



Volume 7. Nazi Germany, 1933-1945

Himmler's Secret Directive to all Members of the SS and the Police on the Care of all Legitimate and Illegitimate Children of "Good Blood" (October 28, 1939)

The population policy of the Nazi regime, conceived on racial-biological grounds, pursued the "upbreeding" of the German *Volk* on two parallel tracks. First, racial inferiors were to be isolated and eventually eliminated. This was the goal of the following measures: the forced sterilization of those with hereditary illnesses, the prohibition against sexual relations between Aryans and Jews as stipulated by the "Blood Protection Law," and the systematic destruction of "life not worth living" under the euthanasia program. Second, "racially valuable" elements were to be supported and encouraged to multiply. This was done in part through the propagation of early marriage and childbearing, not least through financial support. But, as it turned out, these measures had little effect on marriage and procreation patterns. For the most part, however, the regime was unwilling to respond with tougher family-planning measures, as it feared the loss of popular support. Nevertheless, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler had long pursued a far more radical racial policy within his own organization. After the beginning of the war, he issued the following directive to all members of the SS and police. According to Himmler, these men were to serve the Fatherland not only as soldiers, but also as the producers of legitimate and illegitimate children. In this way, the future of the German people would be secured on both a military and a biological level.

Berlin, October 28, 1939

The Reichsführer SS and
Chief of the German Police
in the Reich Ministry of the Interior

SS-Decree for the Entire SS and Police

[. . .]

The old proverb that only he can die in peace who has sons and children must again hold good in this war, particularly for the SS. He can die in peace who knows that his clan and everything that his ancestors and he himself have wanted and striven for will be continued in his children. The greatest gift for the widow of a man killed in battle is always the child of the man she has loved.

Beyond the limits of bourgeois laws and conventions, which are perhaps necessary in other circumstances, it can be a noble task for German women and girls of good blood to become even outside marriage, not light-heartedly but out of a deep moral seriousness, mothers of the children of soldiers going to war of whom fate alone knows whether they will return or die for Germany.

[. . .]

During the last war, many a soldier decided from a sense of responsibility to have no more children during the war so that his wife would not be left in need and distress after his death. You SS men need not have these anxieties; they are removed by the following regulations:

1. Special delegates, chosen by me personally, will take over in the name of the Reichsführer SS, the guardianship of all legitimate and illegitimate children of good blood whose fathers were killed in the war. We will support these mothers and take over the education and material care of these children until they come of age, so that no mother and widow need suffer want.

2. During the war, the SS will take care of all legitimate and illegitimate children born during the war and of expectant mothers in cases of need. After the war, when the fathers return, the SS will in addition grant generous material help to well-founded applications by individuals.

SS-Men and you mothers of these children which Germany has hoped for show that you are ready, through your faith in the Führer and for the sake of the life of our blood and people, to regenerate life for Germany just as bravely as you know how to fight and die for Germany.

The Reichsführer SS
H. Himmler

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Source of original German text: "Geheimerlass des Reichsführer-SS für die gesamte SS und Polizei" (28. Oktober 1939); reprinted in Norbert Westenrieder, *Deutsche Frauen und Mädchen!* Düsseldorf, 1984, p. 42.