national and social program.<sup>2</sup> As Bäumer wrote Emmy Beckmann in April 1933, “A new, spiritually different phase of the women’s movement has arrived, and I personally have the desire to join it.”<sup>3</sup> The Nazi “focus on

women’s biological functions, rights, and duties,” Bäumer believed, might help “to forge bonds across the boundaries of class” in solving “modernity’s current ills.”<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, many liberal women saw opportunities for participation and accommodation as well as opposition in the Third Reich.<sup>5</sup> Which is

women’s movement in a real sense and that it begins to fight.” Bäumer to Koenig, 7.29.33, in: Beckmann, *Lebens*.

<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Canning: *Languages of Labor and Gender*. Ann Arbor 2002, p. 190; Kevin Repp: *Reformers, critics, and the paths of German modernity: anti-politics and the search for alternatives. 1890 - 1914*, Cambridge 2000, p. 147.

<sup>5</sup> Wendy Lower: *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*, Boston 2013; Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East*, New Haven 2003; Kathrin Kompisch: *Täterinnen. Frauen im Nationalsozialismus*, Köln 2008; Nicole Kramer: *Volksgenossinnen an der Heimatfront. Mobilisierung, Verhalten, Erinnerung*. Göttingen 2011; Sybille Steinbacher (Hg.): *Volksgenossinnen: Frauen in der NS-Volksgemeinschaft*, Göttingen 2007; Also see Adelheid von Saldern: “Victims or Perpetrators? Controversies about the Role of Women in the Nazi State”, in: Christian Leitz (ed.): *The Third Reich*, Oxford 1999, p. 207-228; Jill Stephenson: *Women in Nazi Society*, New York 2001; Gisela Bock: *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik*, Opladen 1986; Ann Taylor Allen: *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany*, New Brunswick, p. 230-234. For a summary of this debate, see Attina Grossmann: “Feminist Debates about Women and National Socialism”, in: *Gender & History*, v. 3 (Autumn 1991), p. 350-358; Also see assorted essays in Renate Bridenthal / Atina Grossman / Marion Kaplan (eds.): *When Biology was Destiny*, New York 1984; Kirsten Heinsohn / Barbara Vogel / Ulrike Weckel (Hg.): *Zwischen Karriere und Verfolgung. Handlungsräume von Frauen im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, Frankfurt 1997; Ilse Boroth / Barbara Serloth (Hg.): *Gebroche Kontinuitäten? Zur Rolle und Bedeutung der Geschlechtsverhältnisse in der Entwicklung des Nationalsozialismus*, Innsbruck 2000; Repp, *Reformers*; Lora Wildenthal: *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945*, Durham 2001; Can-

<sup>1</sup> See Gertrud Bäumer: “Die Frauen in der Volks- und Staatskrise”, in: *Die Frau (DF)* 6 (March 1933), in: Bundesarchiv (BArch), NL Bäumer, N 1076, S. 13.

<sup>2</sup> “Pulled back and forth between individualistic motives and social motives of diverse shades, they [social theorists] have still not arrived at a unified and well-founded ‘social ethos’ and cultural policy”. See Gertrud Bäumer: *Die soziale Idee in den Weltanschauungen des 19. Jahrhunderts. Die Grundzüge der modernen Sozialphilosophie*, Heilbronn 1910, S. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Bäumer to Beckmann, 4.13.33, in: Emmy Beckmann (Hg.): *Des Lebens wie der liebe Band. Briefe Gertrud Bäumer*, Tübingen 1956. Within the NSDAP, “[y]ou can see that even here there exists a

why liberal women provide an interesting case study for examining the ideological affinities between liberalism and Nazism, not to mention the space for resistance and collaboration in the Third Reich. I will take up the question of liberal women's responses to Nazism in three respects: the politics of "racial community", the pursuit of empire, and social policy. The spectrum of liberal women's responses, I argue, was both ambivalent and distinctive, reflecting a particular set of concerns that helped define the liberal women's movement before and after 1933.

## 2. The Politics of Race and Volksgemeinschaft

This cautious optimism was as much the result of longer term ideological traditions within the liberal movement as shorter-term concerns about Weimar's viability.<sup>6</sup> In the wake of Ver-

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ning, Languages; Kevin Passmore: *Women, Gender and Fascism, 1919-1945*, Manchester 2003.

<sup>6</sup> The primary challenge for Weimar democracy, according to Bäumer, was the tension between "national"- and "rational democracy"—and many liberals agreed that there needed to be as much emphasis on the former as the latter. Monika Faßbender: "Zum Briefwechsel zwischen Anton Erkelenz und Gertrud Bäumer, 1933", in: *JzLF*, v. 2, Baden-Baden 1990, S. 150-156; also see Gertrud Bäumer: *Die Seelische Krisis*, Berlin 1924, S. 10, 17; Werner Huber: *Gertrud Bäumer. Eine politische Biographie*, Augsburg 1970, S. 351-355; Eric Kurlander: *The Price of Exclusion: Ethnicity, National Identity and the Decline of German Liberalism, 1898-1933*, New York 2006, pp. 251-260, 347-353; Bruce Frye: *Liberal Democrats in the Weimar Republic: the history of the German Democratic Party and the German State Party*, Carbondale 1985, p. 88-117, 131-132, 164-194; Lothar Albertin / Konstantin Wegener (Hg.): *Linksliberalismus in der Weimarer Republik*, Düsseldorf 1980, S. 464-471, 576-591; Renate Bridenthal / Claudia Koonz: "Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Weimar Women in Politics and Work", in: Renate Bridenthal et al. (eds.): *When Biology became Destiny*, New York

sailles and Depression, liberal women defended the republican order, urging voters not to abandon the erstwhile liberal parties.<sup>7</sup> Bäumer and Marianne Weber both protested the democratic State Party's decision to endorse the Enabling Law as well.<sup>8</sup> But having warned

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1984; Attina Grossman: "Abortion and Economic Crisis: The 1931 Campaign Against Paragraph 218", in: Bridenthal, *Biology*; Elisabeth Meyer-Renschhausen: "The Bremen Morality Scandal", in: Bridenthal, *Biology*; Renate Bridenthal: "'Professional' Housewives: Stepsisters of the Women's Movement," in: Bridenthal, *Biology*, p. 33-108; also see Barbara Greven-Aschoff: *Die buergerliche Frauenbewegung in Deutschland 1894-1933*, Göttingen 1981; Heide-Marie Lauterer: *Parlamentarierinnen in Deutschland 1918/19-1949*, Königstein 2002; Raffael Scheck: *Mothers of the Nation: Right-Wing Women in Weimar Germany*, Oxford 2004; Julia Sneeringer: *Winning Women's Votes: Propaganda and Politics in Weimar Germany*, Chapel Hill 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Huber, Bäumer, S. 353-357.

<sup>8</sup> "The German people are called upon to make decisions over general trends in plebiscitary fashion, but not over clearly-articulated political questions." See Bäumer, *Frauen*, S. 13; Eberhard Pikart (Hg.): *Theodor Heuss: Der Mann, das Werk, die Zeit*, Tübingen 1967, S. 178-179. Nazi attempts to revise the Weimar constitution revealed "a passionate and... unjustified struggle" against republican principles in which "popular democratic ideas and convictions are noticeably mixed with fascist authoritarian ones." Marie Luise Bach: *Gertrud Bäumer. Biographische Daten und Texte zu einem Persönlichkeitsbild*, Weinheim 1989, S. 4-5; also see Bäumer, *Frauen*, S. 13. Huber, Bäumer, S. 148-169. Bäumer likewise went out of her way to show that women were less attracted to Hitler than men. „56% der Frauen fuer Hindenburg (48% der Maenner), 33,6% fuer Hitler (35,9% der Maenner) und rund 10,4% fuer Thaelmann gegen 15,4% der Maenner." Gertrud Bäumer: *Der neue Weg der deutschen Frau*, Stuttgart 1946, S. 30-36. If Germany required a Führer who could unite all Germans behind a common national and social mission, liberal women far preferred a liberal Naumann or Steesemann to a fascist Hitler or Strasser. Bäumer,

against the Nazis' "primitive instinct of violence and fear," Bäumer believed privately that "the inhuman elements of the regime" might be ameliorated over time.<sup>9</sup> A "kernel" of Friedrich Naumann's National-Social tradition was preserved in National Socialism, Bäumer contended,<sup>10</sup> particularly a commitment to eugenics, social welfare, and the integrity of the German empire.<sup>11</sup>

Such statements cannot be dismissed as a sign of cynical accommodation. Bäumer and at least some colleagues truly believed that the "progressive" elements of National Socialism might be coopted, "that the dilettantish, unreflective [*undurchdachten*] phrases of the National Socialist program," in Bäumer's words, "could no longer hold up against the more intelligent portion of its followers" who wanted to work positively towards the "solution of Germany's most fateful questions [*Schicksalfragen*]." <sup>12</sup> Germany had tried democracy

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Krisi, S. 140-141; Repp, *Reformers*, pp. 104-138, 300-312; Heide-Marie Lauterer: *Liebestätigkeit für die Volksgemeinschaft*, Göttingen 1994; Ute Planert (Hg.): *Nation, Politik und Geschlecht. Frauenbewegungen und Nationalismus in der Moderne*, Frankfurt 2000; Robert G. Moeller: *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in Postwar Germany*, Berkeley 1993, pp. 8-20, 122-141.

<sup>9</sup> Huber, Bäumer, S. 360-361.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Huber, Bäumer, S. 187-192, 292-295. When Heuss contacted Bäumer in February to indict the "deep-seated causes of a spiritual, national kind" which seemed to have brought about Hitler's victory, Bäumer was notably silent. See letter from Heuss to Bäumer, 2.03.34, in: BArch, NL Heuss, N 1221, S. 77. Also see "Zum Bruch mit dem Völkerbund" by Bäumer, *Frauen*, S. 13.

<sup>12</sup> "I am convinced," she concluded, "that Naumann's national-social world of ideas provides an especially suitable point of departure" for the inevitable debate between progressive and conservative forces within National Socialism; Martina Neumann: *Theodor Tantzen. Ein widerspenstiger Liberaler gegen den Nationalsozialismus*, Hannover

for fifteen years before 1933, and it had seemingly failed. Women's political marginalization had also accelerated well before the Nazi seizure of power.<sup>13</sup>

Liberal women were consequently willing to give Hitler the benefit of the doubt on some matters – not because they accepted Nazism's violent methods or demagogic rhetoric, but because some elements of Nazism seemed to carry the potential for real reform.<sup>14</sup> By attempting to construct a more inclusive, "feminized" vision of the German *Volksgemeinschaft*, liberal women might at least partially

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1998, S. 265; Angelika Schaser: *Helene Lange und Gertrud Bäumer. Eine politische Lebensgemeinschaft*, Köln 2000, S. 288.

<sup>13</sup> Ann Taylor Allen: *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany*, New Brunswick 1991, pp. 234-236; In 1930 only two liberal women – Bäumer and Marie Lüders – remained in the Reichstag, and they possessed little voice in parliament or on the relevant committees. See Schaser, Lange, S. 247-248; Angelika Schaser: "Bürgerliche Frauen auf dem Weg in die linksliberalen Parteien (1908 - 1933)", in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 263 (1996), S. 641-680; Lauterer, *Parlamentarierinnen*, S. 68-83; also see Greven-Aschoff, *Frauenbewegung*, S. 161-162; Huber, Bäumer, S. 364.

<sup>14</sup> As Annemarie Doherr put it, there was no denying the positive aspects to Nazi attempts to reinvigorate national and social life. The movement's only real limitation lay "in the limits that the National Socialist state idea sets for the cooperation of women in administration, policy making, and occupational organization." Annemarie Doherr: "Die Frauenwirtschaftskammer in Hamburg", in: *DF* 11/33. Also see Else Ulich-Beil: "Familie, Volk und Staat", in: *DF* 3/33; Those who considered everything in Weimar an "error of baseless liberalism," Bäumer announced in March 1933, were equally mistaken in viewing "man as the single carrier of all decisive state power." See Bäumer, *Frauen*, S. 13; Greven-Aschoff, *Frauenbewegung*, S. 186; Repp, *Reformers*, pp. 105-147; Canning, *Languages*, pp. 170-217. See also Dagmar Herzog: *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany*, Princeton 2005.

undermine the dominant masculinist discourse<sup>15</sup> Even in Nazi Germany, Bäumer wrote Weber, there were always new spheres and diverse ways in which one could promote women's rights and responsibilities.<sup>16</sup>

Liberal women's views on the "Jewish Question" were also complex. In the 1920s some complained that Bäumer was only reelected chair of the BDF over the gifted Alice Salmon due to her successful exploitation of anti-Semitic stereotypes among liberal women.<sup>17</sup> The merger with the Young Germans, Bäumer wrote Beckmann: "will bring us out of the one-sided asphalt-democratic Jewish atmosphere."<sup>18</sup> This included instructions to women to contribute to the "racial community" and mission to unite German "peoples and races under one scepter."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> According to the Evangelischen Frauenzeitung, "We do not oppose National Socialism as a party, but only in its position vis-à-vis the woman." Greven-Aschoff, *Frauenbewegung*, S. 188. See essays in Stephanie Gilmore (ed.): *Feminist Coalitions. Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*, Champaign 2008; Estelle B. Freedman: *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*, London 2003; Kathleen Canning: *Gender History in Practice. Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class, and Citizenship*, Ithaca 2006, pp. 50-51.

<sup>16</sup> See letters in Beckmann, *Lebens*, S. 33-45, 194-195.

<sup>17</sup> Bärbel Meurer / Marianne Weber (Hg.): *Beiträge zu Werk und Person*, Tübingen 2004, S. 26-29.

<sup>18</sup> In the pages of *Die Frau* Bäumer also "employed racist argumentation and thereby sanctioned it." Greven-Aschoff, *Frauenbewegung*, S. 186.

<sup>19</sup> See assorted articles by Dorothee van Velsen: "Frauen, Volk und Staat"; Else Ulrich-Beil: "Familie, Volk, und Staat"; Luise Scheffen-Döring: "Einige Gedanken zur Aussenpolitik", in: DF 3/33, in: BArch, NL Bäumer, N 1076, S. 13; Greven-Aschoff, *Frauenbewegung*, S. 186.

As she witnessed the consequences of Nazi anti-Semitism after 1933, however, Bäumer frequently contradicted this völkisch creed and published scathing articles attacking Nazi Judeophobia.<sup>20</sup> She condemned the Law for the Protection of the Civil Service and solicited articles from non-Aryans like Marie Baum and Camilla Jellinek.<sup>21</sup> In 1936 Bäumer published a lead article in *Die Frau* arguing that an individual's intellect and values were more important than "composing hereditary charts and maintaining the purity of the blood."<sup>22</sup> For Bäumer and colleagues like Jellinek there was no contradiction in criticizing Nazi anti-Semitism while still accepting the overarching völkisch ideology on which anti-Semitic persecution was based.<sup>23</sup>

The part-Jewish Democratic social reformer Marie Baum refused to accept her legal marginalization.<sup>24</sup> Baum's first real experience of Nazi anti-Semitism occurred during the 1 April 1933 boycott when a group of stormtroopers forbade her – as an "Aryan" – from entering a Jewish store. Ironically, Baum

<sup>20</sup> Greven-Aschoff, *Frauenbewegung*, S. 186.

<sup>21</sup> See articles by Bäumer and Baum, in: DF 7/34; Lauterer, *Parlamentarierinnen*, S. 204-207.

<sup>22</sup> See Gertrud Bäumer: "Die seelischen Erbwerte," in: DF 1/36.

<sup>23</sup> Lauterer, *Parlamentarierinnen*, S. 213-216; Camilla Jellinek: "Zum Gesetz über die Anwendung deutschen Rechtes bei der Ehescheidung vom 24. Januar 1935.", in: DF 5/35; also see Klaus Kempster: *Die Jellineks 1820 - 1955. Eine familienbiographische Studie zum deutschjüdischen Bildungsbürgertum*, Düsseldorf 1998; "The Martyrdom of a German Who Was No Longer Permitted to be German," criticizing Nazi racial policies and anti-Semitism.. Camilla Jellinek: "Martyrium einer Deutschen, die nicht mehr Deutsche sein durfte.", in: DF 3/35; Jellinek to Lüders, 2.14.33, in: BArch, NL Lüders, N 1151, S. 245; Kempster, *Jellineks*, S. 497-501.

<sup>24</sup> Heide-Marie Lauterer: "Marie Baum und der Heidelberger Freundeskreis", in: Meurer / Weber, *Beiträge*, S. 91-107.

was simultaneously relieved of her lectureship at the University of Heidelberg owing to her Jewish heritage and lost her civil service position in the foreign office.<sup>25</sup> Baum became preoccupied with “Jewish Question”, in contrast to most of her Jewish and gentile colleagues.<sup>26</sup> Baum would spend hours recording the fates of every Jewish friend, colleague, and neighbor.<sup>27</sup> Such stories moved Baum to join the “‘other Germany’ come together at that time in smaller or larger groups, in order to help the persecuted and sponsor emigration, especially of children and young people.”<sup>28</sup>

Bäumer herself solicited articles from ‘non-Aryans’ like Baum and Jellinek in order to push back against Nazi racism.<sup>29</sup> Bäumer and her colleagues’ may have made a cautious intellectual investment in a movement that, for all its faults, seemed capable of fulfilling elements of Friedrich Naumann’s National-Social vision that the Republic had not.<sup>30</sup> But where

<sup>25</sup> Baum stressed how many of these non-Aryan victims “belonged to the Christian community”. Marie Baum: *Rückblick auf mein Leben*, Heidelberg 1950, S. 276-279, 281-286; Lauterer, *Parlamentarierinnen*, S. 221-222.

<sup>26</sup> For more on the phenomenon of German-Jewish “distancing”, see Till van Rahden: “Mingling, Marrying and Distancing: Jewish Integration in Wilhelminian Breslau and Its Erosion in Early Weimar Germany”, in: Wolfgang Benz (ed.): *Jews in the Weimar Republic*, Tübingen 1998, S. 193-217.

<sup>27</sup> Baum, *Rückblick*, S. 282-286; Lauterer, *Parlamentarierinnen*, S. 223-225.

<sup>28</sup> Baum, *Rückblick*, S. 280-288; Also see Lauterer, Marie Baum, S. 107-108; Julius Schätzle: *Stationen zur Hölle. Konzentrationslager in Baden und Württemberg 1933-1945*, Frankfurt 1980.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-106; Schaser, Lange, S. 287-26, 300-96; as late as May 1940, Bäumer announced proudly that many women from the old (liberal) “associations” would like to have a readers’ letters section in DF to reinvigorate the sense of community that existed before 1933. Beckmann, *Lebens*, S. 135.

<sup>30</sup> “Moreover, in the case of some of these ideas – notably Social Darwinism – it is often hard to dis-

affinities did not exist – such as the Nazi penchant for violence, biological determinism, and a repudiation of basic civil rights – women were willing and able to question the gap between Nazi rhetoric and reality.<sup>31</sup>

### 3. Liberal Women for Nazi Empire?

Liberal women were no less imperialist than their male colleagues.<sup>32</sup> Most had supported

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entangle the genuinely liberal from the potentially totalitarian. Also, even if the German women’s movement had largely succumbed to the protofascist ideas by 1914, this did make it inevitable that it would support the advent of genuine fascism in 1930-33... Finally, it should be borne in mind that feminist movements in other countries were also turning to the right at the same time, and that elsewhere too there was a general retreat from liberalism in the 1920s. These developments, then, were not confined to Germany, even if the form they took there was rather different from – ultimately much more violent and destructive than – the form they took in other countries.” Richard J. Evans: *The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894-1933*, London 1976, pp. 273-275; also see Repp, *Reformers*, pp. 300-312; Huber, Bäumer, S. 364.

<sup>31</sup> Beckmann, *Lebens*, S. 96-100, 150; Heide-Marie Lauterer: “Fürchte Dich nicht”, in: *JzLF*, v. 17 (2005), S. 91-98.

<sup>32</sup> James Sheehan: *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century*, Chicago 1978, pp. 246-264; Theodor Heuss; Friedrich Naumann: *Der Mann, das Werk, die Zeit*, München 1968, S. 31-35, 126-127, 144-145. See Kurlander, *Price*, pp. 21-116; Friedrich Sell: *Die Tragödie des deutschen Liberalismus*, Baden-Baden 1981, S. 286-298, 361-362; Sheehan, *German Liberalism*, pp. 258-283; Dieter Lange-wiesche: *Liberalism in Germany*, Princeton 1999, pp. 7-11; Frye, *Liberal Democrats*, pp. 6-20, 88-101; Repp, *Reformers*, pp. 104-138, 300-312; Wolfgang Mommsen: “Wandlungen der liberalen Idee im Zeitalter des Liberalismus”, in: Karl Holl / Günther List (Hg.): *Liberalismus und imperialistischer Staat*, Göttingen 1975, S. 109-148; Lothar Gall: “Sündenfall’ des liberalen Denkens oder Krise der bürgerli-

nationalist and imperialist goals before 1918 and continued to want a radical revision to the Versailles Treaty thereafter.<sup>33</sup> Many saw the Third Reich as a vehicle for making Friedrich Naumann's decades-old dream of *Mitteleuropa* into a reality. In the years after 1919, a myriad of Democrats expressed the desire for a political and/or economic union comprising much of Central Europe and spearheaded by a Greater Germany. Some already employed the term "living space" in the 1920s.<sup>34</sup> For Elisabeth Bronner-Höpfner, the self-determination of Baltic Germans in the Memel region demanded greater priority from the Weimar government. Equally frustrating to many Democrats was the government's unwillingness to

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chen-liberalen Bewegung?", in: Holl / List, Liberalismus, S. 109-148.

<sup>33</sup> See Larry Jones: German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party System, North Carolina 1988, pp. 12-40; Lothar Albertin: Liberalismus und Demokratie am Anfang der Weimarer Republik, Düsseldorf 1972, S. 64-67, 143-145, 321-323; Frye, Democrats, pp. 48-57, 101-117; Lothar Albertin: „Das Friedensthema bei den Linksliberalen vor 1914: Die Schwäche ihrer Argumente und Aktivitäten“, in: Holl / List, Liberalismus, S. 89-108; Jürgen C. Heß: Das ganze Deutschland soll es sein. Demokratischer Nationalismus in der Weimarer Republik am Beispiel der Deutschen Demokratischen Partei, Stuttgart 1978, S. 317-369; Lora Wildenthal: German Women for Empire, Durham 2001, pp. 54-202; Heß, Deutschland, S. 187-277; also see Thomas Goethel: Demokratie und Volkstum: Die Politik gegenüber den nationalen Minderheiten in der Weimarer Republik, Köln 2002.

<sup>34</sup> See for example Josef Wünschuh: „Der Aufgabenrahmen des Unternehmers in der staatlichen Wirtschaftslenkung“, in: Stahl und Eisen, v. 58 (1938), Nr. 24, S. 650-652; Wünschuh speech, 12.19.41, „Formen der neuen wirtschaftlichen Denkart“, in: BArch, NL Wünschuh, N 1223, S. 71; Ingo Haar: Historiker im Nationalsozialismus, Göttingen 2000, S. 362-366; Frye, Democrats, pp. 130-131; See Bäumer, „Ursprung und Sinn des Arbeitdienstes in Deutschland“, in: BArch, NL Bäumer, N 1076, S. 5.

discuss the German Tyrol.<sup>35</sup> Bäumer and Marie Lüders were not alone in wondering why first Stresemann and later Hitler were not moving faster to unite all Germans “under one scepter.”<sup>36</sup>

Once Hitler showed a willingness to pursue a revision of the Versailles Treaty in the interest of creating a “Greater Germany,”<sup>37</sup> many liberal women endorsed aspects of Hitler's foreign policy as well as his decision to reinstitute general conscription in March 1935.<sup>38</sup> In her 1936 book *The Unknown Army*, Lüders even urged Hitler's General Staff to modify the new Army Law [*Wehrgesetz*] to permit a women's

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<sup>35</sup> See letters, articles, minutes, in: BArch, NL Bronner-Höpfner, N 1026, S. 9, 17, 18, 29; Frye, Democrats, pp. 127-131.

<sup>36</sup> Lauterer, Parlamentarierinnen, S. 207-215; Dietrich to von Richthoffen, 12.28.33, in: BArch, NL Dietrich, N 1004, S. 154; Dorothee van Velsen: Frauen; Else Ulrich-Beil: Eingliederung; Luise Schefen-Döring; Gedanken, in: DF 3/33; also see Letter from Heuss to Bäumer, 2.03.34, in: BArch, NL Heuss, N 1221, S. 77. Also see Gertrud Bäumer: “Zum Bruch mit dem Völkerbund”, in: DF 11/ 33.; Bäumer, folder marked Vorträge z.T. unvollständig [1947-48], in BArch, N 1076, S. 5.

<sup>37</sup> As Bäumer conceded to the Allies in 1946, “I saw the possibility of a revision of the Versailles Treaty and my belief in such an opportunity was strengthened by the armistice with France.” See folder „Auf den Krieg bezugliche Aufsätze“, in: BArch, NL Bäumer, N 1076, S. 5; Bäumer to Weber, 5.10.40: in Beckmann, Lebens, S. 135.

<sup>38</sup> Reiner Burger: Theodor Heuss als Journalist, Hamburg 1998, S. 341-343; Lauterer, Parlamentarierinnen, S. 215-216; Dietz to Gerland, 8.29.36; Gerland to Dietz, 9.17.36, in: BArch, NL Gerland, N 1010, S. 11; See Karen Hagemann / Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Hg.): Heimat-Front. Militär und Geschlechtsverhältnisse im Zeitalter der Weltkriege, Frankfurt 2002; Andrea Süchting-Hänger: Das ‘Gewissen der Nation.’ Nationales Engagement und politisches Handeln konservativer Frauenorganisationen 1900-1937, Düsseldorf 2002.

draft in peacetime.<sup>39</sup> Hitler's Chief of Staff Blomberg contributed the forward while the Nazi Education Ministry considered promoting her work "as objective and psychologically preparatory material" for the military.<sup>40</sup>

To be sure, liberal women continually wrestled with the tension between their enthusiasm for territorial revision and disdain for the Nazi regime's aggressive methods.<sup>41</sup> Pleased by the

<sup>39</sup> See letters from Lüders to Hans Bott Verlag, 2.02.36, 6.16.36, to Blomberg, 5.04.37, 2.02.36. BArch, NL Lüders, N 1151, S. 326; also see See Lüders 1935 draft of the article, "Gesetz über Frauen dienstplicht", 1936 notes on the articles, "Betrifft Untersuchung der Möglichkeiten des maximalen und optimalen Einsatzes weiblicher Arbeitskräfte zum Ersatz von Männern in der Kriegswirtschaft", and finally the 1937 articles, "Vormerkungen für die Beschaffung von Fach- und Ersatzarbeitern für die Durchführung des Vierjahresplanes," and "Arbeits-einteilung Centrale". BArch, NL Lüders, N 1151, S. 156.

<sup>40</sup> See Lüders correspondence, 11.17.36, 11.20.36, in: BArch, NL Lüders, N 1151, S. 156. Not surprisingly Bäumer accorded The Unknown Army a glowing review in the pages of DF, citing the long tradition of women liberals' support for a strong military and empire. Gertrud Bäumer: "Das unbekannte Heer", in: DF 12/35; also see assorted articles about rearmament, Gertrud Bäumer / Magnus von Hausen: "Wehrhaft und friedensbereit"; Gertrud Bäumer, "Wie entwickelt sich die Rechtstellung der deutschen Frau", in: DF 6/35; Gertrud Bäumer: "Frauenaufgaben im Kriege", in: DF 5/40; Gertrud Bäumer: "Arbeitsdienstplicht im Rahmen der deutschen Frauenerziehung", in: DF 10/40.

<sup>41</sup> The letters from this time reflect how earnestly Bäumer struggled with this inner conflict, how profoundly affected she was by the need of the people, and how much she wanted to help carry the suffering of those who were robbed of their sons." Beckmann, *Lebens*, S. 117. Horst Sassin: *Liberale im Widerstand. Die Robinsohn-Strassman Gruppe. 1934-1942*, S. 275-276; See marginal comments in 1935 article, "Deutsche Sängerschaft", in: BArch, N 1042, S. 137. Also see memoirs in Hergard Robel (Hg.): *Wilhelm Külz: Ein Liberaler zwischen Ost und*

quick victory over Poland, Bäumer nonetheless had enough compassion to worry about the casualties on both sides. She confessed to Marianne Weber how moving it was to read a soldier's letter from the Battle of Warsaw describing how "everyone had come together, Germans and Poles, men and women, to help the wounded." "I sacrifice myself not for the government," Bäumer intoned three weeks later, "I sacrifice myself for Germany."<sup>42</sup> In May 1941, after Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess made a tragicomic attempt to fly to England and negotiate peace with Great Britain, Bäumer grumbled to Beckmann: "A greater moral defeat is hard to imagine ... I am embarrassed."<sup>43</sup> How to celebrate Christmas, Bäumer wondered in December 1941, when Hitler was drafting 17-year old boys into military service and workers were laboring 7-day weeks for meager pay.<sup>44</sup>

West. Aufzeichnungen 1947-1948, Oldenbourg 1989, S. 7-24, 43-46; Joachim Scholtyseck: *Robert Bosch und der liberale Widerstand gegen Hitler 1933 bis 1945*, München 1999, S. 176-182; Gertrud Bäumer: "Der Sinn der Erde", in: DF 12/36; See Catalogue of Hitler's speeches on various questions 1923 to 1940 followed by "Parteiparolen" and "Kalendersprüche"; Lüders to Veltchen, 3.29.33, in: BArch, NL Lüders, N 1151, S. 326; Lauterer, *Parlamentarierinnen*, S. 212-215; Lüders to Neurath, 10.08.36; Lüders to Blomberg, 5.04.37, in: BArch, NL Lüders, N 1151, S. 326. Also see Lauterer, *Parlamentarierinnen*, S. 215-219.

<sup>42</sup> Gertrud Bäumer to Marianne Weber, 10.02.39, 12.27.39, in: Beckmann, *Lebens*, S. 125-134.

<sup>43</sup> Gertrud Bäumer to Beckmann, 5.15.41, in: *ibid.*, S. 146-147.

<sup>44</sup> Gertrud Bäumer to Ritter, 12.25.41, Graefe, 1.13.42, Beckmann, 2.10.42, in: Beckmann, *Lebens*, S. 165-181; also see Andrea Wagner: "Ein Human Development Index für Deutschland: Die Entwicklung des Lebensstandards von 1920 bis 1960", in: *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, Nr. 2, (2003), S. 171-199; Richard Overby: *War and Economy in the Third Reich*, Oxford 1995, pp. 205-232, 259-314.



Even passionate critics of the regime, recalled Marie Baum, found it difficult to “wish for a defeat of one’s own fatherland rather than a victory under Hitler’s rule.”<sup>45</sup> Could patriotic liberals really abandon their government in the midst of war, particularly with the Soviet Union now bearing down on them from the East? Hence Bäumer and other liberals chastised Britain and America for encouraging a criminal Soviet regime to run roughshod over Europe. How could Churchill and Roosevelt claim to seek Germany’s liberation while Stalin destroyed all vestiges of democracy and civil rights in every country he conquered?<sup>46</sup> In supporting the Nazi war effort, liberal women severed long-term contacts to liberal colleagues abroad, undermined friendships with pacifist colleagues at home, and compromised thirty years of work toward international understanding.<sup>47</sup>

If liberal women sacrificed much in their efforts to justify Nazi foreign policy, their changing attitude toward German nationalism and imperialism in the wake of Stalingrad was equally sincere. In July 1943 Bäumer wrote Weber about the need to return to the more liberal, humanistic values of the Weimar years.<sup>48</sup> *Die Frau* attempted to publish articles describing the refugee situation and the bottlenecks in armaments production, which the regime would not allow. By early 1944, Bäumer, like most of her liberal colleagues, saw nothing in Hitler’s Third Reich worth salvaging: “Everywhere a prison, and that is bit-

ter. Everywhere barbed wire, and that is a shame.”<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. Liberal Women and Social Policy

According to liberals, women were intrinsic to solving the social questions that preoccupied the Nazis.<sup>50</sup> Were not many goals of National Socialism, from eugenics to natalism to the welfare state, first articulated by the German women’s movement?<sup>51</sup> Just as importantly, Bäumer added, the Third Reich offered women new opportunities in the fields of “social policy, state and youth welfare.”<sup>52</sup> And yet “German women had [also] experienced a step

<sup>49</sup> „Überall ein Gitter, und das ist bitter. Überall ein Draht, und das ist schäd.“ Bäumer to Usinger, 2.03.44; Bäumer to van Velsen, 3.10.44; Bäumer to Graefe, 5.05.44, Bäumer to Wagner, 6.29.44, in: Beckmann, *Lebens*, 205-229.

<sup>50</sup> By regularly commemorating, quoting, and endorsing the views of Helene Lange, Gertrud Le Fort, Emma Enders, and other prewar feminists, DF helped (re)inscribe the language of liberalism into the biomaternalist discourse of the Third Reich see Bäumer, “Fiat”, in: DF 12/34; Emmy Beckmann: “Emma Ender zum 60. Geburtstag”, in: DF 9/35; Gertrud Bäumer: “Die Seniorin der europäischen Frauenbewegung”, in: DF 6/36; Gertrud Bäumer: “Zur geschichtlichen Tiefe der Frauenfrage”, in: DF 7/35.

<sup>51</sup> Gertrud Bäumer: “Die Frau und die Geschichte”, in: DF 2/37; After the 1937 Nuremberg party rally, which praised the role of German women in typically vague fashion, Bäumer asked why there were no more individuals like Henriette Schrader and Helene Lange – both well known left liberals – in the Third Reich: “Who will inherit their mantle? Not only in terms of the issues, but more than anything else in regard to their uncompromising and fearless attitude.” Gertrud Bäumer: “Vom ersten Aufruhr in der Mädchenbildung”, in: DF 11/37; Acknowledging natural distinctions between men and women was very different than subordinating the latter to the former. Stephenson, *Women*, p. 8.

<sup>52</sup> Gertrud Bäumer: “Zum ‘Status’ der deutschen Frau”, in: DF 9/37.

<sup>45</sup> Baum, *Rückblick*, S. 304; Gertrud Bäumer: “Internationale Frauenbewegung an der Wende”, in: DF 3/39.

<sup>46</sup> See article „Verratene Europe“ [1944], in: BArch, NL Bäumer, N 1076, S. 5; Bäumer to Graefe, 12.28.43, in: Beckmann, *Lebens*, S. 217.

<sup>47</sup> Schaser, Lange, S. 325-327.

<sup>48</sup> Bäumer to Weber, 7.28.43; Bäumer to Heuss, 9.07.43, in: Beckmann, *Lebens*, S. 194-197.

backwards in their professional and public opportunities for action.”<sup>53</sup> Women outnumbered men by the millions, meaning that many *could not expect* to return to the home.<sup>54</sup> What of families that depended on dual incomes or single mothers for survival? Did the state have the right to deprive families of their economic well-being?<sup>55</sup>

According to some liberals it was also matter of utilizing women’s natural organic proclivity for nurturing in fields like education, medicine, and social services.<sup>56</sup> Among ancient Germanic tribes, Bäumer argued, women were the priests, teachers, and medical assistants.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> See *ibid.*; also see Gertrud Bäumer: “Die falsche Emanzipation: Zur Stellung der Frau in der Sowjet-Union”, in: DF 10-11/41; Gertrud Bäumer: ‘A propos d’un anniversaire.’, in: DF 7/39.

<sup>54</sup> Annemarie Niemayer: “Zahlen sprechen”, in: DF 10/33; In 1925 the German economy employed nearly five million women younger than twenty-five. Could all such women be permanently replaced?” Gertrud Bäumer: “Panik über den Frauenberufen”, in: DF 11/33.

<sup>55</sup> How would that contribute to a healthy “racial community [Volksgemeinschaft].” Bäumer, Panik; also see Gertrud Bäumer: “Einsatz der Frau in der Nationalwirtschaft”, in: DF 2/39; As Bäumer happily related in DF the DAF’s Frauenamt reported 3.834 million active women members in 1938. Where women were as “productive” as men they likewise enjoyed the same salary or wages. Most remarkable, laws that had previously permitted employers to pay women 40% less than men had been revised in favor of women. Gertrud Bäumer: “Frauen schaffen 1938 und in Zukunft”, in: DF 1/39.

<sup>56</sup> Bäumer, Frauen schaffen; Too many people, Bäumer reasoned, accepted a simplistic view of the ‘good old days’, that belonged “in the rubbish bin of ‘national kitsch’ [in die Rumpelkammer des ‘nationalen Kitsch’].” Gertrud Bäumer: “Vom Gestern zum Morgen”, in: DF 10/33.

<sup>57</sup> Why couldn’t they fulfill “the sense and essence of National Socialism” as teachers, doctors, or academics in the Third Reich? Gertrud Bäumer: “Vom Bildungsziel der Frau im Lichte des NS und der Frauenbewegung”, in: DF 11/33.

Nazis who called for the removal of female doctors or professors neglected the lessons of history and biology.<sup>58</sup> It was not Germanic tradition but the Nazi appropriation of “the Anglo-Saxon model” that pushed women back into the home.<sup>59</sup> If women’s “natural” proclivities made them more suitable than men for some occupations, liberal women rejected the idea that “biology was destiny” in others, such as factory work and equal pay.<sup>60</sup> The number

<sup>58</sup> Bäumer, Panik; Favoring men regardless of qualifications therefore contradicted every free market principle, undermined the economy, and left women access only to the worst paid, least-skilled jobs. Gertrud Bäumer: “Bilanz 1934”, in: DF 1/35.

<sup>59</sup> Gertrud Bäumer: “Die Pflicht zur Wissenschaft”, in: DF 1/34; Bäumer’s complaint about the Victorian origins of Hitler’s “cult of domesticity” was not unique to liberals. According to Alfred Rosenberg, “The age of Victorianism and the ‘dreamy romantic girl’s life’ are naturally finished once and for all.... All educational opportunities must be open to her.” Through rhythmic gymnastics and sport the same care must be given to her physical training as is the case with men. Nor should any difficulties be created for her in the vocational world under present-day social conditions (whereby the Law for the Protection of Mothers should be more strongly implemented). Hence all possibilities for the development of a woman’s energies should remain open to her”. George L. Mosse: *Nazi Culture. Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich*, New York 1968, p. 40.

<sup>60</sup> Borrowing liberally from the Nazi Women’s Front leader Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, Bäumer declared, “In the more complicated social body of the present we need a female elite who can ‘think along [mitdenken]’ with the men due to their disciplinary training.” Yet how could women ever fulfill their “natural” role as mothers without access to well-paid jobs? Gertrud Bäumer: “Bilanz 1934”, in: DF 1/35. Women were not mere “employees,” but professionals who took the same initiative and responsibility as their male colleagues. Yet women’s interests were consistently ignored in terms of “determining work hours, vacation, pay, promotion in a profession, the division of the work day, health, [etc.]” Gertrud Bäumer: “Berufsschicksal der Wohl-

of women employed in the armament industry proved their value.<sup>61</sup>

Liberal women were also frustrated by changes in women's education.<sup>62</sup> The longtime educator Emmy Beckmann criticized so-called educational reforms, which dictated that girls would have less time for math and science than boys, privileging racial over scientific training in preparing primary school teachers, still largely a female profession.<sup>63</sup> Beckmann also rebuked a 1937 law abbreviating the length of secondary school, where women were already getting a subpar education.<sup>64</sup> In May 1937 Bäumer followed up with a critical appraisal of her own.<sup>65</sup> The average exam

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fahrtspflegerin", in: DF 9/35; also see Gertrud Bäumer: "Jugend- und Fürsorgeamt", in: DF 12/35.

<sup>61</sup> Gertrud Bäumer: "Einsatz der Frau in der Nationalwirtschaft", in: DF 2/39.

<sup>62</sup> How could women become effective professionals when they remained mostly untrained, uncompensated volunteers? In order to remedy this trend Bäumer demanded a complete "reform of the sense and content of mandatory civil service," which focused primarily on male military service. Gertrud Bäumer: "Frauendienstpflicht als Gegenwartsaufgabe", in: DF 10/35.

<sup>63</sup> The stereotype that women were discouraged intellectually by competing with men was completely undermined by the thousands of female university students engaged daily in "free intellectual exchange and competition with the opposite sex" in seminars across Germany. It was by separating women from men and offering them a less demanding curriculum that the regime risked creating a sense of intellectual inferiority. Emmy Beckmann: "Fragen der Mädchenbildung in der pädagogischen presse der letzten Monate", in: DF 10/35; also see Helmut Stubbe-da Luz: Emmy Beckmann (1880-1967). Hamburgs einflußreichste Frauenrechtlerin, in: Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte, v. 73 (1987), S. 97-138.

<sup>64</sup> Emmy Beckmann: "Fragen der Mädchenbildung", in: DF 1/37.

<sup>65</sup> Women performed better than men in 1932-33, with 70.4% passing their final exams to only 58.2%

scores of female students were higher than males across the board. Yet the new girls' curriculum was utterly useless "as preparation for the study of mathematics, and in the field of the natural sciences."<sup>66</sup> Women liberals attacked the sharp reduction in women earning higher degrees during the 1930s as well.<sup>67</sup>

If liberal women never accepted the regime's warmed-over "cult of domesticity", some did embrace the malleable concept of "racial community [*Volksgemeinschaft*]"<sup>68</sup> Bäumer praised the new law for "Protecting Mothers [*Mütterschutz*]" (17 May 1942). While pregnant women must leave any work that in-

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of the men. Well aware of the accusation that women's schools were less rigorous – a circular argument since the Nazis had made them that way – Bäumer sought to prove women's "superiority" by "a comparison of boys' schools that permitted girls: the number of those who didn't pass in the 1932 school year included 10% of boys and 5% of girls." Gertrud Bäumer: "Auswirkungen der Schulreform", in: DF 5/37; also see Claudia Huerkamp: *Bildungsbürgerinnen. Frauen im Studium und in akdaemischen Berufen 1900-1945*, Göttingen 1996.

<sup>66</sup> Condemning women to a watered down education and fewer job prospects was not the only consequence of the "reforms". For women educated in "domestic [*hauswirtschaftlich*]" matters could never be a true intellectual partner to their husbands or model for their children. Gertrud Bäumer: "Auswirkungen der Schulreform", in: DF 5/37.

<sup>67</sup> Gertrud Bäumer: "Bilanz 1934", in: DF 1/35; The only explanation for the lack of qualified women after 1933 was the regime's antipathy toward women pursuing advanced degrees. Gertrud Bäumer: "Die Frauen in den Rechts- und Sozialwissenschaften", in: DF 8/37.

<sup>68</sup> Gertrud Bäumer: "Vom Gestern zum Morgen", in: DF 10/33; As Dagmar Herzog makes evident in her recent study of sexuality in post-1945 Germany, the Nazis embraced a peculiar combination of liberal and conservative attitudes toward women and sexuality. According to Herzog, Nazi views had more in common with the sexual reform movements of the 1920s than the Christian conservatism of the 1950s Herzog, *Sex*, pp. 11-65.

volved dangerous chemicals or strain, they were protected from losing their job regardless of tenure. Women with state insurance [*gesetzliche Krankenversicherung*] were also paid their full salary for six weeks before and after birth. An employer could not release a worker while pregnant or for four months after delivery – a model for other European welfare states.<sup>69</sup>

In fact liberal women interpreted the *Volks-gemeinschaft* rather differently than their Nazi colleagues. Weimar had perhaps paid too much attention to the “physically and mentally sick elements” within the national community, Bäumer conceded, to the detriment of “the people as a whole [*Volksganze*].”<sup>70</sup> Anyone who looked at the development of liberalism since the 1890s, however, should appreciate its efforts toward both the individual and the whole society. The strength of the Weimar welfare state was its concern for the sick or defenseless individual as well as the national community; it did not discard human beings who failed to contribute to the health of the “racial community [*Volksgemeinschaft*].”<sup>71</sup> Welfare policy needed to include “a sphere for compassion [*Nächstenliebe*] ... precisely toward such human beings, for whom, from the material perspective of pure racial values any efforts must be wasted.”<sup>72</sup> For this reason, liberals had strong reservations regarding the

indiscriminacy of the Nazi eugenics program.<sup>73</sup> Rather than eliminating “life unworthy of life,” the state needed to provide more programs to address the social consequences of industrialization: dangerous or unsanitary workplaces, higher infant mortality among the poor, the proliferation of working mothers, and the lack of safe and affordable housing.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Gertrud Bäumer: “Die internationale Bedeutung des deutschen Mutterschutzgesetzes”, in: DF 10-11/42.

<sup>70</sup> Gertrud Bäumer: “Der Sinn der Wohlfahrtspflege und die Frauenarbeit”, in: DF 3/35.

<sup>71</sup> Revising the traditionally “liberalistic view of the lack of responsibility of the individual toward the whole and the whole toward the individual.” Der Sinn der Wohlfahrtspflege und die Frauenarbeit”, in: DF 3/35.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.. For more on the Nazi use of “racism as social policy”, see Detlev Peukert: *Inside the Third Reich*, New Haven/London 1987, pp. 208-235.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Weindling: *Health, Race and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 146-153, 388-392. Also see Luca Dotti: *L’utopia eugenetica de welfare state svedese, 1934-1975: il programma socialdemocratico di sterilizzazione, aborto e castrazione*, Soverio 2004; Astrid Ley: *Zwangssterilisation und Ärzteschaft: Hintergründe und Ziele ärztlichen Handelns 1934-1945*, Frankfurt, 2004; Rather than defend sterilization, Bäumer downplayed its severity and distinctiveness: “A legal framework for sterilizing those unworthy of reproducing, if that is what is meant, exists, as far as I know with women’s approval, in almost all great democracies.” Gertrud Bäumer: „Internationale Frauenbewegung an der Wende”, in: DF 3/39; Bäumer dismissed the Nazis’ artificial division between socially and biologically-determined disease, from the supposedly lazy or “workshy” to the dubious category of “imbecile.” Why should women who would do everything to keep their children healthy be barred from motherhood because of a higher potential of hereditary illness, when so many racially ‘healthy’ women end up with poorly raised or neglected children? “Eindrücke und Meinungen: Fragen einer Mutter. Zum Erbgesundheitsgesetz”, in: DF 3/35.

<sup>74</sup> Gertrud Bäumer: “Nächstenliebe und Fernstenliebe: Gedanken zum Winterhilfswerk”, in: DF 12/38; for more on the relative effectiveness of Winterhilfswerk, see Michael Burleigh: *The Third Reich. A New History*, New York 2000, pp. 223-228; One needed a combination of “compassion toward those close to you and those who are farther [*Nächstenliebe und Fernstenliebe*]” to counter any faceless, state bureaucracy that neglected the individual. Quoting Martin Luther, Bäumer admonished the regime: “wherever it is harmful (to men), the law should bend and give ... The wise ruler must leave a space for love.” Gertrud Bäumer: “Der Re-

Lüders was especially interested in promoting the rights of single mothers.<sup>75</sup> While disagreeing with the Third Reich's exaggerated emphasis on producing children, she appreciated the Nazis' apparently progressive attitude toward single motherhood.<sup>76</sup> Beckmann agreed, insisting that single women contributed powerfully to society without leading a conventional life.<sup>77</sup> Marianne Weber endorsed the concept of single motherhood and adoption as well, which she felt traditional bourgeois society made too difficult.<sup>78</sup> Bäumer concurred that patriarchal custody laws left over from Wilhelmine Germany should be repealed.<sup>79</sup> Camil-

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gier muss klug sein, dass er der Liebe Raum lasse.", in: DF 11/33.

<sup>75</sup> Heide-Marie Lauterer: "Liebe Marquise von O': Von den gesellschaftlichen Problemen liberaler Parlamentarierinnen in der Weimarer Republik. Kommentar und Edition eines Briefes von Marie Elisabeth Lüders an Katharina v. Oheimb vom 26. Sept. 1924.", in: JzLF, v. 16 (2004), S. 273-283.

<sup>76</sup> Marie Elisabeth Lüders: "Zur Reform des Unehelichenrechts", in: DF 11/35; See articles, 2.29.40, from "Der Schwarze Korps" and 2.24.39-2.26.39 Völkischer Beobachter prints Rudolf Hess letter to unmarried mother, which demands that she be treated like any other, in: NL Lüders, N 1151, S. 265. Also see Heide-Marie Lauterer: „Fürchte Dich nicht“ – Marie-Elisabeth Lüders' Stellung zu den beiden deutschen Diktaturen", in: Jahrbuch zur Liberalismusforschung, v. 17, Baden-Baden 2005, S. 91-98.

<sup>77</sup> Emmy Beckmann: "Ein erfülltes Frauenleben", in: DF 12/33.

<sup>78</sup> Marianne Weber: "Wahlmutterschaft", in: DF 2/35; Richard J. Evans: Third Reich in Power. 1933-1939, p. 521; also see Burleigh, Third Reich, p. 234; Robert Gellately: The Gestapo and German Society, Oxford 1990, pp. 217-218; Lüders and others applauded the extent to which children's "relation to the racial community" now superseded conventional conservative mores in bequeathing children (and their mothers) social legitimacy. Marie Lüders: "Zur Reform des Unehelichenrechts", in: DF 11/35; Lauterer, "Fürchte Dich nicht", S. 91-98.

<sup>79</sup> But she believed that unmarried fathers had more responsibility than merely providing child

la Jellinek complimented the Third Reich on allowing women greater agency in determining grounds for divorce.<sup>80</sup>

And yet liberal women were never afraid to point out the "gaping contradiction" between the regime's family-friendly claims and German social reality.<sup>81</sup> In a 1934 obituary honouring the children's activist Hedwig Heyl, Bäumer praised her struggle "against the calcifications and blind spots in the social order, which the masses today oppose in National Socialism."<sup>82</sup> For despite their efforts at accommodation, Bäumer and her colleagues worked just as hard to preserve the national, social but also *liberal* paradigm of reform.<sup>83</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Between the traditional cult of domesticity and a "first wave" feminism centered on political equality, between life as passive victims and active collaborators, liberal women in the Third Reich sought to carve out a 'third way' that facilitated female participation in political, social, and economic life.<sup>84</sup> In respect to the

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support. Did Gretchen not say to Faust of their child, "Was it not granted to me and you; to you as well?" War es nicht Dir und mir geschenkt? Dir auch"; Gertrud Bäumer, in: DF 1/35.

<sup>80</sup> Camilla Jellinek, Gesetz; Marriage could now be dissolved from either side based on the "principle of irreconcilability [Zerrüttungsprinzip]," while an extramarital affair [Ehebruch], committed from either side, was no longer an automatic ground for divorce. Most importantly, the new laws held equally for women and men. Martens-Edelmann: "Voraussetzungen der Ehescheidung", in: DF 4/36.

<sup>81</sup> With Bäumer expressing embarrassment at Goering's Mother's Day speech praising Hitler's mother for giving birth to "the greatest son of all times." Bäumer to Borchers, 05.15.41, in: Beckmann, Lebens, pp. 147-148.

<sup>82</sup> Gertrud Bäumer: "Hedwig Heyl", in: DF 2/34.

<sup>83</sup> Repp, Reformers, pp. 108-135.

<sup>84</sup> Stephenson, Women, pp. 110-111.

politics of *Volksgemeinschaft*, liberal women were willing to accommodate the regime's ethnic preoccupations in some respects, but found more essentialist Nazi racism unacceptable. When it comes to space, liberal women were similar to other German (and European) liberals in supporting empire and wanting a systematic revision of the Versailles Treaty. As the Third Reich's foreign policy became more aggressive after 1936, however, liberal women proved increasingly critical – arguably more critical than the liberal party generally.

Finally, Bäumer and her colleagues made certain concessions to biopolitical conceptions of race and space. But this emphasis on women's "natural" biological advantages over male colleagues also encouraged women's entry into the economy and society.<sup>85</sup> Unlike their conservative and Nazi counterparts, liberals defended the rights of women, families, the poor, and the sick by introducing elements of "nurture" into the debate.<sup>86</sup> This approach, for all its contradictions, reveals less the political bankruptcy of the German women's movement than the ideological resilience and allure of German liberalism's progressive and universalist traditions.<sup>87</sup>

In conclusion, I would argue that liberal women followed the same broader patterns of resistance and accommodation as their male peers, but with subtle differences that had much to do with the experience of liberal women since the last decades of the Kaiserreich. In negotiating the Third Reich liberal women drew, perhaps even more consciously than their male colleagues, on a progressive

Naumannite tradition that, while preoccupied with nation and empire, ultimately rejected, in the words of Bäumer, a "National Socialism without personal freedom, without ... civility... propaganda instead of honesty – in truth the diabolical perversion of that which Naumann strove for as a political and social goal."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Gertrud Bäumer: "Vom Gestern zum Morgen," in: DF 10/33; Gertrud Bäumer: "Der Sinn der Wohlfahrtspflege und die Frauenarbeit", in: DF 3/35.

<sup>86</sup> Süchting-Hänger, *Gewissen*, S. 399.

<sup>87</sup> David Schoenbaum: *Hitler's Social Revolution*, New York 1997, pp. 111-113.

<sup>88</sup> See Bäumer's notes, 12.17.46, in: BArch, NL Bäumer, N 1076, S. 1.