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**From hobby to necessity: the practice of  
genealogy in the Third Reich**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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## Abstract

After achieving political power in January 1933, the Nazis began to plan and implement racial policies that would redefine the lives of ordinary men and women. Persistently promoted as health measures, many of the racial policies enacted would go on to have considerable and, in many cases, devastating consequences for the family sphere. This thesis examines one aspect of Nazi policy, the practice of genealogy. Re-envisioned and turned into a civic duty of the ‘responsible citizen,’ this one-time hobby forced Germans to reassess friendships, marriages and courtships.

But why did genealogy gain such prestige under National Socialism? What objectives did the Nazis hope to achieve by weaving the practice into the fabric of central legislative measures? How did society react to obligatory family research? These questions are central to understanding how the Nazis were able to establish and maintain a system of inclusion and exclusion in the *Volksgemeinschaft*, or People’s Community. Dealing with these issues also offers the opportunity to define the all-consuming nature of Hitler’s regime more clearly. The requirement to perform genealogical research was the mechanism used by the regime to challenge the people’s sense of belonging to community in the family home. The gradual definition of work and social spaces along racial lines merely complemented pressures to achieve Aryan status more quickly. Many were forced to dedicate leisure time to writing to family members asking for genealogical information of relatives. Some also attended genealogical exhibitions and read books for family researchers to move their research forward.

The growing importance and promotion of genealogy is equally important in understanding how the Nazis were able to create a climate of fear for the Jews. For example, simple family research guides appeared in national newspapers and town halls and schools were frequently used to stage genealogical exhibitions. At the same time, the press documented the existence and progress of government institutions whose main remit was to collect and catalogue genealogical information of every inhabitant of Germany. It would have been difficult to leave the home and perform everyday tasks without being reminded of the growing radicalism in society. The highly publicised effort to accumulate and centralise genealogical information – as part of a programme to identify and control the nation’s Jewish population – was intended to dampen Jewish morale and feelings of security. Thus, exploring how genealogy was utilised and promoted in society, and also

how ordinary men and women viewed and engaged with it, also allows this study to document anti-Semitic policies, as they evolved from limiting freedoms in social and economic spheres to state-sponsored murder.

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# Abbreviations

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| BArch        | Bundesarchiv, Koblenz                           |
| Gesamtarchiv | Gesamtarchiv der Deutschen Juden                |
| GStA         | Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz |
| NSV          | <i>NS – Volkswohlfahrt</i>                      |
| SA           | <i>Sturmabteilung</i>                           |
| SD           | <i>Sicherheitsdienst</i>                        |
| SS           | <i>Schutzstaffel</i>                            |



# Introduction

The aim of this study is to re-examine the isolation, persecution and control of Germans and Jews in the Third Reich by focusing on a central, but much neglected, aspect of governmental policy: the practice of genealogy. An analysis of the implementation, evolution and enforcement of genealogy is crucial to our understanding of Nazi rule because it was an essential tool for achieving the party's core ideological concept of a racially pure *Volksgemeinschaft*, or People's Community, and separating German society along racial lines. Moreover, examining society through the lens of family research allows us to re-evaluate how ordinary men and women engaged with the regime on a daily basis and to help determine whether or not compliance with racial policies stemmed from outward pressures, general feelings of apathy or a genuine identification with the party's racial ends. This thesis will seek to address a number of outstanding issues related to both compliance and anti-Semitism: How did the introduction of compulsory family research affect social and economic relations between Germans and Jews? How did state-sponsored genealogy impact day-to-day life? What ideological aims and hopes did the Nazis hold for genealogy? To what extent were they realised? How did the regime seek to promote the practice and make it appealing to the general population?

When Adolf Hitler achieved political office on 30 January 1933, he began implementing his vision to improve the racial health of the nation. Like many citizens at this time, Hitler and other members of the Nationalist Socialist Party that he led were deeply concerned about the perceived disintegration of society.<sup>1</sup> In their view, the Weimar Republic had been an era of loose morals. Alcohol abuse, smoking, criminality and promiscuity had been rife and collectively served to affect both the quality and quantity of healthy offspring. Crucially, these social-ills were perceived as being hereditary conditions. To affect change, the Nazis intended to impose strict moral and behavioural standards. In particular, they held high expectations that genealogy would help solve the problems of hereditary sickness by tracing and identifying whole families and individuals with 'problematic' family trees.

It was in this context that the Nazi party's vision for a *Volksgemeinschaft* gained a hold on society, particularly among Germans who believed anti-social behaviour was to blame for

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, "Social Outsiders and the Construction of the Community of the People," in *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany*, ed. Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 4.

their own low quality of life.<sup>2</sup> The form of *Volksgemeinschaft* propagated by the Nazis dangled the chance of new and improved living conditions in front of vulnerable Germans as well as the prospect of being part of a community whose guiding precepts were duty, honour and racial purity.<sup>3</sup> To ensure longstanding support from these individuals, the Nazis promised to control certain elements in society such as the communists who were already widely feared and hated.<sup>4</sup> Doctors and eugenicists who were attracted to the Nazi party were equally concerned by the alleged health risks Jews posed to the German population. It was a common argument in professional circles that Jews were racially impure and morally corrupt. Moreover, Jews were carriers of disease as well as transmitters of hereditary diseases and thus should be isolated and controlled on medical grounds.<sup>5</sup>

On the orders of Hitler bureaucrats began enacting legislation aimed at promoting the isolation of Jews in all spheres of German life. The Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service enacted on 7 April 1933 required all civil servants to reveal their ancestral history, making the detection of Jewish blood a dismissible offence. The phrasing 'of Jewish blood' would gradually permeate the whole society and economy, leading for example to the creation of 'Jew free' workspaces in businesses across the country. At the same time that certain economic rights of Jews were dismantled, leading Nazis began the task of demolishing all notions that Jews were, or had ever been, German.

For many German Jews, the questioning of their identity as Germans in official circles would count among the most painful experiences of their time in pre-war Germany. Indeed, over several generations, many Jewish families had made great efforts to integrate themselves into German culture. As Deborah S. Hertz has pointed out, "Thousands of Jews across the German lands in the nineteenth century chose not the Jewish God but life as a Protestant."<sup>6</sup> Mixed emotions and desires - and not just those stemming from spiritual considerations - drove many Jews towards Protestantism. Institutional bigotry understandably forced many Jews to view the act of conversion or complete disassociation with the Jewish community as a loophole in advancing their careers or marrying Christian

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<sup>2</sup> Michelle Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk: Weimar and Nazi Family Policy, 1918-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Diemut Majer, *"Non-Germans" Under the Third Reich: The Nazi Judicial and Administrative System in Germany And Occupied Eastern Europe with Special Regard to Occupied Poland, 1939-1945* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 36. and Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Gellately and Stoltzfus, "Social Outsiders and the Construction of the Community of the People," p. 4. See also, Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 194-198.

<sup>6</sup> Deborah S. Hertz, *How Jews became Germans: the history of conversion and assimilation in Berlin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 13.

loved ones. 'Ethnic intermarriage,' as Hertz observes, 'was made legal only in the later nineteenth century and some jobs, particularly those high up in the civil service, were off limits to those of the Jewish faith.'<sup>7</sup> Yet regardless of the reason for choosing not to follow or practise the Jewish faith, most Jews were proud of their nation and viewed themselves as German first and foremost. No other event in pre-1933 German history is greater evidence of their patriotic orientation than the First World War, which saw 12,000 German Jews out of a total population of 600,000 die on the front line.<sup>8</sup>

For many soldiers of Jewish descent their proven bravery and sacrifice on the battlefield counted for very little when they returned home and attempted to settle into life in the newly formed Weimar Republic. Slowly, situations where they were treated as second class citizens and somehow viewed as different from their fellow German countrymen became more manifest in wider society. The numbers of spas, hotels, guest houses, cafes and restaurants openly – and some proudly - denying their facilities to Jews increased during the 1920s.<sup>9</sup> Recent scholarly research has shown that the ability to assume the role as the head of a family and become its primary bread-winner, or simply to get a foot on the economic ladder, also proved frustratingly difficult as the 1920s progressed. Many Jews eagerly sought steady jobs and income, but across the German economic sphere - from mining to insurance companies, and from shipbuilding to banking – having Jewish ancestry was not necessarily seen as a desirable quality.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, in the years before the Nazis achieved power there is clear evidence that anti-Semitism was openly practiced. Despite economic discrimination violating the law in many respects, no action was taken from 'the top' to punish either individuals or companies who vetted potential employees for Jewish ancestry:<sup>11</sup> 'Those...heads of personnel who refused to employ Jewish applicants, and guesthouse owners who did not accommodate Jews risked no general social disapproval or fatal economic consequences.'<sup>12</sup> By implementing radical policies such as the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, Jewish inequality now became state-sponsored.

With the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws in September 1935, which prohibited marriage between Jews and Germans, genealogy was made an inescapable part of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph W. Bendersky, *A Concise History of Nazi Germany* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), p. 159

<sup>9</sup> Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

everyday existence. Moreover, the prospect of remaining in employment, obtaining a marriage loan, or entering certain parks and dining at restaurants was conditional on the person having German blood. At the same time, society became filled with newspapers and posters informing Germans how and why they must document their ancestry. To show what they were protecting the population against, the Nazis designed, sponsored and erected posters depicting the hereditarily ill as pitiful and deformed figures. One prominent poster titled *Hier trägst du mit*, or 'This is your burden,' depicted a young, muscular and blond haired male struggling to carry two feeble-minded individuals, one of whom was given a 'monkey-like' appearance.<sup>13</sup> Any deviation from what the Nazis viewed as normal in physical appearance or mental capacity almost always led the affected individual to be labelled 'un-German.'<sup>14</sup> Yet because the Nazis exercised extreme latitude in their definition of unhealthy, individuals who displayed lazy or workshy tendencies were likewise termed a hereditary threat. As unproductive members of the *Volk*, these individuals, like the mentally-ill and physically handicapped, ran the risk of being selected for the sterilisation or euthanasia programmes.<sup>15</sup>

To heighten feelings of disgust and apprehension of asocials and inferiors among the general public, the Nazis drew attention to the relationships formed between inferiors and racially pure Germans. The offspring of these relationships, too, came under racial scrutiny, often being referred to as mixed breed, grotesque, or racially inferior. The Nazis argued that as long as such relationships existed disease would continue to flow into the German *Volk*. More aggressively, the Nazis promulgated views that just one sexual encounter with a Jew would prevent Germans from producing Aryan children – even when married to another Aryan. Although Nazi enthusiasts were confident they could prevent unhealthy genes entering the *Volk* by abstaining from sex with inferiors, they nonetheless worried that some individuals would put their own sexual gratification above the needs of the community and form (or continue in) mixed-relationships or mixed marriages.

Thus, the Nazis handed the network of public health offices and its doctors the responsibility for determining the worthiness or fitness of couples to marry. Prior to getting married couples had to provide documentary evidence that they themselves, their parents and grandparents were hereditarily healthy. As conditions such as alcoholism and prostitution were also viewed as hereditary, couples could expect probing questions

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<sup>13</sup> Kirk C. Allison, "Eugenics, Race Hygiene, and the Holocaust: Antecedents and consolidations," in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. Jonathan C. Friedman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 51.

<sup>14</sup> Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

relating to the *character* of ancestors. How dead relatives lived their own lives was seen by the Nazis as a primary indicator as to how future descendants of potential marriage partners would live theirs. In the same vein, doctors formed judgements on candidates themselves using their dead ancestors' perceived quality of life as a barometer. If any doubt existed that the applicant was concealing his or her past or their race they would undergo a medical (physical) examination.

By this stage German anti-Semitism had become organised and legal. The combination of new duties bestowed upon public health offices to screen for Jewishness, among other alleged diseases, and the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 gradually limited Jewish participation in wider society. In the space of a couple of years, the Nazis were able to erode all long standing feelings of envy felt by Eastern European Jews, in particular those of Poland and Russia, towards Jewish life in Germany.<sup>16</sup> Germany was, in the words of Ruth Gay, 'both a place and state of mind' for Jews of the East, an established haven for those seeking to escape violent pogroms and extreme poverty.<sup>17</sup> In particular, many were attracted by the economic, social and religious freedoms that in theory were guaranteed following the legal emancipation of Jews between 1866 and 1871.<sup>18</sup> As the Nazis grip on power continued, efforts were intensified to repeal all emancipatory progress made by Jews during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, requiring employees of the state to document their ancestry, became a recruiting template used voluntarily in other companies, institutions and societies throughout Germany. In turn, the informal practice that existed in some areas of the economy of denying jobs to Jewish candidates before 1933 became firmly rooted into the formal application process of many professions.

While German Jews were facing intense scrutiny of their family backgrounds in an increasing number of settings in the 1930s, the state began turning its attention towards other perceived inferiors. Hated and feared by the Nazis, homosexuals were prone to violent assaults, imprisonment and, in extreme cases, castration. One conservative estimate puts the number of homosexuals arrested at some stage during the Third Reich at 50,000,

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<sup>16</sup> Hertz, *How Jews became Germans*, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Ruth Gay observes documents the precarious and vulnerable life Jews lived in the East. Huge numbers of Eastern Jews fled the East in response to Russian pogroms in the 1880s. By the outbreak of World War One Gay estimates that 90,000 Eastern Jews sought refuge in the West. This wave of mass movement was also spurred on by the Kishnev massacre of 1903, which killed 49 Jews and left a further 2000 families without a home. For more see: Ruth Gay, *The Jews of Germany: A Historical Portrait* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 229. For a detailed discussion on the socioeconomic causes of Eastern pogroms in the nineteenth century see: John Klier, *Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 62-70

<sup>18</sup> Klier, *Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms*, p. 62.

with one in ten of those interned being sent to a concentration camp. In the camps, many died of random violence, malnutrition and the effects of disease.<sup>19</sup> Across the country, too, gay bars and nightclubs were ordered closed by the regime. In line with Nazi thinking, homosexuality was not a biological condition that someone was born with, but rather was seen as a lifestyle choice.<sup>20</sup> Unlike homosexuals the Jews could not unlearn their 'Jewishness.'<sup>21</sup> In turn, the Nazi party was determined to make Germany as inhospitable as possible for Jews, particularly for parents and those holding onto hopes of having and raising children in the Third Reich.

Turning genealogy into a serious venture in the Third Reich would not have occurred in the absence of a sprawling network of archivists, registrars, church officials, clerks, bureaucrats, genealogists and racial experts, among others – these were the professionals who combed archival collections, studied genealogical records and authenticated them for citizens researching family history. In her recent book, *Hitler's Furies* Wendy Lower has focused on the supporting role women played in the bureaucracy after Germany's invasion of the Eastern territories. Moving East, away from their homes and families in Germany, they took up professional roles as clerks, typists and nurses, among other positions, with some women even going so far as to participate in mass murder. Just as Lower has sought to establish female roles in the historiography of the Holocaust – 'from rescuer to bystander to killer, and all the grey areas in between' – this level of attention still has to be placed on professionals who, in the pre-years in Germany, organised and bureaucratised anti-Semitism.<sup>22</sup> Archivists, registrars, among others, came into contact with their victims on a daily basis; they took note of their names, birthdates and addresses, and often treated researchers of family history as coldly and efficiently as their daily paperwork. These professionals, who, on the other side of the desk, ordered, preserved and reproduced records to visitors countless times a day, played a key role in the bureaucratisation of racial persecution. The ways and means these professionals - from their desks and research rooms - contributed to the social and economic decline of Jews is the aim of this study.

The contributions of professional groups to propping up and maintaining racial legislation is all too apparent in the archival records used throughout this thesis. Official memoranda,

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<sup>19</sup> "Multiple Voices: Ideology, Exclusion, and Coercion" in *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 312.

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth D. Heineman, "Sexuality and Nazism: The Doubly Unspeakable?" in *Sexuality and German Fascism*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> Wendy Lower, *Hitler's furies: German women in the Nazi killing fields* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2013), p. 11.

pamphlets, instructional books, photographs and German newspaper reports collectively establish their contributions to uncovering Jews in society as well as providing the paperwork necessary to certify many Germans as Aryans. From these sources, too, a professional fastidiousness, even pride, in stamping out the circulation of forged certificates emerges, a process that resulted in narrowing of the chances of Jews had of escaping detection by the authorities.

But official records reveal little or no information as to the obstacles family researchers faced when searching for the birth, death and marriage certificates of relatives. Official records, for example, tell nothing of the economic pressures that went hand in hand with family research at this time, nor detail the panic felt by individual researchers when they struggled to find a particular certificate. For this reason, the personal experiences as recorded in personal correspondence and diaries of ordinary Germans and Jews - as well as their 'official' experiences in archives as noted in official documentation - have been included where possible. As will be demonstrated - and particularly exemplified in the personal archives of H.H, born in Berlin in 1901, and who went on to work as a merchant in later life - Germans were both nervous about and unprepared for the task of compiling family trees.<sup>23</sup> They wrote to friends and family members asking for information on the location of birth, death and marriage certificates. Some advertised in newspapers, attended exhibitions or, when money permitted, sought out professional help. Moreover, British newspapers, most notably the *Guardian* and *Times*, are invaluable in helping to build a more detailed picture of how the mounting pressures of proving racial status transcended the day-to-day lives of researchers. They recount the horrific and traumatic experiences endured by those who fell short of the state's perception of normal. In particular, they reveal both the immediate and dramatic effect the Nazis had on the life of Jews. This last point is especially important: in the early stages of the Third Reich the Nazi hierarchy attempted to downplay the full extent of anti-Semitism to the outside world. In turn, state-run newspapers such as *Völkischer Beobachter* covered up much of the injustices committed against the Jewish population by the Nazis.

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<sup>23</sup> The author would like to thank the descendants of H.H for allowing me to use copies from his personal archive in this thesis. Access to this archive has brought to light the personal strains and anxieties associated with meeting the racial demands of the Third Reich that would have otherwise remained difficult to obtain. In particular this archive is an important source for showing how families, having lost contact with each other over time, attempted to re-establish family bonds with the aim of sharing genealogical knowledge. Far from the common portrayals of proud German men and women, smiling and hard at work for their leader and country, the use of this personal archive and other sources reveals that, in the privacy of their own homes, people were worried about their Aryan credentials. After the experiences of H.H has been told, and in line with wishes of the family, this archive will be destroyed.

Research on the Third Reich has sought to identify more and more of the injustices Jews would have endured in the course of their day-to-day lives. The research of Robert Proctor, for example, explained the gradual radicalisation of the medical profession and how this development led to the marginalisation and eventual expulsion of Jewish doctors from the profession. Moreover, he argues that doctors were essential in strengthening and legitimising the idea that Jews were carriers of disease. In support of this claim, he provides an extensive list of individuals who, under National Socialism, applied their expertise and ingenuity to seeking out new racial threats posed by Jews to the Volk. These individuals, he asserts, 'were remarkably creative in their attempts to explain the odious effects of racial miscegenation.'<sup>24</sup> Paul Weindling, too, has shown that a desire within the science community to create a better, more racially pure society was nothing new. Going back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a genuine conviction among some eugenicists existed that 'the causes of mental and physical degeneracy' could be rooted out and exterminated, thus transforming 'daily life into a hygienic utopia of large, prosperous and patriotic families of sound "eugenic" quality.'<sup>25</sup> When the Nazis came to power, they had at their disposal an existing base of the educated professional class that offered help in establishing health programmes and initiatives that helped to divide and categorise the population along racial lines.

More recent research by Erich Ehrenreich has looked closely at the bureaucracy of persecution, in particular exploring the ways and means by which doctors, civil servants, racial experts, and institutions sought to benefit, both financially and in terms of prestige and power, from the requirement to document racial ancestry. Indeed, Ehrenreich's work offers the closest parallel to this thesis and was one of the first to draw attention to the significance of genealogy in anti-Semitic policies. But the practice of genealogy, and the worries and pressures that flowed from proving racial status, needs to be placed at the centre of individual's lives in the Third Reich and given prominence when studying people's attitudes and reactions to Nazi policies.<sup>26</sup> The burden of performing genealogical research formed an important backdrop of family life, occupying the thoughts and altering the behaviour of family members on a daily basis. Indeed, using archival material and newspapers this study is able to demonstrate that family members sought out and maintained relationships with relatives partly for the purpose of obtaining genealogical

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<sup>24</sup> Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 197.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Julian Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism: 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1945*, vol. One (London: Phoenix Giant, 1998), p. 2



information. Moreover, personal correspondence reveals that feelings of panic and worry connected to family research were all-consuming. Through the mechanism of genealogy, the Nazis were able to challenge ordinary men and women on their superior or inferior ancestral credentials in the privacy of their own homes.

Other works have documented the decline of fortunes of Jews by focusing on the elaboration of everyday mundane tasks. Marion Kaplan, for example, has documented both the reactions and coping strategies of couples as more and more restrictive policies came into force. They tried hard to maintain some semblance of normality. As Kaplan writes, 'Children must attend school even as their teachers and classmates become more antisemitic; women must serve dinner, even if grocery stores display "Jews Unwelcome" signs.'<sup>27</sup> This thesis will add to such portrayals of daily burdens facing Jews and detail how the promotion of genealogy functioned as a mechanism of intimidation. For example, campaigns to justify the need for genealogy, as well as educating society on the rules of the practice, were continuous and conducted in plain sight. Indeed, newspapers, genealogical pamphlets and exhibitions were all used to weaken the morale of Jews and create the impression that the uncovering of every hidden Jew in society was imminent. As the Nazis grew more overt in their anti-Semitism, they implemented extreme measures to make the ancestry of Jews obvious to everyone. To stigmatise, isolate and humiliate the country's Jewish population, they introduced identity cards, passports with the letter 'J' and later, the Star of David.

The Scope of events during the pogrom of 1938, triggered by the killing of a German diplomat based in Paris by a Jew, also needs to be clearly defined. Historians such as Robert Gerwarth, Martin Gilbert and Peter Longerich have been important in providing detailed and comprehensive overviews of the mistreatment and imprisonment of Jews, as well as the reckless destruction of property. They are also correct in asserting that one of the main goals of the Nazi leadership during this event was the 'safeguarding' of archives in synagogues and Jewish communities.<sup>28</sup> But a more detailed exploration of the process of 'securing' historical records still needs to be carried out.<sup>29</sup> For example, was there an effort by state and party offices to acquire Jewish archives before the pogrom? Did the regime's operation during the pogrom to appropriate Jewish archives go according to plan? Official

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<sup>27</sup> Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2011); Martin Gilbert, *Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006) and Longerich, *Holocaust*.

<sup>29</sup> Astrid M. Eckert, "Managing their own past. German archivists between national socialism and democracy," *Archival Science* 7, no. 3 (2007), p. 228.

documentation produced by civil servants during and after the event shows that great efforts were made by the state to protect genealogical sources housed in a variety of locations, such as synagogues and businesses. They also reveal that many archivists were genuinely panicked when they heard of genealogical records being destroyed by protestors across the nation. Uncharacteristically, reports written by archivists are full of emotion, detailing important records stored in synagogues that had been consumed by fire.<sup>30</sup> The determination to find and ‘protect’ Jewish records during and after the pogrom highlights an untold determination of archivists to uphold Nazi racial policies.

In the weeks and months following Kristallnacht the Nazis turned years of meticulous information gathering and cataloguing of genealogical information into action. They began isolating and murdering disabled children in hospitals. They then progressed to eliminating disabled adults, including those defectives with Jewish ancestry. In wider society, Jews were given until 1 January 1939 to adopt a ‘Jewish sounding’ middle name, such as Sara and Israel. The aim was to distinguish Jews more easily from their Aryan counterparts in official settings. All official documents, including birth certificates, were to bear this new addition. With Germany’s invasion of Poland on 1 September the importance of genealogy, and its contributions to the assiduous and calculated persecution of Jews in Germany, fell temporarily to the wayside. As Robert Gerwarth writes, ‘Germany was now at war and the “restraints” under which radical Nazis operated since 1933 no longer applied.’<sup>31</sup>

Polish Orthodox Jews in particular would be singled out for acts of violence and humiliation by the advancing troops. They wore different (traditional) clothing, spoke a different language and thus seemed to conform to Nazi propaganda.<sup>32</sup> As SS and Wehrmacht (army) troops progressed through Polish towns and villages, they destroyed Jewish owned shops and homes, and in the process killed 5000 Jews – all within the first six weeks of war alone.<sup>33</sup> In Germany, many Jews spoke German, looked German and integrated themselves fully into German culture. It was partly this reason that the Nazi hierarchy felt the need to impose the practice of genealogy on the population, to root out the ‘enemy’ among them. This study will focus on the calculating policies used by the German authorities to identify German Jews alone, and not on the random and reckless round-ups and massacre of Polish Jews that ultimately defined the war in the East.

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<sup>30</sup> “Vertrieb der Jüdischen Personenstandregister,” 9 Dezember 1938, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 230.

<sup>31</sup> Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, p. 153

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.153

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.153

Before an examination on the misuse of genealogy by the Nazi is carried out it is worth placing the practice in its historical background. Chapter one therefore will look at the transformation of genealogy from a leisure pursuit in the Wilhelmine Germany regime to a tool for identifying and controlling ‘unhealthy’ elements in society. In particular, it examines the extent to which goals and attitudes associated with genealogy changed between the 1880s and 1933 with the emergence of eugenics. It looks at how genealogy, a private and somewhat respectable hobby for remembering the dead and living, took on a new character as experts became convinced it could control the social evils of industrialised cities. As the practice of genealogy grew in prestige, more genealogists and scientists began to weigh in on the debate of how it could best benefit society. In turn, the boundaries and perceived benefits of genealogy began to be redefined to the issues of colonialism, immigration and ‘the Jew.’

Chapter two looks closely at society following the implementation of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of April 1933 and the Nuremberg laws of September 1935. It asks: How did ordinary men and women respond to ancestral research? What forms of help did individuals turn to when family research became too difficult or complicated? This chapter considers the government’s attempts to stimulate mass support as a mechanism to reduce public overreliance on the overstretched services of archives, churches and registries. It considers the growing market catering specifically for family researchers. The measures the government implemented in order to restrict those deemed to possess inferior blood will also come under consideration.

Chapter three examines how the Nazis attempted to screen all couples prior to their wedding day. The Nazis used a network of institutions, including public health offices and archives, to assess couple’s fitness for marriage. The Nazis feared inferior couples procreating and passing on their ‘unhealthy’ genes to their future offspring. Those who fell short of Nazi ideals were denied permission to marry. In a similar vein, this chapter considers how employers vetted employees in search for ‘Jewish blood,’ and thereafter weeded them out from their Aryan workforce. Businesses were assisted in their endeavours by the government-sponsored Genealogical Office, which at the time was compiling a card-index system holding the background information of every Jew and German in the country. The government used a combination of modern technology and expertise to try and achieve this goal. They updated the public on the institution’s progress in newspapers to provoke fear and admiration in equal measure, all the while restricting the freedoms of Jews further.

Chapter four examines the state's use of exhibitions to promote conformity to its racial ideals. As well as hoping to deter Germans from mixing with Jews and other inferiors, large scale exhibitions promoted traditional gender roles. Women were encouraged to take pride in their home as well as feed and comfort their racially pure children. The Nazis tried to show women how life would look if they deviated from the path of virtue and had sexual relations with non-Aryans. They were shown grotesque pictures of children of mixed offspring in the hope that, by appealing to the health of their unborn child, women would take seriously the task of researching a potential partner's family tree. Small scale exhibitions will likewise be discussed. Under the Nazis, genealogical exhibition became a common feature in small towns. Far from being overtly anti-Semitic, local exhibitions were intended to offer practical genealogical advice to visitors. At these exhibitions, visitors could see examples of family trees, ask questions and pick up pamphlets to aid them in their own research. To exemplify this, readers of this thesis will be 'shown around' one particular exhibition so as to detail exactly how the Nazis sought to make the transition from an ordinary citizen into a member of the *Volksgemeinschaft* an easy one.

Chapter five examines the extension of the Nuremberg laws in Austria in mid-1938, which came just weeks after the country's Anschluss or union with Germany. Issues such as how experts were employed to achieve racial ends, how Austrians coped in this climate of change and how Austrian Jews were treated under Nazi rule will be considered. This chapter also looks at the violence and destruction in the months leading up to, and during, Kristallnacht, or the night of broken glass, on 9-10 November 1938. Amid uncontrolled devastation, the Nazis put in place plans to 'secure' genealogical records from Jewish communities. The wholesale appropriation of records held in Jewish communities would enhance the search and identification of Jews, especially converts to other religions.

This thesis attempts to examine the experiences of ordinary men and women as they went through the process of dealing with the state's ever more restrictive and onerous racial policies. This was not straightforward, as many motives and factors proved influential. While some were quick to accept the new order and prove their place at the top of it, others expressed panic and worry at the thought of providing background information, not least because they lacked the basic knowledge and skills to be considered by definition an amateur genealogist. Many went through the process because documented Aryan status offered job security and therefore a steady income to feed the family. It allowed many the opportunity to carry on with their lives as normal, frequenting cinemas, parks and restaurants. More importantly, Aryan status offered a certain degree of anonymity in the

People's Community, where members were identifiable to the authorities only when they expressed divergent political, religious or sexual views.

Regardless of the motivation, the emotional and psychological stakes in genealogical research were high. Newspapers such as the *Völkischer Beobachter* played an important role in publicising the location and mission of institutions which dealt specifically in genealogical records. Genealogical exhibitions, too, became familiar sites in Germany, informal settings where visitors could learn and hone their research skills. Even so, some turned to genealogists and genealogical guides for help, while others wrote numerous, and sometime nonsensical, letters to churches, archives and registries seeking entry extracts. As this thesis will show, genealogy, and the desire to create a family tree with no familial gaps, was what preoccupied the thoughts of many throughout Nazi rule, particularly in the early years after the party came to power. Adding pressure to many was that finding only the odd certificate relating to an ancestor made them vulnerable to being interrogated and examined by racial experts – again causing untold fear. By studying genealogy and the rules and regulations that made the practice applicable to the country as a whole, we gain new understanding of what it was like to live under the Nazi government.

One final point must be made: although racial legislation was initiated from above we cannot ignore the compliance of those below. As the membership ranks of the *Volksgemeinschaft* swelled, the presence of social outcasts, of racial inferiors, only became more obvious. Jews were isolated at a time when their private lives were falling apart. Dismissed from work, deserted by many friends, and prohibited from more and more social spaces and services Jews were gradually pushed to the periphery of German society. It was here, when the limits of social separation seemed to have been reached, that the Nazis began to think of a more radical solution.

## Chapter one: The popularisation of genealogy

The practice of genealogy underwent a radical transformation in the late nineteenth century. The notion behind collecting and storing artefacts such as letters, photographs and wedding cups in the family home was central to documenting and expanding knowledge on the history of the family. These personal collections had the power to evoke powerful sentiments of happiness and closeness to another relative. Not only did these objects play a key role in remembering relatives who had died or no longer lived nearby, but they were some of the few sources used to convey key details about a relative - such as what an uncle looked like and the date when he got married - to another family member. This form of collecting however was underpinned by a growing preoccupation from scientists about perceived high rates of mental and physical 'degeneracy' procreating which, in turn, cast the future of Germany into doubt.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, scientists in the emerging field of eugenics saw a particular value in genealogy. By expanding the practice beyond the family home to health and social institutions, genealogy could help trace and even help determine potential personality and health flaws in individual family members.<sup>2</sup> In this way, scientists would be offered a fighting chance of making degenerations and hereditary illnesses disappear entirely, in essence creating an efficient and healthy German work-force. Viewing genealogy as a solution to a better society as well as a stronger, more reliable workforce chimed 'with a German nationalism increasingly defined by blood and heredity.'<sup>3</sup> It was not enough therefore to compile family histories by studying domestic objects; if the family tree was to be an accurate representation researchers had to study genealogical guides that, at the turn of the century, were beginning to emerge on the shelves of bookstores, and follow the advice of the expert. Early forms of genealogy possessed sentimental and romantic foundations. The implication of German nationalism, and it's espousal of a 'national family,' however, required enthusiasts to break from tradition, and prove their 'biological worth' to the collective.<sup>4</sup> A detailed overview of the driving forces behind the transformation of

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy, 1933-1945* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Jason Tebbe, "Landscapes of Remembrance: Home and Memory in the Nineteenth-Century Bürgertum," *Journal of Family History* 33, no. 2 (2008), <<http://jfh.sagepub.com/content/33/2/195.full.pdf+html>> [accessed 23 June 2012], p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 206.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 206.

genealogy is central to understanding why the practice became obligatory under National Socialism.

Up until the 1860s genealogy was primarily the study of inherited objects and artefacts. It involved individuals examining heirlooms as a way to 'connect' with dead relatives, to probe their character, understand their living conditions, and commemorate past milestones. Amateur researchers spent considerable energy collecting and displaying objects that recorded their family history and, in particular, made a point of filling the rooms of their homes with souvenirs. They made use of large living rooms to erect glass cabinets, where family treasures such as wedding cups and commemorative plates could be given pride of place.<sup>5</sup> Commonly inscribed on cups and plates was the date of marriage, allowing the collector to celebrate 'the founding of a family.'<sup>6</sup> Other household furnishings were equally set aside for displaying revered objects. For example, sideboards, chest of drawers and table tops were not just intended as sites where contemporaneous fashionable products such as German-made dolls<sup>7</sup> could be displayed, but locations where objects specific to family traditions and displaying background information of relatives were amassed.

Some families, however, sought collections that preserved both the memory *and* the physical body of dead relatives. Amateur genealogists could collect objective items that communicated clear dates of births, weddings, christening and holidays.<sup>8</sup> While such items reflected times of happiness they could not create the kind of closeness eagerly sought by some mourners. During the eighteenth century mourning a loved one spawned a new commercial enterprise.<sup>9</sup> One popular technique involved turning old jewellery into custom pieces that carried lockets of the deceased's hair. Rings, lockets, bracelets and necklaces were commonly used, each one intended as a display piece. While access to household objects could be controlled for family viewing only, if so desired, mourning jewellery, by contrast, was clearly intended for a larger audience. Turning the deceased's 'body' into a luxury appendage served the dual role of personal and public remembrance.<sup>10</sup> The idea of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 206.

<sup>6</sup> Jason Tebbe, "From Memory to Research: German Popular Genealogy in the Early Twentieth Century," *Central European History* 41 (2008), <[https://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FCCC%2FCCC41\\_02%2FS0008938908000319a.pdf&code=8c7346f86ce5431250aadcbedad50cd](https://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FCCC%2FCCC41_02%2FS0008938908000319a.pdf&code=8c7346f86ce5431250aadcbedad50cd)> [accessed 12 May 2012], p. 210 and H.H to E.G, Liebenberg, personal correspondence, 9 January 1936.

<sup>7</sup> Juliette Peers, *The Fashion Doll: From Béb  Jumeau to Barbie* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p. 98.

<sup>8</sup> Tebbe, "From Memory to Research," p. 212.

<sup>9</sup> Christiane Holm, "Sentimental Cuts: Eighteenth-Century Mourning Jewelry with Hair," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 1 (2004), p. 140.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 140.

enshrining hair in glass and metal was to reassure the wearer that, while the rest of the body would be lost to time, this lock of separated hair would not.<sup>11</sup> In this state, the individual could ‘live-on’:

The specific quality of hair in this context of showing and hiding lies in the fact that it is a witness of the hidden story: Before hair becomes raw material for remembrance it must be cut off a body. But the very moment of the cutting gives the hair a new status. The separated hair can last forever....Moreover, the separated hair will no longer grow, it embodies as materialized time an epoch that is absolutely past. Its temporal semantics privileged and still privilege the hair cut in the *rites de passage*. The cut edge of the hair in the material medium of remembrance marks the act of remembrance as the very moment when its natural status was transformed into a cultural status, and when the present presence of the body is anticipated as a future absence. This sentimental cut is the—more or less visible—condition of “hair remembrance,” which can be recognized as a model for sentimental remembrance in general.<sup>12</sup>

Bespoke memorial items like wedding cups and locketts were indeed symbols of privilege and wealth. Hair formed a crucial object in the act of remembering because it did not decay and could easily be turned into something beautiful, befitting the status and character of its previous owner.<sup>13</sup> But collecting hair and encasing it for posterity could not compare to the popularity of more traditional forms of remembrance. Family historians framed portraits and photographs of relatives and carefully pinned them to the walls of their home.<sup>14</sup> Collectors also ensured that key details about the photograph - for example, the subject’s name as well as when and where the photograph was taken – were included on the actual photograph itself. The collection, researchers hoped, would not only spark interest among descendants - and, in turn, allow the collector to receive admiration and support for his or her achievements – but inspire descendants to step up and become curators of the family’s history themselves. Once in the role, it was the responsibility of the curator to continue the tradition of framing and filling the walls of the family home with pictures of new-borns - or alternatively portraits or heirlooms of a newly discovered ancestor.

Family historians, where possible, also included photographs in letters to distant relatives. In this context, pictures became integral in keeping families ‘together’ across great distances, not only informing siblings, parents and grandparents of new additions to the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 140.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 140.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 162 and Holm, “Sentimental Cuts,” p. 139.

<sup>14</sup> Tebbe, “Landscapes of Remembrance,” p. 201.



family but allowing the addressee to share in key moments such as birthdays and holidays.<sup>15</sup> Put another way, exchanging photographs helped distant relatives overcome feelings of exclusion and detachment by offering them a chance to 'see' the key moments of a family event. Photographs also allowed the addressee to determine the physical health of relatives pictured. The eagerness to remain informed and up to date about the well-being of relatives, as well as 'see' how well they lived, was such that photographs were exchanged as gifts during family events.<sup>16</sup>

One letter dated 2 January 1873 was typical in its expression of gratitude when a gift was received. Written by one George Muller, an inhabitant of Karlsruhe, Baden, to his brother, Jacob, who had emigrated to Australia, it read:

Dear Brother, I received your letter and the three photos. Every day we get great pleasure looking at them, especially my godchild, George. I see he has eaten well since we last saw you. I can remember well when Eva threw him up in the air and everyone laughed. Then he was only a little baby, and now he is a beautiful big boy who will be a great help to you along with your other children. That is how God wants it....Dear Brother for the time being I thank you sincerely for the three photos. Until now, we have not had pictures taken of ourselves, but I hope, if God keeps us healthy, it will happen this year. I am intending to have us all photographed in a family picture so that we will not be forgotten.<sup>17</sup>

Frustration was also evident when news reached a family member that a photograph was too costly to have taken or the postal price too high to send. Such was the commitment to widen their own collection that many relatives appeared more than willing and, indeed, spent large amounts of money to subsidise the cost of a professional photograph. In this respect, one letter is particularly poignant. It was composed in 1865 by Christiana Schmitt and was laden with sorrow; such were the financial worries of her sister, a recent émigré to Australia, that a gift to her appeared a mere afterthought: 'If next year turns out well and money is not too difficult, Mathias [her boyfriend] and I will make another picture of ourselves...so you can hold it in your hands.' What followed was an acceptance of reality: 'If we can only save enough for you so you could also send us your portrait but how! We know that it is much too expensive for you so leave it for the time being.' In the meantime,

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 203.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 203.

<sup>17</sup> Katherine M. Reynolds, *The Frauenstein Letters: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Emigration from the Duchy of Nassau to Australia* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 164-165.

a cheaper alternative was suggested. 'Send us a few hairs and then we can have them made into a locket. That would be a good keepsake.'<sup>18</sup>

Pictures gave the holder untold joy, a means of bridging the historical or geographical gap between the observer and the donor. But photographs allowed members to point out similarities in facial features to everyone else in the family. In letters between siblings, parents and grandparents this idea of likeness was often a central topic of discussion. Enclosed in the same letter Christina sent to her sister, for example, was a professional photograph of their 'dear old mother.' 'It is fortunate, dear Sister, we can now send you and your family a picture of our dear old mother so that you can one more time in your life, see her likeness.' Christina added: 'We would not know what bigger pleasure to give you.'<sup>19</sup> Christina intensified the connection between her sister and their mother by capturing their likeness in this new-age technology and, paradoxically, also described how fleeting this connection actually was. Thus, one of the main reasons for sending photographs was to trigger feelings of happiness in the recipient. The Nazis made a concentrated effort to eliminate all sentiments connected to receiving and sending family photographs and letters, as will be discussed in chapter four. Instead of being used to promote well-being, Germans were encouraged to collect and scrutinise them for evidence of a hereditary illness.

Nevertheless, the form of collecting as practiced by Christina soon changed. Just five years after Christina had penned her letter to her 'dear Sister,' German cities across the country were experiencing rapid growth due to mass industrialisation. To maintain this period of economic growth, companies and industrialists alike encouraged potential workers to leave their villages and small towns and start a new and exciting life in the city.<sup>20</sup> The success of these calls was so great that the social structure of places such as Saxony and the Ruhr began to change dramatically. The demand for labour to man factories led to a large migration of labourers from both inside and outside the borders of Germany.<sup>21</sup> For example, between 1870 and 1914 over two million Poles left their divided homeland seeking new work or better living conditions in the West. As Sebastian Conrad has pointed out, approximately '90 per cent of those emigrating within Europe' at this time, 'and thus

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 128.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 128.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Pulzer, *Jews and the German State: The Political History of a Minority, 1848-1933* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Mergel, "The Kaiserreich as a Society of Migration," in *Imperial Germany Revisited: Continuing Debates and New Perspectives*, ed. Cornelius Torp and Sven Oliver Müller (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 272

the vast majority of all those emigrating, moved to Germany.’<sup>22</sup> Foreign workers were integral in helping to establish and maintain the country’s industrial infrastructure.

The onset of urbanisation concerned many genealogists in Germany. It was not just the fact that thousands of workers were leaving behind a healthy life in the countryside and flocking to smoke-ridden cities that irked genealogists. It was also that the fact that in the cities men were working longer hours to the detriment of their family life. Husband and wife, in short, were spending great deals of time apart. As Andrew Lees put it, ‘The big city thus appeared to....writers to be a den of iniquity—a place in which innocent migrants from the countryside and their descendants were initiated into a way of life that exacted a heavy price morally as well as physically.’<sup>23</sup> One such writer who aligned himself with such arguments was Max Nordau, who examined and exaggerated urban life and its deleterious effect on the nerves of male workers.<sup>24</sup> In his book *Degeneration*, published in 1896, Nordau remarked how modernisation would, in time, soak up both time and thoughts of each and every city inhabitant. Features of everyday life, he remarked, would include seeing individuals reading ‘a dozen square yards of newspapers daily,’ ‘constantly called to the telephone’ and ‘to be thinking simultaneously of the five continents of the world.’ It would be commonplace for individuals to ‘live half their time in a railway carriage or in a flying machine, and to satisfy the demands of a circle of ten thousand acquaintances, associates, and friends.’ And yet, amid this congested and busy life style, he concluded, this generation will ‘know how to find its ease in the midst of a city inhabited by millions, and will be able, with nerves of gigantic vigour, to respond without haste or agitation to the almost innumerable demands of existence.’ This discussion presupposed that the individual would, on the one hand, have little time for his family, and yet, on the other, possess enough of it to ‘satisfy the demand of ten thousand acquaintances, associates, and friends.’<sup>25</sup> Such a view of the world, in particular of the city, asserted that too many distractions, too many other interests and too many technological advances stood in the way of family stability. Family homes thus would become a place shared, and not a home where husbands and wives, sons and daughters, came together over a family meal to recount their days.

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<sup>22</sup> Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 149.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Lees, *Cities, Sin, and Social Reform in Imperial Germany* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), p. 34 and Tebbe, “From Memory to Research,” p. 213.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.213.

<sup>25</sup> Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (London:William Heinemann, 1920), p. 541.

Idealistic as this last image was – namely, families sitting round tables, covered with handmade cloths, whilst homemakers busied themselves with the transfer of food from stove to plates – it nevertheless remained the end game for many contemporary social thinkers. Crucially, it also was a vision shared by many nineteenth century genealogists; they, too, mourned and decried the loss of ‘familial devotion.’<sup>26</sup> There was concern, for example, that city workers and the unemployed relied heavily on alcohol, either as a form of escapism or a reward after a long, hard day at the factory. There was a comparable, but altogether different set of habits of degradation being performed by women. The anonymity afforded in a large city concealed the fact that thousands of women engaged in adulterous affairs or had casual relationships with boyfriends. Not wishing to carry any maternal or financial baggage women practiced abortion as a form of contraception. To be sure, there was some truth in these allegations. The government itself had been particularly troubled by the high rates of abortion. At the turn of the century, for example, approximately twenty-five percent of all pregnancies in Berlin ended in abortion.<sup>27</sup> Rather than leading a selfish and unfulfilled life, one that had dangerous consequences for the status of marriage and continuation of a family name, genealogists invoked family research to rekindle lost concepts of family and honour. Genealogists urged individuals to research the lives of descendants past, to re-capture their dedication to home life and clean living, as well as the high values they assigned to work.

Genealogists, however, held more grandiose plans for the practice. Rather optimistically, practitioners argued that mapping out the family tree could help control disease and destructive behaviours at a national level.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, there was both optimism and ‘evidence’ for such a claim. Like many scientists at this time, genealogists had become influenced by the work of Gregor Mendel.<sup>29</sup> Published in 1900, his study had shown precisely how a pea’s germ plasm operated; for example a pea’s height is determined by the joining of two hereditary genes, one from the mother and one from the father.<sup>30</sup> Equally as important, Mendel had shown that genes could not be modified. The following example is given: if a tall plant is inhibited by lack of water, it will still transmit a tall gene to its offspring.<sup>31</sup> Eugenicists and genealogists alike paid particular attention to this scientific

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<sup>26</sup> Tebbe, “From Memory to Research,” p. 218.

<sup>27</sup> Volker Rolf Berghahn, *Imperial Germany, 1871-1918: Economy, Society, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), p. 65.

<sup>28</sup> Tebbe, “From Memory to Research,” p. 213.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 213.

<sup>30</sup> Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2009), p. 125.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 125.

discovery because it implied that heredity and not environment was decisive in determining a person's physique and mental capacity. Similar to the tall plant passing on its tall gene to offspring, the causes of alcoholism, mental illness and criminality were viewed as hereditary.<sup>32</sup>

For genealogists, the connection between genealogy and heredity was obvious: if alcoholism and mental illness were inherited conditions family trees could prove useful in determining risk of inheritance.<sup>33</sup> Not only did genealogists want to advance the 'scientific value' of genealogy in their efforts to make the practice relevant to heredity, but they also claimed it would allow scientists to follow and document hereditary characteristics as they passed from one generation to another.<sup>34</sup> Scientists had failed to realise the potential of genealogy in medical studies, many genealogists reasoned. For example, works tracing the hereditary transmission of a disease, particularly schizophrenia, in a given individual, often used a genealogical table that only listed the male offspring – namely those carrying the family name.<sup>35</sup> By contrast, a genealogical chart, showing the complete ancestry of the subject, would allow the scientist 'to survey the number of certain diseases in the ancestry and to assess if a hereditary influence could reasonably be assumed.'<sup>36</sup> Only when a threat was successfully traced through a person's lineage, using a genealogical chart documenting male and female ancestors, many reasoned, could measures be taken to prevent them from procreating, and thus passing this gene onto his or her offspring.<sup>37</sup>

Measures advocated by practitioners were extreme. Called 'racial hygiene' or eugenics, it embraced the idea that societal problems could be solved by preventing or discouraging the 'genetically unfit' from procreating and producing offspring.<sup>38</sup> Many genealogists committed this conviction to paper, stating in journals such as the *German Herald* that unfit persons should be prevented from marrying another 'defective.' Alternatively, the individual should be forcibly sterilized.<sup>39</sup> Many genealogists supported racial hygiene because they believed it would allow them to play an active role in clearing up societal

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 125.

<sup>33</sup> Bernd Gausemeier, "From Pedigree to Database: Genealogy and Human Heredity in Germany, 1890-1914," in *A Cultural History of Heredity III: 19th and Early 20th Centuries* (Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, 2005), <<http://www.mpiwg-berlin-mpg.de/Preprints/P294.PDF>> [11 January 2013], pp. 182-183.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, pp. 182-183.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, pp. 182-183.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, pp. 181-182.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp. 182-183.

<sup>38</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Eric Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof: Genealogy, Racial Science and the Final Solution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 27.

problems. Practitioners viewed it equally prudent to affiliate themselves closely to eugenic institutions. Genealogists, for example, along with Alfred Ploetz, helped to formally organise the German eugenic movement in 1905 by founding the *Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* (Society for Racial Hygiene) – in 1907 it would be renamed *Internationale Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* (International Society for Racial Hygiene).<sup>40</sup>

Alfred Ploetz himself was in like-minded company. He shared the same ideas as his genealogical counterparts, seeking the creation of a healthier, more intelligent race that used up fewer resources and was less prone to disease.<sup>41</sup> The eugenics movement in Germany campaigned against unnecessary events such as war and revolution that destroyed or maimed the most valuable sections of the population. The withdrawal of both financial and material support for the child-bearing poor, he argued, should also be sanctioned.<sup>42</sup> Ploetz argued that alcoholism as well as other afflictions of the poor were part of normal life, designed to weed out those considered a burden to society. In this way, medical care was regarded as having beneficial effects for individuals, but detrimental for society as a whole.<sup>43</sup> Similar to their British counterparts, such as John Haycraft, Germany's social Darwinists considered leprosy and tuberculosis to be nature's way of defending the fit, as these ailments only afflicted those of a 'weak disposition.'<sup>44</sup> Ploetz considered 'racial hygiene,' as he termed it in 1895, to be the way forward, a philosophy that protected the race rather than individual.<sup>45</sup>

In 1908, the *Zentralstelle für deutsche Personen- und Familiengeschichte* (German central office for family history) reached an agreement with psychiatrists and eugenicists, among them Alfred Ploetz that effectively turned the *Zentralstelle* into a central collecting point for genealogical records that would help towards understanding hereditary illness.<sup>46</sup> It was clearly an initiative that benefitted both eugenicists and genealogists. Following the opening up of psychiatric records dating back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Society for Racial Hygiene appointed a commission to conduct 'scientific research into genealogy,

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<sup>40</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 17.

<sup>41</sup> Nicole S. Porter, Nancy Bothne and Leonard Jason, "Interconnectedness and the Individual in Public Policy: Foundational Principles of Dynamic Systems," in *Public Policy Issues Research Trends*, ed. Sophie J. Evans (New York: Nova Science Publishers 2008), <<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=8FimyKiZOXUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Public+Policy+Issues+Research+Trends&hl=en&sa=X&ei=FjMSUp1Pxb3RBdnqgGA&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false>> [accessed 14 December 2012], p. 122.

<sup>42</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>46</sup> Gausemeier, "From Pedigree to Database: Genealogy and Human Heredity in Germany, 1890-1914," p. 180.

heredity, and racial regeneration.’ The approach of the commissions to its task, of which Ploetz was a member, was show-cased in 1910 at the Fourth Congress on Caring for the Mentally Ill, held in Berlin. The slogan for the event was: ‘recognise, cure, prevent.’<sup>47</sup> From this point onward, the practice of genealogy became much more central in medical endeavours to understand and trace disease.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the proposal to work with scientists was a watershed moment for this ‘amateurish hobby.’ As Bernd Gausemeier explains, ‘This scheme exemplifies how dramatically the role of genealogy changed around this time. It was no longer regarded as an aristocratic pastime or as an auxiliary method for political history.’ He continues: ‘In 1913, it was no longer unusual that a manual of genealogy contained contributions on psychiatric and anthropological applications and on the uses of family research in the social sciences.’<sup>49</sup>

The fact the genealogists embraced eugenics stemmed from a perceived intellectual affinity with its policies. But there were also practical benefits to be gained from this alliance. Using events like the Fourth Congress on Caring for the Mentally Ill eugenics was able to boost its prestige across Germany. Genealogists used these opportunities, in turn, to push forward and advertise their own contribution in this field. One example event used to gain wider attention for the practice was the 1911 Dresden Exhibition for Racial Hygiene. Genealogists assisted in the erection of stalls and contributed their own ideas in the layout of displays. The exhibition emphasised the close connection between eugenics and genealogy. One attendee, for example, wrote how one section titled ‘Race Hygiene’ had ‘200 tables, charts and colored natural objects’ to demonstrate ‘the law of heredity’ in addition to how ‘different characteristics are transmitted from one generation to another.’ Genealogical tables were used to demonstrate the consequences of alcohol and syphilis, as well as being a mechanism used to stress the importance of contraception. For the observer, the lesson to be learned was simple: ‘The public at large must learn to appreciate the necessity for exercising a reasonable amount of care in the selection of a life partner.’<sup>50</sup>

The exhibition was an attempt by genealogists to reveal the serious side of the practice to a wide audience. Far from studying heirlooms to better understand how the deceased had once lived, genealogists wanted to give the impression that genealogy was essential for

<sup>47</sup> Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 22.

<sup>48</sup> Gausemeier, "From Pedigree to Database: Genealogy and Human Heredity in Germany, 1890-1914," p.180

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 180.

<sup>50</sup> Henry G Beyer, "The International Hygiene Exhibition at Dresden," *Popular Science* 80 (1912), <<http://www.google.co.uk/search?tbm=bks&hl=en&q=Popular+Science+Feb+1912>> [accessed 26 July 2013], pp. 161-162.

scientists investigating inherited characteristics. Their contribution to scientific exhibitions became a valuable way of linking themselves both theoretically and physically to the eugenics movement. Like scientists, it became unthinkable for genealogists to approach the task of ancestry *ad hoc*, at leisure or half-heartedly. Rather, it was considered good practice to approach the task of one's family tree having first formulated clear and precise questions.<sup>51</sup> Obviously, genealogists did not regard themselves as mere followers of eugenics, but, as their presence in Dresden made clear, an essential component whose contributions led to the continuing growth of the field. They advocated eugenic policies such as sterilization and denying marriage between the unfit not because evidence suggested so, but from a genuine conviction that defectives were a real threat to Germany and future descendants. Genealogists thus used this interaction with eugenicists and support of eugenic policies to change the practice radically, to gain prestige, and, in the process to be taken seriously.

## The emergence of racist eugenics in Germany

The acceptance of genealogy in Germany was not achieved simply by exhibiting family trees at public events such as the Dresden Hygiene Exhibition in 1911. To appear relevant and 'scientifically valid,' genealogy had to be seen to accommodate new scientific trends, particularly 'scientific racism' that, at its foundations, believed in the existence of superior and inferior races. Identical to other Western powers, Germany considered racist ideology offered the necessary justification to acquire and hold onto colonial territory.<sup>52</sup> As such, eugenicists firmly believed that the obligation of science now lay in identifying and separating different races. In a similar fashion as to how harmful characteristics were presented at home, scientists sought to associate physical traits of foreign peoples with either 'beneficial' or 'damaging' heredity characteristics.<sup>53</sup> Crucially, notions of 'racial distinctiveness' from non-Europeans was reaching a wide audience. Already by 1914 eugenics was being taught in a quarter of all German universities, forming an important part of the curriculum in courses such as medicine.<sup>54</sup> Students were taught to recognise fellow Germans by racial features consisting of blue-eyes, blonde hair and white skin, which was contrasted sharply with the 'dark skin' and 'dark eyes' of Africans and Jews.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Tebbe, "From Memory to Research," pp. 215-216.

<sup>52</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 27.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>54</sup> Anne Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect: Photography and Eugenics, 1870-1940* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism*, p. 136.



Whether this mode of thinking was achieved in a lecture hall or in an exhibition centre mattered very little. Eugenicists wanted the public to adopt their idea that national identity was biologically determined in whatever way was most appealing. Publications, exhibitions and ‘scientific’ works certainly had a role to play, but genealogy also had its place. Indeed, genealogy was popular because of its ability to look beyond physical traits, instead examining an individual’s blood so that national identity could be verified.

The assumption that humans could in some form be ‘racially separated’ from one another owed much to Eugen Fischer. A racial anthropologist, Fischer had travelled to German Southwest Africa in 1908 to study the Mendelian theory of heredity in a human context. His aim was to explore the psychological and physical effects of racial miscegenation or ‘racial mixing’ between the offspring of Boers and Hottentots.<sup>56</sup> Leaving Africa that same year, Fischer returned to Germany to complete his findings. In 1913, Fischer published his work under the title *The Rehobeth Bastards and the Bastardisation Problem in Humans*. He concluded that racial characteristics operated in a Mendelian fashion.<sup>57</sup> In support of his argument he observed how darker skin, hair and eyes were ‘dominant characteristics, since they appeared prominently in ‘mixed breeds.’’<sup>58</sup> Moreover, he argued that ‘racial crossing’ did not result in a new race but rather a ‘racial mixture,’ in which qualities of both parents were ‘differentially dispersed’ in one body.<sup>59</sup> Fischer’s colonial study had shown that both physical and psychological traits were ‘permanent and heritable.’ As such, his research led him to believe not only that different ‘biological races’ existed but that they were clearly recognisable from one another, both physically and mentally.<sup>60</sup> ‘Racial crossing’ bore no benefits or improvements for national populations. Rather, if left unchecked ‘mixed breeding’ could lead to a degeneration of our own race, with their ‘inferior qualities’ prevailing.<sup>61</sup> His findings served only to fuel colonial debates between German colonial administrators in Southwest Africa and jurists at home. The former argued that the male offspring of a union between an African woman and a German man should not be granted

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<sup>56</sup> Andrew D. Evans, *Anthropology at War: World War I and the Science of Race in Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 52.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 83.

<sup>58</sup> Fischer perceived such traits to be a sign of ‘degeneration.’ For more details see: Udo Krautwurst, ‘The Joy of Looking: Early German Anthropology, Photography and Audience Formation,’ in *What We See: Reconsidering an Anthropological Collection from South Africa: Images, Voices and Versioning*, ed. Anette Hoffman (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2009), p. 178 and Evans, *Anthropology at War*, p. 83.

<sup>59</sup> Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 82.

<sup>60</sup> Evans, *Anthropology at War*, p. 83.

<sup>61</sup> Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler*, pp. 82-83.

German citizenship. Jurists, favouring the patriarchal approach, argued that the son should inherit citizenship from his father regardless of his race.<sup>62</sup>

Genealogists wanted to use their own knowledge to limit foreign characteristics being passed on to future German citizens. It is at this point, for example, that articles began to appear in genealogical journals, although not excessively, detailing relationships and marriages between Germans and individuals from different ethnic backgrounds.<sup>63</sup> While mixed relationships were described as ‘genealogically significant,’ and intended as trivia to engage the interests of the reader the fact they even appeared in print highlights the growing attentiveness of genealogists to single out people who willingly invited ‘foreign blood’ into their family tree.<sup>64</sup> As time went on, readers of genealogical articles were made to feel that children of mixed marriages represented another race entirely, simply because they did not share the characteristics or blood that made Germans distinct. The physical appearance of the offspring was used for harsh ends. Their existence was evidence that a German had willingly chosen to procreate outside the German community: ‘The Negro admixture is unmistakeable...’<sup>65</sup>

The interest of genealogists in mixed couples was also influenced by political developments. Indeed, the growing preoccupation of genealogists with ‘blood’ and race was part of a wider discussion about the role heredity could play in both foreign and domestic policy. In parliament, politicians of the right and left quarrelled over the rights of Germans living outside the *Reich*’s borders and the citizenship status of Jews who had lived, worked and procreated in Germany.<sup>66</sup> As it stood, citizenship was not granted to any German who had lived abroad for ten or more years. Loss of citizenship could be avoided, however, if the individual registered with a consulate.<sup>67</sup> Arguments centred on the question of whether the current rules of citizenship, namely citizenship based on descent, should be maintained or should Germany adopt residency laws favoured in Britain and France? Britain, for example, granted residency ‘to every person born within the domains of the Crown, no matter whether of English or of foreign parents, and, in the latter case, whether the parents were settled or merely temporarily sojourning, in the country, was an English

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 82.

<sup>63</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 28.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>66</sup> Annemarie Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914-1922* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), p. 22.

<sup>67</sup> Andreas Fahrmeir, *Citizens and Aliens: Foreigners and the Law in Britain and the German States 1789-1870 - Monographs in German History* volume 5: Monographs in German History (New York: Berghahn, 2000), p. 42.

subject...'<sup>68</sup> Nationalist in outlook, the Pan-German League argued that Germans living abroad or *Auslanddeutsche* were an integral part of the nation. As such, their rights and eligibility to German citizenship should be the equal to that of Germans living at home.<sup>69</sup>

This notion of German unity was realised in the resulting Citizenship Law of 1913. This law was a partial success for radical parties such as the Pan-German League.<sup>70</sup> Whereas citizenship was withdrawn after a gap of ten years, those who could prove German descent were now given permanent residency and transmitted this status to their children and grandchildren.<sup>71</sup> Citizenship therefore became linked to a person's genealogy and was an exclusive right of only those considered to be of German descent. The principle of descent replaced resident status and became the sole criterion of official membership in the German state.<sup>72</sup> To be eligible an individual also had to possess no criminal convictions, proof of income and residence. In reality, whether an individual satisfied these conditions or not proved irrelevant. It was the applicant's nationality that informed decisions on 'worthiness.'<sup>73</sup> Financial independence and shelter were secondary considerations.

The German government clearly felt genealogy could help establish relationships as well as promote a closer bond between the state and individual – regardless of where he or she resided. In addition to making German nationality both inheritable and exclusive, the Citizenship Law of 1913 also helped legitimise theories espoused by scientists and genealogists; namely that German constituted a racial type. And like a distinct race, some asserted, Germans possessed heredity characteristics that were unique to them. Past anthropological studies, collating both the regularity and distribution of blond hair, blue eyes, and white skin among German school children,<sup>74</sup> served to typecast notions of being German further. However, following defeat in the First World War and the occupation of the industrial Ruhr by colonial African troops, debates on how best to preserve the German race seemed all the more important. In the months after the war's end, stories abounded of 'coloured' troops raping and sexually harassing German women. The supposed scale of sexual violence convinced politicians and journalists that the racial integrity of the German

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<sup>68</sup> Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 43.

<sup>69</sup> Sammartino, *The Impossible Border*, p. 23.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.

<sup>72</sup> Christiane Lemke, "Crossing Borders and Building Barriers: Migration, Citizenship, and State Building in Germany," in *European Integration in Social and Historical Perspective: 1850 to the Present*, ed. Jytte Klausen and Louise A. Tilly (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 1997), p. 88.

<sup>73</sup> Christhard Hoffman, "Immigration and Nationhood in the Federal Republic of Germany," in *The Postwar Transformation of Germany: Democracy, Prosperity, and Nationhood*, ed. John S. Brady, Beverly Crawford, and Sarah E. Wiliarty (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999), p. 359.

<sup>74</sup> Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism*, p. 136.

people was under attack.<sup>75</sup> Many politicians were aware that illegitimate children – who took their mother’s citizenship – had been conceived as a result of sexual encounters between German women and black troops.<sup>76</sup> One representative in the Bavarian Popular party, for example, found this particular situation unacceptable, and pointed to the example set in America where black men could be lynched for violating a white woman. Some German women, in fear of what black troops might do to them, placed themselves under the protection of white men, as they went about their daily business.<sup>77</sup> Politicians used scare tactics such as the black man’s tendency for ‘sexual aggression’ to urge women to procreate only with other civilised members of the *Volk*.

For genealogists, too, it stood to reason that ‘African Blood’ would as a result of this mixture flow through and thus define the family trees of countless Germans. The reaction of genealogical journals to cases of ‘racial mixture,’ as before, was not one of indifference, instead revealing as much as was possible about the couple’s relationship to its readership. Far from being mere trivia, however, writers insisted that interracial relationships would spell the ‘end of our culture.’<sup>78</sup> Whether this destruction came about by the father staying in Germany and experiencing a superior culture, using his offspring as leverage to remain put, or by the very act of degrading a woman above his racial station is not made clear.

The possibility that damaging characteristics were transmitted in the blood, most notably the blood of Jews, was unsettling to many genealogists. To be sure, Jews had traditionally been targeted during episodes of economic and social distress. But after the war, this hostility intensified. It was they who betrayed the nation, who contrived with pacifists, defeatists and leftists and prevented Germany waging total war on its enemies. German Jews, in short, had destroyed the country ‘from within politically and biologically.’<sup>79</sup> Popular literature made the musings of genealogists more acceptable, just as did notions that ‘biological contamination’ had ended the war early. Artur Dinter’s novel, *Die Sünde wider das Blut* (Sin against Blood), was published in 1918, and turned myths of ‘blood pollution’ into a lucrative business.<sup>80</sup> The book recounted the tragic aftermath of a ‘German hero’ following his marriage to a half-Jewish woman. Although a Christian convert,

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<sup>75</sup> Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler*, p. 83.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 83.

<sup>77</sup> “African and Afro-German Women in the Weimar Republic and under National Socialism,” in *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German women speak out*, ed. May Opitz, Kathrina Oguntaye and Dagmar Schultz, trans. Anne V. Adams (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1992), p. 47.

<sup>78</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p.49.

<sup>79</sup> Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 102.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 102.

baptism had failed to prevent the child inheriting the 'apelike' traits of its mother. However, the biological repercussions did not end there. When the husband married a second time, on this occasion to an Aryan woman, they went onto produce a similarly grotesque child.<sup>81</sup> The message of the book was simple: sexual encounters with Jews, however brief, meant that Germans forever lost the ability to produce German children.<sup>82</sup>

Anxiety of the *unseen* also dominated more serious, scholarly works. In his book *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, published in 1911, Werner Sombert considered physical appearance to be an insufficient way of revealing the *true* ancestry of the Jew. Explicitly, he acknowledged a direct link could be forged between appearance and ancestry. Implicitly, however, establishing additional criteria to biologically determine persons of Jewish ancestry would be prudent:

The people I have in mind are the crypto-Jews, who played so important a part in history, and whom we encounter in every century. In some periods they formed a very large section of Jewry. But their non-Jewish pose was so admirably sustained that among their contemporaries they passed as Christians or Mohammedans...“They practised all the outward forms of Catholicism; their births, marriages and deaths were entered on the registers of the church, and they received the sacraments of baptism, marriage and extreme unction. Some even took orders and became priests.” No wonder then that they do not appear as Jews in the reports of commercial enterprises, industrial undertakings and so forth. Some historians even to-day speak in admiring phrase of the beneficial influence of Spanish or Portuguese “immigrants.” So skilfully did the crypto-Jews hide their racial origin that specialists in the field of Jewish history are still in doubt as to whether a certain family was Jewish or not. In those cases where they adopted Christian names, the uncertainty is even greater. There must have been a large number of Jews among the Protestant refugees in the 17th century. General reasons would warrant this assumption, but when we take into consideration the numerous Jewish names found among the Huguenots the probability is strong indeed.<sup>83</sup>

The ability of Jews to hide their racial origin, as popularised by such writers as Sombert and Dinter, encouraged some genealogists to go beyond their professional remit and publish the names of Jews who had been baptised.<sup>84</sup> As already discussed, this approach was not entirely unique. Descriptions of unions between Germans and Africans were noteworthy enough to fill column inches of journals. But after 1918 the intention behind listing details of milestones became insidious. Contrary to being intended as trivia, where

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 102.

<sup>82</sup> Hermann Graml, *Antisemitism in the Third Reich*, trans. Tim Kirk (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 59.

<sup>83</sup> Werner Sombert, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* (Ontario: Batoche Books Limited, 2001), <<http://www.efm.bris.ac.uk/het/sombart/jews.pdf>> [accessed 3 November 2012], p. 11.

<sup>84</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 50.

details about individuals to be married were mentioned, lists were mostly restricted to the individual's name, as well as the site where baptism was performed.<sup>85</sup> Gone forever was the human aspect to ancestry. Readers could now glance at a list, and quickly establish the names of Jews who had been baptised in their area or region. This commercial cynicism of Jews was intended to advance the idea that race was predetermined and that the act of conversion represented nothing more than a futile attempt to change it.

As well as deepening fear of race mixing among its readership, genealogists helped forge the idea that genealogy was the only way to achieve individual well-being. The fact that lists appeared in genealogical journals reinforced the notion that compiling family trees was the only effective way to verify the racial identity of a potential spouse. The family tree, in turn, was promoted as an important tool in outing individuals – the Jews – who would deceive and give us grotesque children. As such, genealogists increasingly called upon readers to treat the practice with respect. It was no longer seen as appropriate to research one's ancestry *ad hoc*, at leisure or half-heartedly. Rather, it was considered good practice to approach the task of one's family tree having first formulated clear and precise questions.<sup>86</sup> So that readers could secure the necessary records, genealogical journals, alongside the baptism lists, began publishing catalogues and bibliographic resources. More importantly, however, they began reviewing research guides.<sup>87</sup> It was in this way that readers knew of writers such as Eduard Heydenreich, whose two-volume guide *Family Historical Source Inquiry* imparted knowledge on how to 'check' the race of themselves and their spouses, accurately.<sup>88</sup>

Part of the reason for exposing Jews and alerting readers to new publications in journals was because archives remained all but closed to ordinary Germans. Archives were sites where professors and politicians studied the lives of rulers. The people whom kings and statesmen ruled over seldom came into consideration. Despite changes in the rules governing access – for example, it was only in 1911 students were eligible for entry – archivists continued to open up files to the public slowly and cautiously.<sup>89</sup> But just as before, status, intellect and political leanings continued to define access. For example, Onno Klopp, a prominent historian, and Franz Mehring, author of the *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (History of German Social Democracy) were banned from

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 50.

<sup>86</sup> Tebbe, "From Memory to Research," pp. 215-216.

<sup>87</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 50.

<sup>88</sup> Tebbe, "From Memory to Research," p. 216.

<sup>89</sup> Johanna Weiser, *Geschichte Der Preussischen Archivverwaltung Und Ihrer Leiter* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag GmbH, 2000), p. 78.

Prussian archives because of their critical stances towards Prussia.<sup>90</sup> Genealogists wanted to bridge this cultural gap. Indeed, many felt that current circumstances surrounding dangers to the *Volk* necessitated it. Furthermore, awareness of one's ancestors rested, at the very least, on the acceptance that archival access be universal. One way of promoting the practice among Germans, in the meantime, was by placing genealogical trees of non-noble families in instructional books.<sup>91</sup> Societies such as *Roland*, a society described as a 'Saxon Provincial Association for Family Research' and the *Zentralstelle für Deutsche Personen – und Familiengeschichte e.V* (the Centre for German Personal and Family Research) also made efforts to commercialise the practice.<sup>92</sup>

In the meantime, the idea of Jews and Germans forming separate races, though not prevalent, was becoming more noticeable.<sup>93</sup> Important in this respect was Julius Friedrich Lehmann, a medical publisher based in Munich. Anti-Semitic in outlook – for example, he boasted he never allowed Jews to work in a position of power – he proved a 'highly gifted racial propagandist.'<sup>94</sup> As early as 1918, his foremost achievement was flooding Germany with racist literature as well as synonymising racial hygiene as a movement towards a stronger, racially purer nation.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, believing that Germans had a superior right to rule the nation (the Nordic or Aryan supremacy theory), he did everything within his power to advance the Nordic platform. In 1922, Lehmann published Hans Günther's *Racial science of the German Volk* (*Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*). This study held over 300 images of Jews from different countries and every bodily feature was singled out for racial observation.<sup>96</sup> Eyes, ears, lips, hair, height and skin colour were discussed under the heading 'Jews of the Present.' The aim of the book was to show that Jews, in comparison to the perfect Aryan, were 'physically inferior' because they did not possess the coveted elongated skull.<sup>97</sup> This book made Lehmann and Günther household names. So popular

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<sup>90</sup> Torsten Musial, *Staatarchive Im Dritten Reich: Zur Geschichte Des Staatlichen Archivwesens in Deutschland 1933-1945* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1996), pp. 66-67.

<sup>91</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 17.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, pp.17-18. It was only in the late 1920s that archivists began actively encouraging the general public to visit archives *en masse*. A number of outreach programmes were established to encourage the public to view the archive differently, in a more inviting light. In 1936, for example, two exhibitions *Friedrich der Große* (Frederick the Great) and *800 Jahre Brandenburg-Preußische Geschichte* (800 Years of Brandenburg-Prussian History) were on display at the Secret State Archive in Berlin-Dahlem. The first exhibition alone attracted 2,882 visitors. For more details see: Musial, *Staatarchive Im Dritten Reich*, p. 59.

<sup>93</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 51.

<sup>94</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 26.

<sup>95</sup> Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, p. 471.

<sup>96</sup> Gregory Paul Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling under the Third Reich* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 14.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

was this book that by 1927 it was in its eleventh edition. Lehmann's achievement lay in his fusion of anti-Semitism with nationalistic fervour.<sup>98</sup>

In 1926, Lehmann followed up this success by founding the *Volk und Rasse* journal. He gave precedence to articles concerning race in German culture, and encouraged readers to use the journal as a channel for the exchange of ideas between like-minded scholars.<sup>99</sup> Editions were issued offering prizes for photographs depicting Nordic individuals, pictorial genealogical trees that showed the inheritance of Nordic facial features, as well as essays on German customs.<sup>100</sup> Lehmann's and Günther's contribution to racial anti-Semitism was simply to make it modern and scientific, combining new innovations such as photography with consumer incentives such as financial rewards to increase its readership. By so doing he turned the idea of racial differences between Aryans and Jews into a lucrative business. In 1926, for example, Günther was earning 12,000 marks in royalties from his publications.<sup>101</sup> One estimate has put the average monthly wage of white-collar workers at 159.50 marks in January 1927.<sup>102</sup> The royalties earned by Günther at this time should therefore be viewed as considerable. The journal's success was such that plans were proposed to take the journal on the road, with touring exhibitions on race and displaying collections of genealogies, photographs of 'outstanding' Nordic men and women as well as the family trees of long-established families.<sup>103</sup>

What should be taken from the Lehmann- Günther collaboration was not simply that the Nordic or Aryan supremacy was a highly saleable commodity but that the fruits of their labour, the *Volk und Rasse* and the *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, contended on a 'scientific level' that Jews could be easily identifiable. In his appendix to his *Rassenkunde* book, Günther regurgitated long enduring racial stereotypes of Jews, namely that they lacked imagination and originality.<sup>104</sup> He also claimed that intermarriage between Jews and Aryans was racially undesirable, believing that such actions would not only lead to physically inferior offspring, but also the contamination of 'superior' German blood that

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>99</sup> Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, p. 472 and Bernard Mees, *The Science of the Swastika* (Budapest: Central European University Press 2008), p. 180.

<sup>100</sup> Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, p. 472.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p. 472.

<sup>102</sup> Hilde Walter, "The Misery of the "New Mittelstand,"" in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 188.

<sup>103</sup> Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, p. 472.

<sup>104</sup> Richard Weikart, "The Impact of Social Darwinism on Anti-Semitic Ideology in Germany and Austria, 1860 – 1945," in *Jewish Tradition and the Challenge of Darwinism*, ed. Geoffrey Cantor and Marc Swetiltz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 113.



would contribute to the decline and eventual disappearance of the Nordic race.<sup>105</sup> His advice to arrest this potential development was to call for a strict separation between both races. For him, the idea of marriage between these two groups fell nothing short of *Rassenschande*, or ‘racial disgrace.’<sup>106</sup> His desire to ban racial-mixing was also shared by the emerging Nazi party. The party’s goal of outlawing sexual relationships between Germans and Jews would be realised only a few years later, at the 1935 Nuremberg rally.

Through the practice of genealogy, advocates of racist genealogy began to view humans not as people with aims, desires and families, but as objects that had to be divided into fit and unfit categories. To be sure, genealogy thrived at a time of panic. The blights of abortion, alcoholism and prostitution were overwhelming public services. The scientists who flocked to genealogy typically did so because they were convinced in its ability to cure the social ills of the day. Conversely, scientists also believed genealogy to be the tool for realising a better, more advanced society. Publications, as well as the travelling exhibition created by Lehmann, proved crucial in promoting the positive side of the practice. In this way, Germans were taught how to ‘perceive nationality in their own bodies and in the bodies of others.’ Features such as blond hair and blue eyes were transformed into nationalistic qualities, ones that ‘pure Germans’ alone would possess.<sup>107</sup> Crucially, the same media had also ‘shown’ that Jews were racially different from non-Jews, while at the same time pointing to the threats of race mixing. Enthusiasts were more than willing to exploit every possible medium to promote their field. But in doing so, they relinquished control of it. Thus, it could be used in a way that not every genealogist would have liked.<sup>108</sup> It was the perceived benefits of genealogy alongside the belief that anybody could engage with it that was to make it such a potent weapon for the Nazis.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p. 113.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 113.

<sup>107</sup> Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism*, p. 146.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 146.

## Chapter two: Laying the racial foundations, 1933-1938

After the election of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor in January 1933 the Nazis began implementing policies that would protect the *Volk* from its perceived enemies. For Hitler, there was much work to be completed. The 1920s, he asserted, had been a time of loose morals. He remained convinced that Germans, especially women, had failed in their responsibility to protect and enlarge the racial community.<sup>1</sup> Rather than staying at home, making meals and raising children, women had cast aside their aprons for overalls, and had followed the men into the factories. As a result, family values had become undermined. With the luxury of additional income and no inhibitions their personal lives had become chaotic. They drank, danced, and, more damagingly, engaged in sexual relationships, giving little or no consideration to their partner's race. What followed, of course, was that immoral behaviour had combined with alien blood to produce offspring, who, in turn, threatened the purity of the pure-blooded Germans. Hereditary illnesses such as feeble-mindedness and alcoholism, criminality and physical defects, were perceived as now flowing uncontrollably through the German body. The Weimar Republic had, if anything, shown the Nazi party that German people were unsuited to having individual choice and private freedom. Personal life and pleasures, they asserted, took precedence over the health of the nation.<sup>2</sup>

The policy of integrating family research into the everyday experience of Germans began almost immediately. As early as April 1933 as an article within the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, the Aryan clause required all civil servants to verify their blood purity, starting with the production of birth, baptismal and marriage records pertinent to themselves, and replicating this process through the family tree to their grandparents. As time went on, doctors, lecturers, dentists, engineers, lawyers, among others, wishing to remain in employment, were called upon to meet the state's new racial requirements. The list was lengthened to include those engaged in educational activities; the primary school teacher, the editor, and the prospective as well as current student.<sup>3</sup>

As well as raising the profile of genealogy among the workforce, this policy was intended either to produce or deepen feelings of hatred for individuals of non-German blood,

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<sup>1</sup> Baranowski, *Nazi Empire*, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 63.

especially Jews. New attitudes and behaviours were to be adopted towards those shown to be racially unfit and ineligible for long term employment. Germans of pure blood were expected to shun Jews in the workplace. Not to be seen acting in such a way was tantamount to being declared a 'Friend of the Jews,' and thus risk the loss of respectability in the eyes of co-workers, friends and the Party. Equally, the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service sent an official message to Jews that only racial Germans were entitled to mould the minds of German children, enforce the law, or heal the sick. The law showed 'lenience' only towards war veterans, who could stay in their post, at least temporarily; other individuals shown to possess Jewish ancestry were summarily dismissed. The Nazis wanted to filter out the genetically unfit, creating workspaces that brought together people of similar racial backgrounds, and who conducted their lives in accordance with the Nazi ideal of racial segregation.<sup>4</sup>

The legislation in April was just the beginning. The Nazis not only wanted to reduce settings where Jews and Germans coexisted, but also opportunities for prospective friendships and courtships to form. Nevertheless, the idea that Germans and Jews would simply live segregated lives did not form part of Nazi thinking. To bring defiant individuals in check the Reich government drafted the Law for the Protection of Hereditary Offspring on 14 July 1933. This legislation ordered the compulsory sterilisation of individuals suffering physical or mental maladies, such as Huntington's disease, epilepsy, deafness, manic depression and schizophrenia. Also targeted were prostitutes, alcoholics, beggars and gypsies.<sup>5</sup> Through this legislation, the government sought to break down individual autonomy, explicitly outlining groups who Germans should avoid altogether. If Germans failed to accept this, and insisted on polluting their genealogical trees with weak genes, the alternative was not mere condemnation, but physical intervention that would see their own children forcibly operated on as an act of containment. The law came into force in January 1934. Between its enactment and the outbreak of war in September 1939, 320,000 individuals, most of whom were of German ancestry, had their right to have children taken away surgically.<sup>6</sup>

Family research was therefore to prove a journey burdened with emotional strain, irrespective of whether or not it was carried out by the family or by others. The Nazis believed that the family tree was an unprecedented opportunity to reveal undesirable

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<sup>4</sup> Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> Baranowski, *Nazi Empire*, p. 187.

<sup>6</sup> Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, p. 13.

influences buried in one's past, to document them, and then assess them according to the principles of the Nazi party as well as the Nuremberg laws. Eugenacists also backed the Reich government's call to trace mental and physical defects of family members. The idea that these groups should be identified and thereafter prevented from procreating with healthy members of society was commonly accepted by the international eugenics movement.<sup>7</sup> The result for ordinary Germans was that, far from remaining in the past, painful memories of death, illness and disease in the family had to be relived, the name of the condition written down, and its effect on the individual summarised. It was then to be housed with the other archives relating to the family's ancestors. One genealogy leaflet, published in 1936, concluded that by documenting and making the 'life history of the ancestors' an ever-evolving process, we can trace both the 'good and bad' genes in a given family, and their transmission from generation to generation. From this point, we can begin to understand how and which genes have been retained in your genetic make-up.<sup>8</sup>

By the end of 1934, Jews found it increasingly difficult to live and work normally in the Third Reich. Not only had they been driven from public service, but businesses and veteran associations were now voluntarily implementing their own version of the Restoration of the Civil Service Law.<sup>9</sup> Those who possessed even one Jewish ancestor or practiced the religion had contracts terminated or memberships revoked. In school, Jewish children had to endure their own difficulties. They were forced to sit through lessons explaining why their own family tree was inferior. Moreover, they were told how their race was seedy, hook nosed and invariably possessed yellowish skin. In and around the classroom, educational diagrams were used to these physical qualities. School children were even taken on educational outings to racial exhibitions with the aim of highlighting the poor hereditary qualities of Jews.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Horst Biesold, *Crying Hands: Eugenics and Deaf People in Nazi Germany* (Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 1999), pp. 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> "Verwaltungsblatt der Hansestadt Köln," 12 September 1936, Generaldirektion GStA [herein after GStA], I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Graml, *Anti Semitism in the Third Reich*, p. 100. The *Guardian* reported on the expulsion of individuals with Jewish ancestry in private organisations. One article titled '200 Nobles Expelled' appeared as early as April and read: 'About 200 hundred German aristocrats have been expelled from the association of nobles because their ancestry during the past 184 years has been found to be "tainted" with Jewish blood. Members were required by the marshal of the nobility to produce family trees dating back to 1750. The association, which has 13,000 members, has always imposed a "mild" Jewish bar, and many German titled families do not belong to it for this reason.' "Leader of the Nazi Youth," *Guardian*, 17 April 1934, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 152.

By spring 1935, however, cracks between the state and institutions supplying genealogical information were already beginning to show. The Protestant and Catholic churches had noticed a considerable increase in their workload following the Restoration of the Civil Service Law.<sup>11</sup> Although extracting excerpts on Germans on request was part of the problem, it was nonetheless the ruling by the government that church officials would not be compensated for this extra work that irked many. In April 1935, when church officials were dealing mostly with requests from civil servants and party members, the government issued a decree stating that all documents requested for proving ancestry were to be free of charge.<sup>12</sup> The only condition was that documents requested be used in an official capacity, such as certifying ancestry to remain in employment. One month later, however, and bowing to pressure from the churches, the government relented, stating that parishes could charge sixty pfennigs for every excerpt requested.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the introduction of charges, the government made family research applicable in every aspect of life. In September 1935 Hitler went some way to achieve this vision. At the Nuremberg Party rally, Hitler declared his intention to codify the nation.<sup>14</sup> The Nuremberg Laws, as they became known, went on to divide the population into four categories: The Nazi-coveted Aryan status was assigned to those who had no Jewish grandparents; *Mischlinge* (mixed breed) second-degree, persons with one Jewish grandparent; *Mischlinge* first-degree described those persons with two Jewish grandparents and full-Jew as a person who had three or more Jewish grandparents.<sup>15</sup> What this speech essentially did was push racial laws, already rigorously applied in the civil service and government, into the public sphere. From this moment onward, every aspect of life in the Third Reich was consumed with the notion of racial status. Documenting Jewish ancestry resulted in individuals being stripped of their political and civil rights; Jews were labelled subjects of the state. These rights remained intact for those of German blood who by contrast were recognised as citizens of the Reich.

The idea that Jews and Germans were racially different led to further social restrictions being imposed on both groups. Thus, the Nuremberg Laws included the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour. This law proscribed ‘marriages between Jews

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<sup>11</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 67.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>14</sup> Baranowski, *Nazi Empire*, p. 205.

<sup>15</sup> A Jew was also defined as a person who was either married to a Jew or belonged to the Jewish religious community as of 14 November 1935, the date the law was passed, or went on to join the community thereafter.

and citizens of German blood...even if, for the purpose of evading this law, they were concluded abroad.’<sup>16</sup> Additionally, sexual relationships outside marriage between Germans and Jews were forbidden. Hard labour, imprisonment or a fine was the penalty for anyone found to be in breach of the law. The Nuremberg laws aimed to elevate Germans above Jews and *Mischlinge*, implementing a law that would encourage Germans to marry and socialise within their own race. Such was the perceived need and desire to protect the purity of German blood that the Nuremberg laws went into effect one day after the Nuremberg rally, on 16 September 1935. Every German was now expected to provide proof of ancestry.

The search for genealogical documentation for ordinary German citizens then began in earnest. Commercial and private institutions were required to ascertain the ancestral background not just of employees, but also remarkably from the very individuals who used their services. The Ministry of the Interior, for example, issued a statement after the laws had been announced that couples who wished to get married had to prove their Aryan status.<sup>17</sup> As part of their wedding day preparations, spouses had to visit the local health authority in order to submit their own birth certificates and those of their parents for inspection. Along with this documentation each spouse attached a statement declaring that, to the best of their knowledge, they were free from Jewish blood, hereditary illnesses and infectious diseases.<sup>18</sup> The implications for failing to follow procedures and produce the necessary records or evidence of a hereditary condition, were indeed serious. The local authority would not issue a ‘certificate of fitness to marry’ and therefore the couple could not marry.<sup>19</sup>

These documents were of critical importance to the Nazis. It was not simply the idea that Jews were carriers of disease that led to this new measure, but rather the conviction that together Aryan couples, and only certified Aryans couples, could produce children that were mentally and physically fit. Vetting potential marriage partners before they actually wed, went the Nazi thinking, would ensure that the hereditarily ill remained single, and, by implication, childless. The *Volk*, in turn, would be protected from weak genes and individual families would be saved from carrying the burden of caring for and nurturing a mentally or physically handicapped child.

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<sup>16</sup> "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor,"

<<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/nurmlaw2.html>> [accessed 24 February 2013].

<sup>17</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 64.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, p. 16.

The normal way of proving one's racial status, however, required much more effort than reproducing authenticated birth certificates to a local health official. The process of applying to the University of Berlin was typical for showing racial purity in Germany after September 1935. Prospective students first had to collect a printed form titled 'Proof of Ancestry' from the university offices. All sections, the form stated, had to be filled in and clearly legible. Standard information included the applicant's name, date of birth, address, profession, as well as the name, and religion of his or her parents and grandparents. After completing the document, the student then had to attach their own birth certificate, the marriage certificate of their parents, and the baptismal records of their grandparents to the form. Applicants were told that all records must be authenticated copies or an original. Completed and with relevant attachments, these records were submitted to the Student Directorate, whose remit had expanded to include checking the racial background of the student population. If there was cause for suspicion - for example they possessed a Jewish-sounding surname - then additional information relevant to the applicant's great-grandparents could be requested. For married applicants, the search for ancestors was doubled. The applicant was also required to submit the same documentation for his spouse. Both spouse and applicant had to be cleared and approved by the Student Directorate before the individual could matriculate.<sup>20</sup>

The process of proving one's racial status was cumbersome because it required citizens to replicate this same process time and again. Whether at work, applying for a marriage loan, placing a child in the education system or joining the Nazi Party, individuals had to submit birth, marriage and baptismal certificates for inspection to the relevant official or body to be checked for authenticity. These records, again, would be copied and placed in the institution's filing system. The applicant or employee would then take their documents home and store them safely until they were required for inspection in another setting. After September 1935, professions ranging from law to medicine and tax advisors to secondary school teachers made employment conditional on documentary proof of racial purity. Even volunteers underwent racial examination. For example, unpaid workers were commonly used to provide additional support for community health visitors, going on house-calls to visit new mothers. They supported and served the interests of the *Volk* community by offering other German blooded mothers advice on proper nutrition and child care.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> This example was taken from "Admission to the Friedrich-Wilhelm University of Berlin," in *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich*, ed. George L. Mosse (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 310.

<sup>21</sup> Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, pp. 172-173.

## The *Ahnenpass*

Reproducing certificates time and again inspired the launch of a new product on to the market, which was intended to lessen the strain on the individual. By 1935, the Federation of German Civil Registrars had produced the *Ahnenpass* (racial passport) for mass retail.<sup>22</sup> This was a fifty page booklet that offered the buyer the chance to establish their Aryan ancestry beyond the standard proof, tracing their blood line back four generations to 1800. Although the passport could vary in terms of layout, inside many versions the purchaser was presented with an empty family tree table, allowing him or her to fill in the blank spaces with the names of '32 great-great-great-grand parents, 16 great-great-grand parents, and so on.'<sup>23</sup> For some Germans it was not enough to know that their parents and grandparents were of Aryan stock; they wanted to prove to friends and acquaintances as well as the state that their Aryan ancestry went back further. In this context, a completed *Ahnenpass* filled the holder with family pride and the knowledge that, among their peers, they were socially distinguishable and possibly superior. The *Ahnenpass* could be bought at bookstores across Germany from 1935 onward (see figure 2.1 below).<sup>24</sup> It could also be purchased at local registry offices. The price of the booklet was on average sixty pfennigs.<sup>25</sup> Conditions of sale were nonetheless attached to the merchandise. The booklet, for example, could not be purchased by Jews. An insert in one version of the *Ahnenpass* read: '[Jews] and racial aliens cannot have their registrations in this certificate [certified] by the registrar of births. It is only destined for citizens of pure German blood.'<sup>26</sup> The fact that registrars did not openly resist or act defiantly to this form of commercial anti-Semitism gave substance to this declaration.

<sup>22</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, pp. 68-70.

<sup>23</sup> "New Burden for Nazis," *Guardian*, 7 August 1940, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, pp. 71-72.




<sup>25</sup> "Verwaltungsblatt," 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 14.

<sup>26</sup> "New Burden for Nazis," p. 5.



**Figure 2.1 - Inside the *Ahnenpass*.** Box one is the owner of the *Ahnenpass*. Boxes two and three contain the names of the parents. Boxes four to seven list the grandparents. Source: “Finding the Village of Your Origin,” FamilySearch, <<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mnprgm/PRG/Village/Village.html>> [accessed 19 February 2013].

Of course, there was no standard form for the *Ahnenpass*. Some, for example, were personalised to help the applicant organise his past more efficiently. One copy of an *Ahnenpass* (see figure 2.2 below) has personalised entries for *Vater* (father) and *Mutter* (mother). These could all be found in the top left hand corner. Each page was also laid out similarly, normally three entries to a page. Immediately after filling in the required blanks in the first entry, the applicant would move on to the one below, which required extensive details of his marriage. And once again, the applicant would begin this entry by inserting his full name on the first line. This formality was then followed by information on his occupation, spouse’s maiden name, confession, birth place, when and where the marriage was performed, the registry office and where the extracts of the ceremony could be located in the book of marriages. The last entry required the same as the first, only this time it was the details of the mother that was inserted. A quarter of the overall entry space was allocated to the registrar’s declaration. The declaration box was confined to the right hand side of the entry and ran vertical to the genealogical information on the page. After applying his signature to the pre-printed declaration, namely that the entry and the information contained within was correct, the mark of the state, the Nazi seal, was administered.

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>(Vater von 3)</b> <span style="float: right;">6</span><br>Familienname: <i>Melonenka</i><br>Vornamen: .....<br>geboren am <i>14. 2. 1855</i> in <i>Rehlin</i><br>als Sohn des (12) <i>Melonenka</i><br>und der (13) <i>Lorenz</i><br>Bekenntnis: <i>evangelisch</i> Tauftag: <i>11. 3. 1855</i><br>Beuch. b. Standesamt: ..... Geb.-Reg.-Nr. ....<br>b. Pfarramt: <i>Rehlin</i> Tauf-Reg.-Nr. <i>20</i>    |  | Die Richtigkeit des Eintrages wird auf Grund vorgelegter Urkunden beglaubigt.<br>..... Werte gezeichnet ..... Werte hinzugefügt.<br>  |
| gestorben am ..... in .....<br>beuch. b. Standesamt — Pfarramt ..... Reg.-Nr. ....  |  | Für nebenstehenden Eintrag ist Beglaubigung nicht erforderlich.  |
| <b>Die Eheschließung des</b> <i>Melonenka</i> <span style="float: right;">6/7</span><br>Beruf: <i>Facharbeiter</i> Bekenntnis: <i>evangelisch</i><br>und der <i>Johanna</i><br>geborene <i>Rehlin</i> Bekenntnis: <i>evangelisch</i><br>erfolgte am <i>5. 10. 1880</i> in <i>Rehlin</i><br>beuch. b. Standesamt — Pfarramt <i>Rehlin</i> Reg.-Nr. <i>15</i>   |  | Die Richtigkeit des Eintrages wird auf Grund vorgelegter Urkunden beglaubigt.<br>..... Werte gezeichnet ..... Werte hinzugefügt.<br>  |
| <b>(Mutter von 3)</b> <span style="float: right;">7</span><br>Geburtsname: <i>Melonenka</i><br>Vornamen: .....<br>geboren am <i>11. 5. 1859</i> in <i>Rehlin</i><br>als Tochter des (14) <i>Melonenka</i><br>und der (15) <i>Lorenz</i><br>Bekenntnis: <i>evangelisch</i> Tauftag: <i>13. 6. 1859</i><br>Beuch. b. Standesamt: ..... Geb.-Reg.-Nr. ....<br>b. Pfarramt: <i>Rehlin</i> Tauf-Reg.-Nr. <i>34</i> |  | Die Richtigkeit des Eintrages wird auf Grund vorgelegter Urkunden beglaubigt.<br>..... Werte gezeichnet ..... Werte hinzugefügt.<br> |
| gestorben am ..... in .....<br>beuch. b. Standesamt — Pfarramt ..... Reg.-Nr. ....  |  | Für nebenstehenden Eintrag ist Beglaubigung nicht erforderlich.  |

Großeltern mütterlich

11

Figure 2. 2 - Completed and certified individual entries of both parents in the *Ahnenpass*. Entry 6/7 duplicates information found in the official marriage register. Source: "Finding the Village of Your Origin," FamilySearch, <<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mnprgm/PRG/Village/Village.html>> [accessed 19 February 2013].

Other versions of the *Ahnenpass* came with guidelines included. One pamphlet issued by the mayor's office in Cologne for the benefit of city employees advertised how one *Ahnenpass* available from local registry offices not only provided users with an understandable explanation of making the ancestral proof but also instructions as how to compile information collected in the form of a family tree: 'This is where the *Ahnenpass* is a considerable help,' it observed. The pamphlet did its best to make the *Ahnenpass* the more appealing option, compared to the standard proof. If anything, the latter was made out to be burdensome and impractical for the rigour of everyday life. 'When using an

*Ahnenpass* it is no longer necessary to present certificates. [It also avoids] loss of documents which are difficult to replace.’<sup>27</sup>

The *Ahnenpass* was marketed as a product for the Aryan. Instead of the standard proof, certified Germans were challenged to turn into an amateur genealogist and trace family records back to 1800. Publishers and the Reich government continuously sought to put a positive spin on their product. Its size meant the product was convenient. One selling point of the *Ahnenpass* (and perhaps a motivation for some buyers) was that the holder would avoid having to reproduce many genealogical documents every time an official asked to see them. Rather, a completed booklet would contain background information of the holder’s entire family certified by a registrar.<sup>28</sup> This characteristic of the booklet also meant that the individual would avoid the fate of losing valuable family certificates whilst in transit.<sup>29</sup> This spin helped give momentum to sales. Although the bearer of the *Ahnenpass* had to ‘establish the “racial purity” of five generations of ancestors’ - this, one newspaper claimed, was ‘a difficult task for most people’ - thousands of holders nonetheless began assembling the necessary certificates.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the *Ahnenpass* was a profitable venture. By 1937, for example, one publisher observed how its own version of the booklet was in its 136<sup>th</sup> edition. By April 1941, the national publisher *Westphalia* was distributing copies to approximately 20,000 stores nationwide. Stock was now too low, the company complained.<sup>31</sup>

To some extent, consumers bought into the propaganda. Some Germans relished extending the boundaries of genealogy beyond their parents and grandparents. But finishing the *Ahnenpass* was no easy task. It required knowledge of the town or village where ancestors had lived, died and been baptised. It also required financial investment; holders were faced with the choice of paying lower fees for extracts, thereby making the passport unofficial, or the higher rate, thereby allowing the *Ahnenpass* to double as an official document. It is worthy of mention, however, that many ordinary Germans were happy to stop once the standard proof had been completed, preferring instead to focus the mind on day-to-day living. Writing letters, which at the outset held sentences like ‘I am in a rather difficult

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<sup>27</sup> “Verwaltungsblatt,” 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, bl. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, bl. 14.

<sup>30</sup> “New Burden for Nazis,” p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, pp. 72-73.

situation and would like to ask you if you can give me some information using your church books' was not a task many found endearing.<sup>32</sup>

The *Ahnenpass* had another unique selling point. Openly researching one's family background and racial origins served as a valid reason to re-establish connections among family members and friends. For example, one letter, written to a relative in Berlin in January 1937, observed how they had not met for a long time: 'It is a fact that you only make an effort to write when you really have an urgent reason to do so. This is the same with me I confess.' The writer immediately came to the point: 'I still need some information for the *Ariernachweis* and got more or less stuck on how I can get information about grandmother.'<sup>33</sup> Thousands and thousands of letters addressed to relatives were written in the same fashion, with the same intent. They often began with similar heart-felt regret at not having been in contact sooner, before eventually coming to the dilemma: 'I hope that you are able to help me because in spite of all research I do not get further than the birthday in Militsch [Milicz – Lower Silesia], as the wedding of the parents of the rope maker Neumann with his wife, born Grade or Graden, did not take place in Militsch.' It went on: 'no further information is attainable from the birth certificate of Grandmother. I... do need the information...before 1800 [and] it would be a great help...if you could help me.' At the end, the very essence of the letter gave way, again, to family cordiality: 'Anyway I thank you in advance for your effort and hope that you and yours are all in best health. Signed your cousin.'<sup>34</sup> One letter, dated 8 August 1937, also shows how performing ancestral research forced Germans to probe into the lives of friends and relatives, a pursuit normally guarded against by the conventions of social tact:

Dears Frau S.

Some months ago my wife, Elly, born, Werniecke, wrote to you in order to get some information about your parents and...ancestors. Unfortunately, up to today I have not received an answer so...I presume that the letter might have got lost in the post. In the meantime, I naturally had to continue with my research and have now received information via the German Consulate that according to the information of the registry officer in wielkie Hajduki the death of V. W. which I have given to you with the date 31.7.1930 has not been registered at all. I have no choice but to contact you again directly...as my Aunt, E, in Schoenberg as well as her Uncle H, can give her no more exact information and I [also] hear that your mother has died. I would like to hear from you if you can give me additional information to the date of the birth...the year and the place of birth and also, if possible, the day, month, year of the

<sup>32</sup> H.H to evgl. Pfarramt, Dannenwalde, personnel correspondence, 20 March 1937.

<sup>33</sup> H.H to W.Z, Berlin, personal correspondence, 15 January 1937.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

marriage. I have already the information about your dad, as well as his parents and I would be pleased to pass on to you in case you need them for your children.

Best wishes from my wife, and I would like to thank you already in advance for your answer...'<sup>35</sup>

The idea that the *Ahnenpass* could save Germans reproducing many genealogical documents in many different contexts caught the attention of the Nazi government. In 1935, the Ministry of the Interior officially endorsed the *Ahnenpass*.<sup>36</sup> Thereafter, instructions were issued by the government informing buyers how to correctly fill out the passport, and, for registrars, archivists and church officials, how to authenticate the information supplied in the booklet. Holders themselves would be required to complete each section of the *Ahnenpass*, providing the forename, surname, birth date and place, denomination, date of christening, and the name of the father of each relative. The holder would then take the *Ahnenpass* to the institution holding the original copy of this genealogical information, normally a registry, archive or church. Alternatively, the holder could submit the *Ahnenpass* with original documentation – usually a certified birth, death or marriage certificate – to allow the official to compare the original documents with the details provided in the booklet.<sup>37</sup> The responsible official would then examine the entries for accuracy and if required make corrections. If the entries were accurate the official would certify the entry using an office stamp and by adding his signature.<sup>38</sup> The official would also provide the cross-reference number from the register of births relating to the individual. Each entry had to be individually certified using this same procedure. Entries unlikely to be completed were scored through by the official using a pen. This was to prevent the holder adding false information afterwards.<sup>39</sup>

The charges involved in having entries authenticated by an official varied. If an individual was able to submit the *Ahnenpass* along with certified or original genealogical documents then the price of having information ratified was significantly reduced. In this context, a charge of only ten pfennigs would be applicable for each box stamped by an official. If the individual had ten or more entries needing stamped in one sitting the official could charge no more than one Reichsmark.<sup>40</sup> However, the holder also had to ensure that the

<sup>35</sup> H.H to F.S, Wielkie Hajduki, personal correspondence, 8 August 1937.

<sup>36</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 68.

<sup>37</sup> Roger P. Minert, "The Ahnenpaß: An Approach to Family History under National Socialism," *German Genealogical Digest* 13, no. 4 (1997), pp. 102-113.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, pp. 102-113.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pp. 102-113.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, pp. 102-113.

information in the box was written in ink and accurate, meaning that the official did not have to make any corrections to the text. Conversely, if an entry was completed by an official the individual would be charged sixty pfennigs.<sup>41</sup> For example if the official had to input the forename and surname of a family member, or had to list their religion or place of residence of the family member's parents, then a fee was applicable.<sup>42</sup> Only after the balance had been settled was the entry validated. Unlike the one Reichsmark limit for those who submitted the *Ahnenpass* along with relevant genealogical information, there was no limit set in cases where an official was required to complete entries on behalf of the *Ahnenpass* holder.<sup>43</sup>

Yet, paying for certificates was not always inevitable. If the applicant could prove – through official documents – that they could not afford to pay the standard charges then the official could waive the fee altogether.<sup>44</sup> The majority of these levies would be equivalent to those applied to the standard proof, not the *Ahnenpass*. This was because the latter was suited to those with high disposable income, not the average worker who, by 1939, could expect to earn not more than ninety pfennigs an hour.<sup>45</sup> There was, however, a way of satisfying one's craving for possessing and completing the *Ahnenpass* and by-passing the higher charges altogether. In cases where ancestral research was undertaken purely for leisure and not to be used in an official capacity, Germans could ask registrars and parish clerks to send out extracts, declaring the first and last name of a family member, along with their profession, place of residence, religion, death, and marriage as they appeared in the registers. This information was not marked as official, nor were they charged on the same scale of fees. It costs twenty pfennigs for these 'notes,' as one gazette described them, to be collated by the parish clerk.<sup>46</sup>

The official endorsement of the *Ahnenpass* was merely one strategy. Indeed, the government used every available resource at its disposal to assist Germans in their ancestral research, whether the aim of the individual was to complete the standard proof or racial passport. After September 1935 the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Party's mouthpiece, began to include genealogical instructions for beginners in some of its editions. The Nazi party had taken a great deal of care to offer simple and easy-to-understand instructions for

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, pp. 102-113.

<sup>42</sup> "Verwaltungsblatt," 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 14.

<sup>43</sup> Minert, "The Ahnenpaß," pp. 102-113.

<sup>44</sup> "Verwaltungsblatt," 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 14.

<sup>45</sup> Konrad Kwiet, "Forced labour of German Jews in Nazi Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 36, no.1 (1991), <<http://leobaec.oxfordjournals.org/content/36/1/389.full.pdf+html>> [accessed 23 February 2013], p. 395.

<sup>46</sup> "Verwaltungsblatt," 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 14.

making the standard proof. The aim was to make the whole process efficient, both for the institutions involved in the production of documents and the researchers collecting it. Guides outlined ten easy steps or rules for researching a family's history. For example, one article, appearing on 5 July 1936, was entitled 'How do I get proof of descent the quickest way?' Readers were told in no uncertain terms of the sites crucial for moving their investigations forward.<sup>47</sup> Civil registrars and archives as well as Protestant and Catholic churches all held vital statistics needed for the standard proof. Moreover, officials in these institutions were empowered with the authority to copy and authenticate extracts and certificates held in their possession. What was needed from the reader, so as to cut down waiting times and the burden placed on officials, was to furnish them with accurate information on family relatives, deceased or living:

Letters to registry offices or ministers [requesting extracts] have to be short and clear. In order to be able to find the documents more quickly the following information should be given

- a) Birth certificates; day, year and place of the birth as well as names of the parents
- b) Marriage certificates; name of persons to be married as well as year, day and place of marriages
- c) Death certificates: name of deceased – with women must include the family name before the marriage – as well as day, year and place of death <sup>48</sup>

Though some Germans were not in the habit of purchasing the newspaper, they nonetheless made exceptions when these articles appeared so as to help them with their research.

Members of the SS and Party, tasked with proving that they were indeed socially distinguishable and racially superior, would also have taken such advice seriously. Having a career in Germany's elite military units, the SS, meant recruits had to show impeccable Aryan credentials all the way back to 1800. For officers, there was a deeper level of scrutiny of their past, with those occupying this rank having to provide evidence of ancestry back to 1750.<sup>49</sup> The Party wanted SS members to stand as examples of racially pure specimens for the entire nation. Thus members had to be tall, athletic, intelligent and

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<sup>47</sup> This newspaper article was found in the personal archive of H.H. "Wie beschaffe ich mir am schellsten meinen abstammungsnachwiess?," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 5 July 1936.

<sup>48</sup> "Verwaltungsblatt," 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 14.

<sup>49</sup> Baranowski, *Nazi Empire*, p. 199.

free of Jewish ancestry. As Shelly Baranowski writes, 'Although ordinary Germans were expected to present genealogical evidence of their racial acceptability, the threshold was lower than that expected of the regime's racial elite.'<sup>50</sup> Between 1933 and 1935, sixty thousand members of the SS were expelled from service because they fell short of one or all of these conditions.<sup>51</sup>

In the meantime other avenues of help were available for lay individuals wishing to progress with their ancestral research. The commercialisation of family history was supported by a growing base of pamphlets, guidelines and textbooks, designed to serve the interests of serious researchers. Young and old alike were targeted.<sup>52</sup> Texts like *Arbeitsheft zur Familien-Forschung (Die Ahnentafel)* (1936) taught Germans to think in terms of 'us' and 'them,' Jews and Germans.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, as Germans progressed through chapters - 'Family history research,' 'You and your family,' 'the ancestral chart of Rudolf Hess,' 'how to construct your own pedigree chart,' 'My parents and I (family group records)' <sup>54</sup> – the idea was to provide readers with a detailed overview of how to become both active and healthy members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. These titles were not accidental. Using subtle indoctrination methods, the Nazis hoped that, having been rigorously exposed to these topics in the classroom, children would hold parents to similar standards. All at once, parents became accountable to their children. Whether or not they agreed, parents had to show an interest in the classroom project, taking their children through the family history to illustrate their membership of the German *Volk*. Germans had to go to great lengths to ensure that their child did not stand out in the classroom through shortcomings in their own familial research. Impressionable children were being used deliberately to put pressure on parents to conform to the Nazi ideal.

Many Germans appeared to have paid particular attention to materials which combined self-help and genealogy. Mass produced booklets such as *Die Ahnentafel als Nachweis deutscher Abstammung: "Der arische Blutnachweis." Ein nationalsozialistische Bedingung für die Erwerbung des Staatsbürgerrechtes*, 'The Ancestral Table as Proof of German Ancestry,' expanded as well as empowered the public sphere to identify those of 'Aryan-blood.'<sup>55</sup> This step-by-step guide, written by Friedrich Wecken and published in Leipzig,

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 199.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 199.

<sup>52</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 76.

<sup>53</sup> Minert, "The Ahnenpaß," pp. 102-113 and Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 125.

<sup>54</sup> Minert, "The Ahnenpaß," pp. 102-113.

<sup>55</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 71.



contained a mere sixteen pages but was dense with information, tables, as well as a genealogical exercise.<sup>56</sup> By its very layout, the booklet cultivated knowledge of genealogy as well as the social responsibilities of the individual in three stages. First, Germans were given a brief overview of the racial landscape in the Third Reich, what genealogical documents were required for certain professions and how to begin preparation.

Understanding every word, every line within the booklet was portrayed as a personal obligation. The words ‘blood’ and ‘citizenship,’ which formed part of the title, served to invoke this feeling, not-so-subtly reminding Germans that collecting paperwork on ‘blood,’ which could be acquired by reading and digesting the instructions from cover to cover, was a condition to becoming Aryan. Purchasing Wecken’s ‘The Ancestral Table as Proof of German Ancestry’ was a sign that the task of demonstrating their own racial purity was being taken very seriously indeed.<sup>57</sup>

Second, readers were provided with illustrative family trees of Paul von Hindenburg (president of Germany until his death in 1934) and Hitler, used in this context both as examples of pure stock and how to bring together collected data on an ancestor’s religion, birth, occupation, marriage and death. Visually, the booklet made clear that whoever was constructing the table would be the sole focus of attention. Rather than appearing at the bottom of a chart, with his or her parents forming the branch above, grandparent’s the next, with the oldest generation placed at the top, the name of the individual appeared on the left hand side of a genealogical pyramid. This pyramid was rotated with all ‘blood relatives’ going backwards from the individual to the right, again, to the oldest relative on whom the earliest information could be obtained.<sup>58</sup> Side by side with individual entries in the ‘blood chart’ would be numbers, providing uniformity and order to the whole endeavour. In Wecken’s example Hitler was given the generational number of one, his father two, mother three, father’s father four, and his mother’s mother five. Six was assigned to the mother’s father and seven, the mother’s mother. The result was that all males possessed even numbers, the female odd. Seeing this diagram, and following the guidance provided by the author, Germans would in time replace both Hitler’s name and those of his ancestors with those relevant to them.

Third, and to drive home the teachings of the booklet, a blank familial construct of a similar type was added to the work, which could also serve as the *Ahnenpass*. Its inclusion

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 71.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 71.

<sup>58</sup> Fritzsche, *Life and Death*, p. 77.

allowed individuals to up-date entries as and when they came across certificates or notarised copies of documents proving the Aryan blood of descendants. The simple aim of the booklet was grounded in the belief that by the time readers had turned over the final page they would possess an awareness of their own racial traits. The chart of ancestors included in the booklet was to provide evidence to the collective that he or she had the right amount of Aryan blood to be accepted by the German race.<sup>59</sup>

Whether published in a book or a newspaper, easy-to-follow guides had become a common feature of everyday life by 1936. But even so, many Germans were still unsure about how to document their worthiness to the Nazi government.<sup>60</sup> The details supplied by ordinary citizens to the relevant archive, church or civil registries by no means guaranteed the official would be directed to the correct bible entry, register extract or certificate. The professions became accustomed to receiving both vague, and, at times, confusing letters that only served to increase their workload: 'Please send me [the certificates of] my Arabian grandmother, with [dates of] birth and death,' went one letter addressed to a local parish clerk. Another letter asked: 'I am of Agrarian origin...please send certificate.' Other letters directed at parishes proved just as confusing and vague: 'Please inform me if my dead grandfather appears in the register of deaths. He died [between] 1821 to 1850....I have been bothered for years with the birth of my grandfather. Will you please help me in the matter?''<sup>61</sup> As genealogical research was a pursuit imposed by the regime, and not necessarily taken up by the individual voluntarily, a number of Germans did not know how to articulate questions in a way that would help track down lost and dead ancestors in an effective manner. One major consequence of this was that the time-frame for investigating an individual's racial past remained undefined. Employers asked employees to procure information quickly. In reality, however, thousands of Germans would spend years

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<sup>59</sup> See: Friedrich Wecken, *Die Ahnentafel Als Nachweis Deutscher Abstammung: "Der Arische Blutnachweis"; Eine Nationalsozialistische Bedingung Für Die Erwerbung Des Staatsbürgerrechtes* (Leipzig: Verlag von Degener & Co, 1933), pp.15-16.

<sup>60</sup> The complex development of the civil registration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century served only to complicate this search. While the recording of births, deaths and marriages became mandatory in Prussia with the founding of the Standesamt, or Vital Statistics Office, in 1874, the registration of these categories by civil registries prior to this date (and across Germany) lacked uniformity. In the province of Waldeck marriage contracts were being recorded in registers as early as 1838, while in the states of Anhalt, Bavaria, Lippe, Mecklenburg, Saxony, Schaumburg-Lippe, Thuringia, and Württemberg, such practices only became consistent when civil registration was extended nationally in 1876. Marriage contracts were normally recorded and kept in the area where the bride lived. Unfortunately for the German people they had little option but to find ways around such complications. This information has been taken from: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. FamilySearch, "German Civil Registration," <[http://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany\\_Civil\\_Registration](http://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany_Civil_Registration)> [accessed 13 December 2012].

<sup>61</sup> "Search For "Aryan Ancestry,"" *Guardian*, 17 August 1936, p. 12.

procuring genealogical information.<sup>62</sup> In cases where a person was unable to obtain the necessary genealogical information, it was enough to swear (and sign a declaration) that they were not of Jewish blood. This method of achieving Aryan status was officially recognised in the education sector in 1935 and the Civil Service in 1939.<sup>63</sup>

The lack of standardised entries in church registers proved equally problematic. Researchers were able to obtain precise dates of a relative's birth, death or marriage *only* if they knew where the event had occurred. The Lutheran Church had long been aware of the need to standardise register entries. The church attempted, not always successfully, to prevent pastors documenting unrelated events in registers. It was a common occurrence, for example, to have entries in registers given over to battles, fires, and disease.<sup>64</sup> In 1540, Lutheran churches began compiling registers that recorded births, marriages and burials. The information collected and entered in church registers using these headings was highly detailed.<sup>65</sup> Baptismal entries included: name of child, parents and godparents, date of baptism, place of birth, address and religion of parents, father's occupation and whether or not the child was legitimate. Marriage entries listed: name of bride, groom, their parents, and witnesses, date and place of wedding, the couple's ages and religion, as well as the occupation of the groom and his father. Burial records recorded: name of deceased, spouse and parents, date and place of death (and burial), age, address and cause of death.<sup>66</sup> One letter published in *The Times* of London newspaper, written after the outbreak of the war but with no hint of the sinister purpose behind family history, noted how the organisation of genealogical information early on allowed thousands upon thousands of Germans to dig deep into ancestral roots:

[It seems that] the records of our own country have been less well kept than those of Germany...Germans must collect the names of all his ancestors back to his 32-great-great-great-grandparents for his "*Ahnenpass*," while most Englishman even with the best professional help would find this very difficult. The answer seems to be that the German records, while not necessarily better

<sup>62</sup> "Archivbenutzung durch Juden," 29 April 1939, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 929, bl. 294 and "Der Verfügung vom 24.1.1938," 27 Januar 1938, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 929, bl. 168.

<sup>63</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 64.

<sup>64</sup> Jürgen Wilke, "From Parish Register to The 'Historical Table': The Prussian Population Statistics in the 17th and 18th Century," *Early Modern Population Statistics and Censuses* 9, no. 1 (2004), <[http://ac.els-cdn.com/S1081602X03000782/1-s2.0-S1081602X03000782-main.pdf?\\_tid=64bd12d2-0807-11e3-9367-00000aabb0f02&acdnat=1376831540\\_405a468560f81a20f0bc7ac237a7e9d6](http://ac.els-cdn.com/S1081602X03000782/1-s2.0-S1081602X03000782-main.pdf?_tid=64bd12d2-0807-11e3-9367-00000aabb0f02&acdnat=1376831540_405a468560f81a20f0bc7ac237a7e9d6)> [accessed 25 June 2011], p. 66.

<sup>65</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. FamilySearch, "Germany Church Records," <[https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany\\_Church\\_Records](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany_Church_Records)> [accessed 23 July 2013].

<sup>66</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. FamilySearch, "Germany, Saxony, Bautzen Lutheran Church Records (Familysearch Historical Records)," <[https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany,\\_Saxony,\\_Bautzen\\_Lutheran\\_Church\\_Records\\_\(Family\\_Search\\_Historical\\_Records\)](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany,_Saxony,_Bautzen_Lutheran_Church_Records_(Family_Search_Historical_Records))> [accessed 9 January 2013].

kept than ours, are so in one point of special value for this purpose. In Germany most, if not all, marriage entries, both old and new....give the birthplace of the parties' parents; birth or baptismal entries give the place and date of the parents' marriage; and death or burial entries those of birth. Each entry thus gives a clue to the next. In England these cross-references are absent not merely from ancient parish registers but from the Registrar-General's modern records. Where only a male line is to be traced the deficiency is largely made good by the superiority of our other records – notably wills, marriage licences, and apprenticeships. But for the tracing of female lines the balance is in favour of the Germans. They have a further advantage in the recent large-scale [micro-filming] of their parish registers....however, it may be hoped that the present efforts of the Society of Genealogists before long will enable us to overhaul them.<sup>67</sup>

A common problem facing researchers, and not just holders of the *Ahnenpass*, was that of deciphering writing in documents. Lutheran church records were usually written in old German script, a style that was noticeably different to the standard script used in the 1930s and 1940s. Researchers also encountered poor hand-writing as well as misspelling of names. Officials were often called upon to decipher entries and, in cases of variations in the spelling of surnames, establish whether or not the holder was related to the ancestor in question. Engaging this level of expertise is one reason for the variation in process of certification.

In 1563, the Council of Trent passed regulations to standardise the system of entries Catholic registers everywhere.<sup>68</sup> Similar to Lutheran records prior to 1540, records on birth, deaths and marriage were sporadically kept. The act of marriage was now to have strict bureaucratic dimensions, with the inclusion of the forenames of parties, surnames and lineages into the register becoming as much part of the ceremony as the swearing of the vows. Such entries had to occur irrespective of 'whether they have been previously married or not; and whether they are not still under the guardianship of parents and guardians.'<sup>69</sup> Entries for baptisms were to be allocated to the first, last and lineage name of the child. This was to be accompanied by a declaration signed by the parents.<sup>70</sup> As illegitimacy was common at this time – and the fact that it was not a barrier to baptism – it was normal for priests to highlight the child's bastard status (*Hurenkind*) by making the entry upside down or sideways.<sup>71</sup> Despite the regulations of 1563, it remained commonplace for entries to be summarised and uneven, sometimes missing important genealogical information. On the

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<sup>67</sup> "Family Records," *The Times*, 16 August 1940, p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> Wilke, "From Parish Register to The "Historical Table," p. 66.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 66.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 64-66.

<sup>71</sup> Angus Baxter, *In Search of Your German Roots: A Complete Guide to Tracing Your Ancestors in the Germanic Areas of Europe* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2008), p. 76.

other hand, some entries were filled in with additional data, such as the dispensation of consanguinity rules in cases where cousins had been married.<sup>72</sup> The amount of genealogical information a researcher could obtain therefore depended wholly on the meticulousness of the individual priest. The attempt to complete the *Ahnenpass* was also hindered by the fact that, until the late nineteenth century, entries in Catholic registers were written in Latin. In cases where the holder could neither read nor speak Latin, it was necessary to consult the responsible official.

The fact that many Germans could neither understand Latin nor decipher old style hand writing meant that they had to rely solely on church officials for the procurement of genealogical information. Again in 1936, the government felt compelled to remind Germans not to inundate churches, archives and registries with letters. The government's decision to intervene stemmed partly from the collective complaint made by archivists and registrars of being understaffed and overburdened with paperwork as a result of the standard proof and the *Ahnenpass*. The ability to respond to queries or conduct research on the behalf of ordinary Germans, they argued, consumed their professional lives. Indeed appeals to burgeon the number of employees in the archives of Marburg, Berlin-Dahlem, and Stettin were made repeatedly.<sup>73</sup> The Nazis responded quickly to placate officials. The *Völkischer Beobachter* encouraged readers to think of the needs of other 'racial comrades.' Readers were reminded that, while the individual request was important, requests would only be handled by archives, parishes and registries in the order they were received: '[People] have to be served before you.'<sup>74</sup> A time period of four to six weeks was considered normal for a reply. Despite appeals to the public to demonstrate patience, most archivists, registrars and priests continued to work under immense pressure to supply genealogical information to all those who needed it. Problems relating to supply and demand would continue to plague these institutions right up to the end of Nazism.

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<sup>72</sup> Noel Curren-Briggs, *Worldwide Family History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 109.

<sup>73</sup> "Repertorienababschriften für die Forschungsabteilung Judenfrage des Reichsinstituts für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands," 23 Dezember 1936, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 72-73 and "Abschrift," 1 Juni 1937, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 86-87.

<sup>74</sup> "Wie Beschaffe ich mir am schnellsten meinen abstammungsnachwiess?," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 5 Juli 1936.

## Promoting self-initiative

The Reich government did what it could to ease the burden felt by officials. By October 1936, the government publicised stories of local enthusiasts and officials researching and putting together ‘Village Kinship Books’ or *Dorfsippenbücher* from around the country. These books were not only intended to reveal the genealogies of inhabitants from small towns and villages,<sup>75</sup> but as a one-stop source where local residents could view details on births, baptisms, marriages, deaths and burials as documented in the local church register. The government, in the meantime, did what it could to propagate the village book initiative. Genealogical exhibitions (to be discussed in chapter four) and newspapers such as the *Völkischer Beobachter* documented how the *Dorfsippenbücher* had been well received in states such as Thüringen. One article titled ‘Success and Aims of Rural Genealogy,’ published in October 1936 by the *Völkischer Beobachter*, even found it noteworthy to mention the completion of the ‘first ten village genealogy books’ in the same region.<sup>76</sup>

The *Völkischer Beobachter*’s use of ‘success’ in the article’s title was not some propaganda ploy to give impetus or stimulate local research elsewhere. Rather, in many respects, it reflected the enthusiasm and cooperation felt by thousands of volunteers who helped research and publish local ‘Village Books.’ For example, in the same article the ambitious plans for the practice of genealogy at a local level were laid out. The party described how it wanted to create a village book for every town and village in Germany within the next thirty years. Referring to Thüringen once again, the report proposed that, within the next year, ten more books would be created.<sup>77</sup> The article went so far as to document the yearly output of books needed to meet this ambitious target. The Reich government aspired to have one hundred completed by 1939, five hundred by 1940 and then one hundred books every year thereafter. If this rate of output remained steady, went the logic, then it would be ‘possible to reach the planned target’ of publishing the genealogies of every family living in Germany’s 36,000 Protestant and Catholic parishes.<sup>78</sup> The overall aim of this initiative was to reduce overuse of church books, and at the same time document the genealogical tree of every inhabitant.

<sup>75</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 134.

<sup>76</sup> “Die ersten zehn Dorssippenbücher,” 28 Dezember 1938, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 128.

<sup>77</sup> The article also stated that within the following twelve months the number of towns and villages in Thüringen compiling village books was to rise from 35 to 658.

<sup>78</sup> Raymond S. Wright, “The Impact of Nazi Records on German Genealogical Research,” *Ancestry Magazine* 16, no. 6 (1998), p. 52.

The special attention accorded to rural life by the Nazis was particularly important in popularising genealogy in villages and small towns across the country. Notwithstanding the fact that the standard proof was compulsory, the idea that rural life was viewed as honourable, principled and untouched by the decadences of the city encouraged many to research and reaffirm their historical ties with the land.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, an appealing aspect to the blood community was that to be a member was to inherit a family beyond your immediate one. As such, every German was to be treated by his fellow German with respect, honour and courtesy. Each was expected to put aside individualism and the temptation to exploit others. Acting contrary to this ideal, the Nazis argued, was to harm and threaten ‘the unity and continued existence of the *Volk*.’<sup>80</sup> And like a family, it was important to make Germans feel that their fellow Germans were around them, to provide them with a sense of security and communal support. The regime supported events that asserted the *Volk* at a local level. Local festivals were important in this respect, insofar as they encouraged active cooperation with the regime. In small towns such as Celle in Lower Saxony residents congregated to celebrate local life as well as initiate a ‘Beautiful Village’ campaign. As part of the celebration organisers of the event approached and took photographs of local farmers. Such collections, accompanied with a list of each subject’s age, head size and shape, hair and eye colour, as well as their family’s length of residence in the area, were sent to local museums or farmers associations.<sup>81</sup> Events such as these allowed fellow Germans to line the streets, talk to one another, and take pride in the beautiful surroundings of their village. Germans did not endorse ideas of the *Volk* purely for material gain, although it certainly was an influential factor; they embraced it because it promoted a society where everyone was viewed as a racial equal, except of course for the outcasts.

Another way the Reich government sought to maximise cooperation from the Churches was to distribute leaflets and gazettes guiding readers through the ancestral process to various authorities, including central government ministries, local government offices, archives and registries.<sup>82</sup> These leaflets were designed to furnish readers with advice that, in turn, would help reduce their reliance on official institutions and their hard-pressed staff for data collection. One example of how advice for the standard proof was packaged for the ordinary citizen can be seen in the *Verwaltungsblatt der Hansestadt Köln*, which was

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<sup>79</sup> Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, p. 65.

<sup>80</sup> Joseph W. Bendersky, *A Concise History of Nazi Germany*, Third ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), p. 29.

<sup>81</sup> Frank Bösch, ‘The Conservatives in Lower Saxony between Kaiserreich and Federal Republic,’ in *German History from the Margins*, ed. Neil Gregor, Nils Roemer and Mark Roseman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 137.

<sup>82</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 63.

circulated around administrative offices in the Palatinates in December 1936. As simple as it may seem, this particular issue made a point of showing what constituted a family unit; it was not to be thought of as constituting only children and their parents. In this way, the Nazis believed they could make the standard proof and the *Ahnenpass* relate to each reader, and to understand the fact that grandparents were an integral component of a German family.<sup>83</sup> The standard proof reflected the importance of grandparents in both home life and the purification of the *Volk*:

The kinship of a person is his relatives [and] consists of the four grandparents and their successors.

a) the four grandparents

b) the parents and their siblings (aunt and uncle of the person in question)

c) the person in question

d) the siblings of the person in question (carrier of the kinship) as well as their children (nephew and niece to the person in question)<sup>84</sup>

Similar to *Völkischer Beobachter*, The *Verwaltungsblatt der Hansestadt Köln* was absolutely clear that Germans should show self-initiative when tracing their ancestors. The paper encouraged Germans to begin ancestral research in the familial home. In trying to acquire knowledge on the racial purity of ancestors, researchers were told to go from room to room, opening drawers to rummage through personal archives. Yet very few families kept an ordered filing system, or even the semblance of one, from which genealogical documentation could be readily pulled.<sup>85</sup> Thus, assessing personal records was as much about knowing what was missing as determining what was actually present. In other words, an initial assessment of family records would help the researcher build up an inventory of records missing and, by implication, records to be requested at the registry office, archive or church. The next step, as we shall see, was to gather documents and knowledge by questioning parents, relatives and friends prior to writing letters to registries, synagogues, and parishes. To make these gatherings both productive and informative, readers of the gazette were given a list of questions that would hopefully guide group discussions. Family name, religion, place and time of birth, baptism, place and time of

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<sup>83</sup> Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>84</sup> "Verwaltungsblatt," 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 11.

<sup>85</sup> Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Towards German Jews 1933 - 1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 130.



marriage, date and time of death of all relatives were to be exchanged and recorded. For women who were married, it remained important to document their maiden name as well.

But equally Germans had to take some responsibility for their own family research, regardless of whether they were in the process of completing the standard proof or the *Ahnenpass*. With so many letters coming and going over such a long time scale, it was important for Germans to adopt practices to minimise the prospect of documents becoming misplaced or even lost. The most common practice adopted was to assign each incoming document with the same number that was allocated to an individual as they appeared on the family pyramid. One Berliner, who was compiling an extensive family tree to enable his daughter to attend university, operated on this basis. By late 1937, he had received the birth, death and marriages certificates for 54 family members and for every one received he placed a corresponding number in the top left hand corner.<sup>86</sup> When looking for a specific certificate he did not have to sift through file after file. For all its simplicity, it was to prove a very effective system. In his personal archive there is further evidence to suggest his observance to the rules of genealogy was rigid. His family archive, containing a family tree and certificates, also held a newspaper clipping which was intended to guide researchers through the process of ancestral research. In demonstrating that the archive was organised to reflect the meticulousness appealed for by the article 'Meinen Abstammungsnachwiess?' printed in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, one particular point stands out, namely: 'It is essential that you enclose the certificates you have already received or an appropriate list of your ancestors...'<sup>87</sup> A covering letter, dated 21 February 1937, listed his entire collection of records. It listed all his family members in the style: 'Meines Ahnennachwieses, also der Vater meiner Gorssmutter väterlciherseits, nämlich C. N, geb.28.3.1781 in Rawitsch (now Rawicz), evangelisch.'<sup>88</sup> The official examining the archive would have had very little to complain about.

As well as those documents received officially, other, every day, household documents were singled out as important in building a more comprehensive profile on the character and race of family members. Newspapers, gazettes and pamphlets listed private letters, written recordings of oral information, and extracts from written sources, death notices and even copies of tombstone engravings as acceptable additions to family archives. Wary of the accuracy of oral information, articles were quick to point out the importance of

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<sup>86</sup> Family tree of H.H, undated.

<sup>87</sup> "Wie beschaffe ich mir am schellsten meinen abstammungsnachwiess?"

<sup>88</sup> H.H to Auswärtige Amt, Berlin, personal correspondence, 21 February 1937.

verifying key data against registers stored in archives, churches and registries. This information, too, was to be easily distinguished from other sources of information: ‘Oral statements have to be marked as such.’ Moreover, family tree books, contracts, buying or leasing files, educational and work certificates, military documents as well as tax notices were also valuable by-products of the past, and no less conducive to unearthing the racial origins of one’s predecessors. Pictures and newspaper clippings were highly prized in this context; they built up a ‘picture of the surrounding of the ancestors.’ Photographs and silhouettes of family members were to be searched out as well. It was, however, specified that every picture, bust outline, and photograph collected should have the following details, clearly and coherently displayed on its underside: ‘name and age of the person recorded’ and also ‘where and when the photo was taken.’ It was recommended that these records – often stored as ‘junk in attics and cellars’ - be retained alongside documents from official institutions, preferably filed in drawers ‘to avoid loss of important and sometimes irreplaceable documents.’ The records pertaining to each individual were to be separated and, importantly, assembled in a chronological order. In cases where an individual doubted the worth of any of the above records, archives in all states made themselves available to give assistance: ‘When sifting through these documents the archives of the city of Köln [will] advise you.’<sup>89</sup>

The paper furnished readers with suggestions to stimulate self-initiative in the wider family circle. ‘If you don’t have this information,’ stated the second point, ‘ask relatives.’ Families were challenged to assemble something close to a working group, consisting of one’s parents, aunts and uncles, sisters-in-laws, fathers-in-law, and so on. These work groups were promoted as a means of saving time, money and research: ‘Keep the connection with your relatives by forming close family bonds. By using this family bond...double work and double costs can be saved.’ In a bid to gain momentum and pass on useful tips to the public, evening lectures and exhibitions were held across Germany to make this familial venture more appealing and rewarding. And it was not without some degree of success. The *Völkischer Beobachter* claimed that in Schleswig-Holstein volunteer groups had appeared in many cities, including Kiel, Lübeck, Schleswig, Rendsberg, Flensburg, and Neumünster.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> “Verwaltungsblatt,” 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 12.

<sup>90</sup> The article explained in the most simplistic terms the importance of village books for genealogical research. To paraphrase the article: village books give us the most comprehensive and most accurate information about the consistency of the population of the towns in Nord Schlesig in the course of the last century and about additions from the surrounding areas. They outline both the numbers and

Beyond the family circle, there were commercial means to establishing family genealogies. *Völkischer Beobachter* led the way. Advertisement sections were often filled with appeals from ordinary Germans for others to come forward and participate in their research. Beginning with the family name in question, these appeals invariably possessed the same layout: 'Families Ginger. According to the research so far the areas where this name is predominant is Saxony, southern Germany and Austria. [S]o far the research has found that the oldest person carrying this name is Carl Gottlob Ginger who was born on 17 February 1758 in RothenKirchen. Other lineages have been certified in Passau, Augsburg, Würzburg. Anybody interested in further research of the above names please contact K.I.Ginger, Berlin, Lichterfelde, Potsdamer Strasse 36.'<sup>91</sup>

Although advertisements were similar in tone and format, additional information went a long way in revealing the ups and downs of ancestral research:

### **The lineage of Wienecke**

According to the research so far the lineage of Wienecke originates from Hildesheim where the oldest bearer so far of this name is Heinrich Arendt Weinecke, who was a resident and landlord. His son, Johann, was also a resident and landlord in Hildesheim. He was born on 5 March 1749. His siblings have so far all been completely researched. Any bearers of the above name are asked to contact Oscar von Weinekcke, Wellkampf in Berlin, Wilhelms-hagen, Bleßstrasse 31-33 for further research of the lineage.

### **Concerning the research of Büst**

According to the research so far the original home of this lineage was Altmark. The way the name is written varies considerably, you find Boste, Bueste, Bost, etc. A line of this lineage has been researched without any gaps to the year 1720. The oldest known bearer of the name....Hans Bouste, who married in 1720 in Ackendorf, near Gardelegen, Altmark. All bearers of this name who are interested in further research are asked to contact Martin Büst, Salz Wilde (Altmark) Freilichgratstrasse 12.<sup>92</sup>

For some, the task at hand was simply too overwhelming. In turn, many looked to genealogists, both amateur and professional, for help and guidance. Indeed, these groups viewed the *Ahnenpass* as an unprecedented business opportunity.<sup>93</sup> For a fee, genealogists offered advice on how best to meet the new racial requirements of the Third Reich. Their

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importance of people moving in the cities from the south and the north. Moreover, they list the national/regional of couples living together and document where these families 'sit' in the social strata. "Wie Beschaffe ich mir am schellsten meinen abstammungsnachwiess?"

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, pp. 74-75.

identification with racial policies also encouraged the state, through newspapers such as *Völkischer Beobachter*, to add to the professional prestige where it could: 'Make sure that you support the great work of genealogy by paying fixed small fees, if possible. You cannot expect that the people who work on your behalf work without payment...' <sup>94</sup> With such endorsements, advertisements providing professional contacts and expounding the areas of expertise of individual genealogists found their way into more and more journals and newspapers, such as the *Allgemeines Suchblatt für Sippenforscher*, or General Search Sheet for Kinship Researchers. Flyers, business cards and brochures were also employed to inform would-be customers of costs as well as listing the legal disclaimers involved in accessing and collecting records for the *Ahnenpass*. <sup>95</sup>

To maximise their earning potential, some genealogists were willing to offer their services to institutions involved in making the racial passport. Faced with hundreds of requests every month, officials, who found the burden of genealogical research on their time and resources onerous, often welcomed the prospect of a professional who was both efficient and knowledgeable in this field. One Berliner, for example, awaiting vital information on one ancestor, received a letter weeks later from the German Consulate in Posen, which contained useful advice showing how an ancestor may be found when details on their life were sketchy: 'If you cannot provide the name, place and date of birth, death and marriage,' the letter read, 'then your research....will not be successful.' This outcome and the advice that followed would have been given to countless Germans: 'In this case, it is advised to ask the following genealogists for help': Otto Leuthold, Wilhelmstrasse. 12; Dr Eduard von Behrens, Promenada 5 or Benno Schulz, Poznan, Willa Zameczek. <sup>96</sup> Officials could rely on the willingness of individual genealogists to take on extra work that arose from such cases. But the expertise genealogists possessed was a commodity that many ordinary Germans could simply not afford.

Genealogy activities were not just about understanding 'the self' but were a necessary precondition to becoming a member of the 'blood community of the German *Volk*.' <sup>97</sup> Yet citizens could not remain static after revealing their ancestral history, rather they had to continually demonstrate they were acting in the interests of the nation. For example, a popular poster, appearing around the time of the Nuremberg laws, and depicting a blond mother breastfeeding her new born child, portrayed motherhood as noble contribution to

<sup>94</sup> "Wie Beschaffe ich mir am schnellsten meinen abstammungsnachwiess?"

<sup>95</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>96</sup> Auswärtiges Amt to H.H, Berlin, personal correspondence, undated.

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, p. 66.

the *Volk*. The Nazis invested much effort in encouraging women to marry early, start families and make a good home life. Propaganda showing mothers rising early, cooking breakfast, cleaning the house and helping the children with their homework were both common and ideal representations of maternity in Nazi thinking.<sup>98</sup>

Mothers of large families were also given additional support to help keep their children healthy. They had access to kindergartens run by the *NS – Volkswohlfahrt* or National Socialists People's Welfare organisation (NSV). In these spaces, every child was bathed and had their teeth brushed as soon as they arrived. After this, the children were split into groups according to age and from there embarked on itinerary that involved playing, exercising, singing, eating and sleeping. The purpose of these activities was to raise children according to the values of National Socialism, to serve the national community as well as look after one's self.<sup>99</sup> In the countryside, these nurseries served an important function, allowing mothers to leave their children under professional care while they went and worked in the fields.<sup>100</sup> There was also financial incentive to parents who had proven Aryan status. By 1936, low income families received regular money grants when their fifth or subsequent child was born. What is important in this context, however, was that these benefits were denied to anyone who could not produce proof of their lineage to the necessary authorities. Couples shown to have Jewish blood, a hereditary disease, or possessed a history of alcoholism were likewise denied material or financial support from the state.

The withdrawal of state support from Jewish parents signalled an intensification of the government's anti-Jewish campaign. In the three years after the Nuremberg laws were promulgated, Jews had endured a whole host of problems. They were mocked on the street and victims of physical violence. Moreover, they became unemployable. No respectable German employer would even contemplate hiring a Jew. But in 1937 new decrees and restrictions were implemented which resulted in Jews being banned from public baths, markets, theatres, swimming pools and libraries. In the same period, the government stepped up its effort to encourage Aryans to create a racial divide between themselves and Jews. One example was the *Deutscher Polizeibeamte* which was reportedly distributed around Berlin police departments and offices from June 1937. 'The German Civil Servant,' the article read, 'must, in his relations with full-blooded Jews be careful not to offend

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<sup>98</sup> Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, p. 64.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

<sup>100</sup> Lisa Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), p. 25.

against the National Socialist conception of life and against the fundamental principles of the National Socialist State.’ As if never fully removed from the office environment, employees now found their home and work life entwined. The wording of the article did not refrain from promoting adherence through fear: ‘[A]ny friendships between a civil servant and a full-blooded Jew means a serious breach of duty and [will] be followed by criminal prosecution.’ Reinforcing the point in meticulous fashion, a list set out the social settings to which this ruling extended: ‘This applies to visits, mutual invitations, the letting of flats or rooms, especially in holiday resorts and spas, to Jews, or renting of rooms in Jewish boarding houses and families.’ It was also clear that to fit the Nazi ideal of the obedient and dutiful civil servant, controlling one’s own actions was not enough. The article concluded by attempting to bind traditional male values of pride in his family, as well as the role of the husband as the regulator of discipline, and connect it to the Nazi goal of social segregation. ‘Every civil servant must urge his wife and family not to break these rules.’<sup>101</sup>

Seven months later, in January 1938, the Reich government implemented further anti-Semitic decrees to Jews. On 5 January, the Nazis passed the Law on the Alteration of Family and Personal Names. This law prohibited Jews from changing their names (this will be discussed in detail in chapter three). Being a Jewish proprietor at this time created additional problems. In 1936, the Aryanisation of Jewish property began in earnest. This was a process whereby Jews were forced to transfer ownership of their business to Aryans. The processes leading to Aryanisation often depended on both location and size of the Jewish business. In small towns and villages, for example, Saul Friedländer observes how a combination of boycotts and intimidation by the Gestapo was enough to initiate a transfer. In larger cities, Aryan firms found that barring Jews from credit facilities was equally effective.<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, boycotts were used in conjunction with financial restrictions, including town officials explicitly warning recipients with state pensions to stay away from Jewish shops.<sup>103</sup> Already, Gau (district) economic advisors, appointed by the Nazi party, had established a network of offices across the country. The purpose of

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<sup>101</sup> "New Anti-Jewish Divorce Rule in Germany," *The Jewish Echo*, 25 June 1937, p. 13.

<sup>102</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1945*, vol. One (London: Phoenix Giant, 1998), pp. 234-235.

<sup>103</sup> Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, p. 310.

each office was to ensure Aryanisation was carried out officially by taking ‘control over sale contracts’ between Jews and Aryans.<sup>104</sup>

In addition to narrowing the rights and freedoms of German Jews, the Nazis never tired in its attempt to make ordinary Germans susceptible to the idea of *Volk*. They continued to promote cohesiveness among Germans by making them, collectively, feel under attack. In everyday life, the Nazis singled out Jews as a threat to both the unity and future of the German nation.<sup>105</sup> Festivals again played a key role in perpetuating the Nazi stereotype of Jewish danger. In Leissling, a small village in Saxony-Anhalt, the local Easter tradition of ‘begging for eggs’ was transformed and became an outlet for expressing the physical and mental ‘differences’ of the Jewish race. Under the Nazis the parade now involved local citizens donning masks that caricatured the Jewish ‘hook’ nose. They wore their best clothes, put on bowler hats, and dark glasses to emphasise their ‘wealth.’<sup>106</sup> While this was intended as a ‘funny’ joke, it nonetheless was an important lesson. It became a way of normalising racial anti-Semitism, a ‘funny’ way of interlinking racial inferiority, selfishness and the Jewish race. Thus, the benefits of the *Volk* were presented to the population by a combination of propaganda and spectacle. The value of belonging for the ordinary German was not just the knowledge that pure blood ran through his or her veins, but also that a world of benefits and social advancement and security existed because of what German blood symbolised to the Nazi party.

The government utilised genealogy for its own racial ends. The Nazis believed that by identifying someone with Jewish blood and applying racial laws to them (laws which will be described in detail later) that they could isolate and eliminate their threat to the German *Volk* as a whole. Genealogy was the mechanism used to inventory the people; a method that the Nazis believed would filter out the lazy and degenerate Jew from the hard-working and honest German. Of course, there would be some Germans who would go on to express regret, even frustration, at having to organise genealogies. Nevertheless, the Nazis continued to make the rewards for proving Aryan ancestry alluring, both financially and emotionally. Certified Germans were invited to participate in the takeover Jewish businesses and its holdings for a heavily reduced price. The thought of ‘profiting at the

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<sup>104</sup> Frank Bajohr, "Aryanization and Restitution in Germany," in *Robbery and Restitution: The Conflict over Jewish Property in Europe*, ed. Martin Dean, Constantin Goschler, and Philipp Ther (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), p. 35.

<sup>105</sup> Bendersky, *A Concise History*, p. 29.

<sup>106</sup> The exact year when locals first caricatured the Jews and made it part of the ‘begging for eggs’ festival is not stated. For more details see: Richard Overy, *The Third Reich: A Chronicle* (London: Quercus, 2010), p. 137.

expense of Jews was,’ as Joseph Bendersky has pointed out, ‘a temptation too many could not resist.’<sup>107</sup> In addition to materialism the process of gaining entry in to the *Volk* could prove emotionally satisfying. Indeed, there is compelling evidence that for all the hardships it entailed, a deep sense of personal pride of fulfilment could be taken from piecing together the family tree. Victor Klemperer, for example, observed how one acquaintance took ‘great pleasure’ in ‘piecing together’ his family history. As a result, he became convinced that ancestral research, the bringing together of a nation under a collective Aryan identity, had captured the loyalty of Germans everywhere.<sup>108</sup>

In the end it mattered very little whether Germans expressed overt enthusiasm for family research, or carried it out based on a combination of self-interested and self-serving reasons. To achieve the goal of a racially pure *Volksgemeinschaft* required only that the population remained passive and compliant. The fact that the majority of Germans were obedient in carrying out their research worked in favour of the Nazis, and maintained the effort to separate the country in to healthy and unhealthy persons.

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<sup>107</sup> Bendersky, *A Concise History*, p. 144.

<sup>108</sup> Victor Klemperer, *I Shall Bear Witness: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer* (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), p. 421.



## Chapter three: Protecting the Volk against blood-mixing, 1933-1938

The Nuremberg laws were a defining moment in German society. The laws prohibited mixed marriages and reduced Jews to the status of subjects. The Nazis believed that following a legal path of persecution would reduce cases of anti-Semitic violence. As one report, appearing only weeks after the rally, put it: 'It will now bring absolute clarity, and though resolute in preserving the racial interests of the German people, will refrain from any hateful persecution of the Jews.'<sup>1</sup> The Nazis believed they had arrived at a middle ground between persecuting individuals of Jewish ancestry and placating Germans who supported discrimination, yet not necessarily its manifestations in open violence and destruction of property. At the same time, Gestapo reports observed how ordinary Germans welcomed the new laws, such as in the city of Munster where the inhabitants were said to be 'satisfied' with recent developments. The enactment of the racial laws, it was noted, also served to have a dampening effect on violence towards the Jews.<sup>2</sup> In Magdeburg, the people reportedly interpreted the 'regulation of the relationships of the Jews as an emancipatory act, which brings clarity and simultaneously greater firmness in the protection of the racial interests of the German people.'<sup>3</sup> It is undoubtedly true that some Germans welcomed the legislation for reasons which varied between outright anti-Semitism and a general hope that an legislative approach to Jewish persecution would help quell wilful violence and destruction of property. Nevertheless, what is important here is that, for the most part, there was an accord of indifference towards the Nuremberg Laws. This apathy or silence was all the state needed to push forward with its plans to redefine courtship and marriage in the Third Reich.

The Nuremberg laws did not just categorise and divide the nation, rather they served to dramatically alter the daily experiences of Jews and suspected Jews. No longer did a Jew's genealogy simply result in the termination of an employment contract, it also increased their likelihood of maltreatment and experience of violence. Jews were constantly being reminded of their position at the bottom of the racial hierarchy; national newspapers

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<sup>1</sup> Otto Dov Kulka and Eberhard Jäckel, ed. *The Jews in the Secret Nazi Reports on Popular Opinion, 1933 – 1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy, 1933-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 109-110.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 110.

expounded the growth of card catalogues held by the authorities of Jews living in the country, and added to the sense that the state was closing in on its racial enemies; radio announcements called for the purification of the Aryan community and employers remained ever vigilant against 'Jewish looking' workers. The consequences arising from poor genealogy were not something an individual could escape from, and certainly did not stop at the doorway to the family home. Rather it permeated family life and determined the quality of life they would lead.

Within weeks of its enactment, local branches of the Nazi party began pinning up 'The Nuremberg Laws' poster in cities, towns and villages across the country. (The poster had been carefully designed and created a visual aid to understanding the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour, enacted at the Nuremberg rally in September 1935, and prohibiting sexual relationships and marriages between Jews and Aryans, and the first Supplementary Decree to the Reich's Citizenship Law, published six weeks later, on 14 November). As well as establishing the four blood groups (German blood, *Mischlinge* first and second degree and full Jew), the poster also stated which marriages were forbidden, displaying every 'possible combination of the inter-marriage of Jews, half-Jews, quarter-Jews which are prohibited under the racial laws of the Reich.'<sup>4</sup> As the poster made clear: full Jews were prohibited from marrying individuals with one Jewish grandparent, or second degree *Mischlinge*; *Mischlinge* of the second degree were not allowed to marry persons within their own group or those deemed a full Jew; an individual with two Jewish grandparents, or first degree *Mischlinge*, could not marry a German, however certain allowances could be granted by the Ministry of the Interior. In such cases, consideration was given to the *Mischling's* physical characteristics, political leaning, the length of time his or her family had lived in Germany, and whether his father fought in the war.<sup>5</sup> Individuals with two Jewish grandparents were permitted to wed full blooded Jews, but the latter would in turn be reduced to their spouse's status, namely a full Jew.<sup>6</sup> Sexual intercourse and marriage between Jews and non-Jews was deemed inexcusable by the state and therefore given a label that was intended to evoke revulsion: *Rassenschande*, or racial defilement.

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<sup>4</sup> "When a Jew May Be Arrested in Germany," *The Jewish Echo*, 14 May 1937, p.11.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Noakes, "The development of Nazi policy towards the German-Jewish "Mischlinge" 1933-1945," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 34, no.1 (1989), <<http://leobaeck.oxfordjournals.org/content/34/1/291.full.pdf+html>> [accessed 23 February 2013], p. 315.

<sup>6</sup> Michael J. Bazyler, "The thousand year Reich's over one thousand anti-Jewish laws," in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. Jonathan C. Friedman (New York: Routledge, 2012), p.84 and Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p. 77.

The main goal of the racial policies was to prevent marriages between persons of alien blood and German blooded Aryans. The fear regarding the transmission of inferior blood and hereditary diseases into the *Volk* was such that the Party exerted extreme pressure on Germans and Jews engaged in mixed relationships. Even before the Nuremberg Laws had been announced, high-ranking Nazi officials proceeded to ruin potential unions between these groups. In July 1935, the Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick, asked registrars to refuse to publish notices of marriages between Jews and non-Jews.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, registrars were instructed to sit couples down and explain to them why their relationship was 'erroneous.' Couples who disregarded the advice given by the registrar and went ahead with the ceremony could expect to be greeted outside by an unruly demonstration.<sup>8</sup> Papers such as *Der Stürmer* often published the names and addresses of couples in mixed relationships, making it easier for demonstrators to target them long after their wedding day.<sup>9</sup> Julius Streicher, publisher of *Der Stürmer*, encouraged this form of behaviour because, in addition to humiliating couples who had shown open contempt for preserving the purity of the German race, it served as a warning for potential marriage partners. The hope was that concern for the other-half would thus encourage partners to speak openly and honestly about their ancestry, thereby protecting loved-ones from public condemnation.

The Nuremberg laws rubber stamped forms of discrimination already being handed out to racial defilers. After September 1935, charts detailing the Nuremberg Laws were issued by the Nazis to registry offices across the country. Registrars were to pin this chart on their office wall and, under considerable pressure, memorise the laws it displayed.<sup>10</sup> While racial laws forced registrars to become more vigilant - registrars faced dismissal or even prison for officiating at a wedding between a Jew and German – the events between September and November 1935 also required the registrar to prohibit other racial groups from marrying. The Law for the Protection of Hereditary Offspring on 14 July 1934, as discussed in chapter two, had already led to the sterilisation of individuals with hereditary diseases. On 18 October 1935, however, the Nazis enacted the Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People, which prevented racial aliens, racial inferiors and individuals with a transmittable disease (such as sexual diseases) that may cause a (potential) spouse to fear for their own health or that of their potential offspring, from

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<sup>7</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, p. 298.

<sup>9</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> Warburg, *Six Years of Hitler (Rle Responding to Facism): The Jews under the Nazi Regime*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 90.

marrying.<sup>11</sup> This law not only prohibited racial inferiors such as Gypsies and their offspring from marrying Germans but made ‘certificates of fitness to marry’ compulsory for getting married. Registrars needed these certificates to verify whether or not the couple were fit to marry.<sup>12</sup> The failure to follow the rules and verify the ancestry of couples to marry could result in the party investigating the registrar’s own family tree.<sup>13</sup> The stakes were indeed high.

The rigorous process for getting married, though discussed in chapter two, is worthy of further investigation. The reason stems from the fact the promulgation of the Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People altered the genealogical requirements of couples waiting to wed. Between 1933 and 1935, for example, couples going to the registry office to wed were only required to sign a declaration stating that they were free from mental illness and venereal diseases (such as syphilis) as well as from tuberculosis.<sup>14</sup> Following the Nuremberg laws the rules changed again. In addition to this declaration, couples now had to produce their own birth certificates as well as those of their parents. Moreover, they were required to sign a declaration stating that, as far as they knew, they did not possess Jewish ancestry.<sup>15</sup> The latest legislation, coming in October 1935, tightened further existing rules. Not completing a ‘certificate of fitness to marry’ automatically disqualified couples from taking their vows. The Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People, in essence, offered the registrar considerable protection for crimes against the *Volk*. The registrar was required only to cast an eye over the certificate officially produced by the responsible local health office, thereby ensuring that both were of Aryan stock. At the same time, the new wave of laws added a very specific power to the registrar’s role, namely the demand to request a medical examination at the local health office if he doubted the accuracy of submitted documentation.<sup>16</sup>

Unique to local health offices across Germany was the fact that its doctors preferred to review candidates in person prior to determining his or her ancestry. This practice of working, for example, is contrary to that of the Reich Office for Kinship Research based in Berlin (to be discussed below) whose racial experts relied mainly on photographs of

<sup>11</sup> Majer, *"Non-Germans" Under the Third Reich*, " pp. 103-104.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wipperman, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 91.

<sup>14</sup> "Other Notices," *The Eugenics Review* 31, no. 2 (1939),  
<<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2962370/pdf/eugenrev00236-0057.pdf>> [accessed 14 March 2013], p. 137.

<sup>15</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 64.

<sup>16</sup> "Other Notices," p. 137.

suspected Jews (and his or her family) to work out race.<sup>17</sup> The investigations undertaken at these health offices were intentionally invasive, designed to filter out all blood-related or physical ailments viewed by the Nazis as being harmful to potential offspring and the national community. Attending a prearranged appointment at the health office, applicants for marriage certificates would undergo a medical examination. This involved the responsible doctor conducting a detailed study of the patient's anthropological measurements.<sup>18</sup> During the course of the investigation, questions would be asked about the applicant's proneness to illness, the dates he or she was afflicted as well as the name of the condition. The reason for this was to allow the doctor to follow up any condition he considered serious or transmissible (such as schizophrenia) with the doctor responsible for past (or current) treatment.<sup>19</sup> In short, doctors at these clinics were charged with measuring candidates against rigid racial standards, to be scrupulous when a hereditary illness or physical impairment was detected, and to establish whether or not they were capable of producing a strong and healthy German family.<sup>20</sup> This was the message reiterated time and again by the Nazi newspaper, *Völkischer Beobachter*:

Before the enactment of this law persons who on account of their weak mindedness, prodigality or alcoholism had been declared incapable of managing their affairs were allowed to marry with the consent of their legal guardian. However, it is against the interests of the national community that such persons should marry. Further there are persons who suffer from mental troubles but who for some reason or other have not yet been declared incapable of managing their own affairs, and others who in consequence of pathological heredity have become criminals. It is obvious that the state must not leave to them the responsibility for the foundation of a family. The present law is a necessary complement to the previous law for the prevention of hereditary disease. The purpose of marriage being the production of healthy children, it is morally unjust to bind a healthy, reproductive individual to a sterilized one. On the other hand, there is no objection against two barren individuals entering into a life community.<sup>21</sup>

Before a certificate of marriage could be issued the applicant's genealogical tree also had to be carefully picked apart and minutely examined by the doctor. As such, questions pertinent to family history took up a large segment of the examination. The doctor sought to extend, if possible, his knowledge of the applicant's genealogical tree, and beyond the

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<sup>17</sup> Evan Burr Bukey, *Jews and Inter-marriage in Nazi Austria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 50.

<sup>18</sup> Eliot Slater, "German Eugenics in Practice," *The Eugenics Review* 27, no. 4 (1936), <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2985526/>> [accessed 11 February 2013], p. 292.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>21</sup> Felix Tietze, "Eugenic Measures in the Third Reich," *The Eugenics Review* 31, no. 2 (1939), <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2962393/pdf/eugenrev00236-0025.pdf>> [accessed 11 February 2013], p. 106.

requirements of the standard proof – the latter, as has been discussed, necessitated individuals produce background information relating to their parents and grandparents. The doctor enquired about the applicant's great-grandparents, and whether they had in their possession details of their births, deaths and marriages.<sup>22</sup> Questioning of a similar nature was even asked in reference to first cousins. With the family history segment completed, the doctor summarised the genealogical information about the applicant's parents, grandparents and, where possible, great-grandparents onto a summary card.<sup>23</sup> The summarised details were then checked against records held in various institutions the applicant may have come into contact with during their lifetime, such as, hospitals, homes for alcoholics, asylums, services specialising in tuberculosis, venereal diseases and obstetrics.<sup>24</sup> Space on the card was also given over to the applicant's skills. Talents were only written down if the doctor considered them to be high or above average. Categories listed could include mathematics, languages, music, painting and sport. Lastly, the outcome of the investigation is entered on the card. Some of the outcome could read: 'non-Aryan,' 'criminal,' 'insane' or 'highly gifted.'<sup>25</sup> The word(s) entered here determined whether or not the applicant would be granted a marriage certificate. The fact that doctors listed diagnoses of criminal, and insane made it clear that the Nazis saw multiple threats to the sanctity of German blood. Yet it would be misleading to assume that health offices were created solely to protect Aryans from wedding Jews. Rather, health offices sought to pair individuals with similar family histories by vetoing, say, the marriages plans of an Aryan and a criminal while at the same time awarding certificates to couples demonstrating pure Aryan lineage. Doctors, in line with Nazi principles, believed these pairings stood the best possible chance of creating strong and healthy German families.

In the meantime, the Nazis attempted to deter racial mixing outside on the street. The most direct way of achieving racial segregation was to arrest, intimidate, threaten or become physically violent towards German-Jewish couples. Everything from conversing, holding hands, kissing and handshakes between these racial groups was subject to one or more of the above actions. Indeed, the regime feared the potential consequences of sexual encounters between these groups that what was considered minor infraction, such as walking next to an Aryan, often led to disproportionate penalties. In one case in Hildesheim a Jewish war veteran, who had already been held under 'protective custody'

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<sup>22</sup> Slater, "German Eugenics in Practice," p. 292.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 292.

<sup>24</sup> "Aufbewahrung von gemeindlichen Akten, die für die Sippen-, Rassen – und Erbforschung," 2 Juni 1939, GStA, I. HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1182, bl. 12-13.

<sup>25</sup> Slater, "German Eugenics in Practice," p. 292.

for eight days prior to his trial, was sentenced to thirty days imprisonment for kissing an Aryan girl. The girl he kissed testified at the trial and under questioning even admitted having consented to the kiss. It mattered little. In sentencing the accused, the court declared that by his very act he had not only taken the honour of the girl in question, but 'insulted' the entire German nation.<sup>26</sup> In another case, strong suspicions abounded in Gartnisch, Halle, that an Aryan woman had a relationship with a Jew. Both were subsequently arrested to await trial.<sup>27</sup> The harsh treatment meted out to Aryans was intended to deter them from making a 'racial-mistake' and producing offspring that threatened the purity of blood running through the *Volk*. It was hoped that by introducing harsh measures for racial defilers, Germans everywhere would take notice and be compelled to take certain precautions (for example, investigating the ancestry of potential partners) to protect their own Aryan family tree.

The Nazis made an unremitting effort to publicise and justify racial policies to ordinary Germans. One reason for this strategy was to reassure the public that the state was directing all its resources and energies into protecting the health of the *Volk*, and removing all elements that served to threaten it. Not satisfied persecuting Germans and Jews solely behind closed court doors, the Nazis transformed the process of the capture and arrest of defilers into a shared and transparent experience. It was to be enjoyed by all Aryans. Those who had insulted both the memory of their ancestors and their living racial peers, for example, were often marched to prison through the streets, flanked by police or SA. Although some onlookers remained quiet, others displayed their disgust by laughing, clapping, and cheering at the victims. Adding to the 'humour' of the spectacle were hastily designed signs, hanging around the neck of the victim, stating the nature of their crime: 'I am a racial defiler.'<sup>28</sup> There are examples cited in Nuremberg where Aryan women had their heads shaved prior to being exhibited in the streets.<sup>29</sup> Marches of this kind were intended as a warning to onlookers. Individual gratification would not be put above the collective health of the nation.

The police also played their part in supporting racial policies. Officers were tasked with controlling and, in time, eliminating altogether German-Jewish relationships. For example, posters titled 'The Solution to the Jewish Problem,' designed by Karl Olfstein, Police

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<sup>26</sup> "To Kiss An "Aryan" Girl Is to Insult the Nation," *The Jewish Echo*, 1 November 1935, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Kulka and Jäckel, ed. *The Jews in the Secret Nazi Report*, p. 177.

<sup>28</sup> Gerhard Schoenberger, *The Yellow Star: The Persecution of the Jews in Europe, 1933-1945* (London: Corgi, 1969), pp. 20-21.

<sup>29</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p. 79.

Chief of Breslau, were beginning to line the hallways in most, if not all, of Berlin's police offices by October 1935.<sup>30</sup> Similar to those in registrar's offices, the posters adorning the wall of police offices' were to offer a thorough grounding on laws relating to marriages and sexual encounters between Germans and Jews. The poster helped officers answer awkward questions such as 'When can a person of Jewish origin be arrested on the charges of violating the Nuremberg laws?' Whilst on patrol, a policeman was expected to keep these legal issues in mind.<sup>31</sup> Interrupting and questioning couples formed part of their new responsibilities. Suspicions aroused, officers could ask citizens about ancestors to help determine whether or not the couple was interacting illegally.

Nor did it help that the nation-wide obligation to embrace genealogy caused some neighbours to turn meddlesome. According to books and leaflets in circulation at the time, belonging to the collective required more than meeting the regime's exacting racial standards. As one leaflet warned, 'Genealogy research is no longer a matter of the individual but a task for everybody.'<sup>32</sup> Citizens were charged with keeping their German blooded neighbours and friends in check, ensuring that they too cut off all ties with Jews. Some residents took this responsibility very seriously indeed and in the process became agonisingly intrusive. Staring through peep holes, watching the comings and goings of the opposite flat, they wrote down the time and date of all movements.<sup>33</sup> Every body movement and every expression was observed. Some even went so far as to write post cards addressed to the Gestapo denouncing defilers. And it was not beyond some to hire a spy to pry on their behalf. Knowing the race of residents allowed nosey residents to narrow their attention, to keep an eye on those 'betraying the *Volk*,' and wait for an opportune moment to denounce them.<sup>34</sup> In many cases, the rationale behind such intrusiveness was not hard to justify – at least, in the eyes of the denouncer. Their motivation was often carried by newspapers and posters which stressed the role of *you* 'in the extension of the community of German blood and...the German nation.'<sup>35</sup>

The consequence of such advice was that Germans began to denounce in their droves, forcing the authorities to check on the ancestry of the accused. In Hamburg, for example, a

<sup>30</sup> "When a Jew May Be Arrested in Germany," p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> "Verwaltungsblatt," 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Patricia Szobar, "Telling Sexual Stories in the Nazi Courts of Law: Race Defilement in Germany, 1933 to 1945," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1/2 (2002), <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/3704554.pdf?acceptTC=truepp>> [accessed 14 May 2013], p. 140-141.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 140-141.

<sup>35</sup> "Verwaltungsblatt," 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 14.



flurry of denunciations led to 5000 people being detained for questioning, with 1500 judicial inquiries launched.<sup>36</sup> No longer were relationships built on a foundation of intimacy; sex and marriage were pushed into the public sphere, for all to see. As Patricia Szobar writes, 'Because an entire community was responsible for maintaining sexual standards, the scope of the investigations was broad. Prior to race-defilement arrests it was not uncommon for formal statements to be taken from as many as a dozen people, with investigators questioning friends, neighbors, coworkers, and family members for evidence of an "intimate relationship."'<sup>37</sup> As part of the questioning process family members were routinely asked about their own heredity, building a broader picture of the character of the victim. In short, there was nowhere persons in mixed relationships could go to for privacy. Not even the home.

## **Tightening genealogical requirements in the workplace**

For individuals of Jewish blood, the loss of certain marriage privileges in September 1935 signalled the beginning of a more concerted effort by the state to control and remove unwanted elements in German society. But Jews also faced growing economic persecution. In an increasing number of professions, Jews endured widespread isolation from Aryan co-workers, and the prospect of dismissal. Following the Nuremberg Laws the government wanted every worker to prove themselves worthy of remaining in employment. The Reich government also became occupied with documenting and persecuting German civil servants with Jewish spouses.

By November 1935, five weeks after the Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People had gone into effect, the government was already making significant strides to expel all Jewish presence from its ranks. The Restoration of the Civil Service Law of 1933 had, of course, been in effect for two years, and with some serious repercussions. According to this law civil servants had to demonstrate their Aryan lineage by filling in a questionnaire that detailed the family's vital statistics back to their grandparents. Those who demonstrated having Jewish relatives were forcibly retired. But this legislation was not all-encompassing, and, by 1935, it was clear the government was enduring - as opposed to feeling optimistic about - current racial requirements. For

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<sup>36</sup> Scoenberner, *The Yellow Star: The Persecution of the Jews in Europe, 1933-1945*, p. 20.

<sup>37</sup> Szobar, "Telling Sexual Stories," p. 143.

example, Jews who had served in the First World War or whose brother had fallen on the battlefield were exempt from this law, thereby avoiding being forcibly retired. The Nazis wanted the war veteran loophole closed. The final phase of exclusion came on 30 September when the government issued a memorandum to all departments under its control, demanding that persons classed as racial Jews under the Nuremberg Laws (those with three or four Jewish grandparents) be suspended from their post.<sup>38</sup> In Magdeburg, Saxony, the provincial government reacted to the 30 September order by issuing a five page questionnaire titled 'Questionnaire for the Certification of Aryan lineage' to employees. It was dated 8 October. Employees were under duress to return the completed forms to their employers by 25 October.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, employees were to submit for scrutiny their own marriage certificates, that of their parents and grandparents no later than 25 November. Employees who had been suspended because of Jewish ancestry never returned to work. On 9 December, the Nazi government issued a decree retiring all suspended Jewish civil servants. Jews who had thus far escaped dismissal because of war service also lost the privileges and were removed from their posts.<sup>40</sup>

The state's pursuit of removing people with Jewish ancestry was fast becoming a priority in other sectors of the economy. Already towards the end of 1935, employees with Jewish blood had been forcibly removed from editorial boards. Moreover, Jews were no longer allowed to serve as voluntary fire-fighters and were considered equally unfit to serve as soldiers in the Wehrmacht.<sup>41</sup> Although no formal discriminatory legislation had yet been implemented, Jewish doctors also experienced severe restriction in terms of who they could and could not treat. Following the Nuremberg Laws, for example, many Jewish doctors had to rely on income from Jewish patients alone. Moreover, many hospitals dismissed doctors of Jewish ancestry. One figure put forward has suggested that by the end of 1936, the overall number of Jewish doctors had declined by as much as seventy percent, from 9000 to 3,300.<sup>42</sup> Jews had little option but to accept these new conditions. Scrutinising family histories to ensure their Aryan lineage was, by 1935, a standard feature

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<sup>38</sup> Michael E Abrahams-Sprod, "Life under Siege: The Jews of Magdeburg under Nazi Rule" (University of Sydney, 2007), <<http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/1627>> [accessed 27 March 2013], pp. 107-109.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 108.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 109.

<sup>41</sup> Wolfgang Benz, "Exclusion as a Stage in Persecution. The Jewish Situation in Germany, 1933-1941," in *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution*, ed. David Bankier and Israel Gutman (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003), p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> Abraham Ascher, *A Community under Siege: The Jews of Breslau under Nazism* (California: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 80.

in most offers of employment. Jews fired from one job had little or no chance of finding new work from another German employer.

Equally damaging for Jews was the fact that they were afforded little or no protection in Labour Courts, where disputes relating to unfair dismissals between Jews and former employers were settled. By December 1935, Labour Courts were regularly ruling in favour of Aryan businesses. In the proceedings, former employers tended to make linkages between the defendant's genealogy and their unreliability, with the latter serving as legitimate grounds for dismissal.<sup>43</sup> The technicality used to end contracts of Jewish employees was reinforced by the Reich Supreme Labour Court, which supported the treatment of Jews because 'the racial principles promulgated by the [Nazi Party] were now widely acknowledged.'<sup>44</sup> Those who remained in employment were now on borrowed time. Labour courts were even sanctioning the removal of Jewish workers simply because their Aryan colleagues had requested it.<sup>45</sup> One article appearing in *The Times* of London, for example, read: 'A 'non-Aryan' who had been with [his] firm for six years and whose work had given no cause for complaint' was fired. 'He was married. He had fought for Germany in the War and had been wounded several times. Last year he was given notice after 26 [employees in] the same firm had demanded his dismissal.' The person in question thereafter appealed to the Labour Court in Weimar but a hearing was not granted. The court justified their actions by reiterating the policy of the Nazi party to segregate Jews from non-Jews.<sup>46</sup> As this example made clear, some Aryan workers believed in the new racial hierarchy with such conviction that they were unwilling to work alongside those considered legally inferior however patriotic their credentials.

The reactions of employers to individuals suspected of having Jewish blood were mixed. While some employers bowed to the pressure from German workers and fired Jews, others preferred to obtain genealogical documents from a variety of sources prior to making a final decision on their future – in other words, to determine if they were a full Jew. Indeed, the fact that many employees were unable to procure certificates of births, deaths and marriages did not necessarily result in automatic dismissal. Some employers sought to discover the racial origins of certain employees themselves and, in turn, began writing to archives, registries and churches requesting vital statistics. Employers resorted to this course of action because either they felt the individual was concealing their race by

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<sup>43</sup> Majer, "Non-Germans" Under the Third Reich, pp. 143-144.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Ibid, pp. 144.

<sup>45</sup> Warburg, *Six Years of Hitler*, p. 48.

<sup>46</sup> "New Nazi Action against Jews," *The Times* 15 February 1936, p. 11.

intentionally creating gaps in their family tree or doubted the authenticity of a submitted certificate(s). The Nazi party itself attempted to set an example that all employers could follow. In Jena, for example, the local Nazi branch, fearing a scandal of having a Jewish worker, wrote to the state archive in Magdeburg for genealogical documents. ‘I have been instructed to investigate the descent of a local officer....who is suspected of being of Jewish descent. I would therefore be very obliged, if you could help me with my efforts.’ He began his inquiry by asking for the death certificates of the person in question’s late ancestors, *M* and his Wife, *S* (maiden name Caspar).<sup>47</sup> It is worthy of mention that no decree ordering the dismissal of Jews from private enterprises was given by the government until 1938. The combination of asking proof of ancestry and any ensuing dismissal therefore was nothing short of voluntary.

Government and non-Government employers also had the option of consulting the Reich Office for Kinship Research, housed in the Ministry of the Interior<sup>48</sup> to establish a particular employee’s racial identity. Established in April 1933 (this department changed its name from Ministry of the Interior Expert for Racial Research to Reich Office for Kinship Research in March 1935), the initial remit of this office and its racial experts was to investigate the ancestry of party members, ensuring they were of Aryan heritage.<sup>49</sup> However, its role expanded considerably following the Nuremberg Laws. Now private employers, too, could turn to this office for help and advice. One of the office’s main tasks was to determine a person’s racial status in the complete absence of (or relatively few) genealogical documents. The first step to initiating an investigation was for the employer to send what genealogical information they received (or collected themselves) to a ‘racial expert’ for examination. Of utmost importance was that a questionnaire –the same ‘Questionnaire for the Certification of Aryan lineage’ as filled in by Magdeburg civil servants - and photographs of the individual, his or her parents, and grandparents, be included along with the genealogical documentation.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> “Abschrift: Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei. Gau Thüringen Kreisleitung Jena, Abteilung: Personalamt,” 16 August 1935, GStA, I. HA Rep. 178, Nr. 929, bl. 14. The names have been intentionally omitted.

<sup>48</sup> Burleigh and Wiperman, *The Racial State*, p. 58.

<sup>49</sup> The Genealogical Office was an agency of the Ministry of the Interior, and, as Eric Ehrenreich has stated, was used to enforce civil law. This office was affiliated to the NSDAP Department for Kinship Research. The latter office was financed by the party and looked into the ancestry of party members. However, the NSDAP Department for Kinship Research is not the focus of this thesis. For the sake of simplicity, the Reich Office for Kinship Research will be referred to hereinafter as the Genealogical Office. These details have been taken from: Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 79.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 97 and pp. 111-112.

In most instances, racial experts arrived at decisions on race without ever having met the employee in person. The examiner felt suitably qualified to conduct a biological examination purely by studying photographs of the individual, and his or her living and dead relatives, for evidence of ‘Jewish characteristics’ in the family.<sup>51</sup> It was a procedure that was far from being precise. One resident from Heidelberg being investigated, for example, was described as displaying ‘German characteristics’ simply because ‘he is taller than Jews or people of Jewish origin.’<sup>52</sup> Most cases put before the Genealogical Office were concluded by examining the physical characteristics based on photographs of the employees along with his or her relatives. Only occasionally did the examiner request to see the suspected Jew in person; one reason for this was that the examiner could not determine race from photographs alone. Even so, racial experts were always looking for ways to cut down examination time. For example, circulars were issued reminding examiners to demand family trees, kinship tables and certificates in the possession of the examinee.<sup>53</sup> This was also a precaution against cases of forgery. The psychological strain on those under investigation was considerable; neither did it help that a decision on race could be prolonged further whilst the examiner consulted other institutions (such as archives, churches and registries) to verify or request a particular document(s). It could take up to six weeks to receive an authenticated certificate on birth or death.<sup>54</sup>

## The illusion of normality, 1936 – 1937

1936 has been described as the year when Germany ‘appeared to have found its way back to normalcy.’<sup>55</sup> Such a conclusion is understandable. Anti-Semitic posters and notices, an everyday feature of German life, were summarily stripped from walls, shop windows and *Sturmkasten* across the country in preparation for the Olympics in Berlin. Signs displayed outside German restaurants and at entrances to parks warning Jews to keep out were removed from sight.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, open violence against Jews by Nazi enthusiasts was, at

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, pp. 111-112.

<sup>52</sup> “Poliklinik für Erb- und Rassenpflege e.V. Betreff: Rassenkundliches Gutachten,” 29 September 1942, Bundesarchiv (hereinafter BArch), R1509/1231, bl. 3.

<sup>53</sup> “Abstammungsbescheide der Reichsstelle für Sippenforschung,” 25 Juni 1938, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 107.

<sup>54</sup> Auswärtiges Amt to H.H, Berlin, personal correspondence, undated.

<sup>55</sup> Margaret Baacke, *Tainted Blood?: Memoirs of a Part-Jewish Girl in the Third Reich 1933-1945* (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2007), p. 63.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Taylor, *Jews and the Olympic Games: The Clash between Sport and Politics: With a Complete Review of Jewish Olympic Medallists* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), p. 73 and Baacke, *Tainted Blood?*, p. 63.

least for a short time, discouraged. Even so, and despite discernible acts of 'reconciliation' shown by the Nazis, Jews continued to feel under pressure and the victim of a more calculated form of persecution.

Any sense of security felt by Jews at this time was short-lived. In July 1936, the Nazis began to use racial exhibitions to justify political arguments that Jews were inferior to Germans. On 17 July, a foreign newspaper observed that a permanent exhibition at the Museum for Social Hygiene was due to be erected in Nuremberg. Titled 'Heredity, Race and Nation,' its vision was to 'educate' visitors on the 'dangers' of mixed marriages. Mimicking what would soon be seen by thousands at the 'Wandering Jew' exhibition, the exhibition established a wall 'devoted to a graph showing the wanderings of the Jewish people in the course of centuries and its penetration into Germany and Europe.'<sup>57</sup> In Munich, too, a similar political doctrine—namely that the Jew represented a 'genealogical threat' - was channelled through public events. Over the course of five days, 20 to 25 July, a series of twenty-two lectures, with an expected attendance of 3000 students, were due to take place at the city's university. Adding 'prestige' to the series Julius Streicher, publisher of *Der Stürmer*, was invited to conduct a 'lecture of honour' in which he would discuss the 'Nazi conceptions of race.'<sup>58</sup> The significance of this event was that, while the Nazis were willing to suspend certain anti-Semitic measures, they proved unwilling to stop events that perpetuated myths about Jewish blood and its danger to the German community.

Beyond the cultural attack on Jews, the regime was hard at work finding individuals possessing Jewish ancestry. In the same month as the racial exhibition, the Genealogical Office in Berlin declared its intention to copy (microfilm) every church book in Germany prior to 1875, the year civil registries were established.<sup>59</sup> This decision was part of the Genealogical Office's mission to supply genealogical information to private and public bodies, both efficiently and professionally.<sup>60</sup> As it stood, experts spend a considerable amount of time either travelling to or writing to church officials to retrieve background information on individuals. It also helped settle fears of church officials who complained bitterly about the overuse of church registers. Many officials observed that the combination of the Restoration of the Civil Service Law and, in 1935, the Nuremberg

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<sup>57</sup> "Exhibition on Hereditary Race and Nation," *The Jewish Echo*, 17 July 1935, p. 9.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>59</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 85.

<sup>60</sup> Schulle, "Oranienburger Strasse 28-31," p. 365.

Laws, had resulted in registers being used more in the last two years than the preceding two hundred.<sup>61</sup>

The following month, in August 1936, *Völkischer Beobachter* boasted of the institution's success. The article showed workers in white coats standing alongside microfilming equipment; the article lauded the convergence of enthusiasm and technology. 'Work,' the article stated, 'is carried out with the help of the most modern technical equipment' and the 'photocopying department takes up a whole floor of the building. This is where church books are filmed.' The process of duplication was, in theory, simple. The Genealogical Office requested churches to send its registers to Berlin. 'These silent witnesses of the past arrive from all over the country [and are] copied for future generations and research.'

[T]he original film goes to the archive and a new, easily readable church book is produced and bound in the in-house bookbinding department. This is then sent back to the parish along with the one the parish had sent originally. This means that the old church books can be left in peace and the new ones can be used for research. It is planned that all threatened church books in Germany are filmed/copied in this way.<sup>62</sup>

Duplicating church registers was undoubtedly linked to the long-term preservation of church books. But the Genealogical Office also required access to the contents of church registers in order to identify and document Jews in Germany. Already by 1936, the institution was advanced in its preparations to uncover persons of Jewish ancestry. A primary task of the institution, for example, was to expand to the *Fremdstämmigkartei* or Register of People of Foreign Origin. This card file system, housed on site, listed racial Jews, irrespective of whether they practised the Jewish faith, had no religious affiliation, or had converted to Christianity.<sup>63</sup> To facilitate this growth, workers were expected to copy (manually) the contents of every register received onto pre-printed forms. The baptismal entry was of particular significance as Jewish converts could be identified easily by their name and age.<sup>64</sup> The completed card was then filed. In the future, when investigating a particular individual, racial experts simply had to cross-reference this card (if present) with genealogical information taken from other sources, such as synagogues, police records and

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<sup>61</sup> Deborah Hertz, "The Genealogical Bureaucracy in the Third Reich," *Jewish History* 11, no. 2 (1997), p. 61

<sup>62</sup> This newspaper article was found in the personal archive of H.H. "Dienst an Volk Und Rasse: Die Arbeit Der Reichsstelle Für Sippenforschung - "Motorisierte Phototrups" Retten Die Kirchenbücher." *Völkischer Beobachter*, 27 August 1936.

<sup>63</sup> Schulle, "Oranienburger Strasse 28-31," p. 368.

<sup>64</sup> Hertz, "The Genealogical Bureaucracy in the Third Reich," p. 62.

archives. In August, newspapers were reporting that over one million cards had been completed and stored.<sup>65</sup>

Jews were thus left with the impression that the Genealogical Office was tirelessly pursuing them. The *Völkischer Beobachter*, for example, wrote how the institution as a whole was constantly brimming with activity: 'This is where the genealogists and experts find the aids they need. Many interesting and unusual books are kept here, indispensable sources for the genealogist.'<sup>66</sup> Genealogists and employers from all over the country used the card file to cross-reference names for clients and employees. The sheer extent of the card index understandably filled researchers with optimism that names of clients or employees would be found either in the Register of People of Foreign Origin or the Register of Ancestry of the German People (*Ahnenstammkartei des deutschen Volkes*), which will be discussed in greater detail below - approximately five thousand letters a month were received by the institution asking for information on birth, death, marriages and baptism. The institution did not hold a card for every German. The obvious shortfall was made up by experts willing to point ordinary Germans and researchers in the direction of officials who could help them and also by making genealogical books available. As the *Völkischer Beobachter* explained: 'All in all one gets the feeling that the work done here is [in] service to the nation and follows the spirit of National Socialist legislation.'<sup>67</sup>

The Genealogical Office relied on a whole host of individuals, societies and institutions to facilitate the growth of its card-index collection on Jews. Genealogical societies, local history groups, town officials, archivists and teachers were among the groups considered active collaborators.<sup>68</sup> In fact, genealogical information relating to Jews was, as the *Völkischer Beobachter* observed, sent in 'from all corners of the Reich.'<sup>69</sup> The mayor in the district of Pankow, Berlin, assembled a card catalogue of Jews in the district, using personal data retrieved from police departments and records of civil and marital status.<sup>70</sup> The spiritual quarter also joined the effort. In Berlin, the Protestant Church created a card-index for all parish registers in Greater Berlin back to the year 1800. This project was coordinated by parish registrar and Chairman of the German Genealogical Society, Paul

<sup>65</sup> "Dienst an Volk Und Rasse," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 27 August 1936.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Annegret Ehmman, "From Colonial Racism to Nazi Population Policy: The Role of the So-called Mischlinge," in *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 126.

<sup>69</sup> "Dienst an Volk und Rasse."

<sup>70</sup> Reich Central Direction of the NSDAP, Main Office for Municipal Policy, "Gau Office for Municipal Policy Greater Berlin," in Kulka and Jäckel, ed. *The Jews in the Secret Nazi Report*, p. 158.



Themel. Indexers created a sub-index listing Jews, blacks, gypsies and Turks who had been baptised. A duplicate was sent to the Genealogical Office.<sup>71</sup> Despite claims of impartiality, archivists also reported on the location of potentially valuable genealogical records, thereby bringing them to the attention of the Genealogical Office. In these reports, sanatoriums, care institutions, hospitals for the deaf and blind, special needs schools, and homes dedicated to the care of alcoholics were listed.<sup>72</sup>

The participation of the group of enthusiasts was mostly voluntary. Nevertheless, their efforts to track down Jews were crucial in creating a climate of fear for Jews. Nor did it help that the activities of both researchers and indexers found support from powerful allies of the state. The Archbishop Gröber of Freiburg-im-Breisgau, who joined the SS in 1933, for example, preached on the danger that foreign blood presented to the German community. As such, Gröber claimed that ancestral research was important; no one person should possess the right or the means to cover up his or her racial past.<sup>73</sup> His worldview made plain that church registers laying around gathering dust, forgotten, should not be tolerated. Rather, every register in every church should be opened and its contents examined. Adding to the feeling of being hunted was the fact that the state was open about the contribution of volunteers to the enterprise, even dedicating news articles to genealogical work undertaken by individual groups.<sup>74</sup> Many Jews would be left with the impression that only time stood between themselves and an index card, bearing their name, date of birth, profession, and address, being produced.

Similar to the Register of People of Foreign Origin, the Genealogical Office also held designs to create a genealogical profile for every living German. The project had been well planned. In 1933, an agreement between the Genealogical Office and the *Zentralstelle für deutsche Personen- und Familiengeschichte* (the Central Office for German Personal and Family History), based in Leipzig, was reached. The latter maintained the Register of Ancestry of the German People. This index had initially been established in 1921 by Dr Karl Förster, a lawyer and court director. The agreement of 1933 meant the responsibility of administrating the collection was now handed to the Genealogical Office. The card index was moved to Berlin.<sup>75</sup> Each card recreated the complete genealogy of the families

<sup>71</sup> Ehmann, "From Colonial Racism to Nazi Population Policy," p. 126.

<sup>72</sup> "Aufbewahrung von gemeindlichen Akten, die für die Sippen-, Rassen – und Erbforhung sowie für den Abstammungsnachweis von Bedeutung sind," 29 Juni 1938, GStA, I. HA Rep. 178, Nr 1182, bl. 13.

<sup>73</sup> Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 275.

<sup>74</sup> "Die Volksgeschichtlichen Und Volkspolitischen Ausgaben Der Sippenforschung," 4 Ocktober 1936, newspaper clipping, in GStA, I. HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 9.

<sup>75</sup> See footnote of Schulle, "Oranienburger Strasse 28-31," p. 375.

listed. A given card detailed the name of the most recent offspring, his or her parents, and the grandparents. Some cards detailed genealogies stretching as far back as the sixteenth century. The cards were then filed phonetically, according to family names. Within these classifications, family's names were grouped geographically.<sup>76</sup>

The acquisition of this card-index allowed the Genealogical Office to leapfrog the initial phases of establishing and growing its own ancestral database. What they acquired was a powerful administrative tool which, in time, staff hoped to develop into a fully comprehensive database, which would contain genealogical information for every German and their descendants. To achieve this vision, the work never stopped. Dedicated staff at the Genealogical Office was on hand to correct or update index cards – for example to reflect changes in name. Thousands of letters were sent monthly to staff by private individuals, the party and the government informing indexers of relevant changes. Other measures were also taken to ensure a continuous growth and development of genealogical data. For example, the institution deployed photographers – ‘motorised troops of photographers,’ as the *Völkischer Beobachter* referred to them – to photograph church books on location. These ‘motorised troops,’ the newspaper highlighted, were constantly on the road.<sup>77</sup>

The ongoing work of the Genealogical Office, in the meantime, did hold certain benefits for Germans seeking to fill in ancestral gaps. By August 1936, the database reportedly held over 2.5 million cards. One newspaper, for example, described how the Genealogical Office had ‘accumulated such ample data in its voluminous card indexes that it can now supply large numbers of peoples with certificates of descent and race upon the first inquiry.’ It added: ‘The office is already able to help those unfortunates who have difficulty in tracing their family tree. If documentary evidence cannot be found, it will arrange for application to be examined by one of the anthropological institutes, which are authorized to certify Aryan characteristics. Such certificates would be recognized [sic] by party and State.’<sup>78</sup>

Genealogy was rarely out of the public eye. In October 1936, the *Völkischer Beobachter* reported on a meeting of the *Ostfälischen familienfundlichen Kommission*, or East-Saxon Commission for Genealogy. At the meeting, there was a general call for archives to begin compiling their own genealogical databases, similar to that currently being undertaken by

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 368.

<sup>77</sup> “Dienst an Volk und Rasse.”

<sup>78</sup> “Family Trees for Aryans,” *The Times*, 8 July 1935, p. 14.

the Genealogical Office. One archivist in particular took the opportunity as speaker to announce plans to compile vital statistics for 'every person, male or female, who has ever lived in the city of Hannover.'<sup>79</sup> No doubt this was welcome news for the Genealogical Office, which, along with other institutions, collaborated regularly with archives. Other developments in Hanover included the establishment of a bureau, whose staff offered advice and help on family research to struggling Germans, free of charge. Learning that help was on offer at no cost, and from experts, would undoubtedly have caught the attention of many Germans. Jews would also have their attention roused whilst reading this article, but for rather different reasons. The speaker, for example, indicated his intention to support the 'execution of the Nuremberg laws.'<sup>80</sup> Taken in conjunction with news of the database, Jews could be forgiven in thinking that the right to determine his or her own race had been lost.

## The resumed attack on 'inter-racial' marriages

By early 1937, the Reich government once again began using the legal system to oust 'Jewish elements' from the economy. On 26 January the government introduced the Civil Service Law which required both employees *and* their spouses to demonstrate Aryan lineage. This, in essence, meant employees who had met the initial requirements of the Civil Law of 1933 (see above) were required to resubmit original or authenticated copies of certificates (relating to his wife) to the responsible official. Moreover, employees were required to swear a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler.<sup>81</sup> Under these new conditions, it was not simply enough to be of Aryan ancestry. Employees were tasked with demonstrating ideological commitment to the health of the *Volk* by refraining from activities that threatened it. Germans married to Jews certainly fell into the Nazi category of racial misconduct and, after 26 January, proved sufficient grounds for dismissal. Dismissed and disgraced, Aryans, like their Jewish spouses, were no longer considered part of the German community.

Certain allowances were nonetheless built in to the Civil Service Law of 1937. In particular, civil servants were eligible to marry second degree *Mischlinge*, or persons with one Jewish grandparent. First, however, civil servants had to seek special approval from

<sup>79</sup> "Die Volksgeschichtlichen Und Volkspolitischen," 4 October 1936, GStA, I. HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 9.

<sup>80</sup> "Die Volksgeschichtlichen Und Volkspolitischen Ausgaben Der Sippenforschung," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 4 October 1936.

<sup>81</sup> Bendersky, *A Concise History*, pp. 116-117.

the Ministry of the Interior and Führer's deputy, Rudolf Hess.<sup>82</sup> Yet, such dispensations did not satisfy all in government. Martin Bormann, private secretary to Hitler and head of the Party Chancellery, advocated removing employees unwilling to relinquish their relationship with a Jewish spouse; those married to a second degree *Mischlinge* included. To stigmatise this group further he published the names of individuals married to *Mischlinge* and sent this list to every government department so that dismissal proceedings could begin.<sup>83</sup> Despite his efforts, civil servants with Jewish spouses who had already provided proof of ancestry were in general allowed to stay in their jobs. But they suffered discrimination. Civil servants in mixed marriages, and holding a prominent public post, were often transferred to a more discreet role or a remote location.<sup>84</sup>

Before long other areas of employment began targeting employees in mixed marriages. In February 1937, Germans married to Jews were disqualified from becoming notary publics. The association of surveyors soon followed suit.<sup>85</sup> By March, education authorities in the Potsdam area had informed the Education Ministry that all teachers married to Jews had been identified.<sup>86</sup> This situation fulfilled the demands of Bernhard Rust, Minister for Education and Science. The previous September he had ordered all employees to provide evidence of their spouse's race. Genealogical information submitted by employees was soon used to maximum effect. In a confidential circular dated April 1937, the Ministry of the Interior demanded the removal of teachers with Jewish spouses.<sup>87</sup> In clarifying reasons for dismissal former employees were pointed to the newly implemented Civil Service Law of January 1937, which justified removal of civil servants 'for the purpose of rationalising the administration.'<sup>88</sup> By the end of 1937, education authorities had successfully purged every school in Germany of its Jewish teachers. Aryan educators with a Jewish partner were, likewise, completely eliminated.<sup>89</sup>

For some, however, the threat of dismissal was enough to initiate divorce proceedings against a Jewish spouse. In one example, the leader of the League for the Protection of German Motherhood divorced her husband because he stood in the way of a 'brilliant

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<sup>82</sup> Noakes, "The development of Nazi policy towards the German-Jewish "Mischlinge" 1933-1945," p.324.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 273.

<sup>84</sup> Majer, *"Non-Germans" Under the Third Reich*, pp.96-97.

<sup>85</sup> Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 78.

<sup>86</sup> Charles B. Lansing, *From Nazism to Communism: German Schoolteachers under Two Dictatorships* (Cambridge, Mass:Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 51-52.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, pp. 51-52.

<sup>88</sup> Quoted in Noakes, "The development of Nazi policy towards the German-Jewish "Mischlinge" 1933-1945,"pp. 324-325.

<sup>89</sup> Lansing, *From Nazism to Communism*, pp. 51-52.

future.’<sup>90</sup> Presumably due to the prospect of losing steady income as well as standing in the racial community surfaced during court proceedings. Looking to carve out a future in the Third Reich, dissociation was promoted as the only means of being accepted into the *Volksgemeinschaft*. German women who divorced their Jewish husbands were handed the opportunity to remarry, and thereby facilitate the transmission of German blood from generation to generation.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, the sooner this happened, the sooner the new Aryan couple could start contributing to the preservation of their race. Hitler himself, demonstrating early justifications for what was to form the ideological foundations of the Nuremberg laws, argued in *Mein Kampf* that the regeneration of a strong Germany first needed the rejuvenation of the sanctity of monogamous relationships. After all, Hitler argued, ‘early marriage was compatible with human nature – particularly for the man, as the woman in any case is only the passive part.’ In practical terms, he indicated that marriage could be used as part of a broader project to ensure that the racial traits of degenerate people would perish over the coming generations: ‘[M]arriage cannot be an end itself, but must serve the one higher goal, the increase and preservation of the species and the race. This alone is its meaning and its task.’<sup>92</sup>

By 1937, law courts openly encouraged divorce in cases of mixed marriages. The *Deutsche Justiz*, the official Nazi legal periodical, reported that an Aryan had grounds to divorce his wife if, at the time of marriage, he had assumed she was of mixed blood or *Mischling*, and not as it later turned out to be the case, ‘a full-blooded Jewess.’<sup>93</sup> Assistance from the court was now given to Germans who, having stumbled upon ‘the mistake’ in ancestral research, were willing to atone. ‘The fact that a person is of Jewish origin and not of mixed origin...might debar a full-blooded German who is fully conscious of the importance of the racial problem from contracting a marriage. The divorce application of the petitioner must, therefore, be granted for he could prove at the time of his marriage to his wife he held the mistaken view that only her father, but not her mother was of the Jewish race.’ The benefit of doubt lay with the Aryan: ‘If petitioner had known the true state of affairs he would never have contracted the marriage.’<sup>94</sup>

The succession of anti-Semitic measures targeting marriage, businesses, employment, and, later on, homes, sought to destroy the morale of Jews and throw them deep into hardship.

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<sup>90</sup> Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart*, p. 12.

<sup>91</sup> Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, p. 67.

<sup>92</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Pimlico, 1992), p. 229.

<sup>93</sup> “New Anti-Jewish Divorce Rule in Germany,” *The Jewish Echo*, 25 June 1937, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

The Nazis also exploited the growing incidence of financial ruin and ensuing poverty as ‘confirmation’ that Jews were, at root, unhygienic, as well as a race of beggars and scroungers.<sup>95</sup> At the same time, an intellectual campaign was underway that sought to justify existing laws governing the sexual separation of Jews and non-Jews. Over the course of a two day workshop, 12 -14 May, Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer, a geneticist and future director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Genetics and Eugenics, delivered a lecture to the newly established Research Department on the Jewish Question, a division of the Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany, titled ‘What can the Historian, the Genealogist and the Statistician contribute to the Research Problem of the Jewish Question.’ In it, Verschuer claimed that ‘cross-breeding’ was capable of changing the ‘biological character of the *Volk*.’<sup>96</sup> Yet, the conviction that a Jew could be identified simply by the shape of his or her nose, a view postulated by many others in his profession, was dismissed by Verschuer’s himself. Instead, he argued that Jews could be separated from Germans because of their ‘higher’ prevalence for physical afflictions such as diabetes, haemophilia, flat feet and deafness.<sup>97</sup> His findings soon reached national attention after being reported in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. His lecture was an opportunity for the regime to show that existing anti-Semitic policies had been built on a foundation of modern ‘science.’<sup>98</sup> Moreover, understanding Jews in terms of a ‘medical problem’<sup>99</sup> was useful in legitimising the latest round of prescriptive measures, such the Civil Service Law of 1937 which brought the ancestry of an employee’s spouse into the frame.

Verschuer, in short, argued that the separation of Jews and non-Jews was necessary due to the former group’s propensity for certain diseases. To add scientific credence to his claims, Verschuer suggested the launch of a study that focused on couples in mixed marriages. The study would involve recording the physiological and psychological characteristics of each spouse. Similar checks would be carried out on their offspring and any other child thereafter.<sup>100</sup> Scientists, Verschuer claimed, would be helped in their assessments by utilising genealogical information collected by the state. Of particular importance were

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<sup>95</sup> This image of Jews as ‘scroungers’ would be exploited later at the ‘Eternal Jew’ exhibition. The exhibition opened in November 1937 in Munich. This topic will be discussed in chapter four.

<sup>96</sup> Hans-Walter Schmuhl, "The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics, 1927 - 1945: Crossing Boundaries," (Springer, 2008), <<http://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-1-4020-6600-9/page/1>> [14 February 2013], p. 236.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p.237 and Sheila Faith Weiss, *The Nazi Symbiosis: Human Genetics and Politics in the Third Reich* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 103-104.

<sup>98</sup> Weiss, *The Nazi Symbiosis*, p. 104.

<sup>99</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 198.

<sup>100</sup> Alan E. Steinweis, *Studying the Jew: Scholarly Antisemitism in Nazi Germany*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 50.

applications submitted by *Mischlinge* to the government for marriage approval. Alan E Steinweis observes that these applications ‘contained potentially useful impressionistic observations recorded by government officials about the prospective partners and their families.’<sup>101</sup> Another vital source, of course, was the card-index, housed in the Genealogical Office, which was to play a key role in tracing changes and diagnosing diseases of future generations produced by mixed marriages.

The idea that Jews represented a danger to German blood was widely accepted in place in Germany’s educated circles by 1937, even before Verschuer presented his findings. Medical journals repeatedly claimed that Jews were a ‘public health hazard,’ and that Germans should take every precaution to avoid contact.<sup>102</sup> Even more damaging was the fact that segregating or at least limiting sexual encounters between Jews and Germans was interpreted as a *public health measure* and, as such, was listed as German health legislation in the *Sammlung Deutscher Gesundheitsgesetze*.<sup>103</sup> Verschuer’s contribution was that his 1937 lecture helped propel the idea of Jews as a disease into the mainstream; a process aided by the coverage of his talk in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Yet Verschuer’s contribution to racial policies extended far beyond his own research on Jews. As already observed, he made reference to ongoing efforts by the state to collect genealogical information on the general population. In his lecture, he noted that race research, now and in the future, would benefit greatly from a growing database, which contained detailed and accurate records on ancestry.<sup>104</sup> His determination to prove mental weakness in Jews would have been of little comfort to those inferiors, who, adjusting to marriage and employment realities, were supplying sensitive information to the state.

Verschuer’s reference to genealogy and its significance in national politics was undoubtedly motivated by his surroundings and his audience. As the sponsor of the workshop, it seemed only proper to observe the work being carried out by the Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany. Established in 1935 and headed by Walter Frank, one of the main goals of the institute was the propagation of anti-Semitic attitudes through historical argument. One prominent study, published in 1936, recounted how Jews used their ‘control’ of the press in the Bismarckian era to advance their own careers, both in politics and the economy.<sup>105</sup> But in 1937 the institute directed its attention towards the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p. 50.

<sup>102</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 141.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p. 141.

<sup>104</sup> Ehmann, “From Colonial Racism to Nazi Population Policy,” p. 126.

<sup>105</sup> Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling*, p. 123.

collection of ancestral backgrounds. In particular, and also especially relevant to Verschuer's research, was the institute's desire to obtain details of Jewish converts and those in mixed marriages. The plan to acquire such records was put into action when, on 22 December 1936, the institute sent a letter to the Prussian Prime Minister requesting that state and local archives submit inventories of all files relating to the 'history of the Jews.'<sup>106</sup> On 22 January 1937, the Ministry of the Interior sent out orders for archives to begin the task. In theory, archivists were to create inventories based on their own holdings. But in reality this scope fell far short of the institute's expectations, which sought to ascertain the whereabouts of all Jewish files, in all institutions. As grandiose as it seemed, Ernst Zipfel, Director of the Prussian Administration, nevertheless sent out orders to expand the process of recording Jewish records to municipal administrations, court and police authorities, synagogues, registries and churches.<sup>107</sup> All relevant offices were asked to complete a questionnaire on their holdings and return it to the responsible archive. Special attention was given to the location of registers which detailed baptisms.

The new responsibilities of archives indicated intensification in the search for genealogical information. The questionnaires sent out to both civil and religious authorities by state archives were needed to 'preserve' and appropriate Jewish family history. They asked if registers of births, deaths and marriages were present. If so, what years did they cover? Did the registers contain excerpts on *Mischlinge*, Jewish christenings or baptisms?<sup>108</sup> Attempts to bring physical registers back to state archives were also encouraged by Zipfel. And this policy was not without some degree of success. The state archive of Hanover, for example, boasted how it was able to obtain custodianship of one important register ('in private hands') through 'positive talks' with a local mayor. Moreover, the letter noted how registers were arriving at the archive almost daily. Plans were in place to have officials from the Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany analyse registers and inventory lists after they had all arrived at the responsible archive.<sup>109</sup> Being a regular speaker at events organised by the Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany - he would lecture at a workshop the following year, between 5-7 July 1938, and again in

<sup>106</sup> "Generalrepertorium über Judaica-Bestände in deutschen Archiven," 22 Dezember 1936, GStA, I. HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 50 and "Verfügung des Generaldirektors der Preußischen Staatsarchive an die unterstellten Archive," undated, GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 1152, bl. 51-52.

<sup>107</sup> Musial, *Staatarchive Im Dritten Reich*, p.47 and "Auszug aus dem Mitteilungsblatt Nr. 1/37 (Ifd. No.2) vom 1 Januar 1937 A.V 1/37," 1 Januar 1937, GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 1152, bl. 46.

<sup>108</sup> "Fragebogen für die Pfarrämter zur Erfassung der jüdischen Personenstandsquellen," undated, GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 1152, bl. 67. This questionnaire was attached to a letter dated 19 February 1937.

<sup>109</sup> "Auszug aus dem Mitteilungsblatt Nr.12" (Ziffer 9) vom 23.11.37 – A.V. 6388" 23 November 1937, GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 1152, bl. 172.



January 1939 in the auditorium at the University of Berlin<sup>110</sup> - Verschuier would have undoubtedly known about organised efforts to tabulate genealogical information on certain sections of the general population.

There is, of course, the simple fact that activities to undermine the position of Jews were hardly concealed. Indeed, the general public was also called upon to help and uncover individuals of Jewish ancestry. One internal memo, circulated around state archives in November 1937, for example, stressed that 'reliable archive users' should put themselves in the service of the Research Department on the Jewish Question. Users were to be made aware of the questionnaires mentioned above, with the actual forms being available on request. If, in the course of their research, they came across a Jewish conversion or mixed marriage they were to fill in the questionnaire and submit it to the responsible archivist. The archive, in turn, was to pass collected questionnaires onto the Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany. Posters were also to be erected in and around the research room to promote cooperation from private businesses and individuals.<sup>111</sup>

However, Jews were about to face further hardships in their lives. By the end of 1937, the government felt comfortable in its judgment that the wholesale campaign to appropriate Jewish businesses and homes would no longer have a detrimental impact on the economy.<sup>112</sup> This belief gave the government considerable latitude in how it now treated and persecuted the Jewish population. At the same time, the intense anti-Jewish propaganda campaign was having positive effects for the regime (anti-Jewish propaganda will be looked at more closely in chapter four). As well as becoming synonymous with disease and hereditary illnesses, the Reich government was making a concentrated effort to assign 'the Jew' the role of the enemy within.<sup>113</sup> Carrying the stigma of the enemy, plans of how to make them more easily recognisable in society was planned and implemented.

## **A step-up in anti-Jewish policy**

In early 1938, a new and intense phase of Jewish persecution began. On 5 January a law was passed which authorised the Reich government to annul any change in forename or surname (or both) that had taken place before the Nazi succession to power on 30 January

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<sup>110</sup> Schmuhl, "The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics, 1927 - 1945: Crossing Boundaries," pp. 237-9.

<sup>111</sup> "Auszug aus dem Mitteilungsblatt Nr.12," 23 November 1937, GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 1152, bl. 172.

<sup>112</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 96.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, p. 96.

1933.<sup>114</sup> That same month, Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer SS, ordered former Russian citizens with Jewish ancestry to be expelled from Germany. Anywhere between five hundred and one thousand individuals were affected by this latest measure.<sup>115</sup> Himmler believed ardently in protecting the *Volk* from foreign elements. His interest in genealogy, for example, saw him visit the Genealogical Office in February. He toured the microfilming department and took a 'particular interest' in the Register of People of Foreign Origin. Coming to the end of his visit, he expressed his desire that all Party and State departments would support the Genealogical Office as it worked towards point four of the Nationalist Socialist Party programme.<sup>116</sup> Point four asserted that only persons of German blood could become citizens. Jews, with their foreign blood, were ineligible.

At the same time, Himmler was constantly trying to raise the racial standards and behaviours of Germans. Early in February, he addressed the German Society of German Nobility (*Deutsche Adelsgenossenschaft*) where he spoke about the challenges to creating healthy German families. One newspaper covering the story wrote how Himmler had shown 'himself to be strongly against excessive drinking.' Speaking in harsh terms, Himmler reportedly exclaimed that, 'If a man abuses alcohol he was punished; if a man could not stand alcohol he was deprived of it and obliged to give it up for two or three years...if he broke his word of honour there remained the pistol. If he were unable to give his word of honour he was dismissed [from] the corps.'<sup>117</sup> Prospective wives were no exception. Sensitive and intrusive questions were also asked on his fiancée's previous life. In this regard, the prospective husband needed to display ruthlessness, assessing whether his future wife drank too much, smoked, and, if so, to what extent? And, importantly, was she domestic, maternal, and wishing for children at the earliest possible stage of marriage? In line with the Nazi leadership, Himmler wanted every individual to provide details about ancestry as well as outline any mental weakness, such as fondness for alcohol. His approval of suicide in severe cases stemmed from the fact that he did not want parents passing on un-German traits to their offspring.

The Reich government followed up Himmler's visit to the Genealogical Office with further anti-Jewish measures, which were intended to mark out Jews from German society. On 23 July, the Ministry of the Interior passed a decree requiring all Jews to apply to local

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>116</sup> "Der Reichsführer SS besichtigte die Reichsstelle für Sippenforschung," 11 Februar 1938, newspaper clipping, in GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 1181, bl. 75.

<sup>117</sup> "Choosing Nazi Black Guards," *The Guardian*, 4 February 1938, p. 6.

policies stations for an identity card. All Jews above the age of fifteen had to apply. This identification card, by law, had to be on their person at all times. Moreover, Jews were under duress to inform official or state offices of their racial status immediately upon arrival. At the same time, they had to furnish their card for inspection. Newborns also did not escape attention from the authorities. Parents who had a child after the decree of 23 July were given a three month time-frame to make their child known to the police.<sup>118</sup>

Less than one month later, on 17 August, another regulation was implemented to organise the identification of Jews. This latest law required all Jews, after 1 January 1939, whose names were not on the 'catalogue of Jewish First Names,' to adopt the additional middle names of 'Sara' or 'Israel' (a measure that will be discussed further in chapter five).<sup>119</sup> These middle names had to be registered at the appropriate registry office and police station. The victim was also expected to update relevant documents such as birth and marriage certificates to reflect these changes in name.<sup>120</sup> 'Sara' or 'Israel' was also to be included in official documents signed thereafter. As such, Jews had little choice but to write to relevant archives, registries and churches requesting the responsible official to update their records. Archives, however, were informed by the Ministry of the Interior on 16 November to ignore letters from Jews as only registrars and police stations were to be notified of such name changes.<sup>121</sup> Even when abiding by racial legislation and requesting that middle names be updated Jews could do little right. The Nazis viewed them as criminals and inferior, and therefore it seemed prudent that every Jew register their details with the police. On 5 October, the Ministry of the Interior demanded that all Jewish passports be stamped with a red 'J.' Jewish passports which did not possess this red marking were deemed invalid.<sup>122</sup>

The combination of laws enacted in the course of 1937 and 1938 made it difficult for suspected Jews to perform family research in archives. Since the promulgation of the Civil Service Laws in 1933, archivists had been struggling to cope with high levels of researchers and written correspondence asking for genealogical information. Archivists were burdened further with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 as well as instructions from the Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany to provide an overview of Jewish

<sup>118</sup> Götz Aly and Karl Heinz Roth, *The Nazi Census: Identification and Control in the Third Reich* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), pp. 80-81.

<sup>119</sup> John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 139.

<sup>120</sup> Majer, *"Non-Germans" Under the Third Reich*, p. 170.

<sup>121</sup> "Auszug. Registrierung der Annahme zusätzlicher Vornamen durch Juden in den in staatlichen Archiven befindlichen Judenregistern aus der Zeit vor 1874," 4 Februar 1939, GStA, I. Rep.178, Nr. 1152, bl. 246.

<sup>122</sup> Warburg, *Six Years of Hitler*, p. 123.

records in their possession. In April 1937, for example, a letter from the Secret State archive in Berlin-Dahlem revealed ongoing struggles. It noted how the growing responsibilities of archivists often inhibited their ability to respond to enquiries from the general public quickly.<sup>123</sup> If the advice handed out in the *Völkischer Beobachter* was to be believed, this meant that ordinary Germans and Jews were waiting longer than the expected six weeks to receive a reply from archivists. During the wave of anti-Semitic legislation in 1938, Jews could only stand by as their access rights to archives and expert advice were severely curtailed. A decree issued by the Ministry of the Interior, dated 24 March 1938, stated that, in the case of Jews, state archives were to be used expressly for family research or exploring ‘the history of Jews.’ A circular to all state archives followed soon afterwards. Dated 1 April, it reiterated this latest regulation as well as information on how to define a Jew.<sup>124</sup>

By the end of November 1938, research rooms in state archives were undergoing a process of Aryanisation. Just after Kristallnacht on 9-10 November 1938, a night of concerted action to destroy Jewish owned businesses and homes as well as synagogues (discussed in detail in chapter five), Zipfel complicated the ability of Jews to access records, genealogical or otherwise. Dated 22 November 1938 and sent to the Ministry of the Interior, his letter suggested a new regulation whereby Jews could perform genealogical research only when they ‘do not produce significant strain on the running of the archive.’<sup>125</sup> On 7 January 1939, Zipfel issued a decree according to which Jews had to write a formal letter requesting access to the research room and files.<sup>126</sup> Archivists were generally encouraged to maintain contact between themselves and Jews by written correspondence. Answering queries by letter would prevent them gaining physical access to the research room. And on those rare occasions when Jews were given the go ahead to enter the building, segregation policies were in place to stop them coming into contact with Aryan researchers. One report, for example, emerging from the Secret State archive in Berlin, detailed how two Jewish readers were not permitted to use the public hall, and in consequence were ‘accommodated in a special room and worked under special supervision.’<sup>127</sup> It goes without saying that archives were important for family research. The orders of Zipfel should be construed as nothing short of calculating. He adjusted

<sup>123</sup> “Urschriften dem Herrn Generaldirektor der Staats-Archive,” 15 April 1937, GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 1152, bl. 78.

<sup>124</sup> “Auszug aus dem Mitteilungsblatt Nr. 4 (Ziffer 4) vom 1 April 1938 – A.V. 1973,” 1 April 1938, GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 929, bl. 189-191.

<sup>125</sup> “Benutzung der Staatsarchive durch Juden,” 22 November 1939, GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 929, bl.248

<sup>126</sup> Musial, *Staatsarchive Im Dritten Reich*, p. 44.

<sup>127</sup> “Archivbenutzung durch Juden,” 29 April 1939, GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 929, bl. 294.

archival policy to reflect the deterioration of relations between Germans and Jews in wider society. His policy reform not only complicated the research process but made the actual visit to any state archive an intimidating prospect for Jews. This policy would have hit those individuals suspected of being a full Jew, who used the holdings of state archives to try and elevate themselves to the *Mischling* category particularly hard.

These restrictions impeded individuals who sought to prove they were not ‘full-blood,’ but rather a *Mischling*. One notable case was that of Walter Jellinek, a law professor at Heidelberg University, who began his family research in 1935. His case was complex, not because he denied having Jews in his ancestral tree, but because he insisted that his grandfather, born a Protestant, had later in life converted to Judaism. This, in turn, rendered him a ‘Judaised Aryan,’ offering Jellinek, and, importantly, his children, a chance to avoid being labelled ‘full-Jews.’<sup>128</sup> In letters to the Genealogical Office and various archives between 1939 and 1941, Jellinek repeatedly made reference to his children, whose fate hung in the balance while an outcome on his own racial status was being processed.<sup>129</sup> Yet, using the uncertain future of his offspring to access archives did not easily earn him a seat in the research room. If anything, it prolonged his application for admission while officials debated about Jellinek, determining whether or not his racial status entitled him to use of the facilities: ‘Questioned “Are you or the person on behalf of whom you are doing the research Jewish?”’, Professor Jellinek answered that he descended from the Aryan Sect of the Deists and Abrahamites.’ The archivist dealing with the request felt he did not possess enough knowledge on Jellinek’s racial status to acquiesce to the latter’s wishes ‘to continue with the research of the ancestors of his children on their mother’s side.’ Nor did he prove willing to arrive at a decision himself: ‘I would like to ask for advice.’<sup>130</sup> Jellinek’s struggle to continue his research to disprove his Jewish ancestry would span a total of six years. Ironically, it was the delays that prevented him being treated with severity. With correspondence going backwards and forwards between Jellinek, archives, and the Genealogical Office, enough time had lapsed to avoid the application of anti-Jewish measures against him. In 1941, he was downgraded to *Mischling* second degree, thereby avoiding being rounded-up and deported.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, pp. 108-115.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, pp. 108-115.

<sup>130</sup> “Benutzung des Staatsarchiv durch Juden vom 1. Juli bis 31. Dezember 1938,” 24 Januar 1939, GStA, I. Rep. 178, Nr. 929, bl. 275.

<sup>131</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, pp. 108-113.

Zipfel's aim to segregate Jews and non-Jews within his own sphere of influence coincided with the launch of 'Jewry and the Jewish Question,' a series of lectures organised by the Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany and held in the University of Berlin's main lecture hall, on Unter den Linden. This lecture series formed part of an ongoing programme by the government to popularise myths about Jews and their 'hereditary threats.' On 9 January a circular was sent out by the organiser reminding civil servants that the upcoming event would be aired on radio the following day.<sup>132</sup> The opening talk was given by Walter Frank, director of the institute, and titled 'Dreyfus - the Wandering Jew.' Otmar von Verschuer also used the event to discuss his theories on the Jews. His talk covered the same ground as before, namely that Jews were susceptible to certain illnesses and noted their overreliance on doctors.<sup>133</sup> The media went into overdrive to portray such findings as factual. Newspapers, for example, used the new information to reveal the ways in which Jews had 'harmed' the German people.<sup>134</sup> German radio, too, set aside a three minute slot to offer a roundup of the day's lecture. Each lecture was allocated a further slot after the ten o'clock news.<sup>135</sup> Inoculating the Germans people against the 'hereditary threat' posed by Jews came down to one easy precept: the complete isolation of Jews.

As we have seen, however, the isolation of undesirables from the gene pool of the *Volk* was achieved in steady increments. In 1933, the practice of genealogy had been largely isolated to civil servants. By 1935, however, the state's aim to prevent or at least limit negative genes being passed on to successive generations meant that every persons living in the Reich had to show lineage. That same year, the state also made marriage certificates obligatory for potential spouses. In their role, officials employed in health offices were to test the couple's racially compatibility.

At the same time, the state utilised the instruments of ridicule, violence and threat of jail to protect the health of the *Volk*. Jews and non-Jews, married or engaged in a sexual relationship, risked the prospect of being paraded through the streets and molested. Nor could they, once identified, live in relative peace and quiet. Papers such as *Der Stürmer*

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<sup>132</sup> "Die Mitglieder des Sachverständigenats und die Forschungsbeauftragten des Reichsinstituts," 9 Januar 1939, GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 1152, bl. 238.

<sup>133</sup> Schmuhl, "The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics, 1927 - 1945: Crossing Boundaries," p. 239.

<sup>134</sup> Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, p. 212.

<sup>135</sup> "Die Mitglieder des Sachverständigenats und die Forschungsbeauftragten," 9 Januar 1939, GStA, I. HA Rep.178, Nr. 1152, bl. 238.

published the names, dates of birth, addresses and professions of couples in 'mixed relationships.'<sup>136</sup> This invited Nazi enthusiasts to pay a visit at their door.

By 1936, Nazi racial policy was being supported by the construction of a complex card index. The Genealogical Office, which maintained the index, was used by a multitude of employers and private individuals to identify and discriminate against Jews. The fact that the mission of the Genealogical Office was reported in newspapers also, in itself, became an informal means of mounting pressure on Jews. It added to the sense that concealed Jews would soon be uncovered and the full force of the Nuremberg Laws would thereafter be applied to them.

The amendment to the Civil Service law in 1937 also indicated an intensification of anti-Jewish policy. Part and parcel of employment conditions now included revealing the ancestry of a loved one. This policy, as has been shown, extended into other professions as well. Schools removed teachers simply because their spouse had shown Jewish ancestry. Nevertheless, the quick succession of anti-Semitic legislation during this period led to new and innovative ways of embedding radicalism into everyday life. Exhibitions and lectures became a formative way to reveal the racial differences that existed between Germans and Jews. Attendees, in turn, were taken on an educational journey, showing the negative characteristics they would expose their future family to if both they and the government failed to take action. The inclusion of scientists and state figureheads, such as Verschuier and Julius Streicher, served the function of adding legitimacy to ideas of racial segregation.

By late 1938, a new phase of anti-Jewish policy was ushered in. German bureaucracy had organised various methods to isolate Jews, such as registering with the police, retrieving a new identity card and having a 'J' emblazoned on the front of their passports. Moreover, Jews were under duress to confess their race every time they came into contact with an official of the state. After the pogrom, Jews were forced to make it easier for the outside world to recognise them, namely by adding the middle name of 'Sara' or 'Israel' by the deadline of 1 January 1939. Adding to this predicament was the fact that Jews had little opportunity to contest their race. After the pogrom, archives had closed their doors to Jews, and, according to correspondence, archivists were encouraged to reply to their questions only when there was sufficient time. Though more and more restrictions were implemented to make Jews stand out in society, there was, as yet, still no indication that the government

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<sup>136</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p. 79.

was heading towards a policy of annihilation. Even so, the government continued to implement more drastic racial policies that, day by day, made life bleaker for the Jews.



## Chapter four: Marketing Nazi ideology, 1933-1938

From the earliest days of its rule, the Nazi Party had worked hard to foster wide support for its racial policies. Believing that hereditary diseases such as alcoholism and feeble-mindedness were out of control and posed a serious threat to the future health of German families, exhibitions began to be utilised as a mechanism to underline the dangers of free choice. Although the Nazis stressed that Germans should ‘marry only for love,’ they were clear – as we have already seen – in the fact that potential partners had to be picked from a pool of persons who were of German blood and free from inferior genes. In justifying this position, exhibitions were tailored to show the genetic damage caused when individuals failed to protect the purity of the family tree. In turn, visitors were shown how ill-considered sexual encounters or relationships invariably produced offspring who, in later life, would turn out to be weak-minded, asocial or lazy individuals. The Nazis featured the most grotesque pictures of inferiors they could get their hands on in the hope that visitors would learn valuable life lessons, and in particular practice caution when questions concerning procreation and finding the ideal marriage partner became pertinent. The Nazis cited the health of unborn children to justify policies that interfered with family affairs and probed the racial health of its members.

Exhibitions also offered the opportunity to warn Germans of the hereditary threat posed by Jews. Although laws would come into force, essentially banning Germans from marrying Jews, the Nazis still sought to gain support and acceptance for its policies. In turn, many exhibitions during the Nazi era were intended to portray the Jews as cunning and deceitful, traits that any good mother would not want her children to inherit. Spreading the idea that the genes of Jews would have a detrimental impact on the character of any offspring, made it easy for the Nazis to push the benefits of genealogical research. Thus, determining the racial heritage of a spouse under the Nazis became infused with more traditional aspects of motherhood, such as housework, cleaning and preparing family meals.

Before beginning this chapter, however, some key points need to be addressed. The Nazis used a combination of national and local exhibitions to attract support for its anti-Semitic policies and to insist that genealogy be incorporated into the family planning process. Though the aims of national and local exhibitions were essentially the same, their direction in pushing the merits of genealogy were quite different. At national exhibitions such as the ‘Miracle of Life’ (to be discussed below) exhibits were chosen that made explicit

connections between poor genes and a lower quality of life. They used a technique whereby healthy, fit and happy Germans were juxtaposed with unhealthy and ‘diseased-looking’ inferiors, namely the Jews, blacks, gypsies and criminals.<sup>1</sup> Large-scale exhibitions like the ‘Miracle of Life’ were important propaganda events because the government expected large numbers of people to attend. As such, they wanted visitors to leave with the misguided perception that a hereditarily healthy person was a happy one, and that only individuals with Aryan ancestry could truly be content in life. Showing the hereditarily diseased, by contrast, was to provide visitors an insight into the ‘wretchedness and unspeakable misery’ adults and children from parents possessing an ‘inferior lineage’ were forced to endure.<sup>2</sup> The aim of many large-scale exhibitions therefore was to show visitors *why* policies such as a genealogical investigation of a spouse was necessary; ‘it was to teach young people not to bring such children into the world.’<sup>3</sup>

Hundreds of small scale exhibitions would take place across the country during the Nazi period. While undoubtedly many had an anti-Semitic dimension to them, there is evidence that many were set up with the main aim of showing the local populace *how* to meet racial policies. They were held in town halls, school buildings and local archives, creating a space where the local population could view examples of family trees, take home pamphlets or obtain the contact details of genealogists who would perform research on their behalf. As we have already seen, many Germans were intimidated by the process of ancestral research and this inexperience came through in the form of misguided questions they posed to church officials, registrars and archivists. In turn, small scale exhibitions became an exercise in teaching visitors to be succinct and clear when requesting genealogical information from these institutions. Moreover, they were intended to teach visitors what to look for in terms of hereditary disease and the actions to be taken should a family member possess one. Visitors learned at these exhibitions that the health of the *Volk* trumped the interest of individual families, and that they should be prepared to scrutinise the health of the family in order to prevent unhealthy relatives from procreating. Local exhibitions, in short, helped support racial aims of distinguishing healthy from unhealthy by supplying visitors with the necessary skills and advice to determine their own classification.

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Poore, *Disability in the Twentieth-Century German Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan 2007), pp. 99-100.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 98.

As we have already seen in preceding chapters, elements of society were made to reveal their ancestry to the responsible authorities within a few short weeks of the Nazis coming to power. The Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, enacted in April 1933, removed all persons, with certain exemptions, from active civil service possessing even one Jewish grandparent. Three months later, in July, the Law for the Protection of Hereditary Offspring was implemented. It empowered, among others, doctors, midwives and social workers to determine whether or not patients under their care were suffering from a genetic disease. In the meantime, the health offices where doctors worked were charged with creating and maintaining a data bank to hold genealogical information for every asocial, criminal or hereditarily diseased person they came into contact with.<sup>4</sup> The stored forms were to provide a genealogical background of the patient's parents as well as his or her grandparents. If the patient did fall into one of the categories the responsible official was to refer them to the newly established hereditary courts as a sterilisation nominee.<sup>5</sup> Every court, where three judges and two doctors presided, reviewed cases on an individual basis and decided whether or not sterilisation should go ahead. One percent of the population, a total of 360,000 persons, would undergo forced sterilisation between 1934 and 1945.<sup>6</sup>

Genealogy was now gaining a new prestige under the Nazis. Patients at health offices were asked about the character and health of dead and living relatives – did your father drink? Did anyone suffer from schizophrenia? To gain a broader picture of the family's hereditary health and worthiness to contribute to the *Volk* through procreation, doctors performed intelligence tests such as mathematical division in order to preclude any 'feeble-mindedness.'<sup>7</sup> Patients found to be fit and healthy were told how they could keep their family trees 'in good form,'<sup>8</sup> such as not procreating with Jews, or individuals suffering from 'mental weakness.' Alternatively, anyone who displayed behaviours deemed not normal or were considered physically disabled were informed by the doctors how their impairments 'burdened' the family.<sup>9</sup> Given that doctors were heavily involved in the sterilisation process and willingly selected candidates for the procedure, sterilisation could easily be packaged to the patient as helping to lift a heavy family burden.

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<sup>4</sup> Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, pp. 526-527.

<sup>5</sup> Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, pp. 139-142.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pp. 139-141.

<sup>7</sup> Fritzsche, *Life and Death*, p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, pp. 526-527.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pp. 526-527.

The growing importance of genealogy, particularly in the field of medicine, encouraged the Nazi Party to intensify its promotion of the practice. In 1934, a large scale exhibition titled 'The German People and German Work' was held in Berlin. Organisers of the exhibition showed photographs of women in mixed marriages with Jews as well as detailed the hereditary threats inferiors posed in the hope that visitors would begin to scrutinise their partner's ancestry. One newspaper reporter who attended the event described how one photograph, 'evidently taken at a ball,' showed 'a middle-aged, corpulent, and self-indulgent-looking [sic] Jew dancing with a very blonde and young Aryan girl and apparently enjoying himself.' Its intention, he surmised, was to stress the undesirability of this 'mixed-union.'<sup>10</sup> The image of an obese and 'Jewish looking' man was highly significant, and was conscientiously selected because of the supposed overt connection between Jews and an array of worthless qualities that now included obesity. Onlookers were informed that the state would solve these hereditary crimes and stem the flow of hereditary diseases by the sterilisation law.<sup>11</sup> The exhibition was thus readying visitors for the dramatic changes simultaneously taking root in the medical profession. For those who had already made contact with a doctor, it became clear that family planning was fast becoming an elaborate process and went beyond mere provision of dates of births, deaths and marriages of relatives. In appointments to assess worthiness for bearing children, doctors were beginning make observations about the patient's weight, believing it indicated levels of motivation for work.<sup>12</sup> Being overweight was also viewed as an indicator of other health-related problems such as asthma and diabetes. The fact that Jews almost wholly appeared in propaganda as fat and greedy stressed that they were of a lower reproductive worth as compared to Aryans.

One of the main aims of the exhibition was to capture the support of women for hereditary measures and to show the consequences of those who failed to keep their family trees pure. To this end, organisers erected photographs depicting grotesque children from German-African relationships – or the so-called Rhineland Bastards. Importantly, as Shelley Baranowski has pointed out, racial experts had 'found it difficult to prove "blackness" resulted in hereditary illness.'<sup>13</sup> Even so, they were collectively presented as a 'hereditary danger,' one which had to be neutralised if the deterioration of the Aryan stock was to be

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<sup>10</sup> "A "German People and German Work" Exhibition," *Guardian*, 23 April 1934, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, p. 524.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 532.

<sup>13</sup> Baranowski, *Nazi Empire*, p. 208.

prevented.<sup>14</sup> Their mothers were likewise stigmatised with having led depraved lifestyles that had introduced these 'unfit elements' into the *Volk*; actions which, according to one caption, constituted the 'saddest betrayal of the white race.'<sup>15</sup> The lack of concern for choosing sexual partners and the resulting 'inferior offspring' was used to promote newly instated controls on family planning, most notably genealogy. Placing notable family trees, for example that of Hitler, close to the section on Rhineland Bastards was part of the pro-natalist strategy to emphasise how reproduction between healthy Germans created 'valuable' members of the *Volk*.<sup>16</sup>

Women were viewed with a certain degree of suspicion in the new German state. The Nazis feared that, like the mothers of the 'Rhineland Bastards' or the woman in a mixed-marriage with a Jew, some women would fail to put the interests of the nation first and produce children that were considered to be racially healthy. The actions that could lead a woman to being labelled selfish were indeed exhaustive. Having sexual intercourse with Jews, blacks, gypsies, foreigners or the mentally defective confirmed the woman's loss of honour and respect in the eyes of the Nazis. Women who made a conscious decision not to have children (or have them later in life) also came under suspicion. The Nazis made little scruples of their intention to end all sexual liberation and consign racially healthy females to more traditional roles of womanhood: wife, mother and homemaker. Significant developments in these areas were already occurring in Germany. The *Hilfswerk 'Mutter und Kind'*, a branch of the NSV, had been established in February 1934 with the aim of monitoring the health of mothers and expectant mothers.<sup>17</sup> Advice centres and recuperation homes in the countryside were established and provided women with practical guidance on specific areas of mothering such as child nutrition, cooking and exercise.<sup>18</sup> Social workers were also assigned to expectant mothers. Part of the remit for this role, in addition to providing advice on breast-feeding and child care, was to assess mother and child for signs of hereditary disease. Messy or disorderly houses were construed as symptoms of a feeble-minded mother. A similar outcome was also reserved for children suffering from a physical deformity or 'mental weakness.'<sup>19</sup> Observations made during a visit helped

<sup>14</sup> By 1937 half of the approximately six to eight hundred Rhineland Bastards had been sterilised to prevent the dissemination of 'genetic defects' through the *Volk*. See: Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Ursula Grant Duff, "German Eugenics Exhibition," *The Eugenics Review* 26, no. 4 (1934), <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2985333/pdf/eugenrev00291-0070a.pdf>> [11 February 2013], p. 164.

<sup>16</sup> "A "German People and German Work" Exhibition," p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pp. 23-24.

<sup>19</sup> Gisela Bock, *Women in European History*, trans. Allison Brown (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002), p. 211.

determine whether the mother or child (or both) were 'worthy' candidates for sterilisation. Social workers, alongside doctors, were responsible for referring approximately 40,000 'undesirables' to the hereditary courts by 1935.<sup>20</sup>

The campaign for women to create and raise healthy children intensified in 1935, partly in response to the reorganisation of family planning and motherhood. *Das Wunder des Lebens*, or 'Miracle of Life,' staged at the Kaiserdamm exhibition halls in Berlin between 23 March and 5 May, was another opportunity to educate and warn women of the racial threats they faced when searching out the ideal partner and future fathers of their children. The importance of vetting (potential) spouses based on physique was a major theme of the exhibition. The organisers used exhibits that depicted the wretchedness of non-Aryans in graphic detail. Plaster heads of Asians, poles and Jews - 'heads of the wildest sort' - were carefully selected not only for 'their repulsiveness' but also to underline the fact that hereditary illness was broadly defined to include physical features such as 'hook noses' and 'blackness.'<sup>21</sup> At this exhibition, individuals possessing such 'undesirable' physical features were portrayed not as potential marriage partners, but as persons who had to be segregated and sterilised to protect the racial health of future offspring. Physical features were seen as just as important as genealogy in assessments of hereditary health.

In fact, women were encouraged to seek out men displaying outward health that included traits such as blond hair and blue eyes. To make these characteristics seem desirable and attractive to German women, organisers made an effort to pin up posters of Aryan men in uniform. They were attractive, muscular and tall. Moreover, organisers of 'Miracle of Life' attempted to show how intelligent German men had come from large families. A chart displaying prominent sons of Germany's past such as Goethe and Schiller was featured. Max Frisch, a journalist who attended the event, observed how a tour guide, a doctor, made a conscious effort to bring his group to a standstill in front of it. Pointing to Carl Lowe, the twelfth child in his family, Frisch recalled the doctor's words: 'You see ladies and gentlemen, we would never have had these geniuses if families in those days had not had a lot of children.'<sup>22</sup> The presupposition held by leading Nazis, Hitler included, was that the more children a couple had the greater the chances they would have a child that was talented.<sup>23</sup> By dangling the possibility of a child with Goethe's or Schiller's genius in front

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 211.

<sup>21</sup> Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Max Frisch, "The 'Miracle of Life,'" in Oliver Lubrich, ed. *Travels in the Reich, 1933-1945: Foreign Authors Report from Germany* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 70.

<sup>23</sup> Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, p. 98.

of them, organisers tried to make motherhood and the prospect of a large family more acceptable to women. The exhibition continued to promote the Nazi ideal that racial heritage was an indicator of value by addressing explicitly the perceived needs and wants of German women. Crucially, the exhibition also included a slogan that legitimised non-marital sex, ‘as long as the child born of such a union was both racially and eugenically “healthy.”’<sup>24</sup>

The physical appearance of foreigners, particularly the Jews, was just one of many signs of inferiority women were encouraged to look out for. In addition to being physically repulsive, the point was reiterated that Jews suffered from severe character flaws, and also the root of epilepsy and syphilis that, at the time, were supposedly rampant in German society – and not to mention destroying German families.<sup>25</sup> To be considered a good mother, following the logic, women were expected to prevent such afflictions being passed onto their unborn child, and thus ruining their offspring’s health and life prospects. This involved checking the family trees of male prospects to rule out the possibility that they carried Jewish blood. Like ‘The German People and German Work’ exhibition, family trees were displayed to honour families who had kept their family trees free from Jewish blood. An essay featured at the exhibition ‘reinforced’ the idea that the Jew was too introverted, too egotistical and too cowardly to care or support anyone other than himself. One interpretation of this text was that children of Jewish men risked inheriting similar immoral behaviours. One visitor summed up its contents as well as described what lay in the subsequent room:

[A] picture was shown to a number of different young people and they were asked to express their feelings about it. The Nordic young man writes a few words, sober and disciplined....Jew writes the longest contribution: the picture – which shows a church that has been blown to pieces, with a soldier standing before the smouldering ruins – means nothing to him; apparently, the soldier wants to plunder what treasures are left in the church, but is afraid of the heat of the flames; besides this, the writer declares that he is opposed to the war, which he regards as sheer nonsense and the nations should come to an understanding; nevertheless he thinks it is better that churches rather than houses should be destroyed, since houses have material value. So we see: the Jew without any relationship to what is happening nationally, greedy and cowardly, pacifistic....and materialistic. And when, after this, the next section [to the exhibition] shows logically arranged themes – above all, children of epileptics, drunkards, and syphilitics – the misery appears to stem from a non-Aryan race....and then what follows is a presentation of German eugenics,

<sup>24</sup> Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 46.

<sup>25</sup> Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, p. 17.

where human beings are bred like race horses, which has no repellent component, quite the contrary, in fact – thanks to this more than skilful method of Nazi popular enlightenment – after what we have seen before, we have to breathe a sigh of relief and believe it.<sup>26</sup>

Jews were singled out as untrustworthy and self-centred in the hope that women would be deterred from starting families with them. The attitudes and ideals of Jews made them inadequate teachers of responsibility, hard-work and commitment to the state. Yet, in many ways, whether female visitors came to believe that scrutinising genealogical tables would immunise their potential offspring from harmful defects proved irrelevant. Indeed, the organisers' attempt to encourage women to take time and think about who they should marry gives the impression that women had free choice when it came to courtship and motherhood. In reality, women's lives faced growing interference from the state. By this time, for example, women would have become increasingly aware of other, far more aggressive tactics to ensure they married only the hereditarily healthy. As has been previously observed, incidences of women being paraded through the streets, or alternatively having their personal details such as name and address published for the crime of racial disgrace was considered newsworthy. Added to this was the fact that registrars were under growing pressure to verify the Aryan ancestries of couples prior to performing the wedding ceremony, under threat of having their own ancestry investigated.<sup>27</sup> The publication of critiques of mixed unions and documented incidences of intimidation highlights that propaganda aimed at exposing Jews as a hereditary threat was not readily absorbed by everyone. A combination of violence and legislation would, however, continue to parallel propaganda in an effort to keep Jews from polluting the family trees of Aryans.

The 'Miracle of Life' was followed in 1936 by a string of other propaganda initiatives intended to stress the importance of genealogical investigation beyond the vicinity of Berlin. In July 1936, the Museum for Social Hygiene in Dresden established its 'Heredity, Race and Nation' exhibitions which, as demonstrated, conveyed the idea of superior and inferior races. The museum was simultaneously engaged in promoting 'the new Germany through scientific channels abroad.'<sup>28</sup> In 1934 in Pasadena, California, an exhibit titled 'Eugenics in New Germany' was opened in the civic auditorium with the support of the

<sup>26</sup> Frisch, "The 'Miracle of Life,'" pp. 69-70.

<sup>27</sup> See also: Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p.91; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p. 79 and Burleigh, p. 298.

<sup>28</sup> The exhibition was open between 3-6 September. Quoted in Robert Rydell, Christina Cogdell, and Mark Largent, "The Nazi Eugenics Exhibit in the United States, 1934-43," in *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s*, ed. Susan Currell and Christina Cogdell (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), p. 366.



American Public Health Association (APHA).<sup>29</sup> It publicised the sterilisation pamphlet as necessary to avert the future transmission of hereditary diseases. One poster portrayed a 'poor, black man' with the aim of representing him as a hereditary danger. The accompanying text stated: 'if this man had been sterilized [sic], then there would not have been born...12 hereditarily diseased' children.<sup>30</sup> Other exhibits celebrated the creation of data banks, which stored genealogical information of patients, and which health offices could refer to when assessing a patient's reproductive value.<sup>31</sup> Hitler's genealogy was also on display. In the course of 1936 the museum established a further six travelling exhibitions which, collectively, visited eighty-two German and foreign cities. Together, they attracted 1.2 million visitors.<sup>32</sup> German officials sought to enhance the sterilisation policies of Germany abroad, perhaps in the hope that it would rationalise its need at home.<sup>33</sup>

The Nazis, in the meantime, made a concerted effort to capitalise on the exposure given to their racial policies through exhibitions like 'Miracle of Life' and 'Heredity, Race and Nation.' In August 1936, a series of notable exhibition images were included in the monthly journal, *Volk und Rasse* (People and Nation). This journal was affiliated to the Office of Racial Policy (*Rassenpolitisches Amt*), headed by Walter Gross, whose remit was to 'coordinate and unify all schooling and propaganda in the areas of population and racial policy.'<sup>34</sup> Some of the posters printed underscored the need for genealogical investigation by showing a link between family background and the inheritance of genetic weakness such as laziness and alcoholism. The images featured created the impression that women were to blame for turning children into worthless adults. If a future descendant of a family was identified as an alcoholic or drug abuser, it was because the mother had disregarded the hereditary threat of the father. The circumstances leading to a child becoming work-shy or lazy in later life also had roots in the poor example set by the mother in early childhood.<sup>35</sup> One poster, for example, was titled 'The terrible results of a woman drunkard' and showed how patient zero, over the next eighty-three years, had 894 descendants. These descendants were categorised based on their 'affliction': '40 were indigent, 67 criminals, 7

<sup>29</sup> Christina Cogdell, *Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia, 2004), p. 94.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Rydell et al, "The Nazi Eugenics Exhibit in the United States, 1934-43," p.370

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 372.

<sup>32</sup> Poore, *Disability in the Twentieth-Century*, p. 105.

<sup>33</sup> For further reading see: Amber N. Schneider, "More Than Meets the Eye: The Use of Exhibitions as Agents of Propaganda During the Inter-War Period" (Baylor University 2009), <[https://beardocs.baylor.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2104/5309/Amber\\_Schneider\\_masters%5b1%5d.pdf?sequence=2](https://beardocs.baylor.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2104/5309/Amber_Schneider_masters%5b1%5d.pdf?sequence=2)> [accessed 23 May 2013], pp. 70-76.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 87.

<sup>35</sup> Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, p. 120.

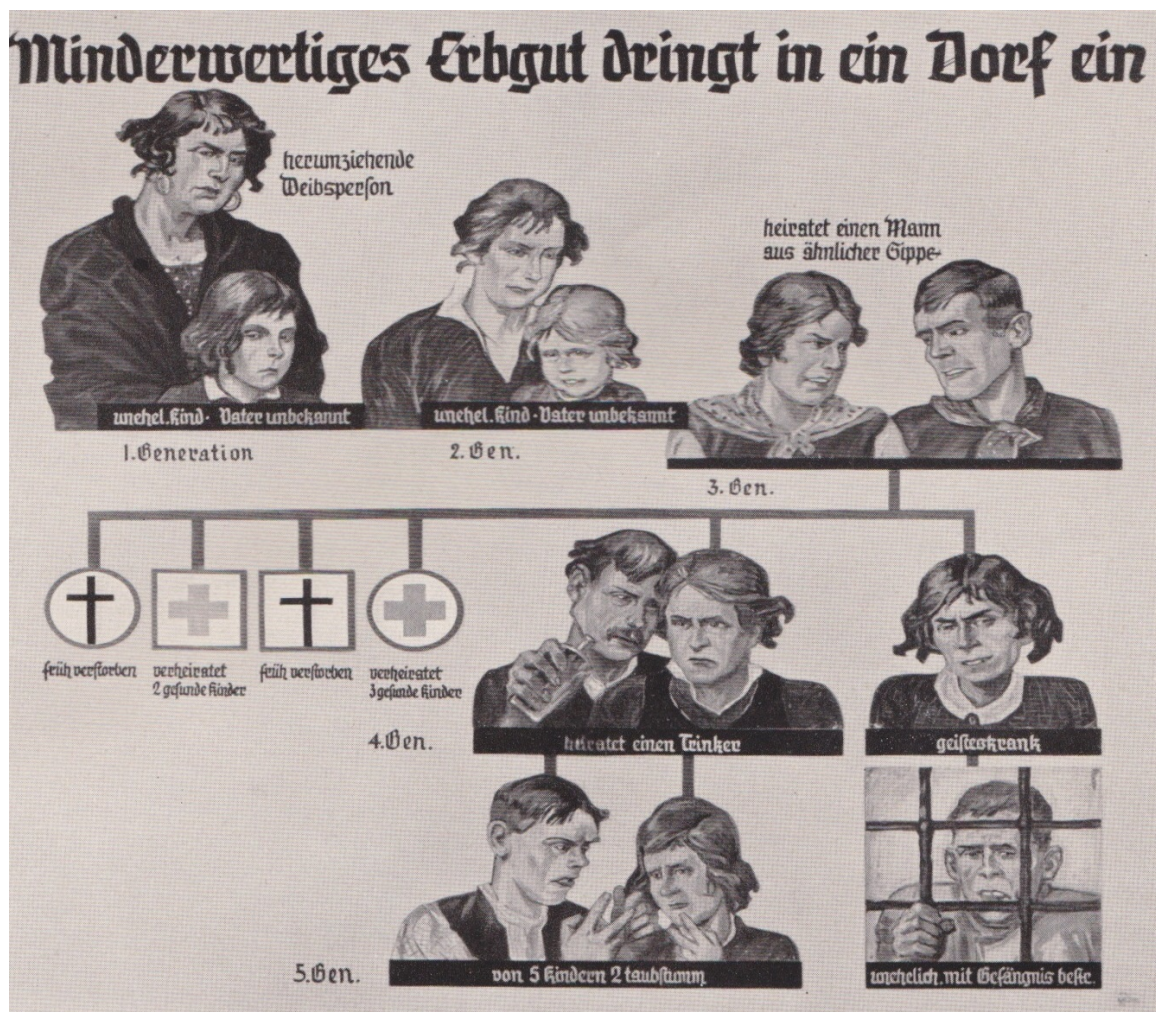
murderers, 181 prostitutes, and 142 beggars.’ A further 437 descendants were labelled ‘asocial.’<sup>36</sup> The Nazis, worried that concealment of a relative’s flaws could lead to similar explosions of unworthy genes, attempted to tap into the maternal instincts of women readers. They did this by illustrating how their denial would lower their children’s, grandchildren’s and great-grandchildren’s quality of life.

One of the most striking pictures featured can be seen in figure 4.1 (below). It illustrates how the future would look if everyone simply decided to disregard the use of genealogy in their own pursuit of instant sexual gratification. Titled ‘Bad genes enter a village,’ the poster was stylised on a family tree in which five generations were displayed. The poster is, by all accounts, a story of racial decline. In the first generation, a woman moves to a unnamed village where she has an illegitimate child. In the second generation, the illegitimate child repeats the mistake of the mother and gives birth to her own bastard child. In the third generation, the illegitimate offspring marries a biological relative. In the fourth generation, one offspring marries an alcoholic, and from this relationship five children are conceived. Two of the offspring are deaf. Another relative, who has a ‘mental malady,’ produces an illegitimate child. This illegitimate child goes on to commit some unknown crime and in the end is sentenced to prison.<sup>37</sup> The poster was simple but effective. Readers could easily trace the social and psychological decline of each generation. And the predicament facing each generation was bleaker than the last. Stemming from one ancestor’s (a woman’s) poor choice, the future descendants of this family had to endure untold hardships, which ranged from illegitimacy to deafness, an alcoholic spouse to mental difficulties, and from a prison sentence to the untimely death of offspring. The poster implied that only the fit and healthy should be allowed to procreate. To prevent a similar fate befalling their own future family, Germans had an obligation to know what they were marrying into.

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted from Calvin College’s German Propaganda Archive, “Posters from Nazi Racial Exhibitions,” trans. Randall Bytwerk <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/volkundrasse1936-8.htm>> [accessed 7 May 2013].

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 4. 1 - 'Bad Genes enter a village.'** The single mother moves to an unnamed village. Her lifestyle choices has a devastating impact on the racial stock of future descendants. Calvin College's German Propaganda Archive, "Posters from Nazi Racial Exhibitions," <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/volkundrasse1936-8.htm>> [accessed 7 May 2013].

The ideological goals of dramatic propaganda at this time should not be overestimated, however. The Reich government continued to face difficulties in inspiring and buoying up commitment to genealogy within the civil service. Of particular concern at this time was that many employees were displaying a general reluctance in providing details of their ancestry to responsible officials<sup>38</sup>, despite the fact the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service had been in effect since 1933 and had made full disclosure of family background mandatory. Between 1933 and 1936, the Nazis grew steadily frustrated by levels of non-compliance. In August 1936, this frustration culminated in Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick, sending out a confidential order to high level administrators. It directed them to undertake a review of the ancestry of spouses for every civil servant who failed to hand in their questionnaire to a responsible official.<sup>39</sup> Even so, it was felt that a

<sup>38</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 64.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pp. 64-65.

concerted effort was needed to remind civil servants why monitoring their hereditary health and that of their families was necessary. To this end, they were offered courses in racial hygiene which was given by the Office of Racial Policy. A further option was also available to utilise their expertise in matters relating to genealogy as well as seek advice in establishing whether a person was ‘‘hereditarily ill,’ Aryan, or non-Aryan.’<sup>40</sup> Moreover, *Volk und Rasse* continued to promote the idea that the ‘unhealthy’ and Jews could lower the racial stock of German families. The journal was popular, boasting a circulation rate of 300,000 by 1939, with readership comprising mostly professionals and the well-educated.<sup>41</sup> In one 1937 article that reviewed the propaganda efforts of the Office of Racial Policy over the last four years, it was observed that eight national exhibitions had gone ahead, each with sections on ‘the dangers of the Jewish influence’ and ‘how to bring up healthy children.’<sup>42</sup> As Robert Proctor had pointed out, ‘It would have been difficult for anyone living in Germany at this time not to have been touched by the activities of this office.’<sup>43</sup> Germans may have been ‘touched’ by propaganda, but not always influenced. During the course of 1937, Heinrich Himmler felt compelled to order *all* civil servants to submit birth or marriage certificates to the responsible official. Employees and spouses who could not obtain these records were ordered to consult an expert at the Genealogical Office.<sup>44</sup> A further circular would be issued by the Ministry of the Interior to the same effect. It restated that if documentary evidence was not forthcoming an ‘expert’ would be called upon to determine the person’s ancestry.<sup>45</sup>

Despite these ongoing problems, a combination of grotesque and caricatured posters and exhibits continued to be utilised to silence any objection there may have been to the practice of genealogy. The Nazi perception that diseases such as alcoholism and syphilis were rampant in society increased the need to be ever vigilant about a potential partner. Jews, in particular, were singled out as carriers of harmful diseases. But because they were cast as ‘the most important citizen in my state,’ women also gained significant attention from the state.<sup>46</sup> What’s more, the state imposed high racial standards on women. If they wanted to be seen as a valuable and productive members of society women had to be

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<sup>40</sup> Burleigh and Wiperman, *The Racial State*, pp. 52-53 and Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p.89 and Poore, *Disability in the Twentieth-Century*, p. 101.

<sup>42</sup> Poore, *Disability in the Twentieth-Century*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>43</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 89.

<sup>44</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 65.

<sup>45</sup> ‘‘Abstammungsbescheide der Reichsstelle für Sippenforschung,’’ 25 June 1938, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr 929, bl. 107.

<sup>46</sup> Frisch, ‘‘The ‘Miracle of Life,’’’’ p. 68.

willing to investigate the ancestry of their own spouse, as well as dedicate their future to nurturing her children, keeping the house tidy, and preparing meals for her family. Thus, the Nazis envisaged exhibitions as sites where women could reflect and learn from the 'racial mistakes' of others. The Nazis believed that domesticity could be used in combination with genealogical research to produce children who were healthy and content. Though women may not have necessarily believed these teachings, they were under pressure to conform and become exemplary mothers.

## **A walk-through the typical local genealogical exhibition**

Although large-scale exhibitions attempted to lend validity to the necessity for genealogical research, many failed to elaborate or give clear guidance on how to perform research independently. Therefore, party and state institutions endorsed and contributed to local genealogical exhibitions. Indeed, small scale exhibitions would be planned, promoted and held in villages and small towns across the country.<sup>47</sup> They intended them to be friendly yet informative sites where visitors could learn the importance of racial health as well as how to begin the process of family research. In comparison to exhibitions like 'Miracle of Life,' which was described by one visitor as 'the largest exhibition of the year' and 'undeniably a magnificent achievement,'<sup>48</sup> those staged in small towns or rural communities tended to be more homespun affairs. Their value nonetheless derived from their focus on practical aspects of genealogy, informing visitors how they could pursue 'family research effectively and successfully' and what 'resources and possible aids' could further their research.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, they addressed areas such as what information to include in letters sent to archives, registries and churches; what institutions are responsible for what records, which private or public institution to turn to if 'the track is covered up' as well as costs likely to be incurred during the research process.<sup>50</sup> After exhibitions had ended, pamphlets were often deposited in local libraries. This practice meant that future generations struggling to compile family trees would have an enduring source of guidance and advice.

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<sup>47</sup> Although the exhibitions to be discussed took place in the pre-war period it is noteworthy to mention that exhibitions continued to play a crucial role throughout the war as the regime pursued its racial goals: For further reading see: Jan Grabowski, "German Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Generalgouvernement, 1939-1945: Inciting Hate through Posters, Films, and Exhibitions," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 23, no.3 (2009), <<http://hgs.oxfordjournals.org/content/23/3/381.full.pdf+html>> [accessed 23 June 2013].

<sup>48</sup> Frisch, "The 'Miracle of Life,'" p. 67.

<sup>49</sup> "Du, deine Familie, dein Volk," 4 Juni 1937, BArch R1509/1103, bl. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, pp. 2-8.

Of course, the Reich government did not confine racial propaganda to the capital, but rather eagerly sought its dissemination throughout the country. It received support in its effort to turn all Germans into Aryans from the Office of Racial Policy which, in addition to offering courses to civil servants, sponsored thousands of school functions and public meetings.<sup>51</sup> In May 1937, the Office helped the city of Frankfurt am Main to put on an exhibition on 'German racial purity,' which was recommended by the genealogical journal *Familie, Sippe, Volk*.<sup>52</sup> Resources owned by the state were also used for similar ends. As noted earlier, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, which had a circulation of approximately of 600,000 in 1938 rising to 1.7 million by 1944, publicised the existence of the Genealogical Office, its effort to collect family histories of every Jew and non-Jew in the country ('including details of hereditary health'),<sup>53</sup> and observed that its resources and expertise were now being accessed by the public. To bolster enthusiasm for the practice further posters and even disclaimers on official documents stressed the health benefits associated with family research; contentment in life, went the official party line, can only stem from knowledge that you and your family's blood has no 'hidden secrets.' Two extracts from an official government pamphlet illustrates this point further:

**Value of ancestor information.** In memory of the line of ancestors with physically and mentally healthy people the heir is conscious of the responsibility, that he/she himself/herself is nothing else but a link in the chain of the endless line of ancestors and that he/she has the holy duty to retain the precious dormant genes pure and intact and to safeguard them against disastrous intermarriage and to pass on the flow of life which has flown for generations – a feeling of deep gratitude will awaken in a descendant when he/she sees his/her predecessors as responsible custodians and protectors of the treasure which for him/her is the basis for health, achievement and happiness. How else can the heir settle this debt than by giving the intact genes a new body to live on in his/her children instead of suppressing precious genes by not having any children and thus stopping the flow of life.

The second extract reads:

**Family Research.** Family research has risen from the level of science to blood and reality and connects the people who belong together in a ring. It researches the flow of the blood in the line of ancestors and helps to strengthen future generations. Everything that is fatefully hidden in a line is brought to light. It connects grandchildren with the motherland, connects the old homeland with the present and creates new pathways from one person to another. Without family research our future is dark and meaningless. Family research throws

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<sup>51</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 89.

<sup>52</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 151.

<sup>53</sup> Jonathan Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 117 and Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, p. 527.

light onto the secret inner laws of our actions and carries its benefit within itself. Happy are the families who organise their lives consciously and with insight and learn to master their fate.<sup>54</sup>

Every outlet was exploited to convince Germans everywhere of the necessity of controls on reproduction and genealogy. In small towns where temporary genealogical exhibitions were established knowledge of a spouse's hereditary health was deemed the new moral standard. Visitors were warned to keep their own 'body pure' and 'only marry a spouse of the same or related blood.'<sup>55</sup> In this vein, one pamphlet to an 1937 exhibition (to be discussed in greater detail below) made clear that identification and control of hereditary diseases was of national importance, as was the task of determining one's own genetic risk: '[Regardless of how much our] professional or non-professional [lives] may try to distract us, we have to look around some times and try to answer the question about the deepest roots of our being.'<sup>56</sup> Much of the attention at these small events was given over to clarifying the Nuremberg Laws as well as the principles of family research. The hope was that visitors, thereafter, would be in a position to self-govern and protect their own hereditary health against potential spouses suspected of posing a genetic threat, such as the Jews.

Encouraging visitors to abide by the terms of the Nuremberg laws and to vet potential spouses for Jewishness or genetic weaknesses relied in part on communicating genealogy as a practice that was informative, enjoyable and cheap. In exploring these issue further, it would be instructive to look at one particular exhibition sponsored by the Office of Racial Policy. It was titled *Du, deine Familie, dein Volk* or 'You, your Family, your People' and opened in Hansa, Hamburg, between 4 June to 31 July 1937. The pamphlet to the exhibition was highly detailed, and noted that the event was for Germans who, having little or no prior experience of family research, spent considerable time and money sending letters to archives, registries and churches.<sup>57</sup> Another aim of the exhibition, also made clear in the pamphlet, was that promoting and protecting the hereditary health of the nation relied heavily on Germans taking individual responsibility and monitoring the health of those closest to them.<sup>58</sup> Fostering public support for genealogy by showing that the practice was indeed fulfilling was a strategy crucial to the intensification of anti-Jewish policy. It is doubtful the state and responsible offices such as the Genealogical Office could have

<sup>54</sup> "Berwaltungsblatt," 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 13.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Mary-Elizabeth O'Brien, *Nazi Cinema as Enchantment: The Politics of Entertainment in the Third Reich* (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), p. 163.

<sup>56</sup> "Berwaltungsblatt," 12 September 1936, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 13.

<sup>57</sup> "Du, Deine Familie, Dein Volk," BArch R1509/1103, bl. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, bl. 2.



investigated the family background on behalf of every German, let alone conceive and attempt to enforce the marital segregation of Jews and non-Jews as laid out in the Nuremberg laws. It seemed more realistic and practical to have individuals put together their own family trees, using posters, exhibits and experts at exhibitions to advise and guide them and thereafter apply racial policies as necessary.

The pamphlet to the exhibition served as a room-by-room guide, with the layout of *Du, deine Familie, dein Volk* purposely set up to show the progression in becoming Aryan in reverse order. The theme at the outset was not where to buy books, ask for help, pick up sample magazines or acquire the business cards to professional genealogists. Rather, visitors were presented with the finished article, the *Ahnenpass* and the ancestral proof, the latter requiring the names of four grandparents, parents and *you*. After this first room, visitors would navigate from room to room, each symbolising a crucial dimension of ancestral research: completed family trees, biology and hereditary justification for the Nuremberg laws, and, lastly, ‘how-to’ guides. Rooms three and four featured differing styles of family trees. Some were simple, with key dates of family members etched onto branches. Others were more artistic: trees sitting in an open, green field – the only tree in view – with finely engraved shields, one for every ancestor, hanging from the branches, down to the base of the tree’s roots. In fine lettering on each shield: baptism, marriage and death, birthplace and occupation. Not far from the tree stands a man, clothed in garments appropriate to both time and occupation; the embodiment of the family’s class.<sup>59</sup> The exhibits in the first four rooms were intended to reflect the fact that visitors would vary in ability and enthusiasm. Informing onlookers on how to put together family trees with little or no gaps in its branches was also linked to the custom of having candidates, whether applying for university or marriage or a job, attach completed family trees to application forms – a procedure implemented to screen for Jews and other undesirables.

After the spectacle of being shown what was possible, visitors progressed to room five. The pamphlet describing room five reveals that instructions in how to look beyond records of births, deaths and marriages and into the *character* of their ancestors would be given. There is a suggestion here, however, that organisers were using non-threatening language such as character in order to manipulate visitors into screening ancestors for un-healthy traits. It is important to reiterate the point that certain character traits such as greed and selfishness were highly publicised as being a sign of Jewishness. Thus asking visitors to look into the character could easily be construed as a strategy to unwittingly reveal their

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<sup>59</sup> “Du, Deine Familie, Dein Volk,” BArch R1509/1103, bl. 4-5.



own Jewish ancestry. The pamphlet asked readers to think about where and how their ancestors lived: What social class did they belong to? Where did they work? A mill or at a local blacksmiths? And what was life like when ‘Grandfather married Grandmother’? In turn, readers were encouraged to search their homes for objects, documents, and photographs. Although the pamphlet does not elaborate, we can look to another exhibition organised by the Office for Racial Policy to show what objects and records were recommended for retrieval.<sup>60</sup> Titled *Vom Ahn zum Enkel* or ‘From Ancestor to Grandson,’ and held in Halle between 16 January to 6 February 1938, organisers displayed paintings of villages from ‘times past,’ as well as family albums, personal letters, and news clippings listing a birth or the naming of a godfather. Encased in one glass cabinet was a series of family books (see figure 4.2 below), some opened at the centre page, which were popular with local researchers.



**Figure 4. 2 - The idea of ‘letting our ancestors do the work for us’ was a central precept of many small scale exhibitions. Family books like those shown were promoted as valuable records, potentially helping researchers fill in gaps in their own family tree. These records were also intended for researchers who wanted to look beyond records of births, deaths and marriages and find more information concerning where and how their ancestors lived. “Vom Ahn zum Enkel”, BArch R1509/1103**

<sup>60</sup> Here the pamphlet states that only a few handwritten and printed documents (as well as pictures) were on display. This small sampling, it observed, would show genealogists what to seek out ‘if they want a complete representation of their ancestors’ personalities.’



**Figure 4.3 – In addition to family books, visitors were encouraged to explore other sources in the course of their family research, including registers of students and military ranks as well as catalogues of funeral services. “Vom Ahn zum Enkel”, BArch R1509/1103**

One book depicts a small rural village, creating an impression that family members listed had a long association with the area. Another book shows a blackened silhouette of a woman. On the opposing side, details of her baptism, marriage and death are listed. The idea of ‘letting our ancestors do the work for us’ was one of the main slogans of this particular exhibition.<sup>61</sup> It was the intention of the organisers to normalise and encourage family research by demonstrating that everyone – from mothers and professionals to military personnel - was actively involved in the process. This strategy is in the *Vom Ahn zum Enkel* promotional pamphlet, which included photographs of the Halle archive’s busy research rooms (see figures 4.4 and 4.5).

It is reasonable to assume, however, that some visitors to either exhibition would have been wary of looking for character flaws in their ancestors. Michelle Mouton, for example, observes that many Germans were unwilling to seek out information that could bring them to the attention of the authorities. Indeed, many potential applicants for marriage loans were put off because of the invasiveness it entailed.<sup>62</sup> As part of the application process, local doctors had to perform physical examinations on applicants to ensure they had no physical deformities, or mental issues. In short, they were to assess worthiness of applicants as recipients. They also enquired about the family tree and whether any ancestor was afflicted by a disease, such as syphilis and tuberculosis, or if they had Jewish ancestry.<sup>63</sup> Doctors were regularly perturbed during the proceedings, as Mouton points out:

<sup>61</sup> “Vom Ahn zum Enkel,” BArch R1509/1103, bl. 7.

<sup>62</sup> Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, p. 61.

<sup>63</sup> Jews were not eligible to apply for marriage loans. Ibid, pp. 57-62.

‘Forced to depend on scanty records, their own memories, and information provided by



**Figure 4. 4 and 4. 5 - Soldiers and civilians researching their family trees together in the Halle archive. “Vom Ahn zum Enkel”, BArch R1509/1103**



their patients, they soon discovered that most patients did not have reliable knowledge about their own families, nor did doctors trust patients to describe their families accurately.’<sup>64</sup> It is a fair assumption, then, that most who visited a local exhibition did so

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

with the intention of meeting the bare minimum of the regime's racial policy: the standard proof. To delve deeper and probe the character of dead relatives would be to risk unearthing potentially damaging information.

Room six of *Du, deine Familie, dein Volk* was intended to reduce visitors' dependency on parish registers and archives. Only a few interested in family research, stated the pamphlet accompanying the exhibition, have even considered that genealogical information could be obtained from outside the walls of these buildings: 'How about a museum for applied arts? Even professional researchers did not suspect this.' It was asserted that key dates could be found in pieces of artwork, pottery, carpentry, as well as on cushions and tapestries. Time would have to be invested, of course. 'But wouldn't you find it more interesting searching through these beautiful works of art than in the files of churches and archives?' Filled with so many objects, so much history, the museum could be the difference between continuing or stopping research altogether. To illustrate this, an example:

A genealogist is searching the family 'Luders' in Hamburg and has reached the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He finds in a museum in Hamburg a "Fayenceschüssel"[porcelain bowl] from 1646 with the name Jakob Luders. Easily, he can now learn everything that the expert has already figured out: Jakob Luders, was a brewer [and his name also appears] in 1613 in the proclamation book of St. Catharine. In 1637 his daughter is baptised in Jakobi church. At the same time he [the researcher] hears that the Hamburger "Fayances" in the 17<sup>th</sup> century were quite expensive and were made from precious Chinese porcelain. His ancestor, Jakob Luders, must have been a rich man.<sup>65</sup>

Readers of the pamphlet were informed that room eight would hold more important genealogical resources, such as the Hamburg address books and the Hamburg Merchant Year Book. Contained between these pages, visitors could find their ancestor's 'place of residence,' thus allowing the researcher 'to ascertain his or her affiliation with a certain Hamburg parish.' In this way, 'the search for a church book in which this ancestor's life dates are registered becomes much easier.'<sup>66</sup> Recent redevelopment in the area of Hansa also made the address book indispensable. Ideas about the physical surroundings of ancestors, as if this helped the genealogists account for their mental well-being, and thus any hereditary problems that may be familial, again occupied a special place in the exhibition. Several maps showing 'the house they lived in' or 'where they worked' – in case it does not exist anymore – could be found in the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce library. Entering the room, more images reportedly awaited the visitor: cards celebrating a

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<sup>65</sup> "Du, Deine Familie, Dein Volk," BArch R1509/1103, bl. 5.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, bl. 6.

birthday, a wedding, or a poem commemorating a death, described here as ‘important for genealogical research,’ because they regularly contain biographical notes. ‘Last but not least,’ as the organisers were keen to stress, lists of pupils and scholars, their matriculation numbers, family names, field of study, ‘future profession,’ ‘future whereabouts’ and dates of death were ‘also accommodated in the library.’<sup>67</sup> Encouraging Germans to broaden the scope of their research was a strategy designed in part to alleviate the pressure felt by archivists, registrars and priests in supplying genealogical information. As a contributor to the exhibition, the Chamber of Commerce should be included in the long line of departments and institutions that – and to quote Christopher Browning – was willing ‘to meet the professional challenge and solve the myriad of problems created by an escalating Jewish Nazi policy.’<sup>68</sup>

The local exhibition also offered visitors the opportunity to seek out professional assistance. The organisers were careful to display family trees (in rooms nine and ten) that were aesthetically pleasing to inspire and promote self-initiative. The pamphlet also advised visitors to ‘pick the most useful things for him [or] her from what is shown.’<sup>69</sup> Equally, organisers understood that there were limits, and some Germans would be overwhelmed with the task of proving the purity of their blood. As a result, and despite the pamphlet assuring readers that feelings of difficulty were a normal part of ancestral research, organisers emphasised that staff were at hand to answer all questions. Moreover, staff at the event would provide the names of researchers who could assist them in their research.<sup>70</sup> In contrast, the pamphlet to *From Ancestor to Grandson* went into greater detail about the skills of the genealogist. It avidly portrayed genealogists as selfless individuals, willing to work into the night in help Germans in need. A scene is described: One night, while members of ‘Halle Genealogy Evening,’ a club of genealogy enthusiasts, busied themselves with their research, a couple entered the main door of the library. They seemed nervous, tentative but in urgent need of genealogical expertise:

Hard work is going on all around the long wide tables – people search in books and writings rich in content for traces of their ancestors, pages are turned eagerly, people read and write. Then the bell sounds. An unassuming married couple enter, a little self-conscious, almost hesitant but full of hope, as they want to find help: their son [needs] to prove his German origin [if he is] to be welcomed into the German National Army as a volunteer.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, bl. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939 - March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 11.

<sup>69</sup> “Du, Deine Familie, Dein Volk,” BArch R1509/1103, bl. 7.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, bl. 8.

Serious thinking is required: the case is not easy as the parents know very little about their ancestors. But little by little progress is made by finding and showing the right ways: Knowledge of previous property, as well as emerging recollections of grandfather's military service and things like that will make the search easier. The couple leave the advice bureau of the "Genealogy Evening" – well advised and thankful to the helpers.

That's the way it often goes and all the work serves the common goal, to support and nurture the discoveries of the blood related connections of the German people.<sup>71</sup>

By far the most important sections of the Hansa exhibition –spread over three rooms – were those of eleven, twelve and thirteen, which went under the collective title of 'Family History and Genetic Biology.' Genealogy, from the perspective of the exhibition, now turned serious. While much satisfaction and sense of accomplishment could be gleaned from family research, onlookers were not to lose focus of why they were doing it. Germans were to turn themselves into Aryans, and, in doing so, show their own 'worth' to society. Part of being a responsible German was recognising when you possessed an unhealthy trait, and then preventing its continuation in the family bloodline. Although onlookers had no say in which genes were passed on, other options remained open; they could remove ambitions of raising a family altogether so that any 'defect' may die with them. In these rooms genetics was explained in a way that everybody could understand:

You have inherited your physical and mental characteristics, good ones as well as bad ones, from your ancestors. At the beginning of your life your father and mother passed on these qualities, which influence your character fundamentally. It is true that nutrition, climatic conditions, education and other environmental influences allow a change (variation) of these foundations; however these foundations themselves cannot be eradicated from the nature of a person....The genetic qualities are connected to minuscule bodies – called genetic bodies or chromosomes – which are in every building block of your body. The human body consists of an estimated 50 to 100 billion of these building blocks, called cells, which each contain 24 pairs of genetic bodies. The genetic bodies are lined up onto differently bent miniscule sticks like coins in a roll of money. Every genetic factor has its special place in one of the 24 genetic bodies and appears at the same place in its partner. Some genetic qualities are determined by one single pair of factors: with others 2 or several have an effect together. You have developed from 2 cells: The egg cell from your mother's body and the sperm cell from your father's body. These germ cells contained – in contrast to the building blocks of the body – each only 24 single genetic bodies: during insemination 24 genetic body pairs developed, which contain a complete genotype. You will only pass on 24 single genetic bodies to each of your children – half your genotype – a different selection to each child.

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<sup>71</sup> "Vom Ahn zum Enkel," BArch R1509/1103, bl. 16-17.

All genetic qualities appear in pairs. If you inherited the hereditary factor to see in any light condition, even in the poorest from your father, but from your mother the hereditary factor for night blindness (she can't see in twilight), then the latter gene dominates the healthy one. You are night blind like your mother. You can pass either of the two hereditary factors on to your children: however it is not up to you to prefer the healthy hereditary factor. If you have inherited the hereditary factor for short sightedness from your father and the hereditary factor for normal vision from your mother, then the first one will be [cancelled out]: you have normal vision. Again you pass on one of these hereditary factors to each of your children. However if two of these concealed hereditary factors come together in one of your children – from you and your wife who perhaps also has normal vision – then the child will be very short sighted. [It is at times a] cruel game of the dominant and concealed.<sup>72</sup>

Readers were informed that inheritance of night blindness was governed by Mendelian laws, the latter of which stressed that genes could not be modified. This reference to Mendal is particularly significant. It is remarkable just how worried Nazi officials were about the Mendelian laws of inheritance at this time. Like night blindness, officials believed that Jewish characteristics might be recessive and emerge only after generations. Jewishness could never be bred out a population unless there was strict segregation. This preoccupation helps us understand why the Office of Racial Policy was so prolific on sponsoring events that promoted the principles of genealogy, why the Nuremberg laws were a central feature in countless exhibitions and why the latter laws were interpreted as a health measure implemented to guarantee the health of the family. Coming back to the topic at hand, it may also reflect why the pamphlet to *Du, deine Familie, dein Volk* informed readers to be observant, detached and methodical when scrutinising dead and living relatives.

Doubtless, one of the main challenges facing organisers of *Du, deine Familie, dein Volk* was to encourage Germans to turn informant and notify Nazi authorities, such as the Genealogical Office, when they doubted the health or race of relatives, neighbours and work colleagues. In turn, the pamphlet informed readers to put their emotions to the wayside and make judgments about the very people whom they shared their life with. It added that the aim was 'to observe without prejudice, to record plainly and without emotion, and not to make choices between comfortable and painful facts.' The pamphlet stated that these observations should be transferred or slipped into a family book, a book that traditionally was intended to record genealogical information of dead and living relatives. To create a comprehensive profile of the relative's character, recorders were asked to specify any ailment afflicting the relative. This was best achieved by listing the

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<sup>72</sup> "Du, Deine Familie, Dein Volk," BArch R1509/1103, bl. 7-8.

condition, the doctor who diagnosed it, and also including personal testimony from relatives who experienced the condition first-hand. Preferably, notes in the family book were to be legible, neatly laid out, and for every new topic discussed, a clear heading. As the following example illustrates: ‘characterising account from the father’s childhood as a report by Uncle Eduard.’ The pamphlet tried hard to emphasise the unique position of every German, every family member. By sheer proximity and the fact that *you* share the same hereditary genes qualifies *you* to both monitor and make ‘flawless observations’ of the family. From here, individuals were encouraged to hand over the book to a local genealogist who, in turn, would evaluate it and decide whether it was worth further attention.<sup>73</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether Germans accepted the advice given at local exhibitions or voluntarily handed over family books to genealogists for analysis. What is clear, however, is that the state through its responsible offices did what it could to encourage Germans to be self-reliant and knowledgeable. The exhibitions discussed above offered alternative routes to further family history. The example of the porcelain bowl, providing information otherwise difficult to locate, is evidence of this. Yet, for all the intention of alleviating pressures felt by many Germans, exhibitions attempted to ascribe turning informant to the list of what constituted a responsible citizen. Sons and daughters were encouraged to watch their parents (and vice versa), looking for disabilities, and (ideally) pass this information over to the Nazi authorities. Yet, to repeat the findings of Michelle Mouton, many Germans were unwilling to handover information that would bring themselves, their families or spouses to the attention of the authorities. Thus, many Germans did what they had to to meet the bare minimum requirements of the Nuremberg laws (the standard proof) so that they could return to some form of normality. Even so, many Germans struggled with the guideline and procedures to engage effectively with professional institutions. This is why, again and again, the pamphlet encouraged Germans to return and look at the exhibits once more – ‘have you forgotten something, come back. We are expecting you’:

There will hardly be a national comrade who when walking through the exhibition does not ask the question: What I have seen is beautiful, but who helps me? Dear national comrade, walk on to the next room and you find yourself in the information centre. The staff here will answer any question with free and expert advice, they will show you the way to further research, also show you the books in which you can already find some information about your family and your ancestors and give you the names of researchers who will

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, bl. 8



be able to help you with your work. Use the small subject library, which is there and don't forget to take prospects and sample issues home with you. And – have you forgotten something, come back. We are expecting you.<sup>74</sup>

The Nazis maintained their effort to promote Jews as a hereditary threat throughout the course of 1937. On 8 November 1937 the exhibition *Der Ewige Jude* or the 'Eternal Jew' was opened in Library of the German Museum, in Munich.<sup>75</sup> Whilst there, the exhibition attracted 412,300 visitors, approximately 5,000 per day, until its closure on 31 January 1938.<sup>76</sup> The exhibits on display corresponded with Nazi ideals of 'Jewishness.' Jews were portrayed as having large 'hooked noses,' 'yellowish skin' and suffering from obesity – the latter a reference to their questionable, greedy character. Even with international attention focused on this event, the Nazis did not baulk at giving prominence to the Nuremberg laws nor their intention to segregate Jews and non-Jews as a part of a programme to improve the health of Germans. One report even suggests that Nazis expected exhibits explaining the Nuremberg laws to be well-received on account of 'the great interest shown abroad in their anti-Semitic measures.'<sup>77</sup> Towards the end of the year the 'Eternal Jew' moved to Vienna and was on view at the Northwest Station, the city's largest hall. By this time, Austria was fully incorporated into a Greater Germany and the exhibits explaining the Nuremberg laws were, far from being purely academic for visitors, now instructional of the changes taking place around them.

The Anschluss with Austria in March 1938 would bring about a period of intense physical violence and destruction of Jewish homes and businesses. The level of hatred directed towards the Austrian Jewish minority would far exceed anything witnessed in Germany. For a number of years, as Bruce Pauley has pointed out, the Austrian Nazi party had been left frustrated 'that their comrades in Germany were actually doing something about the "Jewish problem,"' whereas Austrian anti-Semites had seldom done anything except talk.'<sup>78</sup> Now with Austria under Nazi control, this 'frustration' led to appalling scenes. In many cases victims were forced to picket Jewish owned shops. At one particular shop in Vienna it was reported that a 'girl holding one of the notices was forced to kneel, stand up, and kneel again continuously while a crowd looked on.'<sup>79</sup> More crucially for anti-Semites,

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, bl. 8.

<sup>75</sup> Munich was the first of a three venue tour. The other venues included Vienna and Berlin

<sup>76</sup> "Der ewige Jude: The "Eternal Jew" or the "Wandering Jew,"" Holocaust Education and Archive Research Team, <<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/holoprelude/derewigejude.html>> [accessed 21 June 2013].

<sup>77</sup> "Anti-Semitism in Germany," *Observer*, 7 November 1937, p. 14.

<sup>78</sup> Bruce F. Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution: A History of Austrian Anti-Semitism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 202-203.

<sup>79</sup> "Jewish Shops Boycotted," *Guardian*, 25 April 1938, p. 6.

however, was that with Nazi rule a programme of racial policies that would serve to isolate and persecute the country's Jews could now be implemented.

## Chapter five: Expanding and intensifying anti-Semitic persecution.

On 12 March 1938, German troops marched into Austria, and on the next day it was incorporated as a province into the Third Reich. As well as territorial gain, the Anschluss with Austria added a further 200,000 Jews into the state, and thus more than ‘balanced out’ the 128,000 Jews who had already emigrated from Germany by the end of 1937.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately, the Reich government began laying the legal foundations to eliminate Jews from Austria’s social and economic life. On 15 March, Jews employed in the civil service, military or law professions were dismissed.<sup>2</sup> On 26 March, Hermann Goering, commissioner of the Four Year Plan, announced that the capital would be *Judenrein*, or cleared of Jews, within four years.<sup>3</sup> But even he, along with Josef Bürckel, the newly installed Reich Governor of Austria, could not anticipate the vigorousness of racial policy, as well as its dissemination across society. Following the example set by the civil service, businesses and industries began the process of dismissing Jewish employees. It soon became clear, however, that dismissing undesirable categories *en masse*, and with such speed, threatened the fragile Austrian economy. In an attempt to regulate wholesale dismissals, a statement was released by the Austrian Nazi party, under the leadership of Josef Bürckel, informing Jews working in Austrian industry and business that their positions was currently being reviewed: ‘A decision will be made in the near future and published.’ Soon after, cases emerged of ‘Jewish employees having notices of dismissal rescinded for a period of one month.’<sup>4</sup> Dismissal on grounds of Jewish ancestry would not become official policy until July, and yet, in March, racial checks were already having a considerable – not to mention, detrimental - impact on Jewish lives.

Following the Anschluss of Austria, a propaganda campaign was initiated to promote a greater public awareness of Nazi racial policies. At the forefront of this campaign was the *Wiener Gesellschaft für Rassenpflege*, or Viennese Society for Racial Hygiene. Founded in 1924, the society made little effort to conceal its close connection with the Office of Racial Policy, headed by Walter Gross, stating in March 1938 that ‘several members of our

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<sup>1</sup> Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Bukey, *Jews and Inter-marriage*, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> "The Jews of Austria," *The Guardian*, 16 June 1939, p. 11 and Bukey, *Jews and Inter-marriage*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> "Purge of Nazi Administrators in Austria," *The Guardian*, 4 July 1938, p. 11.

committee were active' in the department.<sup>5</sup> After March, the society helped organise lectures, among other events, to inform Austrians of the hereditary dangers society faced. The public could hear talks offering an 'Introduction to Racialism' and 'Basics of Heredity,' as well as more advanced topics such as 'Is Racial Mixing detrimental?,' 'Hereditary Diseases, Heredity and Crime,' and 'Racial Hygienic Marital Counseling.'<sup>6</sup> Dr. Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer was the first scientist invited to deliver a lecture at the University of Vienna following the Anschluss.<sup>7</sup> Recall that von Verschuer had, less than a year prior, delivered a talk in which he advocated the separation of Jews and non-Jews due to the former group's propensity for certain diseases. His latest lecture in April 1938 was on the topic of 'People's Health and Hereditary.' Other important figures travelling to Vienna at this time included Ernst Rüdin, director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Psychiatry in Munich, who delivered a talk on sterilisation. Like Verschuer, Rüdin 'was one of many German medical experts specifically sent with the intention of subsuming Vienna into the New Germany.'<sup>8</sup>

These lectures were part of a much larger effort to prepare and to justify impending racial policies. By this time, Austrians were receiving instructions in how to assemble their own personal archives as a precondition to determining their own race and hereditary risk. *Der Stürmer*, shown 'in bright red cases at street corners' around the capital, informed readers that, 'if unmarried there are six and if married 12 documents which...must [be] produce[d] to prove the purity of their blood.'<sup>9</sup> A mere six weeks after this issue, the Genealogical Office in Berlin furnished government departments in Austria with guidelines (on 7 May) to begin the process of proving the race of its employees.<sup>10</sup> The advice given to officials making the proof were much the same as those circulating in Germany. Along with producing their own birth certificates, employees were required to prepare the birth, death and marriage records of their parents and grandparents. Again, and as witnessed in

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<sup>5</sup> Wolfgang Neugebauer, "Racial Hygiene in Vienna 1938," *wiener klinische wochenschrift* (1998), <[http://www.doew.at/cms/download/50k36/en\\_wn\\_racial\\_hygiene.pdf](http://www.doew.at/cms/download/50k36/en_wn_racial_hygiene.pdf)> [accessed 29 June 2013], p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Weindling, "A City Regenerated: Eugenics, Race, and Welfare in Interwar Vienna," in *Interwar Vienna: Culture between Tradition and Modernity*, ed. Deborah Holmes and Lisa Silverman (Rochester: Camden House, 2009), p. 104. and Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 21. Weindling writes that the *Wiener Gesellschaft für Rassenpflege* became a component of the *Wiener Gesellschaft für Rassenpflege, Ortsgesellschaft der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* (Vienna Society of the German Society for Racial Hygiene). This development, he observes, led to a 'marked loss of a distinctively Austrian brand of eugenics.'

<sup>9</sup> "Curb on Vienna Plunderers," *The Times*, 21 March 1938, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Bukey, *Jews and Inter-marriage*, p. 88.

Germany, this entailed tracking down, corresponding with or visiting local civil registries, churches and archives.

On 20 May 1938 the Nuremberg Laws were enacted in Austria.<sup>11</sup> Now fully incorporated into a Greater Germany, Austrians were obliged to determine whether they were of Aryan, *Mischlinge* first degree, *Mischlinge* second degree or full-Jew. To hold on to a position as a journalist, attorney, editor, doctor and engineer required providing documentary proof that one was completely free of Jewish blood.<sup>12</sup> Less than two weeks later, on 31 May, Austrian civil servants found themselves in a similar position, although this merely formalised the order of 7 May for employees to begin researching their family trees. The Decree for the Reorganisation of the Austrian Civil Service stated that employees who were Jewish, a *Mischling*, or had a Jewish spouse were to be forcibly retired. Certain exemptions to this rule were made, however. If a *Mischling* official had been enlisted in the army on 1 August 1914, had fought for Austria-Hungary in the First World War (or her allies) or had a father, son or husband killed in action, they could retain their position.<sup>13</sup> In reality, however, it mattered very little whether an employee had demonstrated bravery or suffered loss on the battlefield. In June, Hitler instructed Wilhelm Frick, Minister of the Interior, to remove *Mischlinge* veterans from the service as well as those who had lost a relative or spouse.<sup>14</sup> Even officials who were Aryan themselves but married to Jews were dismissed.<sup>15</sup> The consequence of these purges was that the Decree for the Reorganisation of the Austrian Civil Service was even more discriminatory towards employees with Jewish blood than the Civil Service Law of January 1937. In theory, the Civil Service Law of 1937 allowed a civil servant to marry a *Mischling*, albeit after seeking 'special permission' from Rudolf

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<sup>11</sup> Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution*, p. 290.

<sup>12</sup> Bukey, *Jews and Intermarriage*, p. 25. The issue of ancestral research in Austria also intrigued the foreign press. On 27 March 1938, for example, under the headline 'Work for British Genealogists,' the *Observer* published an article anticipating the impact racial research would have in Britain in the coming months. 'Austria's union with Germany is likely to have one curious effect in this country,' it observed. 'Genealogists will have more work to do. Research among family and public records will increase. As Nazi rule is made more complete, Austrians will have to conform to German race laws. Those, for instance, who wish passports will have to prove their Aryan ancestry. It is not known how many Austrians have had English family connections during the last hundred and fifty years, but before the World War a large number, particularly of Viennese, worked in this country. Out of a population of seven million it is probable that several thousand have had English connections.' It added: 'Search for British ancestors was recently given to the police by a German women as her reason for residence in this country.' "Race Laws in Austria," *Observer*, 27 March 1938, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Noakes, "The development of Nazi policy," pp. 325

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 325

<sup>15</sup> Warburg, *Six Years of Hitler*, p. 22.

Hess, Hitler's deputy. As Jeremy Noakes observes however, 'Such dispensations were virtually impossible to obtain.'<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime the Nazis took large steps to control unworthy persons. To this end, an Reich Office for Kinship Research, under the directorship of a professional genealogist from Berlin, Arthur Schultze-Naumburg, was established in Vienna on 1 June.<sup>17</sup> Similar to the twenty-two regional branches distributed throughout Germany, this office had the function of issuing certificates of ancestral proof and determining the racial origins of suspected Jews on behalf of an employer or institution.<sup>18</sup> The incorporation of Austria also prompted Hitler to order Franz Gürtner, the Justice Minister, to reform existing divorce laws, owing to the fact that Austria had no standard law governing divorce; rather each church decided on its own approach.<sup>19</sup> The resulting Marriage Law for Greater Germany was enacted on 6 July. This latest legislation was intended to end marriages that had become valueless to the state and the couples concerned. The new law provided grounds for divorce if a spouse was at fault and this term covered cases where a spouse had committed adultery or had proved unwilling to have sexual intercourse with the intention of becoming pregnant.<sup>20</sup> More damaging, and because the Nuremberg laws had prohibited sexual relations between Jews and Aryans, couples engaged in mixed relationships were now eligible for divorce.<sup>21</sup> In particular, paragraphs 33-39 allowed a partner to appeal for a repeal of a marriage on the grounds that, at the time of marriage, they had failed to grasp fully the significance of their spouse's 'racial differences.'<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that the Nuremberg laws did not dissolve mixed marriages contracted before September 1935. This law therefore should be viewed as an attempt by the regime to assert some form of control in the sphere of marriages beyond their original scope of influence. The Nazis hoped that this new law, in conjunction with laws requiring proof of racial acceptability and intimidation of couples in mixed relationships, would eventually lead to the complete separation of Aryans and non-Aryans.

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<sup>16</sup> Noakes, "The development of Nazi policy," pp. 324.

<sup>17</sup> Bukey, *Jews and Intermarriage*, p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pp. 24-25 and "Rheinisches Landessippenamt," 12 November 1942, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr 1182, bl. 38.

<sup>19</sup> Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>20</sup> Magdalene Schoch, "Divorce Law and Practice under National Socialism in Germany," *Iowa Law Review* 28, no. 2 (1943),  
<[http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/ilr28&div=20&g\\_sent=1&collection=journals](http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/ilr28&div=20&g_sent=1&collection=journals)>  
[accessed 3 May 2013], p. 238.

<sup>21</sup> Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation*, p. 88.

<sup>22</sup> Bukey, *Jews and Intermarriage*, p. 90.

In the background of these developments problems still persisted in determining who was racially acceptable. The underlying cause derived from the wording of the Nuremberg Laws which defined acceptability in terms of 'German or related blood.'<sup>23</sup> Eric Ehrenreich, for example, observes that the racial status of Hungarians was constantly in a state of flux during the Nazi era. To illustrate his point, Ehrenreich details one case where a Hungarian applied for German citizenship, but during the application process the Ministry of the Interior noted that all Hungarians were non-Aryan.<sup>24</sup> This affirmation would have undoubtedly put the candidate's application in serious jeopardy. Such a statement conflicted with experts on racial laws, such as Dr. Bernard Lösener, an official of the Ministry of the Interior and 'author of an official commentary' on the Nuremberg laws. In his assessment, most Hungarians were of Aryan blood. Still, the Ministry of the Interior decided that it would be prudent for responsible officials to determine the status of Hungarians on a case by case basis.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast to Hungarians, there was a common presumption of racial acceptability in relation to individuals of British, Dutch, Scandinavian and French descent living in Greater Germany.<sup>26</sup> Even so, spouses of foreign descent were expected to go through the process of documenting their race. In line with recent amendments to the Civil Service Law of 26 January 1937, which required state employees and their spouses to document their ancestry, and also because more jobs began applying pressure for Aryans workers to disclose the ancestry of their partners, spouses began requesting certificates of births, deaths and marriages from their native land. One letter to the *Guardian*, dated 23 June, noted the impact the racial laws had on the spouses of British descent: [O]ne hears of British people, married to Germans, making frantic appeals to this country to send them the necessary certificates proving them to be of true "Aryan" descent....If these can be produced, "Aryan" blood is supposed to flow and suppliants are granted an Aryan [status].'<sup>27</sup> The 'frantic appeals' to overseas churches and registries should not be overstated. While the threat of investigation by the Genealogical Office certainly did loom over foreigners, especially in cases where they did have difficulty obtaining the required

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<sup>23</sup> Jews were excluded from this definition; Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, pp. 10-11 and p. 61.

<sup>26</sup> See Donald L Niewyk and Francis R Nicosia, *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press 2000), p. 215.

<sup>27</sup> The article continued: 'Germans have, of course, always laid more stress on christening and confirmation than in this country. Hence the search for baptism certificates in particular. Obviously this complicates the process of being "Aryan," because birth certificates can be traced, but baptisms may have taken place anywhere, and there is often no clue to those which took place a great many years ago. Much money and time is thus being spent upon a task which is very likely to prove in vain, and by those who can ill afford to do so.' "Genealogy Gone Mad," *Guardian*, 23 June 1938, p. 8.

certificates, it only seemed likely to proceed if ‘there was reason to doubt’ the spouse was not of ‘German or related blood.’<sup>28</sup> If there was no reason to doubt, a certificate would be issued stating that the holder was of German or related blood.<sup>29</sup> Alternatively, if grounds for reasonable doubt existed, or if the certificates passed to them raised further questions, experts could attempt to retrieve ‘certificates going further back than the grandparents.’ But evidence suggested that this level of investigation was reserved not for spouses of foreign blood, but for potential candidates to the *Schutzstaffel*, or SS, who had to demonstrate Aryan ancestry back to 1800.<sup>30</sup>

The Anschluss with Austria had an escalating effect on the persecution of Jews of Greater Germany. Particularly in Vienna, opportunists exploited the chaos of the Nazi takeover to Aryanise, or appropriate, Jewish businesses. At the same time, countless shops and homes were plundered and destroyed, while out on the streets Jews fell victim to open violence and humiliation. Events were indeed close to spiralling out of control. To impose some semblance of order, the Nazi party created the role of ‘commissar.’ Their remit was to bureaucratised the appropriation of Jewish businesses, with the added aim of minimising and eventually eradicating incidences of physical damage to property.<sup>31</sup> Even with measures in place to prevent Austrians taking over Jewish business at random, violent attacks against the Jews continued to remain a feature of everyday life. 3,800 Jews in Burgenland were indiscriminately rounded up and taken to the Hungarian border to be expelled. In May, 2,000 Jews were arrested and sent to Dachau.<sup>32</sup> In Vienna, Jews were forced to sweep the streets. Jewish-owned businesses routinely had their windows smashed, while others had the word ‘Jew’ written in large yellow paint on the shop front.<sup>33</sup> The success of ‘commissars’ – by November the Nazis in Austria had planned the liquidation of 14,000 Jewish business as well as the sale of 3,000 more<sup>34</sup> – coupled with ongoing periodic outbursts of anti-Semitic violence in both Germany and Austria were significant in shaping and influencing anti-Semitic policy in the coming weeks and months.<sup>35</sup> The Reich government viewed the implementation of further anti-Jewish

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<sup>28</sup> “Auszug aus dem Preußischen Besoldungsblatt Ausgabe B vom 13 Dezember 1938 Nr.38 Seite 415,” 13 Dezember 1938, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 127.

<sup>29</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 64.

<sup>30</sup> “Auszug aus dem Preußischen Besoldungsblatt,” 13 Dezember 1938, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1181, bl. 127.

<sup>31</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 99.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 99.

<sup>33</sup> “Life in Vienna under the Nazis,” *Guardian*, 30 May 1938, p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Overy, *Goering: Hitler’s Iron Knight* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), p. 62.

<sup>35</sup> Martin Dean, *Robbing the Jews: The Confiscation of Jewish Property in the Holocaust, 1933 – 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 108.



legislation as the answer to controlling the violent excesses and compelling Jews to emigrate.

Thus, daily life now became far more precarious for the Jewish inhabitants of Germany. On 15 July, the Reich government announced that all Jewish doctors would have their licences revoked on 1 October.<sup>36</sup> On 23 July, a decree was issued by the Ministry of the Interior that required Jews to pick up new identity cards at local police stations. These cards had a disproportionately large 'J' on the cover, along with the holder's photograph and finger prints. Holders were ordered to present their card when asked by an official.<sup>37</sup> Making life more unbearable was the fact that Jews faced becoming victims of violence or humiliation at any moment. Anti-Jewish riots were a standout feature of the summer of 1938. One reason for this was the so-called 'May Crisis' when the prospect of war seemed possible over the government's intention to annex the Sudeten Lands from Czechoslovakia.<sup>38</sup> Nazi activists were worried about engaging in a war abroad, especially when so many Jews – 'internal enemies' – lived under Nazi rule. In addition to symbols such as 'J' being painted on Jewish-owned homes and businesses, Jews were openly attacked on the street. In one of the more dramatic moments of the summer, the main synagogue in Munich was levelled and the grounds converted into a parking lot. The synagogue of Dortmund was set alight.<sup>39</sup> The fluctuation in thoughtless destruction in the summer of 1938, which had its beginning point in Austria, was to lead to fresh worries from civil servants and Nazi officials about the fate of genealogical records throughout Greater Germany.

It quickly became clear, however, that the combination of violence and destruction, which from the perspective of the Nazis had some usefulness in that they encouraged Jews to emigrate, also had some unforeseen consequences. Instances of grave stones, identified as crucial in ancestral research, being pulled down, desecrated or removed from the burial site completely had been reported as early as May 1937. In Bodenheim, for example, an old Jewish cemetery situated not far from the village, had its outer stone wall removed. The newspaper documenting the destruction added that tombstones had already been removed, thereby creating the necessary conditions to transform it back into a field.<sup>40</sup> But during the

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<sup>36</sup> Eduard Seidler, *Jüdische Kinderärzte 1933-1945: Entrechtet, Geflohen, Ermordet - Jewish Pediatricians: Victims of Persecutions 1933 - 1945* (Basel: Karger Publishers 2007), p. 103.

<sup>37</sup> Bukey, *Jews and Intermarriage*, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Alan E. Steinweis, *Kristallnacht 1938* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Arno J. Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken? The "Final Solution" In History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), p. 165.

<sup>40</sup> "German Jewish Cemetery Transformed into a Field," *The Jewish Echo*, 21 May 1937, p.11.

course of disturbances of summer 1938 gravestones were singled out for destruction, as Ian Kershaw has observed: ‘Far more than had been the case in the earlier antisemitic [sic] waves, attention of Party activists increasingly focused on...Jewish cemeteries, which were repeatedly vandalized.’<sup>41</sup> The unpredictable nature of destruction interfered with wider plans to collect and preserve sources that could help enforce racial policies. In some areas, gravestones were ‘the only source’ for documenting ‘the older kin history of the Jewish population’:

For the city of Hanover, for example, the indispensable work “Genealogical studies of the old Jewish families of Hanover” (Berlin 1913) by Rabbi Gronemanis, and the most important source for [tracing the biological] connections and spread of Jews throughout the state capital, was written almost exclusively using grave stones from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>42</sup>

Amid these events, some rural district councils were willing to take advantage of Jewish emigration caused by an increase in violent disturbances and reduced economic opportunities to seize registers of births, deaths and marriages. The council office of Erlangen (*Bezirkamt Erlangen*), a small city in Franconia, was given permission by the state authorities to obtain registers of marriage – they detailed marriages before 1876 – stored in ‘the Israelite cultural communities.’ The council office had cited a ‘public interest in the clarification of kin relations’ and the diminishing Jewish presence in the area as justification for appropriation.<sup>43</sup> Although the council was given the go-ahead by the state authorities to transfer registers to a central location for safe-keeping, it is unclear whether the plan came to actual fruition. What this example illustrates, however, is that the pretext to obtain records was exercised in the months before Kristallnacht (to be discussed below), and at a time when the position of the Jews in Greater Germany was quickly deteriorating.

Parallel to the anti-Semitic riots there existed a persistent pettiness by state agencies and institutions involved in the administration of the ancestral proof to persecute both issuers and holders of forged certificates. The increasing likelihood of being assaulted, of having homes and businesses looted and destroyed, and having little or no economic stability, led Jews to pursue various paths to protect themselves and their families. Many, as already briefly noted, chose to emigrate. In Vienna alone, approximately 46,000 Jews fled between

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<sup>41</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1938: Nemesis* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), p.131.

<sup>42</sup> The report noted that amid all the destruction one Jewish cemetery in particular, in Hameln-Pyrmont, Lower Saxony, was secured by an SA Oberführer, Dr. Lambrecht. The report declared that any Jewish graves which had remained intact should be preserved and universally studied. “Verblieb der Jüdischen Personenstandsregister,” 9 Dezember 1938, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 230.

<sup>43</sup> Personenstandsregister der israelitischen Kultusgemeinden,” 10 Mai 1939, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 196-197.

March and August 1938.<sup>44</sup> Others sought out forged baptismal certificates in an effort to conceal their non-Aryan background. High-ranking Nazi officials, in particular Adolf Eichmann, moved quickly to close this loophole.<sup>45</sup> Over a period of three months, beginning in August, several arrests were made of church and civil officials. One report, for example, detailed 'that besides Mr. Frederick Richter, the vergers of the Anglican Church in Vienna (who is a British subject of Austrian birth), 18 sextons, registrars, and other officials of various Roman Catholic churches in Vienna have been arrested during the past three months on charges of forging or falsification of baptismal certificates for Jews.'<sup>46</sup> Of course, the persecution and intimidation of these groups was nothing new under the Nazi regime. Recall that as early as July 1935, months before the Nuremberg Laws, Wilhelm Frick, Minister of the Interior, had encouraged registrars not to publish notices of marriages between Jews and non-Jews. Moreover, they were to inform couples in mixed-relationships, under threat of having their own family tree investigated, why going ahead with a wedding ceremony was not in the family's own or the state's interests.<sup>47</sup> By 1938, the regime was demonstrably willing to go much further and imprison officials who subverted racial laws by falsifying genealogical information.

The ongoing effort to reduce and ultimately eliminate cases of fraud was strengthened by vigilant officials who were willing to inform the Secret State Police (or Gestapo) when falsified documents surfaced. When one Gustav Naumann presented his birth certificate to a Stettin registry office, the responsible official immediately became concerned. The office, whose accusations are detailed in a report written by an official of the state archive, asserted that Gustav had attempted to conceal his religion by inserting the word 'Protestant' rather than 'Jewish' on the certificate. The office asked that the archive check his religion against the appropriate entry in the *Judenregister*, or Register of Jews, which was in the archive's possession. Gustav was indeed of Jewish religion and this information was duly relayed back to the registry. Upon questioning, Gustav seems to have alleged that any change to the religion field stemmed from the actions of an archive official: 'On the following day two officers from the Gestapo came to [the archive] to find out more about the person who falsified [the] documents.' Naumann could not recall the official's name and also claimed he had paid sixty pfennigs for the registry extract. 'We have questioned the civil servants and the employees of our state archive and found Naumann's statement

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<sup>44</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 106.

<sup>45</sup> George E. Berkley, *Vienna and Its Jews: The Tragedy of Success: 1880s - 1990s* (Cambridge: Abt Books, 1988), p. 325.

<sup>46</sup> "Threats to Vienna Jews," *The Times*, 7 October 1938, p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 57 and Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 91.

to be false. This means Naumann not only accused a member of the state archive of falsifying documents but also of embezzling money.’ The fee, it was claimed, did not appear in the account books.<sup>48</sup> Informants played an important role in upholding the racial laws.

In order to make the identification of Jews all the more clear to German officials Jews were ordered on 17 August to incorporate the middle name of ‘Sara’ or ‘Israel’ in line with the terms of the family names law (*Gesetz über die Änderung von Familien- und Vornamen*); these names were to be adopted no later than 1 January 1939.<sup>49</sup> This latest law required Jews taking an active role in their own persecution. Jews were instructed ‘to give written notice within a month from the date after which he is required to use the additional given name’ to ‘the registrar with whom his birth and his marriage are recorded, and to the local police authorities in his place of residence.’<sup>50</sup> Those affected were equally obligated to provide their additional name when dealing with German officials. Those who knowingly refused to follow these orders faced a possible prison sentence and/or a fine.<sup>51</sup> The combination of identity cards and notifying responsible officials of name changes were a prelude to more aggressive anti-Semitic measures in the future, in particular the requirement to wear the Star of David. In the meantime, however, this latest decree was creating more immediate problems for some. Whether wrongly instructed or being overcautious to avoid punishment, some Jews were providing details of name changes to institutions not specified on the decree. It has been revealed that several state archives had received requests from Jews asking them to update the registers of marriages (before 1874) in their possession. Sending letters of this nature would have required Jews to spend money they could scarcely afford. Archivists nonetheless were in a position to grant Jews their requests, as long as they added a note to the register and next to the entry, which stated: ‘Following...[the] decree on the execution of the law on the change of family and forenames of 17 August 1938 the mentioned (*person*) has...adopted the additional forename of Israel (Sara) with effect from 1 January 1939.’<sup>52</sup> Regardless of the reasons, a number of Jews were duplicating personal information which ‘would further ensure his

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<sup>48</sup> “Beim hiesigen Staatsarchiv hat sich am 19.und 20.d.mts. ein bedenklicher Zwischenfall ereignet, über den ich im Folgenden berichte,” 29 Oktober 1938, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1152,bl. 210.

<sup>49</sup> “Auszug. Registrierung der Annahme zusätzlicher Vornamen durch Juden in den in staatlichen Archiven befindlichen Judenregistern aus der Zeit vor 1874,” 4 Februar 1939, bl.246, GStA, I HA Rep.178, Nr 1152, bl. 246.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *A Holocaust Reader* (New York: Behrman House 1976), p. 52.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

<sup>52</sup> “Auszug,” 4 Februar 1939, GStA, I Rep.178, Nr. 1152, bl. 246.

bureaucratic identification.’<sup>53</sup> These names, as Marion Kaplan has observed, were inserted into phone books, ‘announcing a person’s racial status to anyone who cared to look.’<sup>54</sup>

On 20 August the Central Office for Jewish Emigration was established in the Rothschild’s mansion in Vienna. After months of planning and preparation, Adolf Eichmann, a *Untersturmführer* (or second lieutenant) in the SS, now had a sufficient base on which to develop and maintain a deportation programme.<sup>55</sup> Weeks earlier, on 19 July 1938, Eichmann had seized control of the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde* (Jewish Religious Community of Vienna, or IKG) located in Seitenstettengasse. Among the many documents seized were existing membership lists, which furnished Eichmann’s office with background information about Jewish individuals, such as name, address and profession.<sup>56</sup> The central office was designed, as Marion Kaplan has observed, to be a ‘one-stop’ shop, a system in which Jews entered the office as owners of apartments and furnishings, businesses and bank accounts holders and left the other end with a passport.<sup>57</sup> Part of the emigration process entailed completing a questionnaire, or *Fragebogen*. In it, applicants were required to disclose background information such as their name, date and place of birth, address, country of birth and profession. Information on relatives was also required.<sup>58</sup> This information was then kept on a card-file system. In a letter to the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Police, or SD), headquarters in Berlin Eichmann declared that 350 applicants were being processed daily – a figure that would be increased to between 600 and 700 following Kristallnacht.<sup>59</sup> The establishment of this office was an important development in anti-Semitic persecution. As we will see, its success in fast-tracking the emigration process for Austrian Jews served as a pretext to the establishment of a similar institution in Berlin in early 1939: the Central Office for Jewish Emigration. Captured registers of births, deaths and marriages from Jewish communities during Kristallnacht in November 1938 were used to facilitate fast-track emigration; available registers were used to confirm biographical information on identity cards and emigration papers belonging to Jews.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Aly and Roth, *The Nazi Census*, p. 83.

<sup>54</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p. 146.

<sup>55</sup> Anatol Steck, "The Archives of the Jewish Community of Vienna: A Cooperative Microfilming Project to Preserve Holocaust-Relevant Records," *Stammbaum: The Journal of German-Jewish Genealogical Research* 24, no. Winter (2004), <[http://digital.cjh.org/exlibris/dtl/d3\\_1/apache\\_media/L2V4bGlicmlzL2R0bC9kM18xL2FwYWNoZV9tZWRpYS8yNDIyMDg=.pdf](http://digital.cjh.org/exlibris/dtl/d3_1/apache_media/L2V4bGlicmlzL2R0bC9kM18xL2FwYWNoZV9tZWRpYS8yNDIyMDg=.pdf)> [accessed 23 June 2013], p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p. 131.

<sup>58</sup> Steck, "The Archives of the Jewish Community," pp. 4-9 and Dean, *Robbing the Jews*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>59</sup> Melissa Jane Taylor, "Experts in Misery"? *American Consuls in Austria, Jewish Refugees and Restrictionist Immigration Policy, 1938-1941* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest, 2006), p. 183.

<sup>60</sup> Schulle, "Oranienburger Strasse 28-31," p. 367.

Rather than attempting to dispute their racial status, many Jews were eager to demonstrate their Jewish ancestry in order to flee their persecutors.

Attacks on Jews and Jewish-owned property persisted into the autumn despite high profile decrees and orders intended to control such violence and to bureaucratised the persecution of the Jews. In October, the Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick, issued a further decree stating that all passports owned by Jews were invalid. They had to be handed over to local authorities where they had a disproportionately large 'J' stamped on them. Jews were only allowed them back if they intended to emigrate.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, violence towards Jews reached a new level. In the course of one week, 14-21 October, Nazi activists and anti-Semites entered Jewish homes and businesses, destroying interiors, and assaulting their owners.<sup>62</sup> On the first night of these 'demonstrations,' the news agency Reuters observed that youths marched 'through the streets smashing the windows of Jewish flats and beating everyone they met.'<sup>63</sup> At least twenty synagogues were targeted in this month alone, and were either vandalised, torched or both.<sup>64</sup> The uncontrolled violence and destruction was at odds with the state's aim to collect and preserve records and objects such as tombstones that would enhance the search for Jews. Institutions involved in the administration of ancestral proof were increasingly worried about the safety of records, particularly registers stored in synagogues. One official alluded to the negative impact this period of intense anti-Semitism had 'for the determination of kin relations,' and remarked at a later date how action to secure registers should have been carried out long before the excesses of Kristallnacht in November.<sup>65</sup>

Fear of losing records through senseless acts however, far from diminishing, would intensify in November. On the morning of 6 November Herschel Grynszpan, a 17 year-old Polish Jew living in Paris proceeded to the German Embassy where he shot the Third Secretary Ernst vom Rath twice. Grynszpan had been angered about an event which took place weeks earlier, on 1 October, when 12,000 Polish-Jews were forcibly expelled from Germany.<sup>66</sup> This act of retribution would have devastating consequences for the Jews of Greater Germany, both in terms of physical violence and the implementation of further, and far harsher anti-Semitic policies. In the period that followed the Nazi regime attempted

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<sup>61</sup> Warburg, *Six Years of Hitler*, p. 123.

<sup>62</sup> Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler's Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era 1938 - 1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p.144.

<sup>63</sup> "Jews Attacked in Vienna," *Guardian*, 15 October 1938, p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, p. 144.

<sup>65</sup> "Verbleib der Jüdischen Personenstandsregister," 9 dezember 1938, GStA, I Rep.178, Nr. 1152, bl. 230

<sup>66</sup> Gilbert, *Kristallnacht*, pp. 23-25.

to instil fear into the Jewish population, but their inability to balance destruction and appropriation compromised their ability to ‘secure’ and ‘protect’ every record of genealogical value.

## Kristallnacht

On the night of 9 November 1938 onlookers watched with a ‘mixture of astonishment, amusement, and disapproval’ as marchers, some holding axes, advanced along the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin shouting ‘Germany Awake’ and ‘Perish Judah’.<sup>67</sup> It was the early hours of Thursday morning, and news had filtered through ten hours previously that the Third Secretary at the German Embassy, Ernst vom Rath, had died from his wounds.<sup>68</sup> The ensuing events, which came to be known as Kristallnacht, had disastrous consequences for Jews and records held in synagogues, Jewish cultural centres and other Jewish institutions.<sup>69</sup> Civil servants and racial experts believed records stored in Jewish communities would help fill in the gaps of countless family trees. This view led Reinhard Heydrich, head of the SD, to send a telegram to all state police offices across Germany ordering them to ‘secure’ archival records from synagogues in their area while the ‘demonstrations’ were still in progress.<sup>70</sup> Many high-ranking Nazi officials, Heydrich included, and archivists were surprised by the scale of destruction. The inability to control the mob and, in some instances, appropriate archives prior to the destruction of synagogues was viewed as ‘regrettable’ and ‘wholly avoidable.’<sup>71</sup>

The death of vom Rath on 9 November offered the Nazi leadership the perfect pretext under which to appropriate registers of births, deaths and marriages, among other records, from Jewish communities across Germany. Before the pogrom, a worry existed that the state had no legal basis for confiscating registers ‘against the will’ of the Jewish community.<sup>72</sup> Kristallnacht would be used as a cover to side step this issue. Heydrich was in Munich, marking the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch at the City Hall, when he came to learn of Vom Rath’s death – it was announced during the course of the event. Soon after, Heydrich

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<sup>67</sup> "Nazi Attacks on Jews," *The Times*, 11 November 1938, p. 14.

<sup>68</sup> Gilbert, *Kristallnacht*, p. 27.

<sup>69</sup> "Jüdisches Archivgut," 15 April 1939, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 82.

<sup>70</sup> Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, p. 127.

<sup>71</sup> "Staatsarchiv," 10 November 1938, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 215.

<sup>72</sup> "Personenstandsregister der israelitischen Kultusgemeinden," 10 Mai 1938, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 196.

arrived back at his hotel, the *Vier Jahreszeiten*, to begin issuing instructions.<sup>73</sup> The orders sent to the Gestapo chief, Heinrich Müller, in Berlin were short and to the point. The police were informed to expect 'actions' against synagogues, Jewish businesses and homes over the course of the night.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, they were to constrain 'protestors' only insofar as their actions threatened other Germans or German property. 'Demonstrators' were permitted to devastate Jewish properties and institutions. However, under no circumstances were they to loot them. Jews and foreigners were not to be harmed. Heydrich's lack of concern for the welfare of synagogues did not extend to archives contained within them. Police were to be deployed immediately to synagogues and prepare their archives for removal. After the archives had been confiscated they were to be immediately handed over to local SD offices.<sup>75</sup>

The attempt to 'secure' important archival documents from synagogues faced serious obstacles during the course of the pogrom. Of particular concern to Heydrich was the fact that demonstrations were not following the intended path. Jews, despite orders not to be physically assaulted, were attacked and humiliated on the streets. In Kassel, for example, Jews who had been arrested 'were paraded in the open,' whereupon 'the fire brigade was called out, and the hosepipes were turned on them, so that they were all completely drenched before being sent to the concentration camp at Buchenwald.'<sup>76</sup> Reports also emerged of shops being plundered by Nazi activists.<sup>77</sup> The overall impression of Kristallnacht was one of unrestrained destruction and violence. As one report observed: 'In every part of the Reich synagogues were set on fire and dynamited, Jewish shops smashed and ransacked, and individual Jews arrested or hounded by bands of young Nazis through the streets.'<sup>78</sup>

It was in this context that apprehension for the 'safety' of archives grew. One report, written on 10 November by an official of the Stettin State Archive, made clear that the ineptness of Nazi activists was threatening the retrieval of important archival documents. The report detailed how the SD had visited the synagogue in Stettin and had taken measures to secure part of its archive collection. Even so, 'a great part of the material has been destroyed.' The synagogue was described as being 'completely destroyed,' with only

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<sup>73</sup> Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p. 127 and Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1945*, vol. One (London: Phoenix Giant, 1998), pp. 273-274.

<sup>75</sup> Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, p. 274.

<sup>76</sup> Diplomatic Correspondent, "Extent of German Pogrom," *Guardian*, 18 November 1938, p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> "Letters to the Editor," *Guardian*, 17 November 1938, p. 20.

<sup>78</sup> "Nazi Attacks on Jews."



its outer walls left standing. The loss, it noted, was ‘even more regrettable’ because collections from other Pomeranian synagogues had been deposited there. It now lay with the state ‘to take measures’ to save the remnant files from the destroyed archive, ‘as soon as possible.’ It also stated that archives ‘which are of importance today’ should ‘be safeguarded against further loss.’<sup>79</sup> Reports from across the country were similar in content: ‘The synagogues were set on first, and only the walls of them are standing.’<sup>80</sup> The synagogue in Stettin was one of a total 171 set alight. In Bavaria, registers of the synagogues congregations in Aschaffenburg, Burgpreppach, Burgsinn, Ermsershausen, Ingolstadt, Sandersleben, Volkersleier were allegedly consumed by fire.<sup>81</sup> In the end, reports conceded that whilst the pogrom had yielded ‘registers of the Jewish communities’ it had come at a considerable cost. In Hannover one report observed that ‘registers of the Jewish communities have been confiscated.’ Yet it was quick to point out that many had also suffered the fate of being ‘displaced, burned or otherwise destroyed.’<sup>82</sup> Even more problematic was the fact that registers were stored in a variety of locations in the week and months after the pogrom. One report, dated 9 December, recorded that archives were ‘in the most diverse hands,’ including, but not restricted to, offices of the SD, the police, the SS, the Sturmabteilung (SA), the Hitler Youth and ‘private persons.’<sup>83</sup> Records from the Jewish Community Archive in Breslau – where ‘several other Silesian synagogue archives’ were deposited – was reportedly handed over to the Silesian Museum for Arts and Crafts and Antiquities. Here, ‘masses of files’ were ‘lying about unevaluated and unregistered.’ In this state, they were described as unusable.<sup>84</sup> What followed in the aftermath of the pogrom was a genuine desire from civil servants and Nazi officials to centralise and assess intact registers. Among the perceived benefits of register entries was that racial experts, most notably those from the Genealogical Office, could return to old (individual) cases where race had been difficult to establish. Of equal importance, the contents of the registers could be used to fill in gaps in the institution’s card catalogues.<sup>85</sup> As noted in chapter three, the

<sup>79</sup> “Staatsarchiv,” 10 November 1938, GStA, I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 215. In Osnabrück the archives from eleven synagogues were reportedly handed into the State Archive by the Secret State Police. However, in Badbergen local synagogues and all registers of births, deaths and marriages from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were said to have been destroyed by fire. “Auf die Verfg. v. 4. I. 40 – A.V. 86 - ,” 12 Januar 1940, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 43.

<sup>80</sup> “Letters to the Editor,” p. 20. The correspondent following the pogrom in Berlin noted that when he returned hours later the synagogue was ‘still smouldering.’ ‘The fire brigade,’ he continued, ‘had confined its efforts chiefly to preventing the spread of fire to the neighbouring houses and the synagogue itself appeared to be gutted.’ “Nazi Attacks on Jews,” *The Times* 11 November 1938, p. 14.

<sup>81</sup> Elisabeth Brachmann-Teubner, “Sources for the History of the Jews from the Eighteenth Century to the Twentieth Century in the Archives of the Former DDR,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 38, no. 1 (1993), <<http://leobaeck.oxfordjournals.org/content/38/1/391.full.pdf>> [accessed 23 February 2013], p. 403.

<sup>82</sup> “Verblieb der Jüdischen Personenstandregister,” 9 Dezember 1938, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 230.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid and “Auf die Verfg.,” 12 Januar 1940, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 43.

<sup>84</sup> “Herrn SS-Obersturmführer Dr. Turowski,” 4 März 1940, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 60-63.

<sup>85</sup> Schulle, “Oranienburger Strasse 28-31,” p. 366.

aim of the card-index system was to hold background information on every Jew living in the country.

In the coming days the Nazis attempted to bring about the complete removal of Jews from Germany. On 12 November a meeting took place at Goering's Air Ministry, in which Heydrich was present. Much of the agenda was taken up by Heydrich's proposal for the establishment of a Central Office for Jewish Emigration on German soil. In justifying his position, he pointed to the success of Eichmann's office in Vienna in expediting Jewish emigration. He also noted that an emigration tax - extracted from wealthy Jews - would help remove poor Jews from German borders within a ten year period.<sup>86</sup> The project was approved. Yet to achieve similar emigration rates as seen in Austria (in September alone ten thousand Jews had emigrated from Vienna),<sup>87</sup> required the mechanism of the Gesamtarchiv der Deutschen Juden, or the General Archive of the German Jews. Established in 1905, the mission of the Gesamtarchiv had been to collect and preserve archives of Jewish communities, associations and societies from across Germany. It also encouraged private donors.<sup>88</sup> When the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service was enacted in April 1933, its scope was broadened to include certificates of births, deaths and marriages. By 1935, twenty seven communities' archives had been taken over.<sup>89</sup> For civil servants and Nazi officials the Gesamtarchiv could play a major role in enforcing racial policies, not only in regards to issuing 'certificates of origin' from the registers of births, deaths and marriages and membership to the Jewish community, but also confirming background information displayed on identity cards and emigration documents.<sup>90</sup>

Over the next six weeks, Third Reich authorities moved to assert their control over the archive. Yet, before any move on the archive could be made the government felt compelled to revisit the issue relating to the wide distribution of registers. On 27 January 1939, a meeting was called at the Ministry of the Interior in Berlin. The first point in the agenda was that the archives gathered in November 1938 were not to be dispersed further. The minutes recorded also corroborate earlier reports that archives were stored in a number of

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<sup>86</sup> Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, p. 129.

<sup>87</sup> Hilary Hope Herzog, *"Vienna Is Different": Jewish Writers in Austria from the Fin De Siècle to the Present* (New York Berghahn books, 2011), p. 105.

<sup>88</sup> Brachmann-Teubner, "Sources for the History of the Jews," p. 402.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, pp. 402-403.

<sup>90</sup> "Zentralstelle für jüdische Personenstandsregister (Zusammenziehung der jüdischen Personenstandsregister aus dem Altreich in Berlin)," 31 März 1939, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 22.

locations.<sup>91</sup> As such, the decision was taken to have confiscated archives centralised in local offices of the Gestapo. As yet, there were no plans for archives to be concentrated *en masse* in Berlin. The Genealogical Office, represented at the meeting by Gerhard Kayser, head of the Register of People of Foreign Origin, did enquire as to the possibility of having confiscated marriage registers (predating 1876) transferred to its office in Berlin.<sup>92</sup> Noting his concern that some registers were still in private hands, he raised the point that the Gestapo should sweep the '1,400 Jewish communities' in Germany in order to build a more accurate picture as to the location of registers.<sup>93</sup> Clearly, the Genealogical Office also interpreted the events in November 1938 as an opportunity to carry on its 'success' – as described by the *Völkischer Beobachter* in August 1936 – of collecting and cataloguing ancestral information on Jews. Seeking control of the marital registers was merely an attempt to close gaps in the card-index, thereby making the catalogue more elaborate and effective as a mechanism for outing Jews. In short, and to paraphrase the newspaper report quoted in chapter three, he wanted to be in a position whereby suspicious employers, party members and government officials could ascertain the race of an individual upon the first inquiry.<sup>94</sup>

By mid-March, the fate of the Gesamtarchiv had been decided. A decree (17 March) from Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer SS, and also Heydrich's superior, informed Kayser to take control of the registers of births, deaths and marriages confiscated during the 'actions of November 1938,' and to take stock of them at his department in Berlin.<sup>95</sup> No doubt worried about the sheer number of registers, as well as the speed at which he was set to receive them, he immediately began to make alternative arrangements for storage at the Gesamtarchiv on Oranienburger Strasse 28. During his preparations, he visited the archive twice. 'On the basis of the visits,' Kayser determined that the best solution was to transfer an employee of the Genealogical Office to the Gesamtarchiv.<sup>96</sup> The official was to be joined by an employee of the Department for Kinship Research (*Amt für Sippenforschung*). This department was an agency of the party. He was also made responsible for 'certifying the certificates' issued from the registers – 'as far as they have already been centralised or will be centralised' in the archive - to visitors of the archive, 'for the purpose' of

<sup>91</sup> "Niederschrift über die am 27. Januar 1939 im Reichsministerium des Innern stattgehabte Besprechung über jüdische Archive," GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 253-254 and Schulle, "Oranienburger Strasse 28-31," p. 369.

<sup>92</sup> "Niederschrift über die am 27. Januar 1939 im Reichsministerium des Innern," GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 253-254.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 253-254.

<sup>94</sup> "Family Trees for Aryans," *The Times*, 8 July 1935, p. 14.

<sup>95</sup> "Zentralstelle für jüdische Personenstandsregister," 31 März 1939, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 22

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, bl. 22.

establishing their ancestry.<sup>97</sup> They were to perform their duties, as detailed in a report to the Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick, dated 31 March, in the ‘former offices’ of the Gesamtarchiv.

Kayser also made clear that Jewish employees of the Gesamtarchiv were to continue working towards - as he termed it - ‘Jewish purposes.’ To this end, employees were to use the archive’s holdings to validate identity cards and to issue certificates of nationality and membership to the Jewish Community, along with other certificates that would help promote emigration.<sup>98</sup> They were now ordered to conduct this business out of two offices in the library. Kayser did, however, identify serious operational obstacles, ones that potentially could impede the work of tracing family histories and issuing extracts from registers. One problem stemmed from ongoing problems connected to Kristallnacht, in particular that appropriated registers had remained – with few exceptions – sealed or unopened, in offices across the country.<sup>99</sup> The issue of unopened registers had been brought to the Genealogical Office’s attention at the meeting on 27 January, where it was claimed that registers were opened only in cases where an identity card was being issued. By March, however, Kayser expressed that the on-going closure of registers was delaying ancestral decisions as well, and also impeding the process of emigration. His aim was to restart the process of issuing certificates of births, deaths and marriages as a basis for determining race, ‘as soon as possible.’<sup>100</sup>

Another concern was the damage inflicted on surviving registers of the pogrom. The microfilming programme of the state-run Genealogical Office, as already noted, was focused on copying church books. Kayser predicted that the programme may have to be expanded to include fragile registers. He added: ‘As these are measures to preserve and secure materials concerning kinship...I intend to propose that the costs are met by the...Ministry of the Interior.’ Funds were also required to relocate registers of births, deaths and marriages, stored in state and party offices across the country, to the Gesamtarchiv. Plans to centralise registers were intended to simplify the process of family research not just for hopeful émigrés, but for suspicious state and party agencies as well as

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid. and Schulle, “Oranienburger Strasse 28-31,” pp. 366-367. To reiterate points made in chapter three, the Genealogical Office was an agency of the Ministry of the Interior and helped impose civil law. The NSDAP Department for Kinship Research, by contrast, was sponsored by the party and looked into the ancestry of its own party members. Again, the activities of the NSDAP Department for Kinship Research are not the focus of this thesis. Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 79.

<sup>98</sup> “Zentralstelle für jüdische Personenstandsregister,” 31 März 1939, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 22. See also: Schulle, “Oranienburger Strasse 28-31,” pp. 366-369.

<sup>99</sup> “Niederschrift über die am 27. Januar 1939 im Reichsministerium des Innern,” GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 253-254.

<sup>100</sup> “Zentralstelle für jüdische Personenstandsregister,” 31 März 1939, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 22.

individuals challenging their Jewish status. It also meant that experts from the Genealogical Office had unlimited access to the available registers to perform genealogical investigations on specific individuals, or merely to fill in ancestral gaps in the registers still housed in the Ministry of the Interior. Kayser was clearly eager to have his recommendations implemented quickly, noting in his report that he intended to apply his recommendations by 6 April. He proposed that the institution be renamed the 'Central Office for Jewish Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages.'<sup>101</sup>

While the name and the mission of the Gestamtarchiv was being agreed, Jews were coming to terms with yet more restrictions. They were prohibited from attending theatres, concerts and exhibits. Moreover, Jewish children were banned from public schools.<sup>102</sup> The emphasis of the Nazis was to reduce the Jews' quality of life, and to segregate them as much as possible from the general population. As we have seen, the growing desire for ever-more harsh restriction of inferiors had its roots in the 'regime's orientation towards war.'<sup>103</sup> Moreover, the threat of going to war when 'enemies' still lived in Germany had been a constant preoccupation of many Nazi members, and these feelings were heightened following the 'May Crisis' of 1938. The Genealogical Office's eagerness to retrieve and open sealed registers was largely symptomatic of a much wider determination to identify and control/remove undesirables prior to any impending war. A period of intense activity, for example, ensued following the opening of the Central Office for Jewish Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages. On 15 April, Heydrich ordered that all records and files from synagogues and Jewish communities appropriated during the pogrom be concentrated in responsible offices of the Security Police, 'for analysis.' This order was to be carried out 'without delay.'<sup>104</sup> An official of the Genealogical Office was charged with 'travelling around' the country to offices of the SD, and collecting records documents relevant to genealogical research.<sup>105</sup> The Genealogical Office sought to assert total control of registers of births, deaths and marriages that formerly belonged to Jewish communities and synagogues. The thinking behind this was that by having more accurate background information on Jews available – and all in one location - family research would, along with the process of issuing of certificates, be expedited.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, bl. 22.

<sup>102</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p. 146.

<sup>103</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 135.

<sup>104</sup> "Jüdisches Archivgut," 15 April 1939, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 82.

<sup>105</sup> "Abschrift aus Fr.Arch.3.B.4," undated, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 117.

Another priority for the Genealogical Office at this time was to sift through and determine the value of existing records stored in the Gesamtarchiv, in addition to that of the appropriated files and documents centralised there in the aftermath of the November pogrom. Kayser was assisted in this task by Dr Jacob Jacobson, director of the institution. The overall collection was reportedly reduced ‘considerably’ as a result of this initiative.<sup>106</sup> The holdings of the archive were divided up into two departments. Department A) was made up of records of births, deaths and marriages, and included tax lists, pupil lists and ‘similar lists.’ Department B) held historical records. Both departments were organised in ‘alphabetical order’ and ‘according to the name of the Jewish community.’<sup>107</sup> The records of historical value were intended to be handed over to the archive administration, but Kayser had to wait for approval from the SD. In the meantime, an inventory providing an overview of the institution’s registers of births, deaths and marriages was being compiled.<sup>108</sup> These initiatives were undertaken to make holdings more manageable and easy to navigate. Again, the overall strategy was to make ancestral research efficient and retain only those files, records and registers that helped support and enforce racial policies of the government. In the meantime, institutional holdings that would help expand and further genealogical research were being identified. In one memo, for example, it was observed that no records had been appropriated in Württemberg during Kristallnacht. Archives belonging to Jewish communities records in this area, it was claimed, were ‘endangered.’ It is unclear whether any action came as a result of this memo, or if registers from the Jewish communities were indeed relocated to the Gesamtarchiv, but what is known is that the term ‘endangered’ usually anticipated appropriation by the state.<sup>109</sup>

The practice of collecting background information was crucial in the state exercising control over the population. Family history determined a person’s fitness to marry, as well as their eligibility in accessing state benefits and services, such as health visitors and marriage loans. Sterilisation candidates were also chosen based on their hereditary risk. Moreover, collecting accurate information supported the state in its effort to remove Jews through the process of emigration. While certainly malicious and calculating, the strategy of the Nazis up to mid-1939 did not point in the direction of mass murder. However in

<sup>106</sup> The memo is short but considerably detailed. In addition to detailing how the holdings of the archive were to be divided, the memo also stated that the historical records (which constituted 120 square metres) were now superfluous to the function of the Central Office for Jewish Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages. It was the intention of the Office to hand these records over to the Archive Administration. No deadline was specified in the document. The memo noted that the registers of births, deaths and marriages were to be housed in the ‘strong room in the cellar.’ See Ibid, bl. 117.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, bl.117 and and Schulle, “Oranienburger Strasse 28-31,” pp. 366-369.

<sup>108</sup> “Abschrift aus Fr.Arch.3.B.4,” undated, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 117.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, bl. 117.

July, an event occurred that would alter the nature of genealogical research, making it quite literally a matter of life and death (this will be discussed further below).<sup>110</sup> A child born in the Leipzig area, and not yet five months old, was euthanised following a petition by his parents to Hitler requesting a ‘mercy death.’ Before the procedure Hitler’s physician, Karl Brandt, had consulted with the parents’ physician to determine the extent of the child’s condition, and to assess whether the disabilities outlined in the petition were indeed accurate.<sup>111</sup> Brandt, along with Philipp Bouhler, Head of the Chancellery of the Führer, were now tasked with extending this scheme and establishing practices for killing other children suffering with disabilities. An organisation, the Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Severe Illnesses with Hereditary or Predisposed Causes, was set up to direct this campaign.<sup>112</sup>

Because of the worsening treatment towards inferiors the need for safeguarding and appropriating records of genealogical value persisted. During the course of the summer, a circular was issued by the Ministry of the Interior ordering records ‘relevant for genealogy, race and genetic research,’ along with other files and documents of value in the determination of ancestral decisions, be stored away safely, ‘for future evaluation.’ Hospitals, welfare and youth offices, institutions ‘for the blind and deaf and dumb,’ special needs schools and institutions specialising in alcoholism were to make arrangements for storing background information on patients.<sup>113</sup> At the same time, the Ministry of the Interior was passing on instructions to civil institutions to try and acquire valuable records from Jews planning to emigrate.<sup>114</sup> On 7 August, the State Archive in Kiel reported an incident involving one Julius Israel Magnus who was intending to emigrate shortly for America. It had been ascertained that, following a period of questioning of various synagogues, Magnus was in possession of several registers of births, deaths and marriages. As a result, orders were given to the provost of Rendsburg to have the registers confiscated by the local police. The same day as this report was written, the archive had received (from the local police department), a register of deaths (1750-1899), a register of births (1834-1869) and a register of marriages (1863-1869).<sup>115</sup> As the conference of 27 January made

<sup>110</sup> “Abschrift,” undated, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 117.

<sup>111</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>112</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 136.

<sup>113</sup> “Aufbewahrung von gemeindlichen Akten, die für die Sippen-, Rassen – und Erbforschung,” 2 Juni 1939, GStA, PK, 1. HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1182, bl. 12-13.

<sup>114</sup> “Abschrift aus Gen.10,” 1 August 1939, GStA, PK, 1. HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 26.

<sup>115</sup> “Schutz des deutschen Kulturgutes gegen Abwanderung,” 7 August GStA, I. HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl.29.

clear any records that would help provide detailed background information on Jews was to be handed over the Gesamtarchiv.

On 18 August the Ministry of the Interior, under the guidance of the Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Severe Illnesses with Hereditary or Predisposed Causes, issued a private circular to all state governments introducing a 'Requirement to Report Newborn Children with any form of Handicap.'<sup>116</sup> It required doctors and midwives to report any child under the age of three suffering from 'idiocy or Mongolism (especially if associated with blindness or deafness); microcephaly; hydrocephaly of a severe or progressive nature; deformation of every kind, especially the absence of limbs, malformation of the head and the spine; paralysis, including Little's disease (cerebral palsy).'<sup>117</sup> Doctors and midwives were sent questionnaires as part of the assessment process, with completed forms then returned to the Reich Committee for consideration by a panel of three experts. If selected for euthanasia, the child was transferred to a 'specialist children's clinic' where he or she were murdered by ingesting a tablet, injection or the long drawn-out process of starvation. If the victim was not already under medical care, the committee had to obtain permission from the parents to have their child hospitalised.<sup>118</sup> As time went on, the level of detail to be provided increased, with doctors obliged to document family history, and in particular information on excessive alcohol abuse, tobacco and drugs. Hereditary illnesses, the possibility for improvement, life expectancy, institutional behaviour and treatment were similarly to be listed.<sup>119</sup>

The euthanasia of children added a new and sinister dimension to the practice of genealogy. Before this order, background information had largely been compiled in the medical setting as a basis for preventing certain groups from marrying and procreating. Euthanasia now offered a new alternative for parents who were willing to go to the extreme to protect future generations of the family from illness and disability. Henry Friedlander, for example, observed one couple who used this very justification when putting forward their handicapped son, Paul, for selection. Friedlander described how the father had deemed it his 'greatest duty' to 'maintain the purity of his family tree.' He also sought to prevent his wife from further agony.<sup>120</sup> This line of reasoning seemed to have

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<sup>116</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 136.

<sup>117</sup> Patricia Heberer, "The Nazi "euthanasia" program," in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. Jonathan C. Friedman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 141.

<sup>118</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p.136

<sup>119</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 52

<sup>120</sup> Quoted in Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, pp. 171-172



been effective. Paul was transferred to a special children's ward, and within a matter of months was murdered.<sup>121</sup>

The programme to murder hereditarily ill children not only created a precedent, but established both the machinery and dedicated personnel that, if needed, could be expanded to target other 'inferior elements.' Following the outbreak of war on 1 September 1939 this predicament did indeed occur, with the euthanasia programme going beyond its initial scope to include adults. On 9 October at a meeting involving leading doctors of the programme it was agreed that one in five psychiatric patients should be euthanised, approximately 65,000 – 70,000 patients.<sup>122</sup> Public health offices, psychiatric institutions and nursing homes, among others, received questionnaires inquiring about the concerned patient's capacity for work, psychiatric and neurological disorders, if they had been detained on criminal grounds, and if their stay in a mental institution had exceeded five years.<sup>123</sup> The health authorities were also to identify patients who 'are not of German or similar blood.'<sup>124</sup> Jews were now being actively singled out. It will be recalled that health authorities were already closely monitoring every asocial, criminal or hereditarily diseased person they came into contact with.<sup>125</sup> Since 1935, health authorities had been encouraged to establish data banks which stored family histories on patients, including details on parents and grandparents. More recently, and as mentioned above, institutions dealing with the vulnerable persons were informed to make special arrangements for the storage of patient files. Irrespective of the fact that murder did not feature in Nazi policy when these measures were effected, by autumn 1939 genealogical information was – or was in the process of – becoming centralised, enabling health authorities to trace family histories of euthanasia candidates quickly and efficiently.

The war with Poland was to prove an effective cover for expanding and intensifying the persecution of Jews. Even at this early stage in the war, the Nazis were beginning to use genealogical information for brutal ends. Peter Longerich, for example, has observed that in Pomerania the murder of mentally ill patients preceded the euthanasia programme becoming operational. In addition to this, Longerich details that in the new Reichsgau of Danzig-West-Prussia, incorporated into Greater Germany following Hitler's edict of 8 October 1939, thousands of patients receiving treatment at various psychiatric institutions

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, pp. 171-172.

<sup>122</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 137.

<sup>123</sup> Heberer, "The Nazi "euthanasia" program," p. 142.

<sup>124</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 137.

<sup>125</sup> Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, pp. 526-527.

– for example, Kocborowo Mental Hospital – were shot owing to their inability to work and Jewish heritage.<sup>126</sup> Jews were, by now, enduring further restrictive measures on the movements. They were prohibited from leaving their home after eight o'clock in the winter and nine o'clock in the summer because, as the Nazis stated, they would use the cover of darkness to attack Aryan women. This measure was enacted in Prussia, Bavaria, the Saar, Austria and the Sudeten area.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, Jews were prohibited from owning radios. This measure added to earlier ones, passed the previous year, banning Jews from driving or owning a car.<sup>128</sup> The mere presence of Jews in German society had always been anathema to the Nazis. At the outset of war, however, they were beginning to question the very existence of certain sections of the Jewish population.

Amid these dramatic events, the Genealogical Office stuck to its more sober plan of collecting, expanding and centralising its collection of registers of births, deaths and marriages. Major problems still existed in this respect. Files, records and registers were still reported to be in a variety of locations across Germany, un-catalogued and unusable.<sup>129</sup> The dire state of appropriated genealogical records still remained a pertinent issue when, on 24 June 1940, the Genealogical Office moved both its Register of People of Foreign Origin and its Register of Ancestry of the German People into the Gestamtarchiv.<sup>130</sup> But despite its centrality in the execution of racial policies pre-September 1939, the moral authority of the office was being undermined by Hitler's pursuit of a racial war. Hitler's need for continual expansionism and subjugation of inferiors conflicted with the Office's research-laden (and often time-consuming) approach to determining racial status. The 'Nazi authorities,' as Doris Bergen has aptly observed, had at this point 'showed themselves more concerned with destroying Jews and expanding German power in the east than with maintaining the purity of their own ideological principles of Germanness.'<sup>131</sup> This is evident as early as September 1939 when the Ministry of the Interior lowered the genealogical requirements for individuals seeking German citizenship, particularly for

<sup>126</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 138.

<sup>127</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 171.

<sup>128</sup> Wolfgang Benz, "Exclusion as a Stage in Persecution," p. 51.

<sup>129</sup> "Herrn SS-Obersturmführer Dr. Turowski," 4 März 1940, GStA, I Rep. 178, Nr. 1153, bl. 60-63.

<sup>130</sup> Schulle, "Oranienburger Strasse 28-31," p. 368.

<sup>131</sup> The standards for racial acceptance continued to fall as the war waged on. Bergen writes that in 1942 the Ministry of the Interior announced 'unrestricted rights of German citizenship to any person of German ancestry in Alsace, Lorraine or Luxembourg who joined or was conscripted into the Waffen-SS. Two German grandparents sufficed to establish German ancestry.' Doris. L. Bergen, "The Nazi Concept of 'Volksdeutsche' and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-1945," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (1994), <<http://jch.sagepub.com/content/29/4/569.full.pdf+html>> [accessed 20 April 2013], pp. 574-575. Eric Ehrenreich observes that by July 1944 the military demanded only that the conscript declare an oath that neither he nor his wife had Jewish parents or grandparents. The intention of the military was to revisit the issue of ancestry after the war had concluded. Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 65.

individuals willing to perform military service. Candidates struggling to obtain records relating to parents and grandparents could, in their stead, be made to sign a declaration stating that his parents possessed 'German blooded ancestry.'<sup>132</sup>

The loss of commitment to study and rationalise background information relating to specific individuals was now apparent in other areas of society as well. From 1940 onward, for example, Jewish patients of psychiatric institutions, segregated from their German counterparts since 1938, were moved to killing centres. No consideration was given to their medical diagnosis, whether or not they could recover from their ailment, or current or future capacity for work.<sup>133</sup> The total disregard of accurate information served to speed up the process of deporting or murdering Jews and suspected Jews. The euthanasia programme which targeted both children and adults could not have operated without collaboration and support of a number of professional groups, which included but was not restricted to, civil servants, doctors, nurses and racial experts. Those individuals who participated in the selection of victims were not coerced, nor did they later express any moral convictions when killing members of a group who were, by all accounts, stigmatised and vulnerable.<sup>134</sup>

Despite the contradictory approach of the government towards racial status, the Genealogical Office maintained its mission, and continued to investigate and issue decisions on race. As time went on, the requirement for individuals to consult with the Genealogical Office, churches or registries for ancestral decisions or registry extracts seemed superfluous to the demands of war. In March 1941, low and middle ranking civil service officials were informed by the Ministry of the Interior to dispense with their research until after the war.<sup>135</sup> As far as the Jews were concerned, performing genealogical research for the purpose of emigrating was no longer an option. Parallel to the extermination of degenerates, the regime entered a new phase of its anti-Jewish campaign. Continual territorial gains made by the German army had resulted in more and more Jews coming under Nazi rule.<sup>136</sup> This situation had seemingly grown out of control following the invasion of Russia in June. In the Nazi view, the 'vision of a *judenfrei* German empire continually receded before their advance.'<sup>137</sup> By this time, however, over 400 ghettos had

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

<sup>133</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, pp. 141-142.

<sup>134</sup> Henry Friedlander, "The Exclusion and Murder of the Disabled," in Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, ed. *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 151-152.

<sup>135</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 65.

<sup>136</sup> Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution*, p. 110.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, p. 110.

been created within Polish territory. The severe conditions created in Poland's approximate 400 ghettos were viewed by the Reich government as ideal locations for the regime's 'racial enemies.'<sup>138</sup> The individual strands that had served to control and escalate the persecution of Jews and other inferiors – the law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People, the Nuremberg laws, the outbreak of war and deportation to the East – were now brought together not only to legitimise the crossing of moral and ethical boundaries, but the killing of the handicapped and able-bodied Jewish inferiors in the name of the *Volk*.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Joanna B. Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), p. 141.

<sup>139</sup> Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, p. 567.

## Conclusion

The Nazis came to power in 1933 with the aim of improving the health of every man and women living in Germany. In the Nazi worldview, there was much to overcome. The foremost concern was that high rates of fertility among inferior elements of the population - Jews, blacks, gypsies, among others - were polluting the purity of the *Volk*.<sup>1</sup> The Nazi image of a healthy individual did not extend to these groups, particularly the Jews. They were viewed as having a higher propensity to certain mental and physical illnesses. Moreover, they lacked the qualities necessary to make them productive and innovative members of the community. The protection of the genetically healthy sections of society - the tall, blond haired Aryans who were free of hereditary illness - was, as Lisa Pine has correctly pointed out, 'to become a firm priority on the government's agenda.'<sup>2</sup> An intensive campaign to encourage Germans to conduct intimate and long courtships and to avoid sexual contact with those deemed to be inferior began almost immediately. The consequences of not following advice meted out by the Nazis were both severe and dramatic, as this pamphlet from 1944 made clear:

People are creative and significant only as long as they preserve and keep pure their racial inheritance. The decline of a people's culture is always the result of race mixing and a decline in racial quality. Any change in the racial makeup of a people leads to a change in its nature and its culture. If the race that gave a people its nature is debased by mixing with foreign and inferior races, the people's culture will perish and can never again be restored to full life.<sup>3</sup>

As this study has shown, the Nazis sought to minimise contact between Aryans and non-Aryans from the outset. The practice of genealogy was an essential tool for achieving this goal of separating German society along racial lines. Many Nazi officials, medical professionals and racial experts advanced the misguided belief that genealogy could accurately determine who was and was not of German blood. Though initially enacted in the civil service, the requirement to document ancestry gradually extended into other areas of society. Individuals, many having worked for the same employer for a number of years, were suddenly ousted from their posts after a Jewish parent or grandparent came to light. For the victims, the loss of their occupation marked the beginning point in their phased exclusion from society. Even at this early stage of the Nazi regime, the ominous uses and

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<sup>1</sup> Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Calvin College's German Propaganda Archive, "Racial Policy," trans. Randall Bytwerk, <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/rassenpo.htm>> [accessed 24 July 2013].

intentions of genealogy were beginning to emerge. For bureaucrats and racial experts, probing family backgrounds was seen as a practical solution to reduce and, in time, eliminate Jewish careerists who were overrepresented in the economic sector, and denying Germans jobs to certified and honest Aryan workers.

If this study has shown anything, however, it is that the Nazis relied on a combination of intimidation and physical violence to enforce racial segregation. Filling in family trees may have helped expose the unworthy in society, but equally the assignation of race, in some cases, served to test the resolve of friends and lovers. To make the decision to cut ties with non-Aryans an easy one, some employers were willing to dismiss Aryan workers who persisted on seeing inferiors in a social context. Moreover, when an inter-racial marriage was performed prior to its prohibition in 1935, the registrar and the couple concerned not only faced verbal and physical assault from Nazi activists, but also the prospect of having personal information such as their name and address published in newspapers.<sup>4</sup> These crude strategies were intended to arouse concern and anxiety. The negative publicity attached to inter-racial marriages was designed to provoke couples into being forthcoming about their ancestry. It was also to dissuade them from concealing a Jewish relative. The Nazis also launched and maintained a propaganda campaign intended to drive German women away from grotesque inferiors and into the arms of handsome, hardworking and caring Aryans. These events, of course, all coincided with mounting pressure being placed on registrars to deny non-Aryans access to their services. After 1935, it became standard pre-ceremonial practice for registrars to scrutinise the ancestries of wedding applicants.<sup>5</sup> The regime envisioned the domicile of every Aryan to be 'Jew free' in the future. The first step to releasing this goal was to officially deny and also frighten Aryans and Jews from forming platonic or sexual relationships with one another.

It is worth pointing out that marriages and relationships were also ended abruptly by Aryan spouses. The reasons for this varied. Some sought to advance their careers and did not want to be stigmatised by a Jewish spouse.<sup>6</sup> Others suddenly became concerned about their spouses race and initiated divorce proceedings citing these grounds.<sup>7</sup> Many couples separated owing to the fact that it was simply too dangerous to carry on in a mixed relationship. Many were persuaded to take such actions after reading newspaper accounts of racial-defilement courts cases, or simply hearing the Nuremberg laws being broadcast

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<sup>4</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> Burleigh and Wiperman, *The Racial State*, p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart*, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 298.

on the radio.<sup>8</sup> Of course, there were some Aryans who stuck by their Jewish lovers and endured extreme hardship as a result. Furthermore, not all proceedings for divorce were initiated by Germans. Jewish spouses broke off relations in the hope that their actions would protect their loved ones from state persecution. In more desperate situations, Jewish martial partners even resorted to suicide to improve their spouse's and children's chances of a normal life.<sup>9</sup> Regardless of the reasoning behind the dissolution of these relationships, the regime was affecting change at a family level.

But as this study reveals the Nazis were as just as concerned about hereditary and sexual illnesses entering the *Volk* as they were about Jewish and other foreign blood. The practice of genealogy, for example, was modified to help the professional community identify individuals suffering from genetic weaknesses. Thus, the brand of genealogy imposed by doctors, social workers, midwives, community health visitors and voluntary health care workers on patients was highly medicalised, and shifted genealogy away from its domestic and leisurely roots. Far from remaining a private matter, patients were quizzed on family members potentially suffering from hereditary illnesses, sexual disease or chronic alcoholism.<sup>10</sup> The information collected was used by health officials to make judgments on the worth of the patient and to determine whether or not they were eligible to marry or bear children. In cases where an individual was deemed a high risk to possess or pass on potentially harmful genes, the health official was obligated to initiate sterilisation proceedings. The assistance and expertise offered by the medical community was integral to both the functioning and enforcement of racial and health laws at a local level. Intensive scrutiny of family histories was invariably justified as a health measure intended to protect the client and any potential offspring from undue 'harm.'<sup>11</sup> Yet the reality is that the majority of doctors willingly dispensed with medical ethics, choosing instead to help implement a health programme that had drastic and life-changing consequences for those falling short of the Nazi ideal of healthy. The abandonment of ethical behaviour would become even more discernible with the Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People of October 1935, according to which the medical profession was to deny marriage certificates to Jews and other non-whites.<sup>12</sup> In short, the party through its agents in the medical profession decided who was included and who was excluded from

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<sup>8</sup> Szobar, "Telling Sexual Stories," p. 137.

<sup>9</sup> Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, pp. 90-92.

<sup>10</sup> Slater, "German Eugenics in Practice," p. 292.

<sup>11</sup> See: Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, pp. 141-142.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Weindling, "German Eugenics and the Wider World: Beyond the Racial State," in Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 322.

the *Volksgemeinschaft*. By wilfully carrying out their duties, they gave credence and legitimacy to the notion that Jews were carriers of disease.

Of course there were other professional groups who made a concentrated – as well as unrelenting – effort to help the Nazis realise their vision of a racially healthy and pure *Volksgemeinschaft*. Experts at the Genealogical Office maintained a programme of microfilming and card-indexing in a bid to make genealogical information accessible to the public. The attention afforded to this organisation's successful accumulation and cataloguing of genealogical information in national newspapers adds considerable detail and nuance to the portrayal of problems Jews encountered in everyday life already discussed by Marion Kaplan and others. Moreover, much of the day-to-day activities and operation of archives, churches and registry offices was given over to helping laypersons locate registry extracts. In wider society, mayors, civil servants, local branches of SA, teachers, museum curators, archivists, genealogists, librarians and racial experts, among other groups, offered expertise and resources to both inspire and guide researchers through the genealogical process. These groups were often represented at local genealogical exhibitions, the role of which was to educate visitors about the location, contents, and even how to navigate and interpret, important books, manuscripts, archives and artefacts. They were also to help manage and raise the expectations of reluctant or intimidated researchers by making the search for documents appealing and within their capabilities. Professionals, for example, installed elaborate genealogical tables of notable families that could easily be defined as artwork. By their very nature, these artworks undoubtedly would have gone beyond the practical needs of the ordinary German man and woman. Regardless, their intention was to inspire and, in so doing, help foster a commitment to racial policy to those they came into contact with.

At the same time professional groups attempted to bolster support for the regime's policies by bringing more traditional forms of collecting to the attention of Germans. In addition to visiting archives to collect official documentation, professionals advanced the idea that Germans should cast light on the *character* of their ancestors. They attempted to influence unwitting visitors to exhibitions to obtain more detailed information about hereditary and moral illnesses. They conveniently packaged the pursuit of additional background information as being the normal duty of a conscientious family member who merely sought to protect the memory of relatives. One of the best examples of this underhanded tactic was the family book. The custodian of the book was responsible for monitoring the collective health of the family and asking relatives to comment on the personality and



behaviour of other relatives. But it also informed visitors that factual information about family conditions could be found in postcards, letters, photographs, silhouettes, wedding cups, and newspaper clippings. This thesis has thus built on the work of scholars such as Jason Tebbe by highlighting the changing meaning of household objects in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rather than having the power to evoke playful and happy sentiments<sup>13</sup> household items such as photographs, under the Nazi regime, held the potential to conjure feelings of fear and dread.

Contributors to exhibitions were helping the regime create a generation of researchers who could detach emotionally from their families and, if necessary, play a role in preventing their unfit relative from procreating or marrying. In short, individuals who contributed to exhibitions subjugated both knowledge and resources to put a positive and fun spin on the regime's racial policies. In fact, they affirmed the Nazi ideal of a *Volksgemeinschaft* in society by pushing visitors to adopt innovative practices in the course of their research. The comprehensive discussion in this thesis on the role of local genealogical exhibitions played in promoting compliance with racial policies, as well as what Germans encountered when they visited them, has filled an important gap left in the works of scholars such as Eric Ehrenreich.<sup>14</sup>

The dramatic transition of genealogy from a pastime - indeed a hobby intended to remember loved ones distanced by geography and time - into a practice with ominous underpinnings would therefore not have been conceivable without dedicated professionals, many of whom were more than willing to accept the subversion of both their training and ethical stance. With the ongoing desire to uncover more and more horrific deeds of the Nazis, attention has gradually shifted to functionaries occupying the mid-to-lower levels of Nazi bureaucracy. Wendy Lower, as observed in the introduction, has looked closely at the clerks, typists, secretaries and nurses who applied for and then moved to new roles in the East territories such as Poland and Russia. The application of their skills made the isolation and persecution of inferiors a reality. Their daily interaction with Jews – and for some, actual involvement in activities of mistreatment and murder – was often depersonalised, with both duties and beliefs grounded firmly in a system of 'priorities and tasks, personal commitments and anxieties.'<sup>15</sup> This work, in turn, has shifted this focus eastwards, back to Germany, and to those professions who interacted with Jews in everyday life, and similarly

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<sup>13</sup> Tebbe, "From Memory to Research," p. 224

<sup>14</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*.

<sup>15</sup> Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, p. 162.

in a passive fashion. When possible, they took to answering genealogical queries through correspondence to minimise contact with anxious (and Jewish) researchers.

Even with this supporting structure in place many ordinary men and women struggled to cope with the demands placed on them by the racial policies. At its most basic level many Germans found the prospect of communicating with officials an intimidating prospect. This often resulted in their letters lacking the clarity and conciseness to obtain the required registry extract. Another issue was that many entries in church registers were in Latin, old German script, or barely legible. As this study has demonstrated, problems connected to genealogy occupied the daily thoughts and worries of countless Germans. Crucially, this is an idea that has not been picked up by historians and provides a new insight into how Germans lived their daily lives. This point is intensified when considering that genealogical research could span years. The panic that arose from this process also manifested itself in various forms. When genealogical advice was posted in the *Völkischer Beobachter* some individuals archived the article. This is exemplified in one personal archive made available to this author in which, hidden among personal letters and a family tree, was a newspaper clipping offering step-by-step advice for amateur genealogists.

Feelings of frustration also pervaded personal letters sent to family members, friends and officials. Many opened with sentences outlining the dire state of their research and expressed the hope that the recipient would help find the missing document. One letter, for example, began: 'I have no choice but to contact you once more concerning this matter, as I am stuck.' They often ended with similar sentiments of trepidation: 'The death certificate is my only chance to find out her place of birth.'<sup>16</sup> Given the panic genealogy aroused many opted only to fulfil the minimum requirements of the Nuremberg laws – the standard proof. This choice was affected by an eagerness to return to normality. But it was also a decision that had economic considerations. The cost of sending letters, visiting institutions and having certificates certified was a potential money pit, and, especially for the low paid working-class, these were issues that had to be faced along with the daily cost of living. The fact that professional genealogists were often out of the price range of many meant that genealogy guide books became highly sought after. Many Germans also used existing channels of communication to pursue dead and living family members, such as taking out advertisements in newspapers. It must be pointed out, however, that for some the standard proof offered no grandeur, no opportunity to distinguish themselves socially from their

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<sup>16</sup> H.H to Deutsches Generalkonsulat Kattowitz, Beuthen, personal correspondence, 8 August 1937.

peers. Many were willing to dedicate what leisure time and spare income they had in order to dig deeper into their own past to demonstrate just how far back their Aryan credentials actually went.

In the end it mattered very little whether Germans opted to complete the standard proof or the *Ahnenpass*. The fact that Germans showed little or no resistance to racial policies was a positive development for the regime. Only in a few isolated cases has this study been able to show of church officials and registrars willing to put their freedom on the line and commit acts of forgery. Ian Kershaw has accurately summed up the prevailing attitude at this time when he asserted: 'If one term above all sums up the behavioural response of the German people to the persecution of Jews it is: passivity.' He also observed an undercurrent of 'apathy, a deliberate turn away from personal concern, and a willingness to accept uncritically the state's right to take radical action against its "enemies."'<sup>17</sup>

Kristallnacht was one of the rare occasions of Nazi rule when ordinary Germans communicated their disgust.<sup>18</sup> Yet this disgust did not stem from the persecution and illicit imprisonment of Jews, nor the loss of life, but rather from the reckless destruction inflicted on businesses and homes. Even so, the popular attitude towards indifference and passivity regarding the Jews did not recede but was only momentarily concealed.

It has also been suggested that the needless destruction of property, and in the process learning of most Germans aversion to open violence, encouraged leading Nazis to pursue an orderly and bureaucratic persecution against Jews and other 'inferiors.'<sup>19</sup> This is only partially true. The intentional destruction and loss of registers housed in synagogues and Jewish communities also helped convince civil servants, racial experts and the secret state police that 'letting the mob loose' was not the answer to the 'Jewish problem.' In the months before Kristallnacht attempts had been made by archivists to locate and secure Jewish records prior to their owners emigrating – this is exemplified in the case of Erlangen in Franconia described in chapter five. In one case there is even evidence of one archive offering money to a Jew for his private archive collection.<sup>20</sup> Archivists were determined to prevent the dislocation of archive collections where possible. The sheer number of Jews who emigrated between 1933 and 1938 only complicated this aim however, and despite the obvious efforts of state employees some Jews were successful in

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<sup>17</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p.147.

<sup>18</sup> Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 334.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 334.

<sup>20</sup> "Betr.: Erwerbung von Archivgut aus jüdischem Besitz" "Verwaltungsblatt," 8 Februar 1939, GStA I HA Rep. 178, Nr. 1152, bl. 247-248.

smuggling records of genealogical and historical importance out of Germany. A former president of the Worms Jewish community who emigrated to America, for example, took with him eighteenth and nineteenth century correspondence from the Worms Jewish communal offices as well as a copy of the Register of Jews, 1739-1814.<sup>21</sup> The discussion on the activities of archivists during Kristallnacht reflects the historical need to explain how Jewish historical records actually came to fall into state possession.<sup>22</sup>

Kristallnacht served only to intensify the paranoia that Jews may escape detection and persecution. In turn, state police and government employees vied for the appropriated material in the hope that they could access their contents quickly. They stepped up their efforts to ensure that records still in Jewish possession could be 'safeguarded' through less destructive means. Any sentiments of shock expressed by state employees at the pogrom, of course, were not about the treatment of Jews, but rather concerned the mishandling and ill-treatment of genealogically important records and the damage inflicted on Jewish homes and businesses. This study has thus demonstrated that the destruction that took place over the course of Kristallnacht was far broader than has been discussed by important historians such as Peter Longerich, Robert Gerwarth and Martin Gilbert.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, Kristallnacht was a defining moment in solving the 'problem' of Jews and inferiors. Months after the pogrom, the Nazis began to turn against those perceived as the 'enemies within.' Killing centres were soon established, and victims who possessed visible physical or mental disabilities, or whose family tree was deemed a risk to the health of the *Volk* were sent there.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the regime carried out an exercise in containment. A curfew for Jews was established and emigration centres closed down. Yet, much worse awaited the country's Jews, a fate which does not require further elaboration here. But even these overt signs of radicalism could not detract from the glaring inconsistencies in Nazi racial policy. Though the Nazis never lost focus of their eugenic vision, the odds of realising of a *Judenrein* society seemed far more realistic in peace-time when all available apparatus and experts could be diverted in support of it. Instead, the intensification of war resulted in the Nazis reducing their racial criteria, most notably when an individual expressed a desire to join the military. Government departments, too, displayed a growing

<sup>21</sup> Sybil Milton, "Lost, Stolen, and Strayed: The Archival Heritage of Modern German-Jewish Memory" in *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, edited by Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985), p. 323

<sup>22</sup> Astrid M. Eckert, "Managing their own past. German archivists between national socialism and democracy," *Archival Science* 7, no. 3 (2007), p. 228.

<sup>23</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*; Gilbert, *Kristallnacht* and Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*

<sup>24</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, pp.136-139.

tendency to overlook potential recruits or employees who had difficulties in obtaining genealogical information; the expectation being, of course, that the individual resume the process after the war.<sup>25</sup> Despite cracks appearing in policy, civil servants, racial experts and Nazi officials remained convinced that genealogy was the ideal mechanism for exposing Jews. Professional genealogists, too, continued to benefit financially from the regime's eugenic goals, utilising their skills to help desperate individuals determine their own race. In the hands of these groups, records documenting intimate family moments – births, christenings, marriages and deaths - helped the Nazis assert control over the private memory to aid in the construction of a racially pure *Volksgemeinschaft*.

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<sup>25</sup> Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, p. 65.

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