

Background: This is the account of the women's rally at the 1936 Nuremberg Rally, taken from the official party proceedings. The speakers were Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, the head of the Nazi women's league, and Hitler himself, who outlines the Nazi view of the role of women.

The source: "Die Tagung der deutschen Frauenschaft," *Der Parteitag der Ehre vom 8. bis 14. September 1936. Offizieller Bericht über den Verlauf des Reichsparteitages mit sämtlichen Kongreßreden* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1936), pp. 161-169.

The Rally of the German Women's League

The NS Women's League met on Friday morning in the Congress Hall. The enormous hall was filled two hours before the meeting began. Many thousands of women were unable to enter, and gathered outside to hear the proceedings over loudspeakers.

The Gau and district leaders, the leaders of the women's labor service and those of the League of German Girls took their places on the platform, and the officials of the NS Women's League and the German Women's Work filled the seats. To the side one could see numerous representatives of German women's groups from abroad in colorful and elaborate costumes. The farmers among the participants also wore their beautiful traditional costumes.

Just before the meeting began, 600 leaders of the women's labor service and a delegation of the BDM [League of German Girls] entered and took their positions on the steps of the podium. The meeting then greeted with shouts of "Heil" the Reich Women's Leader, Frau Scholtz-Klink and her aide Hilgenfeldt.

After a piece by the Reich Symphony Orchestra, Hilgenfeldt opened the meeting and greeted the participants and foreign guests in the name of the National Women's Leader. The 20,000 women rose to sing "Our Fate was to be a Free People."

As the song faded, **Reich Women's Leader** Scholtz-Klink spoke.

It is characteristic of both people and nations that at times things happen that overthrow former ideas and values and replace them with new ones. History calls such events revolutions; they have occurred over the millennia and relatively few of them prove of lasting benefit. A revolution, whether in an individual or a nation, deserves the name only when it allows the true, appropriate and deepest strengths of a people to come to expression once again.

Our German people has two revolutions in our recent past. 1918 with all its blood and barricades, noise and brutality, met the outward requirements of a revolution. In reality, however, it represented only the culmination of a decades-long process during which the German people were driven away from their true nature. We know today that this "revolution" was necessary in order to bring the real revolutionaries to the attention of our people, to rouse them against the false ways our people had followed, against the false thinking that had taken over all important areas of our public life. 9 November 1918 was not led by people who were guided by the idea that Germans should once again find themselves and return to their true nature. Rather, it was the work of people who declared the idea of the "people" — or the "German people" — outdated and replaced a passionate affirmation of ourselves with the thesis of a universal "humanity."

However, peoples—by which we mean the generations of ancient families and tribes—have always been a part in the most varied past events. We are therefore justified in thinking there is a larger

meaning to them, that a unified people will always be necessary under the laws established by a higher power. The empty talk about universal humanity is a dishonest and senseless attempt to replace eternally valid laws with the limited strength of mere human thinking!

Thus 9 November 1918 stirred those people in Germany for whom the concept of “people” still had meaning. They formed the core of the National Socialist movement. 9 November 1918 represented the dreadful revelation of a kind of universal thinking, 30 January 1933 represented the triumphant affirmation of people bound to their race under eternally valid laws of life. This revolution lacked the usual characteristics — no bloodshed or uproar — but it brought the German nation back to its true self!

It recalled much eternal that had for a time been forgotten. What was new was the will to bring the knowledge of our nature not only to the individual, but to persuade him of the following: It is not enough to hold foreign thinking impossible for us. Rather, the knowledge of the inadequacy of foreign thinking must lead to a passionate affirmation of your own nature.

This is the thinking we are bringing to the German people — and that is the work of the women of this people. That is the worldview that guides our actions. In contrast to abstract and inorganic Bolshevik theories of humanity, we are the bearers of an organic moral life order.

Let me give several practical examples from the Soviet Union that prove that lovely theories are not able to deal with the reality of life, but rather that life’s powerful hand takes revenge on disobedient and arbitrary human behavior.

The Soviet Union declared the legal equality of men and women in all areas in a law of 18 November 1918. That meant the same right to work, the same duty to support oneself, the right of control over one’s own body, which for the woman meant the right to abortion. The view was that men and women had full freedom only when the state stayed as far as possible from personal relationships. The state provided no legal rights in marriage, which meant that there were only two forms of marriage. One could register a marriage before a government office, or one could be married without virtue of state ceremony.

The result was that, even when one had been married officially, the individual partners had the right when they were unhappy to go to the same office and, for a very small fee, dissolve the marriage. Should there be children, they would be housed in collective homes, since both father and mother worked and housing was in short supply, given the migration from the countryside to the cities. The absence of resources in such homes led of necessity to demanding money from the economically stronger partner. The result was constant legal battles and enormous misery for the children.

Simultaneously, women were increasingly absorbed in industry and the military. In 1918, 24 of every 1000 miners were women. By 1932, 153 of 1000 were women, a number that had grown to 321 by 1935! In automobile and tractor manufacturing, women are 30.4% of the work force, 63.5% of the drilling industry.

The full equality of the sexes had the further result that girls are given the same military training as boys in the communist youth organization and schools. The Red Army is the only army in the world in which both men and women are trained as soldiers and officers to wage aggressive war.

At the opening of the International Communist Women’s Congress in Moscow on 8 March 1936, Frau Kogan called on communist women throughout the world to fight the enemies of the Soviet Union. Among other things, she said the following: “At the call of the Communist Internationale and of comrade Stalin, we are ready to join the front ranks against the enemies of the socialist fatherland and to fight to the last drop of blood for communism throughout the world!”

The effect of Bolshevik “freedom” was:

Helpless women and wretched children, worn out sick women as the result of heavy labor and abortions, a rapid fall in the birthrate, and growing complaints from the women themselves that finally led the Soviet government to make proposals on 25 May 1936 for improvements in these areas.

A law was proclaimed four weeks later that required both partners getting a divorce to appear in person, and that a note be made in the personal papers of the partner who wanted the divorce. The fee for the first divorce was 50 rubles, for the second 150, and for third and following ones, 300 rubles.

Abortion was permitted only in those cases where a continuation of the pregnancy represented danger to the life or health of the woman, or in cases of inherited diseases. Abortions could be performed only in hospitals or clinics.

Forcing a woman to have an abortion received a sentence of up to two years in prison.

Pregnant women who violated the law would receive a public reprimand for the first offense of the law, and a fine of 300 rubles for subsequent offenses.

The law further provides an increase in financial assistance for new mothers and state grants to those with numerous children.

This law, the Reich Women’s Leader continued, is the beginning of life’s powerful answer to the theories of freedom of the individual and “humanity.” We Germans had 14 years under an attempt to impose Bolshevik principles on us. The German woman took her place alongside the German man when she realized that a struggle was going on between God’s order for earthly affairs and universal apostles of humanity who wanted to replace these eternal laws. It was a battle between good and evil.

Good and evil are equally strong forces in life. They find visible form in National Socialism and Bolshevism. National Socialism is good become visible for we Germans. It respects the earth from which our people have grown. Bolshevism is absolute evil because it is a universal approach that rejects the eternal laws of nature. “Good” and “evil” have never stood in such stark contrast before all the world as they do today in these two forces.

The Reich Women’s Leader concluded that our courage to do good must always be greater than our fear of evil. We must never make weak compromises. Our work is to spread this idea. It is nothing other than a daily struggle between these two forces. It is not ultimately a battle of means or of money, that is of perishable things, but rather it is ennobled by the spirit in whose service we stand: In the battle between good and evil, we are the obedient servants of the good.

At the International Women’s Congress in Moscow on 8 March 1936, Frau Kogan called for the women of the world to fight for the victory of Bolshevism. At our congress we National Socialist women call on all women loyal to their people throughout the world, as the physical and spiritual mothers of their people, to join in an unwritten but strong community as servants of the good in the battle against evil in the world. Then we with our Führer along with the women of other nations and their leaders will guarantee the peace of the world.

The Führer before the German women

The Führer began by speaking of the educational mission of National Socialism, the results of which were increasingly visible. The Führer again found words that went to the heart about the duties and lives of German women. Here is a part of what the Führer said:

“Our entire people today is filled with optimism. What a splendid youth we have once more in Germany! Everything has become so cheerful, so confident! Believe me, that is the most important thing a person needs.

A person who is not joyful cannot sense joy. One needs optimism in order to live. It begins with children. It takes optimism to bring a child into the world! What can it become? What will it become? Every mother believes her child is the best. This is a healthy optimism. When a child is born, the mother receives it with joy. She worships this small creature! (Stormy applause)

The child itself begins life with enormous optimism. It wants to live, and it charges into life with the great optimism of such a little creature. The optimism that accompanies us through life even survives death. When the end of life comes, human optimism falls back on the Almighty. He overcomes the terrifying knowledge of the end of life with a triumphant optimism in eternal life. Woe to the people or to the nation that loses this capacity!”

“Each year we see that the inner confidence of the German people has grown yet more, as has his confidence in his own worth, in his position in the world, and in his confidence in himself and in our community. Winning the faith and confidence of the people is the prerequisite for the success of any political leader. Must I not be the greatest optimist of all?” the Führer said to long-lasting and enthusiastic shouts of “Heil!”

“Those abroad may say ‘That is fine for the men! But your women cannot be optimistic. They are oppressed and dominated and enslaved. You give them no freedom of equality.’” We answer: What you see as a yoke others see as a blessing. What is heaven to one is hell for another.”

The Führer sarcastically proved the illogic of such criticism. “As long as we have sound men — and we National Socialists will see to that — there will be no women throwing hand grenades in Germany, no women sharp-shooters. That is not equality for women, but rather their debasement”

“Women have boundless opportunities to work. For us the woman has always been the loyal companion of the man in work and life. People often tell me: You want to drive women out of the professions. No, I only want to make it possible for her to found her own family and to have children, for that is how she can best serve our people!”

“If a woman jurist does the best possible work, but next to her lives a woman who has given birth to five, six or seven healthy children who are well educated, I would say the following: From the standpoint of the eternal values of our people, the woman who has borne and raised children has done more, given more, accomplished more for the future of our people!”

“Real leadership has the duty to enable every man and woman to fulfill their dreams, or at least to make it easier for them to do so. We seek this goal through laws that encourage the healthy education of children. But we have done more than simply pass laws. We are educating for German women and girls a manly youth, the men of tomorrow!”

“I believe we have found the right way to educate a healthy youth. Let me say this to all the literary know-it-alls and philosophers of equality (laughter): Do not deceive yourselves! There are two separate arenas in the life of a nation”: that of men and that of women. Nature has rightly ordained that men head the family and are burdened with the task of protecting their people, the community. The world of the woman, when she is fortunate, is her family, her husband, her children, her home. From there she can see the whole. The two arenas together join to form a community that enables a people to survive. We want to build a common world of both sexes in which each sees its own tasks, tasks that it alone can do and therefore can and must do alone.”

“In my 18 years of struggle, I have gone a way that knowledge and consciousness of duty demanded. I have never left this way. But my life will have meaning only if our people lives, if a healthy posterity matures.

As I travel through Germany, I see in the millions of children nothing less than what gives meaning to

all of our work. I see children who in obeying their mothers also obey me. (Stormy applause)

When I see this wonderful growing youth, my work becomes easy. I overcome every weakness. Then I know why I do everything. It is not to build some miserable business that will perish, but rather this work is for something lasting and eternal. A vital part of this future is the German girl, the German woman, the German woman, and thus we meet the girl, the woman, the mother.”

“I do not measure the success of our work by our roads. I do not measure it by our new factories, or our new bridges, or the new divisions. Rather, I measure our success by the effect we have on the German child, the German youth. If they succeed, I know our people will not perish and our work will not have been in vain.”

“I am convinced that no one understands our work better than the German woman. (long-lasting, jubilant applause) Our opponents think that Germany has tyrannized women. I can only reply that without the support and true devotion of the women of the party, I could never have led the movement to victory. (renewed enthusiastic applause) And I know that also in hard times when the know-it-alls and those who think themselves wise lose confidence, women’s hearts will remain true to the movement and be bound forever to me.”

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The Reich Women’s Leader thanked the Führer after the jubilation at the end of his speech had calmed down. In the name of all German women, she promised to work hard to ease his concerns. Not only the Reich Women’s Leader’s words, but also the jubilation of the crowd followed the Führer as he left the hall.

While singing continued in the hall and the women’s leader lead a final “Sieg Heil” as an oath and affirmation to the Führer, the tens of thousands of women waiting outside the hall greeted and thanked the Führer.