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# Women Under National Socialism: The Case Study of Melita Maschmann

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WOMEN UNDER NATIONAL SOCIALISM: THE CASE STUDY OF  
MELITA MASCHMANN

A Thesis Presented

by

LYNDA M. WILLETT

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,  
University of Massachusetts Boston,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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History Program

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## ABSTRACT

### WOMEN UNDER NATIONAL SOCIALISM: THE CASE STUDY OF MELITA MASCHMANN

August 2012

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The case study of Melita Maschmann shows that despite the deep manipulation and gender discrimination she was subject to in her youth by National Socialism Maschmann made her own free choices as an adult and chose to zealously absorb its political ideology. The general assumption is that National Socialism, and fascism, were male dominated political ideologies in which women played a passive role, such as that professed by Gertrude Scholtz-Klink. However, many women found National Socialism appealing and became active supporters of its ideals. The purpose of this paper is to explore that appeal and analyze why certain women such as Maschmann became such strong supporters of this political ideology.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

On the 6 November 1933, Adolf Hitler made a speech declaring: “When an opponent says, “I will not come over to your side,” I calmly say, “Your child belongs to us already... You will pass on. Your descendents, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community.”<sup>1</sup> These words show the importance Hitler attached to the absolute inculcation of National Socialist ideas into German youth. The case study of Melita Maschmann shows that despite the deep manipulation and gender discrimination she was subject to in her youth by National Socialism Maschmann made her own free choices as an adult and chose to zealously absorb its political ideology. The general assumption is that National Socialism, and fascism, were male dominated political ideologies in which women played a passive role, such as that professed by Gertrude Scholtz-Klink. However, many women found National Socialism appealing and became active supporters of its ideals. The purpose of this paper is to explore that appeal and analyze why certain women such as Maschmann became such strong supporters of this political ideology.

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<sup>1</sup> David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 63.

In 1933, when Hitler gained power in Germany, Melita Maschmann was fifteen years old. Maschmann joined the female section of the Hitler Youth, the Bund Deutscher Mädel (BDM), and became an ardent supporter of National Socialism and Hitler. Maschmann underwent denazification after World War II and in the 1960s wrote *Account Rendered, A Dossier on my Former Self*, in letter and essay form to a German Jewish friend believed to be living in New York. In her writing Maschmann attempts to explore and justify some of her actions and beliefs under National Socialism. Maschmann's interpretation of National Socialism shows the appeal of the political movement led by Hitler to Germans and provides proof of the intense but hidden manipulation National Socialism applied to young German women.

Maschmann's experiences and explanations for her behavior provide a very detailed account of the effect of Hitler's policies and propaganda on young women. The influence was insidious; Maschmann at times questioned the logic of what she saw around her, but never took any action against stopping the injustices she witnessed. Maschmann was too young to vote for National Socialism but every aspect of her life was heavily influenced by its policies toward young women. Maschmann's parents disapproved of National Socialism, but had very little success when trying to remove Maschmann from the influence of National Socialism.

Maschmann's essay is not an unknown historical text. Richard Evans,<sup>2</sup> Jill Stephenson,<sup>3</sup> Daniel Jonah Goldhagen,<sup>4</sup> Claudia Koonz<sup>5</sup> and Elizabeth Harvey<sup>6</sup> all use

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*. (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005) 225, 313.

<sup>3</sup> Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, (London: Croom Helm, 1975) 207, 215.

Maschmann as a primary source. But, these historians only use extracts from Maschmann's memoir. Goldhagen uses Maschmann to explore anti-Semitism, Koonz uses Maschmann to explain the appeal of the Hitler Youth and Harvey uses Maschmann as a primary source for German occupied Poland. Also, Maschmann's memoir is not always used correctly. For example, Martyn Housden refers to Maschmann as an SS Officer.<sup>7</sup> It is easy to mistake Maschmann for an SS officer as on more than one occasion she co-operated very closely with the SS. But, as a woman Maschmann could never have been in the SS. Also, despite the frequency of the use of Maschmann's memoir it is not without controversy.

Koonz states how Maschmann's "recollections convey the same self-justification of Scholtz-Klink's reminiscences."<sup>8</sup> Koonz writes of interviewing Gertrude Scholtz-Klink in the 1980s. Scholtz-Klink was in charge of the National Socialist Women's League and a fervent member of the National Socialist Party. Maschmann never met Scholtz-Klink, but Scholtz-Klink had a huge influence over Maschmann and all German women during WWII. However, Maschmann is still worthy of study because of the differences between her and Scholtz-Klink. Maschmann had no intention of sitting at home in Germany during WWII. She volunteered to go to the Eastern occupied territories both as a member of the BDM and later as a Maidenfuhrerin. She fervently believed in

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners – Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. (New York: Vintage Books, Random House Inc, 1997), 88, 89, 103, 429.

<sup>5</sup> Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987), 162-3, 194, 399.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East, Agents and Witnesses of Germanization*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 13, 21, 153.

<sup>7</sup> Martyn Housden, *Hans Frank, Lebensraum and the Final Solution*. (Basingstoke, Hampshire, GB: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/umass>, 1, footnote 1.

<sup>8</sup> Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987), 194.

the Germanization programs for German occupied Poland and assisted the SS in expelling Polish farmers and replacing them with German settlers. Her belief in the ideology of National Socialism led her to choose to continue her work with the SS and she underwent a personal crisis over her Christian beliefs, which she found contradicted strongly with her commitment to the political ideology of National Socialism.

In 1939 Maschmann was a 21 year old single woman heading out to German occupied Poland. Scholtz-Klink was about to embark on her third marriage. Maschmann never, at any time, mixed with the Nazi elite. Scholtz-Klink speaks openly to Koonz of her meetings with Hitler and her relationships with other top Nazis. Scholtz-Klink also spoke freely to Koonz of her attempts to recruit German housewives with her “cradle and ladle” campaign.<sup>9</sup> However, Maschmann replaced her own middle class credentials in favor of the anti-materialism and class free creed of National Socialism. One of the reasons Maschmann supported the war effort of Germany was because she believed the war offered more opportunities to German women. This certainly was not the view of Scholtz-Klink. Koonz asked Scholtz-Klink if she felt Hitler’s policies for German women were adequate. Scholtz-Klink stated “Absolutely.”<sup>10</sup> Maschmann wished for more emancipation, but Scholtz-Klink simply wanted more Nazi women at home, cooking Nazi approved recipes.

Toward the end of WWII Maschmann was desperate to stay and defend Berlin. When this became impossible she joined a werewolf group with a group of SS officers and

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<sup>9</sup> Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* xxv.

<sup>10</sup> Koonz, *Ibid*, xxiv

may well have undergone some form of explosives training. However, Scholtz-Klink actively campaigned against German women volunteering for the German military in 1944.<sup>11</sup> Scholtz-Klink and Maschmann are of a different age group and mentality, but both are capable of providing historians with vital information on the female supporters and activists of National Socialism.

Koonz writes of how archivists and members of the National Socialist party were issued with kerosene in 1945 and told to burn their records of the Nazi era.<sup>12</sup> Scholtz-Klink informed Koonz that on receipt of her issue of kerosene she immediately burned all her papers. As a consequence of this, and the Nuremberg Trials, there are few truthful accounts by women of the reasons why they chose to support National Socialism.

Maschmann claims to have no knowledge of the concentration camps and the eventual fate of the Poles she expelled from their homes. Maschman also claims to have failed an interview after WWII to help National Socialists escape justice. It seems more than likely Maschmann was lying simply to protect herself and others from further prosecution and imprisonment but this is now impossible to prove.

Joanne Sayner has written an article about Maschmann in which she discusses some of the issues historians encounter when using Maschmann's memoir. Sayner states that the writer Heinrich Boll referred to Maschmann's text as "Nazistisches Nichts" and questioned the decision to publish it.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Koonz, *Ibid*, xxiv.

<sup>12</sup> Koonz, *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Joanne Sayner, "Man Mub Die Bunten Blumen Abreiben": *Melita Maschmann's Autobiographical Memories of Nazism*, *Forum of Modern Language Studies*, Vol 41, No 2, 2005: Oxford University Press, 223.

Sayner has read both the German language versions of Maschmann's text and the English language version. Sayner states that the autobiography was first published in German in 1963 and called *Fazit: Kein Rechtfertigungsversuch*. A year later it was translated into English and French. The 1963 reprinted English language version of Maschmann's essay is the one used in this paper. In 1979 the essay was republished in German as *Fazit: Mein Weg in der Hitler – Jugend*. Sayner focuses her analysis on the 1979 German language version.<sup>14</sup>

Sayner makes it clear that in the German language version of 1979 she believes the text to contain “seemingly self-critical, but often highly contradictory, depiction and interpretation of memories of the protagonist's Nazi past.”<sup>15</sup> This finding confirms the impression the reader obtains of the 1963 English language version; even if the reader uses a translated version of Maschmann's memoir the contradictions, questions and ambiguities of Maschmann's writings remain.

Maschmann's memoir is very conflicting. Maschmann wrote the memoir in the 1960s but even twenty years after WWII her explanations and memories promote, at times, nauseating National Socialist beliefs. This influence is particularly dominant when she writes of the Jewish ghetto she observed and her memories of her experiences of the peoples of Eastern Europe. Maschmann shows a full awareness of the consequences of some of her actions and is clearly at times using evasion and concealment in her memoir. But, Maschmann is also, at other times, brutally honest.

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<sup>14</sup> Sayner, 213-224.

<sup>15</sup> Sayner, 213.

Interpretation of Maschmann's text should not be based solely on her gender and with the assumption that she was a victim of a patriarchal system. This would profoundly underestimate Maschmann's commitment to the political ideology of National Socialism. Maschmann, as a young woman under the age of eighteen, was indeed indoctrinated by National Socialism. However, as time progressed, she made the choice to move from being a victim of National Socialism to becoming a perpetrator. There was not a country, political system or educational establishment that offered the same opportunities to women that were offered to men in the 1940s and National Socialism was not unusual in its discrimination against women. However, it was unusual in that it expected women to fulfill a very specific role as homemakers and producers of children fully committed to its political ideology.

Possibly if Maschmann's full commitment to National Socialism and her close work with the SS in Poland had been known her interrogation – and the jail sentence she was given - would have been very different. Women like Maschmann had a vested interest in ensuring that the belief that women within National Socialism were always victims; this idea has been continued over time. Maschmann's involvement in the BDM campaign against the Lebensborn program shows the irony of this belief. Maschmann regarded the Lebensborn program to be an aberration of National Socialism and the one part of its ideology that she, and the other members of the BDM, was vehemently against. However, at the end of WWII Maschmann found when undergoing interrogation by the Allied forces that she was not viewed as a National Socialist but as someone whose sole

purpose within National Socialism was to help replace the population losses incurred by the SS during WWII.

Maschmann could not have been the only National Socialist to find the ghettos, violent anti-semitism and treatment of the inhabitants of Eastern Europe as sub-human acceptable. But, Maschmann may well be one of the few people prepared to write frankly, albeit with limitations, about why she believed them to be necessary. Harvey refers to Maschmann's essay as an "often quoted memoir."<sup>16</sup> But, Maschmann's memoir is much more than simply being a useful primary source of a young German woman in WWII that can be quoted piecemeal. If Maschmann's beliefs and actions are interpreted via fascist ideology and within their historical context – the Treaty of Versailles, the economic and political collapse of Weimar Germany, the Nazification of German society - a different perspective is obtained and a deeper understanding of National Socialism, its influence on German society and young German women is achieved.

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<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East*, 13.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE COLLAPSE OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

#### *The economic collapse of the Weimar Republic*

As a child Maschmann had witnessed the collapse, both political and economic, of the Weimar Republic. Maschmann writes of how she became aware of the sense of shame of the adults around her at the failure of the Weimar Republic to deal with the political and economic woes of Germany. Maschmann writes of the high unemployment in Berlin and the fact that beggars were constantly knocking at her parents' door, requesting food. Maschmann writes

Part of the misery about which the adults complained daily was unemployment. One could have no conception of what it mean for four, five or even six million people to have no work. Berlin had four million inhabitants... Imagine all the families living in Berlin having scarcely enough dry bread to satisfy their hunger.<sup>17</sup>

These childhood memories became one of the key factors in Maschmann's later decision as an adult to continue with her support of the National Socialist party and its activities. Michael Evans has written a historical trilogy of National Socialism. In the first book of his trilogy Evans confirms what Maschmann witnessed.

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<sup>17</sup> Melita Maschmann, *Account Rendered, A Dossier on my Former Self*, trans Geoffrey Strachan (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1965), 15.

Evans states that in 1926 the largest financial burden on the Weimar Republic was the war reparations imposed upon them by the Treaty of Versailles, followed by the burden of welfare payments to huge numbers of disabled soldiers, war widows, orphans and the elderly. One way the Weimar Republic tried to deal with these massive outgoings was to print more money, which simply increased the hyperinflation. The Weimar Republic then tried to reduce welfare payments and began to impose strict means testing. However, the means testing simply alienated many claimants and also failed to provide adequate income for housing, clothing and food. Some Germans, driven to desperation, began to beg and turn to prostitution to make ends meet.<sup>18</sup> The economic consequences of the Treaty of Versailles and the state of Germany at the end of WWI combined to cause a catastrophic effect on the country.

David Redles provides further details on the economic collapse of the Weimar Republic. One of Redles' sources is the collection made by Theodore Abel in 1938 of biographies from Germans who, just like Maschmann, became supporters of National Socialism. One German reported that "My parents' house, which had a peace value of Rm.38,000, was sold by them for the price of a pound of butter. Bank savings shortly disintegrated to almost nothing...my parents...were simply put out on the streets."<sup>19</sup> Another eventual supporter of National Socialism is quoted as stating "many times I had hunger – I received for my millions of marks not even a breakfast roll."<sup>20</sup> The inability of

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*. (New York: Penguin 2005). 141-145.

<sup>19</sup> Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came to Power*, (New York: Harvard University Press, 1938), 17, 4, quoted in David Redles, *Hitler's Millennial Reich, Apocalyptic Belief and the Search for Salvation*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005), 24.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

the Weimar Republic to deal with its economic woes was having a devastating effect on the German people. Maschmann's early memories of the chaos of the Weimar Republic were certainly not inaccurate childish imaginings.

*The political collapse of the Weimar Republic*

Unfortunately for Maschmann the economic chaos was matched by political chaos. In fact, it is difficult to know which came first, and certainly the two factors together to the young Maschmann seemed to combine to lead her to believe that Germany was facing disaster. Maschmann writes

The desperate struggle to save democracy, which was then being fought out, was not recognized or appreciated by my parents. We never heard the grownups do anything but curse about the chaotic squabbling of this parliament. Ultimately one came to understand that things ran so wild there because the Germans had splintered into a senseless multiplicity of parties, which had their knives into one another quite literally. As I remember it, hardly a day seems to have passed when my mother did not read out a news item from the morning paper about some political murder.<sup>21</sup>

Maschmann's memories of this era of time in German politics were extremely accurate.

Ian Kershaw states that violence in German politics erupted after the end of WWI and that the Freikorps – a group that became the forerunners for the early Nazi paramilitary groups - were responsible for more than 300 political murders of left-wing politicians from 1919 until 1922. Kershaw argues that the introduction of violence into German politics could be traced back to WWI.<sup>22</sup> Just as the problems of the Treaty of Versailles could be traced back to WWI, so could the introduction of violence into German politics.

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<sup>21</sup> Maschmann, 15.

<sup>22</sup> Ian Kershaw, "War and Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe." *Contemporary European History*, Vol 14, No 1, (Feb 2005), 113-114.

### *Treaty of Versailles*

Maschmann never indicates at any time in her memoir that she was aware of any attempts to solve the controversy and problems caused by the Treaty of Versailles other than the solutions offered by National Socialism. As a child Maschmann's childhood had been heavily blighted by the consequences of the Treaty of Versailles. Maschmann was intensely aware of her mother's constant complaints of the conditions forced on Germany by the Treaty after WWI. Maschmann recalled her mother stating that "lands had been carved up on every side in a shameful dictated peace, her [Germany's] economy was in decline, thanks to the reparation payments demanded by the former enemy countries."<sup>23</sup> Maschmann absorbed from the adults around her the sense of German outrage at the conditions forced upon them. German reparation payments for WWI were stopped early in 1932, but Maschmann and her parents seemed to be unaware of the decline of international support for continuation of the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles.

It is important to remember that Maschmann and her parents were not part of a German elite; they were not privy to political chatter or particularly aware of political developments and discussions outside Germany. There was a select group of economists and politicians that attempted to amend the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles, but sadly they never succeeded. One of the members of this select group was British economist John Maynard Keynes. However, Maschmann never at any time indicates that she had any awareness of the work of people such as Keynes to solve the issues caused by the Treaty of Versailles.

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<sup>23</sup> Maschmann, 13.

Keynes was a prolific writer on economic matters and the founder of a branch of economics that was named after him - Keynesian economics. At the end of WWI Keynes worked for the British Government, attending the meetings to arrange the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. However, Keynes became deeply disturbed by what he witnessed at these meetings. In 1919 Keynes published his writings informing the British public of his objections over what he perceived as deeply unfair and unjust terms being forced upon the defeated Germans.

As an economist Keynes provides in details of tables of figures showing the export numbers from Germany of iron goods, wool and coal. But, to dismiss this as a dry economic argument against the Treaty of Versailles would be a mistake. At times Keynes seems desperate to show his humanity and compassion via his economic arguments. Keynes writes of his absolute despair over the political support for the harsh terms forced upon Germany at the end of WWI. Keynes writes of how the British electorate was led by a Coalition of British politicians to believe that “Germany could certainly be made to pay the greater part, if not the whole cost of the war...A vote for a Coalition candidate meant the crucifixion of the Antichrist [Germany] and the assumption by Germany of the British national debt.”<sup>24</sup>

The Coalition party won the election of 1918 and the proposal of the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles for Germany seemed to be a monster no politician was prepared to argue against. However, Keynes does not stop there in expressing his

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<sup>24</sup> John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, vol. II, *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*. (Cambridge UK: Macmillan and Co Ltd, St Martin's Press for the Royal Economic Society, 1971), 91.

abhorrence for the politicians who wanted these terms imposed upon Germany. Keynes writes

This was the atmosphere in which the Prime Minister left for Paris, and these the entanglements he had made for himself. He had pledged himself and his government to make demands of a helpless enemy inconsistent with solemn engagements on our part, on the faith of which this enemy had laid down his arms.<sup>25</sup>

Time and again Keynes was overruled by the politicians at the negotiating table and was unable to ensure that more fair and reasonable terms were arranged for the Treaty of Versailles. At one stage Keynes finds that expressing his frustration in the text of his writings is not enough. Keynes inserts into the footnotes of one page how he cannot even begin to fathom how the reparations expected from Germany were calculated. Keynes states:

The whole cost of the war has been estimated at from 24,400 million [British Pounds] upwards. This would mean an annual payment of interest (apart from sinking fund) of 1,200 million [British pounds]. Could any expert committee have reported that Germany can pay this sum?<sup>26</sup>

Keynes continued to be involved in a debate over the terms of the Treaty of Versailles well into the 1930s. At one stage this debate dissolved into a public spat via an exchange of letters between Lloyd George and Keynes published in *The Times*. However, Keynes was still involved in making a contribution toward trying to resolve the economic crisis for Germany. Keynes tried to find a solution for the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923; the Dawes Plan of 1928 that attempted to stop the economic impasse of the

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<sup>25</sup> Keynes, 91.

<sup>26</sup> Keynes, footnote 1, 90.

Weimar Republic and the Young Plan that ran up to the 1930s.<sup>27</sup> Sadly, none of these succeeded in providing the Weimar Republic with the economic stability it so desperately needed.

Keynes genuinely believed the Treaty of Versailles to be unjust. Keynes writes “...nations are not authorized, by religion or by natural morals, to visit on the children of their enemies the misdoings of parents or of rulers.”<sup>28</sup> It is very clear that Keynes felt the terms of the Treaty of Versailles to be a monumental mistake, both economically and morally wrong.

The problems caused by the Treaty of Versailles and the collapse of the Weimar Republic became key components ripe for manipulation by Hitler and Joseph Göbbels. They would take full advantage of these facts when gathering support for the National Socialist party. Maschmann regularly justifies in her memoir her support for many of the activities of National Socialism – particularly those in Eastern Europe – and felt these activities were acceptable as they were only putting right the wrongs that had been inflicted on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. Maschmann also argues that another reason she supported National Socialism was because she felt that not only would Hitler take on the issues caused by the Treaty but because he also offered a more socialist, egalitarian society. Maschmann originally identified National Socialism with socialism and believed that this political ideology would carry Germany forward to a better future.

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<sup>27</sup> Keynes, *Activities 1922-1932: The End of Reparations*, vol. XVIII. Edited by Elizabeth Johnson (Cambridge University Press: Macmillan, for the Royal Economic Society, 1978). 185-390

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 142.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE FUSING OF SOCIALISM WITH NATIONALISM

Maschmann's childhood exposure to the chaos of the politics of the Weimar Republic, its economic failure and her belief in the injustices inherent in the Treaty of Versailles all led her to begin to believe at the age of fifteen that National Socialism offered a solution to Germany's problems. Maschmann asserts

I believed the National Socialists when they promised to do away with unemployment...I believed them when they said they would reunite the German nation, which had split into more than forty political parties, and overcome the consequences of the dictated peace of Versailles.<sup>29</sup>

Maschmann was already beginning to develop the political ideology that would hold a huge influence over her for many years.

Maschmann was first introduced to National Socialism by her mother's dressmaker. The dressmaker, despite the fact that she was physically handicapped, wore a swastika and would talk to Maschmann of her 'socialist' convictions.<sup>30</sup> Maschmann also began to share the dressmaker's belief that National Socialism was "socialist." This belief was not an unusual one at this time in Germany. Stanley Payne writes of how Hitler championed state planning, but did not wish to end ownership of private property.

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<sup>29</sup> Maschmann, 16.

<sup>30</sup> Maschmann, 9.

However, Hitler did wish to stop the extremes of capitalism and particularly “foreign capitalist domination.”<sup>31</sup> Payne also writes of plans by the NSDAP for a “limited planned economy.”<sup>32</sup> It is therefore not surprising that both Maschmann and the dressmaker believed National Socialism meant “socialism.”

One election poster for the Nazi party from 1928 states: “Smash the world-foe, International High Finance.” The enormous figure of a muscular man wielding a swastika-adorned hammer is pummeling the building of a bank that does not reach higher than his knees.<sup>33</sup> This image, with the exclusion of the swastika, seems socialist even today and would definitely appeal to voters of a socialist persuasion. However, the NSDAP combined their “socialism” with fierce nationalism; only certain people were to be included in the planned new economy of Germany.

Michael Szaz Zoltan has written an article in which he explores the melding of German nationalism with the ideals of socialism. Zoltan states that this melding ended in a corrupted version of both ideologies; nationalism and socialism combined began to lay the ground for Hitler’s National Socialism. Although Marxist socialism with its rhetoric of revolution did not win the political battle in Germany, it had influenced the German population and socialism became more popular, particularly with the working class. The popularity of socialism led to Germans rejecting their traditional political leaders and this gradually led to nationalism being mixed with socialism, which appealed to both the

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<sup>31</sup> Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Oxford, England: Routledge, 2001), 186.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* 187.

<sup>33</sup> Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 222, a copy can be found in Illustrations.

working and middle class.<sup>34</sup> Marxist ideals had to be diluted to incorporate the appeal of nationalism but made it easier for the political party that combined both ideologies to reach a broader selection of the electorate.

The originator of Marxism was Karl Marx. Marx and his partner Friedrich Engels assert that “the proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state.”<sup>35</sup> The National Socialist party that argued in favor of centralization had incorporated this originally Marxist message. Evans writes of National Socialism’s planned economy for Germany, which Hitler called the Four Year Plan. Evans provides details of the Hermann Göring Works, otherwise known as the Reichswerke, a massive steel plant that was built under the Four Year Plan that became a major source of employment for thousands of Germans.<sup>36</sup> National Socialism was the state, therefore the Reichswerke was owned by the state, not middle class businessmen, foreign capitalists or a cabal of Jewish bankers. Hitler could prove beyond a doubt that the Reichswerke was not under the influence of “International High Finance.” It could be argued that the Reichswerke was proof that Hitler and National Socialism had begun to fulfill their promise to the German people, just as they had advertised in 1928.

Marx and Engels also state that the revolution they anticipate “cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property and on the conditions of

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<sup>34</sup> Szaz, Zoltan Michael, “Ideological Precursors of National Socialism”, *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol 16, 4, (Dec 1963), 932-934.

<sup>35</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, (Canada: Pathfinder Press, 1987), 44.

<sup>36</sup> Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 370-377.

bourgeois production.”<sup>37</sup> The German population may have rejected the idea of a Marxist revolution, but after exposure to Marxist philosophy found some of these ideas acceptable. Zoltan argues that this political melding led people to “accept the cruelty and fanaticism needed to destroy both the person and the property of their adversaries.”<sup>38</sup> It is possible this unification of socialism and nationalism explains Maschmann’s later casual acceptance of Kristallnacht.

*The consequences for Kristallnacht*

Maschmann, in Berlin on 10 November 1938, had to pick her way through pieces of broken glass and furniture scattered all over the street. Maschmann asked a policeman what had happened. The policeman’s reply was “In this street they’re almost all Jews.”<sup>39</sup> Maschmann still expressed some confusion and the policeman further clarified the situation by stating “Last night the National Soul boiled over.”<sup>40</sup> Maschmann only briefly experienced shock at this, then decided that “The Jews are the enemies of the new Germany”<sup>41</sup> and went about her business. Marx and Engels write of “confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.”<sup>42</sup> Maschmann’s belief of a new Germany, combined with her acceptance of the destruction of private property of people she believed to be enemies of the state shows the fusion of the two ideologies and its deeply undesirable consequences.

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<sup>37</sup> Marx and Engels, 44.

<sup>38</sup> Szaz, 933.

<sup>39</sup> Maschmann, 56.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>42</sup> Marx and Engels, 45.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE INFLUENCE OF GEORGES SOREL

Maschmann genuinely believed that anyone who did not fit into National Socialism's racial, ethnic and political doctrine posed a deep threat to Germany. Maschmann placed the political ideology of National Socialism before friendships, material gain and family. Maschmann, as time progressed, risked her life and went through substantial physical hardship in an attempt to ensure the goals of National Socialism were achieved.

Maschmann hated democracy and spied for the Gestapo on a school friend. She believed that individuality should be suppressed and any attempt to assert one's independence from the state was a danger to Germany. Maschmann experienced a strong emotional pull toward the myths of National Socialism and felt that losing WWI had nearly destroyed the Germany that she claimed to love above all else. Maschmann also detested her own middle class credentials and rejected materialism. At first these beliefs of Maschmann may seem strange and unconnected; they do not appear in any particular order in Maschmann's memoir and are brought up by her in what seems to be a disconnected and random fashion. Many of the beliefs of Maschmann seem, on the surface, to be very illogical. Maschmann believes in a political ideology that

discriminates against women and offers her, based solely on her gender, very little benefits. However, Maschmann seems to be unaware of any of these issues even in the 1960s when she is writing her memoir. What is clear from her memoir is her overwhelming loyalty to Germany above all other interests, including her own. A deeper understanding of Maschmann's beliefs and choices can be achieved if the political theories of the French socialist Georges Sorel and his followers are applied to her explanations for her choices and decisions.

The influence of Sorel's type of socialism and its eventual development into the ideology that led to National Socialism is vital to understanding Maschmann's beliefs. Sorel, although originally a socialist, promoted a form of socialism so strong and violent that it eventually evolved to become one of the forefathers of fascism. For Sorel and his followers there was to be no political compromise, no middle ground; any attempt at conciliation was treated as a detestable act to be dealt with by force. Zeev Sternhell explores the cultural development and expansion across Europe of fascism prior to World War I. However, Sternhell asserts "fascism can in no way be identified with Nazism"<sup>43</sup> but does state "the two regimes had common characteristics."<sup>44</sup> Sternhell argues that Sorel's writings remained deeply influential as fascism spread across Europe and tracks the influence of the ideas of Sorel and how these ideas eventually formed the basis of fascism.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology. From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*, trans. by David Maisel. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4.

<sup>44</sup> Sternhell, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Sternhell, 3-194.

The common features between fascism and National Socialism make Maschmann easier to understand. Her political beliefs and the reasons why she made the choices she did become clearer when some of the ideas and concepts of the ideology of Sorel and his followers is explored further.

### *Anti-individualism*

Maschmann writes freely of her decision to work for the Gestapo in 1938 as a spy and informer. The person that Maschmann was spying on for the Gestapo was the Jewish school friend that Maschmann claims her essay is addressed to. Maschmann shows not only how effective was the pressure applied by both the Gestapo and the Hitler Youth on her, but also the role that her political ideology began to play in this decision.

The act of spying on a friend meant that Maschmann had to suppress her own conscience, her own beliefs and individual wishes. Maschmann recalls her co-operation with the Gestapo and states “In this particular instance I did not feel justified in sparing my ‘private feelings’ or on my own individual urge to moral purity.”<sup>46</sup> Maschmann felt that Germany’s need was greater than her own personal moral and ethical code and believed that she was helping Germany by working as a spy for the Gestapo.

Maschmann had tried to persuade her Jewish school friend to join a club that Maschmann belonged to called the Elite Club. Some of the members of the Elite Club were also in the Hitler Youth. Maschmann recalls the argument with her friend and states “I knew you were Jewish and the Party was against the Jews. But, after all, of my group ‘only half’ belonged to the Hitler Youth... You refused and we argued about your

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<sup>46</sup> Maschmann, 45.

‘individualism’.<sup>47</sup> The argument in favor of individuality was totally lost on Maschmann, whose decision to suppress her own individuality led to her being able to justify working for the Gestapo and spying on her Jewish school friend. Maschmann writes of her decision at the age of seventeen, after a failed love affair, how she decided to totally embrace National Socialism instead “because your life has a meaning which is independent of yourself. It is not important that you should be happy, but it is important that you should work for Germany.”<sup>48</sup> This shows the suppression of the self, the placing of a country’s political ideology before the needs, rights and emotional desires of the individual. Maschmann recalls

It was only some fifteen years later that I came to understand the value of independent thought and freedom of action. In 1937 I wanted to devote all my energy to uniting German youth...Every kind of ‘separatism’ seemed to me to threaten the future of the Reich.<sup>49</sup>

Maschmann saw her friend’s individuality - and her friend’s desire to hold on to her individuality - as a threat to the state, a form of separatism which would weaken the state, not something to be valued and nurtured. The fact that Maschmann did not value individuality is a feature held in common with fascism and one that was expanded upon by Sorel’s followers.

Édouard Berth was one of the followers of Sorel. Berth, in his writings, states: “to be is within the group.”<sup>50</sup> Hubert Lagardelle was another follower of Sorel who argued in favor of a class-consciousness and defined it as a “sense that the cause of the whole takes

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<sup>47</sup> Maschmann, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Maschmann, 24.

<sup>49</sup> Maschmann, 44.

<sup>50</sup> Édouard Berth, *Les Méfaits des intellectuels* (Paris: Rivière, 2d ed. 1926), 286, quoted in Sternhell, 104.

precedence over the cause of the individual.”<sup>51</sup> Sternhell explains that “this idea of the primacy of the community over the individuals who comprise it is absolutely necessary to an understanding of both Sorelism and of the transition to fascism.” The idea within fascism that individuality was a weakness was present in the early part of the twentieth century, well before the rise of Nazism and WWII, but clearly had a heavy influence on Maschmann as a teenager in the 1930s.

### *Kristallnacht*

Maschmann’s memories of Kristallnacht also show the suppression of the individual. Maschmann states that by the time she witnessed the results of Kristallnacht she “had totally identified myself with National Socialism.”<sup>52</sup> Maschman could not differentiate between herself and National Socialism and it was therefore impossible for Maschmann to stand as an individual and speak out against Kristallnacht. This unity with a political ideology that replaces the beliefs and rights of the individual shows the influence of Sorel, who writes of people whom he describes as revolutionary proletariat and states:

These men may be deceived about an infinite number of political, economical, or moral questions... but their testimony is... irrefutable when it is a question of knowing what are the ideas which most powerfully move them...and thanks to which their reason, their hopes, and their way of looking at particular facts seem to make but one indivisible unity.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Hubert Lagardelle, “*Le Socialisme ouvrier*” (Paris: V. Giard & E. Brière, 1911), 6, quoted in Sternhell, 106.

<sup>52</sup> Maschmann, 57.

<sup>53</sup> Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans by T E Hulme and J Roth. (New York: Dover Publications, 2004), 127.

Sorel used this as a socialist argument for the general strike, but all those who fully embraced National Socialism demonstrated the indivisible unity of which he writes.

Maschmann explores how, at the beginning of WWII, she realized she had been absorbed into what she describes as the “Whole.”<sup>54</sup> Maschmann states that her inner voice told her “Well, for yourself you are now dead.” Maschmann then realized “Everything that was *I* had been absorbed in the *Whole!*”<sup>55</sup> The unity of National Socialism with the individual that was Maschmann was now complete. Maschmann had been fully absorbed and indoctrinated into the ideology of National Socialism. During WWII Maschmann went to Poland and came within the reach of Russian snipers as the Red Army moved into eastern Germany. However, Maschmann writes “I had no fear about myself. What happened to me did not matter. The whole which I served was not endangered by the dangers which threatened me.”<sup>56</sup> Maschmann felt that her death would be irrelevant, National Socialism would continue without her, its unity and indivisibility unbroken by the loss of one individual.

*Dislike of middle class values*

Maschmann stated that as a child she had found it offensive that her parents refused to allow their servants to eat at the same table as the Maschmann family and felt that National Socialism would succeed in “declaring war on the class prejudices of the social stratum from which I came....”<sup>57</sup> Maschmann describes her parents as having

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<sup>54</sup> Maschmann, 61.

<sup>55</sup> Maschmann, 61.

<sup>56</sup> Maschmann, 61.

<sup>57</sup> Maschmann, 10.

“bourgeois values”<sup>58</sup> which Maschmann absolutely rejected. Maschmann writes of the appeal of “a state of affairs could be created in which people of all classes would live together like brothers and sisters.”<sup>59</sup> On the surface Maschmann’s writings sound communist, but a closer examination reveals the fascist influence.

Sorel also writes of an intense dislike for the middle class. Sorel argues in favor of the proletariat using force to impose their will upon the middle class. Sorel writes “That is why our parliamentary socialists, who spring from the middle classes and who know nothing outside the ideology of the State, are so bewildered when they are confronted with working-class violence.”<sup>60</sup> Sorel further criticizes the middle class by stating “It is very difficult to understand proletarian violence as long as we think in terms of the ideas disseminated by middle-class philosophers.”<sup>61</sup>

Sorel believed that the fear the middle class and Parliamentary socialists had of violence and social unrest was a huge weakness and states “there must always be a certain amount of movement, and the middle class must always be kept in a state of fear.”<sup>62</sup> Maschmann soon became involved in the intimidation tactics of the Hitler Youth against the middle class, despite her own middle class credentials. Maschmann writes of her brother who had joined the German National Bismarck Youth. Maschmann handed over her brother’s shirt and cap displaying membership of this now banned organization to the SA men who had appeared at their door one day. Maschmann seemed to think this

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<sup>58</sup> Maschmann, 10.

<sup>59</sup> Maschmann, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Sorel, 40.

<sup>61</sup> Sorel, 80.

<sup>62</sup> Sorel, 81-82.

an amusing event, as was her memory of turning up in public in her Hitler Youth uniform at the last meeting allowed of the Bismarck Youth. Maschmann writes she only wore her Hitler Youth uniform as she had heard other Hitler Youth were due to arrive and “were planning to interrupt the proceedings. There was to be ‘no harm done – just a bit of a rumpus.’”<sup>63</sup> Maschmann admits she was disappointed none of her other colleagues from the Hitler Youth turned up. Maschmann also reports on being told, when out with her Hitler Youth group, to march as loudly as possible along the Kurfürstendamm as her Hitler Youth leader told them “This is where the rich Jews live...they need a bit of waking up from their afternoon naps.”<sup>64</sup> Maschmann writes of how, despite the low level of education of the other Hitler Youth girls and her leaders, she enjoyed the weekend activities and how on occasion “the game often degenerated into a first class brawl...fighting over a flag.”<sup>65</sup>

Maschmann never at any time seemed to believe that she or the Hitler Youth were involved in intimidating and threatening behavior. However, the fact that as a teenager she became involved in these antics and thought them amusing - and clearly experienced regret that no-one else turned up at the Bismarck Youth to ‘cause a bit of a rumpus’ - shows the change of values that the Hitler Youth represented. The adults that ran Maschmann’s Hitler Youth club were clearly comfortable with inciting teenagers to participate in aggressive, anti-social behavior. These adults wished to question the status quo of society and, by encouraging teenagers to behave in such a way, would definitely

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<sup>63</sup> Maschmann, 18.

<sup>64</sup> Maschmann, 21.

<sup>65</sup> Maschmann, 19.

be interpreted as threatening middle class values. It is hardly surprising Maschmann's middle-class parents disapproved of her membership of the Hitler Youth.

*The power of myths in National Socialism*

There may be no logic or reasoning for the appeal of myths, but its influence cannot be denied as a strong persuasive power on many Germans who witnessed the processions and assemblies of the NSDAP. Maschmann writes of the first time she witnessed a Nazi torchlight procession and states "I longed to hurl myself into this current, to be submerged and borne along by it."<sup>66</sup> Maschmann explains how even some twenty years later she can remember how emotionally moving an experience this was.

Maschmann recalls

Some of the uncanny feel of that night remains with me even today. The crashing tread of the feet, the somber pomp of the red and black flags, the flickering light from the torches on the faces and the songs with melodies that were at once aggressive and sentimental.<sup>67</sup>

Maschmann also writes of how the people in the procession had sung "For the Flag we are ready to die"<sup>68</sup> and states "I was overcome with a burning desire to belong to these people for whom it was a matter of life and death."<sup>69</sup>

Sternhell notes the influence of Sorel on the element of myth in fascist ideology and states "Sorel was becoming increasingly aware of the power of myth and of the role it can play as a catalyst for social action."<sup>70</sup> Sorel realized the argument for his extreme type of socialism was losing ground in countries where democracy worked, where

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<sup>66</sup> Maschmann, 11.

<sup>67</sup> Maschmann, 11.

<sup>68</sup> Maschmann, 11.

<sup>69</sup> Maschmann, 12.

<sup>70</sup> Sternhell, 57.

individuality was valued and where living standards were rapidly increasing. Sorel claims “As long as there are no myths accepted by the masses, one may go on talking of revolts indefinitely, without every provoking any revolutionary movement.”<sup>71</sup> An emotional appeal via the element of myth was necessary in such cases, as logic could lose the argument.

*Lack of materialism*

Maschmann displayed a strong disregard for personal wealth and personal gain. After the age of eighteen Maschmann began work for the Hitler Youth helping produce press leaflets and propaganda materials and states: “I remember clearly that I always found it unpleasant to have to receive payment for this work.”<sup>72</sup> After 1940 Maschmann refused on principle to sign a contract to stay in her job with the Hitler Youth for another two years and chose to work for free, only earning enough to cover her most basic living expenses by selling articles she wrote in her free time.<sup>73</sup> Maschmann then volunteered to work for the Hitler Youth in occupied Poland.

While in Poland Maschmann refused to become involved in hoarding goods obtained from the Polish black market. Maschmann states “For ‘us’ it was not important to have new clothes or to be able to smoke or drink coffee. These deprivations did not hurt us.”<sup>74</sup> The ‘us’ of whom Maschmann writes is other National Socialists. Maschmann felt certain any committed National Socialist could continue on without material comforts and consumer goods. Maschmann’s parents did not support National Socialism and were

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<sup>71</sup> Sorel, 49.

<sup>72</sup> Maschmann, 52.

<sup>73</sup> Maschmann, 53.

<sup>74</sup> Maschmann, 76.

struggling with the scarcity of certain goods in Germany, but Maschmann refused to help by sending them black market goods from Poland. Other people, such as her parents who did not share her commitment, would struggle. But, not the ‘us’, the group to whom Maschmann belonged, the ideologically motivated National Socialists who could take any form of physical deprivation provided it helped their movement progress forward.

Sternhell provides further explanation about why Sorel was so against the workers accepting any offer of an increase in material wealth and living conditions. Sternhell states that Sorel and his followers believed these inducements were offered to distract the workers away from any true improvement in their lives. The increases in material wealth and better living conditions were offered to the workers by the ruling class as a form of vulgar bribery, simply to distract them from their true purpose.<sup>75</sup> Sorel writes of his belief that “Economic progress goes far beyond the individual life, and profits future generations more than those who create it; but does it give glory? Is there an economic epic capable of stimulating the enthusiasm of the workers.”<sup>76</sup>

### *Glory of War*

Maschmann believed Germany to be a great entity, which had been almost mortally wounded by its enemies when losing WWI. Maschmann states: “The War [WWI] was fought over Germany, and it had been lost...I asked myself then if foreign people...had meant to march into our country and make it their own. If that were true, then one must fear and hate foreigners.”<sup>77</sup> Sorel also glorified war and argued that the

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<sup>75</sup> Sternhell, 100.

<sup>76</sup> Sorel, 247.

<sup>77</sup> Maschmann, 14.

soldiers of Napoleon had achieved glory and despite being poor men, they would live eternally on in the memories of the war in which they had fought.<sup>78</sup>

*Loathing for democracy*

Maschmann did not see the democracy that was imposed upon West Germany after WWII as its savior and was still a firm believer in National Socialism. On release from her imprisonment after WWII Maschmann writes of her “feeling that democracy was something despicable and hateful, an opponent worthy of no honorable enmity.”<sup>79</sup> Maschmann describes her struggle to obtain a ration card and housing, and how she was refused both because of her previous activities within National Socialism. However, Maschmann writes “All the unpleasantness of these circumstances was relatively easy to bear because my ‘fight against democracy’ maintained my inner tension.”<sup>80</sup>

Sternhell writes that one the key components of fascist ideology was anti-democracy. Sternhell notes that Sorel and his followers in 1905 asked “the proletariat to oppose reformism by rejecting the rules of liberal democracy.”<sup>81</sup> The *Cercle Proudhon*, which was formed in France in 1911, continued with this anti-democracy, which they also fused with nationalism.<sup>82</sup>

Sorel writes of his reasons for his loathing for democracy. Sorel states “the Parliamentarians decide on a compromise that partially satisfies the interests of those who are most influential in elections without provoking too lively protests from those who are

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<sup>78</sup> Sorel, 247.

<sup>79</sup> Maschmann, 192.

<sup>80</sup> Maschmann, 192.

<sup>81</sup> Sternhell, 100.

<sup>82</sup> Sternhell, 124.

sacrificed.”<sup>83</sup> Sorel continues with his argument that the compromises made in a democracy simply weaken the position of the proletariat. Sorel states “the workers have no money, but they have at their disposal a much more efficacious means of action; they can inspire *fear*.”<sup>84</sup> Sorel was writing prior to the collapse of the democratic system of the Weimar Republic. However, the belief that the Parliamentary system achieved nothing for the ordinary working person is abundantly clear when reading the memoirs of those Germans who eventually began to support National Socialism. Also, the use of fear against the Parliamentary system sounds very familiar when studying the history of the failure of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the NSDAP.

Sternhell writes in the epilogue of his book about people who openly “took part in the obsessive criticism of democracy....”<sup>85</sup> Not all of the people who criticized democracy were fascists, but fascist ideology and the influence of Sorel’s political writings had clearly permeated throughout continental Europe. Some of these concepts of fascism clearly filtered into National Socialism and it is therefore hardly surprising that Maschmann, who had been spoon fed the political ideology of National Socialism since she was fifteen, loathed democracy with such a passion.

However, there is clearly one element that Maschmann totally misunderstood

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<sup>83</sup> Sorel, 75.

<sup>84</sup> Sorel, 76.

<sup>85</sup> Sternhell, 251.

about National Socialism. Maschmann claims that she believed National Socialism would “give protection and justice to the weak.”<sup>86</sup> How Maschmann believed this is initially less clear.

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<sup>86</sup> Maschmann, 10.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM ON GERMAN SOCIETY

Maschmann describes the dressmaker who introduced her to National Socialism as walking with a limp and having a hunchback.<sup>87</sup> It seems very likely that the dressmaker, who wore her swastika with such pride, had absolutely no awareness of Hitler's wish to ensure "purification of the existing German gene pool."<sup>88</sup> Maschman also seems to be unaware of this element of National Socialism. In fact, she claims that she believed vulnerable Germans would be taken care of and provided for by National Socialism. However, as Koonz's research proves, Scholtz-Klink had a full awareness of the euthanasia programs of National Socialism and argues in favor of them. Maschmann and the handicapped dressmaker, unlike Scholtz-Klink, were not mixing with the Nazi elite. It is entirely feasible that they both were totally unaware of this very disturbing aspect of National Socialist Germany.

#### *National Socialism's treatment of the handicapped*

National Socialism, as Hitler's treatment of severely handicapped adults and children shows, certainly did not protect the most vulnerable and weak members of society. But, Payne confirms the murder of the most profoundly handicapped members of

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<sup>87</sup> Maschmann, 9.

<sup>88</sup> Payne, 195.

society was hidden from the German population at large. Payne also writes of Hitler's desire to cleanse the German gene pool, but again Payne makes it clear that this goal was also hidden from the population. It is therefore understandable that Maschmann expressed the belief that National Socialism would help the most vulnerable. Payne states that in 1937 forced sterilization began of the most handicapped members of society. In 1939 five thousand handicapped children were killed. However, once news began to reach the general public of these abuses Hitler stopped them.<sup>89</sup> However, Claudia Koonz's research furthers the debate of just how well known these activities were. Koonz writes of her interview of Scholtz-Klink in the 1980s in which she attempts to discuss with Scholtz-Klink the role women who supported the NSDAP played in the eugenics program. Scholtz-Klink was not interested in discussing the matter and Koonz, while questioning Scholtz-Klink, asked "But, surely women under your supervision participated in eugenics programs, turned unwilling people over to forced sterilization, and singled out 'undesirables' such as schizophrenics, alcoholics and mentally retarded children for euthanasia."<sup>90</sup> Scholtz-Klink's calm, unemotional reply was that "Germans had been inspired by sterilization laws in many American states."<sup>91</sup> Scholtz-Klink simply was not interested in discussing the issue.

Koonz then writes of her later research on the subject and finds that by 1939 some 370,000 Germans had been forcibly sterilized. It was not uncommon for NSDAP members to ensure they received exemption certificates for members of their own family

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<sup>89</sup> Payne, 196.

<sup>90</sup> Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, xxxii

<sup>91</sup> Koonz, xxxii

from these forced sterilizations. Koonz reports there were objections to the forced sterilizations and the later discovery of the final fate of the profoundly handicapped but only on a limited basis.<sup>92</sup> Koonz reports on how this information began to drift into the general population and began to have a negative effect on German society, but the issues it raised were simply pushed to one side by the military successes of Hitler's regime.<sup>93</sup>

It cannot be proved that the dressmaker who spoke so glowingly to Maschmann of National Socialism knew anything of these programs or that Maschmann ever became aware of these activities. Maschmann was considerably younger than Scholtz-Klink. It is possible that this age difference accounts for Maschmann's lack of knowledge about these issues during WWII. It is also possible that Maschmann knew nothing of the euthanasia and sterilization programs because she did not wish to know. The handicapped dressmaker who introduced Maschmann to National Socialism may have grown to regret her actions, but again these factors are lost to time; as the reader progresses with Maschmann's writings it becomes clear how selective her memories are. However, not only did Hitler wish to cleanse the German gene pool of what he claimed to be undesirable elements, he also had a genuine belief in the racial superiority of the German people.

#### *Racism within National Socialism*

Maschmann makes it clear that she genuinely believed National Socialism was Germany's only solution to its problems. Maschmann later worked as an educator in the

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<sup>92</sup> Koonz, 257-258.

<sup>93</sup> Koonz, 390.

Hitler Youth and was clearly aware of the biological role that German women were expected to play in German society. But Maschmann seems to be comfortable with this role despite the limitations and demands it placed on women. However, Maschmann's main love and interest was what was better for Germany, rather than herself. Maschmann's memoir repeatedly makes it clear that she believed Germany's interests should override all other demands. However, Maschmann seemed to be particularly vulnerable to the racist message contained within National Socialism.

Maschmann totally absorbed the racist philosophy of National Socialism and eventually became an educator in a Hitler Youth camp. Maschmann writes that one former student stated "when you were giving us ideological training about the racial question, for example, we often said to one another: 'Of course Maschi (Maschmann's nickname) doesn't believe in all the stuff she spouts. She's too sensible for that.'"<sup>94</sup> Sadly, Maschmann writes "I was far from being too sensible to believe what I said in those classes. I am surprised that my own inner conviction did not have a more convincing effect."<sup>95</sup> Maschmann claims that she did not bother to read or focus on the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 until she had to teach them, in 1941.<sup>96</sup> But clearly the prior exposure to the Nuremberg Laws had influenced Maschmann and made them seem more acceptable when Maschmann did eventually take the time to study and teach them.

Hitler's philosophy with regard to racial science may have had little influence on Maschmann's students, but it clearly influenced Maschmann. Maschmann writes of the

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<sup>94</sup> Maschmann, 131.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 132.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 46.

first time she saw the occupying French soldiers of the Rhineland. The French had used soldiers from the French colony of Algiers, and Maschmann writes of her shock at seeing these “black skinned men.”<sup>97</sup> Payne writes that fascist ideology outside of Germany did not preach a deliberate message of racism, but that the extreme nationalism of fascism naturally led into an inherent belief in the superiority of one’s own nationality and ethnicity. However, Payne does make it clear that the National Socialist party was the only one amongst all the fascist parties in Europe that developed a “sense of mystical, intra-european Nordic racism.”<sup>98</sup> Evans writes of widespread racism in all European countries between WWI and WWII, not only Germany. However, Hitler shrewdly exploited the occupation of the German Rhineland by French colonial soldiers from Algiers. Evans writes of the rumor that circulated widely throughout Germany that these foreign soldiers raped many white German women. Evans states there was absolutely no evidence of this but that any mixed-race child in Germany in the 1930s was regarded as the product of these supposed rapes.<sup>99</sup> These children were the product of consensual relationships but sadly were used to feed the propaganda machines of Hitler’s racist ideology. However, Maschmann as a young girl in the Hitler Youth would have been subject to heavy indoctrination prior to becoming an educator.

Michael H Kater provides more details about the information fed to young German women such as Maschmann. Kater states that the girls in the Hitler Youth were regularly given lectures on the racial inferiority of Jews, Gypsies and Slavs. These

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<sup>97</sup> Maschmann, 13.

<sup>98</sup> Payne, 11.

<sup>99</sup> Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 186-187.

lectures were based on the Nazi philosophy of race science.<sup>100</sup> Kater writes “German girls were to be the guardians of ‘German blood, German culture, German way of life and customs.’”<sup>101</sup> There were even manuals specifically produced for the girls in the Hitler Youth emphasizing the importance of their role in the future of the German people. The young women were the frontline troops in Hitler’s war to increase what Hitler defined as the “Aryan” gene pool, which simply could not be achieved if a German woman married a “non-Aryan.” One message that Kater states was repeatedly told to the Hitler Youth girls was that they must stop visiting Jewish physicians. More than one film was shown to the Hitler Youth girls portraying Jews and Jewish physicians as rapists and sexual predators on their young, female German patients.<sup>102</sup> The National Socialist party propaganda machine ran an extremely efficient discrimination policy against the perceived “undesirable” elements of German society. However, the National Socialist party enforced “race science” by more than just propaganda.

Blair Holmes and Alan Keele emphasize the bureaucracy that National Socialism put in place to further the discrimination against Jewish physicians. Holmes and Keele provide the narrative of Karl-Heinz Schnibbe who grew up in Hamburg. Schnibbe and his family were activists against National Socialism before and during World War II. Schnibbe writes of the procedure in place to see a physician in Germany prior to World War II. The Schnibbe family was very well acquainted with their Jewish physician, who they considered almost a family friend. But, to make any medical appointment a

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<sup>100</sup> Michael H Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 99.

<sup>101</sup> Kater, 100.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 101.

permission slip had to be obtained from the city insurance. Schnibbe writes of the reaction of the city insurance clerk when told which physician Schnibbe wished to visit. Schnibbe would be publicly chastised, or glared at and repeatedly asked to state again which physician he wished to see. Schnibbe reports that often the “Heil Hitler” salute was made with threatening overtones as he left the clerk’s office with his permission slip in hand to see the Jewish physician.<sup>103</sup> Even if Maschmann or her parents had wanted to use a Jewish physician the administrative procedures put in place by National Socialism would have made this a very difficult task. The combination of both the anti-Semitic propaganda and anti-Semitic bureaucracy shows the efficiency and success of the propaganda of the National Socialist machine with regard to enforcing its policies on race science.

#### *National Socialist Propaganda*

The opportunity for Maschmann to obtain clear, unbiased information from the media was extremely limited. Information from any source other than that approved by Joseph Göbbels was minimal. This control over the German media makes Maschmann’s later support for the invasion of Poland understandable, but it is important to remember that once in Poland it was Maschmann’s belief in National Socialist ideology that took over. However, Göbbels mastery of German media would have made a major contribution toward her initial belief in National Socialism.

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<sup>103</sup> Blair Holmes and Alan Keele, *When Truth was Treason, German Youth against Hitler*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 22.

Göbbels had been awarded a Ph.D. in 1921 from Heidelberg University<sup>104</sup> and would become the Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda in 1933 until his death in 1945. Göbbels' diaries are very articulate but also deeply disturbing. On 24 January 1939 Göbbels writes in his diary "At table the Fuhrer makes another strong plea for vegetarianism. I consider his views correct. Meat-eating is a perversion of our human nature. When we reach a higher level of civilization we shall doubtless overcome it."<sup>105</sup> Considering the activities of the Third Reich it is these thought processes that seem perverse, not the eating of meat. But, it is important to understand the influence exercised by Göbbels and the Ministry he controlled over the population of Germany, and consequently Maschmann. The Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda controlled literature, music, films, theatre, fine arts and journalism.<sup>106</sup>

Evans provides proof of the control Göbbels had over the media in Germany under National Socialism. Evans includes a copy for an advertisement for the "People's Receiver."<sup>107</sup> This radio set could only receive domestic broadcasts that were firmly under the control of Göbbels' Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. Evans writes of the growth of the popularity of radio as a source of information in 1930s Germany and states "in 1934 over six million radio sets were in use in Germany, and by the middle of 1939 over 70 per cent of households in Germany owned a wireless, the

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<sup>104</sup> Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*. 203.

<sup>105</sup> Joseph Göbbels, *The Göbbels Diaries, 1939-1941*, trans by Fred Taylor (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982) 6.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid* 7.

<sup>107</sup> Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Illustration Number 8.

highest percentage of any country in the world, including the USA.”<sup>108</sup> The vast majority of these radio sets were People’s Receivers and Evans writes of Goebells making clear his plans that “‘radio will be purged’ of nonconformists and leftists.” Anyone expressing an opinion that contradicted National Socialism was banned from radio. Evans writes of radio wardens who would arrange for speeches by Hitler to be broadcast in public gathering places. There were plans for 6,000 loudspeaker pillars to be installed all over Germany that would broadcast National Socialism propaganda via radio. This plan was interrupted by the outbreak of WWII,<sup>109</sup> but Maschmann would still have heard this propaganda via the existing public broadcasting of the radio every day. Her opportunities for obtaining truthful news reporting and alternative viewpoints would have been extremely limited.

Holmes and Keele have included copies of a number of official National Socialist documents in their book. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1939 Göbbels made a decree stating “Intentional listening to foreign radio stations is forbidden. Whoever willfully distributes the broadcasts of foreign stations which are designed to endanger the strength of resistance of the German people, will, in particularly severe cases, be punished with death.”<sup>110</sup> In 1939 Maschmann would have been twenty-one. By this time Maschmann had been immersed in propaganda supporting National Socialism since 1933, when she was fifteen. Also, if in 1939 Maschmann had become aware of an opportunity to obtain information from a foreign radio station, the decision to listen would now potentially be a

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 133.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 135.

<sup>110</sup> Holmes and Keen, 145.

matter of life or death. However, it was not just in the Hitler Youth or via the media controlled by Göbbels that National Socialist policies were promoted. National Socialism was also heavily influencing the German education system.

*Nazification of the German education system*

Maschmann writes of her last year of education in the German public school system. When Maschmann told her parents of her membership of the Hitler Youth a large family argument ensued. Maschmann's parents firmly disapproved of her membership of the Hitler Youth. Maschmann's parents then decided to send Maschmann to a boarding school, believing this would help distance her from the Hitler Youth. However, the leader of Maschmann's local Hitler Youth group recommended the boarding school, telling Maschmann "I expect you to do excellently in your Abitur examinations. The Hitler Youth needs people with a sound education."<sup>111</sup> Maschmann does not provide the reasons why her parents followed this recommendation, which seems strange considering their dislike of the Hitler Youth. However, Koonz provides clues as to why Maschmann's parents may have followed this advice.

There could be very unpleasant consequences for a family and a school that attempted to remove or block children from the Girls' Hitler Youth. Koonz writes of one girl leader within the Hitler Youth who reported both her school principal and her parents to the Gestapo when they tried to stop her attendance.<sup>112</sup> Koonz also reports of other young German girls forced to join the Hitler Youth "because of grave consequences to

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<sup>111</sup> Maschmann, 30.

<sup>112</sup> Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*. 194-195.

families whose children did not join.”<sup>113</sup> Also, after 1933 it would have been impossible for Maschmann’s parents to find a school free of the influence of National Socialism which heavily influenced all education for children and adolescents. Koonz provides more details on the nazification of the German education system, with a particular emphasis on female students.

The person in charge of girls’ education was Frau Dr Auguste Reber-Gruber. Koonz states that Reber-Gruber claimed her sole objective was “the moulding of German girls as carriers of the National Socialist point of view.”<sup>114</sup> Koonz writes of some 120,000 female teachers under the control of Reber-Gruber, of whom 83,000 belonged to the National Socialist Teachers Union.<sup>115</sup> The opportunity for Maschmann’s boarding school education to decrease her commitment to National Socialism was negligible. It would not matter which school Maschmann attended. It was simply too late for Maschmann’s parents to remove her from the influence of National Socialism in the German education system. At the age of eighteen Maschmann successfully passed her Abitur examination. After a brief period of time working for the Labor Service Maschmann returned home, hoping to attend University. Maschmann wished to study German and philosophy, but her father was now unemployed. Again, the Hitler Youth became involved in Maschmann’s education, and offered her the chance of working for them for two years, after which time her University application and need for a

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 341.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 200.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 204.

scholarship would be given “sympathetic consideration.”<sup>116</sup> Maschmann found this a very acceptable option and embraced her work with the Hitler Youth. However, Koonz’s research proves that the chances of Maschmann obtaining a place at University were very low.

Koonz writes of the discrimination National Socialism showed against educating women. Koonz describes National Socialism’s philosophy toward women as “anti-intellectual.”<sup>117</sup> Reber-Gruber’s Ph.D was in physical education, which was an acceptable specialty for a woman under National Socialism. Koonz further states that Reber-Gruber furthered the anti-intellectual movement for women by promoting the teaching of “home economics, psychology, folk art, eugenics and physical education.”<sup>118</sup> Koonz’s research also ascertained that in 1933 there were 20,000 women students in German Universities, but in 1939 the number of women in German universities had gone down to 5,500. Koonz further states that under National Socialism the reduction of women teachers had begun in 1933 and the total number had dropped by 15 per cent. This meant that as there were less female teachers, it could be argued there was no need to send women to university to learn to become a teacher. Also, no female teacher was to be granted tenure before the age of 35. It was believed that lack of tenure before the age of 35 would maximize the number of children a woman would produce in her prime childbearing years.<sup>119</sup> However, Maschmann was unaware of these facts and admits that she believed in time she would be allocated a University place. Maschmann writes “I took my place in

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<sup>116</sup> Maschmann, 31-47.

<sup>117</sup> Koonz, 203-204.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 208.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 201.

the queue...without a murmur”<sup>120</sup> and began to work in the press and propaganda section of the Girls’ Hitler Youth until the outbreak of WWII in 1939.

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<sup>120</sup> Maschmann, 48.

## CHAPTER 6

### MASCHMANN'S ACTIVITIES AS A NATIONAL SOCIALIST

#### *Support for the invasion of Poland in 1939*

Maschmann fully supported the invasion of Poland in 1939, as she believed this was an attempt to stop the massacre of any more innocent Germans living in what was now Poland. Maschmann's belief provides proof of the deep manipulation applied by the Third Reich to its own population. Maschmann writes of visiting refugee camps in 1938 set up to help Germans expelled from the Sudetenland by Czechoslovakia. Maschmann was shocked by the suffering of the German refugees she found in these camps and writes "it could not be the ineptness of his (Hitler's) policies which had led to such an aggravation of the situation – it could only be the power lust and envy of our enemies."<sup>121</sup> Maschmann had inherited from the older generation of Germans a sense of outrage at the terms of the Treaty of Versailles with regard to the way it had divided the German people and lands up post WWI. This sense of outrage combined inside Maschmann's mind with the misery she saw in the German refugee camps in 1938. The news in 1939 from the Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda "60,000 German nationals are

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<sup>121</sup> Maschmann, 59.

supposed to have been murdered in an appallingly savage manner”<sup>122</sup> in Poland gave Maschmann all the justification that she needed to support the invasion.

Evans confirms that The Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda gave the German press instructions as early as August 1939 to begin “a hate campaign against Poland that made it seem as if the ethnic German inhabitants of the country...were in constant, mortal and growing danger from violence meted out to them by Poles.”<sup>123</sup> The SS became involved in faking scenes of ordinary Germans being massacred by Poles. This false information and faked massacre footage was used by the Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda to great effect. Sadly, Maschmann does acknowledge in her writing that she learnt the truth of this situation only after WWII. As Maschmann’s only source of information during WWII was firmly under the control of Göbbels it is not totally surprising that Maschmann supported the invasion of Poland. In fact, Maschmann felt such a strong support for the invasion of Poland that she accepted an invitation to complete her editorial training for the Hitler Youth newspapers and magazines by working in the newly occupied territory in Poland.<sup>124</sup>

*Work For the Hitler Youth in German occupied Poland*

Maschmann believed that the starving Polish children she saw in German occupied Poland were a serious threat to Germany. Hitler was not the originator of the belief that Poland with its large population and the higher birth rate of the Polish people were a danger to Germany. However, National Socialism shrewdly chose to develop and

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>123</sup> Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 695.

<sup>124</sup> Maschmann, 60-62.

perpetuate this belief to such an extent that Maschmann, despite her initial reluctance, decided to take no action at all to alleviate the suffering of the Polish people. Maschmann attempts to justify in her memoir why she believed during WWII that if there were more Poles than Germans, the continuation of the German people would be threatened.

Maschmann saw Polish children begging for food, elderly Poles collapsing and dying in front of her and starving Polish adults. Maschmann writes that she once found the sight of an eight year old Polish girl trying to avoid being beaten by a German sentry for stealing coal so distressing that she intervened on the girl's behalf. However, Maschmann did also notice that the Polish children had feet bound in rags and that they "mistrusted my (Hitler Youth) uniform."<sup>125</sup> Maschmann at first felt a strong empathy for the Polish children, but became subject to heavy pressure from other Germans for her compassion toward the Poles. Maschmann began to question the wisdom of her action of helping the young Polish girl and used the racial science and population politics she had been indoctrinated with in both her childhood and the Hitler Youth to justify her actions.

National Socialism promoted the belief that the German race was superior to the Slavic race. However, Hitler had shrewdly picked up on the fear within Germany prior to the rise of the NSDAP of the ability of the Slavic population to outnumber the German population. What is interesting is how widespread this belief was, even amongst Germans who did not support the NSDAP.

Maschmann recalled seeing in her childhood a map of Europe that showed the birthrate of the German and Polish people. The map showed the Polish birthrate as

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 65.

greatly outstripping the German birthrate. As a young child Maschmann had showed the map to her father who explained to her that it was an illustration of how German families had far fewer children than the Polish families. Her father also explained that the depiction of a scared little girl sitting on the area of the map that was Germany was very accurate. Maschmann's father told her the little girl had a lot to fear from the boy who was crawling over from Poland to the German side of the map. Maschmann reports her father said "Look at the boy...he is bursting with health and strength. One day he will overrun the little girl".<sup>126</sup>

Maschmann's parents never at any time approved of National Socialism, but clearly this fear of the German population being overrun by the Poles and others from Eastern Europe was very shrewdly manipulated and developed further by National Socialism. Maschmann received the message from her parents and from National Socialism that the population in Eastern Europe was a serious threat to Germany. Maschman began to argue that this had provided her with the proof that she needed to believe that the "Nordic nations were threatened with annihilation by the biological superiority of the Slavs."<sup>127</sup> Elizabeth Harvey further explains the fear prior to WWII that the Germans had of their East European neighbors.

Harvey writes of Else Frobenius, who was the only female member of the German Protection League. Harvey states that Frobenius firmly believed that German women were "nurturers of national identity"<sup>128</sup> and prior to WWII Frobenius worked tirelessly to

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<sup>126</sup> Maschmann, 66.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>128</sup> Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East*, 29.

disseminate this idea. Harvey further explains that this message appealed greatly to the female political activists of a nationalist persuasion that existed in Germany. These groups then began to actively support better rights for German minority populations, particularly those in Eastern Europe. The Treaty of Versailles had led to the division of previously German territories of geographical areas of Eastern Europe after WWI. This meant that Danzig, Eastern Prussia and Upper Silesia – previously German territory and with German speaking populations - had been left inside Poland. Women in Germany were told how German children in these geographical areas were stopped from attending German kindergartens and forced to attend Polish language kindergartens. Harvey also writes of how the reduced German birth rate, in both Eastern Europe and within Germany itself had become a concern.

Harvey confirms that prior to WWII the German population was fed propaganda material that suggested that they were deeply imperiled as a people by the Poles. Harvey writes of the German public being told that they had a “bleeding border”<sup>129</sup> and could be overrun anytime by their east european neighbors. But, although they were told of the greater numbers of the Poles, they were also fed messages of how inferior the Poles were to the Germans.<sup>130</sup> Harvey provides details of an article that Frobenius wrote in 1921, in which Frobenius states:

Whoever has traveled through Poland knows what happens in a short time to any area under Polish rule: desolate tracts of land, decaying huts, impassable roads, begging ragged people on the streets...it is this which is happening today in

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<sup>129</sup> Harvey, 33.

<sup>130</sup> Harvey, 24-31.

Upper Silesia. The Poles are penetrating into areas which under international law belong to Germany.<sup>131</sup>

Maschmann also became aware of letters supposedly written by Polish Catholic priests to Polish women, encouraging them to have more babies with any Polish man they could find to ensure the continuation and exponential growth of the Polish people. She states that after WWII she began to believe these letters to be forgeries, produced by National Socialism's propaganda machine.<sup>132</sup> But, her earlier instruction in eugenics made her so vulnerable to the information contained in these letters during WWII that she began to fully support the harshness of the treatment meted out to Polish children and adults in the occupied territory. However, Maschmann also witnessed the Kutno ghetto, which the local Jewish population had been forced to occupy.

#### *Kutno Ghetto*

Maschmann uses her political ideology to justify the ghetto, despite claiming that she was deeply disturbed by the sight of the suffering of the few Jewish children she saw there.<sup>133</sup> Maschmann believed the ghetto was necessary because "the driving out of the Jews is one of the unfortunate things we must bargain for if the 'Warthegau'<sup>134</sup> is to become a German country."<sup>135</sup> Maschmann also argues that "since I had seen the sufferings of the German community, some of who had been killed by the Poles, I believed I had learned that one must harden oneself against the sight of human

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<sup>131</sup> Harvey, 28.

<sup>132</sup> Maschmann, 67-69.

<sup>133</sup> Maschmann, 82.

<sup>134</sup> A geographical area of Eastern Europe that prior to WWII was part of Poland.

<sup>135</sup> Maschmann, 82.

suffering.”<sup>136</sup> Sadly, Maschmann’s other observations of the Kutno ghetto become even more contradictory, offensive and pro-Nazi, even in the 1960s, which is when she wrote her memoir.

Maschmann writes that when she first saw the Kutno ghetto she saw the inhabitants wearing “costly fur coats and carefully made up faces. But what not merely amazed but annoyed me was that the detainees were obviously not required to do work of any kind.”<sup>137</sup> This deeply distasteful pro-Nazi prose provides proof of just how deeply the rabid anti-semitism of National Socialism had influenced her. Clearly, even in the 1960s Maschmann seemed to be unable to totally break free of the indoctrination of National Socialism.

Yad Vashem, Israel’s official Holocaust History Museum, contains details of the Kutno ghetto. Yad Vashem reports that the Kutno ghetto was one of the lesser-known ghettos in occupied Poland and only ever contained a maximum of 7,000 inhabitants. The Yad Vashem collection consists of photographs and a film made by Germans of the Kutno ghetto which is described as one of the more “unusual” ghettos with a busy outdoor life and originally possessing a thriving black market. In the Yad Vashem collection of photographs the occupants of the Kutno ghetto can be observed working and trading their wares in the fresh air in 1941. Sadly, Yad Vashem reports that the occupants

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<sup>136</sup> Maschmann, 83.

<sup>137</sup> Maschmann, 84.

of the Kutno ghetto that were still alive in 1942 were sent to the Chelmno extermination camp; only 213 Jewish people of the Kutno ghetto were left alive at the end of WWII.<sup>138</sup>

Maschmann definitely witnessed the Kutno ghetto as both Yad Vashem and Maschmann state that the ghetto was within the confines of a war damaged former sugar factory. Maschmann claims that when she later revisited the Kutno ghetto a high fence had replaced all the open fencing that Maschmann had originally used for her observations and it was now impossible to look into the ghetto.<sup>139</sup>

Maschmann then began to focus on her training as an editor for the Hitler Youth. Maschmann passed her examination and then, as her editor in training work for the Hitler Youth had been unpaid, began to seek another job. Maschmann's next employment was in the Labour Service as a leader of maidens (Maidenfuhrerin). Maschmann, despite the suffering of the Polish and Jewish people that she had witnessed first hand, still strongly supported the occupying of Eastern Europe and in 1942 became actively involved in further settlement of Poland by Germans.

*Work in occupied Eastern Europe as a Maidenfuhrerin*

Maschmann's activities as a Maidenfuhrerin show what a key role the German women in Poland played in ensuring that Hitler's National Socialist policy and objectives for the east were achieved. The Maidenfuhrerins were not just in Poland to wash socks and iron shirts for exhausted SS officers. They were a vital part of the National Socialist

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<sup>138</sup> Yad Vashem [http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/our\\_collections/kutno/index.asp](http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/our_collections/kutno/index.asp). Retrieved 4/4/2012.

<sup>139</sup> Maschmann, 85.

vision for Eastern Europe and without their assistance and commitment it would have been impossible for this goal to be achieved.

As a *maidennführerin* Maschmann became involved in removing the original Polish inhabitants and helping Germans settle into the formerly Polish farms and villages. Maschmann's key role in the German resettlement of Eastern Europe is further explained by Martyn Housden. Housden reports that German occupied Poland was under the jurisdiction of Hans Frank. Frank was a German lawyer who became a member of the NSDAP and eventually became legal advisor to Hitler. He was appointed as Governor General of Poland in 1939. Housden confirms that one of the objectives of Frank, as head of the Government General in occupied Poland, was to change the population of Eastern Europe. Housden writes

Events and policies in the Government General were related to a vision for Europe which became apocalyptic. The continent was not just to be re-structured economically, but also in terms of its population composition. . . In the early 1930s apparently Hitler had spoken about the need to create a racial core of 80 to 100 million Germans in Central Europe<sup>140</sup>

Harvey provides more details of the tasks that Maschmann fulfilled in occupied Poland to ensure National Socialism's vision of an Eastern Europe occupied by Germans turned into reality. Harvey reports that the leaders of maidens and maids of works would firstly welcome the German families who had been allocated for resettlement in the east and ensure they had food and temporary accommodation. The SS would then clear the allocated area of the current Polish inhabitants, and the German resettlers would be

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<sup>140</sup> Housden, *Hans Frank, Lebensraum and the Final Solution*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire, GB: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/umass>, 129.

moved into the area. The leaders of maidens and maids of work would assist the German resettlers by helping them clean the house, providing childcare, helping with the laundry, light farm work and simple animal husbandry. Maschmann confirms all this, and states that she did become actively involved in clearing out the Polish inhabitants to make way for the new German settlers. Harvey reports that great controversy rages around the role played by women in National Socialism over the assistance they gave the SS in helping German settlers into Polish properties.

Harvey states that Maschmann is unusually frank and truthful in that she admits to witnessing and being involved in the expulsion of Poles from their properties. Harvey writes of other former BDM leaders and Maidenfuhrerin in Poland helping with resettlement who deny witnessing any expulsion of Poles.<sup>141</sup> One argument these women used was that the SS did this job. But, Maschmann's memoir provides evidence that this argument certainly did not apply to all the Maidenfuhrerins in occupied Poland.

*Maschmann's choice to assist the SS in Eastern Europe*

One day an SS officer approached Maschmann. Maschmann claims the SS officer told her that "he no longer had enough men at his disposal... his section had again been combed for men who were fit for active service, and he did not know how he would manage to carry through the resettlement without our help."<sup>142</sup> Maschmann admits that at first she experienced absolute fury at being asked to stand in for the SS officers and "to do this man's work."<sup>143</sup> However, Maschmann's political ideology overtook her anger.

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<sup>141</sup> Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East*, 153.

<sup>142</sup> Maschmann, 119.

<sup>143</sup> Maschmann, 119

Maschmann states “I knew very well that my superiors would give me every support if I was not prepared to perform the task that was required of me.”<sup>144</sup> But, Maschmann made no such choice. She thought about her options and claims that she chose to carry out the expulsions of the Polish inhabitants of the villages without the help of the SS to ensure the German settlers would not arrive in occupied Poland and find themselves homeless. Maschmann reports that she spoke to the Maidenfuhrerins she was in charge of and asked if they were prepared to help her with this job. Maschmann reports that “not one of them hesitated for a moment.”<sup>145</sup>

Maschmann admits she knew, based on her gender alone, she had a choice about whether to take on this task or not. It would have been very easy for Maschmann, and the other maidenfuhrenins, to refuse this task, using the argument that as women it would have been totally unsuitable work for them. But, their political ideology was so strong they instead chose to continue the work of the SS without the help or protection of the SS.

Harvey may well have had problems finding German women prepared to tell her the truth about what went on in Eastern Europe, but clearly on reading Maschmann it is not difficult to deduce some of these women were simply lying to Harvey about the degree to which they were involved. Maschmann not only writes of her fury at being asked to stand in for SS Officers and to do their job, but also of how difficult it was to ensure that the Poles only took what the regulations stated they were entitled to take.

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<sup>144</sup> Maschmann, 119.

<sup>145</sup> Maschmann, 119.

Maschmann insists she followed to the letter the regulations that stated the Poles could only take with them what fitted onto a cart. Maschmann admits that she single handedly insisted on making Poles unload their carts so she could check item by item that the regulations had been followed. Maschmann also claims that she ensured only a bare minimum of furniture was left in the formerly Polish properties as was legally allowed. Maschmann argues that the compulsory expulsion of the Poles was acceptable, as Germans had been forcibly relocated after WWI from their farms. Maschmann had retained very clear childhood memories of an elderly East German woman who had lost her family home in the redrawing of German borders after WWI. This elderly woman was a frequent visitor to the family and Maschmann absorbed from her the sense of injustice the elderly woman felt over losing her land and home.<sup>146</sup>

Maschmann shows more concern over the legality of the action of expelling an East European family from their farm than the morality. Maschmann is extremely careful to ensure that her memoir makes it clear that she followed, absolutely to the letter, the legal guidelines as laid down by National Socialism in her treatment of the Poles. Maschmann states “sometimes I had no choice but to make the Poles unload one of the carts and then to specify exactly which things could be loaded up again and which must be left behind.”<sup>147</sup> The vision of Maschmann, following to the minutest detail an inspection of an east european’s possessions prior to expelling them from their own property toward probable death from starvation or even worse is portrayed very clearly.

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<sup>146</sup> Maschmann, 12.

<sup>147</sup> Maschmann, 121.

However, Maschmann is intensely careful to ensure in her memoir that it is clear that she never personally stole any money or property or experienced any personal gain from the forced expelling of the Polish inhabitants. Maschmann would, at times, be the only person driving the Poles out of their homes, but she insists that she would ensure they only took what they were entitled to and never helped herself to any of their possessions.<sup>148</sup>

Daniel Jonah Goldhagen writes of the work of the committed National Socialist ideologues that were in Poland during WWII. Goldhagen writes of a Captain Wolfgang Hoffmann who refused to sign a declaration stating that he and his men knew they were not to “steal, not to plunder, and not to buy without paying.”<sup>149</sup> Hoffman argues that this declaration was unnecessary because “his men, of proper ideological conviction, were fully aware that such activities were punishable offenses.”<sup>150</sup> Goldhagen’s research confirms that Hoffman and Maschmann placed their National Socialist political ideology before personal gain and individual choice. This shows how deeply they had become immersed in National Socialism. It is possible they could both be described as ordinary Germans, but their actions toward the Poles were far from ordinary.

Hoffman found it incomprehensible and shocking how anyone could think that German soldiers under his command could steal and loot. But, Hoffman and his men found it morally acceptable to indulge in the rampant ethnic cleansing that National Socialism demanded of its soldiers in the east. Maschmann felt that provided regulations

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<sup>148</sup> Maschmann, 121.

<sup>149</sup> Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners, Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, (New York: Vintage Books, Random House Inc, 1997), 3.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

were followed when expelling Polish people from their own farms this work was morally acceptable. Hoffman also felt that his work was morally and legally acceptable as there was no theft, looting or personal gain involved.

Both Hoffman and Maschmann never at any time made any individual profit from their work in occupied Poland. Both Hoffman and Maschmann believed their ethnic cleansing to be legally and morally acceptable. Maschmann may not have pulled the trigger on the Poles she ethnically cleansed. Maschmann may not have heard of the concentration camps or realized how severe they were if she did know of them. But, it can safely be assumed that the Poles that Maschmann encountered found their chances of survival greatly decreased.

The writings and statements provided by the NSDAP General Governor Hans Frank also provide clues as to why Maschmann and Hoffman believed their work to be legally enforceable and therefore acceptable. Also, why they both found extermination and ethnic cleansing acceptable, but theft, looting and stealing for personal gain from the Polish people reprehensible. The Allies arrested Frank in 1945. While under arrest Frank handed over his diary which he had written from 1939 to 1945. The diary consists of 38 volumes, the contents of which were used by the Allies in Frank's trial in Nuremberg in 1946. Stanislaw Piotrowski has produced an edited version of Frank's diary, which provides vital clues as to not only the policies, but also the activities that Frank argued were legal and within his remit as Governor General of Poland during its occupation during WWII. On 6 November 1940 Frank made a speech stating "we are not interested in...the Poles getting richer or more secure...we have here solely a gigantic labour camp

where everything which stands for power and individuality is in German hands.”<sup>151</sup>

Frank also stated on 23 April 1940 “The Jews do not interest me in the least...Poles we will feed by allotting them whatever there is to spare...we are not talking about a ration for the Poles but only of the possibilities of feeding them.”<sup>152</sup> The ideology of National Socialism meant that its laws allowed for Maschmann and Hoffman to behave as they did.

In 1946 Hans Frank was put on trial at Nuremberg for the atrocities committed in Poland against the Polish population. Frank, during his trial over the activities of the SS in Poland, states:

I was not informed about anything. I heard about special action commandoes of the SS here during this trial...following my appointment, special powers were given to Himmler and my competence in many essential matters was taken away from me...my aim was to safeguard justice, without doing harm to our war effort.<sup>153</sup>

However, Harvey states that the Germans who were living in Poland must have been aware of the policy of National Socialism toward the Jews. Harvey states “the mass murder of the Jews soon became common knowledge among the Germans – men and women alike – who were living and working there.”<sup>154</sup> However, Harvey has found it very difficult to provide absolute proof of how much the German women knew about the final fate of the Poles and Jews whose properties were taken. Maschmann writes “Whenever we asked a SS Fuhrer where the Poles whose expulsion we had witnessed

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<sup>151</sup> Hans Frank, *Hans Frank's Diary*, edited by Stanislaw Piotrowski. (Poland, Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1961). 98.

<sup>152</sup> Hans Frank, *Hans Frank's Diary*, 99.

<sup>153</sup> <http://law2.unkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/nuremberg/franktest.html>. Retrieved 2/29/2012. 4.

<sup>154</sup> Harvey, 18.

went to, we were told they went to farms vacated by German settlers or that they were resettled in the ‘General Government’ (the central area of Poland left between the German occupied and Russian occupied zones).”<sup>155</sup> Maschmann felt this was all the information she needed and never questioned again the fate of the Poles that she made homeless. But, by this stage in her life Maschmann seemed to have acquired an amazing ability to only acquire the information that suited her needs.

As time progressed, Maschmann began to acquire more responsibility and became responsible for the “Germanization” of a group of properties deep inside Poland. This “Germanization” of the properties was achieved with the help of what was left of the local Polish population and German resettlers. The Germans and Poles worked side by side on the farms and Maschmann witnessed the Polish devotion to the Catholic Church. Maschmann found the Polish population’s deep religious beliefs very disturbing.

#### *National Socialism as a Religion*

Maschmann states of the Poles she observed praying that she “hated them because they took God so seriously.”<sup>156</sup> By this stage in her life Maschmann felt a deep contradiction between National Socialism and the Christian religion. National Socialism had become Maschmann’s religion. Maschmann writes that she “had gradually absorbed all the mistrust of the Church which the party cultivated...the churches were opposed to National Socialism. I had not verified this assertion. I took it over. It was in the air.”<sup>157</sup> The very piety of the Polish people was therefore abhorrent to Maschmann, who found it

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<sup>155</sup> Maschmann, 122.

<sup>156</sup> Maschmann, 109.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 113.

an affront to National Socialism. Michael Burleigh explores the contradictions between the Church and National Socialism.

Burleigh focuses his paper on “those who witnessed the rise of Nazism”<sup>158</sup> and provides details of the explanations of these people as to the links between National Socialism and religion. Burleigh provides the testimony of Christopher Dawson, who in 1934 wrote

It is not that the Nazi movement is anti-religious. The danger is rather than it has a religion of its own which is not that of Christian orthodoxy... There is the neo-paganism of the extreme pan-German element, there is the Aryanized and nationalized Christianity of the German Christians, and there is the racial and nationalistic idealism... which... tends to develop a mythology and ethic of its own that may easily take the place of Christian theology and Christian ethics.<sup>159</sup>

Burleigh further explains that this meant “while the Churches restrained the beast in man, Nazism deliberately unleashed it. Furthermore... the young were also liberated from traditional sources of moral constraint, whether represented by clerics, teachers or their own parents.”<sup>160</sup> This observation by Burleigh does provide clues as to how Maschmann could witness the suffering of the Poles and Jews, but feel so little empathy for them. The only human life Maschmann valued prior to and during WWII were the lives of Germans that fitted into National Socialism’s racial and quasi-religious guidelines. While Maschmann continued her work in Poland Germany began the invasion of Russia. German men seemed to be in very short supply to help with the resettlement of Poland

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<sup>158</sup> Michael Burleigh, “National Socialism as a Political Religion” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 1, no 2, (2000), 2.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 19.

and Maschmann's work began to branch out even more from the expected and traditional role of a leader of maidens.

One of the German settlers in Poland died and with no priest available it fell upon Maschmann to lead the religious service and burial. Maschmann desperately wished to avoid saying the Lords Prayer, but found it impossible to evade. While leading the group in prayer, Maschmann writes "I was overcome with weakness and sweat ran from every pore."<sup>161</sup> Maschmann further explains "I believed all kinds of Christian activity to be forbidden."<sup>162</sup>

Eventually, in 1943 Maschmann's two years in Poland came to an end, and she returned to Berlin to work as an editor in the BDM, the Girls' Hitler Youth. Gradually Maschmann became aware of the fact that Germany seemed to be losing the war. But, this stage in her life is overshadowed by the death of her parents in September 1944 from a bombing raid carried out by the British that killed approximately 13,000 people in just one night.<sup>163</sup>

Maschmann goes into deep shock at the death of her parents and the devastation wreaked on Germany by the bombing raids. The local BDM leader told Maschmann that she was "unstable,"<sup>164</sup> but presumably because labor was in such short supply, Maschmann was allocated the task of trying to assist German refugees seeking shelter from the bombing raids and the advancing Red Army. Carnage and death almost became a daily occurrence for Maschmann. Eventually Maschmann fled to southern Germany,

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<sup>161</sup> Maschmann, 116.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 138-152.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 155.

where she underwent werwolf training in which SS officers taught her sabotage techniques.

*Werwolf Groups in Germany*

As it became clear that Germany was losing the war Maschmann was specifically chosen to attend werwolf training by the SS. It is unclear exactly how the SS chose Maschmann, she does not provide the details or list the selection process that was used. But, although Maschmann evades telling the reader how she was selected what is clearer is why Maschmann was hand-picked by the SS for werwolf training.

Maschmann's commitment to National Socialism had not wavered for a moment. She was regularly risking her life by taking trips to the very frontlines of east Berlin with groups of children from the Hitler Youth, who would sing to the German soldiers to encourage them to fight on against the Russians. Maschmann was also fitting out evacuated houses on the eastern front of Berlin for the soldiers to use as temporary housing.<sup>165</sup> This work was extremely dangerous; Maschmann was in constant danger from the Russian snipers, airplanes and artillery shells and on more than one occasion was nearly killed. However Maschmann claims "I was firmly convinced that I would not outlive the 'Third Reich.' If it was condemned to go under, then so was I."<sup>166</sup> Maschmann had not altered or changed her commitment to National Socialism at all over the years, even though she had witnessed its brutality in Eastern Europe, and was now witnessing its collapse.

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<sup>165</sup> Maschmann, 161-166.

<sup>166</sup> Maschmann, 163.

However, Maschmann initially refused to abandon Berlin and chose to ignore the first order from the SS to attend werwolf training.<sup>167</sup> It is clear that Maschmann did not ignore this order out of fear of the risks that would entail from joining a werwolf group. Not only was Maschmann prepared to risk her own life defending Berlin, she had also risked the lives of the German children she took to the frontlines. To Maschmann it was incomprehensible that anyone, including children, could abandon National Socialism. Maschmann claims “I had gone into the war prepared to die, and this I was still ready to do.”<sup>168</sup> Sadly, Maschmann was prepared to take small German children with her as well. However, Maschmann’s decision to ignore the first order for her to attend for werwolf training shows the degree of freedom and choice she still had over how far to take this commitment to her political ideology.

Maschmann makes it clear that although she was told to attend for werwolf training she chose to ignore the first instruction and eventually reported for werwolf training after leaving Berlin.<sup>169</sup> There were no repercussions or unpleasant consequences to Maschmann that she initially chose to ignore this order. Maschmann decided when she should start her werwolf training, not the SS.

Scholtz-Klink had argued against women being allowed to serve in the German military, but by the time the Red Army began to advance on Berlin even Scholtz-Klink learned to use a sub-machine gun.<sup>170</sup> Scholtz-Klink was arrested by the Red Army, but later escaped and went into hiding. However, to Maschmann the thought of hiding was

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<sup>167</sup> Maschmann, 167.

<sup>168</sup> Maschmann, 165.

<sup>169</sup> Maschmann, 167.

<sup>170</sup> Koonz, 398.

abhorrent. Maschmann, like Scholtz-Klink, experienced complete despair as Berlin began to collapse around her and had to be forcibly placed into a truck that was fleeing the advancing Red Army. The other occupant of the truck used physical force to stop Maschmann from trying to escape to re-join what was left of the desperate attempt by the Germans to defend Berlin. Maschmann states that she eventually “made no further attempt to leave the lorry. But for years afterwards I was ashamed that I had not.”<sup>171</sup> Maschmann eventually met up with a werwolf group and began to make plans to take on the Allied troops as they advanced through Germany.

Maschmann ended up at Innsbruck and at a meeting with the Tyrolean Hitler Youth underwent ‘werwolf’ training which consisted of sabotage techniques taught by SS Officers. Maschmann states that the werwolf group she belonged to achieved very little in the way of attacks on the American occupying forces.<sup>172</sup> It seems strange that Maschmann, trained in guerrilla warfare, prepared to risk her life defending Berlin claims to have only ever provided laundry and cooking services to this group. But, it does seem feasible that her group never achieved one successful attack on the Americans.

Perry Biddiscombe explores the historical origins and the military successes of the werwolf groups. Biddiscombe states that the werwolf groups originated from the Thirty Years War in Germany in 1618 to 1648. Peasants defending their property and families from marauding soldiers formed these partisan groups. The idea within National Socialism of forming modern day werwolf groups originated from discussions amongst

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<sup>171</sup> Maschmann, 168.

<sup>172</sup> Maschmann, 168-172.

German intelligence officers in 1943. Biddiscombe reports that the SS formalized the werewolf guerrilla movement in September 1944.<sup>173</sup> Biddiscombe also states that some historians dismiss the werewolf groups as an anomaly, but he feels they are worthy of study. Biddiscombe writes

In truth, there was an active Nazi resistance campaign during the transitional period. This type of activity was fairly widespread in geographic terms, although it was a scattered and sporadic struggle that varied in intensity, by region, and failed to jolt the advancing Allied and Soviet armies.<sup>174</sup>

Biddiscombe provides fascinating details about exactly why Innsbruck was full of SS officers training people in sabotage techniques prior to the arrival of the Allies.

Biddiscombe writes of a fear within National Socialism in 1943 after the collapse of Italy that Germany could need to withdraw rapidly from certain areas. An Alpine fortress was considered advisable and construction began of ammunition dumps and a mass production of small arms useful for the werewolf movement. Biddiscombe states that the Allies knew of these arrangements and that there were at least seventy underground stores around the Tyrol area known to the Allies.<sup>175</sup>

Biddiscombe writes of the known facts to the Allies about the werewolf training camp in Innsbruck, which may well be the camp Maschmann attended. Biddiscombe states “A werewolf training camp was established at Schlanders, whence recruits went on to a demolitions course in Innsbruck.”<sup>176</sup> Maschmann, after her werewolf training, claims she was approached by an SS Officer who asked her to provide laundry and cooking

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<sup>173</sup> Perry Biddiscombe, *Werewolf! The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement, 1944-1946*. (1998: Toronto, Can: University of Toronto Press). <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/umass>, 4-13.

<sup>174</sup> Biddiscombe, 3-4

<sup>175</sup> Biddiscombe, 178.

<sup>176</sup> Biddiscombe, 246-247.

services for his commando group while they launched guerrilla attacks from the mountains of the Tyrol on the American forces that were about to occupy Innsbruck. Maschmann and other colleagues from the Hitler Youth agreed to help this group of men. One puzzling occurrence Biddiscombe observes is the ambiguity of the local populace to the German soldiers that flooded into this area as the Allies approached.

Biddiscombe writes of the anti-Nazi writer Luise Rinser, who was living in this area with family after being released from prison. Rinser recalls being visited one night by Germans claiming to need urgent medical assistance. It was clear that these men were SS officers on the run. At the time Rinser did not report these men, despite her anti-Nazi beliefs. Biddiscombe states that this was not an uncommon reaction.<sup>177</sup> There could be a number of reasons why the people living in the Tyrol did not fully co-operate with the Allies. First, it is important to remember that the worst excesses of the SS officers and the concentration camps had not yet become common knowledge. Also, Biddiscombe writes of the confusion within the population of the Tyrol over whether they were Italian, Austrian or German. Biddiscombe states “When the decision at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946 approved Italy's claim to retain the South Tyrol, there were strikes, demonstrations, and armed clashes in Bozen, Meran and Brixon, and fighting between South Tyrolese and Italian carabinieri was also reported in the Pustertal.”<sup>178</sup> With the population of the Tyrol in such confusion over whether they wished to be Italian, German or Austrian this area was probably ripe for exploitation by any werewolf group.

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<sup>177</sup> Biddiscombe, 183.

<sup>178</sup> Biddiscombe, 249.

The werwolf groups may not have needed the support of the local people but they would at the very least have needed a fairly acquiescent population to carry on their activities. Biddiscombe also writes of the fact that so many German soldiers had withdrawn to the Tyrol that when the Allies first began to move into this area they were originally outnumbered by a ratio of sixty to one.<sup>179</sup> The civilian population of the Tyrol may have kept quiet about werwolf activities simply as a matter of self-preservation. However, Maschmann did not hide out in the Tyrol mountains above Innsbruck for very long.

Maschmann became ill and made her way down the mountains to a youth hostel set up as a temporary respite for medical care. Maschmann writes

After about four weeks an attack of flu forced me to go down into the valley and seek refuge for a few days...I found two of my BDM comrades there as well. They had left their groups and passed themselves off to the Americans as the owners of the hostel. A secret field hospital for members of our commando group who fell sick was to be set up here.<sup>180</sup>

By this time American soldiers occupied the valley in which the youth hostel was situated and had become very aware of the werwolf groups hiding in the mountains. Maschmann came under suspicion by the Americans and eventually was arrested, interrogated and imprisoned.<sup>181</sup> However, she does state that the imprisonment did nothing to help decrease her commitment to National Socialism.

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<sup>179</sup> Biddiscombe, 246.

<sup>180</sup> Maschmann, 173.

<sup>181</sup> Maschmann, 156-190.

## CHAPTER 7

### MASCHMANN'S SUPPORT OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM AFTER WWII

#### *Assisting imprisoned National Socialists escape justice*

Maschmann, after her release from prison, still continued to attempt to help and assist former National Socialists. Maschmann had no intention of abandoning her political beliefs, despite the growing evidence of the concentration camps and the brutal excesses of the SS.

After staying for a while in the German countryside with old friends of her parents to avoid housing and food rationing problems Maschmann returned to the town where she had spent her imprisonment. Maschmann began to visit National Socialists who were still in prison and writes

I undertook to look after the most prominent of the political prisoners, who was still in the men's camp there. I had meanwhile obtained a job as a reporter on a daily paper...at least for the time being my employers were not to be told about my political past.<sup>182</sup>

The fact that Maschmann's new employers were not told of her political past proved to be a serious error. Maschmann states:

I drove to see the chief of the Hessian Denazification Authorities and explained to him that I had been sent by my office to interview him. This official willingly answered my questions, and I managed to wrinkle out of him some important

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<sup>182</sup> Maschmann, 193

information about the forthcoming trial of the prominent prisoner I was looking after. Naturally he asked me to regard some of what he told me as ‘off the record.’ Fortunately this man never subsequently bothered to find out why the interview had not appeared in the paper.<sup>183</sup>

Maschmann never names the prisoner she helped. Neither does she specify exactly what she did with the information she obtained. However, Maschmann does admit to being contacted by a former colleague who seemed to be interviewing her for recruitment to an organization that helped National Socialists in prison escape from the Allies. Maschmann leaves the reader with the impression that it was a small group of concerned individuals.<sup>184</sup> However, Maschmann states:

I learned how tangible this help could be a few days later when I heard on the news that a certain leading National Socialist had escaped from prison. My visitor had told me...that this man expected to be transferred to Dachau in a few days’ time, where he would have to undergo a very grueling trial. ‘We shall have to make sure he disappears before then.’<sup>185</sup>

Maschmann claims that the unnamed colleague who attempted to recruit her never contacted her again. In fact, Maschmann states that she must have failed the interview. It is difficult to fully believe Maschmann when she claims this group of concerned individuals rejected her as their latest recruit. But, clearly, this group was working as an effective unit that certainly helped at least one former National Socialist escape justice.

There has been much speculation about the escape routes used by former National Socialists. Gerald Steinacher states that a book called *The Odessa File* by Frederick Forsyth fostered much of the speculation. This book, and the film that it inspired, was fictional and muddied the waters for any serious scholar of the subject. However,

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<sup>183</sup> Maschmann, 193

<sup>184</sup> Maschmann, 191-194

<sup>185</sup> Maschmann, 194

Steinacher confirms there were escape routes for former National Socialists but these escape routes were not as well organized as generally believed. Steinacher writes of the chaos at the end of WWII and explains the situation that led to so many people moving around Europe. Steinacher writes

Millions of refugees were on the move, trying to find their homeland, their families, or possibly what was left of their possessions, or else to seek a new existence anywhere else. Those who were fleeing were not just fugitive Nazis and war criminals, but also exiles from the eastern German regions, collaborators and anti-communists from the countries of Europe that were occupied by the Red Army, deserters, prisoners of war, slave laborers, displaced persons, soldiers and survivors of extermination camps and concentration camps.<sup>186</sup>

Steinacher confirms that any National Socialist wishing to escape from the Allies exploited this chaos. The escape was made even easier by the fact that thousands of people at the end of WWII had no documentation to prove who they were. The Red Cross was empowered by the United Nations to provide travel documents that became known as a Red Cross passport. The photographs of the bearers of these passports were only fixed on with paste; the photograph was very easy to remove and replace with another if necessary. Steinacher states how easy it was to obtain a Red Cross passport and that the printed inscription on a Red Cross passport read “The present document has been established at the request of the bearer and because he has stated that he possesses no regular or provisional passport and that he is unable to procure one.”<sup>187</sup>

It is impossible to prove how involved Maschmann was with any organization or group of concerned individuals that helped National Socialists escape. But, it is an

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<sup>186</sup> Gerald Steinacher, “*The Cape of Last Hope: The Postwar Flight of Nazi War Criminals through South Tyrol/Italy to South America.*” University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Faculty Publications, Department of History, Paper 115. 2006. <http://digitalcommons.un.edu/historyfacpub/115>, 208.

<sup>187</sup> Steinacher, 212

established fact that these groups existed and were successful. The most prominent and well-known National Socialists who escaped and ended up in South America were Adolf Eichmann, Klaus Barbie and Josef Mengele.

There is absolutely no suggestion that Maschmann was involved with helping Eichmann, Barbie or Mengele escape, but clearly Maschmann was involved in helping other less prominent National Socialists avoid justice. At the very least Maschmann passed on information to people that would have seriously jeopardized the legal process and corrupted the trial. Maschmann admits to carrying out this work on her own but denies working with other people to achieve this goal. Maschmann leaves the reader dangling, unsure of how involved and successful she was in these activities. Also, Maschmann's claim that she failed her interview to become more involved in helping National Socialists escape justice sounds strange considering that she openly admits she had already passed on information to a National Socialist about to be put on trial. Maschmann never claims that she helped this man escape, simply that she passed on information to him vital for his trial, which would of course have given him a chance to prepare a defense which may well have been far from the truth and ensure a reduced sentence. Maschmann's true depth of involvement in the escape or corruption of the trial of any National Socialist is probably lost to history.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE ROLE OF WOMEN WITHIN NATIONAL SOCIALISM

Both Scholtz-Klink and Maschmann were committed National Socialists. They both chose to work from within National Socialism to influence its policies toward women. However, Maschmann's essay shows the confusion within National Socialism itself as to the role German women were to play, unlike Scholtz-Klink who attempts to convince Koonz that the role of German women as home-makers was cast in stone. Maschmann exercised her own free will and chose when to agree and continue with the work allocated to her as a woman and when to take a stand against the policies of National Socialism. Maschmann exercised her own free will when she agreed to continue the work of the SS in Eastern Europe and when she chose to join a werewolf group, but she also chose to make a stand against a bigamist policy in which German women were to be used biologically to produce enough babies to replace the numbers of German soldiers killed during the war effort.

#### *Maschmann's role within the BDM against the Lebensborn Program*

Maschmann's memoir discusses the SS campaign for bigamy to be allowed to ensure there were enough "racially pure" Germans to carry on after WWII. Maschmann openly admits that she played a key role in fighting against this "population policy" of

the SS. Maschmann states that one of the male leaders in the Hitler Youth had presented an argument for bigamy, with racially suitable women, to ensure the numbers of babies produced provide compensation for the losses the German nation was undergoing while fighting the war. Maschmann writes of how she was aware of a similar idea circulating around the SS, but states “so far as I know there was not a single one of the senior BDM leaders in our office who did not reject it absolutely.”<sup>188</sup>

Maschmann reports that this debate also began to go on in public. Maschmann herself became involved in producing leaflets and reports against this policy and writes “They contained a rejection by the women’s youth leadership for the tendencies within the SS towards a ‘population policy.’”<sup>189</sup> Maschmann may have had a subordinate role within National Socialism solely because of her gender, but clearly she still had a voice within National Socialism. Maschmann also reports on how this public debate seems to have influenced people with regard to German women. Maschmann writes of her arrest in 1945 and interrogation by the American forces. The American questioning Maschmann stated “But the women’s Labour Service was only set up so that every work maiden should present the Fuhrer with an SS man’s child. These camps were just whore-houses.”<sup>190</sup> This confusion both within National Socialism and by the Allies of the role provided by the female supporters and activists of National Socialism shows a deep ambiguity toward these women.

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<sup>188</sup> Maschmann, 150.

<sup>189</sup> Maschmann, 151.

<sup>190</sup> Maschmann, 133.

An interrogation must necessarily be tainted and incomplete if the interrogator believes the woman in front of him was only to be used for breeding stock. Clearly, the interrogator is not looking at the woman as a political creature, merely a biological entity. To base an interrogation and to interpret someone's actions based solely on gender and ability to reproduce implies that women cannot be political, have no interest in politics and do not participate in the public sphere of politics. Women in the NSDAP may have had limited participation in the public sphere of National Socialism, but this does not mean they had an unimportant role to play.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONTROVERSY OVER MASCHMANN'S MEMOIR

#### *Questions over the truth contained within Maschmann's memoir*

Maschmann's memoir is complex, multi-layered and needs to be read very closely. Maschmann tells the reader that her parents loathed National Socialism. This is perfectly believable. However, Maschmann then expects the reader to believe her when she claims to have kept her membership of the Hitler Youth hidden from them until the age of seventeen.

It seems highly unlikely that Maschmann's parents did not know where she was over the long evenings and weekends that Maschmann spent with her Hitler Youth club. At times it is clear Maschmann believes she is telling the truth, but her version of the truth is tainted with National Socialist political ideology. Maschmann's memoir, the way she represents her actions and explains her behavior all lead the reader to believe that in fact even in the 1960s when Maschmann wrote her memoir she has not really moved very far away from National Socialism. Maschmann claims to be writing an memoir explaining her actions but to the reader the memoir sounds more like a rationalization for what led to the Third Reich, why it went to war and began to systematically wipe out large sections of the population of Eastern Europe. Maschmann claims to know nothing

of the treatment of the handicapped under National Socialism and it is impossible to prove that she knew anything of the euthanasia programs.

Maschmann also claims that she found the memories of having to spy on her German Jewish friend for the Gestapo “burdensome.”<sup>191</sup> But, Maschmann states in her memoir, written in a letter style supposedly addressed to her German Jewish school friend, that she was greatly relieved when she found out that “your brothers had suffered no grave harm after their arrest in November 1937.”<sup>192</sup> However, the school friend that Maschmann claims to be writing to never provides confirmation or any reply at all.

Maschmann’s statement that she heard that her friend’s brothers were untouched by the Gestapo seems strange. Goldhagen’s research makes it clear that the treatment of German Jews under National Socialism was set on a path that was inhumane even before 1938 and Kristallnacht. Goldhagen writes “Germans inside and outside the government succeeded in making life for Jews in Germany...all but unbearable...the men of the SA...unleashed physically destructive and symbolic attacks against Jews all across Germany.”<sup>193</sup> Again, Maschmann’s statements cannot always be taken at face value.

*Germans as victims of the Allies, not National Socialism*

One very disturbing theme throughout the essay is Maschman’s lack of empathy over the human suffering she witnesses. The only time Maschmann seems to be able to relate to the pain of the victims of WWII is when she writes of the consequences for the

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<sup>191</sup> Maschmann, 45.

<sup>192</sup> Maschmann, 46.

<sup>193</sup> Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, 91.

German people at the hands of the Allies. Maschmann writes of the death of her parents and states:

In September 1944 my parents died in a night bombing attack by the British which destroyed seventy-eight per cent of my mother's home town and killed twelve to fifteen thousand people...so far as I know, I was the only person to emerge alive from a cellar in which some thirty people, including my parents, were either suffocated or burned to death.<sup>194</sup>

However, Maschmann seems to be totally unable to relate to the suffering that the people of Eastern Europe must have undergone, despite witnessing much of this first hand.

Maschmann again writes of the victims of the Allied Bombing campaigns when she is later tasked by the Reich Youth Leadership to help control the chaos at one of the Berlin train stations. So many German refugees were fleeing from the advancing Red Army and the Allied bombing campaigns that it was proving impossible to cope with the influx of these people. Maschmann reports

They descended in thousands from the unheated trains, with children, old and sick people, the bodies of those who had died on the way, bundles of bedding and shapeless luggage in tow. Families lost one another in the confusion, mothers shouted for their children, children for their mothers.<sup>195</sup>

The irony of this description is that it sounds very similar to a description of the arrival of the trains at Auschwitz. But, of course, Maschmann claims to have had no knowledge of the concentration camps during WWII.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum contains the personal transcript of Leo Schneiderman, who was born in Lodz, Poland. Schneiderman was deported to

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<sup>194</sup> Maschmann, 152.

<sup>195</sup> Maschmann, 159.

Auschwitz with his parents and younger brother. Schneider talks about the arrival of the train carrying him to Auschwitz. Schneiderman states:

And then we got out of the train. And everything went so fast: left, right, right, left. Men separated from women. Children torn from the arms of mothers. The elderly chased like cattle. The sick, the disabled were handled like packs of garbage. They were thrown in a side together with broken suitcases, with boxes.<sup>196</sup>

Maschmann clearly believes that Germans were victims of the American, British and Russian armies, but never of National Socialism. Also, when Maschmann was around the age of seventeen, the Gestapo became daily visitors to the Maschmann household in an attempt to persuade Maschmann to spy on her German Jewish school friend. Maschmann's parents must have known about these visits. Maschmann never states how her parents felt about this but it seems very probable that their reaction would have been impotent fury over their daughter being pressured to become a spy for the Gestapo. Sadly, Maschmann's parents were not in a position to stop the Gestapo from entering their home to meet with their daughter but Maschmann never addresses this issue. Maschmann also avoids explaining to the reader why her parents sent her to a boarding school recommended by Maschmann's Hitler Youth leader. Maschmann, although a committed National Socialist herself, never at any time seems to regard her parents or any Germans as victims of National Socialism.

When Maschmann writes of her regrets toward the treatment of the Jews and Poles she does not seem to be very genuine in her expressions of remorse. And, strangely,

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<sup>196</sup> Leo Schneiderman, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia, Auschwitz – Personal History. <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en>. Retrieved 3/19/2012.

Maschmann is completely silent as to the fate of her twin brother. It is highly unlikely that her twin brother would have been able to avoid conscription to the Wehrmacht, but Maschmann never writes one word about him. The reader is left not knowing if he ever survived WWII.

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSION

At one stage Maschmann states, very accurately, with regard to the leadership of National Socialism that “most of the male leadership held the view that women’s activities should be strictly confined to the family and social spheres and their education should be correspondingly limited.”<sup>197</sup> Maschmann writes of her opposition to this belief, and how she intended to take up the struggle for female equality once Germany had won the war. Maschmann states that one of the reasons she tolerated the discrimination against women was because the war had led to better employment opportunities for women outside the home.

Jill Stephenson writes of this contradiction within National Socialism. Stephenson states that the “Nazis were planning...for the thousand year Reich.”<sup>198</sup> Therefore, a temporary departure from the role planned for women under National Socialism was acceptable during WWII, as it was assumed to be temporary only, and not a step on the ladder for German women in the fight for equality.<sup>199</sup> Maschmann had never at any time grasped how deeply National Socialism had exploited and influenced her. However, it is

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<sup>197</sup> Maschmann, 86.

<sup>198</sup> Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), 186.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, 185-187.

also important to remember that many political ideologies discriminate against women, but many women choose to work within the political ideology of their choice to change it.

Maschmann made the choice to work within the system of National Socialism to change and improve the situation for women, just as Scholtz-Klink did. Maschmann and Scholtz-Klink did not plan to overthrow National Socialism. They were both, like many women before and after them, perfectly happy to work behind the scenes to improve the state of affairs for their own gender. It was not until 1952 that Maschmann began to finally come to terms with the failure of National Socialism<sup>200</sup> and find an end to the journey that had led to so much devastation and death for so many people. It is important to remember that *Account Rendered, A Dossier on my Former Self*, is a memoir, a public document that Maschmann knew people other than herself would read. But, the memoir does contain a chilling message. Hitler's warning to his opponents came true. Hitler did indeed take German youth, boys and well as girls, and place them firmly "in the new camp."<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Maschmann, 212.

<sup>201</sup> Welch, 63.

CHAPTER 11

ILLUSTRATION



a. The NSDAP election poster of 1928, which contains the text “Smash the world-foe, International High Finance.”

b. For comparison purposes a communist election poster from 1932 is also displayed to demonstrate the left-wing influences in National Socialism. The text states ‘An end to this system!’

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