THE OVERLOOKED MAJORITY:
GERMAN WOMEN IN THE FOUR ZONES
OF OCCUPIED GERMANY, 1945-1949,
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

DISSERTATION

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

When the Allies entered Germany in late-1944, most of the male population of Germany was either incapacitated or absent. German women, the majority of the German population, were confronted with rebuilding Germany under the supervision of military governments. This dissertation is a comparison of the experiences of German women in the Soviet, British, American and French zones of occupation. It also informs the historian and military commander regarding the effects of perceptions about women in the home country and how these can affect military occupation. The policies of the four occupying powers directly reflected the roles of women in the home countries.

The Soviets immediately set up German socialist organizations to incorporate German women into the new communist government of the East. Through the benefits of these organizations and the communist punishment system, the communists worked to recruit German women to their cause.

The British military government used a decentralized approach by allowing some British women to experiment with the education of German women. After the founding of a large centralized socialist German women’s organization in March 1947 in the Soviet zone, the British officially began educating German women to participate in Germany’s recovery.
The Americans were rather late in recognizing German women as an important group. Once they did in late-1947 the Americans formed a Women’s Affairs Branch of their military government, which had a limited effect on assisting German women to become politically active.

The French never had a program to assist German women. Instead, the French watched German women as a potentially dangerous political faction.

German women now hold more seats in the German representative assemblies than women in any other large western-style democracy. This is partially a result of the work of German women in the Soviet zone combined with the reaction of the western occupation powers to stir German women to a new level of political consciousness. Historians will be interested in learning about the differences in the occupation policies of the four occupation powers. Commanders of military occupations can learn from the successes and mistakes of the four military governments of Germany 1945-1949.
DEDICATED TO SYLVIA
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Historiography and Military Considerations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Cold War and the Numbers</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Soviet Zone</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The British Zone</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The American Zone</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The French Zone</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Conclusions</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Map of the occupation zones of Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td><em>Trümmerfrau</em>, Schönefeld, Berlin, 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Length of wars versus length of occupation. Independent variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Venn diagram, culture encompasses all aspects of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Map of Bavaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>The <em>Bamberger Reiter</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Women in the representative assemblies of western democracies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At the conclusion of the Second World War, women dominated the demographics of Germany. The census of 1946 revealed that there were 124 women for every 100 men and that in the 20-29 age group, there were actually as high as 171 women per 100 men.¹ This amounted to a population that was 55 percent female overall, with the young working segment (20-29) at over 63 percent female. While these numbers are striking, the actual disparity in healthy persons in this age group would have been even more skewed due to the effects of the war on the young male population.² The disparity among Germans grows even further when displaced foreigners and working prisoners of war (mostly male) were removed from the equation.

Exact numbers taking all of these factors into consideration are not possible to support, but other numbers indicate the seriousness of the demographic disparity. Even after most POW’s had returned home and a new generation of births should have helped


² It must be noted that certainly women had suffered health problems during the war as a result of restricted diets, stress, excessive work and Allied bombing raids (women were 60 percent of bombing casualties), but the effects of battle on men were far more devastating. Over 4 million German servicemen died (or are still missing in action) in the war. About that same number were seriously wounded.
to even the numbers, the disparity continued. By 1960, the ratio of German women to men remained no less than 126:100 (55.8 percent female).³

While casualties and prisoners of war can explain the disparity, the effects of the disparity are less easily explained. In a society that had been inculcated for over 12 years with ultra-conservative rhetoric about values regarding women in the home as opposed to the workplace, the realities of the war had forced women to learn to fend for themselves. Even many of those who had supported the National Socialist plans for women in the state-approved roles of “children, kitchen and church” would often now have to survive in an environment for which they were totally unprepared. To add to their woes, German women faced occupying armies that were singly unprepared to deal with them or their new roles as family and community leaders. Thus a dichotomy existed between the expectations of occupiers and occupied as well as between the realities for each.

This dissertation is unique in that I am comparing the activities of German women in the four zones of occupation—Soviet, British, American and French--and comparing their policies toward German women. I assert that the understanding of the German woman as a helpless bystander during the occupation is inaccurate. The situation of the German woman varied for many reasons. Each woman was affected by her families previous political leanings as well as whether she was urban or rural, middle class or poor, Catholic or Protestant, northern or southern, eastern or western, and the list of differences goes on. Still, most German women experienced something very similar in 1945 almost everyone was without male companionship and seemingly at the mercy of Allied occupation forces.

By the end of the occupation period three of the four military occupation governments had programs or organizations to aid German women in their attempts to gain agency in the new Germany. The Soviets were the first to officially sanction this activity with a centralized party-sponsored program. The British began slightly later, but did not have an official centralized policy regarding German women, nor did the British have a plan to aid German women until after the Soviets announced their plan to centralize all activities of German women in March 1947. The Americans founded their own program six months after this. The French never sponsored a program to aid German women attain agency. I assert that this activity had a role in influencing the German woman attain more political representation than women in most other western democracies experience today. As evidence for my claims I will discuss the idea of the German women in “politics.” By this I mean strictly the idea of women voting and running for office. I do not use the word “politics” to mean the world of lobbying or diplomacy or even that of campaigning. I use the word solely to refer to German women becoming aware of voting and serving in office as a civic duty.

In this dissertation I will explore the situation of German women in politics from the beginning of the occupation period in 1945, until the formation of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic in 1949. This work is intended for two distinctly different if not diametrically opposed audiences--historians and commanders of occupation governments.

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4 The occupation period in some regions technically began in late 1944, but this earlier occupation is only briefly explored here. The focus is on the period following the end of hostilities.
Figure 1.1 Map of the Four Zones of Occupation. The case study areas of Detmold and Bamberg are emphasized.
For the Historians

The first audience for which this work is intended consists of modern historians. European historians will have an interest in this work because it compares and contrasts the four different experiences of Germans in the four occupation zones of postwar Germany. Women’s historians will have an interest due to the fact that women in each zone had a different experience. The treatment of German women in each zone is a direct reflection on the military government of each nation, and thus on the corresponding value system behind each nation’s military. The opportunity to compare four separate value systems in implementing policy on an occupied nation at the same time provides a unique perspective of the occupying societies as well as that of the occupied nation.

I expected to find sources for this dissertation in the national archives of the occupying nations and in Germany at state archives. In some sense the sources available have dictated the type of analysis possible for each zone. For example, the American records in Washington and Germany are neatly divided into local military government detachment subcategories. The Americans also maintained records on occupation planning and execution. Initially, when I discovered that the Americans had begun planning a Women’s Affairs branch of their occupation government in 1947 I thought they were the pioneers in the endeavor to empower German women to help build the future of Germany.

In researching the British records I found that this was not the case. The British had begun locally educating women in the ways of western democracy and capitalism in
late 1945. By mid-1947 they had gone further by bringing German women to Britain for more education. In contrast with the American records, the British records of local military government detachments have not survived but their zonal records include a great level of detail of the bureaucratic wrangling in the creation of the occupation government and its policies, allowing a historian to easily assign responsibility for most decisions.\(^6\) I then assumed the British were responsible for initiating the work in helping German women attain agency.

Again, in my research in Berlin the Soviet zone records of the East German socialist party, the SED, or \textit{Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands} revealed that I had incorrectly attributed the raising of the issue of agency for German women to the British. In the archives of the Soviet Zone administration of the SED, the division between Soviet Military Authority orders and party orders is sharply recorded and one can trace the decision process but not much in the way of local implementation.\(^7\) For this I relied upon newspapers and personal accounts.

Each of the records from the American, British and Soviet zones were useful in cross-referencing the other zones and records. Each was concerned with what the other two occupation authorities were doing, making the process of validation through multiple sources possible in many instances.

The French records are different in this and other aspects in that the French zone was all but forgotten by the other three occupation governments. The research for the

\(^5\) Office of the Military Government in Germany, (United States Zone) (OMGUS) at the United States National Archives and Records Administration in College Park Maryland (NARA) 1999-2000. I have listed the archives I used in chronological order of when I visited them.

French chapter of this work was the most challenging despite the ease of access to the French occupation archives, which are all in one location. This fact helped only marginally as there was really no centralized bureaucracy for women’s affairs in the French zone. Still the French archives contain all the educational, health, safety and intelligence reports necessary to understand the French position with regard to German women. Additionally, the Colmar archives contain a plethora of compilations and secondary sources, which include assessments of the occupation.8

In the research for assessing the planning considerations of the occupiers, I relied on American, British, French and Soviet military orders. For the actual period of occupation I used the respective women’s affairs section records whenever possible. Only the French did not have such a record section. For the French, and to supplement the other zones, I relied upon occupation government records in the areas of education, health, public safety, elections, public opinion, employment, requisitions, intelligence reports and economic assessment committees. I have also found diaries of women in each zone to be useful and in fact critical in illuminating the human face of this period and these people involved.

In my comparison of Soviet, British, American and French occupation policies toward German women, I found that the Soviets gave German women agency earliest. I found this surprising as I had always assumed that the atrocities committed by Soviet troops would correspond to a draconian occupation government for all Germans in the Soviet zone throughout the occupation period, especially for German women.

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Nonetheless, I found that the Soviets were best prepared to integrate socialist and communist women into the apparatus of control of the new German state they created.\textsuperscript{9}

The Soviets did this through mass organizations under the centralized control of the Democratic Women’s Association of Germany (\textit{Demokratische Frauenbund Deutschlands}—DFD).

The British, while unprepared for the problem of German women as a majority of the German population, were the first Western ally which saw the utility in educating German women to be model citizens in local democracies and to be good capitalists. The British began to implement an education program that taught German women these values. They stepped up these efforts after the socialists and communists in the Soviet Zone organized under the DFD.

The Americans were late in realizing that German women might be important in their efforts to “win the peace,” or what we have come to know as the Cold War. However, not until late 1947, long after the Soviet and British initiatives mentioned above, did the Americans form a Women’s Affairs Section of their occupation government. This came about at the behest of the head of the American League of Women Voters who appealed directly to the commander of the Office of Military Government in Germany, United States (OMGUS), General Lucius Clay. He approved the idea after having already come to the conclusion that American troops and governors

\textsuperscript{8} Les Archives de l’Occupation d’Allemagne et de l’Autriche, Gouvernement Militaire de la Zone Française, Colmar, France (AdO-GMZFO) 2002.

\textsuperscript{9} The Soviets often refer to all of their endeavors and supporters as “socialist” entities. In general, I will refer to things Soviet as “communist” or “Soviet” when I mean this style of socialism. There were afterall a great number of socialists who composed the German Socialist Party, which was more reform-minded than revolutionary. When I refer to “socialists” I will generally mean those more moderate socialists, but in some cases I will refer to all of those on the political left, communists and socialists, together as socialists. When necessary I will specify the distinction.
were singularly unprepared to deal with large number of German women who needed aid from occupation authorities.

The French never officially recognized the need for a special office or organization to help German women. This is not to say that the French did not recognize German women as an important group—they did. However, the French treated any attempt to organize a feminine interest group as a potential threat to French rule and stability in Germany. The French perspective did not include a plan to re-educate or mobilize German women for any purpose—communist, socialist, capitalist or otherwise.

Historians will be interested in the historiography of this problem, which I explain in the first half of chapter two. In chapter three, I also explain why I believe German women became important in the overall battle of the Cold War. In short, the division of Germany became a focal point of the Cold War. Since the “real” power struggle regarding communism versus capitalism would not end up being resolved with a nuclear exchange, and because so many of the armed conflicts on the “periphery”—the Middle East, east Asia, Africa, Central America, etc.—ended in stalemate, a battle for the “hearts and minds” of Germans was waged with propaganda. German women became symbolic of that struggle with both sides claiming to have the correct or best approach in aiding German women. Though this is not the focus of my work, it is in this context that I claim German women would find the room they needed to make real advances in autonomy and agency in German politics.

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10 By “battle for the ‘hearts and minds’” I mean that both sides attempted to convince the Germans that their governing system was best. Within this broader campaign to convince all Germans of the righteousness of the cause, German women were important because they were the majority. The Soviets were the first to realized this.
Historians will also be interested in the main chapters of this dissertation concerning each zone, which I have carefully placed in order corresponding to when the respective occupying power recognized German women as a significant group worthy of organized assistance. These chapters are as follows: the Soviets--chapter four, the British--chapter five, the Americans--chapter six, and the French, chapter seven.

These chapters contain the evidence to prove that the Soviets instigated this battle for the “hearts and minds” of the German woman. Despite the Soviets being the first to offer German women agency in the political arena, the Soviet aggression in dividing Berlin and their subsequent actions in suppressing real dissent made their efforts within the strict realm of communist socialism seem hollow compared to the opportunities offered by the consolidation of the western zones under a freer system.

For historians then, the most interesting aspects of this work are the comparison of the experiences of women and Allied policies toward them in all four zones of occupation. The conclusions regarding the Soviet initiative to aid women in organizing and the reaction of the Allies are also interesting. The fact that German women are most likely of all women in the large western democracies to hold office in the lower or upper house indicate that the activities of the Allies stirred German women to civic consciousness and political action. This may cause historians to reassess the occupation period and its relative value in German history.

For Commanders of Occupation Forces

The second audience for which this dissertation is intended is for the commanders of occupation forces. Usually this means army commanders. For Americans, the Air Force, Navy and even the Marines have not traditionally been assigned this task. Even
though President Roosevelt envisioned that the State Department would eventually take over this task in the US Zone, by the time they did (1949 High Commissioner of Germany or HICOG), the occupation was no longer actually called “occupation.” The Army did occupy for four years and it ruled as certainly as any government ruled any state. The process of doing so led to many lessons learned, which have a practical application for military commanders in occupation duty. While this dissertation is more about the history of German women and their interactions with the military governors of the four zones of occupied Germany than it is about military concerns, there is much a commander can learn from this study, which may be useful to future occupation endeavors.

One of the first lessons is that of the divergence of military expectation and reality. The expectation of occupation forces in postwar Europe was that Germany would be hazardous for occupation troops because it would be populated by former members of the Nazi party and the German war machine. Occupation planners justifiably worried about German men (and women who supported them) who would conspire to cause harm and injury to Allied occupation forces. The occupying commanders were also concerned about diseases as cholera, dysentery, and venereal diseases of all sorts. Looting by soldiers, released prisoners, citizens and gangs of travelers must have been a concern as well. Problems anticipated included contraband, theft, drugs, and even lack of accurate maps.\footnote{Technical manual for Commanders, Occupation of Germany, US National Archives RG 331}

The reality was that Allied occupation forces took over a Germany populated mostly by women who had been surviving quite independently for several years. The
Allied occupiers had not seriously considered the ramifications of a mostly female German demographic, and when they discovered this anomaly, they each responded differently. Each of the western occupation forces initially made no special effort to recognize this majority as a group, nor did they give these women credit for being a possible source of leadership potential. Eventually, every occupying power (save the French) came around to the idea that German women were an important part of the voting population, and hence deserved attention and support in their efforts to revitalize Germany as a whole. Successful occupation operations begin in the planning and training phases. Commanders must recognize the importance of understanding the assumptions and perceptions of their own officers and men and even those of their allies.

The Allied powers’ treatment of the discovery of women as the majority of the German population offers a unique opportunity for comparison of the occupation policies of the four occupation powers. Beyond this, the fact that German women are now full participants in a peaceful, democratic society may mean that lessons learned by the occupying powers in Germany after the Second World War apply to occupations of the future. Application of lessons learned from occupation in Europe after the Second World War may not seem fully applicable to the form of occupation done by today’s armed forces, UN or otherwise, in places that do not look like Europe, after conflicts that do not resemble a World War. Since women are usually disproportionately represented in defeated and militarily occupied populations, there are lessons from the occupation of Germany that apply to all situations of occupation.
There are many arguments one could pose against using the occupation of Germany as a model for occupation duty in the modern era. Most nations eligible for occupation by western forces have little in common with the West or with 20th Century Germany. That is to say the areas in question have little or no democratic, industrial or Christian tradition.

One can also argue that future wars will never again look like the Second World War, that it was an anomaly that makes it bad for comparison. True, due to the length of the Second World War and its nature, the demographic dominance of women afterward may have been exaggerated to a degree that may never again be repeated in modern times. I do not claim that we should expect that most wars in the future will look like the Second World War either in nature or length, nor do I think that most occupations will last 50 or more years. But I do feel that the future will look like the past in some way. This having been said, I feel that what occupation planners may gain from my work is value from anticipation, not prediction. In this manner, human experiences can be a guide without them necessitating prediction. I believe fundamentally that human behavior is unpredictable. Still, humans tend to generally behave within certain bounds. Students of modern mathematics and science will understand that human behavior tends to fall into the category of the chaotic, that is to say deterministic, but not predictable.\(^\text{12}\) Even though we may not be able to predict every new situation and when it will occur, by study of the past, we may see some sort of pattern that will aid us in future occupations. Furthermore, the “deterministic” portion of the chaotic nature of human actions means

that human activity from one set of initial conditions is able to “determine” the state of human affairs in a given period of its future. In other words, even though what humans do may be unpredictable, and the outcome of our actions may also be unpredictable, to include having the opposite intended effect in rare instances, what humans do does have an effect on the future. What we do matters. Humans can change the future through learning and adaptive behavior, though we cannot predict the exact nature of the effects of our efforts. I lay out my argument for the relevance of this argument to military commanders expressly beginning in the second half of chapter two. Chapter three and the overall conclusions in chapter eight include important lessons learned from the occupation period of interest to military commanders at the highest levels.
The history of women in Germany is a field that has attracted a modest amount of attention. There are several works that cover the 19th and 20th Century feminist movements in Germany. Werner Thönnesson’s *The Emancipation of Women* focuses on this topic and is more of a chronology of the rise and decline of feminist movements in Germany. Eva Kolinsky has published three separate versions of her work in this area under various titles focusing mostly on women in West Germany in the 20th Century. However, the focus is broad enough that the occupation period receives short shrift and there is no differentiation between occupation zones at all. The work of Atina Grossmann regarding German women is more specifically useful to historians interested in the occupation period. Her article, “A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers,” in *October* explores a very sensitive topic with great care. Grossmann’s book, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform*, explores the German woman’s battle for control of reproduction and illuminates an aspect of the occupation that all of the other works above do not address. These and other authors make the case that German women were well represented by
early 20th Century women’s movements, and that the Nazis derailed, or perhaps more precisely, hijacked these movements for their own ends.\textsuperscript{13}

To properly understand the situation of German women in the occupation period, one must first understand something of the situation of German women under the Nazi regime. Indeed there has been much more written about German women during the Nazi period. Between 1933 and 1945 German women’s movements, which were originally intended to promote women’s political activities, civic awareness and agency, became more narrowly focused on the state-sponsored program of “children, church and kitchen,” (the three K’s of Kinder, Kirche und Küche). Claudia Koonz, in Mothers in the Fatherland, Lisa Pine in Nazi Family Policy 1933-1945 and Jill Stephenson in Women in Nazi Germany all take different approaches toward explaining some of the contradictions that exist in this realm. That is, German women were the first to get the right to vote in 1919, yet they also voted in large numbers for the Nazi party, in effect voting against their own right to political consciousness. The Nazi women’s organization under Frau Scholtz-Klink exemplified this by organizing women under the Nazi banner to support the party in whatever way possible. Many German women at the time must have disagreed with this approach, but the propaganda of the Nazis convinced many as well. Leila Rupp’s Mobilizing Women for War explores this topic and makes a comparison

with how the American and German governments both needed women to support the war effort.\(^{14}\)

While the history of women in Germany has gained some attention in the postwar era, little has been written about the role of women in the rebuilding of Germany. That is to say that many historians have written about the occupation of Germany and many have written about women but relatively little has been done to specifically address the issues of German women in the context of being the majority of the population and their interaction with occupation authorities.

German women are often represented as their own popular self-portrait—the *Trümmerfrau*, or rubble woman. The contemporary culture of Germany in the immediate post-war period lionized these German rubble women who were rebuilding Germany in the press and even in popular poetry.

\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{Trümmerfrau} & \quad \textit{Trümmerfrau} \\
\textit{Singen die Kinder--} & \quad \textit{Sing the children--} \\
\textit{Will mit dem Ziegelbrenner Ziegelbrenner} & \quad \textit{Wants to make a wager make a wager} \\
\textit{Heut eine Wette machen Wette machen} & \quad \textit{Today with the brick burner brick burner--} \\
\textit{Es geht um viel Schutt.} & \quad \textit{It’s a matter of so much rubble.} \\
\textit{Amen Amen.} & \quad \textit{Amen Amen.} \\
\textit{Hingestreut liegt Berlin} & \quad \textit{Berlin lays strewn about.} \\
\textit{Staub fliegt auf,} & \quad \textit{Dust blows up.} \\
\textit{Dann wieder Flaute.} & \quad \textit{Then a lull again.} \\
\textit{Die grosse Trümmerfrau wird heiliggesprochen.} & \quad \textit{The great rubble woman will be cannonized.}\(^{15}\)
\end{align*}
\]

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The striking image of the German woman stacking bricks in bombed-out postwar urban areas of Germany is one that is simply incomplete in explaining the experiences of German women in this era. (See Figure 2.1, page 18).
Figure 2.1 *Trümmerfrau*, Berlin Schönefeld, 1945.
Indeed most works on the occupation period in general ignore German women altogether, focusing instead on either the breakdown of western and Soviet agreements leading to the Cold War, or alternatively, on one zone of occupation or another. During the Cold War, most works focused on the East-West dynamic, grouping the West together versus the East. Due to the fact that the records for the occupation are in German, English, French and Russian, few historians dare approach the task of comparing the four zones as separate entities. This has caused the historiography of the occupation period, and beyond, to be very compartmentalized. Events such as the Berlin Blockade and Airlift provide a chance for crossing boundaries when dealing with issues of grand strategic and diplomatic importance. However, most historians have focused either on one of these larger issues, East vs. West, or on one zone.

While there are works concerning many different aspects of post-war occupied Germany, few of them before 1990 focused on women as an area of importance. Therefore, especially in the realm of the history of German women, no comparative work including all of the zones of occupation has been published. The historian interested in the occupation period must read a long list of books simply in order to get a complete picture of even one particular occupation zone, and even then, the problem of the female majority in Germany normally plays only a tangential role, if any.

The historiography of each zone varies in quantity and quality. The opening of the archives in the East with the unification of Germany has made research much easier in the former Soviet zone. Norman Naimark’s *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* is the best overall work on the Soviet zone of occupation. In this work there is a section concerning Soviet soldiers and German
women that captures the essence of the terror of the initial stages of the occupation, but most of the work focuses on the Soviets, not the Germans. J.P. Nettl’s *The Eastern Zone and Soviet Policy in Germany, 1945-50* is a work discussing the politics of the formation of Soviet policy during the early stages of the occupation, but again this work’s focus is the Soviets. For an understanding of the development of political parties in the Soviet zone of occupation, Henry Krisch’s *German Politics under Soviet Occupation* proves most useful.16

For the perspective of a German woman in the Soviet zone during the very initial stages of the occupation, Christian von Krockow’s *Hour of the Women* is the best first-hand account, but it is a carefully measured tale of his sister’s experience. Von Krockow seems to carefully skirt many questions of interest to historians in determining the broader implications of the Soviet treatment of women. That is to say that while the story is about German women, the source is limited to one woman’s experiences and these are told through her brother’s interpretation.

The historiography of the American zone of occupation is rich and varied. The nature of the archives of the Office of Military Government of the United States zone (OMGUS) has proven useful to American and German historians. The German government sponsored a project to copy everything in the United States National Archives at College Park Maryland, making this valuable record of American activity in Germany from 1944-1952 (including the High Commission for Germany, HICOG

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period) more easily accessible for German scholars. The work of American scholars is itself impressive. John Gimbel’s work, *The American Occupation of Germany: Politics and the Military, 1945-1949* explains the internal working of American policy, but as the title suggests this work does not tell the story of German women. Earl Ziemke’s *The US Army in the Occupation of Germany 1944-1946* fully explores the policy behind the decisions of the initial stages of the American occupation and provides a plethora of anecdotal evidence of American soldier’s interactions with German citizens. Edward Peterson’s *The American Occupation of Germany: Retreat to Victory* presents one opinion of how the early American decision to allow German local autonomy was key in converting Germans in the American zone to supporters of western-style democracy. Another important work on American military government is Robert Wolfe’s edited *Americans as Proconsuls: The United States Military Government in Germany and Japan, 1944-1952*. Again, this work does not really address the occupied German population as much as it does the occupiers. The official US Army “green series” work of Harold Coles and Albert Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors* provides excellent background of the American perspective of the work of occupation, though much of this duplicates the work of Gimbel, Peterson and Ziemke. For a German perspective a historian should consult Richard Merritt’s 1995 work, *Democracy Imposed: US Occupation Policy and the German Public, 1945-1949*. The work of Merritt provides an ample opportunity for the historian to see the opinions of contemporary German citizens during the occupation.17

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In the post-wall era, historians began to publish some important work on the situation of the German woman during the occupation. For the history of German women in the American zone of occupation, the best works are by Elizabeth Heineman. Her book, *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany*, is the most comprehensive look at the problems confronting German women in a postwar society largely devoid of men. Likewise, her article, “The Hour of the Woman” in *The American Historical Review* provides an excellent argument for explaining how German women inherited the leadership of and shaped society in postwar Germany. In 1952 the Historical Division of the Office of the US High Commissioner for Germany (HICOG) published a work entitled, *Women in West Germany*. Unfortunately for historians, this work focused on statistics regarding women in industry and politics. While the numbers are useful to historians, this work contains little analysis of the importance of the figures and their value. This work may be used as a primary source for statistics, but its use for the political, social or cultural factors of the occupation is of limited value.18

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Another work concerning women in the immediate postwar period of occupied Germany bears mentioning despite the fact that it does not directly address German women. Elena Skrjabina’s 1980 work, *The Allies on the Rhine, 1945-1950* is a first-hand account of a Soviet refugee woman in West Germany. While this is clearly valuable as a primary source its late publication and confusion regarding which liberation army was present on the Rhine create the impression of error. Still, the story of refugees in occupied Germany is an important one and this account is valuable to any historian of the occupation period for that reason.

There is no general history of the British zone of occupation. An anthology by Josef Foschepoth and Rolf Steininger entitled *Die Britische Deutschland und Besatzungspolitik* from 1985 is the closest thing comparable to the works on the Soviet and American zones. Other available works within the historiography of the British zone of occupation focus mainly on the British perspective of the economic aspects of occupation. John Farquarson’s 1985 work, *The Western Allies and the Politics of Food: Agrarian Management in Postwar Germany* shows an alternate view of what was really important in the immediate postwar period. Farquarson asserts that the British, with the largest population of Germans of all of the zones of occupation and the fewest agricultural resources, still managed to lead the way for solving many of the initial problems of feeding the German population.19

The most recent important book about the British occupation is the edited collection by Ian Turner, *Reconstruction in Post-war Germany*. This volume consists of

several articles and essays, which run the gamut of interests in British occupation history—including economic, political, military, and social. The most important chapter of this book is perhaps the best bibliography of occupation literature that exists. The twelfth and final chapter, by Turner himself, is an in-depth historiographical essay identifying and explaining all of the major works in English concerning the occupation. Turner offers suggestions for reading on the occupation broken down by occupation zone and by topic. He even offers up names of authors and topics, which were still “works in progress” in 1989. Anyone wishing to research and understand the occupation must read Turner’s bibliography as he has left no stone unturned in his search for German occupation historiography.20

The smallest of the occupation zones, the French zone, offers the least promising historiography. The best overall work on the French zone of occupation is F. Roy Willis’ work, The French in Germany 1945-1949. This book provides an excellent background for how the French zone of occupation came about and how French policy developed within their zone. Willis even notes that women were the majority of the German population with his demographic statistics, but he does not analyze the significance of this fact in any meaningful way. A useful anthology is Klaus-Jürgen Müller’s The Military in Politics and Society in France and Germany in the Twentieth Century. This collection is interesting to the study of the occupation of Germany for its essays comparing the two societies and the military’s role in each. Also of interest is the comparison of the German occupation of France, 1940-1944 and the French occupation of Germany 1945-1949. Again, even here there is little to offer concerning the fate of

20 Ian Turner, Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western
German women in the French zone.\textsuperscript{21} This modest work may be the first to consider the fate of German women in the French zone with respect to their political activities and organizations in the immediate postwar period.

This work will add to the historiography of the occupation period of Germany by being the first work to compare the four zones with respect to German women. This work will compare the planning and execution of the four occupation governments and it will compare the experiences of women living in the four zones.

\textbf{Military Considerations}

“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”

Matthew 24:6

War is a terrible scourge on the people fighting it, the people it is fought for, and the people who finance it. War is to be avoided at all cost, but when the time comes when there are no other options, even democratic nations go to war. Some understand war as an attempt to utterly destroy an enemy army or even the nation. While this may have been the desire of totalitarian or imperialist governments, and even some hard-liners in democratic nations, the general goal of war is to bend the enemy’s will to one’s own.\textsuperscript{22} This has meant that the overarching grand-strategic goal of Americans at war, though not arguably unique, has not necessarily been the total destruction or annihilation of its enemies. Instead, Americans have attempted, particularly in the 20th Century, to bend

the enemy to the American will through the least painful means for Americans.\textsuperscript{23} This has translated to attempts to produce as much materiel as possible, producing as much damage as possible to the enemy, at the same time limiting friendly casualties by winning the war with the fewest number of battles--one single battle being optimal.

In addition, the American way of war has generally carried with it a disdain for lengthy occupation, as it is costly and requires maintaining a large standing army. Though not at home, this standing army remains undesirable to the American public. The ultimate war, consisting of a single battle, would result in bending the enemy to the American will without an occupation, and if an occupation was absolutely necessary, at least it would have to be limited in time to as short of a period as possible.

The result of the desire for short wars with little or no occupation has led planners to all but neglect to plan for long wars with long occupations. No matter how much planners, legislators and the public wish for short single battle wars with no occupation, the likelihood of these desires becoming reality is about as much as the likelihood of the end of war altogether--that is, it is wishful thinking. The Gulf War of 1990-1991 is a perfect example of this. Coalition forces left within months and the conflict continued into the early 21\textsuperscript{st} Century. With no occupation, a lasting meaningful victory is much less likely.

The key points of this dissertation for military commanders are that occupation duty is an extension of the armed conflict by other means and that in order to win the


\textsuperscript{23} Max Boot refers to this almost uniquely American phenomenon in the preface to his book, \textit{The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power}, (New York: Perseus Publishers,
occupation, the occupiers must win the “battle for the hearts and minds.” In order to win this battle the occupiers must understand and be sensitive to the culture of occupied populations. Women, as the bearers of culture, are important in this battle. Through historical examples, I will demonstrate that women are not mere bystanders-mounts to feed-especially in societies where the men are absent or incapacitated. This fact should inform commanders that addressing the needs of women in future occupations could substantially aid mission success.

As stated earlier, it is my fundamental belief that history cannot be used to predict the future, it can be used to show what is possible in the future, for if something has already happened once, it, or something very similar, can happen again. One might assert from the use of the word “possible” that one may be able to ascertain a “probability” for future situations as well and from this, social science would have us believe that one can indeed then predict certain probabilities, or near certainties. Again, as stated earlier, this is not what I intend. Instead, I assert that instead of prediction, one can use the record of human experience to aid in anticipating problems, thus enhancing the attempt to solve them. Specifically, one can anticipate that occupations of hostile territories after periods of conflict will present similar problems that may be anticipated. From studying history, one can gather that short (single battle) wars with little or no occupation are rare. There seems to be little reason to believe that the length of the war has anything to do with the length of the occupation. For the modern military commander, this means that as wars become shorter, there is no reason to believe that occupations will be shorter. As long as

lengthy wars with longer occupations are possible, even if they became relatively unlikely, not to prepare for them would be dangerous, if not disastrous. There is no evidence that their has been a permanent change from long to short wars, nor is their evidence that the length of occupations will decrease. In fact, the recent war on terrorism indicates that the problem may not be geographical in nature, meaning a new set of challenges, including the possibility that in some instances one may not be able to identify where to occupy at all. If decentralized technologically advanced, theocratic terrorist groups populate nebulous scattered regions of the world and communicate with the internet, there may be no territorial concentration of enemies. This is evidence that not only have wars become more difficult to fight, possibly even lasting longer, not shorter, occupation duty, while not a thing of the past, may become a totally different animal. That having been said, I will give examples of the four basic types of conventional wars for which we do have evidence. These typify my crude variables--length of war (short or long) and length of occupation (short or long).

See Diagram Page 30:
Figure 3.1 Length of war versus length of occupation. Independent variables.24

The above diagram shows how the length of war and length of occupation have produced war of varying types. The length of the war does not at all dictate the length of the occupation. That is to say that there are examples of short wars with both short and long occupations and in the realm of long wars there have been examples of both short and long occupations. In the few examples above, the Americans have done neither all of the fighting, nor the occupation duty alone. (In fact, the Israelis did both in the Six-Day War, though some Americans do still patrol the Sinai as part of United Nations forces.) The main point of this exercise is to show that examples exist for many lengths of wars and occupations. Even if many of the most recent examples of wars--Desert Storm, Grenada, Panama--have come close to the ideal single-battle war with no occupation, there is not enough evidence to conclude that future operations will indefinitely confirm this trend as a permanent new reality. In fact, history tells us that change is more likely than lasting static conditions. If this is not enough, then prudence alone should inform
the reader that planning for as many contingencies as possible is the best way to avoid surprise--and failure.

While one can never plan for the infinite number of possibilities that exist in nature, one can plan for the most likely and most dangerous courses that events may take. This is where history becomes important by informing us of what is possible. History tells us that long occupations are possible. American troops are still manning posts in Europe and Korea generations after the conclusion of immediate hostilities. While this work was conceived, American troops were entering Afghanistan in a situation of considerable uncertainty. While American Congressmen and military planners continually preach the temporary nature of all “expeditionary forces,” the reality of the failure of the very idea of “exit strategy” has made many a promise for quick resolution invalid.

The desire and expectation for short wars and occupations is for many reasons, not the least of which is undoubtedly a desire to maintain costs of the operation at the lowest level possible. The desire for short wars is easily understandable: death and destruction are undesirable by all but the most sadistic of persons. The desire for short occupations is more material than principle-based. Occupation is expensive. Lowering costs and implementing foreign policy are divergent goals that elected public servants are expected to balance and solve simultaneously. The question asked of and by legislators must always be ‘why occupy at all?’ The answer follows: to ensure the bending of the enemy will to the will of the occupiers.25

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24 Thanks to Prof. Alan Beyerchen, who gave me the idea to represent this idea graphically.

25 Bending the enemy to one’s will might include, but is not limited to, exploitation of resources, annexing territory, simple subjugation, reeducation, or leading by example.
The danger inherent in not occupying is that the conquered nation will somehow restart the war. One could argue that this is exactly the case after World War One, which had a short occupation that failed to accomplish its goals in the long-term. Germany restarted the war in 1939. Just as if there is no decisive victory, there can be no effective occupation, but without effective occupation, the effect of the “victory” may be lost (the Great War and even Desert Storm). Occupation has come to mean attempting to change the customs and traditions of a conquered enemy population to match, or become more amenable to that of the occupiers. In short, military occupation is a continuation of the goals of war by other means—an attempt to bend the will of a conquered people. In effective occupation, the former enemy will give up customs and traditions and accept the will of the occupiers as its own, such as West Germany and Japan after the Second World War. Less effective occupation might result in a temporary bending of the will in order to assimilate for survival or to attain power in the new order government.

Germans on both sides of the “Iron Curtain” certainly put some of their beliefs aside to serve their new masters for this purpose, though many of them must have sincerely believed the new system to be better than Nazism. The lack of success of National Socialism must have been convincing enough, and if it was not, the temptation to assimilate for the sake of power through participation, or collaboration must have attracted many. These Germans had a seemingly simple choice: communism or western-style democracy, or perhaps more appropriately, Soviet-style socialism or capitalism.

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27 One could argue East Germany to be an example, but certainly in both East and West Germany, some groups did merely adopt the values of the occupiers to assimilate temporarily but many genuinely adopted them permanently or even held Soviet or Western ideals dear before the occupation. Since the
The four occupying powers had different methods of bending the Germans to their will. These different occupiers after the Second World War had different, even diverging goals, due to each having a different vision for how the future should look. Each nation’s specific policy goals were focused upon a different objective. These differences in policy goals and their implementation are what I mean by each specific occupier’s will.

A crude summary of each nation's general will for the occupation is the general picture painted by most Western authors and it suffices for the student to understand Germany as part of the Cold War. To understand the reasons behind the differences in the form of the execution of the specific will of an occupying nation, it may be useful to compare all of them.

Occupation Duty

The process of bending Germans to the will of the occupiers took a different form in each zone. In general, the Soviets and the French, though different in the reasons for their approach, each utilized a centralized approach to force their ideas in a “top-down” method. The British and the American used this at times, but in general, especially with regard to political ideas, they both utilized the approach of localism, or “bottom-up.”

Specifically, the Soviets organized those who agreed with socialism and attempted to make a uniform society that resembled their own through totalitarian methods.28 The soldiers from the East carried conflicting goals in the form of Russian revenge and the spreading of Soviet equality. The brutality of the former hindered the acceptance of the latter. The Americans tried to make a society that resembled theirs by events of 1989-1990, I will assume that Germans generally accept Enlightenment values on a common footing, not separately, though some groups still would emphasize equality over liberty or vice-versa.

first ruling through military governors then by appointing aged social and Christian democrats to positions of responsibility. Eventually, they sponsored local, then regional, then national elections, supporting those parties that fit the Western Enlightened ideals best.\(^{29}\) The British re-educated some former Nazis, supported social and Christian democrats but focused more on economics than politics.\(^{30}\) The French generally ignored German political problems focusing instead on extracting resources from their occupation zone and preventing German unity while simultaneously publicly supporting family-values and a conservative agenda.\(^{31}\)

It will be useful to the military commander to approach the idea of occupation from the perspective of the occupied nation. Questions an occupier might ask include: “Why are we being occupied?” and “What do these occupiers want from us?” Immediately after the conclusion of hostilities, it is probably that most of the inhabitants will be suspicious of all occupation forces. They may assume that the loss of the military conflict resulting in occupation means an end to their culture, or way of life.\(^{32}\) This feeling that occupation forces are a threat to the occupied nation’s way of life is a logical reaction to a situation where the occupied have often lost all power to decide their future. This feeling will make part of the population desperate to protect whatever it can by any


\(^{32}\) Culture is defined as the way a group of people sees itself and its place in the world. It includes the values passed from one generation to another and how a group perceives itself to be distinct.
means possible. This may mean armed or passive resistance, and mission failure for occupation forces.

This should make occupation commanders aware of the need for care in applying change to the local culture. An important as being sensitive to the concerns of the local population are both the appearance and the reality of justice. This brings us to the idea of legitimacy.

What are the legitimate goals of occupation? Western powers seem to think that remaking the world, at least politically, in the image of the West has value. That is to say that Western occupation seems to imply the underlying goals of democratization and reeducation. To a typical American citizen, the words “democratize and reeducate” might sound logical when heard in the context of seeing Enlightenment values as universal. When heard by those to whom Enlightenment values are foreign, these words might sound like terrible, arrogant euphemisms. Democratize might mean to put power into the hands of those who traditionally have not had it, and thus have not deserved it by local custom. Reeducate might mean that traditional values would be targeted for elimination from the minds and vocabulary of locals.33

Preparing for Occupation

This dissertation is not primarily an attempt to prepare armies for occupation, but it may be used as a statement to show why preparing for occupation, especially a long occupation, is important. Because an occupation is a continuation of war, or at least the war’s intentions, by other means, it must be treated as if it is as important as the conflict portion of the war itself. In some instances, it may be more important than the war in that
it will cost more, last longer, and have implications far beyond the battlefield. Politicians and occupation planners should not fail to see the importance of good occupation planning, even if the enemy's fighting force is eliminated.

In fact, the lack of a combatant force in the occupied territory does not immediately mean that the occupied nation will bend to the will of the occupier. In fact, one irony of occupation is that once the enemy armed forces are eliminated or neutralized, friendly forces are confronted with missions that they are not trained to do. There is currently no training for soldiers who will perform occupation duty, or units earmarked for this duty hastily train in the days before deploying. Normally occupation duty training consists of sentry duty, searching vehicles at checkpoints, crowd control, and convoy escort.

Why do friendly forces train for such missions when the enemy forces have been removed from the territory? Warfare has changed and with what is now known as fourth-generation warfare, the absence of uniformed foes does not mean that violence will stop. Thus the need for occupation is real and urgent, for without it, it is entirely likely that a conquered people will reorganize their society to resist in new ways or with another combat force less vulnerable to the one recently defeated. The absence of occupation may equate to no measurable change in the political situation, which may have been one of the goals in going to war in the first place. Social changes may be desirable as well. Cultural studies and historical examples show that these sort of changes take time. Even when initiated internally, even such major changes as the French Revolution appear initially successful, but they often take long generations to bear out the full extent of the

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33 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition*
change desired. As previously stated, it may be that in some cultures, no amount of force may make possible the entire set of desirable changes. If this is possible, it is even more prudent for occupiers to prepare for long occupations in order to survive the occupation due to the uncertainty of success.

Given that occupation might be needed to guarantee success, and that one must prepare for a long occupation, what should that occupation look like? As previously stated, at its root occupation is an attempt to force, or bend, the will of the occupier on the occupied. Force may be military force, or some other sort of force, such as influence over the population to convince them to change their own culture, society, and politics. The kind of change that this entails will always take generations in societies and cultures that are very much different from the occupier. Thus, if occupiers must recognize that it is not intuitively obvious to every occupied population that Enlightenment values are best for it. In order to establish permanent changes in the desires of the population, more than brute military force is necessary. The occupiers must offer some substantive advantage to the occupied nation for this change in mindset to occur.

Commanders of occupation forces have the mission of implementing the foreign policy of the national authority granting them the power to occupy. Commanders must maintain order to do this. They must first maintain order within their own military forces to be able to successfully defend themselves and to prevent incidents that provoke resistance. Subgoals for the accomplishment of these main goals include but are not limited to preventing intelligence leaks stemming from fraternization and to show that the intentions of the occupiers are inevitably just. Commanders must then use their

disciplined troops to protect themselves, maintain order in the occupied population, and
to maintain legitimacy in order to attain national objectives. In order to accomplish their
mission through influence over the population while maintaining order, commanders and
indeed soldiers at all levels need to understand the population with which they will
coexist. Commanders of occupation forces must seek and exploit every possible
advantage to exert influence over the populace of occupied territories. In order to
improve the chances of mission success and to increase the level and permanency of that
success, it is clear that understanding the local populace, its beliefs and attitudes will
convey advantages to the occupying forces. In fact, such an understanding is crucial to
mission success.

The real goal of occupation is long-term effective peace. In this sense the
occupying nation may see the mission of occupation duty to be much like that of a doctor
in preventing the recurrence of an infection. That is to say that the occupation forces
must make the environment safe in the short-term, in order for a long-term peace to have
a chance. To do this the occupation forces must change the way the hostile portion of the
occupied population perceives the occupiers. This may mean changing their very culture.

Success then means not only understanding the general culture, but also
understanding the sub-cultures and demographic groups including religious groups and
minorities. Certainly one must agree that political minorities have been important
throughout history in instigating some of the most important events and movements.
Marginalizing or discounting the importance of such groups would be dangerous and
even foolhardy. The Bolsheviks in the fledgling Soviet Union were a minority, but they
controlled the important segments of the population, including the Red Army, during the
Civil War there. Discounting them would have been unthinkable. Underestimation of their abilities allowed them to easily defeat the forces sent to unseat them. The Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and even the ruling Taliban were both minority groups, but clearly they were crucial. Even the members of the Nazi Party were a minority of Germans, never exceeding 10 million of 90 million Germans.

If understanding the minority groups in the population seems relevant in light of these examples, would it not seem obvious that one must recognize any commonalities of will in the *majority* of the population as well? Unfortunately for some occupying forces in the 20th Century, this has not always been obvious.

In this dissertation, I argue that in most conflicts, the majority of the population has been overlooked, even ignored, and that continued failure to recognize this majority will lead to failure in achieving the long-term strategic goals of occupation policy. This holds true especially if the goals of the occupation are lofty ones such as the internalization of democratic and republican virtues, or at its root, government with its power drawn from the population at large as a codified, culturally respected institution. The long-term transformation of occupied societies based upon fundamental changes in the nature of politics and culture in occupied territories will nearly always require long occupations, millions of dollars, and patience.

When conquering armies remain in former enemy territory for the purpose of a lengthy occupation, one must assume that such a situation will present both the occupying authorities and the occupied population with an almost unique set of problems. In particular, the presence of a large number of young, virile men among the occupiers, all of whom are bachelors, actually or geographically, combined with a predominantly
female demographic in the conquered land, poses a serious threat to any kind of existing social order. This must be so whether the female population is friendly or hostile. In the case of occupation after a war, the population will not be predisposed to think favorably of the occupying men. They will be grieving for their own family members, husbands, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers who have recently been injured, killed or captured by forces associated with or composed of the occupiers. In some cultures, honor may require revenge orchestrated by the survivors. Occupation forces are then always concerned first with their own safety, and next with the accomplishment of occupation goals. The safe completion of these goals requires their survival and that means soldierly discipline. In the long term, discipline alone will not be enough. The goodwill of the population will be required, thus the noble goal of remaking the occupied society in the image of the society of the occupier requires making life better for the occupied population in the best way that the occupiers might know. Inherent in this assumption is that occupation is not meant for punishment if the long-term goal of stability is to be met. Occupation forces that feel enmity toward the conquered people may not even understand this.

Occupation forces usually enter enemy territory armed and postured for the possibility of military action and violence. By contrast, the occupied nation’s civilians in such situations must normally either turn in all weapons or conceal them at precisely the moment when the need for such weapons is at its peak. Being nearly totally defenseless, or armed with effectively one-time use contraband, they then immediately concern themselves with surviving the threat of myriad violence, to include rape, plunder, murder and brutality in general. The initial tension between the occupation forces and the
population will be intense. It will be magnified by any failure of the occupiers to recognize and meet the specific needs of the occupied. A major failing in this regard may result in any number of undesirable scenarios ranging from civil disobedience to terrorist or sabotage operations and even the resumption of hostilities. Clearly any of these scenarios would be undesirable for any occupation commander because they all result in putting his [sic] forces at risk of violence and endanger the mission.

While avoiding these dangerous scenarios is situationally dependent on a number of factors, the commander and indeed the entire occupation force must be aware of the composition of the population. Every operations order for every mission ever accomplished by any western army since the Second World War (and most of them before that time) includes a detailed description of the composition of enemy forces in the very first paragraph. Even though occupation forces would like the people of an occupied territory to be friendly and compliant with the wishes of the occupiers, this same population must initially be treated as potential enemies. Certainly the women of an occupied territory are not traditionally treated as militia or resistance fighters, but their role in raising the men who perform these hostile functions is just as important. If the occupation is a continuation of the armed conflict by other means in order to “win the hearts and minds” of the occupied population, understanding the culture of the occupied territory will be a key aspect of understanding the “enemy” situation.

If modern armies generally understand and agree with Sun Tzu’s famous advice to “Know your enemy like yourself,” they have generally only applied that dictum to the enemy’s combat forces. Twentieth Century conflicts in the Middle East have proven that understanding the differences between religious groups is fundamental to understanding
the situation in conflicts in that region. Shi’a and Sunni religion and the variants thereof have made military commanders aware of the importance of religion. Likewise, conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, etc. have made the military aware of historical differences between nationalities, religious groups and ethnic groups. Military commanders have been forced to look at populations in territories to be occupied not as simply “enemy” or “friendly” but as dynamic systems in which complex relationships exist and matter. In fact, modern armies have developed Civil Affairs units whose mission is to do nothing but continually make assessments of the needs of the population in occupied territory and to provide continuity in the liaison between civilian leaders and military ones. Commanders have benefited greatly from consulting with, or at least informing civilian leaders regarding major military movements or changes in rules of engagement. Clearly modern military forces are aware that the customs of civilian populations matter and they vary based upon their political, religious and ethnic composition. If planners, commanders and armies have recognized that political concerns matter because they offer control of resources, and economic concerns matter because they generate resources, they should also carefully consider cultural concerns because these are what give meaning to the other two levels.

In other words, culture surrounds, encompasses, and under girds all of the concerns of any population, and this may become most apparent when a foreign culture has conquered, invaded and imposed a new value system upon them. If control of and generation of resources is interrupted, the only thing left to an occupied population is its culture. For that reason a population may come to hold its own culture even dearer than
before the war, especially if the people are not convinced that the culture is to blame for causing the failed war.

Figure 3.2.--Venn Diagram--Culture encompasses all aspects of society.

How is a culture generated and sustained? Culture is how a group of people perceive themselves and its ultimate origins lay deep in the past, as far back as prehistoric times. Its unfathomable depths are beyond our reach. However, culture is sustained over time by the passing of knowledge between generations. Culture is the common values and norms that a group of people passes from one generation to the next. In most societies, women are the bearers of culture. That is not to say that men have no role here, but in raising and educating children, women have the primary responsibility for initially defining and passing on values from one generation to the next.34

If cultural concerns matter and women are the bearers of this historical knowledge, then it is worth considering that demographic disparity in the gender of the population and its cultural significance are important as well. In this instance in

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34 See Marian Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. Kaplan demonstrates how women were the bearers of culture within Jewish homes during this terrible period of persecution. In a sense, the Jewish culture behaves almost as if it is besieged by occupiers throughout much of its history. That is to say that it must operate in a hostile
particular, the general awareness that females may be the dominant demographic in an occupied territory after any period of conflict will be useful to the occupying commander and his army. The longer and more violent the conflict, the more violently skewed the demographics (i.e. the more women as a percentage of the population).\textsuperscript{35} This is due to the fact that men conduct most of the violence in war, and they are normally the largest portion of all varieties of casualties. In conservative societies, but only slightly less so in more liberal ones, women are generally the less violent segment of the population and less apt to have previously held the key leadership positions in the community. This may lead occupiers to the perception that since women are not normally behind weapons, they are not a threat, and therefore might be treated simply as mouths to be fed, a burden, but simply not an important group militarily or politically.

This mentality has led planners, commanders and occupying soldiers to overlook the important role that women can have in adding to the occupier’s problem solving capability. This role can take many forms. Women may be simply a source of labor. They may also be a source of leadership. They may be the bearers of culture. Women may perform any number of roles in between these levels just as men do. If commanders, planners and armies recognize this majority of the population in this appropriate manner, women can make the difference between failure and success.

\textbf{All Politics are Local}

For those who may doubt that women can play an important role in any meaningful way to things political and military, I remind them that women raise and train each successive

\textsuperscript{35}Obviously, this generality does not hold true in the rare instance of total war when everyone
generation of men. When women are the only adult in the family--such as after a period of war--their influence on the new generation of men is even more important. Thus, perhaps the most important role that women play in most societies is their role as a family leader. The most basic, fundamental unit of human organization in the community, state, and hence a nation, is the family. The family will most often be led by women in times when able-bodied men are dead, captured, wounded, maimed or in hiding. In many cultures the women run the family even in normal times. While this may seem trivial at the macro-level, to a local commander attempting to feed a population, knowledge of who controls individual food distribution at the family level would certainly be valuable. This is just one simple example of how considering this issue might work to a commander's, and hence an occupying army’s advantage.

The real political, military and diplomatic value offered by traditional feminine roles to a commander anticipating a long occupation should not be underestimated. They often undergird the whole societal structure as the mothers, daughters, family leaders and implicit teachers of entire societies. For instance, in many societies, even where women rarely if ever wield political power, they do make family economic and educational decisions, in effect “ruling” the home. In addition, of the men who often rule a society, all had mothers, most have wives and certainly many will have daughters and sisters, all of whom may be forced to break with tradition in order to ensure self-survival, to sustain invalid men, and to rebuild war-torn communities. If their needs are met, or at least honestly addressed, the underlying influence they exert over the men they support is more
likely to be positive. For this to happen, occupation planners and commanders must think for the near- and long-term.

By this argument I mean only that a well-intentioned, honest and supportive occupation tailored to meet, or at least attempt to address the needs of local citizenry will work best. After all but the most small-scale of conflicts (like Grenada, Panama etc.) this means taking seriously the fact that most of the defeated population is likely to be female. Even under normal circumstances women should make up about half of the population, a substantial part of any society. Either way, women are a considerable potential source of support (or resistance) for occupiers to capitalize on or to underestimate. Understanding and addressing their role may translate possible failure into a more certain success.

As in many other arenas, failure to have a policy is a sort of policy in itself. Quite possibly in this situation, it is not the policy that is intended. That is to say, to neglect having a policy towards women in politics in an occupied territory is to in effect say that they are not important to the business of the occupation army. To discount half or more of the population out of hand, the part of the population that forms the opinions of the youth-male and female alike, the same part that feeds and clothes most of society and has personal influence over them, is short-sighted and backward-looking.

This is not to insist on throwing aside the cultural norms of a society and demand that persons take on what we consider to be "modern" male and female roles, whatever those may be. It may mean that while occupation forces continue to look for a valid alternative government (perhaps from among the traditional male leadership) for a recently deposed or defeated regime, the commander of the occupation must simultaneously attempt to win the "hearts and minds" of the other half (or more) of the
population. An occupier can do this with valid attempts to solicit and address the concerns of the occupied population in order to educate them to the newly available opportunities an occupation government can present. Many women (and men for that matter) in occupied territories will undoubtedly simply hope for occupiers to restore order, install a functioning peaceful government, supply basic needs, and go away. In the past, installing a new government from amongst the local nationals has always meant finding the best man for the job. There will likely, however, be some women who are legitimate candidates for leadership if given the opportunity.

If either traditions or demographic realities are ignored, the success of the "old-fashioned" policy of supporting any newly installed friendly, indigenous government (male or female-led) might be in jeopardy, if not doomed to fail at some level. Commanders should simply consider all options, including that women in an occupied territory should be encouraged to fully participate in reorganizing and governing to the maximum extent that local tradition will permit, and beyond that if the local population can be persuaded to "stretch" traditional limits in the interest of stability.

The short-term role of women during occupation, especially when there is a shortage of men, is that women will replace missing men in every possible aspect and position in society. In all likelihood women will have already replaced men in many situations out of practical necessity. This is important in its own right, but the long-term role of women in such societies is even more important. That is, in traditional societies, women's role as the "trainer of the men" is critical to any military commander involved in a long occupation. As the short-term progresses into the long-term, men return to power and what their mothers have taught them will be of urgent importance. In the current
Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the fact that Palestinian women train their sons that martyrdom is desirable has had a lasting impact on the recruiting capabilities of groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. Without the urging of their mothers, these men might not as often elect to participate in the violence. In other postwar occupations, when the occupied population has been treated significantly better, the will of the occupied has been bent to the will of the occupier, at least enough to prevent continuous violence. In some cases, the occupation has changed the occupied society forever.

An example of an occupation that fits this paradigm is that of Germany after the Second World War. While the temptation exists for very good reasons to look at the occupation only in terms of the Cold War and thus look at only two Germanys, East and West, there were four occupation governments until 1949 when the Bundesrepublik Deutschland (West Germany) and the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (East Germany) were founded. Until then, four diverging policies on how the occupation would be handled existed, with each power reacting differently to the realization that the occupation would be longer than just a few years. That realization gradually forced them to seek the support of the population, in particular the women.

After the Second World War, western occupation policy for Germany was short-sighted because it made decisions based solely on fears of a resurgence of National Socialism in the first few years and then nearly single-mindedly on the fear of a Communist-bloc invasion. While these fears were based upon the very real threats of “Werewolf” and communist activities, another real long-term threat existed: the loss of

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36 Thomas L. Friedman, “Suicidal Lies,” The New York Times, Section 4, page 9, Column 1, 31 March, 2002 (late edition). Friedman argues that Palestinians have empowered themselves with the only
acceptance of the German population for western occupation forces. One can argue that if western occupation forces had left, or had been forced to leave Germany early enough in the Cold War, the Communist Party may have succeeded in wresting control of the entire German nation from the grip of capitalism. Truman and Eisenhower certainly feared such an outcome as evidenced by their refusal to consider Stalin’s repeated secret offers of a mutual disengagement from free and neutral Germany.37

If a communist and/or hostile Germany were thought possible, a long-term investment in the goodwill of the German population would have been prudent. One can argue that this is precisely what the West was doing in 1948 by bringing the Deutsche Mark into existence in the bizone and by airlifting tons of food and supplies to Berlin. While this is excellent evidence that the Western powers were serious about helping the Germans attain economic and political freedom, before the Soviets blockaded Berlin, Western goodwill may not have been so obvious to the population of Germany. In fact, to the majority of Germans, who happened to be women at this particular time, the Soviets must have appeared to have had the most forward-thinking political policies regarding German women. The Soviets had perhaps the most liberal policies in allowing women to participate in politics, and German women in communist organizations in the Soviet zone of occupation reflected this through their participation in great numbers. This participation was unmatched in the earliest stages of the occupation by German women in the Western zones.

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37See Rolf Steininger, *The German Question: The Stalin Note of 1952 and the Problem of*
In an age when the merits of the study of systems has verified the validity of the impact of small changes in initial conditions making for large differences in output, it might seem absurdly obvious that large changes in initial conditions might also lead to large changes in output. By this I mean that we have recognized that individuals can have a large impact in a complex situation. Whatever occupation forces do, they will not be able to always accurately predict the results of their policies, and hence, occupiers should attempt, whenever possible, to look at the entirety of the spectrum of options in attempts to influence (bend) the will of the population. Overlooking important minorities, or even worse, the majority, however traditionally passive and timid this group may have been is dangerous, and perhaps foolhardy. Yet this is exactly what most military occupation authorities did in Germany initially.

Eventually, these authorities, with the notable exception of the French, came to see women as an important interest group. Women from the Soviet occupation zone sparked this interest by organizing conferences and recruiting women to join the communist cause. British and American authorities then recognized the potential political value that women could have, or rather the trouble it might cause the West should German women in their zones join forces with the women from the Soviet zone. The Americans and the British each set out to implement different programs to incorporate German women into their version of democracy. German women in the

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French zone remained more passive and traditional, at least when compared with the women of the other zones.

The differences in the approach and results of the different occupation forces are debatable. The early recognition of women as a viable political ally by the Soviets and German communists in the East may have given their movement added legitimacy for a time, but it was not enough to eventually stabilize the totalitarian regime there. In the end, the brutality of the totalitarian system and the major events of the Cold War overshadowed the importance of the politicization of German women. However, simply because the Soviets failed to win the Cold War does not mean that there is nothing to learn from their occupation experience. The corollary follows that just because the West won the Cold War, it does not follow that the West did everything right. Without the Soviet activity in the realm of German women in politics, the western powers might not have overtly supported German women in the same ways that they did.
CHAPTER 3

THE COLD WAR IN EUROPE AND THE NUMBERS

There may be something to be learned about effective military occupation in places one may not expect. Soviet occupied Germany is one of them. The Soviet invasion of Germany normally brings about visions of the apocalypse. Historians have written about the rape and plunder, the mass exodus from East Prussia and the Battle of Berlin. Norman Naimark spends an entire chapter of his book *The Russians in Germany* describing the plight of women in the immediate occupation period. There is no comprehensive work on the social history of the Soviet zone before the formation of the DDR. Most of the works covering East Germany orient on political, military, diplomatic or economic history. These works depict the history of the Soviet zone as that of first, rape and plunder, and then the story of the formation of a one-party state.

While these issues are key in understanding the Soviet zone of occupation and the German Democratic Republic, this leaves women in the position of first being victims of the Soviet occupiers, and then of being merely subjects of the East German communist government. While some women certainly saw themselves this way, there were many important women in the Soviet zone who were not victims, but actors who began working to improve the lot of women even before the founding of the East German Social Unity Party (SED). Soviet occupation authorities and German civilian
organizations began to recognize women as an interest group within a few months of the end of hostilities. Even then, this was a concern of only marginal significance of the Soviet and German authorities who were more concerned with what they considered more urgent issues—namely the growing tensions between the four occupation powers.

Allied troops who entered Germany from the west were not known by Germans to have been as brutal, but they were still feared. Still, when given a choice most German soldiers and civilians chose to be under the occupation of the western armies. The occupation in the West began with smiles and chocolates, but after President Roosevelt saw photos of American soldiers picnicking with German families and the German counteroffensive in the Ardennes in December of 1944, further fraternization with Germans was strictly forbidden. This initially prevented contact between Germans and occupation soldiers, but did not last through the end of 1945. Eventually children, then women and eventually all Germans began to have normal contact with occupation soldiers and authorities. The occupation in the West then became business-like and orderly, with some instances of trouble from both occupier and occupied, but generally was more orderly than in the East. German women were the object of some of the occupation force’s attention from the beginning of the occupation but not for political purposes until much later. German women in the western zones were treated non-specifically as the whole German population was and they were never officially considered an interest group by occupation authorities until 1947. The Allies were also

more concerned with what they considered to be the larger issues of the looming tensions between east and west and even French obstinacy.

At the end of hostilities the occupation powers first concerned themselves with issues other than the plight of Germans. The French and the Soviets worried more about how they stood in reference to the other occupiers than with the Germans. The British remained concerned about economics and changes in their own government as Churchill lost his bid for re-election. The United States was still leading the war against Japan for a few more months, and then became concerned with domestic opinion over what to do in Germany. In short, the occupying powers started to concern themselves with each other more than with the Germans nearly as soon as the fighting was over. Even if the Soviets may have given women more attention earlier, as will be seen in the next chapters, I do not contend that any of the occupation powers initially targeted German women intentionally as an interest group to aid or advance. All of the powers were concerned with their position in the post-war world. If the term “Cold War” was not yet in common usage, the jockeying for position in the post-war order was obvious even before Potsdam. The Allies were more concerned with sizing each other up than with the German population or with German women in particular.

As details of Soviet atrocities in their zone were revealed, western leaders focused more on their own zones and on enforcing treaty agreements than on the unity of Germany. The Soviets acted similarly, and all sides would test the waters as to how far they could push the limits of the agreements of the Big Three. Both sides were extremely concerned that there might be an outbreak of hostilities between Soviet and western forces. Both sides were concerned that the boundaries and agreements of the Potsdam
conference might not be respected. The western monopoly on nuclear weapon
technology probably kept the uneasy peace while occupation authorities busily restored
the rule of law and basic life-sustaining functions to a war-torn Germany.

The Germans themselves were captives, held hostage in the zone where they
happened to live, unable to migrate without great risk. Most intellectual Germans
believed the old system to have been proven to be bankrupt. They were looking to start
over but they could not be sure what the future would hold, whether it would be a Third
World War or a gradual economic victory for one faction or even a revolution. Before
the Berlin Blockade and Airlift, before the Berlin Wall, and long before the Cuban
Missile Crisis, Cold War battle lines were being drawn by the Germans themselves based
upon the fact that amongst Germans there were supporters of both sides in the coming
Cold War in Europe.

That there were communists in Germany should be no surprise as this is where
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels gave birth to the idea. That so many Germans would be
willing to accept and even participate willingly in implementing Soviet-style
totalitarianism immediately after being “liberated” from the Nazi terror did surprise some
in the West. Communist sympathizers in the East were just as surprised that their cousins
in the West would continue to accept capitalism after it had led to the catastrophes of the
depression, Nazism and the war. Both of these positions existed simultaneously within
the German population, and hence, the Germans were on the frontline of the Cold War.

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42 I actually believe the Cold War began when the West sent troops to aid the White Russians in
the Russian Civil War. The Bolsheviks could never trust the West after this. When Stalin split Poland with
Hitler in 1939, the West had its reason to never trust the Soviets as well. Thus the Cold War starting point
To the Allied occupation authorities, the Germans were seen at different times as lost cousins to be punished and re-educated or potential minds to be won over as Allies.

The recognition of German women as a political interest group may then be seen as part of the greater battle to win over the “hearts and minds” of the Germans, consisting mostly of women. The communist and capitalist ideologies could each include women within their existing platforms for the same goal, but with different approaches. The communists could use the idea of equality as their line of reasoning—it would not be that far of a leap in logic from class equality to gender equality. While the capitalists could get some utility out of “equal opportunity” as well, they could focus more on the woman as leader in the traditional family, a consumer and purchaser, or an educator. For those interested in women’s “liberation,” the communist reasoning would sound more progressive. For traditionalists, the capitalist explanation would suffice for explaining the increased value in the role of the woman by coupling a desire for a recovered European capitalistic economy with the idea that Germany would be a key part of a general European recovery.43 Add to these desires the undeniable fact that German women were the largest part of the German population, and even the most traditional, conservative capitalist would be comfortable allowing women a great role in a German reconstruction.

The capitalists won the Cold War in Europe eventually, but it would be difficult at best for one to prove that it was due to better policies toward women in the West

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43 While it did take time for everyone involved (in the West) to generally agree that this was the case, various joint European recovery commissions figured this out very quickly after the war and the
Germany. This would be going too far. Instead, in the beginning of the Cold War in Europe, when victory of the West was by no means clear, women were initially left out of the equation in the West. It was not until the communists actively recruited German women that women became considered an important variable in the equation for recovery, and then only half-heartedly—too little, too late—as the founding of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland, or the autonomous West Germany would now make its own domestic policy with regard to women and even economics.

It can be safely said that the long term Soviet occupation of Germany failed, as evidenced by the collapse of communism in East Germany. A more neutral view of the Cold War as a whole could concede that the policies of the Cold War powers did at least prevent a major world war, albeit at great cost in human life in places like Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Africa and Central America others. Still while capitalism has triumphed in Germany, the seeds of socialism, and indeed communism, live on in the modern Party of German Socialism, or Partei des Deutschen Sozialismus (PDS), the offspring of the former Social Unity Party of Germany, or Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED). A communist apologist might argue that the West won the Cold War due to the superior industrial base that preceded the battle of ideologies. This advantage is what gave the West the economic power it needed to outspend the Soviets in the Cold War nuclear and conventional arms race, and that is what sent Soviet-style communism into the dust bin of history. Thus, Gorbachev’s unwillingness to support Soviet-style regimes with military might was based solely on a (debatable) military inferiority based in turn on economic problems rooted not in ideological failures, but on

Marshall Plan established it as official policy. See Michael Hogan, The Marshall Plan, (New York:
the whim of nature’s placement of natural resources, and possibly human capital—
ingenuity and education.\textsuperscript{44} The fact remains that the victory of capitalism as an ideology
came not only because of the production of mass quantities of consumer goods cheaper
and better than those of their eastern competitors, it came also due to the failure of
oppressive political policies and restricted personal freedoms of the Communist-bloc
countries.

While this view represented the perception of those Germans fleeing the East by
the 1960’s, and certainly by the 1980’s, it was not the obvious truth to many Germans
during the initial stages of the occupation, from 1944-1949.\textsuperscript{45} There were those Germans
who had always sympathized with communism and many of the believers in this
ideology suffered in concentration camps during the war. To the German communist,
Soviet-style communism seemed a natural ally in the war against Nazi policies—(quasi)-
capitalism being one of those by association--that persecuted communists. German
communists had been around for a long time and looked forward to their liberation by
Soviet soldiers who they hope would help them establish a socialist or communist
Germany.

Those who saw Germany as a potential ally of democracy would have discounted
these German communists as a minority and instead seen western-style democracy as the
true victim of National Socialism. In the eyes of some, the Weimar Republic had had
real potential, but had fallen prey to bad economic policies and the Treaty of Versailles.

\textsuperscript{44} John Gimbel, \textit{Science, Technology and Reparations: Exploitation and Plunder in Postwar
Germany}. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990. The Germans had been among the leaders in the
world in this resource before the war, and both sides tried to capitalize on this by recruiting, or impressing,
German scientists to work for them in the aftermath of the war.
Likewise, the Soviets must have seen Germany as a dichotomous enigma based upon its recent Nazi past but more distant, and more inviting Communist tendencies stirring deep within its bowels. The Soviets and the Western allies must have both hoped that by removing the undesirable Nazi regime, a government that was more familiar to their respective home governments might spontaneously emerge. True, there were pessimistic conservatives in both the West and the East that assumed the Germans to be hopelessly mired in militaristic or Nazi patterns. But the victorious powers were prepared to accept a new Germany into their respective folds under the right conditions. If the conclusion of the Cold War in Europe in 1989-1990 demonstrated Germany moving into the camp of Western-style democracy and capitalism, this result was by no means clear in 1945. This outcome was determined not by how the respective powers treated the German women in their zones during the occupation, but by the larger political and military events of the Cold War in Europe.

What might have happened differently in the Cold War in Europe must remain outside the scope of this work, but one can speculate that the attempts of the East German government in 1990 to maintain an independent, reformed East German communist state without merging with the Federal Republic might have had a chance without the linking of Soviet-style socialism (communism) to police-state totalitarianism. What is important in this discussion is that one must remain open to the possibility that the West may not have won the Cold War in Europe simply because it did everything right. It may be that the Soviets even did some things better than the West during the Cold War, but that they

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45 Allied troops occupied parts of Western Germany as early as September 1944, though they did not cross the Rhine River until March, 1945.
46 Henry Morgenthau had convinced President Roosevelt of as much in his plan for Germany to be
did a few things so wrong that their successes did not matter. In other words, as I stated in the first sentence of this chapter, there may still be something to learn about effective military occupation from sources one may not expect.

One of the strengths of the Soviets during the Cold War in Europe is that they allowed a great deal of freedom in their policies towards women in politics, and this worked initially (1945-1948) in their favor, garnering them the support of large numbers of German women. This might be no surprise in light of the fact that the Soviets women had made great strides toward political equality and utility by making things happen on the ground. Soviet women had proven themselves equal with men in dealing with agricultural problems, education, science, technology, and even combat. Soviet women had proven themselves during collectivization, industrialization and in the Second World War. The Soviet woman’s theoretical equality had come, if not simultaneously with, at least on the heels of class equality. The Soviets then proceeded to have some of the same expectations of women in occupied territories. The fact that the members of the Soviet military had seen the Soviet woman rise to a position of pseudo-equality in many fields meant that the Soviets were generally more willing to accept German women as

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48 See Greta Bucher, “Struggling to Survive: Soviet Women in the Postwar Years,” in The Journal of Women’s History, Vol.12, No.1 (Spring, 2002), 137-159. Bucher points out that though Soviet women had attained theoretical equality in the Soviet Union, they still had little control over reproduction laws and the Soviet state had exaggerated expectation of them with regard to how they would balance work and home. The Soviet view of women was that they should be simultaneously perfect workers, mothers and homemakers. This delicate balance was difficult to maintain and meant that women were still rarely able to advance into management positions.
capable participants in more arenas of society than even previous German governments had, and also more than the Western powers would at least initially.

This is a major difference between German and Soviet totalitarianism. That is to say that Nazi totalitarianism had only offered women the chance to participate as long as they were focused upon the goals set for them by the Nazi party. Soviet totalitarianism allowed for women to critique the state and have a voice in the society in ways German women could not have done under Hitler’s regime.\textsuperscript{49} If the experience of Soviet women differed from that of women in Nazi Germany, there would be some similarities in the situation of German and Soviet women after the war. After all, women dominated the demographics of the Soviet Union as well. Women comprised 57.4 percent of the total population and over 60 percent of those over 16 years of age.\textsuperscript{50} This would have given Soviet authorities some advantages in dealing with the realities of the postwar world. Soviet women had become an important part of the Soviet work force, constituting 92 percent of all new workers from 1941-1950.\textsuperscript{51} Soviet women had even served prominent roles in the combat forces of the Red Army during the war.\textsuperscript{52} Some Soviet women must have felt that women had earned the equality promised to them by the theories of communism, which had from inception supported the idea of gender equality.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{49} Sheila Fitzpatrick demonstrates some of this in Everyday Stalinism: Soviet Russia in the 1930’s, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
\textsuperscript{53} Obviously not all communists believed this, but most of them understood that this was one of the original intents of the communist idea of reorganizing society.
Not surprisingly then, within months of occupying Berlin, the Soviets had allowed political meetings of women who opposed fascism. However, advancing the feminist cause was not an immediate Soviet interest, legitimate united socialism was. To this end, the Soviets forced the union of the communist (KPD) and socialist (SPD) parties in their zone. Numerous women were in the vanguard of the new social unity party (SED). The Soviets were interested in advancing the goals of scientific (and Stalinist) socialism and they would allow anyone who was willing to help to do so. This meant that German women in the Soviet zone would have an equal chance to participate in building a socialist state.

One could also argue that the Soviets had little choice but to offer this as a sort of concession to a population that had been brutalized in the closing months of the war (especially the women). Thus, if the socialist powers sincerely desired that a Soviet-style German socialist state be embraced as a part of a long-term solution to the "German question," there would need to be hard evidence of a break with the past and the founding of a new tradition. Western skeptics could argue the Soviets then were forced to pretend like they were open-minded and progressive. Enough German women were convinced of the sincerity of the effort that thousands joined communist women’s organizations long before any such organization was even founded in the West. Still one could argue that most of the communist female political organizations were segregated, and hence separate, but not quite equal to the real apparatus of power. Women did garner positions in the highest councils of the party and the government, but they were never really represented proportionally, nor did women’s issues ever gain the kind of support in the party that organizers of women’s movements wanted. Regardless, German women in the
East were at least initially offered a voice that they were not offered initially in the West.

While a cynic might still be unconvinced of the true motive of the communists in including women in such great numbers, the fact remains that they did, and they did so much sooner than the Western occupation governments did. The communists did not do so purely out of a belief in fairness or equal rights, however. The real issue at stake was the attempt to win the Cold War. The Soviets wanted to unite all moderate socialists and communists together as “socialists” in a coalition against a capitalism that they wished to present as monolithic and unconcerned with the needs of the German population, and since women were the majority of the German population at this time, it makes sense that the Soviets would include them. The Western Allies wanted to unite Germans into a society of consumers (whether or not they were the de-industrialized agricultural society envisioned by Morgenthau) so they could reinvigorate the stagnant and damaged economies of Western Europe.

The Soviets and the western Allies were in a competition to gain control of the German population. One can assume that from the absence of a Third World War between the Soviets and the West that neither side really wanted this competition to escalate into a direct confrontation--war. The next best way to win the competition without war would be to be able to win economically. This would take time. All of the powers on the continent were economically spent and no amount of money could make the turn around happen overnight. Both would try, the Marshall Plan in the West, and planned economies in the East would each get a chance to demonstrate mastery of material world. In the meantime, for both the Western and Soviet camps, the goodwill and morale of the German people would be the measure of success for the competing
ideologies. While neither side expressly conceded this in written policy, it makes sense that this intangible battle for the “hearts and minds” was behind many of these decisions in planning and executing the bloodless battles of the Cold War. Western policy makers took a long-term approach to this, digging in for a long battle financed and defended by the American dollar. The Soviet-bloc decided on the pageantry of rallies, citizenship medals and Stakhanovite-style heroics while producing little in the way of real incentive for their citizens. In the end the Marshall Plan produced better economic results and was in place precisely when the Soviets were still extracting reparations from Germany. The Allies fostered diversity (albeit minus communism) while the Soviets sought the monoculture of communism. The combination of the Marshall Plan vs. reparations and that of diversity vs. monoculture hindered the ultimate cause of the Soviets as much as it helped that of the West—convincing the Germans to internalize the values of the occupier.

The battles for the “hearts and minds” of Germans were not to be won in direct confrontations between the Warsaw Pact and NATO armies. They probably never could have been won this way, as the hapless Germans were not exactly willing collaborators in allowing American nuclear weapons or Soviet combat units onto their soil.54 Other minor, less cataclysmic battles would have to suffice. This dissertation is largely a story of how part of one of these “bloodless battles,” the one for the “hearts and minds” of Germans, was fought in four different ways in the four zones of occupation.

54 Many rallies were held outside of American military posts in the 1970’s and 80’s when new warheads or missiles were shuttled between locations. By the 1990’s most, if not all nuclear weapons were
The Soviets seized the initiative with regard to “winning the hearts and minds” of the German population by offering to emancipate German women. The Western Allies did not realize that this battle was underway as they were worried first about security, secondly about economics and thirdly about politics. They did not immediately recognize that women would have anything to do with this. When the Second World War ended, the western Allies were ready with military government teams (called civil affairs teams in friendly territories). Each team was trained to govern a specific area of Germany, though the rate of success of getting the right team to the right area was a different thing altogether. These teams, British, French and American or some mix of the three, were prepared for most conceivable contingencies, but not for large numbers of women as the majority of the population. Military occupation records show that most of the claims filed with Allied agencies were filed by women who were everywhere asking for jobs, help with housing, food, and information about missing family members. The great majority of consumers that post-war capitalism would need for the economic miracle of the 50's were begging for help, but the military governments trained to do so were ill-prepared.55

The civil affairs and military government detachments should have been trained to deal with the problems of women. German women had been trained and encouraged to be homemakers, temporary factory workers, and mothers in support of National Socialism. They had not been trained that pluralism was a positive value. They had not been encouraged to participate politically (beyond voting for the NSDAP). The Soviets removed from German soil causing many German towns to post signs declaring their towns “Atomwaffenfreizone!” (Atomic weapon free zone!)
realized that German women would need additional encouragement if they were to implement communist-socialism in Germany. The Soviets also realized that German women would be critical to the effort to reorganize Germany (though the Soviets were less interested in Reconstruction). If the western Allies wanted German society to be rebuilt in the image of western-style democracy, they should have also recognized the important role German women would need to play in that process. In addition the Allies should have planned for that accordingly by having military officers prepared to teach them how to participate in a democratic system. Some British and then American women did eventually recognize the need for special attention for German women. The Soviets, then the British, and finally the Americans initiated programs to help German women become involved politically in order to further Cold War interests, and each succeeded to various degrees.

I do not claim that policies of the occupiers with respect to German women won the Cold War. In fact, I clearly believe that the Soviets had the more advanced policies toward German women in the realm of politics and even in many of their social policies. However, the fact that Germans in the East needed to be socialists in order to benefit from these policies made the difference. The Western Allies recognized this and determined that the right to make a choice, and the economic prosperity of the West would eventually prevail. With regard to women, however, the British and then the Americans decided to hedge their bets by initiating programs that would officially

sanction helping German women. The different approaches were direct reflections on the way women participated in politics in the home nations of the occupying powers.

Breaking Down the Cold War Blocs

As stated in the introduction, in much of post-war literature about the occupation period, even that portion concerning women, the analysis is either concerning one zone of occupation, or any comparison is done by discussing East vs. West. While the Cold War made this understandable, limiting the analysis to two variations, Soviet vs. Western, socialist vs. capitalist, in analyzing the level of political activity by German women during the occupation may not alone explain the very different results in these women’s political participation. In fact, each occupation power in the West had its own reasons for handling the situation as they did, and this dissertation will attempt to compare each of them for their own merits and flaws.

The policies pursued by the occupying powers were very much a reflection of the nature of women's politics in the home country of each occupier. In the United States, only 14 members of the 545 members of Congress (2.6 percent) were women in 1947, and none of them were in the Senate. In the United Kingdom, the numbers were not much better. Only 24 of 640 Members of the House of Commons (3.75 percent) were

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56 This is not to say that absolutely nothing was done before this official sanctioning. Dr. John Flynn, Chair of the Department of History at the University of the South has pointed out to me that some British women, such as Helena Deneke, worked to assess the needs of German women before any official programs were sanctioned. See David Phillips, “Helena Deneka and the Women of Germany: A Note on Post-War Educational Reconstruction,” in German Life and Letters, Vol. 53 No. 1, (January 2000), 89-105. Likewise, some American women were interested in the plight of German women before the founding of the Women’s Affairs Branch in the American zone (see chapter seven).

women.\textsuperscript{58} In France, women had only gotten the right to vote and run for office in 1944. It should not be too surprising then that women made up only 5 percent of the National Assembly in 1945.\textsuperscript{59} What is truly surprising is that having had the vote only one year, they managed to gain more seats as a percentage than either the US Congress or the British Parliament! Certainly this had to do with the role of women in the \textit{Résistance} and the \textit{Maquis} where women served side-by-side with men. Sometimes women were preferred as commanders, albeit partly due to the fact that German men tended to underestimate the capabilities of women in such positions, hence making women more able to remain concealed.\textsuperscript{60} By contrast, women in Britain and America had made gains in the workforce, but with no correspondingly impressive difference in real political power.

With this type of reality for women in the homelands of western democracy, German women had real, tangible reasons to expect more from Soviet-style socialism than from western democracy. In the Soviet Union, women had made more progress. Of the 2250 members of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, 277 (12.3 percent) were women in 1949.\textsuperscript{61} While mere numbers of women in the legislature is not a perfect measure of political power, it is certainly an indicator of how many women have achieved political recognition and the appearance of decision-making authority. Here I

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., (Fourcade).
am careful to distinguish between perception and reality. The German Landtags had little real power in 1947. There was no real German government until 1949. The military occupiers were the real governors in each zone. However, the fact that German women were serving in greater numbers in the Soviet zone was designed to give the impression to German women in all of Germany that communism was more receptive to women in positions of power. The other zones had only token numbers of women. Women therefore must have had less influence in these zones, or so the Soviets and German communists would have German women believe.

Other studies beyond the scope of this one would be necessary to completely illuminate the amount of influence that women had in these societies at this time. Still, if information about the occupying powers is to have any meaning to this study, we must compare like numbers. While in 1947 there was no national legislature, there were legislatures at the state (Staat) level. The communist women of the DFD kept a close watch on the trends of how German women fared in all zones. Overall, 209 of 1887 representatives (11.1 percent) were women in the Landtagen in all of Germany. In that women had reached a higher degree of participation than that of women in western countries (France, Great Britain and the United States) is only slightly surprising. In those countries, women were nearly equally represented at levels below the national assembly. However, in the Soviet Union over a half a million women purportedly served on local Soviets.62 So although German women did not reach this level of participation, which the Soviets reached by mandating it, they did have similar representation to

62 Ibid., Purdy, M4 Factsheet, and Simon-Peirano above.
Western democracies. Though it would be a stretch to call Germany one of the western democracies at this point, they seem to have at least made some of the same strides for female participation that other western democracies had made at this point. This, combined with the fact that many German men were dead, imprisoned, invalid, or politically ineligible made the fact of a slightly increased female participation at the local level somewhat less amazing.

The overall statistics do not tell the whole tale. If one looks at each zone individually, a completely different story is told. The most glaring statistic is that over half of the women in the German Landtagen in 1947 were elected in the Soviet zone. While the DFD offers no explanation for this, we can speculate that women were not as organized or encouraged to participate in the western zones as they were in the East. Again, a further study would be necessary to determine the reasoning behind the election statistics, but again, the numbers tell us something about what was going on in each zone.

The worst case example for women elected to the Landtag was in the French zone. Here not one woman served in 1947. Out of 222 seats, all were held by men. This must have had some correlation with the fact that women in France had only had the right to vote for about two years when these first elections took place.

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64 Ibid.
65 The 5% representation of women in the French National Assembly did not translate to seats for women in the French zone probably because the idea of women in these positions was so new and because the French zone of occupation in Germany was still a male-controlled domain of the French Army.
In the British zone, 43 out of 545 (7.9 percent) seats were held by women.\textsuperscript{66} While this was a better representation than women in any of the western nations enjoyed, it was still far from representative of the 60 percent+ of the population that was female.

In the American zone, women occupied only 28 of the 470 seats (6 percent). In conservative Bavaria, the number was even lower, 5 out of 180 (2.8 percent).\textsuperscript{67}

**Women in the *Landtagen*, 15 August 1947**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US Zone</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Zone</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Zone</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Zone</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the Soviet zone appears to have offered the best opportunity for women to serve in the Landtag (20.6 percent were women), at other levels of government, participation of women varied resulting in women being 16.4 percent of the elected officials at the community (*Gemeinde*), county (*Kreis*) and state (*Land*) level combined. Of 116,675 positions in government at these levels in the Soviet zone, 19,180 were women.\textsuperscript{69}

While like statistics for the other zones are not available for a direct comparison, some statistics are available that shed light on what the reality in the western zones was. First of all, in the French zone there were absolutely no women in any of these positions.

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{67}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{68}Ibid., "Das Neue Wort" 15 August 1947.  
\textsuperscript{69} SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/99 208, "Frauen in den Landtagen und Parlamenten."
If the British and American zones showed some evidence of allowing or encouraging more participation by women in their respective zones, the reality for women in the western zones was still a serious under-representation in government. For example, in Bavaria, where women made up more than 60 percent of the population in 1947, only 1.7 percent of the 6256 government officials at the community, county and state level were women. 70 Only at the lowest levels (community) had women even breached the 5 percent mark in representation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women in Bavarian Parliaments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemeinde (locality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kreistag (county)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landtag (state)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it is not hard to draw the conclusion that the Soviets better accommodated women serving in office in their zone that the western powers did in their zones, at least in 1947, further conclusions are harder to substantiate. One can safely conclude that the French were not open to women serving in public office. But why would the Soviet communist regime, which was more likely to be portrayed as a totalitarian dictatorship than a liberal democracy, be the one most amenable to women in politics? German women interested in politics must have asked themselves the same questions, while those who supported traditional roles of women might have shrugged off these questions as irrelevant. One might conclude simply that while the British and American occupation

70 Ibid., “Frauen in den Parlamenten (Bayern).”
71 Ibid.
powers would tolerate women serving in public office, they certainly did not promote such service, nor afford it any special consideration or opportunity.

The reality may be even simpler. The Soviets did not allow women to have real power even in the Soviet Union. No Soviet woman ever achieved full membership in the Politburo nor was more than 5 percent of the Central Committee ever composed of women.\textsuperscript{72} The British and American occupation forces did not concern themselves with who would represent the German population in terms of gender: they were only concerned with party affiliation, and that meant absolutely no National Socialists would serve (without being cleared as nominal participants) and that Communists would be looked upon with great suspicion, and would eventually be banned. The Soviets were also concerned with party affiliation, but obviously in the opposite way with regard to communism. They would only accept positions sympathetic to the socialist one, though initially they did allow anyone claiming to be anti-fascist to participate. The Soviets and German communists considered women as a great untapped source of support that could be mustered for the cause of scientific socialism. They more clearly recognized that in the state of uncertainty that existed in the immediate post-war period, they would need to rally new sources of support in order to restore order to a totally chaotic Germany and to sustain their momentum in world expansion. In Germany, there could be little question that converting the traditional male political elite into Soviet allies from any other sources than socialist and communist parties would be fruitless. The only alternative to allowing former enemies into the party system was to seek support from new sources. The precedent for German women's participation was set in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} Century when many
of the most active members of the early German communist party (KPD) had been women. Rosa Luxembourg had visited Russia during the abortive Revolution 1905, and had returned to Germany as a mouthpiece for revolution instead of reform. Though she died as a result of her beliefs in the violence at the end of the Great War, women's voices were not at all silenced by her death. Other extreme left-wing socialist women, forerunners of the communists such as Clara Zetkin, continued to work for women's equality in Germany. In 1919, the Weimar Constitution granted suffrage to women (a year earlier than in the United States--1920). If the Soviets were trying something relatively new in recruiting German women to be active in politics, there was reason for them to believe that women might be receptive to communist efforts due to the activities of Luxembourg and Zetkin, and due to the political climate they must have seen as receptive to change in any direction away from what had been the norm from 1933-1945.

Including women in the governing bodies of occupied Germany did not occur to the leaders of the Western powers, having few women in their occupation forces and organizations. The western occupying powers were free to pursue their own policies within the boundaries set for them by their political leaders hundreds or thousands of miles distant who were interested in stability in Germany only as far as it meant to provide for peace and prosperity in Europe, not for any general improvement in the quality of German life, political or otherwise. Even the Marshall Plan was designed not

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to improve the life of the German citizen. Instead, it was to ensure the recovery and integration of the rest of Europe first, with a German recovery as a prerequisite, or neutral side-effect, in ensuring the longevity of such a recovery. The gender of Germans did not matter to the policymakers who designed this recovery.

The Western powers were thus not necessarily interested in maintaining any sort of "status quo" for women politically in their zones, but rather they did not notice the plight of women as significant in the overall scenario of Germany. They did not therefore intentionally ignore women in their political aspirations, but did not hold their situation as any type of priority with which to be concerned. Instead, the western Allies concerned themselves with the basic needs for the survival of Germans, such as food distribution, disease control, crime reduction, restoration of utilities, and the rule of law. In the execution of duties related to these occupation government function, officials must have noticed the prevalence of women in the local populations, but no policy to remedy their corresponding level of participation in government was attempted in the western zones until well over a year after events in the Soviet zone had already demonstrated the relevance of the communist philosophy: "You can have the men, give us the women and children."75

In late 1945, women were already on the move in the Soviet zone. In 1946, some women in the British and American zones showed an interest in political participation, as well. The British considered training women in parliamentary procedure and democracy to their standards. The Americans did little until 1947, and then seemingly only in

75 SAPMO BY/1/64 KPD Reports. This was a popular communist slogan in political campaigns in both East and West, it was unofficial but did appear on some local campaign posters.
reaction to gains made by women in socialist organizations in the Soviet zone who began to recruit western women to join their forums.

While it is unclear exactly what motivated the western occupation forces to begin considering official campaigns to foster women's political activity in their respective zones, in each case it is clear that to some degree, women's participation was sparked by a reaction to the progress made by women in the Soviet zone. The women's conferences sponsored by socialist women clearly had an impact. While this impact is not measurable in any tangible statistical sense, it is readily apparent that without the work of socialist German women, the overall level of participation of German women in all of the occupation zones might have been significantly less. The debates sparked and recorded by the German women in the Soviet zone of occupied Germany provide an invaluable insight as to how many German women saw political activity as a new and exciting part of public life. Indeed, without the efforts of the women from the Soviet zone, there may never have been any serious work by western occupation powers to accommodate women in the government of Germany.
CHAPTER 4

THE SOVIET ZONE

The Soviet victory in Germany was total and brutal to the German population. But life had to go on. It is not the purpose of this work to recount the terror of Soviet atrocities in the immediate occupation period. It is enough to say that the atrocities were real and numerous. As in the other zones, women were left as the majority of the population—of 17.3 million Germans in the Soviet zone, 9.9 million, or 62 percent were women. The dangerous combination of this demographic fact with the Russian desire for revenge led to rape and brutality. Allied authorities were not allowed to take their positions in their sectors Berlin agreed upon by the Big Three for about 8 weeks, in July 1945. In the meantime, chaos reigned and Soviet soldiers plundered with the implicit permission of their commanders. When the orgy of destruction ended, and it did so rather sporadically with fits and starts, until in 1949, Soviet soldiers were finally literally locked into their barracks, rarely to interact with German citizens in any casual or meaningful way again. During this period, Soviet military governors gradually turned over complete power to the East German Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or SED). This party had the most impact upon all German

76 Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv in Zehlendorf, Berlin (SAPMO), DY/1 1643, Einwohnerzahl 1946.
77 Über Die Russen und über Uns, (Berlin: DDR Press, 1953). This government handbook published a question and answer “town hall meeting” style for German citizens available for 50 pfennig, or about 25 cents.
activities in the Soviet zone, to include those of women. While much has been written about East German communism and totalitarianism, very little about the nature of the early political work of German women from the Soviet zone is known, eclipsed by the horrors of Soviet occupation troops.

If in the earliest period of Soviet occupation, the brutality of Soviet soldiers dominated the lives of German citizens in the East, later it was the SED and its affiliated organizations that were of the highest importance to East German citizens. The women in the Soviet zone were most greatly affected by these socialist organizations. While other parties existed at the outset of the Soviet occupation, those outside of the communist/socialist sphere of influence would not be allocated any resources and eventually would become irrelevant.

Persons of other party affiliations or who remained without party, parteilos, would be left out of the communist safety net. I will first demonstrate how a woman outside of the party system could expect to be treated. Then I will show how those insiders who participated in the party structure handled their situation. It will then be clearer to the reader that the Soviet zone of occupation offered opportunities to German women who were willing to work for the socialist cause in a way that their western female cousins would not experience. I will use specific examples of the activities of socialist German women from the Soviet zone.

Administration

Marshal Georgi Zhukov, commander of so many of the successful offensives against the German Army, became the commander of the Soviet Zone of occupation immediately upon the unconditional surrender of the German Armed Forces on 8 May
1945. Zhukov’s government was called the Soviet Military Administration of Germany (SMAD or SMA). In June 1945 General Vasili Sokolovskii became Marshal Zhukov's deputy. The goals of the Soviet Administration were to (1) to supervise the unconditional surrender of Germany, (2) to administer the Soviet zone, and (3) to implement the most important Allied decisions on military, political and economic matters. Sokolovsky commanded the Soviet occupation forces in Germany. Zhukov was the commander in chief until he fell out of favor with Stalin. In the spring of 1946 the Soviets appointed Sokolovskii as commander-in-chief. It was Sokolovsky who issued the order authorising the formation of the German Economic Commission (DWK) which was a centralised administrative body and the first stage to the creation of a separate East German government. It was this administration divided into 12 bureaus, which looked so much like the corresponding ministries in the Soviet government. The DWK set about better organizing reparations and controlled the economy in the Soviet zone until the formation of the German Democratic Republic. Just before this happened in 1949 Colonel General V.I. Chuikov replaced Sokolovsky as commander-in-chief.78

While these Soviets certainly had an immense impact on the population of the Soviet Zone of occupation due to absolute control over occupation policy, the Soviets preferred to allow German communists to control most day-to-day operations. If German women (and men) in the Soviet Zone could avoid confrontation with Soviet soldiers, they might expect to deal with German communists in the form of the aforementioned SED. It

was this political party that had the most direct influence on the lives of German women in the eastern zone.

The Soviet Zone of occupation was in ruins physically as well as demographically. German women began to simply stack bricks and to dig out what they could from the rubble. After a very short interlude these women were authorized to organize “anti-fascist” committees. German women emerged from the rubble in the Soviet zone as an organized force sanctioned by the socialist government of East Germany. From this fledgling start, the Soviets and the East German communists harnessed the power of the German female working class and co-opted as many women as they could into the new socialist party.

While women in the zones of the western occupation forces were certainly busy doing some of the very same tasks, and must have experienced similar success, they were largely organized under traditional groups sponsored by the church, the Red Cross, or other private institutions. The most obvious difference between women in the Soviet zone and in the western zones is the praise heaped upon them by the communist press in the Soviet zone. This is only a superficial difference between the zones. What truly made the organization of women in the Soviet zone different is that they established a break from these traditional groups and recognized the organizational skill of women. Women's organizations did much of the planning and executing of the clearing of rubble in the Soviet zone. What is remarkable is not that women in the Soviet zone were so organized to help all German citizens, but that they were organized by women, and women were largely in charge of the entire operation from top to bottom. The women's
committees actually realized what they were doing in that they specifically recruited and organized women.

*Parteilosen*

While many women benefitted from their association with rubble clearing and the “anti-fascist” committees, there were other who were not so fortunate. By 1947, about two million of the 16 million Germans in the Soviet zone were members of the ruling socialist/communist SED. Of these, about 25 percent were women. That is to say that party membership was the exception, not the rule. While the majority of German women remained apolitical in all of the zones, this is the story of those who seized agency and attempted to actively control the future of Germany. Initially being a socialist did not bring much protection, as many of the first German women trained in Moscow found out when they arrived in Germany and Soviet soldiers treated them as any other German.

All German men and women regardless of political orientation suffered greatly in the earliest months of the occupation. Eventually, by late 1945 party membership brought great benefits to any socialist, namely protection from frivolous imprisonment. Thousands of Germans, most of them not socialists, were imprisoned for almost any minor infraction of occupation rules. Stories of such treatment abound, but they are not all recorded. Most of the accounts published are from men, but through them, one can learn of the fate of women as well. One story that is well-known in Germany is told by Wolf Deinert. His book, *Meine Heimat*, is a first-hand interpretation of his own experiences of trying to escape East Germany. During his stay at the DDR prison,

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79 SAPMO DY 31 IV SED membership numbers.
Hohenschönhausen, Deinert learned the stories of those who had been tortured by the Soviets during the occupation period. Deinert and his friend Alex Latotsky, along with other former inmates of the prison, run it as a museum and continue to give tours of the place. During the tour one will hear stories of girls of 14 imprisoned there in the late 1940’s for drawing a beard on pictures of Stalin with lipstick. Others were imprisoned for making statements against socialism, etc. The stories, while anecdotal, add up to a true picture of the nature of totalitarianism. Those who knew the party line and spoke it well could succeed. Others were outsiders and were in serious danger of losing all liberty if they were involved with the authorities in any way.81

To demonstrate the situation of the persons without party in the Soviet zone of occupation would be akin to telling the story of those who had never voted in America—the task would be daunting and pointless, since these people, by their own choice, have no common story to tell. Still, it is worth mentioning that in any modern state there are large numbers of people who are not interested in politics, regardless of how much they are affected by them. It would be beyond the scope of this work to attempt to tell the story of millions of East Germans that were not affiliated with the communist/socialist party system. Instead, I will use one example of a specific individual to demonstrate how one could be treated in the Soviet zone of occupation. I do this not in an attempt to suggest that all parteilosen were treated as such, but to demonstrate that to be without affiliation to the party was dangerous, and to contrast the nature of life without politics with the life of those who chose to participate.

81 Wolf Deinert, Meine Heimat, (Frankfurt: März Verlag, 1980).
“Ursula-Susanna H. born in 1925, infiltrated in March 1946 as an agent of a foreign secret service. With a mission to spy, she entered the Soviet occupation zone in Germany, where she was arrested on 29 March and 3 April. She was sentenced to 15 years of confinement under Article 58-6, part 1 of the Occupation Powers Act of the Russian Soviet Federal Republic.

Beginning of sentence: 03.04.1946

For the right of copy: Commander of the Registration department of Special Prison no. 1, Lieutenant Baranow.”

This is all one would find in the official record of the confinement of Ursula-Susanna H. The story as she told it to her son, is much different. In fact, only the dates of the events in the report match her story. In 1940, when she was 15, Ursula was placed in a half-way house for troubled youth for four years, until 1944, due to “forbidden contact with a foreigner.” She had fallen in love with a French prisoner of war. At the end of the war, Ursula found herself living with her mother Elfriede in Berlin-Schöneberg, in the American sector of Berlin. One day in February 1946, after returning to the apartment, she found her mother dead and two drunk Soviet soldiers sleeping in the apartment. Shocked and enraged, Ursula immediately reported the incident to the German police with the belief that, since the war had been over almost a year, and the rule of law had been restored to the German authorities, that something would be done to punish the Soviet soldiers and justice would be done, especially since she was in the American sector. However, in three weeks, still nothing had happened and she was

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82 Unpublished manuscript, Ursula-Susanna and Sascha, A. Latotsky, 2001, 1. Alex Latotsky is Sascha, the child of Ursula. His family’s story is the basis of this anecdote. Latotsky cites Russian Federation Archives GA RF f.9409.op.1.d.225.1.178 in finding the order to put his mother in a prison camp. This is a translated document.
83 Ibid.
84 Soldiers from all sectors of Berlin had free access to all four sectors, even after the Berlin Wall was built. Clearly at this early date, access was very liberal.
informed that the dossier with the charges and statements had been lost by the prosecutors office.\textsuperscript{85}

Up until this point, Ursula was simply a victim of criminal activity of a few Soviet soldiers, bad luck, and bureaucracy. One might argue that she was not even in the Soviet zone of occupation due to where she lived in Berlin. At this point though, the Soviets truly considered all of Berlin to be under joint the jurisdiction of the Allied powers. While they were abiding by the agreement of the Big Three to allow Allied troops in Berlin, they must have figured them to be temporary guests, as the various blockades and crises would show later in 1948 and beyond.

Ursula, unaware of the danger of this situation made frequent trips to black-markets\textsuperscript{86} outside Berlin to acquire food and necessary items like silverware, pots and pans, etc. In March she made one her trips, this time to Senftenberg, a city south of Berlin between Cottbus and Dresden, in the Soviet zone of occupation. Here she was arrested by Soviet soldiers on charges of espionage. She associated her arrest with the charges she had leveled against the Soviet soldiers, but more likely she was arrested for not having the necessary papers for travel and for illegal bartering. For these charges, this 21 year-old German woman would stand before a Soviet military tribunal and receive the sentence of 15 years in prison.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{85} Quite possibly the files had been forwarded to military authorities who had a different agenda than Ursula had in mind.

\textsuperscript{86} Such trips were commonly referred to by the idiom “Hamsterfahrt,” or a hamster trip.

\textsuperscript{87} Black-marketeers would face trial in all of the zones of occupation but usually would pay a fine of 50RM (if any) or spend a night in jail for a first offense. The Office of the Military Government in Germany, (United States Zone) at the United States National Archives and Records Administration (OMGUS) records show this as common in all of the American records of the Office of Public Safety and Military Government detachment records.
Ursula found herself in the “Speziallager” of Torgau, a prison for the worst German civilian offenders and Nazis. The Soviets allowed reduced rations in Torgau, where supposedly over 10,000 prisoners starved to death between January and April 1947 alone.88

During her incarceration at Torgau, Ursula fell in love with a Ukrainian guard, Vladimir Jakowlewitsch Brjutschkowsi. He gave her tobacco and food and wrote her secret love letters. Something should be said of Vladimir's own unique story here. Also born in 1925, the youngest of five children, at the age of 17 he was taken sent to Brandenburg by the German Army to work as forced labor in a tank factory. After a year he escaped and fled toward home, but was recaptured at the border of Poland and sent to a textile mill.89 At the end of the war, like many other youth who had been forced into labor by the Germans, Vladimir was pressed into the service of the Red Army.90 In this capacity, he received a short period of training and was sent as a prison guard first to Buchenwald, then to Torgau.91

Like many prisoners of the Soviets, Ursula spent the first weeks of sentence in solitary confinement. It was here that Vladimir took pity upon her and began his secret visits to her, despite the danger. Eventually, the guard and the prisoner developed a relationship, and by 1947 Ursula became pregnant. When the pregnancy became known to the prison authorities, Vladimir came under immediate suspicion and both were

88 Latotsky, 1. He cites Soviet records and local German archives near Leipzig.
89 Ibid., 2. Probably he was captured at the border of the Reich and what the Germans called the General Gouvernement, which was what they called the remnant of Poland after the German-Soviet division of that country in 1939.
90 Actually, Vladimir was quite lucky since many captured Soviet citizens were sent to Siberia as traitors at the end of the war. Maybe he was spared this fate due to his attempt to escape or simply because of his youth. Manpower was a problem for all sides after all.

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interrogated. Despite the fact that neither ever admitted the truth, Vladimir was tried by a military tribunal and sentenced to six years of hard labor in the Soviet Union. On April 17th, 1948, Vladimir, with 900 other prisoners, was sent to a work camp in Suchobeswodnoje in Gorki and Ursula was sent to a new camp in Bautzen. Ursula was told that Vladimir was sentenced to death. The next day, Alexander "Sascha" was born. His parents never saw each other again. Mother and child were soon sent to Sachsenhausen where they lived in barracks separated from the other prisoners.

Despite the fact that there is no record of children in this camp, there were several other sets of mother and children from the Soviet zone in a similar situation, for different offenses. In 1950, Ursula was moved to a women's work camp in Waldheim. Sascha, not yet two years old, would not be allowed to go with her for several weeks. When Sascha did come finally, he would not be allowed to live with his mother, but stayed in a state-sponsored childcare home associated with the local hospital. His mother immediately began to think of ways she could get Sascha out of the prison situation safely.

Sascha was eventually sent to live with an "aunt" in West Berlin where he was adopted by his "uncle." Finally Ursula's sentence was reduced in 1955, to 10 years. In 1956, she was released in bad health. She married a German man named Latotsky, who

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91Latotsky, 4-7. Sascha sought out his father much later, in 1990 and visited him in Ukraine. It was here that he acquired these details of his father's life.
92Ibid., 9.
93Ibid., 3-4. Latotsky notes in his own memoirs that he cannot begin to comprehend his mother's situation at this juncture. By now it was 4 years after her arrest, and the only place she had known as "home" had been her mother's apartment in Berlin, which must have been confiscated by now. She did not know the whereabouts of any of her other family members, her mother had been killed by Soviet soldiers and now the only thing she had left, her son, was denied her.
had been released from forced labor in the Soviet Union at about the same time. Sascha was reunited with his mother and did not speak to his mother about her incarceration for many years. Ursula died of cancer in 1967 without ever having explained exactly how she had arranged Sascha's "escape."

Ursula's story may be compelling, but it may also be so unique as to be written off as anecdotal. If one person's story cannot fairly explain the totalitarian system of the Soviet occupation, it can be emblematic of how Germans were treated during the occupation period. Alex Latotsky's research can illustrate how his mother's story is only the tip of the iceberg. In his quest to find out his own story, and to find his father, Latotsky visited the records of the various camps where he and his mother had been interred. As previously stated, Sachsenhausen's records held no trace of children and generally were not complete. In other archives, Latotsky has found a record of many other children like himself, their mothers imprisoned, they were left to be cared for by local hospitals and volunteers. If these places were state-sponsored, they were not state-supported. Rather, the police would arrive and order certain hospitals and organizations to take care of children, but did not provide for them.

A few stories of these instances will illuminate how the process worked. At one Catholic hospital administered by nuns and deacons in Leipzig, the matron, Frau Naumann, was visited by police and told to make room for twenty to thirty children who would be admitted. Twenty-four hours later three police arrived with ten children. The ranking officer said:

94Latotsky, 4. The "aunt and uncle" were not related to Ursula or Sascha, but were friends willing to say that they were blood relatives, which was necessary to move a child between the Soviet and other zones. With no birth certificate, all of this was tricky.
"The children have no names, they fall under the category of 'Children of the State Government.' It is forbidden to maintain a file on them. Take care not to let word of this get out."95

Even in a hospital, one had to have a ration card to get food. To get ration cards for children without names was impossible, and Frau Naumann had to remember not to let word of the children get out, or she might be subject to punishment herself. The police would not help. Eventually, Frau Naumann thought to issue the children numbers for their cards and by this method the children were also issued shoe ration cards, because all of them had entered the hospital barefoot, or with only socks. The hospital workers made primitive socks for the children with the word "Sachsenhausen" repeatedly knitted into them.96

According to Naumann's records, the hospital was not equipped for infants, and these children were very hard to take care of as this was the first time they had been away from their mothers. The older children cried out for their mothers day and night.97 A few days later, the police brought 15 more children. This time Frau Naumann had a plan. She told the police doctor that she would need the names of the children in case one they died. She emphasized that the cemetery custodian would not take a body without a name. If she tried to have one of the children buried, this might draw attention to the fact that children were being kept in the hospital and this is exactly the type of exposure the police wanted to avoid. The doctor, obviously not knowing how to handle this ethical dilemma, absolved himself of responsibility by simply leaving the children's files sitting on Frau

95Archiv des Diakonischen Werkes der EKD ADW/BSI 48 in Latotsky, Ohne Namen: "Kinder der Landesregierung, 12.
96Ibid., 13.
97Ibid.
Naumann's desk for about an hour. Naumann feverishly copied all of the information that she could about each child.98

She easily got the names of the children, but she also noted the convictions and sentences against their mothers:

"illegal border crossing, espionage, sabotage etc. 5, 10 and 25 years. The mothers had all been interred in Sachsenhausen first, arrested while pregnant, children born in prison and then cared for by German medical personnel or Russian guards...almost every child's file also contained heart-rending letters from mothers (torn notes written in coal or mortar) with special requests for the caretakers to treat the child well such as: 'Sascha has slept only in my arms..he [doesn't know how to] sleep in a bed...be good to him.'"99

The parents were not supposed to know the whereabouts of their children but one father, who had been arrested with his pregnant wife, showed up one day to tell his son goodbye before his attempted escape to the West. Another woman sent a secret note to the hospital begging the workers not to inform her parents of her illegitimate child. She wrote, "Please raise him, after 15 years I will come and pick him up."100 In 1952 these children came under the jurisdiction of the East German Ministry of the Interior, but what became of them after this is unknown.

Through this research, however, Alex Latotsky, Sascha, found out that his family's case was sadly far from being a unique one. He acquired the name of his father and met several women who had known his mother. According to those women, this type of treatment was far too common for women in the Soviet zone who were caught breaking even the most minor of the Soviet occupation regulations.101 Many of these families were so shaken by their experiences that they preferred not to publicize what had

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98Ibid.
99Ibid.
100Ibid, 14-15.
101Testimony of Marina Hovannessjan and Alex Latotsky in Latotsky, 8.
taken place. Alex Latotsky and Marina Hovannessjan, whose family experienced a tragically similar fate, continue to document their work and plan to produce scholarly work illuminating it further. They claim to have access to hundreds of other examples, but these have not yet been published.

Socialist Women

If the Soviet occupation was unkind to Ursula and some of those partyless, or of the wrong party, those who were active socialists or communists, or decided to become one after 1945, would have an elevated chance of avoiding becoming a victim of the totalitarian system. Showing loyalty to the new system could pay dividends for women. Certainly women in the Soviet zone of occupation enjoyed fewer personal liberties than other German women, but if these women professed socialist values they could have at least as many, and probably more, opportunities for political activism than women supporting western-style democracy did in the western zones. The Soviets and the East German communists used the carrot as well as the stick in recruiting women to their cause.

The story of how this happened is two-fold. First, women organized into ad-hoc groups to clear the streets, tend the wounded, and locate missing family members. Some of these groups would be sanctioned as “anti-fascist women’s committees” by the Soviet occupation authorities.

Almost simultaneously, the other part of the picture was developing. Political parties in the Soviet zone began to meet and form plans for the future of Germany. These political parties recognized the value of the existing women’s committees both for practical purposes of rebuilding; the new demographics of Germany required recognizing
the importance of women.\textsuperscript{102} Once the political parties were allowed to officially reopen their doors for business, they struggled briefly as to how to best incorporate the women’s committees into the political picture. This battle was short and formally ended with the formation of the \textit{Demokratische Frauenbund Deutschlands}, or Democratic Women’s Association of Germany. This organization would eventually oversee all women’s activity in the Soviet zone, and proselytize throughout the western zones of occupation in an attempt to unite all German women. This eventually led the British and Americans to start their own programs to help women in their zones. The ideology of the women from the Soviet zone, being that of communism, turned off many of the women in the western zones who were more traditional.

Also notable is the fact that neither the French occupation authorities nor the German women in the French zone reacted to the activities of women from the Soviet zone at all. Instead the French occupation forces ignored the new climate and continued to ban women from political participation, while German women in the French zone continued to live as if politics were not an issue. It would not be until French communists got involved that the French occupation forces would even concern themselves with the plight of German women in their zone of occupation. The DFD started from the seeds of apolitical activity, but was politicized until it became a tool of the SED.

Here it is appropriate to add something about terminology and the socialist parties of Germany. The senior socialist party in Germany is the Social-Democratic Party of Germany (SPD, or \textit{Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands}). In 1919 it fractured into

\textsuperscript{102} See also, Mark E. Spicka, \textit{Selling the Economic Miracle: Economic Propaganda and Political}

91
the revolution-minded Communist Party of Germany (KPD, or Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands) while the SPD continued as the reform-minded socialist party. In the western occupied zones, the SPD supported the western occupiers, while the KPD looked to the East, either to Berlin or even to Moscow, for leadership. In the Soviet zone, the SPD and KPD formally (and forcefully) merged together again in April, 1946 as the Social Unity Party (SED, or Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands). The KPD was eventually banned in the western zones in 1956, but until then, it continued to operate, if somewhat covertly due to the lack of a license (required by occupation policy for all parties). The CDU and FDP continued to operate token offices in the East, but were regarded as strawmen for the SED. They had no power.

I have chosen to refer to the women of the East interchangeably at times as "socialist" or "communist." I have done this because of the baggage that comes with the term "communist." By late 1946 all of the women from the Soviet zone who were involved in politics, were members of the SED and referred to themselves as "socialists," though they certainly meant that they were scientific socialists in the tradition of Marx. They may have done this in deference to the fact that most of the members of the SED had been socialists rather than communists, or perhaps simply out of a desire to seem distinct from Soviet communists. Possibly the individuals in the SED referred to

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*Power in West Germany, 1949-1957*, (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 2000).

103 To add to the confusion, after the reunification of Germany in 1990, the SED renamed itself the Party of Democratic Socialism of Germany (PDS, or Partei des Demokratische Sozialismus Deutschlands). The KPD still exists in Germany despite its tumultuous history, but it has lost most of its membership to the PDS.

104 DY 31 IV 2/17/99, While there continue to be references to members of the SPD in the Soviet zone of occupation even into the 1950’s, these were dissenters and were no longer associated with the socialists discussed in this work. However, there was confusion and resistance to the merger of the parties, even amongst the women of SED organizations. Important women in these organizations, such as Käthe
themselves as socialists out of desire for unity. “Socialism” made this easier. As to their personal allegiance to Ulbricht, Pieck, Grotewohl, Honecker and the other "founding fathers" of the SED, it must have varied just as much as their opinion of Stalin and Soviet-style communism did.

With regard to the women in the SED, many of them saw themselves as feminist activists, some were committed socialists or communists of varying degrees. That is to say that some of these women were former members of the SPD and some were from the KPD. Some had even been without party, parteilosen. Rare was the female leader in the SED who had not originally been a member of the KPD. Still, it seems that consistently using the term "communist" might bring with it connotations that are harsher than those that come with the term "socialist." When confusion between the western SPD and KPD, and the SED is possible, I have reverted to using "communist" at times to avoid that confusion. In general, this is fair since the SED women usually looked to the western members of the KPD as possible allies. Armed with this information, one can better understand the undercurrent of tension between the communists and the socialists.

Keeping this tension in mind, one can more thoroughly understand the dynamic of competition within the ranks of women from both KPD and SPD backgrounds. Regardless of their background, eventually almost all of these women realized that the only real way to have any impact in the politics of the Soviet zone was to be part of the SED apparatus. If after April, 1946 the KPD women would have the upper hand ideologically due to Soviet influence, some of the others had an impact as well, as long as they were willing to show allegiance to the new SED agenda.

Kern, introduced herself as a representative of the SPD in her speech to the International Women’s Day
It is difficult to discern if German women “spontaneously” self-organized before being politicized, or if they were spurred to move by German socialist women, some of them having spent the war in the Soviet Union. Still, the story begins before the documentation of the political battle, when German women were organizing clean-up efforts in war-torn cities. Most of the committees were focused on cities, as this had been the focus of the destruction.

Women’s Committees

At the end of October, 1945, nearly a year after the Allies had first entered German territory, the tenth Allied control council met in Berlin as was customary. This was just before rotating the monthly duty of leadership of the council practiced in the period before the Allies went their separate ways in 1948. The council consisted of General Eisenhower for the United States, General König for the French, Field Marshal Montgomery for Great Britain and Marshal Zhukov for the Soviet Union.  

General König was in charge for the month of October, so he naturally led the discussion. Items of note in the discussion were recorded on a single page. The committee passed laws regarding the status of German property in foreign territories, the status of the validity of German law proceedings and court rulings, and they allowed the rearming of the German police. Almost as an afterthought the French noted that one of the Allied powers had allowed women the right to gather in order to organize their needs and form committees for future consult and action.  

Indeed women had already been gathering in all the zones, but only informally and without political party banners. The

Conference in March 1947.

105 SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/78 #0001, “Bewaffnung der Polizei.”
106 Ibid.
first of these women's meetings had already taken place in Berlin by the time the Control Council met; it was a *fait accompli*. Even so the fact that one of the military governors would announce at this meeting that he had allowed such an event, without bringing it to the attention of the council, was at least bold and might have caused the raising of an eyebrow. Still, none of the members of the council objected to or even commented on the development in writing, evidence that they probably felt it neither particularly threatening nor remarkable.

What one may consider remarkable now is that it was neither General Eisenhower nor Field Marshal Montgomery who had first allowed German women the right to congregate and establish agendas. The Americans were interested in punishing the Germans and therefore were not interested in liberty for Germans at this early juncture. The British followed suit, despite the fact that Winston Churchill had proclaimed in 1940 that the Battle of Britain was indeed a fight for liberal democracy. The French, with their revolutionary history, Declaration of the Rights of Man (and even Declaration of the Rights of Woman) did not allow German women to organize either. It was the Soviets who first allowed this, and it occurred under General Zhukov's command.

Despite the fact that women had been organized since early May, Marshal Zhukov's decision on the 3rd of November, 1945, to give official permission in writing for anti-fascist women to hold meetings for organizational purposes was a landmark in the chronology of German women's history.\(^{107}\) First, it gave official permission for women to re-enter public life after the Nazi period and second, it allowed German women to

\(^{107}\text{SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/78 Briefe an Marschall Sokolowski from Kern et. al. Also in same folder #0100 Pressedienst Nr. 5. Elli Schmidt. Deutsche Verwaltung für Volksbildung in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone.}\)
organize "anti-fascist" committees. While the political nature of these committees remained to be seen, they would have a great positive influence initially in the ruins of Berlin, eventually in all of the Soviet occupation zone, and still later in the rest of Germany. It would be these groups which would end up performing much needed social work in the Soviet zone. Zhukov's decision initiated a chain of events that was essential to the battle for equality that active German socialist women would wage in the next few years. The social work, which was underway long before being authorized, was much more efficient when organized and planned. With women being the majority of the healthy working age population, they were already doing much of the work in the streets, and gaining publicity for doing so in the press.

The bearers of German culture, German women, were now officially sanctioned to organize and perform duties to get the battered German society back on its feet. The fact that the Soviet military sanctioned this was an admission that the responsibility for feeding, clothing, counseling, and succoring the German population was on the shoulders of German women. The Soviets authorized no organizations for German men probably because male German values were dangerous. The Soviets knew they could not possibly support all of the social work themselves and were entrusting anit-fascist women with that responsibility. By recognizing this, the Soviets were implicitly acknowledging the importance of social work in the context of military occupation. That is to say that the work was necessary. By assigning the task to German women, they were also admitting their own inability to perform this task alone. The Soviet commanders probably also assumed that German women could be expected to perform these tasks without endangering the Soviet (communist) political agenda. To insure this, they would
eventually need to orient the anti-fascist committees in a manner that would coincide with their own interests.

This became clear when German women, with the respect these women earned for thoroughness and effectiveness in menial tasks such as clearing rubble, organized a political agenda. When the Soviet political officer assigned to oversee the women's committees suggested to their leaders that they organize further, they did so quickly and efficiently, eventually founding the DFD and the chain of events described above. In this fashion, most of Germany was affected by Zhukov's decision to sanction women’s activities.

His decision was a far cry from granting women political and social equality that German and Soviet communists preached, but it opened the door for change. These changes did not occur overnight, but came after much hard work on the part of German women, who were initially motivated by the desire to help each other clear streets and acquire basic living needs. Their agenda was decidedly apolitical at the outset and this was by design. The committees would not be part of political movement until 1947. In 1945, there were specific rules under which women's committees would be allowed. It must have gone without saying--but still it was explicitly stated--former Nazis were banned from attending such meetings. Also, no organization would be formed as a subcommittee of existing political parties. Instead, these Frauenausschuesse, or women's committees, would be distinctly new entities with the following general goals, which seem very generic:

“1.) The promotion of cultural and political education of women on the basis of anti-fascist and democratic grounds.
2.) To make women aware of possibilities of taking part in public life and the rebuilding of a democratic Germany.

3.) To support young mothers in the education of their children in a democratic sense."  

The fact that this first sanctioned German political meeting since the demise of National Socialism occurred in the Soviet sector of Berlin, and was sanctioned and supported by Soviet military authorities, might surprise those who saw the western Allies as the true mentors of German democratization and the Soviets as simple brutal occupiers. Of course, both sides claimed to be the protectors of "true democracy." The Soviets might be able to claim that they offered, and even enforced, a true equality that would be a pre-requisite for democracy. That equality would mean planned economies and many of the trappings of a police-state. But democracy obviously meant something different to the western Allies. It meant personal liberty, and perhaps most importantly, it meant freedom in commerce, or capitalism. The Soviets could get a lot of recruiting mileage out of pointing out that the Nazis had had a capitalist system, or at least they were born out of the failure of capitalism in the 1930's. The Western Allies would repeatedly point out human rights violations and they could flaunt their wealth in the capitalist showcase that West Berlin would become. Still, if we know now that capitalism would recover, and the police state of Soviet occupied Germany would continue, the citizens of Germany did not, making the choice of a system something other than an automatic one. This, and the threat of Soviet violence (as demonstrated in 1953), forced a significant portion of the German population to give the Soviets a chance to try their system. Some of the options the Soviets offered were appealing for a time.

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108 SAPMO DY 31 001 Soviet Military Authority orders.
The Soviets were first to allow political movements in occupied Germany, and though it would be easy to immediately assume that they would only allow communist political meetings, this is not entirely the case. The Soviets at first were able to accommodate the enemies of their enemy - Nazism. It would be more than a year before they forced the union of all of the acceptable enemies of communism into a monolithic political entity that would become the governing party of East Germany.

Behind Zhukov's Decision and its Consequences

If Zhukov put the policy into writing, which allowed German socialist women the official opportunity to organize, he had not done so out of his own progressive idealism. In fact, this policy had been agreed upon even before the Soviets had taken Berlin. A few hundred German communists had sought refuge in Moscow before and during the war. On 30 April 1945--the very day Hitler would commit suicide--two planes landed just outside of Berlin carrying some of these communists. Among them were Walter Ulbricht, who was charged by the Soviets with establishing communist control of the German state apparatus, along with Anton Ackermann and Gustav Sobottka, who headed groups designated to take over Saxony and Mecklenburg, respectively. In this manner, the Soviets hoped to have German-speaking communists, who were loyal to their version of communism, in a position to collectively establish a German communist regime that was focused upon Soviet goals in a uniform fashion.

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If women were among initial quartering party of the "Gruppe Ulbricht" they are undocumented. Still, as early as June 1945 female communists hiding in Moscow began to return to Berlin. Amongst them was Elli Schmidt, a long-time German communist who had been the first female member of the Central Committee of the KPD in 1935 and spent the war in Prague and Moscow training with Ulbricht's communists. Schmidt's goal (whether her own or one given to her by the Soviets or Ulbricht is unclear) was to organize women and focus them toward socialist goals. Perhaps with knowledge of the Soviet intentions to merge the SPD and KPD, Schmidt began to work together with women of all political leanings. She did not limit her work to KPD members; in fact, if she had, she would have had a very miniscule population of women with which to work.

Indeed, the KPD did not have a monopoly on women's activity. The more moderate SPD socialist women had begun to organize even before Schmidt had arrived. Many more of these women had not fled Germany during the war. Some had suffered (as had many communists) in the concentration camp system. Many had avoided direct confrontation with the Nazi regime and had either worked behind the scenes or had remained dormant, waiting for the arrival of what they perceived to be liberation armies. SPD women like Käthe Kern, Annedore Leber and Toni Wohlgemuth had been just as opposed to Hitler's regime as the KPD had been, but they did not see the Soviet Union as a viable alternative. Yet, when it became clear that the Soviets--and not the Western powers--would capture Berlin, many of these women remained to do what good they could. They had begun meeting to discuss "women's agitation" as early as 17 June 1945, weeks before the arrival of Elli Schmidt. In November of 1945, these SPD women still

111 See “Elli Schmidt: Gute Mütter unserer Kinder. 5 Jahre Demokratischer Frauenbund

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maintained separate records of their goals and activities, but soon they would be swallowed up into the growing KPD-led SED organizations.

The goals of the SPD women seemed on the surface to be compatible with KPD goals. They wanted recognition of:

1) Basic concern for women's problems.
2) Provisions for the establishment of the office of a women's bureau with the organization of the party.
3) The ability to produce recruiting propaganda for women in the party.
4) Promotion of education for women party members.112

The authors of the report containing these goals were careful to frame these goals/demands with the overall future of Germany in mind. They were careful not to seem to be turning their bid for increased concern for women into a bid for women's dominance. They stated:

“The so-called ‘women's question’ is for us only one side of a general social question, which is presently in the front of everyone's minds, all of our energy is focused so that she (the German woman) can come to this definite conclusion.”113

This clearly established the SPD women's movement as wishing to be part of a greater effort to reform society at large, not just to improve the lot of women for their own sake. This is evidence that after a war, women are quite capable of concerning themselves with planning for more than just the issues concerning the care of women and children. These SPD women and others stand as evidence that women can plan and influence society in the absence of capable men.

112 SAPMO DY 28 II 2/31Grundsätzlich Ausführungen zur Frauenfrage, SPD memos.
113 Ibid.
SPD women then had their own agenda, means of advancing it and a vision of the German future--they had agency. They had courageously stayed in Berlin, waited for the timing to be right, and then they set about implementing their plan. They had had no appreciable help from the Soviet Union or the German KPD in doing so (with the notable exception of the Red Army's destruction of Hitler's Reich). They might have then felt somewhat envious of the KPD women who would arrive in July and co-opt their gains eventually all but annexing their work under the auspices of combined SED organizations. Granted, many of the these SPD women would continue to work for socialist women's rights from within SED organizations, but most of the leadership positions would be held by the former members of the KPD, with the SPD being the larger, but junior partner in the merger.

The SED would largely be responsible for the crimes of totalitarianism and the oppression that came with it. While the Soviets certainly encouraged hardline communism amongst politically active Germans even before the occupation of Germany, the activities of the SPD during the immediate occupation demonstrate that there were other German agendas besides purely communist ones that were not immediately discouraged. The agenda of German women became one of those that fit this description.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ One might argue that communism had always been more open to women's equality, but this was not the case, especially in Stalin's Soviet Union. True, the Bolshevik Revolution had granted women emancipation in 1917-1918. By 1936 most of the gains of women were reversed as Stalin emphasized the family as an enhancement to production, a perversion of Lenin’s intentions for women. Stefan T. Possony ed., Lenin Reader, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1966) 71-73, 504, 510. Wendy Z. Goldman, Women, the State, and Revolution, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 337-343. Women had to be very bold and vocal in the face of purges to regain the freedoms they had by 1945. See Sheila Fitzpatrick's Everyday Stalinism: Soviet Russia in the 1930’s, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1-39, 139-163, 190-218.
After Zhukov's 3 November, 1945 Soviet Military Order No. 5 allowing women to meet, German women appeared from all walks of life to meet and discuss women's issues.\textsuperscript{115} Though a cynic may see these meetings as driven by communist motives to incorporate women as part of the newly freed German proletariat or even out of a desire by German women to show fealty to their new masters, many of these women did not have previous political affiliations and were simply interested in being involved in helping their local communities. Indeed, as previously stated, they were not allowed to meet as part of any political party's agenda meetings \textit{per se}. General Zhukov had expressly forbidden that, just as he had expressly forbidden the inclusion of any women who had been members of the Nazi party.\textsuperscript{116}

The first year of work of the women's committees proved to be fruitful and largely without interference from outside authorities, German or Soviet. The Central Women's Committee in Berlin worked to broaden the appeal of the work women could do by ensuring that at least every major city and every county had a chance to organize a committee. Simultaneously, existing committees did real social work that did much to relieve the human suffering caused by the war, forced migration and evacuation of uninhabitable housing. German women in the Soviet zone wasted no time in organizing to help their fellow citizens. They established makeshift nursing homes, health clinics and soup kitchens. While some committees were very small, including no more than a handful of women who might have previously called themselves a knitting club, some were real, large-scale enterprises. In the county of Rochlitz, for example, outside of

\textsuperscript{115}SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/78 Briefe an Marschall Sokolowski from Kern et al. Also in same folder #0100 Pressedienst Nr. 5. Elli Schmidt. \textit{Deutsche Verwaltung für Volksbildung in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone}. 

103
Leipzig, but where there were no large towns, the women's committee put together a soup kitchen that served an average of 14,877 meals at lunch time alone! So, while women in Berlin were spreading the word about what women could accomplish, all over the Soviet zone German women were hard at work. Women worked out a system to look for the parents of lost children. They tried to reunite families that had separated in the mass forced migrations from eastern territories. They even established kindergartens for children so their mothers could continue their work.

The Image of the Rubble Woman

If social work was important and the work done by German women in this period was invaluable, the most common work that needed to be done was the simple clearing of rubble. German woman had had the luxury of slave labor gangs, prisoners of war and older men to clear rubble since 1942, when Allied strategic heavy bombers began to reach Germany in larger numbers. By the end of the war and the arrival of the Soviets, the clearing of rubble became a real German industry. With male labor in short supply, women did most of the dirty work. The German "Trümmerfrau," or rubble woman quickly became a heroic urban figure, toiling against hope to restore physical order from the ground up, in a Germany largely devoid of German male protectors, or workers.

The Soviet occupation government quickly seized upon the idea to support the tragic rubble woman of the German cities. The Soviets did this with a media campaign with the rubble woman as its focus. The first series of articles to lionize these women

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116 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/78 0002, Organization of women's committees.
117 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/78 FBS 9121 #0101, Women's committee's initiatives.
were published in the 81st issue of *Berliner Zeitung*, a new socialist newspaper that had begun circulation in May. In the 17 August 1945 issue of the paper, the entire second page was dedicated to articles about women workers.\textsuperscript{119} The articles were entitled, "Reschooling of Women for the Berlin Construction Business," "In Men's Occupations," and "The Woman in Traffic."\textsuperscript{120} The crowning article of this special page was entitled, "A Housewife Got it Started." In this article, the Soviet influence on this publication become evident. The story is about Alexandra Tscherkassowa, a woman from Stalingrad who fled when the Germans took what the article calls ambiguously, "the city of heroes."\textsuperscript{121} With the German retreat, supposedly Tscherkassowa immediately returned to her home city and worked helping the wounded. She spent every spare moment moving rubble, sweeping the streets, and collecting good pieces of brick and mortar for the purposes of rebuilding. According to the article, in this fashion, "this is how the first volunteer building colony of Stalingrad" was born, as if these "colonies" were well-known to the Germans. If they were not, the meaning of the metaphor was clear: German women should be brave and hard-working like Tscherkassowa, and they too could rebuild. Tscherkassowa supposedly laid 63,000 bricks herself in the reconstruction of one building! If the article is formed in the Soviet-style of Stakhanovite worker stories, naming names (the article goes on to lionize other Soviet women) of those who performed feats that are seemingly impossible, the intent was logical in attempting to get German women to work to rebuild. There were simply not enough men to do the things

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\textsuperscript{119} SAPMO FBS 9098 DY 31 IV 2/17/25 0014-0016 *Berliner Zeitung*.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., women were taking over the work of directing traffic for police, driving trains and other important jobs in these fields formerly reserved mostly for men.
which were traditionally done by men and German women would simply have to get their hands dirty if things were ever going to return to normal. There was no money to pay these women, volunteers were essential to the effort.

German women responded. It is doubtful that the articles of 17 August actually caused masses of German women to begin rebuilding--they had already begun rebuilding before newspapers were being printed even in May 1945. Still these articles must have boosted the dismal morale of these women who worked only for the incentive that there was no other choice. Those who did not work would not receive ration cards—the key to survival. Regardless of the intended and actual effects of the articles, German women continued to work in growing numbers and in return, they were bombarded with articles about the noble virtue of the working woman. Hundreds of articles about the "rubble woman" would appear in all German publications even long after most of the streets were cleared. The Daily Lookout, The German People's Newspaper, The New Times, The People, The Berliner, The People's Will, The Morning, The Courier, The Free Work Place, The Daily Mirror, Free Time, Forwards, The Telegraph, and New Germany all joined the Berliner Zeitung in almost daily praise of the rubble woman.122 The simplest of women's issues became newsworthy. Women shoveling coal were photographed, covered in soot, but smiling. Calls for additional warm clothing for these women were publicized, challenging the citizens of Berlin to do their civic duty. Women were sought for entering the police force. With the end of the war, reconstruction became the biggest news item. It might have seemed to some women that at various times they were being

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121From the slant of the article it is difficult to tell if the authors truly mean the Soviets or the Germans or both as heroes.
lionized, used for forced-labor, and made into heroines. Perhaps all of these would be accurate, but the work was done, and the bravado continued.

If women were also clearing rubble and performing social work in the western occupation zones, there was nothing in the other zones that really compared to this type of organizational structure and support from a political party. While one can argue that this structure in itself would not improve the standard of living in the Soviet zone of occupation to make it competitive with the western zones, one must be cautious not to compare the relative strength of resources available (and made available by the occupying powers) with that of the organizational structure. That is to say plainly: if the standard of living of the Soviet zone of occupation was generally lower than that of the western zones, at least after 1946, this was largely because of the effects of greater western resources, and not due to a superior organizational system or simply the "hard work" of the citizens of one zone over the other.

Despite the fact that the population in the western zones ended up being more prosperous, there may still be something to learn from the organizational methods of those in the Soviet zone. The fact that the German women in the Soviet zone were so successful in organizing a productive committees of women with permission but few resources from the Soviet occupation forces demonstrates that the determination of an occupied population to help itself should not be discounted out of hand. The fact that many German women had worked in Nazi women's organizations with some of the same goals (on the surface at least) might at first make one pause to consider if that somehow made the population more readily agreeable to a women’s undertaking of this nature. In

\[122\] SAPMO FBS 9098 DY 31 IV 2/17/25 0014-0145. The DFD collected hundreds of examples of
the Nazi period, volunteer organizations were encouraged. But the fact that women with Nazi affiliations were excluded makes this line of reasoning less believable. That is to say, German women who had never been organized as a women's interest group (or at least not since 1933) made up the new women's committees and they proved effective in alleviating some of the misery of Germans in the Soviet zone of occupation. This was not a re-labeling of existing groups; these women's committees were something new and different. At the same time, just as the press presented these committees as apolitical, socialists were trying to politicize them. That is to say, German women were portrayed as being devoid of political motive, or of having the wrong kind of politics removed from them, and then the socialists would move in to add the “right” kind of politics.

Growth and Politicization

One might expect that social work and the cleaning up of the German urban areas might have been natural strengths of German women at this time who had spent most of their adult lives in a system that had valued and rewarded them almost singly for their abilities as wives and mothers--nurturers. While this might be true of the traditional role women played in most societies everywhere in the early 20th Century, what the Soviets understood that the Western Allies did not was the changing roles of women during the Second World War. German women, as women in the other nations with large numbers of men committed to the war effort, had been surviving largely on their own since 1941. From 1943 onward, most of them had gone a step further--they had become leaders of families, heads of households where men were either dead, incapacitated, missing, held

these articles from many different sources including the ones listed above.

prisoner, or unwilling to return to menial labor to support their families. German women had led many families on the great forced migrations at the war's end. Women had taken the lead in begging, borrowing and black-marketeering for family survival.\textsuperscript{124} If one looks at the situation this way, one can see that what individual German women were doing for their families, the women's committees were trying to do for society at large, and in general they experienced success. German women pulled urban society up by its bootstraps and they did it from the mundane beginnings of rubble clearing and “anti-fascist” committees.

The growth and expansion of these women's committees in size and number was impressive, especially considering the number of women who were forcibly excluded due to their Nazi affiliations. Between November, 1945 and October, 1946 German women in the Soviet zone of occupation formed over 5,000 separate committees and registered them with their regional committees.\textsuperscript{125} This added up to over 200,000 women joining their local committees by the end of 1946.\textsuperscript{126} Eventually, these committees would transform into an organization claiming to represent over one million German women.\textsuperscript{127} Still, in late 1945 the committees were yet to be controlled by a political organization, but the communists who saw this as a step in politicization that would occur later carefully planned this stage of organization.

Some examples illuminate the nature of this growth. In the Province of the Brandenburg at the beginning of June 1946 there were 695 women's committees. By the

\textsuperscript{125} SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/78 FBS 9121 #0101, 4.
\textsuperscript{126} SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/78 FBS 9121 #0114, Press Service #6, Maria Sendhoff.
\textsuperscript{127} SAPMO DV 31 IV 2/17/7, 0072. “Weibliche Mitglieder Statistik.”
end of July there were 934. By the middle of October, less than a year from the beginning of this process, there were 1,327 different committees. In Thüringen the growth was comparable. In February, 1946 there were about 120 committees but by October there were 1,130. By the end of the month of October over 80 percent of the cities and major communities in every county in Thüringen had an active women's committee. Some counties had as high as 95 percent of its major communities with functional committees.128 For these first months of activity the initial goals of the women's committees remained fairly constant and still revolved mainly around community service.

The next six months, from October, 1946 to March, 1947 would mark the politicization of the women's committees. Whether as a reward for their valuable work in the various types of social work that women were doing, or as a method of ensuring the continued cooperation of this segment of the population, the Soviets and their socialist German partners offered the Central Women's Committee in Berlin the chance to make their entire organization a political one. Before the women's committee would be accepted as a political entity, they would have to produce an agenda, and it would have to be approved by the ruling Soviet military officials. Rather than wait for permission, socialist women acted.

From the beginnings of political organization in Soviet-occupied Germany in July, 1945, socialist women were included. They were often offered the privilege of leading the women’s committee efforts to perform social work. While they served not in the capacity as a party leader initially, by 1946 they organized their political agenda and

128SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/78 FBS 9121 #0101, 4. Still, less than 20 percent of German women in
waited for the chance to implement it. While permission to associate politics with the 
women’s committees did not come until 1947, socialist women were given the 
opportunity to organize under the Central Women’s Secretariat of Berlin in 1946. No 
such freedom was given to any group of Germans--least of all women--in the western 
zones, until much later, 1947. In the American and British zones, when German women 
tried to assert their freedom, they were told sternly, but politely, that any political activity 
was not yet allowed, and that in the future such activity would be licensed. Even groups 
who had proven anti-Nazi pasts were forbidden to meet publicly. Naturally even this did 
not stop activity altogether, but it put extreme limits as to what it could accomplish 
openly. In the Soviet zone, the authorities began to tolerate and eventually promote 
political meetings much earlier.

In secret meetings in the summer of 1945, the German political parties in the 
Soviet zone began to assess the situation of Germany—*all* of Germany, not just the 
Soviet zone—and their position in it. Leaders of the KPD, SPD, CDU and the LPD met 
to discuss possible strategies for Germany’s future.\(^{129}\) Of course, each party had its own 
interpretation of how things stood and where they should go.

The KPD pushed for a new party block. The SPD, which had pioneered these 
meetings, was concerned that a new party leaning totally to the East would be imprudent. 
Instead, the SPD wanted to focus on maintaining unity with Germans in all zones. The 
CDU was totally against the idea of merging agendas while the LPD was concerned with 
how to finance such a move. The KPD, though smaller in membership than both the SPD

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\(^{129}\) The CDU is the Christian Democratic Union and the LPD is the German Liberal Party, 
associated with liberal economics. For more on the SPD and KPD, see above.
and CDU, boasted Soviet support, and was the only party to mention women in its program. The reality of the Soviet occupation made the KPD agenda dominant. Though the other parties would not be banned, even after the formation of the merger of the SPD and KPD, the members of the KPD began to dominate the strategy meetings even before the Soviets authorized political activity. However, since they were a minority, they made some concessions to the SPD, and co-opted some of their ideas in order to obtain, or to maintain the appearance of, a majority platform.

The KPD blamed everything on the “ruling class,” which would have been more all-inclusive than the typical notion that Hitler and his cronies were responsible. More important than who was to blame was “what to worry about now?” The KPD report on the German situation in 1946 identifies the western zones as the danger areas:

“Foreign capital can flow in here as if through a great gate and this controlling factor of economic life can enslave us. This problem of finances, this is the danger...it will make us dependent...if the party wants to gain, the people will have to gain control of the means of production themselves.”

If this type of rhetoric was in line with Soviet communist expectations, so were the hopes of KPD unity. The party was fairly confident that the western Allies would never be able to settle their differences, and in the confusion, the communists might be able to unite working Germans. The KPD was counting on the differences between the “monopolistic Americans,” the “skeptical French,” and the “conservative and practical British” to keep the Allies from working together effectively. This inability to cooperate made the Soviet fear of western military aggression “pointless” in the eyes of the KPD. In other words, the KPD wanted an aggressive campaign in all zones to maintain

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130 SAPMO DY 28/II 1-7/2, 2/1, 3/8/5-6, Minutes of SPD-sponsored party coordination meetings.
131 SAPMO BY 1/797 KPD reports, 1.
communist unity. The campaign of communist women in the western zones would support this agenda quite nicely.

However, in the summer of 1945, almost a year before the creation of the SED, at the same time as the political parties in the Soviet zone began to evaluate their position in the new Germany, the women of various political leanings from the Soviet zone did the same thing. Some of them may have been included in the general party meetings that had taken place. Though there is no record of German women attending these meetings, they must have been aware of them. In any case, the leaders of the Soviet-sanctioned anti-fascist women’s committees gathered to coordinate and focus their agendas for the advancement of women’s rights. About the only thing they could agree upon was that a general all-inclusive women’s organization would be useful.132 This agreement and the KPD plans to maintain communist unity in all zones seemed mutually supportive. Therefore, the KPD supported the women’s plans for the founding of a supra-party inter-zonal German women’s organization. However, for that they would need the support of women from all over Germany, and from all parties and walks of life.

During this critical stage in the development of general support for the fledgling idea of a general women’s organization to encompass the activities of all women, the KPD was careful not to openly force its agenda on non-socialist women. Perhaps the women in charge of organizing these groups truly did not anticipate the intent of the communists, who would later grab control of the whole enterprise, or alternatively, these women were simply working within the constraints given them by occupation authorities. Regardless, by 1947 the socialist women who would gain control of this organization
confessed, admitting in writing that all along their primary motivation in founding such
an organization always had been to advance socialism. Any benefits for women would
be secondary in importance. In this manner, the socialists used “bait and switch” tactics
to recruit women from all political orientations, and then gradually turn them into
socialists. This was the stated intent by 1947.

In order to broaden the base of support for a general women’s organization, the
socialist women needed to determine the climate in Germany at large. For this purpose,
Käthe Kern, SPD, but a future member of the Women’s Secretariat of the SED, and Elli
Schmidt (KPD) sent some of their most trusted subordinates as teams of “surveyors” to
gather information about the German women in these zones. This is one of the first
eamples of close coordination between the SPD and KPD, months before their union.

Despite this coordinated effort, there was no standardization of the information
gathered; rather each woman produced a report on the general situation in each zone and
the place of German women in it. Some women included numerical statistics and some
simply generated anecdotal prose. The socialist women did a remarkably good job of
cataloging statistics about women in the American and British zones, and slightly less so
in the French zone where there appeared to be a general lack of useful information as a
rule.

While it would be overstatement to claim that the majority of German women
were included in a census of women’s affairs, these women kept remarkable records

Sowjetische Besatzungszone.”
133 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/100, 827, “The founding of East German women’s organizations was
for the purpose of enhancing socialism.”
134 Ibid.
working in small teams or alone with little more than a pen, paper, and travel money. They succeeded in visiting all of largest and most important communities in each of the zones. The statistics collected are not, however, useful for objective comparison, nor are they uniform or standardized. For example, in all of the zones, these socialist women attempted to find out how many women were from each of the major parties. However, in some regions (American and British zones) party membership numbers were reported neatly broken down by occupation and age group, and in others the results were reported as a percentage of the whole population only, with no breakdown. In other areas, including the French zone, impromptu opinion polls resulted in prose reports of dubious scientific, if great anecdotal value. Still, there is much that one may draw from these reports despite their irregular nature.

For example, the report of Käthe Hafner (SPD) concerning the activities of women in Heidelberg (American Zone) was a simple two-page memo that summarized the women’s organizations in Heidelberg as decentralized and lacking serious participation. As evidence, Hafner emphasized the fact that no women served on the city council in Heidelberg, even after local elections in 1946.\textsuperscript{135} She also noted that the solution to the problem in the Heidelberg region will be “the activation of the housewives who today more than ever, next to their household worries, should see the urgency of participating in public life.”\textsuperscript{136} Hafner’s analysis of the situation in the American zone

\textsuperscript{135} SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/99 Abschrift Ka., 31 July 1946, 1 (16).
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 2 (17).
supported the conclusion that, “Most women in Germany are indifferent to politics. They are primitive. A campaign to make them aware would help the cause.”

If this analysis were true in occupied Germany in 1945, the campaign to bring political awareness to women somehow transformed the situation into something different. The socialists considered German women to be like wet clay to be molded into political sculptures in their own image. There is no hyperbole in their report to lead anyone to believe they were exaggerating. Instead, the socialists recognized an opportunity to turn indifferent women into potential Allies. They would soon aggressively campaign to sway the German women in the western zones to join the communist cause. Even though this campaign would largely fail, the process it took, including 40 years of Cold War, produced German women who are more politicized than nearly any other women in the world. Despite the unintended result that most of these women would not end up supporting communism, those interested in influencing an occupied population, including military commanders, should take note that the “indifferent majority” can become an interested party under the right circumstances. It will be important to recognize this both in order to inform the planning of the campaign to “win the hearts and minds” of the occupied and to know that this campaign may be lost if promises are broken or disingenuous.

One can also gather something about the nature of “the cause” of the socialist women by a comparison of several reports from different women. The stated goal of the women’s committees was to found a supra-party and supra-confessional organization for German women from all zones. Clearly Hafner believed what she was saying when she

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137 SAPMO DY 28 II 2/31. The communists generally show a belief in the power of propaganda.
discussed a supra-party women’s organization, and assumed that such an organization would be without political leanings. Her report focused on the general nature of women’s organizations in Heidelberg regardless of politics.

If Hafner believed all women’s organizations to be of equal value, others, such as Maria Weiterer (East German KPD) seemed to understand the socialist emphasis of the “supra-party” organization. Weiterer’s report covered the American, British and French zones, along with specific sections for each zone’s larger cities. In each section, where possible, Weiterer lists how many different women’s organizations existed and the political make up of each—but with extra focus on the socialist organizations. In Bremen, for example she lists the following organizations:

“2 SPD, 1 KPD, 1 Bremen Democratic People’s Party, 1 Without Party, 1 Woman of the Free German Workers Union Association, Worker’s Assistance, Charitas, Inner Mission, Lutheran Women’s Association, Jewish Community, Association for German Women’s Culture, Bremen Housewives Union, Association for Alcohol-free Homes. In these organizations there are about: 70 Social Democrats, 35 Communists, and 60 private civilian bourgeois women.”

Examples like this exist for the British zone in Hamburg, Aachen, Essen, Münster and Köln. In the American, likewise, Weiterer catalogued Frankfurt, München, Stuttgart, Esslingen, Nürnberg, and Baden. In the entire French zone Weiterer only found evidence of one women’s organization, that one being in Freiburg, the regional capitol. Weiterer did not limit her report to a statement of activity; she added her own suggestions as Hafner had done. However, unlike Hafner, Weiterer even went as far as to recommend which existing organizations seemed most amenable to the activities of any supra-party

To make this happen, the report goes on to recommend publishing a magazine to “help the cause.”

138 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/99 Abschrift Ka., “Über die Frauenarbeit in den Westzonen 13.12.46” (19). This is an insignifican number of members considering that more than a million women lived in this area alone.
139 Ibid., 3 (19-21).
supra-confessional interzonal women’s organization. She named women who were interested and suggested courses of action to maintain contact and interest with these women.

Maria Weiterer best demonstrated her interpretation of the socialist intentions of the “supra” organization in the final portions of her report. Where as the rest of her report had been interested in all regions geographically and all types of women’s organizations, in the final section, she only discussed one political party—not surprisingly, the KPD. She did not discuss the future of the CDU, FDP or even the SPD. In this concluding portion of her report, Weiterer confesses that:

“In the communist party in the West, 10-15 percent are women. This count is naturally far too low. There is not yet the right attitude in the male comrades and functionaries [of the KPD] toward the great importance of women’s issues. This is most obvious in the printing of ballots...The work of the communist women in this women’s organization is one the most important valuable missions of the party. It is unthinkable that someone, like often is the case for female comrades, in the women’s committee or in a union, [a woman] may exert one’s entire strength to create a position [of authority] and hold no post in the party.”

This is a strange conclusion to draw from a woman who was supposed to be researching the groundwork for a supra-party organization. By focusing on the KPD and women’s influence within it, Weiterer reveals much more about “the cause” of German women from the Soviet zone (or at least her own interpretation of it) and the situation of women in the communist party than she does about women in the western zones, the supposed subject of her report. Weiterer shows that she believes herself to be working for an organization that needs more support, and that this support should come from communist women first. There is no cry for more support from the housewives or all women.

140 Ibid., 6 (24).
parties as Hafner had recommended. Instead, Weiterer lamented the lack of women in positions of power within the KPD, and for this, she blamed KPD men.

Male members of the KPD possibly feared the diminution of their own authority, or the diminished chance of holding an important post within the party, and hence the government, should women all be offered total equality in the party. The male solution was to give women power within the realm of issues that they considered to be “women’s issues.” If giving German women their own fiefdom to cultivate could satisfy women, perhaps male authority within the party would have to sacrifice very little. There is no written evidence of any male-conspiracy to keep women from power. There is simply the fact that women did not occupy positions of authority, even within the party apparatus.

The reports of Hafner and Weiterer shed light on several issues for German women in the Soviet zone. First, Hafner and Weiterer seem to have differing agendas. Hafner generally leaves communist/socialist political rhetoric out of her report. Contrasting her report with Weiterer’s indicates that these women did not approach the goal of a “supra” organization from the same angle. Weiterer’s report tells us that women in Germany faced an uphill battle for an equal opportunity in party politics, even in the communist party, which was supposed to offer the most progressive political opportunities for women. While Maria Weiterer is only one woman, and offers only one opinion, it would seem that she had correctly gauged the relative position of women in the KPD. Women would not need to have their own separate organizations within the party at all if they were considered equals. Perhaps they were being given a “separate, but equal” type of opportunity for participation. Indeed, the majority of the work they
were doing with regard to social work was still within the traditional realm of a woman’s expertise—nurturing and caring for society. German women, even socialists, were likely only offered work in traditionally male-oriented sectors due to the shortage of men, not due to the progressive nature of Soviet or German socialism. These women, at least Weiterer and those like her, were trying to get at the very heart of the matter by identifying the attitudes that would need changing to make all the gains of socialist women complete. Weiterer admitted in her report that the attitudes of KPD men would need to change before women would really be able to participate fully.

In the defense of KPD men, some of the activities of women’s committees must have seemed of questionable value at best, and ludicrous at worst. For example, in the investigative report for North Rhine-Westphalia, an unnamed German woman who maintained a residence in the Soviet Union, but worked for the German KPD in the Soviet zone, proudly claimed responsibility for having aided German women in Bergisch-Gladbach to organize a protest march. At first glance, this sounds like the kind of activism that the KPD might take seriously. This could be exactly the type of activity German socialist women needed to display in order to advance “the cause” of women’s equality. However, later the author reveals that children who had not gotten their share of a promised chocolate issue had conducted the protest march. Apparently some children in the town had gotten a piece of chocolate, and some forty of them had not. These forty children were armed by socialist women with signs that read, “We want chocolate, too!” and paraded through the streets.¹⁴¹ One can only imagine that KPD, or other men, or women for that matter, might not have seen the spectacle as useful political
activism. This type of activity, though possibly useful for instructing children in their role in civil society, or their rights, had little or nothing to do with socialism or anything else the KPD represented. If it showcased the ability of socialist women from the Soviet zone to organize activism, the issue they chose to support must have made at least some men and women of all political affiliations scoff. In other words, these women probably hurt their reputation more than they helped it by portraying themselves as the pied pipers for candy.

If KPD men were an obstacle for communist women to overcome, men and women of other parties could be even worse. The author of the North Rhine-Westphalia report acknowledged that she had a very rough crowd when trying to discuss politics during a train ride from Essen to Hagen in the Ruhr area. The hapless communist claimed to have been verbally lambasted during her discussion of “Russia.” After hearing the author’s political leanings, one person reportedly said, “Why did you come back here at all? You could stay there and make your propaganda.” A woman said, sarcastically, “Don’t stand too close to the door [of the train], you might fall out.” The author attributed these comments to the idea that “the Nazi incitement is still very great, one cannot even say that one was in a concentration camp or else one will be cursed at and heckled.” According to her account, the locals apparently still believed that the only ones in the camps were “hardened criminals.”

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142 Ibid., 7 (30). The author uses the outmoded term Russia instead of the Soviet Union for reasons known only to her. Frequent misspellings in German and a very naïve political analysis inform the reader that this woman probably had a limited education. Her debating skills would suffer for it.
When the conversation turned to the growing possibility of a war between the United States and “Russia,” the author made it known that she was against any war. When she explained that she had a 13 year-old son and that she did not want to risk losing him in the war, one young man jeered, “Hopefully the boy is more clever than his mother!” The 40 passengers in the car, finding this retort very humorous, clapped and cheered to the dismay of the poor woman.144

After the laughter died down she attempted to turn the conversation to the topic of women’s equality. Then, even the women in the train car joined in poking fun at the socialist, “What kind of woman is that? She looks like a decent enough person, but she has such crazy opinions!” Not one person on the train supported her in any of her discussions and this in travelling nearly every day for nearly two months. Frustrated, she noted in her report that even though these west-zone Germans disagreed with her, not once did they argue with her using SPD or even CDU party political reasons as a basis for argument. She wondered if they voted “unconsciously” for these parties, without even knowing their platform and agenda.145

Clearly the majority of German women on the trains did not support communism. It is unclear if these Germans were disinterested in politics altogether, or if they were simply hostile to the communist rhetorical position. More grave is the possibility that these Germans were actually demonstrating the Nazi beliefs, which the communist author attributed them with possessing. While none of the things they said specifically indict

144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
them of this charge, the recent past would say that German women were susceptible to such beliefs, as was the German public in general.\textsuperscript{146}

If the Ruhr Germans on the train were aggressive and rude to the communist “surveyor,” those who had come to hear her talk at gatherings in churches in the areas were more friendly, and even had legitimate questions for her. The most common question concerned prisoners of war. While family members of German prisoners from the Ruhr had received regular letters from German prisoners being held in French POW camps, they had only intermittent contact with those in British camps and only annual written contact with those in the Soviet Union, if any. In response, she explained to them that the Soviets had only recently rearranged their postal system, and she gave out 10 addresses of postal contacts for use in writing the prisoners in the Soviet Union, which she had acquired from the socialist newspaper, “\textit{Täglichen Rundschau}” in Berlin. She even promised those who were interested that she would send them “materials and newspapers” from the Soviet zone upon her return.\textsuperscript{147}

\textbf{Socialist Reports from the French Zone}

The reports from the French zone of occupation were possibly the least promising for the socialists. Here it was hard to find a German woman who showed the least bit of interest in politics. Even rarer were women who cared about equal rights, or believed it would be possible to attain them. Mounette Dotilloull, a French feminist who traveled

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\item[\textsuperscript{146}] See Jill Stephenson, \textit{Women in Nazi Germany}, (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2001) Stephenson suggests that women did support Hitler in large numbers but she tries to present a balanced picture of the overall experience for German women in this period. Robert Gellately explores some of the reasons why Germans in general did the same thing in his book \textit{Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany}, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Gellately specifically argues that most women did not experience Nazi Germany as a kind of political or regressive hell (page 3). Most women, even those who did not support Nazism, accepted the National Socialist emphasis on Children, Kitchen and Church at face value.
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with KPD members Vogeler, “Russian” zone and Scheering, French zone, asked basic questions of German women in the southwest corner of Germany. “Do you earn as much money as men in your profession? Do you think you deserve to? Do you want to get married someday?” The responses recorded bordered on the morose: “I don’t make as much as men...but women have always earned less than men...what should I do about it? It has always been that way and it always will be.” Dotilloull conceded that politics did not interest women from this region.148

Overall, the reports of socialist women from the Soviet zone show an amazing amount of rich, if varied, detail that accurately reflect the statistics of demographics in the British and American occupation zones, and depict apathy in the French zone.149 If overall the reports these women created vacillated between optimism and pessimism, at least they identified most of the women’s organizations, demographic trends and points of contact of women in the western zones. This information would be used to support the creation of a supra-party interzonal women’s organization.150 If it was difficult to get women to participate, to convert those of other political parties and to get men in the KPD to accept them as full members, there was no lack of support for the “supra” organization from women in existing KPD organizations. This fact supported what most socialist women from the Soviet zone already suspected: in the western zones, they

147 Ibid., 8 (31).
148 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/99 Bericht über die Betriebsbesichtigung mit Mounette Dotilloul, 88. In this report there is no statistical information and there is no way to determine how accurate the sampling in this “survey” was.
150 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/99 Abschrift! Nr. 78 More detail about the situation in these zones in later chapters.
would really only be able to count on the members of the KPD to support their “supra” organization, and this was a tiny minority of the population. Still, it was a start.

As a result, by the end of 1946, months before the establishment of the DFD, the socialist women of the Soviet zone of occupation knew more about what women were doing in all of the zones of occupation than any of the respective occupation authorities. These women were well on their way to forming a women’s organization that would include women from all of Germany. They were the only organization attempting such a move from any zone. None of the western authorities were interested in doing so at this early date. Even if the “supra-party” and “supra-confessional” descriptors of the organization would need building, at least there was interest across zonal boundaries.

Having taken an inventory of the needs and desires of people in the western zones, they could first focus on helping to organize those who were cooperative (with the not-so-well concealed agenda of incorporating them into socialism), and they could better attempt to woo those who were indifferent.

Conclusions from the Reports

From the reports of the socialist women of the East, commanders must learn two important lessons. First, in the absence of supervision, civilians in occupied territories will be exposed to myriad ideas. Second, the enemies of the occupation forces may sponsor the campaign to spread these ideas. This should make it plain that occupation forces must have an organized approach to disseminating their own ideas. In short, commanders must have a plan for how to demonstrate that their ideology is favorable to the occupied population. Ideally, the civilians who decide upon the where and why of occupation duty will supply commanders with instructions as to how they should handle
the dissemination of friendly information. Those commanders who are given no instructions as to if and how they should advertise democratic values should request further details. In the continued absence of guidance in this arena, commanders will need a plan of their own.

By late 1946, German women in the Soviet zone, particularly the socialist ones, had a very tangible organizational advantage due to the support of the Soviets, their travels in the western zones and leaders like Elli Schmidt and Käthe Kern. These women believed in the value of propaganda and felt that if their message could be carried to German women--not just in the Soviet zone, but all German women--the common German working woman would be stirred to action. Since women were the majority, they could effect real change simply through force of will and numbers. If the socialists were the force of will, the numbers of women necessary were still “dormant” in the women’s committees. In order to harness this untapped source of socialist potential, the women’s committees would need to be given permission to be politically oriented, and the socialists would take the reigns of leadership, fitting these women into their agenda. The conferences sponsored by German women beginning in 1947 illustrate this point best.

Organizing Women Politically:
The DFD and the International Women’s Day Conference
Berlin, March 1947

At the end of 1946, one of the Soviet political officers who inspected German organizations, a certain Lieutenant Colonel Nasarov inquired as to statistical data for the accomplishments of the women's committees in Germany. While Nasarov's job was

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151SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/80 #0071.
no doubt to insure the Germans were not plotting some form of resistance (or more likely subverting communist goals or wasting resources) and to see to it that Soviet policies were being implemented and followed to the greatest extent possible, he had opened the door for German women to set up a more centralized control apparatus for their fledgling women's committees. One of the women on the Central women's Secretariat in Berlin, Lisa Ullrich, responded to Nasarov’s inquiry that she had no way of knowing how many people had been helped by women's committees. She informed Nasarov that while German women had accomplished much, it had not been centrally coordinated, documented, recorded or regulated.\textsuperscript{152}

Surprisingly quickly, by January, 1947, the Democratic Women's Association of Germany (\textit{Demokratische Frauenbundes Deutschlands}, or DFD) had been organized and plans were laid to implement it as the controlling body for all women's organizations in Germany--optimistically not just the Soviet Zone, but all of Germany. The Soviets had finally allowed “the cause” to have an officially sanctioned mass movement. This would be accomplished in three steps. First, socialist women would set up the framework of this controlling body—the DFD. Next, the DFD would absorb and integrate the women's committees from the Soviet zone of occupation. Finally, the DFD would invite German women's organizations from the western zones of occupation to join them and become subordinate chapters of the DFD. This would occur as the capstone event of the 8 March 1947 International Women's Day Conference in Berlin. It was a well-laid plan, but it needed to be approved.

\textsuperscript{152}Ibid.
Ullrich produced a one-page outline of the goals of the DFD would be, and they were reviewed and commented upon by Nasarov. In her first draft, Ullrich went to extreme pains to ensure the contents were as general, and hence apolitical as possible, at least as far as political party affiliation would be concerned. Her proposed agenda was that of equal rights and pay for men and women. She included the struggle for the protection of mothers and children in her agenda, and even the goal to work for world peace. Nasarov, probably surprised at the quick written response of Ullrich, answered with a two-page critique in which he noted that the agenda and goals of the DFD were not sufficiently politically oriented. Very quickly, within a few days, Ullrich responded with another draft that was more formal in format and included the points that Nasarov had found lacking. The Soviet political officer expected to see more of a socialist plan of action in how women would achieve their goals through the DFD rather than a wish list of things they wanted to change. Nasarov may have assumed that this might be the end of the issue, as he suggested in his critique that it might be better to assign the responsibility to monitor the lot of women to officers within each individual political party. Instead, Ullrich improved upon her draft and made a real road map of action for the DFD, should it be approved.

The statutes of the DFD consist of a 9-page document that is dated November, 1946. There are only 14 main points, the most important of which is the first statute which declares that the DFD "is the supra-party and supra-confessional unity of all

\[^{153}\text{SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/80 #0063.}\]
\[^{154}\text{SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/80 #0051. "Ueberparteiliche und Ueberkonfessionelle," Satzungen des DFD. 7.11.46.}\]
German women for the protection of their interests in all areas of open life.\textsuperscript{155} This left little room for doubt that the DFD was intended to supervise all German women's activities in all four zones of occupation.

While it is likely that this agenda was driven top-down by the Soviets and German communist authorities so that they would only have one women’s agency with which to deal, German women had gained an organization which would give them a greater voice in the socialist apparatus. Certainly the Soviets and the German communists saw the Democratic German Women’s Association (the DFD) as a means to harness and control women in order to focus them on socialist goals. Still, the German women involved in creating the DFD saw its creation as a victory for agency for German women. The fact that these women had been pushing for an organization like the DFD since 1945 that the socialist German women had convinced Soviet and East German authorities to allow them to have what they wanted for their own purposes. Probably both cases are true: the communists were willing to allow women to organize in the hopes of controlling their agenda while the women in the DFD hoped that German women would eventually achieve their own goals this way. Certainly the women involved must have assumed that they would have more autonomy and influence since women would control this centralized agency to monitor all women's activities. Still, either something had changed in the policy of the Soviets or Lieutenant Colonel Nasarov was tired of dealing with rewrites, because in his final response to Ullrich he all but washed his hands of the matter by stating that the final decision in implementing the DFD would be left up to the newly

\textsuperscript{155}Ibid.
formed SED. The SED, the East German Socialist Unity Party, was the result of a shotgun wedding between, the more moderate Socialist SPD and the Communist KPD.

Exactly who made the final decision to allow the DFD to become the dominant women's organization in Germany is also unclear. What is clear is that the Democratic German Women’s Association became the centralized leadership for all women's groups after its unveiling in Berlin in March 1947. The women’s committees would not technically fall under their leadership until November of that year, but that was only a technicality, the DFD now spoke for all women in the Soviet zone and pretended to speak for all German women.\(^{156}\)

While there is no smoking gun, or written order establishing the DFD, one can assume that this new organization must have had support from both Germans and Soviets. The DFD had became the centralized body of control for the women's organizations of the Soviet zone of occupation with the goal of absorbing all women’s committees in Germany after 8 March 1947--the International Women's Day Conference.

This conference has a history of its own, apart from the German women's movement, that dates back to the 1910 Copenhagen International Women's Conference and even earlier conferences. The German women who set up the 1947 conference understood the need to place their movement in historical perspective. Planned and executed by the Women's Secretariat (Frauensekretariat) of the fledgling SED party, it comes then as no surprise that the pedigree of history chosen by these women was that of workers and communist women's movements. The women who wrote the program of events for the 1947 conference do not identify themselves in writing by name other than

\(^{156}\) SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/79 0003, Order of Sokolowskij’s Chief of Staff, G. Lukjantschenko.
the generic "Frauensekretariat SED" at the end of the fourteen-page document that summarizes the intent and history of the event. They explain the history of the women's movement as having started with the French and American Revolutions, but they were incomplete in giving women equality. From here, the SED authors dive straight into the rhetoric of scientific socialism, by tying every single development from 1800 forward to the development of capitalism. Naturally, women like Rosa Luxembourg and Clara Zetkin, pre-war German communist women, played large in the SED explanation of women's movements, and conversely the fact that sizeable numbers of German women supported Hitler is downplayed to instead present German women as victims of some great trick of Nazism. More emphasis is placed on the thousands of women who suffered and died for the cause of women's rights in concentration camps during the Nazi period. This presentation emphasizing the persecution of German feminists in the concentration camp system clearly defines the German woman as one of the most important victims of the Nazi era. In fact, the Nazis did persecute feminists and lesbians. But clearly not all German women, even among intellectuals, were victims of Nazism. As previously mentioned, most of them had accepted National Socialism as a reaction against the problems women faced in the modern world.

Despite the socialist rhetoric, there are valid reasons why a new women's movement would ally itself with the socialist perspective. Socialism and communism were interested in making all classes equal. The socialist women cited in the DFD

157 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/90 #001-014.
158 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/90 #012.
document realized that in this reorganization of society, it might be a good time to level the playing field between the genders as well. Luxemburg and Zetkin certainly advocated this line of reasoning.\textsuperscript{161} This does not alleviate the problem that many western women would feel distinctly alienated by the socialist interpretation offered in this manifesto. While it is true that communist movements had been the only political movements that readily accepted women in large numbers in the previous two centuries, it may have been a mistake for these East German women to present their conference and the founding of the DFD, which would be the crowning event on the last day of the three day conference, in the language of socialism. If the conference was truly going to attract an international audience and the DFD was going to be above party conflict, why couch both in the language of one specific ideology? While it may be obvious to cynics that the Soviets may not have permitted anything else, there is no evidence that this is the case. These German women actually believed in socialism.

Other perspectives existed and far from being silenced or excluded, were welcomed and promoted. On the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} of October, 1947 many German women including women not necessarily of communist pedigree, but currently in the SED hierarchy, met for what they now called the National Committee Meeting. Many of these women had been members of the original central women's committee before the founding of the DFD. They were meeting to present seminar papers concerning the prospect of a united German government and how it should look. Of the four presentations that are

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preserved in the archives, none specifically points to the October Revolution of 1917 as a model, nor indeed do any of them really sound enthusiastic about anything Russian. Instead, the presenters pointed to unique examples in western European history in their search for how to best organize a democratic society. The final presenter, Käthe Kern, a former German socialist (SPD) pointed to the failed revolution of 1848 as model most worthy of German attention. Kern goes into painful detail in enumerating the similarities and differences in the Constitution of 1848, the Weimar Constitution and in organizing the current zones of occupation. Kern finds plenty of room for critique of the Allies in the western zones due to their failure to implement anything new in their occupation policies towards women. Instead of being progressive and implementing new laws to aid German women, according to Kern, the Allies repeatedly relied on the precedents set in the Weimar Constitution, which stated that men and women have "principally the same rights and duties as citizens." For a women's activist, this simply would not do. There needed to be positive action to bring about change to a system that in theory recognized women deserved to be treated equally, but did not provide any punishment for those who did not follow the intent of the law. Relying on the Weimar Constitution as a precedent would not suffice in accomplishing this.

Memories of the Weimar Constitution for German women must have been mixed. While it had brought them unprecedented legal freedoms and rights, its weaknesses were understood as having helped Hitler come to power. In fact, while German women had been enfranchised in 1919 under the Weimar Constitution, many women in the West, and most likely in the Soviet Union as well, believed that German women had used the vote

162SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/81 #0096-0107.
not to improve their own lot or the world around them, but instead to help bring Adolf Hitler to power. While a sizeable number of women had done this, Hitler had come to power on the appeal to masculine values and any support he garnered from women was largely their support of the traditional role of women that Hitler had espoused. Women had voted for the NSDAP in numbers proportionate to their numbers in the population at large. That is to say women neither voted more or less often for Nazis than they did for other parties at the time.\textsuperscript{164} Despite this, many westerners, men and women alike, continued to look with suspicion on German women regardless of the fact that statistics showed that they had never been a majority in favor of Hitler.\textsuperscript{165} This caused some real hesitancy among western women in allowing them to see German women as potential allies, or even as students of democracy, or women's rights movements. The Soviets also, especially Soviet women, must have had their own doubts as to the depth of internalization. They distrusted the dedication to socialist convictions proclaimed by German women, despite the few German socialists who had spent the war in the Soviet Union. None of this would affect policy now that the DFD had been sanctioned.

The DFD had already passed the point of no-return. These women would now attempt the third and hardest part of Lisa Ullrich’s plan: the incorporation of western women’s movements into the DFD. From May to December 1947, rather than invite western women to Berlin for conversion, the DFD would bring their agenda to the western zones themselves in an invasion of ideas that would stir the western powers to finally recognize women as a political interest group.

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., Kern, #0105, "grundsaetzlich dieselben staatsbuergelichen Rechte und Pflichten."
The DFD Conferences

Here something must be said about the unique perspective of the situation held by the socialist women of the East. They seem to have been the first German women to realize that they had a chance to increase their level of political participation. They were the proactive instigators of most of this process. In no document will any of the western powers admit to be reacting to activities of women from the East, but this appears to be the case. The socialist DFD was the first to organize women in Germany in any meaningful way after the end of the Second World War. They did so without having the most educated membership and without significant resources from the occupying powers. While they did have permission to organize sooner, clearly this alone would not be sufficient to keep their movement solid, focused and progressive. That took dedication, even devotion and perhaps more importantly, a vision of what they wanted the world to look like. The women of the Soviet zone understood this in a way that their western cousins did not--or at least not in as cohesive a manner.

After the 8 March 1947 International Women’s Day Conference in Berlin, women's conferences occurred in all of the zones of occupation. Predictably, the goals and results of these conferences varied by where they were conducted and by whom they were sponsored. Women from the western zones, while participating in all of the conferences for which there are records, did not keep as complete a record of their experiences as did the women from the Soviet zone. These socialist women monitored the situation at every conference very carefully, but their opinion of the results invariably rested upon progress made toward a unified socialist women's organization. Not

165Claudia Koonz, Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and 135
surprisingly then, the conferences sponsored by women of the West were mostly considered a failure by the German women of the Soviet zone. The socialists marked the diversity of interests of the women in the western zones as weakness, disunity and a general incongruence with their goals. They kept meticulous records of what they saw and reported them back to Berlin.166

Most of the women’s conferences were modeled after the Berlin International Women’s Conference in March of 1947, with women presenting papers on political issues of various sorts. At the Berlin conference, despite the successful unveiling of the DFD, not everything had gone smoothly. First, participation by the women of the Western zones was uneven so the conference was hardly the "interzonal" or "international" conference for which the socialists had planned. Instead it ended up being a basic organizational meeting to establish communications, and possibly a chain of command or hierarchy for the eastern zone and, if they would cooperate, any other socialist women from western zones. Since the DFD now saw itself as the "matriarch" of all women's organizations in all of Germany, these women truly portrayed it as an four-zone conference representing all German women. However, if socialist women from the Soviet zone were prepared for this meeting, German women from the western zones were not. They sent delegates at the last minute mostly to show that they were in favor of organizing women and cooperating with their sisters in the East. Perhaps they even expected to hear pleas for help from their eastern sisters. They certainly did want to get

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166While these reports are undoubtedly slanted in their positive outlook toward the work of the SED women, the reports concerning conferences sponsored by western women are just as flattering to themselves. While the success of these conferences is definitely debatable, the interesting issues that they brought to light are the main concern of this section.
involved, debate, and promote "progress" for all German women, but the form of that progress--socialism--surprised women from the western zones and made them recoil from the idea of a united women’s organization.

While SED women had hoped that inviting women from the western zones to Berlin in March of 1947 would spark a debate about the role of women, which they could orchestrate, and even choreograph, the debate was mostly one-sided as opposed to a dialogue or discourse. Instead of progress in convincing German women that socialists were the natural leaders of a women's movement, Berlin instead merely was a place for the DFD to showcase its agenda, and a place for western women to listen and begin to formulate a counter-position. The type of debate that the SED women were looking for would not occur until a conference was held in the West. However, here without the home field advantage the SED enjoyed in Berlin, reviews were more negative. This is mostly due to the increased level of preparedness exhibited by western women attending these conferences and the difference in presentation as to what "progress" would mean. The basic differences in defining the agenda and goals meant that women from the Soviet and western zones would talk past each other, using each other as something against which to define themselves rather than finding commonalities upon which to build a universally acceptable German women's organization.

Bad Boll, May 1947

While East German newspapers gave credit to the American and British women for coming up with the idea for and the financing of a four-zonal women's conference at Bad Boll, Wurttemburg from 20 to 23 May 1947, they were slighted that it was coined "the first" of its type. They had sponsored the Berlin conference, which had started this
entire process and the capitalists were now taking credit for that. There were 204
delegates from 42 different organizations varying from political groups to religious ones
and even cultural women's organizations. They named the conference, "Peace
Movement, People's Understanding and Reconciliation as the Task of the Woman."\(^{167}\)

Women from the Soviet Zone complained that there never really was any attempt to
address real women's issues. Instead, there had been a three hour long debate about the
release of criminals and their records from Ludwigsburg. Just as the initial "scouts" for
the SED women had reported, German women in the western zones were largely
uninterested in the political agenda emphasized by the DFD.

The women from the Soviet zone were particularly disgusted with the lack of time
to speak. According to Maria Rentmeister, from the organizing committee of the (DFD),
the socialist women, representing the largest women's organization (280,000 strong!) were allowed only three speaking delegates (of the 204 at Bad Boll) and they were only
given 12 minutes to speak, and that happened only near the conclusion of the formal
session, just as the conference was ending.\(^{168}\) Rentmeister provided the DFD with a typed
5-page report on what transpired at Bad Boll.\(^{169}\) This interpretation of the conference at
Bad Boll differs from the American one only in the reasons behind its failure.

Voelkerversoehnung."

\(^{168}\) Ibid., Freizeit (Halle) 9.6.47.  "Zersplitterte Frauenbewegung im Westen," 23. I use the term
"socialist women" in this context to mean the more broad category of all politically left German women of
the Soviet zone. These women did not normally (there are some exceptions) see themselves as equal with
the SPD (German Socialist Party). The women of the eastern zone saw the SPD women of the East as their
"prodigal sisters," lost sheep brought back into the fold. They did see the KPD women of the West as
allies and hoped to use them as a base with which to build their support.

\(^{169}\) The Americans mention no details of what happened at Bad Boll, considering it largely a failure.
Rentmeister interpreted the failure of the conference to its failure to advance socialist ideals. This, she attributed to some of the speakers who were either participating only at the behest of the Americans, from the abundant amount of floor time given to women friendly to the Westerners, and to the absence of women workers. In fairness to the organizers of Bad Boll, it was their conference and the socialist women were invited as guests, not keynote speakers. If the women from the Soviet zone did not like what they were hearing from the speakers at the conference, part of it at least had to be the fact that many of their Western hosts praised the way the occupation forces had treated them, while condemning the Soviets. The speakers from the West probably had done this in an attempt to state what they guessed the socialist women felt to be an obviously incongruent situation, but apparently it came off instead as braggadocio.

Particularly disturbing to Rentmeister was the tone of Frau Baehnisch from Hannover (Bristish zone). Baehnisch stated, "I have no influence over my party (SPD) but remain steadfast in my belief that we (women) can only be successful in supra-party (ueberparteiliche) endeavors." While one might think that this was focused exactly where the socialists could appreciate it, to Rentmeister, this was simply a "bait and switch" tactic. She saw Baehnisch's true goal as becoming the leader of all women's organizations in all of Germany. Rentmeister goes on to describe Baehnisch as "highly intelligent, able to present a seminar paper from memory," but at the same time "extraordinarily ambitious." Clearly ambition was not a socialist virtue in the form

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170 SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/99, 108, "Bad Boll," report from Maria Rentmeister. Frauen Zahn-Harnack and Marie-Elizabeth Lueders being two good examples who seemed to have been tuned out by the communists immediately because of their Western leanings.
171Ibid.
172Ibid., 109.
Baehnisch exhibited. This is ironic since the DFD’s “ambition” to lead all German women’s organizations was well-known. Despite the belief in conspiracy theories and the like, Rentmeister did not believe that the Americans would support Baehnisch's ambitions.  

In addition to the ambitious nature of individuals, the purpose of "brainstorming" was misunderstood by the socialists, or purposefully misinterpreted. While the organizers of the conference wanted to get ideas, issues and problems out on the table in order to establish an agenda to be worked on later, the socialists wanted immediate action. They reported that the refusal to vote on any resolutions or issues at Bad Boll was a deliberate attempt to hinder "democratic decisions" and an effective way to prevent the socialists from having equal floor time. They seem to have had a legitimate complaint. Rentmeister gives as an example of her socialist colleague, Frau von Renthe who attempted to address the conference on the topic of building "town groups" (Ortsgruppen). Despite the fact that this was actually the scheduled and sanctioned topic for which she was the resident expert, she never got the chance to speak. She was listed 36th out of 36 respondents—purposefully, systematically, and even vindictively according to Rentmeister. She reports that the same thing happened to her time and again during this conference and that none of the women from the Soviet zone were allowed to address the conference on any of the discussion group topics. Rentmeister blamed this on the floor organizer, Lisa Albrecht (SPD). The socialist women from the Soviet zone held a

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173 Ibid. Perhaps this is only because she was not from the American zone.
175 Ibid.
specific grudge against Albrecht who is described simply as the woman who "spoke in a 'Goebbels-form' against the Soviet zone."\textsuperscript{176}

By the time the socialist women actually were allowed to have the floor, for 5-8 minutes on the third day, the women from the East were intimidated. Whether this intimidation was intentional or was a result of simple paranoia is debatable. The socialists claimed to have felt compelled to control their language in order to be able to keep the microphone.

Conversely, when the women from the Soviet zone were able to address western zone women in private, they were received very well. At the slightest hint of interest that these socialist women might cooperate with western women, they were swamped with addresses of women who were willing to send material to aid them from the West.\textsuperscript{177} Western women were intrigued by the women from the Soviet zone. Western zone women asked myriad questions to determine if rumors of Soviet atrocities were true and if conditions were much different in the Soviet zone. Instead of actually listening to their answers, they treated them with pity, and spoke to them as if they were totally oblivious of their socialist leanings. It seems the women of the western zones were surprised to learn that the women from the Soviet zone actually believed in the socialist position. As a result of that eventual revelation, a not so vague undercurrent of conflict returned and suspicions ran high, no doubt from both sides.

The last day of the conference was telling in many respects. Rentmeister describes the mood when each woman at the conference was offered the opportunity to

\textsuperscript{176}SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/99, 108. "Das hat Lisa Albrecht organisiert, sie spricht in einer Goebbelsform gegen die Sowjetzone."

\textsuperscript{177}Ibid.
speak for one minute on a radio program. The women from the Soviet zone were caught
totally off guard and unprepared because no one had told them to ready remarks in
advance. Again, this was probably intentional as far as Rentmeister was concerned.
According to her, the centralization and powerful unity of the women in the East did not
prepare her for the variety of agendas in the West with its 42 different organizations and
204 delegates. It left the socialists feeling very much like outsiders, or worse, just one of
many varied and equal interest groups.

This was not what the socialists had envisioned. They had obviously wanted to
take the lead in a united, socialist women's organization. They found themselves having
to hide this agenda in order to be able to participate at all. "We were very careful. In all
of our actions we have to speak in the language of these people, otherwise we would have
been ostracized."178 One example of this was the simple introduction. When each
speaker came forward and introduced herself, she was to state where she was from and
the number of women she represented. Most of the speakers represented 15-20 women
from local chapters of various organizations. The Catholic Women's Organization was
an exception, and they actually had no idea exactly how many women they represented,
but it was understood that this was a very large group. Still, when Maria Rentmeister
introduced herself, she was careful not to announce that she represented the 280,000
women of the German Democratic Women's Association. She did not want to confirm
the western suspicion that these women were there representing the feared ideas of the
hated communists. While it is clear that these women were card-carrying members of a
communist organization, Rentmeister and her contingency certainly had deep convictions

178Ibid.
about the veracity of their position. These were no mere mouthpieces of Soviet communism, orchestrated by a totalitarian regime with answers prepared by a party official, rather, they were women who were fed up with the shadow of Nazism and were responding to their new found freedom in a way that was acceptable in their new environment.179

Women from the Soviet zone realized that not only were women from the western zones sympathetic to capitalism (despite the fact that many, even most of them were members of the reform-minded socialist SPD) they were also unorganized, or at least decentralized to the point of disunity. The socialist women were convinced they would never accomplish anything if they linked themselves with this sort of cacophony of voices. In spite of this, Maria Rentmeister mildly enjoyed watching the struggle to organize. Lisa Albrecht offered to found a united women's association of all the attending organizations, which is precisely what socialist women wanted, under different auspices. Rentmeister noted (with a hint of satisfaction) that "opposition was immediate. The women said 'We will not subject ourselves to the dictatorship of the SPD!'" 180

Albrecht immediately then declined her own offer to organize a supra-party association on the grounds that her home constituency of SPD voters had forbidden her "to take on more duties." When the "ambitious" Frau Baehnisch offered to take on the task in her stead, the CSU (Christian Socialist Union Party) delegates explained that they were opposed to working together as a large group. Rentmeister then took the podium and

179 Some, if not all of these women must have believed what they had learned about Nazism: to them National Socialism was just an extreme variant of capitalism, making capitalism the root of its evil, or at least suspect.
appealed to the group that such a supra-party organization like this should have a leader, "not from Hannover or Munich, but from Berlin." Naturally enough, the women of the West suspected (correctly) that she meant East Berlin. This may have been the moment of truth for the socialist women. They actually had a good point here. That point was lost before they could emphasize it. The mention of Berlin and the mere thought of traveling into the Soviet zone, or even through it to get to West Berlin caused a whole new debate that clearly insulted the eastern delegation. The women of the West were clearly afraid to move operations into what they saw as hostile territory, and this association was injurious to the goodwill of the women of the Soviet zone.

To give Maria Rentmeister the benefit of the doubt, one must assume that by her suggestion she meant that a woman from Berlin could represent all of the zones much in the way that the Quadripartite Council in Berlin was supposed to rule Germany. In any case, if an interzonal women's organization was going to be taken seriously, it would need easy access to the occupying governments in Berlin, making her proposal very practical. In any case, Rentmeister notes that the socialists "did not have the amount of needed influence to stand a general women's organization on its own legs."182

From this point forward, the socialists from the Soviet zone would feel almost like spies in what they saw as their own territory. Neither Germany, nor Berlin, was yet divided by a wall after all, but the political environment was. The Moscow Conference, the formal proclamation of the Truman Doctrine, and the formulation of the Marshall

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180 SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/99, 109 (3), "Bad Boll," report from Maria Rentmeister. This is an echo of the struggle between (SPD) socialists in the western zones, which resulted in the failure of Kurt Schumacher to achieve victory in the first post-war national elections.
181 Ibid., 110 (4).
182 Ibid.
Plan (and subsequent Soviet rejection of it) all correspond with the timing of these conferences. The sapling idea of a German women’s movement headed by either the socialists or capitalists struggled to survive in the shadow of the issues in this forest of high diplomatic concerns. Eastern disillusionment with the prospect of unity in this endeavor was ever-present after mid-1947. Before this, the language was hopeful, if distrustful as well. But after this point, the delegation from the Soviet zone, at least when attending western sponsored conferences, became more like reporters on the floundering condition of the women's movement(s) in the West than active participants or recruiters. Maria Rentmeister's report concerning the results of the Bad Boll conference is evidence of this shift, which she blamed on the aggressive nature of the questions posed by women from the western zones and their inability to play fairly or see the bigger, socialist picture.

Rentmeister concluded her report with observations about the political nature of the entire affair. While the purpose of the conference was to find common ground for all women, what happened instead was a further definition of political differences. Rentmeister came into the conference hoping to span the divide of political differences in order to unify German women to effect change. Instead she noted sadly that undue time and energy was spent arguing over specific issues such as what women could do to secure the release of "fascists" from the Ludwigsburg internment camp near Stuttgart. The women with children were especially interested in such issues, but on the topic of the "punishment of war criminals, not a word."\textsuperscript{183} She also noted that women in the western zones were fascinated and caught up in the "propaganda" surrounding the issue of women

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 110-111 (5).
deported to the Soviet Union. She shrugged off as ignorant the idea that the women in the Soviet zone would be too scared to try to do anything but beg the occupying authorities for information. In order to counter such dramatic issues from the East, she claimed that she interjected "in the name of the kidnapped scientists in the USA. I could name names. They changed the subject."\(^{184}\)

Despite Rentmeister's poor opinion of most of the leading personalities of the women in the West, she did think highly of some of the membership who she termed "positive women" who had the potential to be valuable allies (or perhaps more apropos, “comrades”) of the women in the Soviet zone. Many were willing to take a chance on another conference in Berlin, even though this would mean traveling through the Soviet zone of occupation. However, even some of these women remained suspicious in the end due to their critique of Soviet policies. For example, Else Reventlow (KPD-west) insisted that Stalinist communism was oppressive and then proclaimed, "I stand on the foundation of the Communist Manifesto." Rentmeister was unconvinced, commenting that Reventlow argued "with the words (and mannerisms) of Hitler and Goebbels."\(^{185}\) No greater insult could be issued regarding a self-proclaimed communist.

Harsh words and feelings of resentment were the most tangible results of the conference. Stereotypes were confirmed and the resulting mistrust formed a greater divide than had existed before the conference. Attempts to reconcile failed. Even the "ambitious" Frau Baehnisch offered alms of peace, complimenting the socialist women privately, admitting, "We [women in the West] need help from you. You are the only

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\(^{184}\) Ibid. Operation Paperclip was a well-known Allied venture to get German scientists to move to the West to work on weapons projects. Many were force migrated.

\(^{185}\) SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/99, 109 (3).
ones that can accomplish anything.\footnote{Ibid.} If they honestly wanted the help, organization, enthusiasm, and unity of the socialist women, they wanted neither their politics nor their leadership.

As a result, the conference resolved little or nothing. Indeed, Rentmeister was thoroughly disgusted. "Nothing positive was accomplished, no program, no documents, no committee was founded. The Americans financed this Congress."\footnote{SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/99, 109 (3).} This strange verdict contradicted the American version of events mostly in the reasons for its failure rather than in degree.\footnote{OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 155. Memo dated 17 October 1947. The US-Zone account blamed the stonewalling attitude of the communist women, the backward, uneducated nature of most of the attendees, and a lack of funds for the perceived failure to achieve democratic goals.} It seemed as though the socialist women had honestly believed that the unorganized women of the West would coalesce to form a chapter of the DFD under socialist leadership and become incorporated into their agenda and membership. They were completely disappointed.

For the women of the western zones, the conference was less of a failure because it had at least led to the planning of further meetings in the American and British zones. These meetings would be conducted nearly simultaneously at Bad Pyrmont (British Zone, near Hannover), Frankfurt am Main (Hessen, US Zone), Stuttgart, Heidelberg, Pforzheim, Mannheim and Ludwigsburg (Baden-Wuerttemburg, US Zone), and in Munich, Nuremberg, Fuerth (et al. Bavaria, US zone) at the end of June, a month later.\footnote{SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/99. Neue Zeitung 24.5.47 (15). Archiv DFD. "Frauentagung fuer Voelkerversoehnung," 15-17.} One of the universal goals of these meetings that appealed to all of the attendees of the Bad Boll conference according to women in the Soviet zone, was to seek out and
encourage the attendance of women from the working class who had been largely missing from Bad Boll and Berlin.\textsuperscript{190}

While this goal may have been formally stated and recognized by all parties at Bad Boll, it was interpreted loosely, resulting in diverging results. The conference at Fuerth ended up being an SPD function. Over 200 SPD women of showed up to participate and issued proclamations which, while idealistic, were of little practical value: "We are against war...any peace founded on the fear of nuclear weapons will not be strong enough to avoid a further catastrophe."\textsuperscript{191} Such rhetoric was unlikely to have any practical and material results for the typical German woman, many of whom in Bavaria were Christian Socialists (CSU, emphasis on the “Christian,” conservative, not to be confused with socialists) or Communists (KPD-15 percent), and considered themselves totally unaffiliated with the SPD's goals.\textsuperscript{192}

While the socialist women from the Soviet zone would attend nearly all of these conferences, their level of participation would be different at each one. For the western sponsored conferences, the eastern socialist women would attend, but mostly report and attempt to gain allies for their cause behind the scenes rather than get into arguments by making public appeals for socialism. They felt that they were largely unwelcome, blaming the women of the West for treating them with jealousy, pity, fear and an arrogance like that of a rich city idler around her poorer country cousin.

\textsuperscript{190}Ibid., 30. Tagesspiegel, 28.6.47. Most of the women at this conference were academics or upper-middle class.

\textsuperscript{191}Ibid., 29. Telgraf, 28.6.47. "Frauentagung in Fuerth."

While the eastern socialists saw the western-sponsored conferences as required attendance, to maintain their legitimacy if nothing else, they also employed another tactic to keep their cause viable: they hosted (or encouraged their western sympathizers to host) socialist-oriented conferences in the western zones. As incredible as this may seem today, the records indicate that attendance at these conferences was at least as good as the western-sponsored ones, and in the case of Frankfurt-am-Main, more than five times the size of the largest western one recorded. While these conferences also attracted women from across the political spectrum, not surprisingly the supporters of the KPD/SED dominated their numbers as well as their agenda. Of the many different conferences hosted throughout the western zones after Bad Boll, a few are worth considering in greater detail.

Bad Pyrmont, June 1947

British women hosted the conference at Bad Pyrmont from 20-23 June 1947 and while it was slightly broader in its appeal than Bad Boll had been due its inclusion of women from all social classes, it was boldly optimistic, possibly even unrealistic. The goals of its organizers included creating an organization for German women in the British Zone that would be above politics, profession and confession, one that would be truly interzonal and indeed universally inclusive of all German women. A very real attempt to encourage working-class women was undertaken. This undoubtedly came from the realization that at Bad Boll 90 percent of the participants were "Akademikerinnen" (academicians, female). This was appropriate neither for the western sense of democratic

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fairness, nor with the eastern socialist intent of the workers being considered the most important, numerous and progressive group.

In the spirit of broadening the Bad Boll agenda at Bad Pyrmont, the slate of topics would be greatly expanded. Some examples of debated issues from these two conferences included: the degree of political involvement of women, taxation, the role of women in the rebuilding of Germany, unwed mothers, and women's occupational needs. This wide variety reveals a real attempt by these women to fully include every level of possible discussion. However, it inevitably seemed to contribute to a sense of dissatisfaction by women from all sides who could not agree on the topics on which to concentrate the most effort.

The records of the Bad Pyrmont conference are only to be found in the records of the eastern DFD. The socialist women were most prolific in collecting data of all sorts, from all zones, and then commenting on what they found. Thus, the official report from Bad Pyrmont, written by Frau Baehnisch, the same woman dubbed “ambitious” at Bad Boll, is found in its entirety only in the records of a communist women's organization. Directly behind the report is a second report thoroughly refuting the original, written by one of the socialist delegates sent to the conference to monitor its progress.

The "ambitious" Baehnisch could have easily had the word "optimistic" added to her terse dossier. Her twelve-page report concerning Bad Pyrmont absolutely glows with positive energy. Baehnisch clearly believed that her conference was on the right track and was setting the tone for a united effort by German women in her zone. Dr. Durand-Wever and Nora Nell put together the first part of the report for Baehnisch to sign. They

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194SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/99, 108, "Bad Boll," report from Maria Rentmeister who repeated the
recorded the various topics of the many speakers. It is hard to gauge the effectiveness of speakers without hearing their tone and the reception of the audience, but without naming them all, we might get a sense of what the mood of the conference by a sample of the topics of the papers presented. The opening day topics seemed suspiciously familiar, like the broad, general topics of Bad Boll. They included such titles as, "The Woman in the Crises of the Past," "A World Women's Peace Association," and "The New Danger of War."\(^{195}\)

If these idealistic themes were disappointing to those who had hoped for a more pragmatic approach at solving real world, everyday problems, many of the topics of the rest of the conference were not. These included, "Problems of Youth and Attempts to Solve Them," "The Ethical Implications of Refugees," "Woman to Woman Help," and most appropriately, "The Woman in Public Service."\(^{196}\)

To the historian this is of interest for the mere fact that women had come to take an interest in social work on their own, without a government sponsored program to make them participate. For the military commander this is evidence that women in an occupied population can be a resource in the performance of humanitarian assistance, a common goal of occupation duty.

In the opinion of the report's authors, all of the topics were well-received with the notable exception of one. When Walter von Hollander spoke in a "fictional-poetic way" on the topic of "What We Men Expect from Women," most of the women left the lecture

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\(^{196}\) Ibid., 136-137.
hall. While no details are available regarding the exact contents of this speech, one must wonder what the speaker's intentions were in addressing this particular audience, at this moment in history with a speech whose very title suggests that he had not one clue as to what that audience was attempting to do at this conference. While it may be unfair to judge von Hollander without the transcript of his speech, it is clear even without it that he offended the bulk of those present.

This poses the (perhaps) even more interesting question as to how such a topic and speaker even found themselves on the agenda for this conference. One may assume that in order to acquire facilities to make the conference possible, certain official speakers may have been forced on conference organizers by whoever controlled the facilities, or even by the military governments, though there is no evidence to support this.

While the anecdote above may be humorous or proof of male chauvinism to historians, to the military commander involved in planning and executing occupation duty in foreign territory this story should be very instructive. If the military addresses the women of the occupied nation in the form or tone of, “What We Men Expect from Women,” then the occupiers are likely to get similar results. That is women will remove themselves intellectually from the lecture hall of the occupiers and will be unlikely to cooperate or portray the occupiers in a positive light. This will have long-term effects on the relations between the occupiers and the occupied.

Despite the anomaly (“What We Men Expect from Women”) in the proceedings of Bad Pyrmont, most of the conference was described by its hosts as a success. In fact, almost in answer to the socialist complaints from Bad Boll, the second half of the official

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197Ibid., 134-135. The exact wording was, "belletristischer Weise."

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The report of the events of the conference consists of Frau Baehnisch's drafts of a series of "Peace Resolutions." If the conference at Bad Boll had come to no concrete conclusions in writing that its members could take with them as evidence of progress, Bad Pyrmont was different. The resolutions consisted of five pages of specific references to changes in German law that, in the eyes of the attendees (or the authors of the report at least) would need to be addressed to make possible a better Germany with equitable chances of success for men, women and children.

More specifically, the resolutions referred to changes needed to modernize antiquated German laws on marriage, divorce, motherhood, taxation and other topics of concern not just for feminists, as some people might have expected, but for forward thinking members of a newly democratic nation. Many of the suggestions for inclusion in the resolutions might have come from the English and American women at the conference (there is no record of French or Soviet women ever attending these conferences) but there is no evidence to suggest that. If there had been Western (read American or British) pressure to include such issues in the record, the German women from the Soviet zone would have certainly pointed out any knowledge they had of this type of coercion. In any case, Baehnisch at least must have believed in what she was writing. The last two pages of the resolutions, signed only by her, concerned reform of the economy, social welfare programs and housing. At last the issues that haunted the common Truemmerfrau were being addressed, at least in writing.

It is likely that the socialist women were slightly taken off guard not by the content of the resolutions but by the prioritization and level of emphasis of some issues over others. In their own work in the Soviet zone, they had consistently emphasized
political participation and improvements to the quality of life as the common and most urgent goals of all political parties in Germany. By contrast, according to them, the women in the West were only tangentially worried about stirring the masses to political activity (with some exceptions). They seemed to have already reckoned that cries for improvements in the quality of life had to be couched in the language of the correct Western reasoning for economic and social reform. This meant using the same language that the American and British occupiers would use to convince their home governments that these improvements were worthwhile. Thus, German women predicted that if military and civilian authorities ignored German cries for assistance in reorganizing, a further degeneration of the social and economic conditions would only result in further political destabilization.

Some of these pleas would be heard, but there is no evidence that the Bad Pyrmont resolutions ever made it to the desk of any of the military governors of the British zone of occupation, or any other for that matter. Even American military records, with its Women's Affairs Branch, do not even mention that the Bad Pyrmont conference ever occurred, even though some (unnamed) American women were supposedly present. In the end, Bad Pyrmont, while successful in bringing many issues to the attention of the women of all zones, was unsuccessful in bringing about real change for German women. It did establish some contacts with existing youth organizations for a sharing of resources, but it is unclear if any of these contacts were lasting or important in organizing women further.\textsuperscript{198} Still, women across the scope of the political spectrum agreed that it was an improvement over Bad Boll.

\textsuperscript{198}Ibid., 137-138 (9-11).
The socialist women from the Soviet zone were quick to point out that Frau Baehnisch's optimism in proclaiming her resolutions and proudly declaring that "This work gives us at a minimum the possibility to maintain our existence" was exaggerated. They accused her of publicly making statements that she did not support in private and that her actual agenda was revealed in her secluded conversations with socialist women where she admitted "in the West zone, there will never be a Demokratische Frauenbund like in the East zone." According to the socialist women, Baehnisch publicly supported a large organization only as long as she could head it, and when that seemed unlikely, she began to support the idea of a variety of unassociated local chapters of women, working for their own goals, but sharing resources.\footnote{SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/99, 149 (6), Report on \textit{Frauenausschuesse}, Hannover.}

The accusations against Baehnisch's integrity went even further. In a speech in Aachen, Baehnisch had allegedly proclaimed her group to be so large that it was "fantastic in numbers." When it turned out that it consisted of only 140 women, 70 of whom were communists, the socialists could hardly contain their cynicism.\footnote{Ibid.} To these socialist women, the fact that 50 percent of Baehnisch's contingency was communist must have been excellent evidence of support for their ideas in the western zones. It must also have given them some sense of how out of touch with their "constituency" that the western "leaders" seemed. While we have no way of knowing how western women really felt about her due to lack of records, we do know that Baehnisch came to represent all that the socialist women found distasteful in the western women's leadership: a
dangerous combination of ambition, ignorance and arrogance. In the end, her report
added to the sense of Bad Pyrmont as a farce from the socialists' point of view.

In a different report, the socialist Milli Boelke made it clear that Baehnisch should
not be trusted. She had held a separate meeting to speak with her new found KPD allies
in order to focus them and to make certain that they understood how to interpret the Bad
Pyrmont conference and the attempts to organize German women from the socialist
perspective. Her report is worth quoting in detail:

"Baehnisch has made a name for herself and wants to become the woman in the West.
She wants to work with the East. We don't believe her. We must reckon with the fact
that the organization in reality will not be that envisioned by Baehnisch, but instead that
of the progressive forces will carry the day. The endeavors of the progressive forces
must be reinforced. Baehnisch must remain isolated in her endeavors. You must
acknowledge that, you have no press, you cannot appear on the radio." 201

By such logic, Boelke must have intended to make it appear to these KPD women
in the West that the only option they had with regard to actually having their voices heard
would be through cooperation with the women of the DFD. Boelke promised that the
DFD would begin a program of sending newspapers and other literature from the East to
the women in Hannover. To that end, Elli Schmidt provided "about 3000 addresses" of
women in the Hannover area alone who were interested in receiving such materials. 202
This seems an exaggeration considering most of the local groups consisted of an average
of 20 members. Still, Schmidt produced the names, but could not deliver 3000 copies of
socialist newspapers.

In good communist form, the “sub-conference” was not over until the

membership had sung, "Brothers to the Sun, to Freedom," a song written by the Russian,

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totally unreasonable from her perspective either. This is further evidence of the contrast between
centralization in the East and localism in the West.

201 SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/99, 12, Report on Frauenausschusse, Hannover.
Radin, in 1897, translated to German in 1918 by Scherchen, and sung to the tune of Russian folk music. To the modern student of history, it might seem ironic that a group of German women would sing a Russian song about brotherhood as opposed to “sisterhood,” especially on this day, the occasion of founding their own women's organization. Perhaps an appropriate song about women simply did not exist. In any event, there is no evidence that anyone was required to sing a very communist song, yet they did so, implying that perhaps the party was indeed foremost on the agenda.

Translated literally, the song goes like this:

_Brothers, to the sun, to liberty, brothers to the light upwards.  
Brightly from the dark past the future shines out._

_See only the course of the millions endlessly pouring from the sky  
Until the night over-swells and demands your longing._

_Brothers, the hands are one now, brothers dying laughs:  
Eternally slavery at an end, the last holy battle._

_Break the yoke of tyrants who so cruelly tormented us;  
Wave the blood-red flag over the world of workers._

_Brothers seize your rifles, up to the crucial battle!  
Communism in honor, its power is in the future!_

At least the women present at this “sub-conference” for true socialists must have had no illusions as to where the DFD's primary loyalties truly lay--spreading communism. If this was their true agenda, they understood that their message to the larger group including all German women would have to be more subtle. Therefore, at the larger conferences such as Bad Pyrmont and elsewhere the representatives of the DFD were often forced to bide their time. They spoke in broad terms about what their

\[\text{\textsuperscript{202}}\text{Ibid.}\]
organization offered German women in the form of benefits, and waited for the chance to gain allies in private conversations and informal gatherings.

Frankfurt-am-Main, June 1947

If the socialist attendees of Bad Pyrmont and Fuerth passively accepted their limited roles and critiqued western ideas, socialist women from the East did not hypocritically brood in the wings of these conferences without offering their own alternative solution to the problems they had recognized: instead they hosted simultaneous conferences in the American zone. The first and largest of these was in Frankfurt am Main on 20 June 1947, the same day as the conference in Bad Pyrmont. While so much ado had been made of 204 delegates attending the conference in the British zone, the socialists in Hessen were able to muster 1200 delegates, according to the report of Emma Sachse and Elli Schmidt. Every county and major city in Hessen participated. Most of the women present were members of the KPD/SED. Hessen was considered by Schmidt and Sachse to be the most progressive of all of the American zones due to the degree of support for the party they noticed, punctuated by the warm welcome they received in Frankfurt.

While women of all political affiliations were invited and officially welcomed, the conference was organized and run exclusively by Genossinen (KPD/SED party members). Communist Eva Hoehn was the president of the conference and Elli Schmidt

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203 SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/99, 160, "Bericht: Ueber die Reise von Emma Sachse und Elli Schmidt vom 19. Juni bis 30. Juni in die amerikanische Zone." It is possible that numbers were limited at Bad Pyrmont and other smaller conferences by the size of the facilities, but there is no way of measuring this effectively. The fact that so many more were registered at Frankfurt is significant and in any case there is no mention of women being turned away from any conference.

204 Ibid., 161 (2). Despite lamenting the fact that no women were in the Sekretariat of the KPD in Hessen, Schmidt and Sachse felt almost at home here, in a city nearly picked by the Americans as the
was the keynote speaker. Her topic reveals much about the agenda of the one-day affair, "The Winning over of Women to Promote our Party." Other speeches covered topics such as "The Realization of Equal Rights for Women in the Eastern Zone" and "The Founding of Women's Committees in Thueringen (Soviet Zone)." To the women of the western zones, these topics might have seemed just as short-sighted, narrow and fruitless as socialist Maria Rentmeister was simultaneously reporting the program at Bad Pyrmont to be.

While one might expect that women of anything other than communist political persuasion were excluded from participation, this was not true. Representative women from the SPD, CSU [sic-likely it was CDU, an affiliated party], and women without party affiliation were present and allowed to ask questions of the speakers. According to Schmidt's report, the questions came from western women who had already long been playing a roll in public life.205 While they most likely presented no formal papers, according to Schmidt, women from the SPD were given the floor and asked particularly provocative questions. Some examples included questions about constraints on freedom in the Soviet zone, the internment of members of the SPD in the concentration camp at Buchenwald, forceful deportations to Russia, poor treatment of prisoners of war, and the registration of all former members of the armed forces.206 Schmidt claims to have overseen the answering of all of these questions, but none of the reported answers, nor the reception of those answers were recorded.

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205 SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/99, 162 (2a), "Bericht: Ueber die Reise von Emma Sachse und Elli Schmidt vom 19. Juni bis 30. Juni in die amerikanische Zone." What she means by "oeffentlich Leben eine Rolle spielen" is open for interpretation, no further details about the question-posers is available.
Undoubtedly a lot of misinformation existed on both sides. It is unlikely that Schmidt and her delegation knew the full truth about all of these issues, even less likely that they would have any control over them. The women of the West, at least the members of the SPD who asked these questions, undoubtedly had already figured the communist party to be operating as a totalitarian regime, equating what the Soviets and the SED (social unity party or communists) were responsible for with the intentions of these women. This may have been unfortunate for those women who actually believed in the unity and the advancement of women in politics and public life. If they were unclear on the details of an issue such as Buchenwald, they must have felt as if they were being attacked by propaganda. If they were even partially aware of the truth behind these issues, it must have pained them to have to avoid dissenting too loudly in public, lest their position in the party at home become eroded.207 To the women of the West, this must have been seen as evidence of either their complicity, concurrence or ignorance, any combination of which would make them suspect.

The terse treatment of the question and answer periods in Schmidt's report clearly betray an unease with her own success in diffusing the situation. In fact, her conclusion drawn from the episode is that "in the American zone everything is driven by a true war psychosis."208 By this accusation, one can imply that she was attempting to re-turn the tables on the western occupiers (and citizens) by highlighting their insecurity instead of

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206 Ibid.
207 Buchenwald was indeed used as a "special holding camp" for political dissenters, Nazis and criminals after the Second World War until the mid-1950's.
answering for the problems of the eastern zone, on which she may or may not have been qualified to comment.

One of the most frustrating realizations of the SED women from the East was the explanation of how the western powers planned to deal with social welfare programs. The SPD membership in Hessen explained to visiting Soviet zone sisters, Schmidt and Sachse, that the Americans intended to "subordinate" one of the KPD's principal goals, that of a movement for social reforms, for women under a supra-party organization, to that of a sub-committee within the SPD and within each of the other respective parties of the West. The Americans could trump the KPD with this type of demand by denying a license to organize for the entire party, which they effectively did by banning the KPD in the Bundesrepublik in 1956.\footnote{Ibid., 163 (3). For the full story of the banning of the KPD in the West, see Patrick Major, The Death of the KPD: Communism and Anti-Communism in West Germany, 1945-1956, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).}

The tough SPD questions aside, the socialists predictably declared Frankfurt a success. Schmidt was particularly pleased to accept the invitation of a Frau Spangenberg of the Hessen SPD to make a formal connection between herself and the party in the Soviet zone. Spangenberg claimed to know of a contingency of SPD members who were dissatisfied with their party in Hessen, and would consider reunifying with the eastern socialists. She apparently knew of Emma Sachse from her work in Thüringen before the war.\footnote{SAPMO DY31 IV 2/1799, 162 (2a), "Bericht: Ueber die Reise von Emma Sachse und Elli Schmidt vom 19. Juni bis 30. Juni in die amerikanische Zone," 1947.} What became of this relationship is unknown, but it would serve as a measure of success over the results of earlier conferences which had had much more disappointing results, and virtually no positive reception comparable to this.
Stuttgart, Wuerttemberg-Baden, July 1947

Many of the same concerns expressed by Sachse and Schmidt during their visit to Frankfurt were repeated in their reports from Wuerttemberg-Baden. Emma Sachse led gatherings in Stuttgart and Heidelberg while Elli Schmidt did likewise in Pforzheim, Mannheim and Ludwigsburg.\(^{211}\) In their combined report of these conferences, Schmidt and Sachse did not focus on the specifics of the speeches delivered by participants, but instead on the overall state of the party, workers' issues, and women's affairs.

While this report does mention the general fear of war in the American zone as a constant issue, it was more concerned with the status of the work of communist women in general. Of particular interest to these women was the fact that in this region there was no real party recognition of women's issues as important in their own right. As previously mentioned, the work of the KPD in the West was being totally swallowed up under the auspices of a sub-committee of the SPD. The reform socialists had incorporated a limited number of members of the KPD into their own organization, making them responsible for "workers' welfare."\(^{212}\) In their report, the authors suggest that if the SPD had truly been aware of the supra-party potential and intentions of these KPD operatives, they would likely not have allowed them to participate at all.\(^{213}\) While this is possible, it is also quite likely that the SPD knew of these intentions and decided instead to co-op them in order to be able to monitor and moderate their activities, focusing them toward their own ends. The SPD leadership cited American pressure and regulation as their reasoning for subordinating the KPD women but the local communists

\(^{211}\)Ibid., 165 (5).
\(^{212}\)Ibid., 163 (3). "Arbeiterwohlfart."
\(^{213}\)Ibid.
felt the real impetus for this was the desire of the SPD to leave the KPD women "out in
the cold."\textsuperscript{214} The active KPD membership in Wuerttemberg claimed that whenever they
actually came up with a good program, a special program for child nutrition, the SPD or
the CDU would preempt them by implementing a similar plan. In these examples,
surprisingly, the KPD blamed the other German parties in the area rather than the
Americans, or any other westerners for that matter, for foiling their attempts to gain a
larger base of support.

Ironically, the Americans would soon do nearly the same thing with regard to
women's programs: they would begin funding their own Women's Affairs section under
the Cultural Affairs and Education Branch of OMGUS. While this would not be a reality
for months after these conferences, one could certainly make an argument that the
Americans were only responding to a perceived threat to their own support by the
activities of these SED women. The KPD/SED certainly were the first in Germany to
recognize the political potential that a women's movement could have. Whether any of
these groups really capitalized upon this potential through the conference above is
another thing altogether.

Emma Sachse's report of an alleged protest which had taken place before the
meeting in Mannheim is possibly emblematic of the frustration that women's movements
everywhere in Germany must have felt to varying degrees. A supposedly spontaneous
protest occurred concerning the lack of potatoes in Mannheim. An unknown, but locally
large number of women marched from the market to the \textit{Bürgermeister} after a shortage of
several weeks. They demanded an explanation. The \textit{Bürgermeister} replied that he would

\textsuperscript{214}Ibid., "Jetzt geht die Sozialdemokratische Partei dazu ueber, die aktiven Frauen der KPD in der
prepare a response and return in 15 minutes. Instead of the Bürgermeister, in 15 minutes the women were greeted by a hastily gathered police force, which arrested the women. One of the women shouted at the police, calling them traitors, "Aren't you ashamed taking us away?" Later the police answered that they had not really thought about it, as it was no better at home for them, where their wives could cook no potatoes either.\textsuperscript{215}

Despite attempting to control the situation with police force, the KPD/SED reported an increase in theft after the incident.\textsuperscript{216}

In spite of the drama of this anecdote, the prime concern of KPD/SED women was not food shortages, but instead the fact that women were under-represented in the government and official party apparatus. The lack of influence of women, even within the KPD in the Stuttgart region is illustrated by the fact that women made up only 8 percent of the entire party membership in Württemberg. While the KPD report about the incident praised Erika Buchmann as being one of the stronger leaders among the KPD women of all zones, some of the local members were of the opinion that party power in the region had become a "family dynasty" due to the fact that her husband was the regional party chairman and their daughter was the leader of communist youth activities. This local jealousy may have kept the regional party from broadening its base of support in the opinion of some KPD members.\textsuperscript{217}

If the meetings in Württemberg-Baden were not as much of a success as declared in Frankfurt, they were still valuable as they had informed the KPD leadership of the Soviet zone of the level of support they might muster and of the type of problems faced

\textsuperscript{215}Ibid., 165 (5).
\textsuperscript{216}Ibid. Albeit, with no further proof, merely poignant rhetoric.
by women in the West. The gatherings in the region had been at least as large as the western sponsored programs at Bad Boll and Bad Pyrmont. Sachse and Schmidt reported that their meetings had attracted between 250 and 1500 persons, mostly based on the size of the lecture hall. Given these numbers, the KPD/SED had at least brought awareness of the potential of women in politics to a few thousand more active people.

Munich, July 1947

Despite being the largest state (Staat) in the American zone, Bavaria had only one women's conference, and it was the smallest of all of the conferences for which there is a record (110 delegates). While reportedly 15 percent of the KPD in Bavaria were women, nearly double that of Hessen or Wuerttemberg-Baden, their focus was less on political goals, and more on community service.218

The fact that a woman was a member of the Secretariat of the Communist Party in Bavaria must have heartening to the SED women. However, Frau Lissmann's greatest achievement in two years had been the winning of equal pay for women train conductors.219 While this was evidence of progress for women, by any measure, the fact that it came in so narrow a field is testimony to the difficulties women faced in making Germany into a more "modern" place for women to prosper.

The report of the Munich conference filed by Hilde Haberl marked the conference a success in more than just gathering information about Bavarian women. Also of interest was the fact that Bavarian women seemed to have a genuine interest in the

218Ibid., 166 (6).
219Ibid.
situation in the East zone and within the DFD. While Frau Haberl may not have been qualified to give definitive answers to questions on these larger topics, she was happy to refer these women to her higher headquarters for answers. Overall, the Munich conference was marked a mild success more for its positive mood and enthusiasm rather for the impact that it might have had. At least there had been no embarrassing moments, or rumors of in-fighting as there had been at some of the other conferences.

Conclusions from the DFD Conferences

If the hosts of each of these conferences (save Bad Boll) proclaimed their work to be “successful,” who could blame them? The fact that German women were participating in the process was a measure of success in itself. If none of the individual parties benefited too greatly from speeches, resolutions, and declarations of peace, it would seem German women did at least gain some knowledge of democracy at work. This was a stated goal of all parties, to include most of the military government officials. If this success was not readily apparent, it was due to the lack of any spectacular, tangible results and the perception of failure of each conference by the opposing viewpoints of non-host participants who felt slighted. The failure of all sides to universally recognize any of the women or parties present as a true leader is indicative of the spirit of discontent generated by the format and broad-natured content of the conferences. In general, women in the West felt that the socialists were disruptive to real progress, wanting only to advance their political agenda--namely communism. Meanwhile the socialists felt like they were being excluded altogether--intentionally so--in order to keep

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220Ibid.
the socialists quiet in order to allow the women from the West the platform they needed to be the mouthpiece of capitalism. There is merit to both sides of the argument.

It is unlikely that any format or content could have been planned to satisfy all of the women invited to these conferences. They had too little in common politically making for diverging goals and interests economically, socially and culturally. It seems that the only thing that they had in common is that they were German women. It is highly likely that these conferences would have had similar results if someone had attempted to organize a German men's organization for political purposes. (Indeed, such an organization seems foolish given the knowledge of Germany's fractured political parties before all of them were banned in 1933.) Though the organizers and attendees of all of the conferences were no doubt well-intentioned, with the goal of uniting German women to improve their lives, their agendas varied too greatly to make of them a united movement organized to accomplish any common set of goals be they socialist, democratic, or capitalist.

One of goals of the conference was achieved: German women began to become involved in political matters. The socialists had gotten this ball rolling, yet the results were not what they had intended. German women would begin participating in politics as candidates and voters for many diverse issues, not restricting themselves to the intended socialist agenda. For the historian this is of interest to inform of how German women became interested in politics after the Nazi period. For military commanders of occupations the lesson to be learned is that the results of an action may not coincide with the intention from the outset. That is to say, stirring a population to political activity may
have unintended results, to include stirring a population to action *against* the policies for which the occupiers campaign.

Beyond the Conferences

Despite the efforts of socialist women to proselytize their agenda throughout Germany, any gains they experienced from their work with regard to forming a permanent interest in a supra-party German women’s organization were temporary and overshadowed by the events of 1948. The German currency reform, followed by the Soviet blockading of ground routes into Berlin, in turn followed by the Berlin Airlift, must have made German’s outside of the Soviet zone of occupation realize that linking their fates with women in the East would be dangerous. Even Germans in the Soviet zone continued to doubt the nature of Soviet intentions.221

At the peak of the Berlin Airlift, tensions in the Soviet zone of occupation were so high, the SED (probably at the behest of Soviet observers) sponsored a series of “townhall-style” meetings between SED functionaries who had traveled to the Soviet Union, Soviet officers who could speak German, and everyday Germans from the Soviet zone. Hundreds of questions were either asked in public forum, or written and sent in anonymously. The program resulted in the publication of the official results of the sessions, a 73-page booklet costing 50 pfennig (25 cents) named “About the Russians, and About Us: Discussion of a Vital Topic.”222 The booklet begins with a 12-page diatribe concerning the righteous nature of Soviet socialism and how the western

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221 SAPMO DY 32 10085. *Über die Russen und über Uns: Diskussion über ein Brennendes Thema.* (Berlin: Verlag Kultur und Fortschritt im Auftrage der Gesellschaft zum Studium der Kultur der Sowjetunion, 1949). This set of town hall meeting minutes from gatherings of normal East German citizens voicing their concerns to Soviets who spoke German and their sympathizers reveals that many East Germans were dissatisfied with Soviet and SED rule.
democracies attempted to crush the fledgling republic in the Russian Civil War.\textsuperscript{223} The communist essay correctly portrayed President Truman as an enemy of the Soviet Union, even before the Cold War:

\begin{quote}
“Mister Truman, as a simple member of the American congress in 1941, as the war in the Soviet Union began said, ‘If the Russians win, we will have to help the Germans, if the Germans win, we will have to help the Russians. Until then, they can beat each other to death, the more the better.’”\textsuperscript{224}
\end{quote}

Even non-communist Germans must have found this offensive and indicative of the general lack of goodwill and the idea of fair play in the West.

This polemic against the West was followed by the questions of and the answers provided to the German population. Surprisingly, many very controversial questions were addressed. Some of the various issues included in the discussions held all over the Soviet zone were that of watches stolen by Soviet troops in 1945, a comparison of the living standards for workers in Russia and the West, and the reasons why a socialist nation needed such a large army.\textsuperscript{225} After the German speakers presented their answers to the written questions, the audience was allowed to ask questions, and they appear to have been fearless. One man even ventured to ask if the Soviet system was not also a dictatorship just as they portrayed the West to be. Another asked if the Russian had any culture. Yet another asked if the Soviets had an interest in a war.\textsuperscript{226} Unfortunately these more sensitive questions did not make it into the printed volume for public reading, and the only response recorded in the official report for these questions, and many of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{222} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 3-12.
\item \textsuperscript{224} Ibid., Bennedik report, 13. While it is unlikely that Truman said this verbatim, there was a sentiment in American politics during the initial stages of the German invasion of the Soviet Union that the two sides both were evil. The dual invasion of Poland by the Germans and the Soviets had not made the Soviets any Allies in the West.
\item \textsuperscript{225} Ibid., Ortsguppe Berichte, Bergen.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
other ones, is that “all questions were answered satisfactorily.” It is doubtful the answers were all considered “satisfactory” to the German doubters in the audience, rather they were answered satisfactorily for the SED and Russian representatives’ political purposes.

According to the reports there were women present at all of these meetings, but some women did send anonymous questions that reveal something about life for women in the Soviet zone. Of interest to this study:

“Why was the policy of separate schooling for boys and girls implemented? Why are Russians not allowed to marry German women? Why are Soviet women so reserved in dealing with German women?”

Again, unfortunately, these questions are given only cursory responses in writing, and the SED woman who answered the marriage question claimed to be “fairly certain” that there was no rule against marrying Germans, though she did say “it would not be surprising” if it were true. The Soviet soldier had gone from being allowed to have anything he wanted from German society in spring 1945 to being isolated from it. German women no longer seemed to fear the Soviet soldier as some were interested in marriage.

Those concerned with this type of problem were clearly in the minority as most of the questions were about East-West relations and POW’s. If the line of questioning about women’s issues plagued the majority of German women in the Soviet zone, the record does not reflect this. Instead, the socialists reported that everything was answered effectively and to the satisfaction of all concerned. This official picture seemed to be only superficial to at least some women, even in the Soviet zone.

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227 Ibid.
228 Ibid., Notes for the editor taken from several different meetings, Bennedik, Prenzlauer and Dammköhler.
If policies toward women in the Soviet zone seemed progressive to socialists and to some others, other occupation and SED policies made those only partially tempting. Recruiting for the DFD definitely suffered due to what some German women might have considered false advertising. On the one hand, it would seem that the Soviets were genuinely going to empower women, or to allow them to empower themselves to some extent. This was the platform of the DFD. On the other hand, the goals that they would be allowed to work for were not going to be German goals, or even the goals of women’s equality, but rather the goals of international socialism. The implications of this dichotomy are hard to measure as there is little evidence as to how many women actually joined the socialist cause. Clearly the SED looked to the KPD women of the western zones as their best source of allies, but these were almost automatic. What the DFD really needed to do was to convince women from the western SPD, CDU and smaller independent parties to join them. While the socialist DFD would have welcomed conversions from these women, the Realpolitik of the Cold War kept this possibility at a distance. Due to the Berlin Blockade and Airlift, almost all hope of a united front of German women was over. Certainly by late 1948 the DFD was no longer confident that it had any chance of becoming the matriarch of all German women across the occupation zonal boundaries. Their rhetoric had changed from optimistic recruiting in the spirit of comradery into prophecies of war to come, caused by the United States and its capitalist Allies. The nature of the DFD changed dramatically in this moment of history. All pretense of remaining apolitical was basically gone. While the DFD maintained its initial self-definition as the supra-party organization for German women, it was now openly socialist in orientation, support and in propaganda, where the West was always portrayed
as war-mongering neo-fascist capitalists who waited for the chance to destroy international socialism. This portrayal, while believable to some women in the Soviet zone of occupation, was not justified in the eyes of Germans from the western zones who had experienced some benefits from the occupation authorities there.

International Connections

The attempts to recruit German women from the western zones of occupation had been important to the DFD, but these were only part of the overall scheme for expanding the influence of the organization. The DFD also desired international recognition as the proponent for women’s issues in Germany. In order to advance this part of its agenda, the DFD began to nurture connections with women’s movements around the world, most notably with Soviet women, but also including American, British and French women’s organizations.

A limited number of examples of “original copies” of letters of the DFD to Soviet “Anti-fascist Women’s Committee’s” exist. The DFD began writing official letters to these Soviet women immediately after the founding of the DFD. Initially, the letters express the desire for comradery between the two groups, and the DFD women actually go as far as to offer that Soviet women are the only ones in the world who could understand the democratic intentions of the DFD. These letters reveal the attempts of the DFD to obtain help from Soviet women in everything from forming their own organization to ensuring good living conditions for German men in the Soviet prison camps. There is even evidence that the DFD accepted an invitation to send

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representatives to inspect an example camp. In general, the campaign to create friendly relations between German and Soviet women seems to have remained formal and of limited value, although there remained official contact even into the 1980’s.

While one might have expected the DFD to have attempted to establish relations with Soviet women due to political expediency, there is also evidence of contact with western women’s organizations. The pattern is that after initial friendly contact, if the western organization was socialist or communist, there might be further contact, but never was there close cooperation or coordination. Western groups were quick to offer help in vague terms in letters, and the German women in the Soviet zone were quick to send letters of thanks, but they did little more to foster strong ties between themselves and women from the West. A few examples bear this out.

In 1946, the British Council for German Democracy sent a greeting to the Central Women’s Committee in Berlin. While the letter promised that British women were interested in how women in Germany would help build a peaceful democracy, they offered little more than their advice and friendship. The women of the Central Women’s Committee answered that they would maintain contact with the British Council, but there is no further evidence of contact between them beyond the initial exchange of letters. Perhaps the German women were skeptical of what British women would want to do to

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230 Ibid., 01-02. The letters show that the German women were extremely concerned that conditions in the example camp inspected might not be the reality in most camps since letters from German POW’s were very rare and stories from released prisoners painted a much different picture than German women had witnessed.

231 Ibid., 10-11. The letters after 1950 seem to be formal greetings congratulating Soviet women on various important anniversaries such as the celebration of Soviet victory in the Second World War and so forth.

232 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/98 FBS 9121, 86-92. Letter from Margaret Lloyd et al. The letter listed many names of British women interested in helping the Central Women’s Committee. There is no evidence that the German women ever took advantage of this offer.
help, but more likely they were deterred by politics. The British women did not identify themselves as socialists, or even democrats. They simply remarked that they would be “observing your activity with sympathy.” The Central Women’s Committee responded that they were pleased to have the support of the British Council, and used the contact in their own newsletter to the general membership as evidence of their growing influence in the affairs of German women, but they did not keep records of any follow-up contacts with the British even after the founding of the DFD.

In 1948, the DFD established contact with French and American women. In the case of the French, the DFD worked through the French Communist Party. French communist women informed the DFD that they had “contributed to democracy and peace” by organizing a 100,000-woman protest in Paris in coordination with the annual International Women’s Day Conference. There is no evidence, however, of the DFD ever attempting to contact other more mainstream French women’s movements or organizations.

In the case of contact with American women’s organizations, the DFD seems also to have had a limited perspective. The first documented contact is a letter to the Congress of American Women. The letter was a simple statement of solidarity between the two groups, and an endorsement of Henry Wallace as a presidential

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233 Ibid., 87.
234 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/109 11-12. Foreign Correspondence. This protest may have been due to French women being excluded from attending DFD events. While this is the tone of the letter there is no direct evidence that French officials expressly prohibited French women from visiting the DFD, however, they were not noted as present at the Berlin Conference.
235 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/80 FBS 9122. Letter to the Congress of American Women. This group was on the US Attorney General’s List of Subversive Organizations (the McCarthy List of Nov 1950).
candidate. Further DFD letters to the Congress of American Women expressed the DFD’s concerns about the American involvement in the Korean War. The DFD must have thought that Congress of American Women might be able to influence an American pull-out. If this type of contact had any effect on the legitimacy of the DFD as the matriarch of German women’s organizations, it would only be recognized by those American organizations on the extreme left. Other American women’s groups, such as the League of Women Voters, worked to impact German women’s affairs in the American zone of occupation, but there is no evidence that the DFD ever attempted to contact them despite sharing some of the same goals.

It would seem that the DFD had either consciously decided only to make contact with socialist-leaning organizations, or it did not keep records of their dealings with mainstream western women. Another possibility is that the DFD was afraid to be seen consulting with non-socialist organizations, thus earning itself the suspicion of the SED, where women were having enough problems finding respect. The mail in all zones was subject to censorship until 1949 after all, and if the DFD were found to be placing gender politics above party politics, it could risk losing all they had gained. In this manner, party politics superceded the initial stated intentions of the DFD in creating a supra-party organization. By 1948, it became quite clear inside and outside of Germany that the DFD was not as advertised. Certainly this must have surprised almost no one, but it did hinder efforts to recruit from the western zones and to make international connections other than socialist/communist ones. One can only infer that the currency reform of the western

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236 Ibid. Wallace had been head of the Dept. Of Agriculture and was a vice-president under Roosevelt. He ran for President in 1948 on the Progressive Party ticket. After opposing Truman’s policies, he was vilified by McCarthy as well.
zones, followed closely by the Berlin Blockade and Airlift must have interrupted the plans of the DFD. Any hopes of creating a legitimate supra-party organization before these events died on the vine in this period of drought of goodwill. The DFD’s own actions and records after this date show that it had officially given up hope of doing this by 1948.

Accomplishments

While the elite of the DFD was working to become the political arm of all German women, the rank and file of the women’s committees, who became de facto members of the DFD, continued their work for women’s equality. In the process, they tackled many issues as varied as their success was. The success of the DFD in accomplishing its grandiose schemes was disappointing at the grand-strategic level. The socialists had failed to create an organization that would supercede all other German women's organizations. Still, German women had begun to become concerned with politics. If the result of this was not measurable in 1949, the effects of socialist women stirring women to political consciousness would affect German women in their future. The battle for women’s equality waged by the DFD added up to many tactical victories for German women in the Soviet zone of occupation. In an earlier portion of this chapter, it was mentioned that the women’s committees performed work in organizing the clearing of the streets and some limited social work. By the end of 1947, when the women’s committees were put under the direct jurisdiction of the DFD, they had accomplished much. German women in the Soviet zone experienced success in dealing with issues like child support, birth control, equal pay for equal work, and compensated

vacation days. A full recounting of every women’s issue addressed by the DFD would be impossible in this work. Instead, a few examples will have to suffice.

As early as September 1945 German women began to appear on Berlin radio to recruit more women to join the crews of women already working clearing the streets. “Women’s Radio Hour” became a kind of institution in Berlin, whereby representatives from the women from the committees would address women on current women’s issues and try to mobilize them for local elections and so forth. Other local radio broadcasts were less frequent, but were hailed as successful. Women were becoming noticed for holding positions of responsibility.238

Women were using their newly found positions of authority to advance the cause of women in any way that they could. Usually that meant by moving information from the masses, through the governing authorities, both German and Soviet, and then back to the women’s committees. The most immediate result of this use of information was the gradual recognition of women as equal partners in the work force. Women were initially regarded as temporary workers, ones that needed to be forced to work for a time until men could be used. After nearly a year of nearly all labor, heavy and otherwise, being performed by women, the women’s committees began demanding rights for their members.

In this case, the women’s committees functioned as if they were union representatives for the women workers, with the Soviets in the uncomfortable and ironic position of being the owners of the means of production. The women’s committees’ first success came in acquiring better working hours for the women who cleared the streets.
On 10 August 1946, the Soviet Military Administration (SMA) authorized German women to opt not to work at night. Women also acquired the right to 24 hours off if they were forced to start working a different shift. Finally, they were permitted special considerations if they were pregnant, or had children who were still in school. Overall, the women’s committees must have felt that their negotiations with the SMA were wildly successful in August of 1946, for only a year before, they had had no protection under the law whatsoever.

Even better things were soon to follow. If women were not recognized as equals in the party, they were pronounced to be equal as workers on 17 August 1946. That meant finally, for the first time in history, German women were required to be paid the same as a man was paid for the same job.

The women’s committees were shocked at their own success due to the fact that German women were still being paid on average about 75 percent of what a man made for the same work in all of the zones of occupation. For example, at a spinning and weaving mill in Bremen, in the British zone, the official rates of pay were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Rate of Pay for:</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% of Man’s Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14-18 years</td>
<td>RM 0.30</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 22</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The order of Field Marshal Sokolovskii, when seen in the light of this type of blatant discrimination makes it seem even that much more remarkable and valuable to women in

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239 DY 30 IV 2/17/26, FBS 9098, 0055. “Workers protection and accident prevention.”
the Soviet zone. The other zones would not experience the same legally mandated equal pay until the formation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. German women in the Soviet zone could be proud that they had gained something important, but their work was clearly not complete as women still would not receive the same ration card category as men, even if they performed the work of a man.242

It is likely that the success of the women’s committees in securing rights and benefits for women workers caused the subordination of the committees to the socialist DFD. Neither the Soviets nor the SED could afford to have a renegade group of workers filing legitimate complaints against a socialist governing authority. The more pliable and politicized DFD could diffuse the power of women workers and give the impression that this was part of the process of state-sponsored socialism. The feedback provided from the women’s committees was then a sanctioned part of the system, and not a challenge to it. This follows the pattern of the union of the KPD and SPD into the SED in 1946. In short, “if you can’t beat ‘em, force ‘em to join.”

In politics, the work of women in the Soviet zone was also a measured success. The DFD attempted to bring women to the polls to vote for the socialist agenda. In this, they were successful in some aspects and not so successful in others. Overall, the DFD failed to meet its own goals, but it did make a large number of women aware of politics. When the DFD took control of the women’s committees in November of 1947, it boasted a membership of over 242,000 women, a good number, but still not overwhelming (2.7

241 Ibid., 0015, 3 September 1946.
percent) in an area with over 9 million women.\textsuperscript{243} Still, by 1950 a full 25 percent (1.25 million) of the membership of the SED was female.\textsuperscript{244} The DFD could not take credit for the bulk of this increase as at any time 60-70 percent of DFD membership was without party affiliation.\textsuperscript{245} Perhaps the very idea of what the DFD was supposed to be, an apolitical organization, attracted those who were prone to avoid party politics. In this manner, the DFD’s own nature hindered its cause, but there were some gains despite this.

Even if the DFD was designed to be above politics, perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the women’s committees and the DFD was in focusing the effort of those women who did become politically active. While there is no way to determine how many women voted, it is clear that women were more likely to be elected to positions of authority in the Soviet zone of occupation. As evidence, it is worth restating that women composed 20.6 percent of the seats in the \textit{Landtagen}, or state assemblies in the Soviet zone.\textsuperscript{246} While this is not representative of women in the general population, the Soviet zone was clearly the most representative of women relative to the other zones.\textsuperscript{247}

At the local level, women had made gains as well. In the “Ostzone” women had fared similarly as they had in state elections:

\textsuperscript{243} SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/6, 0169. “\textit{Referat Weiterer},” However, by contrast the SPD had 175,000 women members in all of Germany in 1914, so over 200,000 in East Germany alone for the DFD was quite an accomplishment. Marie Stritt’s and Clara Zetkin’s Federation of German Women’s Associations had only about 70,000 members in 1907. For more on this see Werner Thönnesson, \textit{The Emancipation of Women: The Rise and Decline of the Women’s Movement in German Social Democracy, 1863-1933}, translated by Joris de Bres, (Frankfurt am Main: Pluto Press, 1973).

\textsuperscript{244} SAPMO DV 31 IV 2/17/7, 0072. “\textit{Weibliche Mitglieder Statistik}.”

\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., 0169.

\textsuperscript{246} SAPMO DY 30 IV 2/17/99 207. “\textit{Frauen in den Landtagen und Parliamenten},” March 1947. These were the highest bodies of political participation in which a German could participate before the founding of East and West Germany.

\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., in the British zone 7.8 percent were women, in the American zone 6 percent and there were none in the French zone.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Gov’t Positions</td>
<td>112,040</td>
<td>18,185</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Gov’t Positions</td>
<td>4,222</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landtag</strong></td>
<td>413</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>116,675</td>
<td>19,180</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District and City appointed positions 707 198 28.0

There were also 181 women mayors in the Soviet zone and 656 women acting as state lawyers or judges. While these numbers seem to indicate that women were making real strides in becoming represented in proportion to their demographic dominance, that never became a reality. Out of 575 major urban areas, only 178 (31 percent) had female mayors (3 came from Berlin which is not included in the total of 575). This would be the highest percentage of women mayors that this part of Germany would ever see.  

Politics aside, some of the most important work of the DFD and other German women affiliated with it, were simple acts of social service that occupation and German civil authorities were either unwilling or unable to perform. The DFD took up the cause of informing the world of the situations of foreign children in Germany who were kidnapped from occupied territories during the Second World War. The DFD took an interest in purging the ideas of Nazism from cultural instruction. They even got involved in distributing “seed” potatoes. These regional DFD projects were very timely and important for a given period of time, but they were still part of the overall political maneuvers of the DFD. The organization needed more members in order to be important to the SED, and in order to gain members it had to be seen and heard.

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248 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/9, “Anteil der Frauen als Bürgermeister.” By 1960 the number in the Soviet zone would be down to 35, or 6 percent.

249 SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/6, 0167-0177, “Referat Weiterer.”
While there were certainly benefits for German women, and men, from these activities, often the local chapters, former women’s committees, fought an untold number of smaller battles that made life better. If the popularization of the DFD helped local membership increase, then it might be here that one will find the most immeasurable source of success for German women in the Soviet zone.

A few examples will show how the women’s committees functioned like “a thousand points of light.” In Blankenfelde, German women successfully prevented a local vinegar factory from taking over the local Schloss (mansion, or palace) and instead set it up as a makeshift school. The local DFD chapter in Wurzbach, Thüringen collected 10,000 Reichsmarks for the purpose of making 25 beds for “resettlers.” Countless other examples in a similar vein exist for local chapters, which did the work of collecting the daily food for orphanages, nursing homes, hospitals and almost anyone who needed it.

If women were not represented in politics in numbers proportional to the population at large, they were certainly over-represented in charity work. While men were not totally absent from this work, the women’s committees did most of the organizing, planning and distribution associated with food, clothing and even medicine. Yet the women’s committees were largely spontaneous associations of local adults, who happened to be women in the age groups where men were now absent. The committees predated the DFD. The DFD became the political voice for a large number of local groups, which were not necessarily interested in politics. No matter how hard the DFD

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250 Ibid., 0177.
251 Ibid. The “resettlers” were probably those who came from, Silesia, now part of Poland. 10,000 RM was far too much for the purposed 25 beds, so the surplus was used for further social purposes.
tried to get these women involved in politics, the women in the committees generally continued to work, probably aware of the politics around them, but unwilling or unable to put aside their work in order to participate as politicians. German women went to work in greater numbers after the war, but they still resisted becoming politically active.

If these German women had common reasons for not participating in the political process by the simple act of voting, they are not recorded. One might guess that the sentiments of German women in other zones might replicate what women in the Soviet zone might have felt—they had all shared a common experience, if the occupiers and their politics were different, the results on the psyche of the German woman voter may have been similar. Rural women in the western zones lamented to some of the “surveyors” from the Soviet zone that they had “only known Hitler’s type of politics for 12 years.” In the wake of what had happened around them, many German women were totally apolitical and focused first on feeding their family, then on the community. With the demands placed upon them at these two levels alone, there was just not room in the lives of many German women for party politics. Some women went further stating that, “These days, one doesn’t dare open one’s mouth. When one hears what is going on in other zones...one can quickly find oneself in a concentration camp.” There is evidence in all zones that one could indeed find oneself in prison camps for political views, and obviously some Germans did not want to take their chances at picking the right party to support. Instead, many of them supported local social work, remained apolitical, and watched the DFD take credit for their work.

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Results

German women in the Soviet zone saw some limited increase in political activity along with countless success stories in organizing general relief efforts at the local level. These successes were tangible results that occupation authorities could appreciate and understand. Two other results of women’s activities are germane to understanding the importance of the women in the Soviet zone. One of these results clearly follows from the work of the DFD and was a visible victory for women in the Soviet zone. The other result of the work of women in the Soviet zone of occupation is subtler, even complex, and arguably the result of some other factors outside the scope of this work.

The most tangible victory for German women in the Soviet zone of occupation was the enacting of the 1950 “Law for the Promotion of the Woman.” This law codified the gains German women had made in the Soviet zone of occupation such as “equal pay for equal work,” the right to health insurance, and the right to work in any profession for which they were qualified. In short, the 1950 law made certain that with the founding of the German Democratic Republic (GDR, East Germany), the woman would still remain equal under the law with men. The law did not stop there, however. The law stated formally that “It is desirable to bring the number of women mayors, city administrators, county government officials, and state government representatives into correct proportions with the population of women in the GDR.” In order to make this happen, the DDR would promote quotas of women in the state civil service academy “Walter Ulbricht.” This law was clearly a victory for German women, but more

\[253\text{ Ibid.}\]
\[254\text{ SAPMO DY 31 2/17/29, 0072-0081. “Gesetz zur Förderung der Frau vom 20 Mai 1950.”}\]
\[255\text{ Ibid.}\]
specifically for the DFD, which is listed by name in the 13th article as one of the forces behind the decision to implement it. Here was written proof in the law of the land that the DFD had made progress for women in the GDR.

The DFD was interested in politicizing German women, but only in a socialist way. In traveling to and speaking at women’s conferences in the western zones of occupation, members of the DFD had accomplished part of their objective: they identified sources of support and they drew into politics some women who might not have otherwise become active. However, many of the western women who came in contact with the rhetoric of the socialist women from the East were drawn to action for the purpose of opposing socialism, not joining it. In this way, the socialist women can receive partial credit for stirring women to action, but with an unintended twist on their intentions. After the conferences in the western zones had failed to identify leadership for a joint venture of women from all zones and certainly by 1948, the DFD no longer considered women in the western zones a viable source for recruiting into what had become a socialist/communist oriented organization. The DFD would still maintain some contacts with women in the western zones, but they generally restricted their activities to the Soviet zone.

If the DFD was successful in garnering recognition for German women as politically useful Cold War Allies in the Soviet zone, and eventually the GDR, they were also indirectly successful in doing the same thing for German women throughout the other zones, but for the other side. Shortly after the International Women’s Day Conference in Berlin in 1947, the occupation authorities in the British and American zones became aware of the need to offer some sort of program for German women in
politics. There followed a flurry of activity in the American zone whereby the Office of Military Government for Germany (United States zone) (OMGUS), set up a Women’s Affairs Branch under the Bureau of Culture and Education. The British selected some women for “democratic” training in England, and allowed some of these to participate in a limited way in organizing German women in the British zone of occupation. The French changed little in their policy, but their zone was smaller and furthest from the Soviet zone.

While it would be impossible to draw a direct connection between the activities of German women from the Soviet zone in the above story forming the DFD and the decisions of western policymakers, it would be more than coincidence if German women in the American and British zones began to experience the benefit of Allied attention immediately after their own campaign of proselytizing in the West and recruiting communist and socialist women. In fact, the only thing missing to prove that this occurred as a result of DFD activity is a confession from the authorities that this is what made them act. No such confession exists, but the timing of the interest of British and American occupation authorities makes it rather obvious that they were influenced by the perceived threat of increased communist activity and support amongst the German women in their zone.

One is reminded of the antics of the American staff officers in the Cold War spoof, Dr. Strangelove. Several officers, after having discovered that the Soviets had prepared several mineshafts as nuclear shelters, become convinced that the US suffered from a “mineshaft gap.” The analogy is that the Americans (and the British to a certain degree) must have been worried that the Soviets were going to gain an advantage in the
Cold War by garnering the support of the German women in their zone. They reacted by also trying to get German women to support their own policies.

One can still measure the results of all this activity in getting women to be politically active today. If one can accept that the percentage of national political offices held by women as an accurate measure of how politically active and equal women are in a given country, Germany ranks at the top of all of the Western-style democracies with populations larger than 50 million. The attempt at centralization made by women in the Soviet zone contrasts with the emphasis on localism in the British zone. I will address the implications further in the overall conclusions from the activity in all of the zones of occupation.

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256 See Caroline Lambert, “French Women in Politics: The Long Road to Parity,” *US-French Analysis*, (The Brookings Institution, 2001) and the Interparliamentary Union. Available at the following websites http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/fp/cusf/analysis/women.htm and www.ipu.org. German women hold roughly 30 percent of the seats in the Bundestag. The Nordic nations of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland report 38.9 percent of both upper and lower house seats to be held by women as of June, 2002.
CHAPTER 5

THE BRITISH ZONE

If Soviet and German communists were single-mindedly focused upon the spread of scientific socialism in the post-war world through a centralized system, the British focused on education and the spread of capitalism through a decentralized bottom-up approach. In these and other ways the British zone of occupation in 1945 provides an excellent contrast with the Soviet zone. Geographically, the zones existed side by side in the northern half of Germany and were the only two zones to have direct access to the sea. The two zones approximated one another in size, but here the comparison ends and the contrast begins.

The British zone included the northern half of Germany from Denmark to Hesse, and from the Benelux borders in the West to the border with the Soviet zone in the East. The Americans did control the enclaves of Bremen and the port of Bremerhaven within the British zone, however. In all, the British zone was the second smallest in size of all zones at 95,312 km² but had the highest population of all with nearly 23 million inhabitants. This led to a population density of over 240 persons per square kilometer in the British zone. The Soviet zone though larger at 108,000 km², only had 17 million inhabitants resulting in a population density of roughly 157 persons per square kilometer. For a clearer picture of what this meant, the British zone was roughly double the size of the French zone, but with four times the population. By comparison, the American zone
was the largest zone, at 110,075 km², but with only 16 million inhabitants, about two-thirds the number of Germans in the British zone.\(^{257}\)

The higher population density in the British zone presented a particular set of problems for the British initially, especially with respect to feeding the population after a spring with a greatly reduced agricultural activity. The fact that much of German industry was in the British zone of occupation did little to offset the initial disadvantage of more mouths to feed. The Germans in the British zone of occupation would have been better served by more farmland as in the American and Soviet zones. Instead of food, the British had landed control of German steel. Nearly 80 percent of all German crude steel was produced in the Ruhr, the so-called “weapons forge of the Reich.”\(^{258}\) Predictably, the British developed a pre-occupation with economic policy, and how it would affect the Germans and more importantly the British economy.

The British were focused on two conflicting aims—security of Europe against a regenerated Germany and the possible trade gains from a resurgent German economy. The British focused firmly on the latter, as the other Allies were overzealous in ensuring the former. In other words, while the British were concerned with security and understood this to mean keeping Germany from re-arming, they wanted the German economy to flourish for the benefit of their own. Critics of this dual policy argued that both could not be accomplished, and that one would have to take precedence. Those who

\(^{257}\) Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv in Zehlendorf, Berlin (SAPMO), DY 31 IV 2/17/99 Reports on the “Westzonen.” The American zone population density was 145 person/km² and the French zone was the smallest zone by far, 42,000 km² and 6 million inhabitants (143 persons/km²). From Centre des Archives de l’Occupation Française en Allemagne et en Autriche, (Colmar)Anne Lemetayer, unpublished maitrise “La Politique Française d’Occupation en Allemagne a Travers la Revue Des Troupes Françaises en Allemagne, 1945-1949, 13.

sided with the liberal economics of Keynes understood that an economic recovery for
Germany would best help avoid a repeat of the debacle after the last war.  

    British logic flowed from a basic instinct for prosperity. The British government
realized that for its own economy to recover, Europe would need a general recovery.
Europe’s recovery was inexorably tied to German coal and steel. For these resources to
be used effectively, Germany would need to recover from the war to a basic minimum
level to be determined later, but certainly an economic depression was to be avoided at all
costs. Another parallel idea was that Germany would need to recover enough to support
itself in the post-war world. The victors should not be caught in the moral quandary of
“in effect paying reparations to Germany” in any form, including life-sustaining
necessities, for any longer than absolutely necessary. The British and the Americans
had already been feeding local populations from the time they had begun their
occupation. This was clearly only a temporary solution to a much more long-term
problem. The British envisioned a united Germany that was economically viable, but not
threatening. In fact, if Germany recovered, and behaved well enough, it might even
provide enough consumers to help propel a general European recovery, of which the
British would want to be a part.

    Thus, Germany was not looked upon solely as a defeated political and military
enemy who could be reformed with the insertion of a new political elite, as the Soviets
had envisioned. The British were more interested in a “supply and demand” capitalist

259 John Maynard Keynes published a sharp critique of the Treaty of Versailles in 1921 in which
he predicted how reparations would ruin the world economy. They did, during the Great Depression the
Germans defaulted on their reparations after a long period of hyperinflation and despite being bailed out by
American loan schemes such as the Dawes Plan, the world economy suffered greatly.
world than in a conflict of ideologies. On the supply side, they concerned themselves with British and German production capabilities. The occupation authorities had agreed to dismantle German machines and send them to the nations, which were approved to receive reparations. Since most of the steel in Germany was produced in the British-occupied Ruhr area, it made sense then that the British had an advantage in controlling a potential vital resource and source of tension between the occupying powers.\textsuperscript{261}

On the demand side of the capitalist equation, the British eventually would have to concede that the Germans were to be valued as potential customers and consumers of British goods. To this end, they needed the German economy to recover beyond the bare minimum of subsistence levels. The British not only wanted the Germans to recover so that British pounds would cease to be spent sustaining the Germans, they envisioned a German economy, if not dependent upon Britain, at least as a tributary in the flow of British wealth. For this magnitude of a German recovery, the British would need the German citizens to believe in capitalism. The British believed a precondition to capitalism to be a stable two-party democracy. German unity would take a backseat to this British policy. This, combined with the British determination to maintain their alliance with the United States, which though not as determined to link the German economy to a European recovery initially, would eventually come around to the idea as evidenced by implementation of the Marshall Plan.

\textsuperscript{260} Public Records Office of the United Kingdom, Kew Gardens, London (PRO) FO 942/549 Control Commission for Germany, Occupation Policy, British Zone of Germany, 29 April 1946.  
General Administration

In order to fully understand the British occupation it is first critical to understand the organizational peculiarities of their military government and its evolution. Whereas the Soviets had a very simple chain of command to execute Stalin’s policies with his hand-picked military governor, communist party representatives and the German KPD/SPD, then the SED after February 1946, the British had a different perspective on Germany. The occupation had fallen under military auspices, so initially the military government in the British zone, the Control Commission for Germany (CCG), reported to the War Office. Gradually it began to take some orders from the Foreign Office. During the transition to peace, Parliament realized the need for a civilian agency dedicated strictly to the governing of conquered enemies. Due to the potential for conflict between the two offices, War and Foreign, Parliament created the Control Office for Germany and Austria (COGA) in October 1945. COGA ran policy in London and the CCG executed that policy in Germany. The CCG was headed by the Military Governor, first Field Marshall Montgomery (1945), then Marshall of the Royal Air Force Sir W. Sholto Douglas (1946-1947), and for the rest of the occupation (mid-1947-1949) General Brian H. Robertson. The CCG reported to the COGA, which was led by a junior Member of Parliament (MP), Labour Party Representative, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, John B. Hynd. Due to the apparent lack of emphasis on Germany as evidenced by the assignment of young Mr. Hynd to the position of chief, the COGA was often referred to as the “Hyndquarters” for Germany.\footnote{Ian Turner, ed. *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany*, (New York: Berg, 1989), 360.}

and took all of the best machines for themselves, but eventually supported and enforced the “multi-lateral deliveries” issue pushed by the Soviets, and resisted by the Americans.
COGA, one can gather that the British military occupation of Germany was somehow less essential to the British government than the Soviet governing apparatus in Germany was to Stalin and his Soviet government. Perhaps the democratic nature of the British government demanded a military government that had more checks and balances than the totalitarian Soviet government. Whatever the reasons for the British method of governing and prioritizing, their methods allowed for more variety of civilian influence and better prepared the British to concentrate on education and economic issues, which the British prioritized most highly, when the situation allowed. This probably had something to do with British colonial tradition. The British had a long history of colonial policies from which to draw inferences as to how a foreign population would react to a British presence.

The COGA representatives in London, despite relegation to the role of stepchildren, naturally took their jobs very seriously and made the best of a bad situation. A more senior MP, Sir Gilmour Jenkins, did not envy Mr. Hynd’s “responsibility for this ‘Alice in Wonderland’ state of affairs for the The Times described as ‘this strange liability of the victor for the vanquished.’”263 His main reason for pitying Mr. Hynd was not any lack of sincerity of Parliament in its efforts to establish the rule of law in Germany, but rather the financial restrictions on the COGA and the CCG. Financial hardship had made the British reluctant occupiers. Unlike the Soviets and the French, who felt the urgent desire for revenge upon the Germans in retribution for the invasion and occupation of their home territories, the British felt compelled to occupy Germany as a duty to be

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263 PRO FO 942/549 Control Commission for Germany, Occupation Policy, British Zone of Germany, 6 May 1946.
fulfilled. The invasion and occupation of Germany was like the taming of a recalcitrant colonial holding that they no longer wished to control.

The Labour Party was divesting the Empire of its “holdings” exactly as this time. Just as the Indians were establishing their own independence from the Empire, the British were gaining responsibility for a new territory. Against this backdrop, the British wanted to go into Germany, institute policies that would make Germany a ‘favourable’ trading partner, in the process the British wanted the Germans to internalize democratic values, and then the British wanted to leave. In fact, some MP’s wanted to limit British involvement as early as one year after the occupation began when a group of them proposed to “offer Denmark and the Dutch to look after the administration in particular regions,” presumably along their borders.264

Other divergent ideas for Germany’s future existed. Some reactionary British citizens wanted to disarm and even dismember Germany, but in general there was less of a cry for this type of treatment of the Germans in Great Britain than there was from the Soviets, the French, or even the Americans. Eventually the occupation of northwestern portion of Germany by the British continued with the basic goals of disarming, democratizing, reeducating and denazifying the Germans. The implementation of occupation policy through the leadership of Mr. Hynd, the COGA and the CCG bears this out.265 While women did not play a vital role in the minds of British occupation planners, the fact that they were a demographic majority made German women a segment of the population that could not be ignored.

264 Ibid.
265 For a full bibliography on the activities of the COGA and the CCG and British policy in general, see chapter 12 of Ian Turner, ed. Reconstruction in Post-War Germany, (New York: Berg, 1989).
The most important lesson for military commanders of occupation forces must be that the failure to begin the occupation with a single unified policy toward women nearly caused the loss of initiative in the development of German women’s affairs. Luckily for the British and German women in the British zone of occupation (especially those who were not socialist) the British had competent individuals making decisions and interpreting occupation policy at the local level. Civilians, not military officers, made most of the major decisions in question. After the International Women’s Conference in Berlin in March, 1947, the British military and the civilians in charge of education in the British zone worked together to convince the British government agencies in London that German women were important enough to warrant centralized schooling. Without the initiatives of British civilians in the British occupation government, the British occupation of Germany might have looked more like the American version, and would have been had to react even more than it did to Soviet initiatives such as the DFD. The second lesson to be learned from the British zone of occupation for military commanders would be that civilians provide an important source of ingenuity for occupation planning, reeducation, and women’s affairs. The civilians working in local military government made the difference for the success of the British occupation with regard to German women.

German Women in the British Zone

The British government and its armed forces did not recognize the demographic dominance of women as a problem worth noting until the occupation was well underway. Nowhere in the planning for occupation of Austria and Germany, for which the British planned simultaneously and not separately, did any official recognize this fact in writing
in any meaningful way that influenced the initial stages of the occupation. The British simply made no preparation for the problem. Despite this fact, eventually the British developed one of the most comprehensive programs for education and labor for German women. However, they did so not out of a desire to address a feminist agenda, nor to assert female equality. The British implemented their policies toward German women with one goal in mind: in order for the Germans to be peaceful democratic trading partners, the population would need to be educated and convinced of the values of capitalism. Because women dominated the demographics of Germany, logic dictated that German women be included in any plan to implement democratic capitalism.

Whereas in the Soviet zone, the occupiers valued German women for their ability to invigorate socialist ideology, in the British zone women were only valued for ideological purposes insofar as the ideology was capitalist economics—if capitalism were to reign, women would be critical to making it happen. One would be going too far to say that immediately following the war the British consciously focused all policies toward German women with this in mind, for the British experienced a relatively haphazard and gradual recognition of the influence German women could have with regard to economics. Upon recognition of the problem the British focused their efforts on the education of German women of all parties rather than on one particular political persuasion. The education policies of the British in the summer of 1945 focused on the economics of the problem and transformed this to a political concern in 1947.

The politics of German women finally became an issue worthy of British attention for three main reasons. First, in 1946 the British made the decision to allow German
women in the British zone to organize into local voluntary organizations. These organizations meant structure and agreeing to one particular structure would mean debate. Since the British women in charge of putting together German women’s organizations were directed not to take charge, but merely to facilitate and advise, the German women within these organizations would need leadership. This meant a discussion of how best to select the leaders and eventually elections. Second, the British education system for Germans grew from a general reform of German curricula toward a totally revamped German education system. This included adult education, which led to an ever-increasing focus on women’s education because they were the majority of adults. The education system generated a process of change from the bottom-up. The local British authorities suggested changes to their higher headquarters, which coordinated implementation. The higher headquarters rarely dictated change from the top-down. Lastly, the visits of DFD women from the Soviet zone made the British feel as if they were obliged to facilitate further education on the topic of politics. In 1947, after the DFD visits, the COGA did initiate change from the top-down at the suggestion of local and regional British policymakers, who took many of the more thoughtful suggestions of Germans. The 1947 institution of a system of feedback from the Germans through CCG officials to COGA made for a responsive self-organizing system that demonstrated the flexibility of the British occupiers.

Along the way to this end result the British attempted first to restrict women’s education to non-political issues at the local level. After the DFD conferences in 1947, the British made a conscious decision to bring a selected group of German women to England and educate them regarding democracy and public life. After a fairly successful
program where German women were visiting England for the purpose of education, the British would then get the idea that German women might be a suitable source of labor in Great Britain, where industry was suffering. Several issues concerning the status of women highlight a period of change in the way the British government treated the Germans, women and immigrants.

The Initial Situation in 1945

German women in the British zone of occupation faced a greatly different situation at the end of the war than the women in the Soviet zone. Much of this had to do with how the war had been fought and how it ended. While there had been bloody fighting in the British zone, such as at Aachen on the western border, the Americans had been the troops that had done most of this fighting. As a result most of the damage done by the British in the British zone had been inflicted by from strategic bombing rather than by ground action. In fact British troops had only entered Germany in the final weeks of the war. The Germans in the British zone had survived the British firebombing of Hamburg in 1943 and other cities in the British zone. However, the widespread destruction by the Red Army and the brutal treatment of the German civilian population in the ground war in East Prussia and near Berlin had no parallel in the British zone. The occurrence of rape and pillage, widespread in the Soviet zone, were less frequently reported in the British zone. Most Germans believed that the British occupation forces behaved the most “civilized.” The Germans initially even rated the British as friendlier and less prone to violence than the American occupation forces. However, British forces
were roughly 50 percent less likely to fraternize with the German civilian population.267

That is to say the initial British occupation was more orderly and responsible than the
Soviet occupation of the East had been. If German women in the British zone were not
treated as brutally as they had been in the Soviet zone, they also were not initially greeted
with amount of attention that they were in the Soviet zone. Though women were
certainly in the streets cleaning up rubble and helping the injured, there would be no anti-
fascist women’s committees in the Soviet style. The British idea of how to help German
women was less focused on attempting to get them to identify with a particular party.

An important part of the equation for this study is the fact that again women were
the majority of the population in the British zone of occupation consisting of 12.4 million
of the 22.8 million Germans there (54.4 percent).268 This is not as drastic a difference in
gender demographics as the Soviet, or any other zone. However, it was still enough to
have an impact on British policy fairly early in the occupation period. Predictably, the
focus of the British was different in interpreting the importance of the fact that women
outnumbered men.

Census and Employment Statistics: Detmold 1945

When British troops entered Germany territory and began to assess the conditions
of the population they quickly discovered that women were the majority of the population
locally. The unit records for most of the British Civil Affairs teams that traveled with
combat troops have not survived the process of cataloguing. Some have, but
unfortunately no city or county (Landkreis) had all of its records survive intact.

House, 1946), 76, and John Willoughby, Remaking the Conquering Heroes: The Postwar American
Occupation of Germany, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 33-34.
Therefore, complete statistics for any region in the British zone of occupation are impossible to reconstruct (but strangely enough some overall zonal statistics have managed to survive). The statistic that 23 million Germans lived in the British zone is of little help in understanding the regional and local situation even with a general breakdown of employment and gender statistics. Unfortunately, Civil Affairs detachments, renamed Military Government (MilGov) detachments once established in Germany, also kept haphazard records for any given town. Part of the problem was that in the confusion of the initial occupation (the first 6 months), MilGov detachments rarely stayed in the town where their sponsor unit ended the war. They moved several times, and some took their records with them, while others left them for the new detachment, which might then in turn take those records with them on subsequent moves.\(^{269}\) All in all the standardization of records was poor, and many of them did not survive at all. Still, it is possible to get a general idea of the situation by using what limited information is available.

For this purpose I have chosen to focus on the area just southwest of Hannover. The area of Detmold, Schaumburg and Lippe forms a triangle and includes a generic cross-section of the territory in the British zone. This area is not technically in the Ruhr region, but there is substantial industry. The area is bounded by three autobahns but there is still enough countryside and farmland here for this area to be called mostly rural. The 121st Mil Gov Detachment left Belgium on 5 April 1945 and arrived in Detmold on 8 April. They noted that the most pressing problem was the drunkenness and looting of the

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\(^{268}\) SAPMO DY 31 IV 2/17/99 Reports on the “Westzonen.”

\(^{269}\) PRO WO171/7919 Detmold War Diaries 121 Mil Gov Det. April-October 1945.
displaced persons in the area.270 Next in order of priority were the sources of water and electricity, repaired with British help on 9 April. With Hitler still alive, the war still raging, the British were already working to restore order in the territory that they had occupied. There were few reported problems between Germans and British soldiers at this early stage. However, although order was reported to be “generally good,” on April 11 a German woman reported that she had been raped “by 2 negro soldiers.”271 The resolution of these accusations was turned over to the unit commander to investigate and punish the soldiers. The British were then not immune to having to deal with accusations of atrocities committed by their troops. But the exception proves the rule that at least the British took the conduct of their soldiers serious enough to document it. In addition, the fact that Mil Gov noted the incident makes a strong case that if there were a plethora of acts of violence by British soldiers against civilians, the British in Detmold would have noted them as well. Instead, other isolated acts committed by individuals did occur, but there is no evidence of widespread misconduct by British troops despite the opportunity.

The behavior of the British solider was not the focus of MilGov detachments: their interactions with German civilians were. After 1946, and for most of the rest of the occupation period, the number of British troops numbered fewer than 140,000 for the entire zone. This is less than 2 soldiers per km². About half of the troops were combat troops and spent most of their time either on sentry duty, or training for the possibility of armed conflict. Most of the other troops were support--engineers, supply and transportation personnel--for the combat troops. All of these troops were bound under

270 PRO WO171/7919 Detmold War Diaries 121 Mil Gov Det. April-October 1945, 8 April report. There were DP’s from Poland, Yugoslavia, Italy, France, Russia, Belgium, Serbia, Ukraine, Holland and Romania.
the non-fraternization order of General Eisenhower from September 1944. The order forbade British soldiers to consort with Germans on any matter outside immediate government business.272 The order encouraged politeness, but discouraged anything further. Until July 1945, British troops were not allowed to share a drink or dance with German women. Nearly all interactions between the British military and German officials happened through MilGov detachments.

The Detmold MilGov detachment kept detailed records of what they thought to be notable in their new domain with respect to British-German relations, but they did so with an eye for what would potentially affect the future of the occupation. They certainly had less time for making official histories considering the magnitude of the problems confronting them, considering that the local population was normally about 30,000 and now there were 7,000 additional displaced persons known to be living in the city, and one-third of them were Russian. In the first two weeks of occupation, the Detmold detachment “discovered” 20,000 more displace persons for whom they would be responsible in the immediate vicinity. A full 10,000 of these DP’s were in the Detmold prison camp system living on starvation rations. Very few resources were available to the occupiers, who attempted to forage for what they could find to help the citizens of Detmold. In fact the only “valuable resource” reported to be found in the area, if it could be called useful at all at this time, was a “large number of vacuum cleaners found in the Detmold airstrip barracks.”273 If the British were going to help the Germans in the Detmold area, they would have to support them with British-supplied goods. These

272 PRO WO 32/11161 Non-fraternisation orders and newspaper commentary.
would be hard to obtain due to the urgency of supplies for British troops in the area, who were rounding up large numbers of surrendering German soldiers. The lack of food created an environment of theft among the civilian population. The British commanders were forced to deal with scores of German women who were stealing food for the survival of their families. Most of the courts martial for these offenders resulted in a fine of 100-200RM, or failing payment a month in the prison camp system. Despite the lack of food, health improved and MilGov reported that confidence in the local economy was gradually returning. As evidence, the Detmold detachment reported that local bank deposits outpaced withdrawals at a rate of four to one. At least the Germans now believed that the British were not going to threaten their cash savings.

By the end of May 1945, the Detmold detachment had established the rule of law and could begin assessing the situation in more detail. They requisitioned the local newspaper offices, party buildings, and the Hitler Youth hostel in Detmold. They used these offices for their headquarters and as offices for “hired collaborators (11 Germans) and (19) others,” a total of 30 English speaking Germans and DP’s. One of the next orders of business was to address the alleged problem of venereal diseases suspected to be a major problem in Detmold. Fortunately, the situation turned out to be “not abnormal, and no action” was required. Only 207 women of over 30,000 registered either had VD or reported having had a case in the last two years.

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274 Ibid.
275 PRO WO171/7919 Detmold War Diaries 121 Military Government Detachment, 19 April 1945 report, 417,000 RM deposited, 102,000 RM withdrawn.
276 PRO WO171/7919 Detmold War Diaries 121 Military Government Detachment, 29 April 1945 reports. It is unlikely that over 30,000 women were tested.
On 28 May 1945, Colonel C.R. Horley replaced the commander of the Detmold detachment, Lieutenant Colonel F.W. Shepherd. This marked the true transition from a “wartime” mindset to a peacetime administration of government. The change of command for Detmold was only a small part of a general reorganization. A Canadian unit relieved the British combat troops of their responsibilities in Detmold so that they could occupy more towns in the area. Several new MilGov detachments were attached to Colonel Horley’s command. The most important result of this reorganization was that more territory now came under his command. Colonel Horley moved the veteran Detmold detachment to Schaumburg-Lippe but remained with a new Mil Gov detachment in Detmold where he commanded a total of four separate communities. He immediately began to focus on rearranging the civil affairs of his new domain. Among other things, he ordered a more complete census and began to dismiss local educators who were reportedly sympathetic to the old regime.\textsuperscript{277} Of the 132 teachers, 33 were dismissed.

The 15 June 1945 census results showed a total population of 55,500 persons in Schaumburg-Lippe, of which 33,200 were women (59.8 %). Of these women, 23,200 (67 %) were reported as unemployed, though only 2,900 (12.5 %) unemployed men were reported. The British reported that the startlingly high numbers for unemployed German women included “married women who because of home duties are not available for general labour.”\textsuperscript{278} Clearly the wartime policies of the Nazis had not helped German

\textsuperscript{277} PRO WO171/7919 Detmold War Diaries 121 Military Government Detachment, May-June 1945 reports.
\textsuperscript{278} PRO WO171/7919 Detmold War Diaries 121 Military Government Detachment, May-July 1945 reports.
women to enter the public sphere on equal footing, and the British explained away the reasons for this with their own prejudice.

These statistics alerted the British to the possibility of using women as a source of labor and they began to do so immediately. A new census for July 1945 showed that the disparity between women and men was even greater than initially reported:

27 July Census and Employment Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>133,086 total</td>
<td>110,717 total (83.2 %)</td>
<td>22,369 total (16.8 %)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lippe</td>
<td>Men 29212</td>
<td>Women 69845</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schaumburg</td>
<td>Men 24212</td>
<td>Women 63845</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>41809</td>
<td>21432</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|            |          |            |            |
| Percentages| (31.4 %) | (68.6 %)   |            |
|            | (30.6 %) | (69.4 %)   |            |
|            | (35.5 %) | (64.5 %)   |            |

Women were 68.6 percent of the total population and 69.4 percent of the working population in Schaumburg-Lippe. They also made up 64.5 percent of the unemployed population. Though unemployment at 16.8 percent was not particularly good, it reflects a greatly improved situation over what had been over 50 percent only in June. A similar situation is reported to have existed in other detachment areas, with numbers fluctuating over time and space, but with similar proportions.

While the focus was definitely on putting people back to work, the British did support an initiative to provide public assistance to those families where no one could work. In those instances, the man would receive 29 RM while his wife and children were authorized 22 RM each, 15 RM for those under 16 years of age. This clearly created a situation where the British were stating plainly that men were more valuable than women,

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280 Ibid., 15 June 1945 report.
but there is no official record of complaint on that basis. To be fair, even in the more “progressive” Soviet zone, equal pay for equal work for women did not become a reality until 17 August 1946. Still, if the British had realized the importance of women as workers during this period of reorganization, they showed no inclination to reform how they were compensated. Women in the British zone would have to wait until the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949 for this to become a reality. Despite the continuation of the unfair practice of paying women less than men, women were going to work in great numbers. In fact, every single man and woman, including DPs, deemed able to work was employed by the beginning of November 1945. The Schaumburg-Lippe detachment reported finally that “there is no further labor reserve.”281 The economically conscious British occupiers had managed to get the Germans back to work as much as was possible in less than 6 months.

Despite the relatively good news about employment figures, the German population still held to a deep distrust of the British occupiers. The main factors which inspired the lingering resentment toward the British were the shortage of food and housing, as well as the British policy of requisitioning German housing for British personnel.

The shortage of food was severe enough that rumors of British plans to starve the Germans began to seem plausible even to educated Germans. One particularly nasty rumor which was widely believed in various forms was that, “Green vegetables, fruit and grain are transported during the night to England.” The fact that many farmers had not

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281 Ibid., 3 November 1945 report.
planted in the spring of 1945 due to lack of fuel, machine parts, seed, or labor was lost on many Germans.

Despite the German belief in British conspiracies, occupation officials in the British zone felt that they had done better than the other Allies in providing sustenance for the Germans in their zone. One official in a letter to his superior regarding a 1946 information gathering trip he had made to the American zone noted that:

“...in the U.S. Zone, the people there definitely do not look so happy. Their faces are more yellow, the children look far worse, poorer and thinner, and nobody smiled. In Stuttgart they were definitely starving and two well-dressed men gobbled my stale sandwiches in the street where they stood, and in Munich the children looked awful. In the British zone, there is a noticeable difference which I was glad to see. There is much more joy among them; the men whistle and the children laugh, that is, as a general rule. A completely different atmosphere although there is much more control in our Zone, and the Americans are leaving the Germans very much to themselves.”

If the British and the Germans saw the shortage of food differently, there was little the British could dispute with regard to the requisitioning of housing. In every zone of occupation the authorities needed buildings—preferably ones that had not been damaged by bombs, with working utilities—from which to conduct the business of military government. The British were no different. However, instead of having occupation forces give notice to individual or families that they would need to evacuate their homes, the British official made local German officials responsible for this dirty work. Only when the required evicted Germans were too slow did British military authorities get involved in the distasteful business of throwing Germans out of their homes. In either case the Germans were none too pleased to be tossed out of their homes. The resulting confrontations sometimes erupted into protests, which in turn might turn violent. The British responded with surprisingly little action, and allowed the protests to
die of natural causes. One such protest occurred on 2 July 1946. A delegation of six housewives was to meet the German “Burgomaster” [sic] a Herr Petersen, in the Hamburg town hall in order to protest against their ouster from their homes with no notice. Apparently the German authorities had simply failed to notify them and the British had them “evacuated compulsorily.” A War Office official present at the incident noted that, “The protest seemed reasonable.”²⁸³ If the grounds for initiating a protest seemed reasonable, the situation quickly turned ugly.

At 10.30 Mr. Frerk took us to the Town Hall and we were introduced to Petersen in his room, from which vantage point we could have a good view of the crowd below in the Town Hall Square. There were two of three hundred people there already, good natured and laughing, mostly women. Gradually the crowd became larger, and at eleven o’clock, the six women entered the Town Hall with their petition and the crowd began to shout in rhythm, “Petersen,” “Petersen show yourself,” “Petersen resign.”

We thought, as it was entirely a German administered affair we would not be present during the women’s petitioning—it would be a bad thing and not fair to Petersen. So we remained there to watch the crowd. Gradually it grew to between 3 and 4 thousand, and the tone began to change. They became angry and waved their fists, being agitated by little groups of men, obviously Nazi element, who looked up at us, and started the crowd in rhythmic shouts of “Is this your democracy?” “Do you call this liberation?” and (politically interesting) “We are not Indians.” Also, “Are we in a concentration Camp?” The shouting became a little sinister and somebody struck up “Deutschland Über Alles,” (this was sung three times altogether) which was taken up with vigour and those men who did not remove their hats had them torn off for them.”²⁸⁴

Not only did the German demonstration fail to help the evicted citizens of Hamburg find shelter, as might have occurred had the protest remained peaceful, but the Germans had forced the British Military Police to use violence to break up the demonstration.²⁸⁵ Furthermore, the British officials remained convinced that many “Nazi

²⁸² PRO FO 946/37 Directorate of Civil Affairs, letter to Mr. Houghton from the War Office, 2 July 1946.
²⁸³ Ibid.
²⁸⁴ PRO FO 946/37 Directorate of Civil Affairs, letter to Mr. Houghton from the War Office, 2 July 1946.
²⁸⁵ The normal procedure was for the German authorities to help those evicted find a minimum of shelter before moving them. If the hapless victims of eviction had not been notified, it was not their fault for being uninformed. Mr. Petersen would have been obliged to help them find shelter at a minimum if the demonstration had not been violent.
elements” remained at large in German society and, “How quickly would they again destroy themselves if they were left alone.”\textsuperscript{286} Clearly the protesting citizens of Hamburg had done themselves no favor by behaving as they did.

By 1947 housing had become the number one concern of Germans in the British zone of occupation, surpassing food as their number one concern. The Germans in the British zone of occupation blamed the British for their woes. The British blamed the economy and remained determined to do something to remedy the situation. If large crowds could gather and demonstrate against British policy in spite of British goodwill, the British authorities assumed that Germans either just did not understand the postwar world’s realities, or they were totally uneducated. Either possibility could only be remedied through reform in education, which the British had already undertaken in an effort to cleanse the curriculum of Nazi propaganda. Children who had grown up in the Nazi school system had been inundated with texts in all subjects that focused them on racial purity. Those who had grown up knowing nothing else in the last twelve years were now adults who, in the opinion of the British, needed reeducating. It was through this type of reasoning that German women became an important target group of German citizens whom the British would attempt to assist being molded into better citizens.

Women’s Education

Due to the shortages of food, shelter and labor, the British initially focused more on how women could affect the economics of the occupation than on how they would affect politics. The British were not initially attempting to make political allies out of German women; they simply wanted German women to be educated and responsible.

\textsuperscript{286} PRO FO 946/37 Directorate of Civil Affairs, letter to Mr. Houghton from the War Office, 209
This is not to say that the British were wholly unconcerned with women in politics. The British wanted German women to be politically aware, but did not attempt to mold German women into one political party. Instead, the British wanted to stimulate a kind of self-awakening in German women. If German women could become convinced that the nature of democracy and capitalism was to create choices and wealth for everyone in society then the German economy might recover and stabilize. This was the goal of British policy.

The British perspective becomes clearer when contrasted with the Soviet position. The Soviets wanted to officially institute a particular type of politics, communist socialism, from the top down. They imagined a trusted vanguard of German socialists constructing a Soviet-style system. The British idea was to gradually inspire democratic capitalism from the bottom up, through education and prosperity. The British did not want any political activity initially; they banned it in fact. Without economic stability, Germany might choose the path of revolution instead of reform and democracy. Eventually in early-1946 the British loosened the reins they had on voluntary organizations, and then they actually began to formally promote them. This was not out of a desire to see all Germans politically oriented in one direction but rather to get the population involved in determining its own future.

Women were a key part of the liberalization of voluntary organizations. With some 55 percent of the adult population female, German women’s organizations took on added meaning in the British plans to reinvigorate the German economy. The British realized that German women were making economic decisions individually that added up

July 1946.
to an overall disastrous economic situation in Germany. Bartering, black-marketeering and hoarding of cash stalled economic recovery efforts. Active German women who understood democratic capitalism would mean consumer spending that would generate a quicker economic recovery. Before 1947, the British desperately desired that sort of reinvigoration and worried less about directly trying to influence the specific politics of it. They actually wanted an apolitical reeducation of German society paralleled by an economic recovery. The British wanted to prove that capitalism would work while educating the Germans on how democracy worked.

In view of this philosophical road map to a German recovery, it should not be surprising that the British did not sponsor a politically oriented women’s organization, nor even the vague “anti-fascist” committee of the Soviet Union and the Soviet zone of occupation. The British did relatively little to organize women at all. Many forms of German women’s organizations already existed everywhere in the British zone, however. In Aachen, Essen, Münster, and Köln, literally every major city and town had one if not several women’s organizations. Though there were many organizations, the membership numbers were fairly small. For example, in Bremen there were women’s organizations associated with the KPD, the Bremen Democratic People’s Party, Voters without Party, the SPD (which actually had two separate groups), Charitas, Inner Mission, the Jewish Community, the Bremen Housewives Society, the Federation for Alcohol-free Homes, and the Worker’s Help Association. Despite the impressive number of organizations, the membership of all of these organizations combined totaled only 165 women in a city of two million. Of these 165 women, 70 claimed to be members of the SPD, and 35 were
KPD. This meant that the other organizations had only 60 members, and their interests varied widely and did not align themselves automatically with one political party or another. The British were not concerned with these types of groups at all, preferring to focus on education in general and not on the politics of such endeavors. Thus, unlike the authorities in the Soviet zone, who attempted to gain control of all women’s organizations to focus their efforts politically, the British simply let the few women who wished to organize to continue to do so toward almost any non-national socialistic goal.

If the politicization of German women toward a specific political ideology was not something the British occupation forces initially desired, they did eventually want women to participate in the building of a new democratic Germany. Key members of the CCG felt that German women needed to be educated in order for them to value the idea of participation. Therefore instead of using officially sponsored government organizations to set the agenda for German women, the British decided to use reform of the existing education system to do so. In practice as in theory, the concern with women’s education was generated not from the top-down from the COGA to the CCG, but from a local committee of various CCG officials who brought the idea to the attention of their superiors.

As part of the International Affairs and Commissions division of the CCG (IA&C), the British formed an Administration and Local Government branch (A&LG). According to its own charter, the A&LG branch was “based on the principle that all power belongs to the individual and that he delegates it upwards as necessary to his

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elected representatives at each level from Parish to Central Government.”288 Even though the A&LG charter only used “he” in referring to individuals, the CCG dictated to A&LG that it was “the duty of A&LG to encourage women to take part in activities leading to sound Local Government.”289 This directive left no doubt in the minds of A&LG officials as to how they should value German women’s interests.

One of the first tasks of the Education Branch of the A&LG was to assess the German education system as it had existed in the past. Not surprisingly, the Education Branch report on this subject reflected the emphasis of the Nazi education system on German arts and sciences. Boys were treated with preference in almost all areas of academics, and girls were encouraged to study “domestic science.” Indeed girls spent more time on the subjects of cookery, housework, handwork and gardening than they did on any other subject.290 The British set out to rectify this by making all fields open equally to members of both sexes. In order to do this for girls the British needed only to institute new curricula in German schools. This they did, but for those women who had been educated in the Nazi school system current reforms would not help. For this problem the British offered two solutions. First, they would allow women to form voluntary local organizations to promote the exchange of ideas. Second, they would actively promote adult education and offer courses on selected topics.

The British did not want women to organize under a large monolithic organization with centralized goals. Instead, they envisioned something local and

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289 Ibid.
290 PRO FO 1050/1298/63356. The curriculum of girls’ secondary schools in Germany, Time Tables of Oberschule and Aufbauschule.
decentralized. For this they turned to the British concept of the Women’s Institute. As early as December 1945 the Education Branch presented its staff with a pamphlet entitled, “What a Women’s Institute is and what it does.” [sic]\(^{291}\) This British-style organization existed in every county in England and Wales, but seemed more of a leisure activity group than civic education exercise. According to the leaflet, a Women’s Institute was

“A society which includes women of all classes and creeds who happen to live in the same village. Each Institute is linked with others in its own County and all Institutes together form the National Federation...The aims of a Women’s Institute are to bring countrywomen together to learn the things which will be of help in their homes; to improve conditions in the village; to consider the needs of country people throughout the land and to develop a spirit of friendliness, co-operation, and initiative.”\(^{292}\)

This did not sound substantially different from the agenda of the girls’ schools with their traditional curricula. There was no political portion to the agenda, but the British hoped that civic awareness might eventually lead to interest in capitalism and then democracy.

More interesting than the goals of the Women’s Institute was its monthly meeting agenda, which fit nicely with the apolitical, but economically oriented agenda of the British occupiers:

“(1) Business, which trains members in business methods and ensures that they manage the Institute themselves.
(2) Lecture, demonstrations, or short talks by members.
(3) Tea, which brings members together informally.
(4) The Social Half-hour, which may consist of singing, drama, games, or other forms of recreation.

In addition to the Monthly Meeting Institutes often have...courses of classes in Cookery, Dressmaking, Upholstery, Home Nursing, Keep Fit, or some other subject.”\(^{293}\)

\(^{291}\) PRO FO 1050/1250/63356 77A. Free Leaflet from the National Federation of Women’s Institutes reprinted December 1945.
\(^{292}\) PRO FO 1050/1250/63356 77A. Free Leaflet from the National Federation of Women’s Institutes reprinted December 1945.
\(^{293}\) Ibid.
Many of these “additional” items on the agenda would look familiar to women who grew up in the Nazi period, but these were only of tertiary importance behind economics and political awareness. The British women of the Education Branch had much more ambitious goals for German women. The British agenda in Germany went far beyond what this British institution offered, which was little more than an extension of a social club. Still when starting from nothing, the model of the Women’s Institute offered somewhere to begin. Soon local women’s groups began forming in the British zone in this mode. This inauspicious beginning was probably more due to the fact that there were initially only enough resources for little more than this type of effort than out of nostalgia, or preference for things British.

Though British authorities encouraged German women to form local apolitical organizations, still confusion reigned in the bureaucracy of many MilGov detachments, who were unsure of how to treat groups of women attempting to organize. They were unsure if such meetings or organizations were legal or whether these institutions should be banned under the blanket ban on political activity. The easiest thing to do when such groups requested permission to meet was to deny initial approval and then to pass the request to higher authorities. This created delay and frustration among many women’s groups. In April of 1946 the IA&C advised A&LG that several women’s groups had been attempting to create groups for the purpose of discussing women’s issues, including education. Furthermore IA&C informed A&LG that in at least two cases these groups were unjustly delayed or denied permission to execute such activities. The IA&C wanted to ensure that in the future A&LG authorities would realize that:
“It is not necessary for an application to be submitted to MilGov before a non-political [emphasis mine] organisation is formed or a meeting is held. Once an organisation is in being, has agreed its constitution, and elected its office-bearers, it should inform MilGov of relevant details. Provided there are no security objections to the sponsors, MilGov will inform them that as long as they observe the relevant MilGov ordinances they are free to prosecute their activities....MilGov will therefore ensure that all such requests or suggestions are dealt with promptly and sympathetically. [IA&C’s original emphasis (underlining)]...Where women suggest starting an organisation on a Zonal or Provincial basis, they should be advised to start first if appropriate on a local basis.”

This policy statement opened the door for women to organize with limitations. The last sentence had obvious implications for women like those members of the socialist women’s organizations of the Soviet zone, who imagined they could form an interzonal German women’s organization. Whether the British suspected the socialist intentions of the yet-to-be-created DFD this early is unclear. Certainly it would not have taken much prophecy to determine that SPD and KPD women were working on forming a women’s organization that would report to someone under the influence of Soviet power somewhere in the chain of command and desired to influence all German women across zonal boundaries. Regardless, it is unlikely the IA&C made its policies directly in response to what socialist women in the Soviet zone were doing but the British goals were definitely diametrically opposed to those of the socialists. Certainly the restriction to “non-political” and “local” organizations meant that the British were not ready for German women to move as quickly and as far as the DFD would have them try.

The British were primarily interested in a fundamental change in the perspective of individuals caused by a change in their level and orientation of their education. Rather than orient all German women toward one political party as the socialists were advocating, the British claimed they wanted to teach German women to think, decide and act on their own initiative. The approach of their policies reflected this in that they did

294 PRO FO 1050/1299 IA&C Division Military Government Instruction No. 78.
not originate from the COGA in a sterile cubicle in London and declare unpopular policies onto a submissive German population. Instead, the British policymakers in Germany were responsive to what they perceived the population needed. In July 1946 the CCG began to assess the needs of German women through its newly formed Special Office of Women’s Affairs (S.O. Women’s Affairs). This office did not make policy per se, but it did report the effects of existing policies and offer suggestions as to how to improve operations.

The IA&C had a double approach to implement policy. In the initial directive forming the Special Office for Women’s Affairs, the IA&C declared that its work was “based on the principle that all power belongs to the individual and that he delegates it upwards as necessary to his elected representatives at each level from Parish to Central Government.” The second operating principle was that of action through voluntary associations.

In accordance with these typically British beliefs, the IA&C did not push women’s education issues from the top. Rather the promulgation of women’s education reform started at the local level of MilGov and worked its way up to the level of being zonal and British policy. The British policymakers who brought attention to women’s education gradually began to have an influence on other areas of government, particularly those of economic interest. By the time the DFD women held their conferences in the British zone in 1947 the CCG already had fostered women’s organizations for almost every imaginable purpose besides politics. Before March 1947 the British saw education

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296 Ibid., 1.
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and labor as the keys to fostering women’s participation in Germany. If occasionally they confronted political questions and issues before this date, they did not offer training in political issues until mid-1947. When the time came to confront the issue of women in politics, the British took advantage of their advanced women’s education program to exploit their position in this situation.

Women’s education was an interest of the CCG within months of the end of hostilities, but it had grown from a minor provincial project into one that incorporated the entire British zone. This process—totally separate from the project to organize women—began within the IA&C division of the CCG, which also had responsibility for education. On 21 September 1945 the Education Branch of the IA&C sponsored an ad-hoc meeting of what they called the Committee on Women’s Education. There is no evidence that either COGA, CCG or IA&C directed this committee to meet. Instead local government officials recognized the need and value of such a committee and formed it to address a pressing local and regional issue.

The committee consisted of three military officers from MilGov (two Royal Navy and one Army) and three British women who were education experts from IA&C. The ranking officer among the military members of the committee was Major Mark. The Naval officers were Junior Commanders. Officers of this rank were governors of medium-sized towns or rural counties (Landkreise). The fact that such junior personnel were in charge of this meeting indicates that this was not a high priority to those in charge at the Foreign Office, the Home Office, the Military Government or IA&C. The

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298 PRO FO 1050/1298 Committee on Women’s Education Monday 21 Sep 1945.
military officers seem to have been invited only as a courtesy because the military government actually had responsibility of all activity in the British zone. These officers did not aid or hinder the progress of the committee. In fact, the military officers present did not have much to add, so in future meetings there was usually only one officer present, and often there were none.

This first meeting was inauspicious and resulted in little other than an agreement by MilGov to allow extra resources for uneducated women’s studies and arrangements for further meetings of the committee. This was likely the intent of inviting the military officers to attend in the first place. The monthly meetings eventually resulted in more resources for women’s education in general.

The committee arranged for courses to be taught to local German women. The initial curriculum was much like that of a home economics course. By December 1945 the committee had spread its ideas to many other MilGov detachments where British civilians implemented the program. The courses included instruction on basic economics along the lines of a more academic setting. Production of food, transportation, textiles, electricity and ironically, manpower issues had become part of the curriculum.²⁹⁹ The immediate importance of this instruction was diminished by the limited capacity of A&LG to provide enough instructors to ensure each locality had the ability to offer such courses. Indeed only a handful of MilGov detachments could support such work initially, but by 4 January 1946, at least each of the 4 states (Länder) had one town where German women could enroll in such courses.³⁰⁰ Gradually more German women were beginning to show an interest in this line of education.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.
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On 12 March 1946 the Education Branch held a Women’s Conference in Detmold. At this conference, sponsored by British women, but executed by Germans, the following resolutions were passed:

(i) That as a general principle women should be the Heads of girls’ schools.
(ii) Men and women should have equal consideration when education authorities are appointing Heads of mixed schools.
(iii) The deputy head of a mixed school should be of the opposite sex to the head.
(iv) Women should play a more active part in educational administration.
(v) In mixed schools of all types, women should be proportionally represented on the academic, as well as on the technical side.

More important than the passing of the resolutions by German women was their acceptance by a general assembly of educational authorities the following day. 301 Despite such apparent progress, not all of the endeavors of British women who had formed this committee were successful. A certain Miss Walker, who was present at nearly all of the meeting for which there are minutes, decided to draw the attention of the German authorities to certain issues where the letter of the British policy was being followed, but not its intent. For example, Miss Walker complained to the director of the Vocational Teacher Training College in Düsseldorf that the “expected increase in the number and variety of women teachers employed and in training as a sequel to the opening of trades and crafts to women and girls did not from her observation, appear to have taken place.” 302 That is to say, women were being trained for some of the new positions in industry, but they were not being trained to be instructors for training women for these positions. Miss Walker and the Women’s Committee of the Education Branch

300 Ibid.
301 PRO FO 1050/1299 10a, 63356/ED, Conference of Committee on German Women’s Education. 15 June 1946.
agreed that women should be trained as instructors for the new positions as well as for the
government as well as for the positions themselves. This is one good example of how the British handled women as if they were more important as part of the economic equation than the political situation and how they dealt with resistance from Germans who did not fully support changes in traditional roles for women. Some of the resistance came from women who were not aware of, or not interested in working in new fields, but the Education Branch was dedicated to ensuring that German women would find fair treatment in all fields.

As evidence of German women’s attitudes, Miss Brown of the women’s committee offered that in the medical field, as many as 40 percent of the students had been women at the end of the war. According to university authorities, most of them had given up their studies, and gone home resulting in only a fraction (1/3) of them practicing professionally. Furthermore, only 25 percent of German university students in all fields were now women. The few available and able men were returning to school. Women were not applying in great numbers and some universities were giving preference to men.

Despite fighting an uphill battle in some realms, such as the university system, German women were making real progress in other areas. In the elementary school system for example, women were outnumbered in teaching positions five to one. At first glance this situation seemed discouraging, but Miss Walker noted that many women were recognized as being better teachers than their male counterparts—“a point of view which

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302 PRO FO 1050/1299 10a, 63356/ED, Conference of Committee on German Women’s Education, 15 June 1946, 2.
303 PRO FO 1050/1299 10a, 63356/ED, Conference of Committee on German Women’s Education, 15 June 1946, 2, paragraph 3.
was beginning to find acceptance even in Germany.304 Another positive trend for German women was that even though the two-year “emergency courses” designed to produce teachers quickly to fill the immediate shortage were designed for men, the proportion of men and women was nearly balanced. In fact, she noted that a considerable number of war widows were taking up this line of training and work and that the German authorities were beginning to see the wisdom of accepting this social change. Apparently war widows were receiving the respect due to their husbands as German officials “were putting them on the same level as the [veterans of] the Wehrmacht.”305 Whether or not that is the type of compliment the Education Branch was looking for regarding the treatment of German women is doubtful, but whatever German women and their British mentors could use to improve the status of women’s education was a welcome advantage.

The women’s committee was concerned that despite the advantages afforded to war widows, other women were being afforded little opportunity for education or advancement. The committee was convinced that part of the problem was still the general attitude of German men. Local government committees run by MilGov but including German men were “unenthusiastic” at best to the suggestion that women should serve in local governing committees. The attitude of German men eroded the confidence of German women, who largely still believed that their place was in the home. The women’s committee chairman, Miss Gemmell, agreed that German women would face opposition from German men in their efforts to assert agency. Gemmell used this to emphasize the need for women’s education as critical to actively combat this

304 PRO FO 1050/1299 10a, 63356/ED, Conference of Committee on German Women’s Education. 15 June 1946, 2, paragraph 3.
phenomenon. She added carefully, however, that the education of adult women “should be non-political and unbiased.”  

Miss Walker dissented from this point of view only slightly, commenting that “she was trying as far as possible to encourage her own students to think that democracy was something that was ‘lived’ and not talked about. Some were accepting that fact, but were meeting difficulty with the authorities in the towns.”  

Based upon this situation Miss Walker asked Miss Cameron for help from A&LG “in putting into operation some pressure to bear on the authorities so that students in teacher training could study the actual machinery of local government.”  

Since there were no officially elected German officials in the British zone at this point, such pressure would not be possible. Still Miss Cameron assured Miss Walker that as soon as elections were held, the equality of opportunity for women could be brought to the attention of the authorities through the town councils. In this manner politics began to seep into the affairs of the women’s committee of the Education Branch, but in general only on the periphery and not as the central agenda. This would change rather dramatically in March of 1947.

The Wilton Park Experiment

Since late 1945 and throughout 1946 the British Foreign Office offered instruction in “citizenship” to certain POWs who were judged to be politically reliable. The program initially consisted of a series of lectures by leading British citizens and some limited debate about current events. The British set up the “school” in question at a

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305 PRO FO 1050/1299 10a, 63356/ED, Conference of Committee on German Women’s Education, 15 June 1946, 2, paragraph 3.
306 PRO FO 1050/1299 10a, 63356/ED, Conference of Committee on German Women’s Education, 15 June 1946, 4.
German prisoner of war camp at Wilton Park in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire near London. About 300 POWs participated in the course every six weeks. In February 1947 the Foreign Office expanded this program to include instruction for exclusively male German civilian candidates for positions in local and regional governments and other related organizations. The British realized the attention that this move would create so they set out to produce a program of instruction that would meet the needs of the German civilians and the need to avoid the appearance of creating a possibility for Germans to obtain a free vacation in England.

The second part of this was easy. The German civilians would have to live in the same conditions as the POWs did. They would sleep in simple beds with no sheets due to the lack of linen for the POWs. They would have a voucher system for cigarettes and soap just as the POWs did. They would eat the same food as the POWs did. Customs would ensure that on their return trip they would bring no food or goods with them, avoiding the appearance of the “shopping trip” to England. In fact, other than the 10/6d (10 shillings and 6 pence) per week in cash they received “for personal expenditure,” the civilian students at the Wilton Park Training Centre lived just as the POWs.

Changing the curriculum was slightly more difficult. The British modified the program of instruction in order to make it more participatory and responsive to the needs and concerns of potential German civilian government officials. This would mean diversifying the curriculum from a purely lecture format to something more interactive.

307 PRO FO 1050/1299 10a, 63356/ED, Conference of Committee on German Women’s Education, 15 June 1946, 4.
308 Ibid.
309 PRO FO 939/340, German Civilians at Wilton Park, February 1947.
310 PRO FO 939/340 Courses for Germans in United Kingdom, 5.
While the faculty at Wilton Park drew up these changes, COGA, CCG and the
Foreign Office fought a battle over resources against those who felt that any money spent
educating German civilians was frivolous. More specifically, some British officials
questioned the wisdom of using scarce resources to pay for the travel of Germans to
England. They considered the idea of educating Germans to be good in principle, but
they thought the format of a traveling lecture series in Germany to be a more efficient use
of resources. Only a few instructors need travel and in fact CCG authorities already in
Germany could conduct the course. The Wilton Park faculty prepared a careful response
to some of the accusations, which British officials were leveling against the Wilton Park
option. In defining the raison d’être of the Wilton Park Training Centre to the pundits
and responsible government officials, without the support of whom the program would
cease, the faculty decided to explain what the program was not:

“It is not a sight seeing tour of London or Great Britain,
It is not a reward for services rendered to the British occupation authorities.
It is not a lecture tour of prisoner of war camps although we expect all civilians to go and
visit at least one of them.
It is not a course intended to improve their knowledge in their various professions and
occupations, although it is hoped that by meeting representative British people and
visiting British institutions they may indirectly profit in this respect.
It is not an opportunity for renewing or making personal or professional contacts,
although her again this might be a by-product in a few cases.
Finally, it is decidedly not a Schulungskurs [emphasis of original author] either in
DEMOKRATIE or in journalism, education, trade unionism, local government, etc.”311

The author denied that the course was political in nature by stating that the course was
not at all similar to a “Schulungskurs,” a political training course, nor did it teach
democracy (Demokratie). The Wilton Park faculty report of February 1947 continued:

The civilians take part in the following activities:

(a) Tutorials
(b) Classes and Discussions

311 Ibid., 2.
(c) Special Seminars
(d) Lectures by outstanding representatives of British life and opinion.
(e) Organised visits to representative British institutions and meetings with the men responsible.
(f) Independent visits of interest to individuals.

The work is supported by a library containing about 3,000 volumes and by the provision of all national daily newspapers and many weekly and monthly periodicals.\(^{312}\)

The explanation following the list of events makes clear that the demands on the student to participate were far beyond that of those who attended lectures. This course truly represented a variety of experiences for German civilians. However, with regard for the denials of the course being a political training course in democracy the record of the course curriculum belies this part of the Wilton Park explanation. It is remarkable how very absolutely political the training course was and specifically how much the course focused on democracy as a topic.

To list all of the evidence proving Wilton Park to be precisely a democratic training course would overwhelm the reader. A few examples demonstrate the point sufficiently. In explaining the tutorials, the report concluded that through such exercises “the civilian students are learning the practical principles and the methods of political adult education.” In essence, if this part of the course was not political education, at the very least it was a lesson in how to conduct a political school, a fine distinction, but still with a political motive.

If the tutorials hinted at political schooling in democracy, the seminars went much further. The seminar topics appeared very neutral at the outset, “Britain’s Internal Situation” and “British Foreign Policy.” The concluding seminar in the series dropped all pretense of remaining apolitical in the truest sense of the word, “Democracy Here and

\(^{312}\) Ibid., 3.
Abroad.”313 The faculty members at Wilton Park certainly were self-aware that what they were doing might be looked upon by the Germans involved as pompous preaching. Indeed the author of the curriculum report noted that,

“We avoid all formal lectures by providing an opportunity for everybody to state his views or to try and settle his doubts. We attempt to avoid any impression of propaganda and indoctrination and make everyone realise that they are not passive recipients of Truth but active participants in a search for it...This is important since German civilians are very sensitive and would object to any suggestion of “England” lecturing “Germany.”314

While this faculty statement of intent was a noble show of sympathy for the German plight, it must have been easy for the Germans to assume rather easily that this is what students signed on to experience. Still, since only hand-picked volunteers attended, the British greatly reduced the chance of any student “objecting” seriously to the intent, format or content of the course.

Despite the statement, “We avoid all formal lectures,” amazingly most of the course of instruction consisted of lectures. The content varied in content from “English Poetry” to “The Work of Reuters” and Professor A.J. Toynbee even addressed the class with his lecture entitled, “An Approach to the Study of History.” If these topics appeared to meet the apolitical litmus test, most of the rest of the lectures focused on political and more specifically democratic processes. Politically-loaded examples of lectures included, “One Way to a Free Society,” “Principles of Tory Policy” (offered twice by two separate speakers), “The Practice of Local Government in England,” “Academic Freedom and the German Universities,” and “Parties and Parliamentary Government.” Other examples abound to contradict what the faculty claimed was a course free of lecture and politics. Of particular interest to this study was Lady Astor’s lecture, “Women in Public Life.”

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313 Ibid.
314 Ibid., 2.
The Wilton Park Training Centre came under intense scrutiny within weeks of allowing civilians to participate in what had been considered POW reeducation. A surprise inspector reported to the Foreign Office that the classes were too large for really free discussions and that the staff had too little contact with the students outside of the classroom. More damning than these flaws was the accusation by Squadron Leader White, the inspector that,

“The staff appear to be far too self satisfied that their method was incapable of improvement. This is regretable [sic] when one considers that work in human relationships is still largely experimental and that a complacent attitude is not ideal for research work.”

The inspector clearly understood the Wilton Park project as more of a human relations experiment than a truly professional reeducation program. The response to the criticisms of the inspector was immediate. Mr. Koeppler, the faculty leader at Wilton Park, agreed that the classes were too large. He also commented that the 90-minute visit “inclusive of having tea” was too short for Mr. White to come to such hasty and harsh conclusions. Despite the criticism Wilton Park continued to train and reeducate German men. Soon German women would join their ranks.

The idea of Lady Astor addressing a room full of male German POWs and governmental candidates provokes an interesting question. If the British understood the importance of women in public life, enough so to include it on the short list of what Germans needed to know, why were no German women present as students? The answer is very simple. Wilton Park was a POW camp, and under the rules of such camps, the

presence of German women was strictly forbidden. This would change rather dramatically over the next few months.

The International Women’s Day Conference in Berlin on 8 March 1947, and the subsequent visits to the western zones of occupation by DFD women later that year caused the British to take a more focused interest in attempting to influence German women and their politics. Immediately after the DFD invasion of German socialist women from the Soviet zone in 1947, the British reconsidered the policy of exclusively training German men. There is neither mention of the DFD program nor even of the conferences they held in the British zone in British occupation archives. While some of the British women in the service of the CCG attended the DFD conferences and German women in the British zone even sponsored some of them, the CCG either avoided mentioning this phenomenon in its reports, or there is some other explanation for the omission. Perhaps the CCG had nothing to do with these conferences and the British women of the CCG attended in their off-duty time, or without telling their superiors.

Whether or not the British were reacting to the DFD and its conferences, after a few months of negotiating the rules, by which German women could participate, Wilton Park became a gender-integrated environment. By June 1947 the British began to send German women from the British zone to Wilton Park with the express purpose of training these women in the politics of democracy and how to practice them.

Again the suggestion for the change came from the bottom and was implemented from the top. Immediately after the International Women’s Day Conference in Berlin the CCG realized that the policy of keeping German women’s voluntary organizations completely non-political need to be rethought. If the DFD could somehow politicize all
German women including those in the British zone with a communist slant, irreparable damage could be done to the work of the IA&C and its Education Branch. The threat of being pre-empted by the Soviet sponsored women of the East prompted these CCG authorities to begin immediately to do openly what they probably had been doing already in measured doses—namely to discuss political topics. The IA&C went further by encouraging German women’s voluntary organizations to promote women as political candidates for local offices.316

What had happened in the British zone and with CCG complicity did not immediately translate into sweeping changes in British policy originating in England. That would take COGA and Foreign Office involvement. This began nearly simultaneously but took three months to take effect.

The International Women’s Day Conference sponsored by the socialists in Berlin had ended on 9 March 1947. On 13 March, the Training Centre at Wilton Park held the third committee meeting regarding the attendance of civilians.317 Two previous meetings in February had functioned already to initiate the idea of allowing the German civilians documented above to attend this school as well. At this third meeting, just four days after the socialist announcement of the founding of the DFD, the COGA introduced the idea of the attendance of women at the Wilton Park Training Centre. The immediate response of the War Office was that this would not be allowed because the presence of women “is

316 FO1013/479 Local occupation records. While there were women in local government position even from the earliest of elections, they were very much the exception. Detmold records showed the struggle of women to attain local office in numbers proportionate to men. In 1948, Education branch officials, who had helped train German women for political office, commented that “It is very gratifying that there are now 4 women councillors in the Kreistag.” Four out of 12 was not proportionate, but it was progress.

317 PRO FO 945/229 1A. Minutes of third meeting.
The COGA argued that an exception was necessary and enlisted the advice of the subordinate CCG to explain to the British government why this course of action was not only good policy, but strategically critical.

A bureaucratic battle ensued and by 10 May 1947 the Headquarters of the CCG involved itself directly. In a letter addressed oddly to the Foreign Office (it was the War Office that had denied the initial request) General Robertson, through his corresponding adjutant representative, explained all of the good reasons why German women should be included in this program. His letter merits quotation in detail:

“2. The numerical predominance of women over men in Germany will alter in the future their relative participation in the work of local government, the professions, and public life generally. German women are already occupying important governmental positions and it is our policy to encourage them to assume such positions of responsibility in increasing numbers.

3. Unless this is achieved and German men and women are induced to work self-confidently together, the task of reconstructing Germany will be impossible. It is an economic necessity to overcome the present German tendency to delegate women to minor executive work only, and to refuse to consider their responsible employment outside domestic life...

5. ...we are placing ourselves in an indefensible position by continuing to exclude them from this scheme of social re-education.

6. The presence of women at the course, would, moreover, increase its value for the men, both civilians and Ps.W. [POWs], since no proper representation of conditions in Germany can be made without an account of women’s opinions and the nature of present domestic life.”

On 4 June 1947 the argument was over and the COGA with CCG assistance from below had won—German women would be allowed to attend the Wilton Park reeducation course. Another factor, which assisted the cause of German women in this battle, is the fact that in mid-1947, nearly simultaneously with the problems associated with issue of

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318 Ibid.
319 PRO FO 945/229 AHQ/6612/ Sec G. Memo from HQ CCG to FO. 10 May 1947. CCG appealed to the FO possibly because the FO could trump the War Office. CCG used several different arguments. First, the argument of fairness, then the argument that the position of CCG would be difficult to
German women working in Great Britain, the CCG reorganized its A&LG and IA&C divisions. The CCG increased the authority of the S.O. Women’s Affairs by making it a branch composed of elements of both of these divisions. This new organization combined the effort of British bureaucrats in the IA&C and A&LG branches and merged some of their activities and responsibilities. The CCG would then have fewer competing bureaucracies with regard to the needs of German women. The consolidation of resources allowed for better coordination for efforts to assist German women.

Regardless of these developments German women attended the reeducation course at Wilton Park on a conditional basis. The Foreign Office emphasized that the first group to attend would be small (12 women) and that they “should, however, be regarded as an experiment.”\textsuperscript{320} The June 1947 experiment was successful and the program continued. Unfortunately there were only a very limited number of slots at the school for civilians (60 total) and the priority remained POW reeducation. Therefore, only a handful of German women (less than 200) actually attended the course before the program ended in 1949.

Some German women sent letters of appreciation (in English) to the faculty at Wilton Park. In these letters, the graduates of the program left a record of some of the successes and disappointments of the Wilton Park Training Centre, which these women experienced firsthand. Most of the German women who attended Wilton Park reported positive experiences. One graduate of the very first course including women, Frl. Rudnitzki, an assistant at the Institute of Social Economy at Muenster (Westphalia), defend if they did not pursue this course, and finally the idea that the training for men would be better if women were there as well.

\textsuperscript{320} PRO FO 945/229 G/1383 Telegram from Foreign Office to CCG, 4 June 1947.
reported that despite initially being skeptical of the Wilton Park project, “I was pleasantly surprised by what I found awaiting me over there.” 321 Despite her overall positive impression of Wilton Park, she suggested several points of improvement for future classes.

Frl. Rudnitzki’s first suggestion revealed that the first women invited to attend Wilton Park really knew relatively little about the aims of the course of instruction. In fact, Rudnitzki reported, “I knew scarcely anything about the aims and objects of Wilton Park as I began my journey to England.” 322 This made the journey and its anticipation much less enjoyable. The Wilton Park faculty took this point seriously and immediately produced a “short introduction” document in order to ensure future students would experience reduced uncertainty.

Other criticism of the program at Wilton Park presented more difficulty. Rudnitzki explained that even though the program was not intended as a chance for German women to sight-see in England, it did seem foolish to her that they came such a great distance and saw little outside of the gates of Wilton Park (the POW camp being the exception. Rudnitzki suggested that the course be either extended by one week to allow travel to London or that the instruction be shortened by one week to allow for this travel to occur during the current 6-week program. 323

Further critique of the program encroached into the delicate area of political differences and their consequences. Frl. Rudnitzki recognized immediately that many

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321 PRO FO 939/340 Report by Frl. Rudnitzki (Course No. 10) of Wilton Park, PCS/COPY/SIC. The fact that the attendees sent letters in English indicates that they were fluent in English before they came. It is unknown if all of the attendees could speak English, but all of the instructors spoke German. Most of the lectures were conducted in English.

322 Ibid.

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people in Great Britain assumed that the majority of Germans including those invited to attend the Wilton Park Training Centre were either sympathetic with or participants in National Socialism. “Here it should be taken into consideration that a large number of the civilian students were already in opposition to National Socialism before the collapse and were persecuted during that regime.”324 Clearly Rudnitzki was personally offended because she had experienced a kind of patronizing treatment of herself as someone who had been duped by Nazism. Some rather vocal British subjects saw it as their duty to help rehabilitate her. As evidence Rudnitzki provided a quotation from a letter “of support” from an anonymous Londoner who generously offered, “Let me help in re-educating you.” This friendly closing to a letter was an insult out of ignorance that Rudnitzki wanted to remedy. If the Wilton Park Training Centre would explain the course to the British public better, Rudnitzki felt such an embarrassing situation could be avoided.325

As far as the content of the course went, Rudnitzki felt that Wilton Park had done a great job. She thought that the course was appropriate and that the faculty generally avoided the appearance of one-sidedness despite the apparent western-democratic leanings of the syllabus. This was likely due to the fact that Rudnitzki tended to have British or at least western-democratic leanings in her own agenda. Frl. Rudnitzki did not like everything in the interpretation of the course syllabus. She believed that the lecturers sent to teach the course were interested in the political opinions of the German students but she also felt that if expressed, these opinions might have created a delicate situation.

323 PRO FO 939/340 Report by Frl. Rudnitzki (Course No. 10) of Wilton Park, PCS/COPY/SIC.
324 Ibid.
325 Ibid.
“For us is was valuable to be able to express our opinion, although in general we could only do so on an academic basis, in the presence of English politicians while the questions of our guests showed that they for their part had a great interest in our arguments. That we could have no influence on political development is obvious. But it is only the person who believes in the values and importance of mutual discussion of our present day problems, who can derive a positive gain from the work at Wilton Park.”

If Frl. Rudnitzki actually believed that she and the nebulous “we” could have no influence on political development, then she had missed a major point of the Wilton Park Training Centre program and the broader Women’s Affairs program as well. The CCG and COGA would not have wasted their resources on a program that they felt could produce no effect on German political development. The British explicitly wanted these people to be a vanguard of a change in the German attitude towards and understanding of western-style democracy.

If the larger issue was lost on Ms. Rudnitzki in her critique, she had many positive things to say about the Wilton Park project and the addition of women to the student body. First, she noted that having the course outside of Germany made the program worthwhile:

“It is not only the fact that it gives a “spiritual” distance from the home atmosphere where, under present circumstances, it is difficult to discuss current problems objectively and peacefully. The interchange of ideas between the civilian students is also made easier in that Wilton Park provides a neutral ground for the various political parties and for the various social classes of our peoples and assists a tolerant approach and understanding. Then there is the contact with the POWs which is of value to both sides, and, last but not least, the practical work which accompanies many of the lectures and seminars and makes it possible to learn something of the working of English public life.”

Frl. Rudnitzki’s praise of Wilton Park went beyond this broad statement of appreciation for the program, however. She found it necessary to mention explicit tangible benefits as well as provide general compliments. Perhaps the most useful

326 Ibid, 2.
327 PRO FO 939/340 Report by Frl. Rudnitzki (Course No. 10) of Wilton Park, PCS/COPY/SIC.
repercussion of holding the school in Great Britain was that German women were able to make lasting contacts with British “Women’s Organisations, such as the British Federation of University Women and the Women’s Institute.” According to Rudnitzki, through these contacts and private invitations, German women glimpsed public life in post-war England, which would be useful in answering the endless questions posed by Germans in the British zone of occupation, who had no idea of life outside of Germany.

Besides these rather minor benefits from the Wilton Park experience, Rudnitzki offered commentary on the idea of allowing women into the program. Clearly she felt this was of great importance as she closed her report:

“As a final point I should like to say a word about the inclusion of women in the course at Wilton Park. We were the first women for whom the gates of Wilton Park had opened, and I think that people in and out of the camp, had regarded this ‘Ten-headed experiment,’ as it was described in the camp wall newspaper, a little sceptically. A POW who had already attended three courses at Wilton Park said in his closing report: ‘The women have brought those tones into the concert which could not have been sounded in an all-male atmosphere and they have given expression to many an idea which men among themselves all too easily forget.’ I can only confirm that we were not only given many opportunities to air our opinions on current questions in tutorials and discussions but that we also very often and with great pleasure made use of the opportunities. We also assured that through conversation in small circles, particularly among the prisoners of war, full importance was attributed to the ‘women’s question’ and I think that we have made it quite clear and shown it in its right light. With the inclusion of women students one has certainly performed a good service for Wilton Park and I would like to request that in future the percentage of women should be increased as much as possible.”

Women did continue to attend the course at Wilton Park after the “Ten-headed experiment,” but despite Frl. Rudnitzki’s wishes the number of German women who attended remained about the same, around a dozen per class.

One of the other women in course number ten from June and July 1947, the first course to allow German women, was a certain Dr. Schellewaldt, who described herself as

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328 Ibid.
329 Ibid.
a sales woman and, startlingly, a KPD functionary. Apparently she made no attempt to hide her political affiliations and the British still allowed her to attend. Perhaps the British, like a missionary in search of a flock to save, intended to convert some of the “lost sheep” with communist leanings as well. Alternatively, the British may not have screened Dr. Schellewaldt closely enough, but this seems unlikely. Regardless of how it happened, a communist was among the first German women in attendance at Wilton Park.

Perhaps even more remarkable than the fact that the British allowed this to happen is the fact that Dr. Schellewaldt had few serious complaints, though she did suggest several improvements. However, overall Dr. Schellewaldt felt that Wilton Park was a positive experience:

“I have the impression that from the English side Wilton Park is a sincere attempt to enable the German people to learn something of the English mentality and to obtain a picture of the development of English democracy. Equally our English friends have an opportunity to become acquainted with the thoughts and habits of the German people. The tutors and the Rector at Wilton Park have taken great care to fulfill their tasks in an exemplary fashion. This is valuable for both sides because only so can one appreciate the reasons for Hitler’s war and seek together a way to avoid coming catastrophes.”

Likewise, Dr. Schellewaldt agreed with Frl. Rudnitzki’s assessment that the one key to the success of the course was the fact that it was held in England and not in Germany. The hardships of life in Germany hindered the chance of learning anything there, according to Schellewaldt. Still, the course was not flawless.

“Indeed, Wilton Park still shows weaknesses which can only be removed in the course of time. The actual value of Wilton Park cannot be summarised as a set formula. Each one takes from it what he himself most needs. Wilton Park gave me a feeling of tolerance and patience for my fellowmen. I personally considered that there was something lacking

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330 PRO FO 939/340 Report by Lotte Schellewaldt (Course No. 10) of Wilton Park, PCS/COPY/SIC.
331 Ibid.
Dr. Schellewaldt sensed the now obvious split between the Allies that was developing. She claimed that the Allied lack of emphasis on the Soviet perspective gave the Germans, both civilian and POWs, “a false impression of Democracy.” By this she meant that the students at Wilton Park had the feeling that the German POWs generally believed that democracy only had one style, and it was that of the West. These Germans also believed that the Russians did not have this type of democracy, and thus were inferior. Dr. Schellewaldt felt very strongly that the British were unknowingly “strengthening the theory...that the Eastern peoples are inferior.” Despite this critique, Dr. Schellewaldt did not believe that the British people believed this theory, nor did she believe that they desired anything but peace and friendship with the United States and the Soviets. Still, according to her, the message heard by the students, especially the POWs was not the message intended by the Wilton Park faculty. Much of the discontent amongst the POWs, according to Schellewaldt, stemmed from the fact that out of 1000 POWs held at Wilton Park only about 100 of them actually did any type of useful work. Dr. Schellewaldt considered this a waste of manpower and suggested that the youngest of them, some aged seventeen at this time, should be either put to productive work or enrolled in school. Wilton Park did not have the capacity for either solution.

Dr. Schellewaldt made another legitimate critique of Wilton Park with regard to politics. She claimed that one of the courses boasted no less than 28 SPD officials (mostly men), while she was the only KPD representative present in her class.

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332 Ibid.
333 Ibid.
“Unfortunately always with us one thinks first of the party allegiances,” she confessed.335

None of the official documents referring to Wilton Park note any reference to a search for quotas based upon political affiliation, but the impression of prejudice against the communists was lasting at least upon Dr. Schellewaldt. Likewise, she noted that there “was neither a German nor an English paper with a ‘Left’ tendency.” Not surprisingly, the British made no effort to rectify these issues directly.336

Dr. Schellewaldt’s report created little direct response or change in the curriculum. The Wilton Park faculty summarized Dr. Schellewaldt’s contributions to the course very simply, “Definitely one of the better sort of communist. Had made a lot [of] dominantly sensible contributions to discussions. Wilton Park has certainly brightened her up physically.” Perhaps Dr. Schellewaldt’s very attendance at Wilton Park was an accident or oversight by the authorities who selected the students from the German volunteers. Of the limited number of women enrolled in future classes, none identified themselves as a KPD functionary. Her recommendation to include a greater variety of political leanings in the students never amounted to any change.337 In fact, the number of women remained altogether the same, about one dozen per class until Wilton Park closed at the end of 1949.

Still, in spite of the relatively small numbers of women involved in direct participation in the Wilton Park program, it did have the potential to affect more women than those few who participated. In fact the original designers of the program of

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334 Ibid., 2.
335 PRO FO 939/340 Report by Lotte Schellewaldt (Course No. 10) of Wilton Park, PCS/COPY/SIC.
336 Ibid., 2.
instruction understood that they were simply educating a cross-section of German society, or what they termed “representatives,” who would share their experiences with others upon their return to Germany.338

The connections with British Women’s Organisations paid off for German women in the British zone of occupied Germany. The contacts made at Wilton Park inspired the creation of a new organisation for joint British and German participation. In 1948 and 1949 the Anglo-German Women’s Organization sponsored a bimonthly meeting where German women who had been to Wilton Park would address mixed groups of German and British women. The Wilton Park graduates spoke on topics such as “Goethe and Shakespeare,” “Cooking,” “Experiences at Wilton Park,” and even “Impressions on My Trip to England.” However, this group seemed more like a socialite tea gathering than a political activist group and was not officially sanctioned by the CCG. Dr. D.M. Broome of the Women’s Affairs Branch was upset that while the British women were meeting every month, they only invited the German women to every other meeting. Also, the name of the group, the “Women’s Affairs Circle” caused a stir as it sounded like it might be affiliated with the official Women’s Affairs Branch.339 Despite the strong reaction by Dr. Broome and the Women’s Affairs Branch, the legacy of Wilton Park gained some limited wider access through this informal exposure.

337 Ibid. There were no quotas to meet and none were ever established. Instead, the British maintained that the goal of selection of students was generally to have a “widely representative as possible” body of students.
339 PRO FO 1013/2229 Women’s Organizations, Anglo German, 1949.
Human Capital--The North Sea Scheme

The German women who had visited Wilton Park certainly drew attention for further endeavors for close cooperation between the Germans and their British sponsors. At the same time, however, severe restrictions on German immigration existed in Great Britain. Even as late as March 1947 the British government denied certain Lady Meade-Fetherstonhaugh permission to bring her two “servant girls” from Austria. Her friend at the Foreign Office replied that, “We are doing our best, but I am afraid that we can’t say yes.”340

Not every case experienced such obstinate resistance. When Heintz Goetze, an ex-German POW married an English citizen but remained in England as an agricultural worker, he obtained had better luck. The office of the Home Secretary gave him vague assurance that his mother and sister in the Russian zone could get permission to come to England but “Soviet visas take...I am afraid it will be a somewhat lengthy process.”341 It seemed to make a difference if the original request for immigration came from a man or a woman, and not if it came from a British citizen or a German one. Perhaps the Goetze family had better luck because the persons involved in the request were immediate family members, but not all family members were treated equally either. In fact immigration policy was not very uniform.

For example, the case of an 81-year-old British subject named Charlotte Betcke, who needed constant medical attention, partially illustrates the scope of the problem. Mrs. Betcke requested permission for her German niece, who had medical training as a nurse, to come to England to take care of her. The government denied the initial request

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340 PRO FO 940/44 Immigration files.
for her visa in March 1948 simply because the niece was German and wanted to work in England. This was forbidden. After Mrs. Betcke wrote several letters to Members of Parliament, the final immigration decision was in the hands of the Chancellor, who denied the request in April 1948.342

Mrs. Betcke went to the press with her story. In April of 1948 the London newspapers reported that while German women were restricted from obtaining British work visas, Austrian women were being actively recruited to fill positions in domestic service. German women, who had heard of the employment of Austrian women, began to write to the Ministry of Labour in Great Britain and within the CCG to determine if they would be allowed to work, and if there were private agencies willing to help them.343

The British government had replied that there were no plans to include German women in this endeavor and furthermore that the Ministry of Labour could not guarantee the promises made by any private agency in this matter. Soon afterwards the newspapers in Great Britain increased their campaign to publicize the imbalance in government policy toward Austrians and Germans.344 By 27 May 1948, this situation had created enough bad press to influence the Ministry of Labour to begin to include German women in the recruiting scheme. German women initially flocked to the opportunity. The Labour government created a plan to regulate the importation of German workers in order to make it more efficient for British employers and to control immigration.

The initial plan began as a one-time opportunity for 2000 handpicked German women to travel to Great Britain for one year of work. Later on 11 June 1948, the British

341 PRO FO 940/28 Mrs. Goetze immigration issues. (Undated)
343 There were private agencies, see below.
added the opportunity for the German women to receive training and work as nurses. This raised the total of invitations to 5000 German women. Despite elevated German interest by the 25 June 1948 deadline the Germans were unable to fill the requested quotas with qualified German women.\textsuperscript{345} The British authorities in Germany advised the COGA and the Ministry of Labour that with more time to plan this operation the women of Germany would provide a reliable source of labour eventually. The limiting factor had been the extremely short notice given for applications.

In July 1948, the Ministry of Labour first extended then revised the plan from a one-time offer to a permanent rotating pool of up to 5000 German women, who would be working in Great Britain for a year at a time. After their year they would be replaced by others, who would already have been screened, approved and processed. What had started as a scandal in the press for the British government had turned into a government sponsored program for German women to work in Great Britain. What the German Army had not accomplished with “Operation Sea Lion,” German women would accomplish by invitation. The program was dubbed “The North Sea Scheme” on 14 July 1948 and staffed by the Ministry of Labour and the Foreign Office.\textsuperscript{346}

The German women who would apply for this program had to meet certain requirements. They had to be between 18-28 years of age and they must have lived in the British zone for two years. Married women were disqualified. English language skill was not a requirement, but a clean bill of health was. The women reported to a segregated motel in Mecklenbeck, Münster where medical personnel screened them for

\textsuperscript{344} PRO FO 1013/1850 Recruitment of German Women in the UK. 29 April-27 May 1948. \textsuperscript{345} PRO FO 1013/1850.
venereal disease and tuberculosis. In order for the woman to pass the medical screening, the doctor must declare her a virgin (virgo intacta). After passing this screening, these women received work visas and a ticket to Great Britain, for which the woman paid through a weekly deduction from her wages.

The virginity screening caused quite a stir among Women’s Affairs officers. Mrs. R.J. Youard reported that in Solingen, reportedly a communist area, women had reproached her “for not having a clearer policy towards women” with regard for “principles of right and wrong and respect for human dignity.” The younger communist women reportedly knew of women who were mothers who had left their children behind to take advantage of the chance to work in Great Britain. When the authorities asked the doctor how this could be, they discovered that the doctor was screening for pregnancy instead of “virginity.” The Ministry of Labour had undoubtedly desired the virginity test to avoid importing the legendary “Veronika Deutschland,” – V.D. Instead, they had created a rather embarrassing situation for themselves. Mrs. Youard seemed determined to change the rules and even threatened “to have a question raised on the subject in House of Commons.”

In response R.W. Luce of the Ministry of Labour stated that Mrs. Youard had “greatly exaggerated the situation” but also reported that the “virgo intacta” requirement had been revoked from the form as of 6 August 1948. Such a change was rather quick for something that Labour tried to write off as unimportant. On 13 August several girls

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347 PRO FO 1013/1850 memo from R.J. Youard, Chief Women’s Affairs, Labour Division, CCG, 20 Jul 1948.
348 PRO FO 1013/1850 memo from Mr. W.E. James, Labour Division, CCG, 17 Sep 1948.
possibly related to the scandal were removed from the program for alleged “political inconsistencies.”

The program became more restrictive after 27 August when it was further limited to 1000 German women working strictly in the field of domestic servitude. However, after 4 October 1948, these migrant workers no longer had to have any sort of OB/Gyn exam at all.

Another development threatened the “North Sea Scheme” by late summer 1948. Private labor recruiting agencies established miniature “North Sea Schemes” of their own that competed favorably with the official government program. At least three different agencies were advertising regularly in the British zone of occupation and one, Compton-James & Co., Foreign Servants Registry, Axminster, England actually established an agency office in North-Rhine Westphalia. This agency must have known exactly what the government offered in the “North Sea Scheme.” In its advertisements Compton-James offered nearly the same benefits as the government, but allowed older women to participate, required no medical report from participants, and did not restrict its recruits to single women.

Advertisement

If you want a job as a domestic servant in Great Britain, you will be interested in the following information. Our services are at the disposal of all persons seeking work, not only for skilled and experienced labour, but for all women and girls (ages from 18 to 50), who want to use their domestic capacities in order to come to England for some time, to learn English and to get to know the country and the population. There are jobs concerned in private households, schools, colleges, children’s homes, sanatories, hospitals and similar institutions. We are not concerned with the placement in hotels,

349 PRO FO 1013/1850 memo from R.W. Luce, Ministry of Labour 6-13 August 1948.
350 PRO FO 1013/1850 memo from R.W. Luce, Ministry of Labour and Mr. W.E. James, 27 August, 17 September, and 4 October 1948.
351 PRO FO 1013/1850 WS 1010/27, Minister of Labour Land NRW, Translation, Düsseldorf, 8 September 1948, ref. Circular No. 319/48 (IId 74/48) from 22.7.48.
restaurants etc. Thousands of women and girls have already found good jobs by the medium of our wellknown organisation and it may be assumed that our endeavors will be successful in this case too. We demand a small payment from the persons seeking work, the wages for one week payable 40 days after your arrival only.

You require a so-called “Labour Permit” issued by the British Ministry of Labour in order to enable you to accept a job. Will you please fill in the attached questionnaire and return it to us with two pass-photographs for the “Labour Permit” and for our information. It is advisable but not absolutely necessary to attach a medical certificate and copies of your testimonials regarding former domestic employment.

Our placement procedure is as follows: we choose – considering your wishes as far as possible – a job from our register, which ought to be suitable for you according to your informations, and submit your dates to the future employer asking him to write to you and to make you an offer explaining in detail what you are expected to do, your wages and other conditions.

The wages are usually £ 1 ½ and £ 2 and are being paid weekly. For specially qualified labour, especially for good cooks are higher wages being granted sometimes. The payment is not to be lower than for British labour of the same degree. Your employer is prepared to pay your fare to England under the condition that you stay with him at least for 12 months. The fare will be deducted from your wages in small rates weekly. The accommodation as a rule a room of your own including the use of the bathroom. A wireless is often available. If no other provisions are foreseen may notice be given by both parties weekly. You may change your employment or – if you should not like our country – you may return home. If you have the intention to stay less than one year will you please tell your employer. Domestic servants come under the protection of the State Sick Insurance.

Private recruiting agencies such as Compton-James & Co. seriously undermined the efficiency of the “North Sea Scheme.” As a result, within a few weeks, the Ministry of Labour invoked 1935 statutes leftover from the Great Depression prohibiting the activities of British recruiting agencies in Germany. These companies had been conducting a lucrative business assisting German women in acquiring work in the field of domestic servitude in Great Britain for at least a year.

The immigration issues brought out by the “North Sea Scheme” for German women began to affect other areas of interest for German and British citizens. In 1947 the British government began to allow British women to marry German POWs, who were in reeducation programs on their way back to Germany. British women were upset to

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352 PRO FO 1013/1850 1040 Translation of advertisement.
learn that in order to carry out their wedding plans they would have to give up their
British passports and cease to be a British subject.\textsuperscript{354} In order for this privilege, the
British woman must apply in England before she left the country and wait three weeks
for permission in the form of a “certificate of no impediment.” Initially, if the British
woman desired to make a “pre-nuptial visit” to Germany in order to determine if the
situation was safe enough to go through with the marriage, she was only authorized to
stay for 30 days. After 6 June 1948, the time limit was abolished, partly due to improved
conditions in Germany due to the implementation of the Deutsche Mark and partly
because of the effects of public opinion. Public British outrage seemed to be quite
effective in initiating some limited changes for British subjects and German citizens as
well.

Public Opinion Research Office

One can see from the changes in immigration policy the dramatic effects that
cociferous public opinion and a free press can have on government policy, at least in
Great Britain and to a lesser extent, Germany. The year 1948 was a turning point in
British policy even before the Berlin Blockade and Airlift, partially because of British
sympathy for the German plight. Through the problems of German immigration, British
public opinion regarding Germans and the corresponding British policies toward them
changed. They did not change solely due to changing British opinion regarding what was
fair in immigration. German public opinion mattered to the British as well. The British
realized that without the goodwill of the German people, any economic recovery would

\textsuperscript{353} PRO FO 1013/1850 8 Sep 1948 Circular Notice No. 451/48, signed Wilrod.
\textsuperscript{354} PRO FO 940/12 Memo, Marriage of British women to Germans. Note that British women
marrying German men, who had permission to stay in England, were not subject to this requirement.
be of no good for the future of Europe, and would actually be akin to rebuilding the enemy for yet another possible war. German public opinion mattered to the British. With women in the majority even several years after the war, the British had to remain sensitive to the opinion of German women.

The CCG concerned itself with measuring German opinion in order to gauge its policies by German standards as well as by British ones. By the time of the immigration problems of 1948, the British had already been collecting data regarding German opinion for nearly an entire year. At about the same time as German women were gaining entrance to the reeducation program at Wilton Park, May 1947, the CCG funded and staffed the Public Opinion Research Office (PORO) offices in the British zone. The PORO began publishing reports about population statistics in the British zone of occupation. It did not take long for the PORO to determine that women were most often under-represented in polls and when they were, they were more likely to respond that they had no opinion. When German women did offer an opinion, it was more likely to be that the occupiers were “corrupt and scandalous.” This and the defeatist attitudes of German men combined to convince the PORO of the following conclusions:

Report 111, summer and autumn 1947, conclusions—The Germans are not interested in anything but their own material advantages and place scant value on the liberty of the subject. The Germans (and this may include some who now thing National Socialism a bad idea) are prepared to condemn the Third Reich because it failed to win the war and not because of philosophy or practice.

Beyond these initial generalities, the PORO set out to determine the general opinion of Germans regarding Nazism. The results were and are startling:

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356 Ibid.
National Socialism was a bad idea  
Men: 38%  
Women: 29%  

National Socialism was a good idea  
Carried out badly  
Men: 51%  
Women: 49%  

No answer  
Men: 11%  
Women: 22%  

The relative reluctance of women, particularly of older women, to answer questions on political matters is frequently noted. The “no answer” group...may contain a large number of discreet Nazis and perhaps those who would have liked to say that “National Socialism was a good idea well-carried out.”  

After these initial findings in the first PORO report, the rest of the report focused nearly exclusively on German women as the source of the problem and any possible solution for the economic and political problems in the British zone. Economics were still the primary concern, and the lack of working-aged men was the underlying weakness of the German economy. The British understood that in order for the German economy to recover, German women would need to enter the work force, but the PORO also noted historically that the Nazis had attempted the same scheme and had failed “lamentably.”  

The rest of the PORO report confirmed and re-emphasized the importance of everything that the Committee on Women’s Education, the Reeducation Centre at Wilton Park, and the Women’s Affairs Branch was already doing. In fact, it seems as if the PORO report #1 was written with Women’s Affairs in mind. Much of the PORO commentary even sounds as if it might have been written by a woman, but this is unlikely due to the

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PRO FO 1005/1868 PORO GOVSC, CCG (BE) Report No. 111 summer and autumn 1947. Surprisingly large numbers of educated Germans expressed their belief that Nazism was a good idea, but carried out poorly. These numbers reflect a very similar attitude for Germans in the American zone of occupation. No such survey was done in the French and Soviet zones during this period.  

Ibid. the Nazis had come to power promising German women their place in the home was honorable and that they would not need to work if they chose to have families. During the war, this promise became impossible to keep. In fact, the German government began to actively recruit women to work in war industries. German women went to work in large numbers to replace the men who did the fighting, but never in the numbers that the German government required to support full mobilization. Leila Rupp,
conclusion where the report notes that women “invariably follow the political opinion of their men.”359 The most interesting portion of the report regarding women bears quoting at length:

“Unless we succeed in bringing women into gainful employment in larger numbers which involves changing many of the basic ideas of Germans on living we shall be unable to obtain a labour force which can support:

- Normal family life
- Orphaned or unwanted children too young for employment
- The over 65’s
- The unproductive females
- The unemployable

At the end of the Thirty Years War polygamy was widely practised but at that time Germany was agrarian. What Hitler failed to do (increase live births) in a nationalist, united, and victorious Germany is unlikely to happen in a disunited, nihilist, and defeated country. Under the age of 21 the number of males and females is about equal so that the two million surplus women are in the age groups over 21. With universal suffrage this means that women have political power. There is in fact no Stadt or Landkreis in the zone where they have not an absolute majority. From data at present available it is not possible to state the exact excess of women by Kreise but it varies from 18-50 percent of the men in the same area. Reason has so far never been the strong suit of the German female, so it is likely that this mass of frustrated females will tend to influence elections towards extremes. Women where they have men will almost invariably follow the political opinion of their men. Where they have none they will tend to be influenced by church or take no interest, become nihilist and use their influence in extreme left or right wing movements.

If women power is extensively employed the total labour force in the Zone is sufficient to ensure normal economic development. Steps however should be taken at the earliest possible moment to ensure that the recruitment and training of female labour is undertaken, and what is more important, the fact that such a step is necessary should be brought home to the German people.360

The results of PORO findings had as much influence on CCG and COGA policies toward German women as British public opinion did on immigration issues. Certainly the CCG began pursuing entrance for German women at Wilton Park just weeks before the PORO findings. The chronology of these developments does not prove a causal relationship between German public wishes and CCG policy, but it does prove that British interest in

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359 Ibid., Report 1.
German public opinion and the plight of women increased dramatically after the DFD announced its intentions to organize all German women in March 1947. This in turn caused the CCG to strengthen the role of the S.O. Women’s Affairs, indeed to make it into a branch, in order to coordinate the activities and resources of German women. In order to correctly gauge the progress and need for emphasis on the affairs of German women, the newly created PORO focused much of its energies initially in this direction. The fact that the PORO released increasingly more reports concerning women throughout 1948 and 1949 demonstrates that at a minimum the CCG was more interested in what German women were doing and how German women perceived the British and their governing policies in the zone of occupation. The PORO poured a continuous stream of information about how German women received the policies of the CCG throughout the rest of the occupation period. Some of the information was useful at a macro-level and other parts of it seemed rather vague and only of minor or local interest. Much of it confirmed what the CCG already must have guessed or known.

In February 1948, the PORO reported women from Hamburg generally “had a particularly unfavourable opinion of the British” despite the fact that one-quarter of them claimed to be able to speak English.\(^{361}\) Further reports showed that German women in the British zone complained that food was still their number one concern.\(^{362}\) Related to this were the many mixed reports that German women generated complaints of “endless

\(^{361}\) PRO FO 1005/1869 PORO records, Report 115. Certainly the fire-bombings had to have had a lingering impact in this city.

\(^{362}\) Marianne MacKinnon, *The Naked Years: Growing Up in Nazi Germany* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987). MacKinnon confirms that the search for food and the general sense of scarcity was a way of life for Germans from even before the war.
queuing and shopping but are generally much more cheerful than in 1946.”363 A sizeable minority, 20 percent of German women, in the British zone believed that the primary intention of the British occupation was “to starve the Germans and wreck their economy.”364 Many of these assumed the British were purposefully conducting a campaign to “produce sterility.” In the eyes of these Germans, the publication of declining birth rates was evidence of the destruction of the German race.365

Despite the bitter opinions of some, the majority of Germans (95-99 percent), even those among the bitter few who accused the British of social engineering, understood that women seriously outnumbered men in the general German population. Furthermore, they understood that German women would have to work in order to survive, but they still had no opinion as to the consequences of the distorted population figures.366

In particular, despair reigned over how to handle the fact that there would undoubtedly be large numbers of women who would be unable to marry a German man. Few had any useful suggestions. Of those who had an opinion, 30 percent favored the idea of German women marrying foreigners but 50 percent opposed this. When asked how unmarried women could help most, more than half recommended that German women take up office work. Less than 10 percent mentioned agriculture, industry or even rubble clearing despite the fact that large numbers of women were already doing these types of work.367

363 Ibid., Report 140-142.
364 Ibid., Report 170.
365 Ibid., Report 196.
366 Ibid.
367 Ibid.
In the area of education the British received better marks from the Germans surveyed. Over 83 percent of them (men and women) favored the British policy of equal opportunity in education, but 70 percent favored separate classrooms for boys and girls. Women were less likely to accept the idea of having mixed-gender classrooms. German women could accept boys and girls being educated in the same school, just not in the same classroom. While German women were more likely to voice their opinion concerning education, only 62 percent of them acknowledged a moral obligation to vote in local and state political elections in 1948. These ideas were exactly what the CCG hoped to combat and change through its education and economic reforms in the British zone. The PORO surveys armed the CCG with enough information where the British authorities certainly knew the concerns of the German population. In order to influence the Germans, the CCG recognized that it needed to do more than simply survey the German population. The British recognized the need to publicize the intent of their efforts to minimize the disgruntling effects of policies that directly affected German cultural life.

Mass Marketing Culture

The idea to attempt to influence the Germans through mass media was not a new one. The Committee on German Women’s Education had recommended this throughout 1946 to no avail. At that time, however, resources were scarce. There was not enough paper to produce local women’s newspapers as late at 1946. There was not even enough paper to produce new textbooks for children. While the British women in the CCG

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368 Ibid., Reports 186, 190, and 192.
369 Ibid., Report 225, 76percent of German men acknowledge the moral obligation to vote.
370 PRO FO 1050/1299 Committee on German Women’s Education July and August 1946.
recognized that other zones (namely the Soviet zone) had magazines and newspapers for German women, the CCG could provide nothing on paper in the resource-poor British zone. Instead of paper, the CCG offered a Frauenfunk, or Women’s Radio, program. This failed due to shortages in electricity, lack of receivers, and a general lack of interest in the program.\textsuperscript{371} The lack of resources surprised few CCG authorities, who were not even allowed to provide Allied food to the Germans due to shortages in Great Britain.\textsuperscript{372}

Still, in late 1946 the British began to support and supply resources for British-sponsored publications and kept track of other German ones through censorship and various other programs even before the PORO reports. However, it was not until the PORO recommended a campaign to increase awareness that the British truly began to focus on the media. Based upon the PORO reports of late 1947 and early 1948, the CCG decided to conduct a media campaign in the British zone of occupation. This campaign included several different aspects such as newspapers in English and German, the creation of new German magazines and the production of what can only be described as propaganda films. One of the most important and visible parts of the raised interest in the media project was that the creation of islands of British culture in the British zone of occupation where Germans could come and read British literature and magazines or even newspapers from other countries. The program remained a local success only as many Germans did not even know of its existence, and German women were less likely to know of it than German men despite the emphasis of the PORO on German women. Even with all of the CCG money spent and work of Information Services in setting up the

\textsuperscript{371} Ibid., 29 August 1946.
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid., 19 August 1946. This contrasts with the situation in the American zone in that General Clay authorized food for Christmas parties even in 1945.
program, called “Die Brücke,” or “The Bridge,” only one-third of all German women even could correctly identify the program as a British public reader room for cultural exchange.\textsuperscript{373} Most German women (54 percent) did not even read the local newspaper and many (21 percent) reported that they had no time to read anything anyway.\textsuperscript{374} The poor showing for the results of the cultural exchange effort cannot be attributed to the lack of locations. The British funded at least one in Hamburg and other major cities in addition to two in each Land:

- Schleswig-Holstein
  - Eckernförde
  - Meldorf

- North-Rhine Westphalia
  - Detmold
  - Duisburg

- Niedersachsen
  - Neinburg
  - Oldenburg

In all cases men were more likely to visit the centers but in Detmold and Duisburg the rates for women were markedly higher than in the other cities.\textsuperscript{375} Notably, this is where the British Women’s Affairs had begun its work, and this is where the Committee on Women’s Education had first implemented its rules on schooling (see above). If the success of “Die Brücke” and other enterprises to educate German women and get them involved were only mildly successful, this was at least evidence of progress.

Despite the discouraging statistics, the British Information Services increased their efforts towards “Die Brücke” throughout the occupation and beyond. The majority of the visiting Germans (69 percent) reported that they came to “Die Brücke” simply for

\textsuperscript{373} PRO FO 1005/1869 PORO records, Report 173. 50percent of German men knew the significance. Die Brücke was also the name of a British magazine published in English and German with a circulation of about 9000 in the British zone.

\textsuperscript{374} Ibid., Report 223. Most German men (67percent) did read the daily newspaper and fewer of them (13percent) reported having no time for reading.

\textsuperscript{375} PRO FO 1005 1869 30a. Special Report No. 288. German men outnumbered women 4 to 1 (or more) in Die Brücke, except in Detmold 2.5:1 and Duisburg 3:1.
the German language newspapers and articles. Only 35 percent looked at the English periodicals and newspapers. Less than 10 percent came for the purpose of looking at books or other foreign reading materials. Very few came for the films or English lessons. Despite these trends, most Germans understood “Die Brücke” to be a positive attempt by the British to bridge a cultural gap and make periodicals available to the masses.\(^{376}\) If “Die Brücke,” the magazine and the cultural centers were mildly successful, other British endeavors to influence German culture and present a western twist to it were not successful.

**Other Media**

The CCG made some half-hearted attempts to use film in their plan to influence German culture. In the early British efforts, filmmakers addressed the plight of the German woman, and used her to exemplify the plight of Germans in general. One of the first examples of this type of film was in the production of short educational films in late 1947.

The idea to use films to affect the masses was a new idea neither to the Germans nor the British—both sides had done so during the war. Perhaps the memory of such campaigns and such flamboyantly artful, but now hardly palatable films like the 1934-36 *Triumph of the Will*, ironically directed by a German woman, Leni Riefenstahl, doomed the idea of a British propaganda film campaign from the start. However, the British propaganda office within the IA&C probably thought that the German mind would still require something dramatic in order reach and influence the German soul.\(^{377}\)

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The first effort of the British was to censor existing German movies. At first it
seemed the British needed only to remove a few titles from circulation—the Nazis had
only sponsored a few hundred films and those were easily removed from availability.
However, the IA&C decided to look at movies before the Nazi period and removed
anything and everything that seemed to promote militarism or German superiority. One
might think that even these qualifications would trim only a handful of films from
circulation. However, the British censors compiled a list of over 1,000 movies to be
banned. There seemed to be little rhyme or reason to their censorship criteria. Even
documentary titles such as *Bedouins*, *Flowers*, and *The Pleasures of Christmas* made the
censorship list.\(^{378}\) Clearly it was easier for the censors to ban movies than to watch and
screen them. Perhaps certain manufacturers, directors or producers carried a particularly
poor reputation as the British blanketed several production companies.

Regardless, so many movies were banned and so little raw stock to make new
movies existed that the British felt they could gain a significant portion of the possible
audience by releasing their own films after taking so many of the German ones off of the
market. When the issue came up at the quadripartite council, the Soviets demanded that
any films made in any zone be exchanged one for one with films made in other zones.
The Americans protested and demanded that Austrian and other foreign films would have
to be exchanged as well. In spite of the friction the western Allies agreed to the Soviet
request. The British complied by sending copies of the films they made to the Soviets

\(^{378}\) PRO FO 946/85 Complete List of Censored German Films up to and including 6th November
1947, No. 5/3/47.
but they never received even one in return.\textsuperscript{379} By their own admission, however, the films the British supplied were low-grade, or even “third-rate.”

An example of one of these films was \textit{School Amongst the Ruins} from December 1947. Graham Wallace from the Crown Film Unit offered to produce this short film to cover the physical problems and limitations on juvenile education in Germany. He and his partner, Frank Leberecht planned a second film, which would address the problems of adult education.\textsuperscript{380}

In \textit{School Amongst the Ruins} the filmmakers used anecdotes from many sources to produce a realistic picture of what life was like for children in Germany. The purpose of the film was to ensure British citizens could understand the importance of supporting German education and the population in general. The film opened in the first scene by showing a cold, dark, bomb-damaged classroom in Cologne, Germany with piles of loose papers of all sorts lying about a desk. The narrator began, “These are the exercise books used by German children in the third winter after the war. Let us take a look and see how things are with these children and their schools.”\textsuperscript{381} When a hand finally turns some of the papers on a desk, it becomes obvious to the audience that the students have done their work on scrap paper such as old bills, wallpaper, newspaper, and even toilet paper.

The producer described the second scene best:

\begin{quote}
\text{“It is a cold and wet winter’s morning. A little fair-haired girl, whom we shall call Marga, is running along the length of a girder that lies across a heap of rubble filling up the street. She has all the grace of a tight-rope walker as she balances her way with arms outstretched. Marga is scantily dressed in old clothes. She has no shoes on her feet. As she goes through the street the camera pans to show us more of the ruined part of the city. Here and there we see other children sitting on the tangled forms of girders, or looking out of the windows, that are empty of glass, as if they were patrons in a theatre box. All}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{379} PRO FO 946/76 Occupation Films.
\textsuperscript{380} PRO FO 946/91 \textit{School Amongst the Ruins}, 4 December, 1947.
\textsuperscript{381} Ibid., 2.
look cold and miserable. As Marga runs along we hear the words of an old German nursery-rhyme:

{Translation}

‘Maikäfer, fliege,
Vater blieb in Kriege.
Mutter ist im Pommerland,
Pommerland is abgebrannt,
Maikäfer, fliege.’

Maybug, fly,
Father stayed in wars.
Mother is in Pommerland,
Pommerland is burnt up,
Maybug, fly.

The camera shows us Marga’s home. A patched up attic dwelling on the top floor of a half-ruined house. The only way up into it is by a crazily built staircase that clings precariously to the outside of the house. The roof, gleaming wet with rain, is patched and held together with strips of tar-paper and sacking. It is one of the few houses standing on the street. Marga runs up the stairs....

Voice of Marga:

‘I am thirteen years old, and I have six sisters. Two are not yet going to school. My Father is missing and my mother works in a factory. I must look after the babies when the neighbors are out searching for food...There are many times when I cannot go to school, because my brother and I have only on pair of shoes between us.’

The rest of the film continues in the same vein to show the hardships German students faced in the post-war period even years later. Throughout the film one can see that the German population consists mainly of women and children. There are very few men present in the film, which was supposed to represent the reality of the British zone of occupation. The thirteen-year-old Marga moves about the apartment cleaning up pools of water from a leaking roof and takes turns using the single pair of shoes with her brother, Otto. They alternate going to school and staying home to watch the smaller children. Otto spends his spare time collecting pieces of coal from the allied distribution points, at great risk to his own safety and freedom. The entire situation was bleak for everyone, but the portrayal of women as the majority of the German population stands out. Clearly the British filmmakers understood that men were a minority in the postwar German world.

The British occupation government gradually became aware that this was an important reality as well.

The producers of *School Amongst the Ruins* used the image of German women and children to encourage British sympathy for the Germans. This was not so much in order to help advance the cause of German women, but to make the job of the CCG and COGA easier through increased participation in donation programs and other charity works. The British occupation authorities felt that in order to succeed they would need help from the British population. The portrayal of the German woman and her children as victims was meant to aid the British efforts to gain popular support for their schemes to improve the German economy. This was part of an effort to hasten the ability of Germany to stand on its own so that the British could eventually provide less and less economic aid. In this instance of British filmmaking, German women simply represented one tool to obtain economic objectives through education.

The Media and Politics

The British occupation authorities’ education policy was not the only influence on German women. In fact, the changes the British effected in German education only influenced that part of the population that actually participated. Programs like the Wilton Park Training Centre only influenced a miniscule percentage of German women directly. Even radio and films reached only a fraction of the population, as expendable income was preciously rare and electricity unreliable for lack of coal in the first two years after the war. Mass media in the form of newspapers set the general tone of politics despite British efforts to make it otherwise. The British regulated the media in the first nine months after the cessation of hostilities, but by early 1946, publishers were printing
largely unrestricted political viewpoints and circulation was only limited by the quantity of paper available. The Germans had freedom to print what they wanted for the first time in 12 years and the result was a vast selection of political opinions across the spectrum from left to center-right (obviously National Socialist ideas were forbidden).

Not only did the British sponsor their own cultural magazine in *Die Brücke*, but they also managed to ensure the largest circulation of political newspapers of all of the zones. The British allowed and even encouraged political parties to participate in publication of their newspapers. While the SPD received somewhat favored treatment, even the Liberals, Independents, Communists and others circulated thousands of newspapers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>Braunschweiger Zeitung</td>
<td>152,600</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rheinische Zeiting</td>
<td>122,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rhein Echo</td>
<td>235,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Westfälische Rundschau</td>
<td>264,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Freie Presse</td>
<td>130,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hamburger Echo</td>
<td>160,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,063,600</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>Rheinische Post</td>
<td>235,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kölnische Rundschau</td>
<td>122,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Westfalen Zeitung</td>
<td>102,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>459,000</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>KPD</td>
<td>Freiheit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volksstimme</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>381,000</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>LIB</td>
<td>Nordwest-Zeitung</td>
<td>201,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lüneburger Landeszeitung</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>376,300</strong></td>
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<td>Hamburger Freie Presse</td>
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<tr>
<td>IND</td>
<td>Telegraf</td>
<td>150,000</td>
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<td>Weser Kurier</td>
<td>155,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>305,000</strong></td>
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261
This burgeoning business in newspapers was nearly more than the daily circulation of all German language newspapers in the other zones of occupations combined. The diversity of the political content of these papers represented an opportunity for a variety of opinions to be voiced.

But what can one say about the plight of the German woman from these numbers? Probably very little, however it is important to understand the political environment in which all Germans in the British zone were living. The main struggle was between the two larger interpretations of socialism and a variety of strains of capitalism. Though the SPD considered itself “socialist,” there was no major movement of women within the party. The Liberals and the CDU were both very conservative on most issues, including women. The other parties were more concerned with their own survival than with women, though a concern for German women might have provided a better sort of survival strategy in itself.

While all of the political parties used their newspapers to take advantage of the opportunity to influence Germany politically, only one party used this chance to redefine the role of the German woman. Not surprisingly, the KPD was the only party that did this. Members of the KPD in the British zone worked to advance the rights of women with sponsorship from the SED in the Soviet zone of occupation.

The female membership of the KPD in the British zone played an active role in spreading the message of the Party. Women in Hamburg even went as far as to form a women’s committee and affiliated themselves with the central women’s committee in

383 PRO FO 946/3 Press Policy memo of April 1946.
Berlin. They thought that they would belong to the DFD after March 1947, but travel restrictions the creation of the bi-zone made this problematic. These KPD women also used the newspapers above as platforms from which they could launch a campaign of “equal pay for equal work,” much like they had done in the Soviet zone. The KPD in Hamburg reported that in the British zone women on average earned 41 percent less than what men did for the same work. In the British zone, however, the KPD faced an obviously completely different situation than in the East. Without the resources and support of the occupation authorities, the party would not be able to dominate the agenda nor elections, though members of SED often claimed that the “socialists” did have a majority—if one counted the SPD and KPD together. If the votes had been counted that way, as they were in the Soviet zone, then the communist math would have been accurate.

At issue was control of local governments, which were largely controlled by CDU or moderate SPD socialists. The KPD obviously preferred any form of socialist control, and preached that women would be better off if that were reality everywhere. The KPD and more radical members of the SPD argued that women should be supporting socialism, because capitalism would continue to exploit them. Women could dominate the electorate and change the course of any election in favor of socialism over capitalism.

Then the CDU and the other capitalist parties would be in the minority position, and at a minimum they would be forced to reform. This never became the reality in the British zone. In every Land and city government the CDU could boast holding more

\[384\] SAPMO BY1 56 26-73, Analyse unsere Arbeit unter den Frauen im Laufe des Jahres 1949. German newspapers in the British zone advertised wages that confirm this KPD accusation. Employers made no secret of the fact of the unequal pay.
seats than the KPD, although the SPD was the majority in some areas. What the KPD wanted was a merger with the SPD into a party that would be very similar to the SED in the Soviet zone. In fact, according to the communist rhetoric, if the SPD would only combine their efforts with the KPD, they would have “more voices” than the CDU everywhere in the British zone except for a very few minor provinces and towns.\textsuperscript{385} The SPD rejected such proposals and instead linked itself at various times with the FDP or even the CDU, forsaking their communist associates. Over and over in KPD writings, this “injustice” stands out as an alarmist call for socialists to unite to fight capitalism.\textsuperscript{386}

The KPD portrayed the fight of the German woman for equality as part of this larger battle. The capitalists, owners of the means of production, were normally men, and the workers, now mostly women were being exploited by lower pay for the same work. If this type of rhetoric worked to gain German women in the Soviet zone the benefit of the order for equal pay, there was no such vindication in any of the western zones. The communist rhetoric fell of deaf ears, even when the KPD won legitimate representation, albeit as a minor party, in elections sponsored by the occupation authorities.

The SED summarized political activity in the British zone by analyzing the positions of the major parties. The KPD explanation of the CDU position was that the Christians were hypocritical and vividly immoral, even unchristian. “Dr. Adenauer explained, ‘The CDU is the party that is against Marxism, against the SPD and against the KPD.’”\textsuperscript{387} This set up the CDU to be the arch-nemesis of the KPD. The CDU posed

\textsuperscript{385} SAPMO BY 1 64 130-160 \textit{Zur Lage in der britische, amerikanische, und französische Zonen, und das Wahlatsysteme}, 2-5. The KPD believed that the effort need only take place in Bremen and Hamburg, in which nearly half of the population of the British zone lived.
\textsuperscript{386} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{387} Ibid., 5.
the question: “Christian or communist?”. Other CDU officials went further and their own words probably helped the cause of the communist more than any of the individual KPD writers did. P.J. Schaeven, General Secretary of the CDU in Cologne reportedly said, “Hopefully the day is no longer far off when the atom bombs will change the minds of the hard-headed reds in the East.” More sinister yet, Maria Sevenich supposedly addressed a CDU gathering in the Ruhr and said, “The Communists had it too good in the concentration camps and it would have been better if none of them had been released.” If these comments were not bad enough by themselves, the KPD made them seem even worse by claiming that the CDU leadership was controlled by a group of former “Nazi officers.”

The KPD explanation of the SPD position is less virulent, but still unfavorable as the KPD blamed the SPD for the failure to establish socialism in the West due to SPD intransigence in merging with the KPD there. The SPD were traitors. According to the KPD position, the SPD publicly renounced the KPD by stating that, “The SED and KPD are not German, but Russian parties.” The SPD also attacked the very idea of democracy in the Soviet zone, “In the Ostzone there is no democracy, the SPD is not allowed. The KPD itself does not practice democracy, it is ruled by the Führer principle.” Such rhetoric, though dangerous, had enough of a ring of truth that it was effective in limiting mass support for the KPD in the British zone. Still support for the KPD grew between the end of the war and 1947. The party went from having the support of between 1-3

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388 Ibid., 4.
389 Ibid. Some of these comments printed by KPD newspapers must have been either taken out of context, or falsely attributed to politicians. These people must have known better than to say any of the things quoted here in any public forum.
percent of the population in local elections in 1946, to having the support of over 10 percent in some of the larger cities in 1947. While the SPD and CDU each boasted support from over 35 percent of the population, the KPD became a significant third choice in what the British had wanted to be a two-party system. Overall, that meant that there were nearly 900,000 communist voters in the British zone in 1947, out of a voting population of 8.5 million. The communists were making progress at the expense of the CDU and the smaller parties, which were shrinking in overall number of voters.

It is likely the KPD continued to grow in the British zone due to terrible economic conditions, very little improvement in those conditions, and the lack of action by the German parties in charge of local governments. The SPD and CDU governments were still tentative and were forced to look to the British for approval before acting on anything remotely controversial. The formation of the bi-zone, the introduction of the Deutsche Mark, the Berlin Blockade and subsequent Airlift changed this perspective in 1947-48. Not only did economic conditions greatly improve, and rapidly, the importance of having consumer goods was greatly overshadowed by the actions of the Soviets. Totalitarianism became linked to socialism, and the growth of the KPD in the West was effectively stunted. Since the socialists were promoters of women’s equality and rights, their agenda became suspended in a web of anti-socialist propaganda. The agenda of German women in the British zone of occupation took a backseat to the more pressing political and military concerns of 1948. Likewise, the growth of support for the KPD slowed.

390 SAPMO BY 1 64 130-160 Zur Lage in der britische, amerikanische, und französische Zonen, und das Wahlsysteme, 5.
391 SAPMO DY 301 IV 2/13/502 Britische Zone Statistische Darstellung, 1-4.
Conclusion

Certainly the British had made efforts to improve the lot of Germans in their zone. They did so in order to alleviate the burden on their own economy in supporting the defeated German enemy. As part of that effort they realized German women would be a key factor in restoring the German economy due to the lack of men. The British determined that German women, imbued with the 3 K’s of *Kinder, Küche, und Kirche* (children, kitchen and church) for 12 years would need assistance in adjusting to any new role as a worker and head of household. By 1946 women’s education made great bounds in Germany largely due to the work of British women who took it upon themselves to improve the German system and more importantly, to make this official British policy. Also in 1946, women’s voluntary organizations achieved greater freedom and levels of organization than they had in any other time in German history. The British occupation authorities helped to facilitate this as well, although they did not encourage women in politics.

By 1947 the CCG and COGA agreed that improved women’s education and participation in voluntary organizations were in fact desirable. It is likely that the formation of the Democratic Women’s Federation of Germany (the DFD) in the Soviet of occupation in March of 1947 played a role in changing the role of German women in politics. The DFD mission to enlist all German women in a supra-party, supra-confessional organization must have seemed threatening to the British occupation authorities. Shortly after the formation of the DFD, the British invited a select group of German women to attend the Wilton Park Training Centre. Here women of various

392 Ibid.
political orientations learned about western-style democracy and had a chance to see what life was like in Great Britain, and in POW camps.

The contacts made between German and British women at Wilton Park led to Anglo-German discussion groups back in the British zone, and alerted the British to the problems of German women. The exchange of ideas also led to the idea that German women might be a source of labor in Great Britain. The ensuing importation of workers under the “North Sea Scheme” effected changes in British immigration and marriage laws through the voice of public opinion.

The British instituted branches of the Public Opinion Research Office in the British zone of occupation to determine the state of German opinion there. What the British found confirmed much of what they were already doing in the realm of women’s affairs, though there was still some misunderstanding between the two cultures. The British set out to combat that misunderstanding with radio programs, newspapers, magazines and even cultural exchange centers.

Despite the efforts of the British to influence German culture, perhaps the greatest influence on the German population was the free press policy of the occupation forces. By mid-1946 when the shortage of paper was largely alleviated, the press became a marketplace of political ideas. In the larger issues of communism versus capitalism, women’s issues played only a small role. The communists wanted women to play a larger role in the battle of ideologies, but the events of 1948—the introduction of the D-Mark, and the Berlin Blockade and Airlift—overshadowed all of this. The fact that totalitarianism had become linked to socialism in the East was detrimental to the cause of German women who saw socialism as the way to gain equality. As voting statistics in
the British zone demonstrate, both socialist parties, KPD and SPD, gained support from 1946-1947.

The refusal of the SPD to merge with the KPD in the West ended any hope of communist domination before 1948, and the events of that year sealed the deal. Scientific socialism and the progressive ideas for women that came with it in the East lost support after the Berlin Airlift. More importantly the movement lost much of its potential and momentum it had gained during the economically depressed years of 1945-1947. During that period Germans had listened to the communists and some had heeded the call to join them in their quest to make the future of Germany a socialist one. However, by the end of 1948 the growth of support for the communists had stopped. Germans who had begun to see the KPD as a legitimate option were less likely to do so after the Berlin Crisis. The KPD hope for a mass-movement of German women linked to the DFD was no longer viable.

German women interested in the struggle for gender equality were not silenced necessarily, but their cause was somehow muted and no longer as urgent or even relevant. This might seem to be counter-intuitive, as an increase in ideological tensions might have had the opposite effect on women’s affairs. That is to say that alternatively the occupation authorities could have seen the Berlin Crisis and the resulting tensions as a period when the critical battle for public support must be won. Women, being the majority of the population, would be the difference between success and failure due to their impact in sheer numbers alone. Instead the battle for political support turned into a struggle for survival for Berliners, who became emblematic of all Germans. The Allied
forces became heroes in this struggle and thus for many Germans became emblematic heroes against the Soviets in every crisis and conflict that followed.

In 1948 when the Soviets cut off the city of Berlin from all material aid from ground transportation originating in the western zones of occupation, they made a fateful choice. While it is not true that the Soviets could not return to a united Germany policy, they did not, until Gorbachev’s glasnost and perestroika, which along with economic woes eventually unraveled the entire Soviet system. In the German context, after 1948 never again could the Soviets credibly claim to be acting in the best interest of German citizens, including women. If any of the large number of undecided voters and those moving from the disintegrating “Splitterparteien” doubted the intentions of capitalists and/or communists in Germany, the Berlin Blockade showed that the Soviets at least held the Germans to be pawns in the Allied game to control Germany’s future. Most western-oriented Germans understood that the Soviets were attempting to force the western Allies to leave Berlin so that the Soviets themselves could increase their realm of control in the East and eventually all of Germany. Even if it was the introduction of the D-Mark by the British and the Americans without Soviet approval that sparked the Berlin Crisis, the reaction was overly harsh. If the Soviets would starve Germans to make their point, would it not also be fair to say that the political motives were suspect as well? Many Germans certainly thought so and decided against joining the KPD, whose membership steadily fell in the British zone after 1948.

As for German women, until the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, they would continue to enjoy the benefits of British support for women’s education in Germany. Women continued to attend the Wilton Park Training Centre as part of the
education program for German civilians. German women continued to travel from the British zone of occupation to work in German homes as domestic servants. None of these programs ended due to the paradigm shift caused by 1948. Instead, these programs continued and German women continued to use them. Perhaps the CCG felt the British were doing enough for the Germans by 1948, however. The British occupation authorities did not implement any new “Wilton Park” or “North Sea” programs after late-1947.

The British could justifiably claim that they had done more for German women than any of the other western Allies. The results of the late 1947 elections supported this. In regional parliaments women had earned 7.9 percent of the seats in the British zone. While 7.9 percent is far from impressive, as the Soviet zone boasted over 20 percent women in the German Landtagen, women had only won 5.9 percent of the seats in the American zone and none in the French zone.393 Also, the British were the first of the western Allies to have a Women’s Affairs office within the occupation government apparatus. The British made real progress in educating women and probably thought they had done a respectable job in helping ready German women to be active in German society. If they had done this only to achieve better support for a democratic political system and a capitalist economy, still the British had made good faith efforts to improve the situation for German women. Though the British purpose was not to gain gender equality for women nor even to unite women in politics, still there is no doubt that those German women who participated in the British education and work programs were better

off than they would have been without them. However, problems such as unequal pay for equal work still persisted and the British seemed relatively unconcerned about them.

Interestingly, the British occupation government, like the Soviets had implemented policies regarding German women with almost solely civilian agencies. The British military had approved and supported the work of the Foreign Office, the Home Office, and the IA&C, but had remained relatively uninvolved in the implementation of women’s programs throughout the zone. Military commanders generally chose not to get involved with the issues of women’s affairs. This seemed to work for the British, but it may have worked even better if the military had been proactive in assisting or aiding British agencies concerned with women. While localism worked in the British zone, it may have worked better with more military involvement. That would indicate that military officers involved in performing such proactive work would need training in order to be able to provide instruction such as that offered by Wilton Park.

The Wilton Park enterprise did not seem to have a military orientation as it was planned and executed solely by civilian agencies (with the agreement of MilGov). The commander of MilGov, General Robertson, argued that the program at Wilton Park would be useful for German women, yet he had not asked that military officers be involved in planning the course of instruction, inspecting the training, or even in assessing the results. These are things that military officers do on a regular basis in training combat units, albeit with a very different program of instruction. It would seem useful to the commanders of occupation forces to have the ability to influence the civilian
population within the zone of occupation. To do so they will need members of their own organization who are trained to deal with women’s affairs.
CHAPTER 6
THE AMERICAN ZONE

On the 9th of May, 1944, less that a month before the Normandy invasion General Eisenhower addressed the officers of the Civil Affairs units training and waiting in Shornenham, England. These men would be the governors of territory liberated from the Germans until civilian government functions could be reestablished. Eisenhower emphasized their mission as getting “rear areas organized—electric lights, roads, and supply…as quickly as possible to some semblance of peacetime standards, so that they can support to the utmost the armies that are fighting at the front.” The general was clearly attempting to stress the importance of Civil Affairs. In order to emphasize his point, he ordered the men, who were in formation, to break ranks and gather around him. To Eisenhower’s credit, he did have at least an inkling of what the problems facing civilians would be. Eisenhower clearly understood that every act in war and in the occupations that follow is a political act with repercussions reaching far into the future.

Eisenhower’s speech continued, “whether it is restoring public utilities or helping a nursing mother who cannot get milk, if you don’t do your job, the armies will

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395 Alan Beyerchen, "Clausewitz, Nonlinearity and the Unpredictability of War," International Security, 17:3 (Winter, 1992), pp. 59-90. In his conclusion, Beyerchen challenges the relationship of war to politics. The two are inherently more intricately related as dependent variables than even Clausewitz’s notion of war as an extension of politics by other means.

274
Unfortunately for these nursing mothers, Eisenhower’s expression of the need for compassion in dealing with civilians did not equate to effective policy executed in Germany a year later. In fact, the American military governors of Germany seem to have been singularly unprepared for the situation they would find. They overlooked the majority of the German population.

As in the other zones of occupied Germany, women were the majority. One might expect that Eisenhower and his planning staff could have projected the demographic imbalance with most able-bodied German men scattered in surrounded pockets of resistance, captured, or dead. There is no indication that Eisenhower or any of his planning staff made such a realization, or if they did, that acknowledged it as an issue of any importance. In fact, except for Eisenhower’s fortuitously prognosticating speech in Shrivenham, England, many of these Civil Affairs officers may not have even begun to think about the implications of dealing with a large population of “nursing mothers” at all. This may be seen as a simple “sign of the times;” in a man’s world women may not have been considered as critical to military planning.

When they entered Germany, as early as September 1944, all of this would change. Germany was a country populated mostly by women. Though the few German men that were available would remain in positions of authority and power, the fact that women were the majority in postwar Germany would eventually underscore the American failure to successfully capitalize early on the hopes of some of the occupied that democracy would result from their terrible catastrophe. It would not be until 1947 that the Americans would begin to focus on women as an important segment of the
German population. It was almost as if the Americans did not see German women. If they did see them, the Americans treated them simply as mouths to be fed, not as important to the reorganization of society as German men were.

Administration

General Eisenhower technically was the commander of the American Zone of Occupation until mid-1946 when General Lucius Clay would take over that position. In reality, Clay had already taken control of almost all matters in Germany for the Americans long before that (with the notable exception that General McNamey commanded the ground troops). However, Eisenhower was such a positive presence that it was useful for the Americans that he stay in command a bit longer. Clay was a member of the southern “aristocracy,” a West Point graduate, and an engineer by training. His ability to manipulate facts and figures and his organizational skills made him valuable as an administrator. Despite his autocratic reputation, Clay was a liberal by ideology and was selected to supervise the political revival of Germany partially due to the recommendation of Eisenhower, but also because he agreed with Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson’s view that Germany was the “workshop for the world.” He also believed the German people should suffer for what they had inflicted on the world but not to the point of disease and starvation. Clay would be the Military Governor of Germany until his replacement by John McCloy in 1949 with the transformation of Military Government into the Office of the High Commissioner for Germany (HICO).

\[396\] Ibid.
The organization Clay commanded, The Office of Military Government in the U.S. Zone (OMGUS), was an apparatus that encompassed all of what the American’s thought the Germans would need in order to become reeducated, democratized, demilitarized, and denazified. In none of these functions had OMGUS considered German women to be a group of significance.398

In the American Zone of Occupation, and certainly in the other zones, there were women who were politically organized and willing to participate in Germany’s democratic and economic resuscitation. OMGUS failed to recognize these groups of women as relevant until late 1947 and early 1948. By the time OMGUS finally organized a Women’s Affairs section to investigate the needs of German women, it was only about one year before the first German national elections and the founding of the *Bundesrepublik Deutschland*.

Clearly the Women’s Affairs Section of the Cultural Affairs and Education Branch of OMGUS played a relatively minor role in materially helping German women organize but this under-funded and under-staffed section did leave a record of what it found. This would result in a continued emphasis on women’s issues into the High Commissioner for Germany era, 1949-1955, and beyond.

If the Americans seemed to have failed to realize that German women would be the dominant demographic group of the adult population in their plans for governing during occupation, the occupiers did have other concerns. Amid the threat of continued

“werewolf” Nazi resistance, which never materialized in any meaningful sense, the Americans planned to denazify, democratize and reeducate Germans. In none of these three aspects of occupation administration was there ever any plan to target women specifically. Despite this lack of foresight, the Americans did eventually recognize the special needs of women and allocated some resources to investigating and organizing these women in order that they would be able to help themselves and participate in the new government. Though it may be argued that the efforts of these programs were ‘too little, too late,’ the records of this enterprise illustrate just how over-simplified the initial American understanding of the German woman as the Trümmerfrau was.

In this chapter, I intend to explore the role of German women in immediate postwar society in the American zone of occupation. Though I have considered feminist perspectives in researching this topic, this work focuses on the policies of the Occupation Government of the United States and the effects of its policy on German women. This part of the study is focused upon the impact of American policy on everyday life and the eventual reawakening of political consciousness among German women in the American zone. It is also focused upon how the American experience in occupation differed from that of the other zones. I will use the records of the Women’s Affairs Branch of OMGUS to illustrate the most tangible results of that experience. I will then look at specific examples in northern Bavaria, in the vicinity of Bamberg to examine the interaction of OMGUS authorities and German women there. In the process, I hope to contribute to our understanding of the complex nature of the role of German women in the immediate
postwar period. Finally, I hope to illustrate the importance of integrating women into any plan for occupying territory with military forces.

The late start of the Women’s Affairs Section begs several questions, among them: Why did it take two and a half years for the occupiers to recognize women’s affairs as an important issue and what finally triggered the interest in German women? What would the goals of such an organization be? The answers to these questions are complex, and involve incremental change caused by many inter-related factors that work like a feedback loop rather than a linear progression of decisions by American officials. One factor was American women, who prodded American military commanders to look at the problems of German society in a new way. Another influence was the harshness of the “non-fraternization order” initiated by President Roosevelt through General Eisenhower and later decentralized. The repercussions of this order, particularly with respect to German children affected Military Government and this in turn affected German women. These factors can be identified and documented. The effects of other factors can only be inferred, such as the influence of the International Women’s Conference in Berlin in March 1947, which did seem to initiate some interest in canvassing German women for their opinions. Another factor one can infer influenced the situation was the perception by military commanders that to deal properly with “women’s affairs” required women occupiers. All of these factors work together to paint a picture of occupiers who came in with the idea that they could simultaneously deal harshly with a civilian population and still manage to improve conditions to the point that someday their job would be complete. They thought they could then turn the messy business of governing over to another civilian agency, possibly the State Department, or back to democratized Germans. The
uneven path that the American occupiers took in humanizing their approach to occupation governing ended in success, but their was room for improvement, which could have accelerated a return to normalcy.

Within the parameters I have set, I will attempt to use Bamberg and its surrounding area as a specific case study to demonstrate the divergence between the goals of the American occupiers at the highest level and the hopes of local German. I selected Bamberg first because its records seemed at least as complete as any other Landkreis, or county and secondly because of the relative lack of “over significance.” During the war, this area of northern Bavaria was not involved in the most intense fighting; it was occupied late in April 1945 with some, but comparatively light, resistance being offered.\footnote{\textit{In fact the actual assault on Bamberg had required only 2 infantry assault companies and it fell within 2 hours of mostly token fighting by a few fanatical resisters.}} Bamberg may be viewed as typical of the experience of the occupation as it was largely an agricultural region, with moderate industrial capacity and medium sized urban areas. It contained few of the critical resources such as the coal of the Ruhr and did not have the connotations of significance of Berlin, Nürnberg, or München.
Figure 7.1 Bavaria made up most of the American Zone, which also included Hesse, Württemberg-Baden, Bremen, Bremerhaven and Hamburg (only initially).
Bamberg was important regionally, as it was a major hub of railroad and river activity and during the war a factory had produced tank components. The major autobahn route from Nürnberg to Berlin (A-9) passes through the region. Culturally, Bamberg had traditional importance in that it had been the seat of the Holy Roman Empire in the 11th Century. The Bamberg Cathedral, built in the year 1012, is a national landmark, containing the remains of bishops, a pope, and the famous “Bamberger Reiter.” The rider, an unknown prince or knight, had come to symbolize Bamberg and was well known throughout the German speaking world as the ideal portrayal of the monarchy and chivalry in the high middle ages.400

Figure 7.2.--The Bamberger Reiter.

400 City of Bamberg Bureau of Tourism and Congress, official tourist guide, September 1999, 15.
In addition to the most famous of Bamberg’s cultural attractions, there are over 3000 monuments and memorials throughout the city that are protected sites under German law. To add to these reminders of former glory, new memorials would eventually be erected. One would be a simple engraved plaque on the site of one of the most picturesque bridges in the town. The memorial “Am Kranen Brücke” (On the Crane Bridge) in the baroque district on the Regnitz explains that 1,992 soldiers from Bamberg died in the Second World War. Almost as many civilians were lost to bombing raids, 242 killed and 1642 missing. In a population of 50,000, this equated to just under 8 percent of the inhabitants. Women, in large part, would bear the burden of surviving these losses and the occupation.

Preparation

If American occupation forces did not initially recognize women as a group worthy of special consideration, they were reacting only to the training and guidance they had received. In late 1944 and early 1945, when American troops were making their final push into Germany they wisely brought with them hundreds of trained Civil Affairs soldiers who would execute their task in Germany under the more ominous term, “military government.” Most of these troops had been carefully screened and trained at the University of Virginia with further training in Shrivenham, England. There is no evidence that the training of these men (and they were all men) referred to or emphasized

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402 Many times the terms Civil Affairs and Military Government are considered synonymous due to the fact that the executors of both were often the same persons. However, for the purpose of clarity and in strict adherence to the intentions of the US Army, the term “Civil Affairs” in this paper refers to activity by these personnel in liberated Allied territories while the term “Military Government” applies to the territory of conquered enemies.
women as an organized social group. The only issues tailored for the concerns of women were listed under discipline, morale and public health (i.e. fraternization and venereal disease.) German women were considered simply a part of the civilian population and not as a special interest group.

The main concern of the training for these men was their safety, field survival skills and their ability to reestablish public utilities quickly and efficiently. Much of the training was theoretical and did not focus on the situations the soldiers in Germany would encounter. The training conducted by the senior members of the detachments, which they in turn had received at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville or in the Civil Affairs Training Program at various universities, consisted of up to 4 months of classroom instruction, much of it focused on foreign language training. Everyone involved agreed this was woefully inadequate, but at least the best available men were carefully selected in order to give the endeavor the best chance of success.

The birth of this training system was unusually difficult because President Roosevelt himself had heard that the Army was “forming a school for Gauleiters.” Roosevelt’s reaction was initially only negative, but grudgingly he admitted the school was probably necessary and he allowed it to continue temporarily under the stipulation that only “absolutely first class men” should be chosen for such duty. The President wanted the State Department to eventually take over these duties but this agency was

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404 The Women’s Army Corps, or WAC’s, were not used probably because Civil Affairs/Military Government units would be attached initially to front line units, and their work would likely start before the fighting had stopped.


406 Ziemke, 18. 10 Feb 43 ltr in PMG, MG Div, decimal file 210.63.

407 See Ziemke, 12-15.
reluctant to take on such a task, knowing it would require manpower in short supply. Thus, the Army would be left to execute the occupation the best it could with a skeptical President and few resources.

The training given to the senior officers in the program was undoubtedly intended to be disseminated to the other members. However, once it became clear that many ad-hoc detachments would be formed, there was no time for this. Over 6000 men were estimated as necessary in 1942, and the Charlottesville system could only produce 450 per year. Even the expandable CATP only trained up to 1300 annually.408 Thus many of the detachments were put together as late as April 1944 in England. Their training was much more like “boot camp” than that of a governor or an ambassador. The two-week “crash course” conducted by the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) consisted of a week of orientation and equipment issue, followed by a week of bivouac. During this week, these men test fired weapons, attended a driving school, learned first aid, and spent at least a whole day learning how to remove unexploded ordinance. Eight one-hour sessions were dedicated to discussions of public safety, local government problems and “special activities.”409 The Army experiences in Africa and Italy had certainly informed some members of this cadre of instructors, but there is no evidence that this experience was referenced or harnessed in any systematic manner.

Trial by Fire: Initial Experiences

Thus, when the first Civil Affairs units moved onto the beaches of Normandy and across France, they were marginally prepared, perhaps as well as could be expected, to

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408 Ziemke, 10-18.
409 SHAEF records, National Archives II, National Archives, RG 331 stack 290/7/21/3-74 box 803/8. Memorandum regarding Tentative Training Program for Newly formed Detachments.
deal with the most threatening of situations. The rest they would have to learn. In France, as in other Allied territories, the Civil Affairs detachments were to aid in helping armies with the eventual goal of turning over local concerns to civil authorities as soon as possible. French liaison officers lightened the burden of civil affairs officers. The local population was generally trusted to do the right thing in the absence of military supervision. Germany would be different, and SHAEF recognized this. As early as February 1944, members of SHAEF’s “German Country Unit,” sometimes referred to as the “German Country Planning Unit,” was moved into a special staff section of the Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer (DCCAO) and they began to construct a handbook for how military government would operate in Germany. This action at staff level had no effect on the preparedness of the men in the detachments as the briefing they received concerning their new status reveals. On 25 May 1944, the deputy in charge of this special staff attempted to explain to the German Country Unit what their mission was. He apologized that it was “woolly” since the decisions at the highest level were yet to be made. The situation required guidance for commanders despite the tentative status of planners.

Tactical unit commanders received no special training for occupation issues. They were strictly to focus on combat, but they were to have Civil Affairs teams attached down to the battalion level in some cases. Thus the German Country Unit produced policy, tactical units maintained operational control, and SHAEF created the European Civil Affairs Division to maintain channels of communication with the teams in the field. This dual reporting responsibility for the teams was designed to give commanders

410 Ziemke, 80. SHAEF G5 records, National Archives II, German Country Unit.
flexibility to use the teams as necessary, but still maintained reporting of Civil Affairs issues to SHAEF while tactical commanders fought the enemy.

Tactical commanders received the first product of the German Country Unit in September 1944 when they were introduced to the first edition of the “Technical Manual (TM) for Commanders for the Occupation of Germany.” This TM was a narrative of the general situation in Germany and gave commanders an idea of what to expect. As previously mentioned, there was no mention of women’s issues in this manual whatsoever except for matters of fraternization and venereal disease. Interestingly enough, after just a few months of nominal occupation “experience” in slivers of German territory captured in late 1944, women’s issues had crept into significance, meriting mention in its December 1944 revision. Unfortunately, the coverage afforded to women’s issues is completely captured as follows:

“It is desirable that, as early as the situation permits, the Women’s Services, whether belonging to the forces, or of a voluntary character (Red Cross, YWCA, etc.) should be included in the occupying forces, and in relatively large numbers.”  

412 Such a cursory mention of women’s affairs in a sub-paragraph in this fashion added little to the awareness of the magnitude of the problems to be encountered. Even more disturbing is the fact that this sentence in the TM appears under the sub heading “Training and Recreation” making it not at all clear which women these services were intended to aid: Allied, German or both? Were German women considered recreation, or were American Women’s Services needed to provide recreation for them? If the Army training system and the SHAEF German Country Unit failed to prepare Civil Affairs

411 Ziemke, 51. SHAEF G5 records, National Archives II, Historical Section.

detachments for women’s issues, the experiences they would encounter quickly alerted them to the need for special consideration for the majority of the civilian population.

When the United States Army moved into Germany in September 1944, special attention was given to women’s affairs only after these issues were brought into the spotlight by outside agencies. The 22 September 1944 Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Resolution 1067 and the World War I occupation precedent caused Eisenhower to implement the largely unpopular “non-fraternization” order. This order called for only minimal and necessary official contact with Germans. This policy was sharply influenced by Secretary Treasury Henry Morgenthau and President Roosevelt’s reactions to reports of American soldiers consorting with German civilians while hostilities were still far from conclusion.\footnote{Ziemke, 99-106. For more on JCS 1067 see Americans as Proconsuls: The United States Military Government in Germany and Japan, 1944-1952 Ed. Robert Wolfe (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984).} Further exacerbating the mood were items such as the 20 October 1944 Stars and Stripes article “Don’t Get Chummy with Jerry.”

“Here’s what’s going on around Aachen:

1) German civilians are giving Yanks the V-sign, the glad hand, free beer, big smiles, plenty of talk about not being Nazis at heart, and hurry for democracy.

2) Some GIs and plenty of officers are returning the smiles, flirting with the Frauleins, drinking the beer and starting to think what nice folks the Germans really are.

3) German civilians are being removed from Aachen and driven two miles in US Army trucks…[to] the best buildings outside Aachen…They have already received 20 tons of Army food.”\footnote{414}

The idea that American forces were using trucks which could have been used to move troops to hasten the end of hostilities must have upset this reporter to some degree but the references to “the best buildings” and “20 tons of Army food” leave the reader with the impression that the Army was treating German civilians with an undeserved cordiality.
The notable increase in the number of allied casualties in December 1944 and January 1945 hardened resolve to implement an occupation based upon justice. Military government soldiers would apply this system in the foggy midst of various methods of interpretation.

Outside influences exposing incidents capable of embarrassing the Allied command and its non-fraternization policy were plentiful. In March 1945, the English Weekly *The People* published an article by Evadne Price entitled, “We Must Hate--Or Lose the Peace: German Women Fool the Troops.” The gist of this article was that German women were occupying positions as secretaries for occupiers in Aachen and that they secretly maintained allegiance to Hitler and continued to have liaisons with SS men. The fact that this article was written by “the first woman war correspondent into Düren” made it of particular significance.\textsuperscript{415} The article depicts American soldiers as being too sympathetic to the plight of civilians to the point of pursuing an instant “forgive and forget” policy. The article also claimed that, “Hitler rose to power through the women of Germany—never forget that, either.”\textsuperscript{416} With such blunt criticism of Allied policy, the Civil Affairs “rear” was forced to investigate and considered “it might be desirable to issue a denial.”\textsuperscript{417} Such issues most certainly caused commanders to deal more harshly

\textsuperscript{414} *Stars and Stripes*, 20 October 1944.
\textsuperscript{415} SHAEF records, National Archives II RG 331 stack 290/7/21/3-74 box 803/7. Newspaper article, Sunday 18 March 45, 8.
\textsuperscript{416} Claudia Koonz would explore the culpability of women in Hitler’s rise in *Mothers in the Fatherland* but her conclusions were constrained by the fact that voting records were not separated on the basis of sex. She does estimate that “almost half” of Hitler’s supporters were in fact women. The corollary is that less than half were and though Hitler’s regime appealed to some women, more men than women supported him. Koonz, 112.
\textsuperscript{417} SHAEF records, National Archives II RG 331 stack 290/7/21/3-74 box 803/7. Memorandum from Major V. Harrington to Major Graham King, 27 March 1945.
with civilians and made it all the more important to implement the “non-fraternization” order.

When tactical unit commanders in the American Zone gave up control of military government functions to Military Government Detachments, except for that of security, on 20 June 1945, most of the detachments were not where they were supposed to be and even those that were had been in position for 3 months or less.418 While they had been trained for pinpoint assignments in specific towns or counties in Germany and had studied available information regarding the area they were to occupy most of their experience was “on-the-job” training. They had participated in initial clearing and security operations in the Rhineland campaigns, but they had little experience operating independently.419 What they did have was conflicting guidance. After learning from Eisenhower himself what his concept of their mission was in the Shrivenham speech, they learned during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944 that:

“The essence of…policy is that no effort will be made to rehabilitate or succor the German people. Rather, the sole aim of military government is to further military objectives.”420

The main problem with this policy statement is the lack of clarity of what “military objectives” are after the cessation of hostilities. The G5 statement was typical of high-handed directives to treat Germany “as a defeated nation” to ensure Germans that the Allies would “prevent any further attempt by them to take over the world” and to that

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418 OMGUS Records, National Archives II Bavaria, RG 260 stack 390/41/13-14/2-3 box 609. Memorandum to tactical commanders dated 18 Jun 1945 from MG Irwin.
419 Ziemke, 164. SHAEF records, National Archives II, Operation Eclipse, G3.
420 Office of the Military Government in Germany, (United States Zone) (OMGUS) at the United States National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives II College Park Maryland. RG 331 stack 290/7/21/3-74 box 803/1. Ltr from McSherry to BG Robbins 21 Dec 44.
end, no “economic rehabilitation of Germany” would be encouraged. While such remarks made for good rhetoric, they aided the military government detachments not one iota, and made life more difficult for German civilians, including women.

Discovery

In the first few months of occupation, the military governors took stock of their new realm. Though overall statistics for Germany were not possible to compile until the second half of 1946 due to the utter chaos following total defeat, conditions locally revealed a distinct predominance of women in the population. In Bamberg, the 1946 census revealed the following statistics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male:</th>
<th>(44%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>41,847</td>
<td>(56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74,801</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These numbers had already been ‘normalized’ somewhat due to over a year of population redistribution after the war’s end. When refugees had returned to their original homes or had moved to their newly assigned residences, much of the population cramping, but not all, would have been alleviated.

In 1945, these numbers would have likely been even more slanted toward a female majority. Initial reports by military officials indicate that in June 1945 population of the city was above 100,000 due to refugees and camp inmates. Though no exact census numbers are available for these transient populations, the refugees and camp

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421 Ibid.
422 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/47/6/5-7 box 1146.
inmates usually consisted of a disproportionate amount of females, as well.\textsuperscript{424} In one of the five Landkreis Displaced Persons (DP) Camps at Tietz the following statistics were reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Inmate</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-13</td>
<td>360 (19)</td>
<td>380 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18</td>
<td>70 (4)</td>
<td>250 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-40</td>
<td>40 (2)</td>
<td>160 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60</td>
<td>90 (5)</td>
<td>80 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>170 (9)</td>
<td>310 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>1170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While each agency and camp reported differently and improvised to provide what information was readily available, no uniformly formatted reports were required. Most statistics reveal the demographic dominance of women at the local level everywhere.

Thus it was revealing that the camp at Ebrach reported 53 women awaiting trial for various minor offenses and only 47 men as of September 1945. This statistic is given force by the fact that the ratio of female convicted criminals to male ones was normally one to twelve!\textsuperscript{425} Such figures may show the increase in the activity of women as compared to men, who found it more prudent to take a “wait and see” stance and avoided coming out of hiding places.

With the German military system put to the sword, the legitimacy of male values was temporarily in question. Women became the providers. Gathering and black marketing became their method of survival for themselves and their families, which often included no (or only unfit) men present. Personal accounts illuminating the shift in the

\textsuperscript{424} The camps near Bamberg were mostly populated with refugees traveling with no documentation. These were not work or death camps, though conditions were not good. These were detention camps.

\textsuperscript{425} OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/47/6/5-7 box 1147.

292
roles of women are so numerous that they can be accepted as appropriate for Germany in general during this period. The statistics of Bamberg’s DP camps help to confirm that women had become dominant demographically as well.

By October 1946, with the situation somewhat ameliorated, and some soldiers having returned home, there were still officially 124 women for every 100 men in the American Zone of Occupation. This figure rose as high as 171 women to 100 men in the age group 20-29. American military officials reported total population figures for October 1946 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9,274,600</td>
<td>7,603,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Locally:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41,847</td>
<td>32,954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total in the US Zone:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Bamberg 428</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16,878,200</td>
<td>74,801</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers for the working population are just as staggering:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6,549,900</td>
<td>4,948,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total workers in the US Zone in October 1946:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11,498,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although these numbers appear to show the dominance of the woman in the work force, another figure must be considered in order to display the traditional tendency for women to occupy the lower paying positions. That is to say, even though women constituted 57 percent of the overall working population, they only managed to obtain 31 percent of more desirable wage and salary positions by 1948. This is actually .6 percent

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428 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/47/6/5-7 box 1146. Weekly intelligence reports, Bamberg.

293
less than what women had achieved by 1939.430 These figures may not be surprising for anywhere in the world in 1948, but clearly the Nazi regime had not helped liberate German women in the workplace despite the increased need for women to work. Thus despite the gains women made in employment percentages corresponding with their relative predominance in percentage of the population, women continued to perform traditionally lower paying jobs in industries that were considered appropriate for women. For example, the following represents the proportion of women wage and salary earners in June 1949 in the US Zone:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>% Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels and Restaurants</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemicals</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical Equipment</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above statistics were furnished by two American Women trade union experts invited by OMGUS to investigate the situation and make recommendations concerning the status of women in Germany. Sara Southall and Pauline Newman speculate in their report that the increase in women workers, especially those in lower wage positions was due not only to the prejudice of employers. In the defense of the public employment offices (Arbeitsämter), which often controlled where a worker was assigned, the “continuing increase in the number of women registering for work who have no previous work experience” could be attributed to the fact that families could not survive on a


430 Ibid, 3.
single income.\textsuperscript{432} Couple this trend with the traditional system of apprenticeship predominant in Germany, and in Europe at large, and it becomes clear that women found themselves with few choices. If they had not entered an apprenticeship program by the time they were 14-16 years old, it was unlikely they would ever receive the training considered necessary to attain a higher paying skilled position, much less any management position.

Though employer prejudice must have been no small factor in maintaining the grossly exaggerated dominance of men in the best paid jobs, the choices women made for themselves in their youth haunted them in the present of 1945-49. The cultural emphasis on \textit{Kirche, Küche und Kinder} (church, kitchen and children) popular among many conservative women (and exploited by Hitler), proved to be a hindrance to the advancement of women’s equality in the occupation period and beyond. Thus, although male patriarchal values were in question, a male dominated society continued under the occupation, partially due to the value system of the occupiers and partially due to the lack of preparation of women for leadership roles under the previous system.

A glance at some statistics bears this out. Of the 16.2 million people in the American zone in 1947, a full 23 percent (3.7 million) were employed in agriculture and forestry. Though population figures for men and women in rural areas were much closer to “normal” at 106 women to 100 men (or 51.4 percent to 48.6 percent), women still

\textsuperscript{431} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{432} Ibid.
omprised 55.4 percent of the agricultural labor force, probably due to war veterans’ incapacity.\textsuperscript{433} Even more incredible are the statistics for agricultural education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Type</th>
<th>Males (%)</th>
<th>Females (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Winter Schools 1947/48</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Agricultural Schools 1946/47</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\textit{Fachschulen})</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges (\textit{Hochschulen})</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in all agricultural and</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home economic schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The anonymous author of the report containing these figures comments that due to the unusually high percentage of women in the population at large, the female percentages were bound to decrease to around 20 percent when the situation normalized.\textsuperscript{434} It is clear from these reports that OMGUS had definitive proof, at least as early as October 1946, that there was a great disparity in opportunities for German women, across all segments of society. These figures for agriculture speak for themselves. Since women were known to makeup 55 percent of the agricultural labor force, they were terribly under-represented in the education for this field. They were deemed fit (possibly even by themselves) only for manual labor in most cases. Very few women were given the opportunity to seek high education.

Thus women were relegated to the role of simple workers in most cases. They were fit for work like planting, harvesting, carrying, and sorting—but not planning and developing. This type of stereotyping supports the symbol of the \textit{Trümmerfrau} as the

\textsuperscript{433} OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 155. Internal Affairs and Communications Division, Education and Religious Affairs Branch. Memorandum “Resume of the Needs and Problems of German Women dated 17 October 1947.

\textsuperscript{434} Ibid., figures compiled by Dr. W. Maerker, OMGUS German Consultant, Appendix C4.
typical self-image of the typical German woman during the immediate postwar period. If women had little education and were manual laborers, they easily fit the model of the simple rubble clearer or subsistence farmer. By looking at examples in society one can see how the prevalent image of the “rubble women” was confirmed by what women saw. In Bamberg, the rubble woman was as prevalent as anywhere and military officials would have to accommodate her.

Bamberg’s Military Governor

On January 8th, 1946, in the regional newspaper *Der Fränkischer Tag:*

*Demokratische Warte für das Regnitz-Main Gebiet* (The Frankish Daily: Democratic Watch for the Regnitz-Main Area) contained in small print on the right hand side of the second page a story about the outgoing military government official, Major John A. Watkins. The article officially expressed the gratitude of the city for Maj. Watkins’ efficient use of his authority during his tenure. It also announced the arrival of the new commander, Major Harry Woodall, and welcomed him to the city.435

The departure of Watkins must have caused a moment of trepidation for the citizens of Bamberg, as he had earned a reputation for being an above-average military government official. While the article in *Der Fränkischer Tag* might seem like lip-service to an occupying power and the hopes of the population for benevolence, there were tangible reasons for Watkins’ reputation. He was credited with getting the Bamberg shoe factory back on its feet, distributing clothing and improving conditions in general.

The Army valued his talents as an effective military government officer as well. At 47 years old, he was mature enough to be described as:

435 Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, *Der Fränkischer Tag,* 8 Jan 1946, 2.
“...hard-headed, realistic, jovial and thoughtful...He is unboastful but extremely proud of what his detachment has accomplished during its months of service and he derives real pleasure from complimenting staff members for their contributions. He has kept that staff well fed and well housed regardless of conditions or circumstances. Watkins has worked hard in this war without ever losing his health, laughter or good humor.”

Watkins was a veteran of the First World War yet had somehow managed to avoid bitterness towards the Germans. Between the wars he published a daily newspaper in Indiana and was the State Commander of the American Legion there. These civilian experiences must have done nothing but aid his organizational skills that would test his tenure as a military government official. His evaluation continues:

“He is illusionless, but full of hope for American and the world. Watkins believes that in 90 days his mission in Bamburg [sic] will have been achieved, namely to turn a purged Landkreis back to its new owners. After that, to his mind, he would remain as mere scenery. Watkins is a good sound, stable American who has brought vigor, decency, attainment and even inspiration to his assignment. There is no watered stock in him, his approach or his methods.”

This is not the typical evaluation of military government officers (MGO’s) in Bavaria. Most of the MGO’s in the surrounding Landkreise were anxious to return to civilian life at the first opportunity and had low morale. Major James R. Case, for example, in the neighboring district of Lichtenfels is described as “vinegar-tongued....he complains about the obstructive attitude of higher headquarters and his failure to get answers to his problems.” Case seems to succinctly represent the majority of MGO’s in describing himself as “old, tired and within two years of retirement....” Other officers in neighboring districts had been cited as incapacitated by family concerns, a desire to return home or addiction to alcohol, according to Colonel Harry Cain who profiled all

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437 Ibid., 2.
438 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/41/13/3-6 box 621. Field Inspection Report on Military Government Detachment G-247, 3 August, 1945, 1. All of the 1945 evaluations of
MGO’s in Bavaria for the Inspector General. Watkins seems to have been ideally suited to the task to which he was assigned and virtually no complaints exist about him specifically.

This description of Watkins makes it likely that he was at least not a factor in exacerbating any bad situation in Bamberg, even if he was unable to solve every problem. If Watkins and his detachment were a positive influence in Bamberg, one might conclude that the situation might have been well enough that perhaps Germans did not suffer as much as might have been possible elsewhere. The people in Bamberg, despite their benevolent governor, still suffered. Women were scraping by to support their families and the situation was far from good.

Miss Bamberg’s Thoughts and Wishes

The cover article of Der Fränkischer Tag published in Bamberg on January 15th attests to this fact, only a week after the city bid farewell to Watkins. The cover article that day was a poem entitled Miss Bambergs Dank und Wunsch, or “Miss Bamberg’s Thought and Wish.”

Miss Bambergs Dank und Wunsch

Zoörscht muß i song, wer i bin
Ich haas Kunäla und bin a Bambergä Gärtnamedala
Jä zweit muß i bei Herrn Oberscht
Mi fo alla obständig Leut nöcht schö bädenken;
Denn wie i grod hör;
Krieg nä durch seine Zeitung.
Wo die pulitische Parteien
Net insäftor durch anande schrein
Wo ruhig und vänunft denkt
Und was net ausr Häusla brengt
Denn mir sen brava friedlichä Leut
Und hamm on Schtreit und Krawall ka Freud
Wal unzä Hä Pfarrä uns immä bãlehrt

MGO’s were written by the same individual, Colonel Harry Cain. This makes the evaluation of Watkins that much more valuable in comparison to the other MGO’s in the area.
Das Friedn ähelt und Zwietracht zäschört
Mir hamm als Härr aufn rächtn Fläck
A Hirn im Kopf, durch aus kan Dräck
Und mecht unz anä was rächt Gscheits vor-
Mä lachna aus denn des is klor
Daß j’gälehrtä a wos is
Desi wä kehrtä is ganz gawifß
Mir handeln um schachern mit unzan Gämus
Mit Retti und Spargl und Zwiefl
Mir hamm ka Schtrümpf an unzra Füß
Und in Summä a kane Schtiefl
Dä Grundsatz vo unzera Handschhaft
Haft: Gut gä laht is halb vä kaft
Mir sen fleißl und fromm
Des kan i bächworn
Etz muss i obä mit mein Gä pappl aufhörrn
Sünst denkt välleicht dä Hä Obetscht zä letz
O Härrschaft, hot die ihra Goschm gä wetzt
Ich hob etz gschbrochn wie a Buch
Mir Bräuchten a guts Brot und Bier
Und Kans wu smecket wie Wognschmier
Denn des abscheulicha Gääbreu is Gätrek fö wilda Säu
A weiss Brot köntn mä vätrong;
Des klein abrot khört nei an Mong
Vo ana Kuh alz richtigs Futtae
Und nochet a Schtückla Buttæ
A weng mehr wurscht und hā bā kées
Etz bin I schtill ä werd sunst bōs
Alz wackra Dirn wor ich net blōde
Und schliess etz mit an Schbruch von Goethe,
Wu mir gälernt hamm: Gottes Hut
Mit Euch! Seid edel, hilfreich, gut.

L. Pfau
(Gertrud Bäumer)

This poem, written in the Frankish dialect was a diatribe against horrid living conditions and an expression of hope for better times to come. Most importantly, it portrays Miss Bamberg as a traditional woman, uninterested in politics, concerned only with feeding her family. The author of the poem, L. Pfau, was a pen name for Gertrud Bäumer, an active conservative feminist with an agenda of her own. Bäumer, born in

439 Gertrud Bäumer as L. Pfau in Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, Der Fränkischer Tag, 15 Jan 1946, 1.
440 Pfau is the German word for peacock, indicating the special kind of attention Bäumer might have been seeking by showing her “feathers.”
1873, had lived to see the feminist movements of the left before the Great War give way to conservative movements in the interwar years. Eventually all of these movements would be forced to combine into the Nazi Womanhood Organization. As a member of this organization Bäumer had continued during the Third Reich to encourage women to support their men, even if they disagreed with National Socialism.\textsuperscript{441} Bäumer had visited Bamberg in 1946 and must have been moved by the things she saw there, including women scrounging from the trash cans of the occupiers. In this work, she puts herself in the shoes of the typical Bamberg \textit{Hausfrau}.

The poem opens with an introduction of the fictitious author, Kunäla, a Bambergä Gärtnamedala (Kunäla, a Bamberg garden girl). The picture of this maiden turned subsistence farmer might have fit over half of the readership of the paper at that time. The garden girl then describes the confusion of hearing about politics in the newspaper and how this type of frivolous activity brings no satisfaction. How can it when “we have no socks on our feet and no boots?” What Miss Bamberg wishes for is good bread and beer. These might wash the taste of ersatz items away (that taste like wagon grease) and save the people from eating animal feed. The poem ends with a quote from Goethe: “\textit{Gottes Hut mit Euch! Seid edel, hilfreich, gut.}”\textsuperscript{442} (May God’s good graces be with you! Be worthy, useful, good.)

This poem might be taken at face value as an expression of popular sentiment by a local poet. It might also be seen as a deliberate construction of the picture of the

\textsuperscript{441} Bach, Marie Louise. \textit{Gertrud Bäumer}. (Weinheim, Germany: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 1989). Bach’s self-proclaimed all-inclusive portrayal of Bäumer’s writings mysteriously does not include this poem.

\textsuperscript{442} Gertrud Bäumer as L. Pfau in Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, \textit{Der Fränkischer Tag}, 15 Jan 1946, 1. Bäumer was working on a biography of Goethe at this time as well.
"Trümmerfrau" for the purposes of redirecting the focus of the occupiers at a time when denazification was still on-going. The use of the Fränkish dialect might be seen as having two purposes. First, it would appeal to the locals by drawing upon traditional roots of language in the area. Secondly, it would be difficult for any censor to read and understand, allowing the paraphrasing of grievances against occupiers to be hidden in the text for only the locals to appreciate.

The reference to being without shoes and socks might confirm this suspicion as only a week before, Major Watkins had been commended for successfully trading shoes for glass and salt. Miss Bamberg might have approved trading shoes for beer and bread, but if shoes were being made in Bamberg, what sense could it make to her to have sent shoes to other areas while locals were still barefoot? In the form of a poem, this type of criticism might then be leveled, even if it did not reach the ears for which it was intended—the military governors. The use of Goethe in the closing of the poem definitively portrays Miss Bamberg as the type of citizen with moral values of tradition and goodness. This "Trümmerfrau" is a God-fearing woman who is cast in the role of victim. Seeking to make meaning of her life, she struggles to overcome obstacles against forces beyond her power. An astute rebuttal might have pointed out that Goethe’s Faust had traded his fate to the darkness for temporary glory, and the Allies might condemn the "Trümmerfrau" with at the very least, aiding and abetting. German women continued their attempts to shake off such thoughts by portraying themselves as having been duped or swallowed up by the former regime.

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443 Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, *Der Fränkischer Tag*, 8 Jan 1946, 2.
Miss Bamberg then demonstrates emphatically the use of the myth of the German woman as the Trümmerfrau—the gallant woman working in the destroyed cities and toiling in the fields of the outlying areas to ensure the survival of the family. This became the German woman’s preferred method of distancing herself from political issues and focusing on the plight of traditional, innocent woman. As Elizabeth Heineman describes it, using the term common at the time, the women of Bamberg were ‘standing alone.’ They generally were without amenities and often without necessities. They were almost all without men fit for work or even companionship. Military Government officials were well aware of most of these issues and were making honest efforts to improve conditions—first for themselves, and only later for the Germans.

Any member of the Military Government should have noticed the daily suffering of the average woman in Germany. Even in Bamberg, where the damage to the city was estimated to be “only 25 percent,” daily suffering was the rule, not the exception. To make a bad situation worse, countless women were made homeless by Military Government “requisitions” and others were denied even the most cursory attention.

Examples of women ‘standing alone’ abound. When Mrs. Erna Brauer, a resident of Bamberg, petitioned OMGUS authorities for help in locating the father of her children in the Russian Zone for the purposes of collecting child support, she was informed that, “your problem is a purely German matter and you are advised to contact the proper German authorities.” Where and who were the German authorities? The police? OMGUS officials must have known that their jurisdiction could never apply across

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occupation zone boundaries. In light of this, the OMGUS response can be seen as distant, cold and cruel, even self-defeating. The lines between military concerns, civil affairs and matters “purely German” were drawn very haphazardly.

What had happened to Eisenhower’s intentions to help nursing mothers? Something had been lost in the translation and in the actualities of putting troops on the ground in former enemy territory. While the Soviets encouraged the SED to allow German women to form “antifa” committees, the British researched how to get German women to be better consumers and citizens, the Americans had ignored German women. A Women’s Affairs Section in OMGUS might be just the necessary agency to help reestablish this aspect of Eisenhower’s intent for military government officials.

If American refusal to aid women with problems of a “purely German” nature might be partially explicable by lack of manpower or simple insensitivity, other actions taken by them were not. While the military government could move into former civil government buildings, if they still existed, and troops could be billeted in former German Army barracks, many buildings were requisitioned for use as officers’ quarters or any other purpose the occupiers saw as necessary. This was a direct result of the ban on billeting soldiers with Germans. This often meant that American officials confiscated the buildings with the best amenities regardless of any claim to ownership by occupants. Ironically, a policy meant to keep Americans from living together with the enemy had instead resulted in Americans requisitioning property from often innocent citizens. Though occupation policy was not supposed to officially sanction vengeance against the Germans, this sponsored looting was conducted openly.

445 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/47/6/5-7 Box 1149. Letter from
Occupants with a documentably ‘clean’ past left a trail of attempts, most of them futile, to have their homes returned to them. Frau Gertrud Assmann of 8 Landsknecht Strasse in Hallstadt, a suburb of Bamberg, appealed to the military government under exactly these circumstances. Writing in broken English, she claimed to have built her house with her own savings. She used every possible shred of convincing evidence to persuade the military governor to return her dwelling as she was housing refugees. She claimed to have “made a narrow escape from a concentration camp.”446 Her request continued to explain how her son was sent to the Russian front as a medic and was constantly put into “the most dangerous places” as a result of her family’s refusal to support the regime with sufficient zeal. The end of her appeal is most emotional as she stated, “Now I am depending all on myself, being an old woman and convinced democrat [sic]. I lived from the increases (harvest?) of my garden.” As if all of this were not enough, the post script of her statement explains in detail how the home has poor plumbing, no gas and no sewer. As the military government would only requisition properties that were considered “most desirable” or at least fully functional, if this was one of the more desirable properties one can only imagine what the undesirable ones were like!

Unfortunately, no official response was filed with this appeal. It is highly unlikely that Frau Assmann received any response or compensation for her loss. Across the top of her letter is written in large black grease pencil (the Army’s all-weather writing

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446 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390 box 1146. OMGBY records of Resident Liaison and security office at Bamberg. December 13th, 1946.
Occupation officials could use the lack of documentation of such claims as evidence of the likelihood that stories were fabricated. With many buildings destroyed and records lost, individuals without connections to the highest levels of government would find themselves at risk of losing what little they had left.

These individuals, many of whom were women like Frau Assmann, would continue to stand alone and now without their own homes. Frau Assmann’s story might be seen as emblematic of German women in the American zone in general: they were helpless, alone, at the mercy of the whims of occupiers, and desperate to distance themselves from the Nazi past.

German women across the American zone of occupation faced the same situation. Similar stories exist in Würzburg, Wetzlar, and virtually everywhere else Americans decided to occupy. This type of American indifference to the rules of private property left a bad taste in the mouths of many German women who had hoped the American system would improve their situation. Instead, the Americans were demonstrating that their regime could be as self-righteously despotic as the one it was replacing.

Courting the Enemy

If the American occupation in general left many women disillusioned, others found it more beneficial. Within months of the end of hostilities, marriages of Americans to Germans became an issue of contention.

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448 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 152. Operations, Plans, Organization and Training Division Report on German attitudes toward the Army Assistance Program to
In September 1945, General Eisenhower rescinded all previous non-fraternization orders. In their place was now a more simplified order banning marriages between Americans and Germans. Billeting of soldiers with Germans continued to be banned, eliminating the possibility of legal cohabitation. Despite these prohibitory regulations, GI’s continued to fraternize. They largely ignored Eisenhower’s call to obedience:

“I rely on all members of the Armed Forces to conduct themselves with dignity and to use their common sense when dealing with the Germans, twice our enemies in war during the last 30 years…I want to impress on each of you that so long as you are stationed in GERMANY you will be regarded as representatives of the American way of life, and in your contacts with the German people I expect you so to conduct yourselves as to reflect credit on your country and your uniform.”

It is unlikely that many soldiers in Germany ever read Eisenhower’s words but they certainly knew the rule against marriage. Nevertheless, eventually the rule was clandestinely challenged. Not surprisingly, the gestation period of disobedience of the order very nearly matched that of the babies in the wombs of German women born of American fathers. Eight months after the first relaxation of the non-fraternization order, the first known case of an American marrying a German was reported.

A German official had performed the marriage and it caused quite a stir amongst American officials in Berlin. Generals Clay, Truscott, and McNaerney conferred and agreed that the offender would be returned to the US. This seems an unusual ‘punishment’ considering most of the occupiers expressed their desire to return home as soon as possible. There was no mention as to the fate of the woman concerned, though it is doubtful she would have been sent to America with her groom. More than likely, she


OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/40/20/3 box 46. Staff Message Ref. No. SC-4458, 29 Sep 45, Eisenhower to Clay.

Ibid.
would be forced to wait until circumstances would become more favorable, which they
eventually would.

By 19 December 1946, marriage of Americans to Germans would be permitted,
but only as an exception to policy and even then after near humiliating scrutiny. Few
Military Government authorities maintained historical records for marriages longer than
one year after the completion of the process. Records for District IV, however, were	abulated and maintained at Kitzingen, only separated from Bamberg by one Landkreis
(county) of about 35 miles, though Kitizingen is in a different district.

Marriage remained relatively rare in District IV at least through 1950. Only 85
marriages of Germans to Americans were reported through 19 September 1950.452
Proportionally extrapolated out to the rest of Bavaria results in an estimated 765
marriages in Bavaria, or approximately 1000 marriages for the entire US Zone between
1945 and September 1950.453 If this number seems low, it is because it is likely true that
many marriages were conducted without the consent of OMGUS authorities before the
relaxation in December 1946, and it is also likely that after this, records may not have
been kept current. Still, if we double our number, 2000 marriages is not an order of

451 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/40/20/3 box 46. Legal Division
memo from Brigadier General Bryan Milburn, 15 Feb 46.
452 OMGUS RG 260 Kitzingen Marriage File, List of Record Files Transferred to District IV,
September 19, 1950.
453 This figure is the result of proportional population figures. 1946 census figures were the basis
for this estimation. District IV had a population and landmass of about 1/9th of Bavaria in 1946. American
occupation forces in Hesse and Württemberg-Baden consisted of about 1/3 of American Forces with 2/3 in
Bavaria. This estimate cannot be proven but should be considered an approximation. Records of the
Office of Public Safety for the occupation of Germany summarized in military government training
manuals at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas indicate that this number may be as high as 4,000. Even this number
is still in the same order of magnitude and clearly shows a very small minority of German women who
married American GI’s.
magnitude that would materially effect the German population of nearly 14 million
persons.

Cynics may believe material benefit to be the only reason German women would
have married American men, but this is rather unlikely. Regardless, if these estimated
2000 German brides and their families materially benefited from the chance for hosiery
and cigarettes that others might scorn or envy, millions of others languished with no
benefactors. These millions were affected in other ways as they witnessed marriages
being performed in their midst. The mentality of the German citizen would vary from
individual to individual to be sure, but there is evidence that many of the women who
married Americans were seen as having betrayed their nation or even as prostitutes. This
particular sentiment could be even worse if the marriage had been to an American of
another race.

The list of marriages in District IV range from the rank of private to colonel. The
majority were sergeants. As the chain of command would approve or disapprove which
marriages would be allowed, one may assume privates might be denied the privilege of
marriage due to the financial responsibility required to support a new family in conditions
of near squalor. Thus, as many privates (12) as officers (11) married Germans in District
IV though there might be only three or four officers and 100 privates in a typical infantry
company.454

One case of interest to this study was the marriage of First Lieutenant John L.
Gordon to Barbara E. Schmetzer. One can see the difficulties involved in obtaining
permission to marry by taking a close look at their file of petition for marriage. First
there was the business of paper work. The Affidavit for Military Government Germany was the application for marriage. Personal information pertaining to address, previous marriages, and blood relations is much like that typical of any US state marriage license. In this sense, OMGUS authorities were merely performing the duties any government might perform. The next few steps become progressively more invasive and might border on civil rights violations in more modern times.

The unit commander of the soldier was required to recommend approval or disapproval regarding the marriage. The petition must have been begun no earlier than 6 months before the soldier was scheduled to leave Germany. The marriage itself could only be conducted in the last 60 days of the soldier’s tour as after being married to a German, he would no longer be eligible to be stationed in Germany. This might be expected from a military system, but the gauntlet the two had to run after obtaining the commander’s blessing was particularly grueling. Keeping in mind that everything had to be accomplished in six months, it makes it absolutely clear that these individuals must have really wanted to be married.

The next step was an interview with the unit chaplain, who might be of any denomination, though most soldiers and chaplains were Protestant. In this case Captain Max Whittington wrote in his recommendation that in his opinion “that it [the marriage] will not bring discredit upon the military service nor be contrary to the public good.” Then was the medical screening, mostly to ensure the prospective bride was free from

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454 OMGUS RG 260 Kitzingen Marriage File, List of Record Files Transferred to District IV, September 19, 1950.
456 Ibid.
any communicable disease, especially of the venereal type. Due to the fact that Lieutenant Gordon was black, additional paperwork was necessary to prove that his commander had briefed the couple on racial law in the United States. Because Lieutenant Gordon was from Kentucky, where inter-racial marriage was at that time still illegal, he was advised that he was not authorized to establish a residence there or in any other state where such laws existed.

Next, the couple had to apply at the Basic Training facility in Mannheim for a travel permit for Barbara, and for a military government marriage certificate from Bamberg. Both of these could only be procured after the marriage itself, which left very little time for a honeymoon due to the aforementioned 60-day prohibition.

With no less than twenty pages of documents, the couple could finally be married and on their way to America, if only to certain destinations based on the color of the soldier’s skin. Amazingly, or perhaps not surprisingly, discrimination still existed in the land of the free with regard the locations for homes of the brave who had served. The very soldiers entrusted with guarding the peace while the Allies dismantled the racist Nazi government and removed racial laws from the books still discriminated against its own soldiers.

Discrimination against blacks came not only from Americans. Germans also had their prejudices, even if they could express them less openly. German women seemed to be divided fairly evenly into two different groups: those who were colorblind and those who associated with the racist views expressed by some white Americans and most German men. Both groups would occasionally be vocal about their opinions on such matters. Those who disapproved of inter-racial marriage ostracized those who ignored
such taboos. Those who were friendly with blacks expressed the rage of those who try to understand racism from the inside.

Prejudice and Rumor

The medical tests to which Barbara Schmetzer was subjected, were one of the leftover consequences of the high rate of syphilis and gonorrhea during the first two years of the occupation. This fact of occupation life had led to continual MP raids of the brothels frequented by GI’s.457 The result of these raids is a vast expanse of statistics that bear out the terrible rampage of venereal disease in early occupation Germany.

Other less tangible results were the stereotyping of the German woman as a disease-carrying succubus seeking material gain through association with occupiers who had access to goods unavailable to Germans. This type of stereotype fed on itself and justified raids long after the threat of disease was gone. Shortly after one of these raids in Bamberg, in November 1945, the military police confiscated the lyrics to a song, supposedly written by a German woman in a version of English that might come from a young German girl. This song goes a long way toward indicating the racial tensions between the often violent triangle of white military police, black soldiers and German women.

To be sung to the tune of “Lili Marleen” 458 [author unknown]

We walked on the street and were quite unaware
Suddenly a car stopped, an MP opened the door
I went pale from fright, the MP took me away
Then we were gone.

457 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/47/6/5-7 box 1146. Public Safety Officer Reports for Bamberg 1945-1947. Raids in 1947 were still netting up to 35 girls of age 14-16.

458 Based on a German poem of 1915, this song became the favorite of troops of every tongue and nation during the Second World War, both in translation and in the original German. A curious example of song transcending the hatreds of war, American troops particularly liked Lili Marlene as sung by the German-born actress and singer, Marlene Dietrich.
I sat in the car and was very quiet
Then the driver asked me what I wanted
I said I’d like to get out, but he laughed
At me, and that was not nice, I had to go with him.

We drove through the streets to the MP station
And then he said, now you can get out
He led me into the room, I looked around
Like an innocent pig, that is understandable
I never saw it before.

The interpreter was not polite
He shouted at me terrible
His first words were
You have a black man
I answered fresh “yes”
In 7 month I’ll be a Mother
From this black man, who knows his business

He drove me to prison, how did
It look there, the lice and bugs were at home there
The room was very small, and it also had to serve
As Toilet, we are no pigs.

We had to go to court, all beautiful girls
Made a face, and suddenly the officer said
3 month I keep you here, and this was not
Nice, I could not go fucking.

Mister Martin was smiling and thought to
Himself, he did that good, the Franklin
Said quite open to me, I’ll stop you
Fucking with your nigger, you old German pig.

Now we sit in the room and can’t get out
Temporarily we can’t love our niggers,
But that’s all right, because soon we can get
Out again to our nigger, that’s very fine.\(^{38}\)

If this type of language is harsh on the ears of us today, it must have been representative of something still harsher to German women and black Americans at that time. We can attribute it to local folklore, but it is more likely that there were real incidents of racial prejudice directed against German women in relationships with black Americans.
Other folklore relates still more typical stereotypes of the occupation period relations between Germans and the Amis (short for Am-er-ic-an, the German term for American soldiers still used today, pronounced “AH-meez”). Each week, the Public Safety Officer in Bamberg, a German, Dr. Grimm, compiled a report of incidents, arrests, and other important data. One of the most interesting sections of these reports is Section I, b-Rumors. While some of the rumors bordered on what we might today call wild, paranoid fantasies or “urban legends,” they must have been very real and useful for the commander of military government in dealing with locals. In 1946 and 1947, some of the most common and fantastic rumors which appeared in several different reports had to do with the possibility of a Russian occupation of the entirety of Germany, lowering of bread and meat rations, and the Moscow Conference as either a trap for the Western Allies or as an omen of a Western pull-out.460

More germane to this study was the following rumor of March 20, 1947:

“It is said that during a routine check at the Bahnhof, the local MP’s stopped a woman, who was wearing a GI coat, and told her to take it off; the woman who had a baby in her arm, asked the MP to hold it, upon turning the coat over to him, the MP wanted to give back the baby, the woman said, “no thank-you, that’s American too.”461

If this exact story is unlikely to have occurred, it does still tell us something about the relationship between occupier and occupied. If it is unflattering regarding the mother of an unwanted child, it is equally unflattering to the American soldier willing to take the

461 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/47/6/5-7 box 1146. Public Safety Officer Reports for Bamberg 1945-1947. 20 March 1947 report. By regulation, during the occupation Germans were forbidden to possess Army material, including uniform items.
coat off of the back of a cold mother in order to obey the letter of the law. One need not have a degree in psychology to see that the American occupation was not seen as a benevolent occasion by those subjected to requisition, humiliation and abandonment. The Amis did not all hand out chocolate bars and chewing gum.

If many Germans experienced the bad side of American occupation, many of them still sought the other side. Marriage to American soldiers was one such possibility after 1946. Black-marketing through an American connection who could supply cigarettes, hosiery or other coveted items was another. Employment by the occupation government was the third and least repulsive possibility for the more traditionally minded German woman.

If some Germans certainly must have married Americans for personal gain, others must have been legitimate marriages for love, though how many, we can never know. The women who would marry American soldiers must have either been in love, or their lives must have been so terribly unsatisfying that they would be willing to sacrifice familial, cultural and societal ties to escape to a better place. This is evidenced by the stringent and embarrassing process of authorization which they were forced to navigate. This select group of women would face discrimination from their own countrymen and from Americans in order to live together legally with their American partners. Though some would undoubtedly still maintain contact with their German families, many of them sought to leave Germany when their men earned their coveted 103rd service point—a significant number in the reassignment system of the time—allowing them to be reassigned stateside. Yet none of these associations with occupiers would be the route through which mainstream German women would find aid. Instead, most German
women would allow themselves to become less directly ‘Americanized’ to different degrees and for various motivations.

Throughout the occupation period, women would remain the largest group demographically in Germany and were one of the only groups of Germans to which an OMGUS office had not been specifically assigned to assist. The evidence existed that they needed this assistance, but there was little incentive to provide it. While individual soldiers were beginning to recognize Germans, and in particular German women as human beings with real wants and needs, official policy towards them had changed little.

Bamberg

The number of soldiers in Bamberg might be relevant in putting into perspective the effects of the presence of a typical garrison on a German community. In April of 1945, the Americans had occupied Bamberg, taking the three military kasernes (or barracks) intact. Panzer, Lagarde and Artillery kasernes were all located in the outskirts of the northeast corner of Bamberg proper. Surrounded by trees, these military posts are still in use, but are out of sight of most of the citizens of the town.

Initially, about 4000 combat troops took up residence here. Throughout the period under consideration here, 1945-49, this approximate number can be considered valid. Records of the exact number of troops on station are not available, as units are counted by unit number designations, which might correspond to many separate geographical locations with only a headquarters on station in Bamberg. The Bamberg community commander in 1997 made some limited records available to a citizen of Bamberg, Nina Cabral, whose father was an American soldier and whose mother was a German. Cabral compiled the numbers for the years in which the community had
actually counted the total number of American residents, to include civilians. She found that the number of American soldiers fluctuated from as few as 2,000 to as many as 12,000 but that in general, most of the time between 1945 and 1997, about 4,000-6,000 American troops would be on station at Bamberg.

The number of Americans stationed or living in Bamberg breaks down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Soldiers</th>
<th>Including Civilians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>10000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>17000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>5999</td>
<td>9946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>7100</td>
<td>14200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>14100</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>6800</td>
<td>13100</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>6600</td>
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<td>1992</td>
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<td>9400</td>
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<td>1993</td>
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<td>5219</td>
</tr>
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<td>1994</td>
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<td>7500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>3721</td>
<td>8500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>9021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>3447</td>
<td>7859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For a city with a population of about 80,000, this may seem like a significant number. What cannot be displayed by the raw numbers is the tendency for troops in foreign garrisons to spend most of their time in their barracks, or in training. It is also true that even the worst “barracks rat” would be forced at some time to have interacted with German civilians. This is due to the scattered nature of American armed forces installations in Germany. Unlike stateside military installations that function as a city with tens of thousands of soldiers, overseas installations tend to be more of a “village” designed to support a small community of up to 5,000, or a brigade size unit.

Still, the number of combat troops in a given area might not reflect the number of German people interacting with American GI’s. With the command structure for all of
American constabulary forces being in Bamberg from 1946-1950, one might safely conclude that with Bamberg being one of the single largest American installations in Germany, it should have produced above average contact between German civilians and American soldiers.

To be sure, evidence of immediate contact between German civilians and American troops is not hard to find. In interviewing senior citizens of Bamberg, Cabral found very few of them without some sort of anecdote about the early years of American occupation. Many of the women had served as cleaning women, in order to obtain extra rations and even the men declared that the American occupation was good for the community. Though time has proven this to be generally true, it was not always a benefit to be dependent upon American kindness for support if one wanted to be accepted socially among conservative Germans. If this support existed before the relaxation of the non-fraternization order, it was only clandestine and illegal. The vast majority of German civilians continued to survive with no outside help.

German Youth Activities

If OMGUS officials had knowledge and experience of the suffering of women in Germany, they did not necessarily have within their means the tools to implement immediate reversals of such trends. Instead, change came slowly, incrementally; and it came from an unexpected direction—through German children.

As early as April 1945, some Americans had become concerned with helping German citizens, especially children. One of the first Americans active in this cause was a Red Cross worker named Jean Anderson. As a woman working with refugees in the
occupied territories, Ms. Anderson saw the need for a definitive policy in the handling of fraternization with German children. In a letter addressed to a Colonel Benjamin Messick, G-5 section, SHAEF, Anderson remarked that:

“Now that the schools are not open, there are thousands and thousands of children everywhere on the streets and in the villages roaming around with nothing to do while their mothers cope with queues for food and housekeeping. You know children, I’m sure; when there is nothing to do, they will invent things, not always good ones…..It seems to me that now is the exact time for Americans to start something constructive and perhaps sow seeds of eventual friendship and at least of orderly accomplishment, instead of destruction in these small children. Could not the C.I.C. [Commander in Chief] working with the Military Government, choose former teachers or other Germans of good record, of which I am assured there a few everywhere, who could organize these German children, who love to be organized, in clearing rubble, however slow a process, in filling trenches, in doing a sort of Boy Scout job in these communities? …Possibly even sports competitions could be organized, perhaps even under G.I. supervision, until the schools open…”

This letter with its very specific suggestions was forwarded through the SHAEF legal branch to the G-5 Division and landed on the desk of Major G.H. Geyer in the Education and Religious Affairs Section, Internal Affairs Branch. He seems to have missed the spirit of Anderson’s letter in his response to Colonel Smith of the Legal Branch:

“As you indicated, our policy statements do specifically outline the desirability of the organization of working parties among German Youth as a necessary stage in keeping them “out of our hair” during the fairly long period before formal educational programs can be provided for them.”

Clearly Anderson was interested in more than just keeping German youth “out of our hair.” Her letter is suggesting a much more serious endeavor. It continues, and bears quoting in full:

“The non-fraternization policy, in its application to small children under ten or so just won’t work. Frequently I have seen a youngster or say five years old come up to a G.I. and say in his most careful English, “Good morning.” If the G.I., thru fear of punishment, does not reply, the child perhaps says it again this time with a pained and

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463 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 331 stack 850 box 4. Correspondence between Jean Anderson and Colonel Messick.
464 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 331 stack 850 box 4. Correspondence between Major G.H. Geyer and Colonel Hayden N. Smith.
wondering expression and finally goes off disgusted and undoubtedly confirmed forever in the belief that what everyone has told him to believe, namely that the Americans are brutes and have no feelings whatsoever. I hope you do not think this is the observation of a sentimentalist, but a comment on what I believe is true about the children, that if properly handled they might, having seen the destruction of war, be a potent force for peace. I know the army wishes first to win the war and is beset with tactical questions, but I understand that Hitler has outlined a phase of resistance and sabotage even after organized war has ended, and right now seems to me the time to forestall him at his own game, if at all possible. After all, the children are either the future soldiers or the future civilians, scientists and so on, of Germany. Though the German children this time seem to be well fed and strong, if eventually another set of ‘wolf children’ arises, scavenging, lawless and hating the representatives of the Allies, we'll have another war as sure as anything.”

While Geyer and Smith exchanged memorandums regarding Anderson’s idea, the Red Cross worker was at the point where the Germans were actually struggling to survive and cope with occupation policies. Whether it was her experience, sentimentality, or simple compassion, Anderson seems to be the first to have articulated the problem facing the divergent goals of the occupation forces. On the one hand, occupation forces were new conquerors and wanted to punish the Germans who had supported the war. They believed the Germans had caused the war and the problems that came with it. They wanted to be stern rulers. On the other hand, it was hard to blame children for any support for the Nazi regime. It was one thing to imagine policies of a Spartan force moving into enemy territory and setting up an occupation government, and quite another thing to do it with a human face. Anderson clearly believed you could catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. In fact, she was clearly one of the first to recognize that “catching flies” was worth considering. It seems most occupation planners were not concerned with catching them, but only with killing them. That is to say that most American occupation planners had considered the most dangerous probability of a

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465 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 331 stack 850 box 4. Correspondence between Jean Anderson and Colonel Messick.
continued armed German resistance, but did not consider what to do when hostilities had ceased. It took civilian aid agencies on the ground in Germany to raise awareness of the need to plan for this situation.

The policy writers, Smith and Geyer allude to the fact that this idea was already incorporated somehow into occupation plans. Smith wrote, “I advised Colonel Messick that it was my understanding that your instructions called for the putting into operation of a program of this character.” Geyer replied that he doubted anything of this nature was in the works, but that it sounded like a good idea. The biggest problem would be overcoming the non-fraternization policy.

Roosevelt had demanded the non-fraternization policy as early as September 1944, but with his untimely death, and Truman’s relatively ‘hands off’ approach on the matter, Eisenhower was free to lift the ban on contact. He did so on July 15, 1945. The lifting of the ban resulted in increased contact but did not immediately generate resources or support for a youth program. That would take almost another year, but, in the meantime, informal contact proved that the non-fraternization policy was unnecessary and its enforcement was difficult and probably counterproductive. Children then provided the first crack in the wall hemming in any goodwill of the American occupiers. “Generals as well as privates found it hard to have to ignore children” under the non-fraternization order. After children had made a breach in American policy, it would eventually become possible for aid for German women to follow, but it would take time.

466 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 331 stack 850 box 4. Correspondence between Major G.H. Geyer and Colonel Hayden N. Smith.
After the initial confusion of setting up an occupation government had passed and essential programs were already in motion, attention finally turned once again to the matter of interaction with the population. It came from the members of the occupying army, and not from the military government per se. The crack in the wall widened by Anderson would eventually become a gate.

In May 1946, United States Forces, European Theater (USFET), the separate command of American forces established upon the dissolution of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) in July 1945, officially sanctioned the German Youth Activities Program (GYA). GYA was designed to be a formal program for American soldiers to informally interact with German youth. The program had the unofficial goals of keeping German youth from troublesome activities and to improve relations between the occupiers and the vanquished along the lines Anderson suggested.

After General Clay’s 2 July 1946 “Amnesty for all Youthful German Offenders born after 1 January 1919,” a new world of opportunity and obligation opened to many more German youth and the occupiers. The response from the Germans was immediate. Over 241,000 youth enrolled in the program in its first two months. This program was authorized by higher headquarters initially but sponsored by local units with virtually no resources allocated to it. As the program grew, it was incorporated into OMGUS and more closely monitored. Although GYA did not begin with the intent to segregate boys’ and girls’ activities, the problems this program encountered contributed

469 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 153. Memorandum “Amnesty for Youthful ex-Nazis” dated 8 July 1946.
to the awareness of OMGUS officials that German females were indeed an especially large segment of the population. As this awareness grew, it became clear to OMGUS authorities that more resources for German girls in GYA and eventually for women’s affairs would be necessary and prudent. The influence of GYA issues on the eventual formation of a separate agency for women’s affairs is substantial. The GYA program was the first effort of the military governors to put a human face on the occupation.

While there were many influences besides Ms. Anderson’s official letters to occupying policy makers in initiating the German Youth Activities Program, the form of the program seems to follow her suggestions. The following is a list of activities initially conducted by GYA, though it is not all-inclusive:

Cultural Activities

- Collection of periodicals from Americans for Germans
- Singing and dancing
- Language study
- Amateur dramatics
- Community festivals
- Motion pictures
- Discussion panels giving a worthwhile experience in democracy
- Radio skits and youth radio programs

Recreational Activities

- Special Service Manual Arts facility access
- Scrap wood and metal available for crafts
- Stamp collecting
- Athletics and games

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470 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 153. OMGUS weekly
Youth activities for Citizenship and Community Services

- Youth Parliament—town meeting
- Youth Days—city government training
- Visits to public offices
- Survey of social conditions
- Reminding youth they live in a world of nations
- Assistance in clearing rubble
- Help return prisoners of war
- Visits to local businesses
- Handicraft projects
- Travelers assistance
- Consultations with welfare officers
- Junior safety patrols
- Garden projects

Clearly some of these ideas were more popular than others, as some of these lofty ideas were bordering on propaganda and indoctrination. The reception of GYA was well documented in some communities and opinions of all those involved were often recorded for future reference. Records for Giessen and Wetzlar in Hesse are very explicit in identifying the problems encountered in this program. In general, all Germans in the area knew of the program and thought it was a good idea in principle. They were, however, unenthusiastic about the realities of the program for the following reasons in Giessen:

1) Lack of adequate space

2) Lack of adequate supervision by a sufficient number of trained youth supervisors

3) The German representative in Giessen was accused of using his position in the Social Democratic Party to promote political objectives

4) GYA was initially established to promote existing youth organizations and not children with independent interests

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471 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 153. Report on the Types of German Youth Activities Included in the Army Assistance Program, 8 April 1947.
In Wetzlar, public opinion was acidly against almost all American activity. This is attributed to the fact that the Americans had just requisitioned 50 homes late in 1947.

Wetzlar complaints cut sharper into GYA:

1) Questionable backgrounds of some of the German workers on the GYA payroll

2) Unresolved theft of candy at the GYA center

3) GYA officers having many other obligations making them difficult if not impossible to get in contact with

4) Insistence of GYA officers on opening a girls’ center which they do not want

5) Lack of German books

With such reports making their way up to General Clay in Berlin, the officers in charge of such a program would certainly initiate corrective action. While a comprehensive report of all criticism to GYA is not available, some of the actions taken by Clay and his subordinate commanders were documented. In April 1947, OMGUS began to wholeheartedly sponsor GYA. Evidence of this exists in a message to all elements of OMGUS authorizing an undisclosed amount of gasoline to be used solely for

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473 Ibid.
474 While there is no evidence to indicate that the International Women’s Conference in Berlin and the subsequent creation of the DFD caused the Americans to aid German youth, it is clear that the competition for the hearts and minds of the Germans was in full swing by this point.
GYA.475 This type of commitment after the harsh winter of ‘46/’47 shows a clear commitment to improving GYA.

More important to this study, even in November 1946 General McNaurney, Eisenhower’s successor in command of Headquarters USFET, recognized that most of the emphasis of GYA to date was focused on activities for boys. He requested that American women in the theater give some time to GYA to “place more emphasis upon activities for girls.”476 When generals express an interest in programs in the Army, the programs tend to improve. There is evidence that this did in fact occur. When Brigadier General Allen also requested women be sent into the theater to aid GYA, OMGUS responded by allowing that:

“If budgetary funds are available consent is given to the appointment of personnel requested, provided that the funds are used in the Army Assistance Program (GYA) and not to develop an organization that would be competitive to German efforts.”477

While there is no evidence that more American women came into theater due to these requests, the stage was set for something to happen to consolidate the efforts of different agencies with regard to women’s issues. It appeared that after the exemption for children and the recognition of the need for more programs for girls that the next “least guilty” group of Germans identified might be women.

475 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 152. AG outgoing Cable dated 5 April 1947 signed Keating.
476 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 153. AG incoming Cable dated 4 November 1946 signed McNaurney.
477 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 156. Memo from Chief, OPOT dated 3 May 1947.
It is easy to see in the language of the requests for personnel that officials seem to have taken for granted that female American personnel were essential to understanding the needs of German women. While these requests fall short of saying that males were incapable of working effectively to solve women’s problems, clearly the underlying belief was that something was missing in any approach utilizing only available personnel who were predominantly male.

Is there something genuinely unique in women that makes them inherently dependent upon other women or are women generally better at handling family issues? Is this what the OMGUS official believed or were they merely attempting to ‘wash their hands’ of women’s affairs? Perhaps there is some truth in both possibilities. While men might work in dealing with women’s issues as part of their role as military governors of an area, they found themselves often forced to make decisions they felt were more suited for women to make. The examples of Fraus Assmann and Brauer, whose child support and housing concerns were met with a cold shoulder from the military government, illustrate situations that women might have ameliorated rather differently than men.

Certainly OMGUS did not request the assignment of American women in order to be kinder to German women, but rather to better understand and deal with them. But is it not possible that a man who is sensitive to human needs might be able to make the same decisions concerning women’s affairs just as effectively? OMGUS officials decided that it was preferable to bring in American women to deal with German women. Certainly interaction of young German women with young male soldiers and OMGUS officials must have presented problems. Traditionally minded German women might be more comfortable dealing with women occupiers who might pose less of a threat in their mind.
On the other hand, male army officers could scarcely be blamed for seeking more traditional assignments in combat units while hoping for some type of “motherly instinct” to surface from women assigned to the “menial tasks” of working with girls and women. Traditional prejudice was at work here. Men had played the roles of warrior, conqueror and occupier. Now they found it appropriate to offer the roles of counselor, organizer, and surrogate mother to women. To the men of OMGUS, it was the “manly” thing to admit a lack of proficiency in dealing with women’s affairs. Now it would be up to women to accept or decline this invitation.

The Women’s Affairs Branch

The International Women’s Conference in Berlin in March 1947 had gone largely unnoticed by OMGUS officials. Unlike in the British zone where significant changes in occupation policy occurred nearly immediately after the conference, the Americans merely hosted a small-scale conference of their own at Bad Boll, near Munich. They invited some upper-elite German women to find out what could be done for German women, but nothing really came of this effort. For real change to occur, American women would need to get involved.

Early in October 1947, General Lucius D. Clay received a letter in his OMGUS headquarters in Berlin. This letter was a plea from an American woman, urging Clay to investigate

the apparent lack of and dire need for a program to assist in determining the direction the activities of German women will take. In Germany today, as you know, women are the overwhelming majority of this adult population and might with assistance and encouragement assume more responsibility in public life than ever before.478

478 National Archives, OMGUS RG260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 155. Letter from Anna Lord Strauss to General Clay, September 29, 1947,
If this letter had been among the many other letters from concerned parents of soldiers or informed citizens with German relatives expressing concern over stories they had heard or read, a polite reply may have been issued by a staff officer or clerk, with a signature stamped under it. This letter was much different, however. Considering that the author was the President of the League of Women Voters, Anna Lord Strauss, and that General Clay had personally met her some months before, the letter had its desired effect. Within 6 months, by February 1948, OMGUS would staff a Women’s Affairs Section under the Group Activities Branch of the Community Education and Cultural Relations Division. Soon the section would become its own branch, and though limited in resources, its work was important in organizing German women in American zone. In September of 1948, a full year after Strauss’s initial letter, General Clay sent his reply that the Women’s Affairs Section “has been created…Your interest in this important phase of our Democratization Program in Germany is deeply appreciated….” 479

Unfortunately, due to the late start afforded the Women’s Affairs Branch in Military Government, it never reached its full potential before the formation of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD) in 1949 and the transformation of OMGUS into the Office of the High Commissioner for Germany (HICOG).

When Strauss made her concerns known to General Clay, it would not have been a request concerning some problem completely alien to the general. Clay was not selected to oversee OMGUS because he was a tyrant or a man who had strictly followed orders blindly. He was a decisive and dynamic leader who was proving his value to the U.S. government, the Allies and the Germans. Having grown up in the South in the early

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479 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 155. Letter From
20th Century, he was vividly aware of the effects of an occupation and even reconstruction. He had high principles and was determined to do things the way he saw best for America, the military, Europe as a whole and lastly Germans. He attempted to resign no less than seven different times due to disagreements with Eisenhower, Truman and various officials in between. Eisenhower always talked him out of resigning and Clay normally got his way.

The zone for which he was responsible was far from the leading agricultural or industrial region in pre-war Germany, yet individuals and families were flocking there from Russian zone. Allied policy, shaped in large part by his personal attention, had averted disaster in a time of ultimate shortage. It may be fairly stated that no single individual among the Allies had a greater effect on the livelihood of the common German citizen. German women would not fail to benefit as well, though it may also be argued that more could have been done sooner.

Within 18 days of Strauss’s simple two-page letter, General Clay had on his desk a 12-page staff study entitled “Résumé of the Needs and Problems of German Women with Suggested Proposals from Military Government Offices.” This type of action taken during the planning for currency reform indicates a level of interest beyond that of simply pacifying an American activist. Perhaps the letter from Strauss was the one factor that made Clay aware of the deficiency under which OMGUS had been operating for the past two years: the lack of any plan to target women for incorporation in the new

General Clay to Ms. Strauss, 2 Sep 48.


Germany. These women would soon become consumers in a newly invigorated
Germany and could help Allied economies, as well as their own.

According to the staff study, a conference of 200 leading German women had
already taken place at Bad Boll in May 1947 (see Soviet Chapter). They had asked for
the following aid from OMGUS:

- Information regarding democratic methods of organization
- Information regarding cultural, educational, social and civic interests of
  women in the USA and elsewhere
- Help in learning how to understand public affairs through study and
discussion on a non-partisan nature.
- Assistance in regaining positions of responsibility in education, the
  professions, and in public life
- The facilitation of contacts and cultural exchange with women of other
  countries. Many desire to correspond with American women.
- Help in combating the social and economic conditions which are
  contributory to the demoralization of girls and young women.482

As all political activity was monitored closely, such a meeting must have taken
place with the blessing of OMGUS authorities. This was likely in response to the
International Women’s Conference in Berlin in March 1947. However, this conference
would take on a completely different tone. Whereas the socialist women in Berlin had
put forward a specific agenda and had their goals already formulated, Bad Boll was more
like a sensing session to determine what German women in the American zone felt to be
the important issues. What these German women were asking for seems to be simple
information. In this period, just after the first Gemeinde and Landkreise (community and

482 Ibid., 1-2.
county) elections, democratic political activity was in a relatively embryonic stage. Political parties were still being formed and licensed. These women did not wish to form a political party per se, but they did have an agenda. The phrasing of their requests in the manner above says much, but what is not said is perhaps just as important. Certainly many of these women felt themselves to be victims who saw the possibility of reasserting themselves as a real constituent force in any new government. They were discovering agency, separate and distinct from any former belief system they had previously experienced. Indeed, some German women had been victims of National Socialism and they did not wish to remain passive in the new Germany under OMGUS or any German government.

Between the lines of the requests of the Bad Boll conference are some important messages. Among them possibly: we wish to experience democracy, we recognize Allied (and more specifically American) expertise in this area, and we feel it is your responsibility to empower us to do what is necessary to make democracy a reality. More poignantly, the last points especially infer that: we reject the upheaval of the current situation, the economic deprivation that had lead to many young women taking part in “immoral” behavior such as stealing and prostitution must be alleviated. Taking this to an extreme one may even read: we wish to distance ourselves from the past errors of our political system and make something resembling the American political system and maybe even adopt the “ideals” of American society as a whole.483 This sentiment may be seen as reaching back into the roots of 19th Century German feminist movements, which

483 All the reports are careful to emphasize only the positive aspects of American culture and do not refer to race conflict, crime or social status inequities that they undoubtedly had been aware of due to National Socialist indoctrination.
recognized that economic deprivation often led to prostitution.\textsuperscript{484} Thus, although these women were presenting their case for help in a context that American women might understand as being consistent with American feminism, it actually might have more in common with traditional German feminism. This type of interpretation may be debated, but clearly the women of the Bad Boll conference were not the typical rubble women; they had a vision and were willing to aggressively pursue it.

The more astute members of the staff study and probably Clay himself must have understood the messages embedded in the report. Another factor American policy makers such as Clay had to consider was the presence of competing ideologies. If these women were courting the American system, they should be accommodated lest they become disillusioned with the promise of democracy. Were not the greatest fears of the occupiers a resurgence of fascism or the triumph of communism? Was not the old system based upon masculine-warrior values that were so much different from what these women were seeking?

The last point made by the women of the Bad Boll conference presents a particular problem. Was not JCS 1067 specifically tailored to prevent improving of economic conditions for Germany? While this policy had been incrementally changed with the implementation of the Marshall Plan and the creation of the Bi-Zone, any reader of the Bad Boll conference points would have been tempted to pause and reconsider the consequences of acting “to improve social and economic conditions which are contributory to the demoralization” of Germans, be they male or female. Acting to

\textsuperscript{484} Werner Thönnessen, \textit{The Emancipation of Women: The Rise and Decline of the Women’s Movement in German Social Democracy, 1863-1933} trans. by Joris de Bres (Frankfurt am Main: Pluto Press, 1973).
improve conditions for any Germans would be an admission that any undeclared “punishment” phase of the occupation was over and that helping Germans had become a priority. While this would be unpopular with policy makers in Washington, many of the occupying commanders had already been operating under that assumption. Clay himself had already stopped reparations collections by Russians in the US zone working on the premise that reparations could only be paid after the German economy was back on its feet.\textsuperscript{485}

This change in policy had happened subtly and against the will of Washington hard liners. In fact, Henry Morgenthau and those under his sway (including President Roosevelt for part of 1944) undoubtedly had seen the demoralization of Germans as a deserved result of the war. But how much of “demoralization” did German girls and women deserve and who would decide when enough was enough? Was the prostration of Germany a just condition due to German war guilt with German women taking their share of the blame, or were they innocent bystanders caught in circumstances caused by others, especially German men? These questions were never posited explicitly or recorded but they do articulate how decision makers’ thought processes might have flowed.

These questions might be answered on a superficial level in favor of German women’s innocence. Had they really had any voice in the Nazi regime? Hadn’t women been marginalized by the regime in order to produce warrior children for the Reich? Had they not been forced to endure hardships, raising children alone in cities that were bombed daily due to the war fought by their men? Certainly the vast majority of the

Trümmerfrauen suffering in Germany by 1947 were guilty of no crime other than being born into the world in a time of turmoil.\textsuperscript{486} This might be a sympathetic version of events on the minds of occupying forces that observed the struggles for day to day survival of German women.

Yet more critical thought might reveal a very different perspective. German women had not been tricked into following Nazism as lambs to the slaughter. They had been seduced. In fact, Nazi policies of Kitchen, Church and Children had been well received by many women eager to return to a way of life threatened by industrialization, war, and economic crisis. Women’s organizations had given various degrees of support to National Socialism. The Nazi Women’s Bureau under Frau Scholtz-Klink has been well documented by Claudia Koonz. Certainly denazification boards were well aware that this organization was disturbingly prolific in Nazi Germany, but still, it could not be argued that it represented universal ideas accepted by all women. It had also escaped the label of ‘criminal organization’ at the Nuremberg trials and no women were tried there. Still, women had voted in large numbers for Hitler, and in the minds of some officials this meant they were as culpable as any other group.\textsuperscript{487} Certainly many women had been victims of Nazi policy. Many pre-1933 women’s organizations were disbanded and incorporated into the Nazi Frauenschaftbund, some against the will of, or at least without the consent of the membership. Other women had served as prison camp guards and had


\textsuperscript{487} Claudia Koonz found it difficult to quantify the number of actual votes cast by women but she estimates some 2 million women voted for the Nazis in 1931. This is still less than half of the voters but a significant proportion. Koonz, Mothers in the Fatherland, 112.
earned a reputation for notable cruelty (Ilse Koch, ‘the bitch of Buchenwald’ et al.)

Which view of the German woman was correct?

Apparently the vision of the Trümmerfrau was eventually the model accepted by
the American occupiers. Clearly the Allies initially could shrug off all allegations of
insensitivity in the name of victor’s justice and military expediency. Two years after the
end of hostilities, this type of explanation was wearing thin on German women and
possibly on the consciences of OMGUS leaders. The letters from American women to
officials, combined with the requests of German women at the Bad Boll conference, had
essentially put the right suggestions in front of the right official at the right time.

General Clay must have at least pondered some of these conclusions and
considered all evidence, for on 23 January 1948, the Group Activities Branch was
authorized and on 8 March of that same year, it was staffed.\textsuperscript{488} The Women’s Affairs
section of this branch was simultaneously created and Ms. Lorena Hahn was assigned as
the sole Women’s Affairs specialist while other qualified individuals were sought.
Interestingly enough, the expressed goals of this section read almost exactly as a response
to the requests of the women’s conference at Bad Boll.

a) Gathering, digesting and disseminating information to individuals and to
women’s groups
b) Aiding in group organization, in developing techniques of discussion, in
preparing agenda for conferences and conventions, radio use and
democratic parliamentary procedures.
c) Facilitating exchange of ideas between German women and those of other
countries.
d) Opening channels whereby material assistance could be given in bringing
specialized and technical experts in industry, education, civil affairs, etc.,
into Germany to consult with German women’s groups.

\textsuperscript{488} OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 152. Group Activities
Branch cumulative reports 20 April 1948.
In addition to these goals tailored to the German women’s requests, Hahn offered her own suggestions as to the direction the Women’s Affairs Branch should take. She thought the new section should focus on three main areas of concern, namely labor organizations, university groups and political organizations. Though her outlook may seem to be solely countenanced by altruistic motivations, she is careful to invoke the threat of communism and its influence. According to Hahn, “These inroads must be stemmed and counterbalanced.” It is clear that whether or not Ms. Hahn feared the “inroads” communism might take among West German women, she was savvy enough to use the threat of such a possibility to the benefit of the organization she would be tasked to lead.

It is unclear whether either the Americans or the Germans in the American zone took seriously the challenge to liberal capitalism posed by the socialist move to empower women. Still, even before the International Women’s Conference in Berlin in March, 1947, the power of communism as a threat to stability was seen as very real, even in Bamberg. In the licensing of political parties for the local elections in January 1946, the communist party had actually attracted a number of supporters willing to sign petitions to legalize the party. As early as January 1946, the membership of the Communist Party (KPD) members had risen from 106 on the 8th of that month to 167 on the 20th. By

[489 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 152. General Observations on Women’s Affairs dated 23 January 1948 from Lorena B. Hahn, 1-2.]

337
comparison, the Christian Social Union (CSU) had achieved only 157 signatures, of which 24 were women.\footnote{Ibid., 2.} In addition to their rising membership numbers, the KPD was the only party to have formally conducted meetings or rallies for the general membership in Bamberg in late 1946; this activity must have been startling from a party with no recorded support in this town before the war. By this time KPD membership had risen to 433 while CSU membership stood at 1135 and their cash on hand was nearly five times that of the KPD.\footnote{OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/47/6/5-7 box 1146. Records of Resident Liaison and Security Office at Bamberg, Party Membership records. The SPD membership for this period was reported as 1185 members and double the cash on hand. Cash: KPD- RM 2806, SPD- RM 5723, CSU- RM 13,192. The FDP (Free Democrats) had 167 members with RM 935 on hand.} Despite their considerable membership, the communists were not represented in the \textit{Landtag}, or local assembly, which consisted of a coalition of CSU and its allies with the SPD as a minority. One can imagine that the KPD membership consisted mostly of workers and the poor. Women must have been attracted to some degree to the only party that professed to treat them as equals but female membership figures are unavailable.

Viewed from this perspective, the question of comparing the role of women in the communist system becomes even more complex. A Russian propaganda poster proclaimed, “Give us the women and the youth, and you keep the men.”\footnote{OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 156. \textit{Women in German Industry}, October 1949.} Those women who had suffered from the mass rapes by Russian soldiers in 1945 must have looked at this type of rhetoric with scorn and disbelief.\footnote{OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/6/5-7 box 1145. Records of Resident Liaison and Security Office at Bamberg, Party Membership records. Unfortunately, the records of the SPD, the Social Democratic Party, which actually obtained the majority in the local election, are not available. Only the CSU membership rolls of January 1946 are available by name, making estimating the male/female breakdown at other times or of other parties mere speculation.}
In fact, not only had the Russians incorporated women into an overall plan for newly forming government agencies, the French and the British had as well. Perhaps the existence of government programs in the other zones of occupation reflected the greater trust in government programs inherited from the political culture of the parent nations as opposed to the self-reliance of a typical American approach.

It seems OMGUS had appointed a thoughtful, active individual to head the new section and she put her ideas on the table clearly and concisely. One of the first orders of business for Hahn was to request help in training new Women’s Affairs specialists from newly founded French and British schools for German women while OMGUS considered building one of its own and debated how it would be funded.\footnote{495} It is a testament to the American lack of knowledge concerning German women’s affairs that they thought the French and British could help them. In reality, only the British had any experience in the matter, as the French had no such program. The fact that the American’s thought the French were ahead of them shows just how little they knew about what was available for German women overall.

Regardless of her ignorance of the situation, Hahn’s intentions were good. Next, she immediately recommended four critical measures for her section to succeed:

\begin{enumerate}
\item The personnel in the section should be allotted maximum time for personal contact with German women.
\item Assign a permanent staff member for each of the Ländere, or states in the US Zone.
\end{enumerate}

\footnote{495} OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 153. Survey of Local Government, Leadership and Vocational Training Schools in the British and French Zones dated 17 October 1948.
iii. Establish an advisory committee for OMGUS and each Land consisting of a member from each Military Government division or branch.

iv. Establish and maintain contact with Allied elements engaged in Women’s Affairs.

Such decisive measures were key in legitimizing the Women’s Affairs section at the local level. Even more important was the timely implementation of substantive programs that could immediately improve life for German women. To achieve this objective, Hahn submitted four proposals for approval, which she already arranged to commence pending permission:

i. An exchange of magazine and press articles, program material, individual and group letters.

ii. The sending of leading American women to Germany.

iii. Maintaining contact with women who might be enlisted in giving time to German groups.

iv. The assuming of responsibility for receiving German women in America, looking after them personally and arranging their orientation.496

The first suggestion fit in with the Amerikahaus program. This was an American funded project to establish meeting centers in more populous urban areas where German’s interested in American culture could visit to read American literature and even meet Americans. Hahn’s idea was to get American women more involved with this project. The only tangible success of this initial stage of Hahn’s plan came in the form of a women’s radio talk show hour, Frauenfunk, in Munich. Evidence of its success might be found in the letters of outrage that began pouring in immediately “from male listeners

496 Ibid.
Far more important to the greater success of Hahn’s proposal were the last three suggestions, and particularly the second one—getting leading American women to Germany. Hahn had probably already been in contact with American women willing to visit Germany in order to make an assessment of exactly what needed to be done. She was certainly in contact with Anna Lord Strauss and had taken some her suggestions for expanding the Women’s Affairs Section to heart. The result of this collaboration was a memorandum requesting additional women to be employed by OMGUS to expand the minimal capabilities of the women’s affairs personnel. This request included a list by name and proposed title for several women suggested by Strauss. By April 1948, there were still no women’s affairs representatives in Bavaria. While eventually the women’s affairs section would be assigned additional permanent personnel at the Land level, the initial requests were not filled. Instead, Hahn had to be satisfied by temporary visits by “expert consultants” in the field of women’s affairs. This would take time to accomplish meaning most of the experts would first visit only in 1949.

One prominent American woman who visited in 1948 was Mrs. Case Going Woodhouse, former Representative in Congress from Connecticut. She spent the summer in Germany “studying ways and means to organize women and help them to comprehend and assume their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.” The article went on to quote Mrs. Woodhouse extensively regarding the “nucleus of German

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497 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 156. OMGBY monthly report to OMGUS, Women’s Affairs, April 1948, Charles D. Winning, Division Director, 11.

498 OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 156. Personnel in Women’s Affairs Section, Bavaria, Lorena Hahn.
women around which can be developed a basic movement toward German-rooted democracy.°

She is reported to have said:

“This women are anxious to help in the reconstruction of Germany. Their leadership is largely Weimar Republic and has suffered from the First and Second World Wars and from the Nazis. They have learned that German nationalism does not pay. Their talk is of pan-Europe and of peace. In communism they see the same evils as those inflicted on them by nazism. They do not possess a very clear comprehension of the real meaning of democracy or of its methods and responsibilities, but they do have an appreciation of its benefits and its results. This group is not large, but it is intelligent. It is the most articulate group (apart from the Communists, who are also better informed) among the German women. It looks to the United States Military Government for help.”

This type of interpretation must be understood in light of the ongoing Berlin Blockade and the corresponding airlift. It was imperative for OMGUS to achieve at least a modicum of sympathy for the average German civilian during these dark days, lest they lose the reason for spending so much money, effort, and even lives to resupply Berlin. Woodhouse was convinced that the support groups forming for women in religious, social and political settings were the key self-organizing factor OMGUS must use as a building block for future influence of German attitudes in general.

Indeed, German women in the western zones were forming support groups of all types, even before the American impetus to do so existed. Many women’s groups had existed before the Nazi Women’s Bureau had eclipsed them. Everything from crochet clubs to church groups had been swallowed whole under this organization. When it no longer existed, German women were free to return to their previous activities. But it had been over 10 years since this type of freedom had existed and some women must have been at least tentative in assuming things could go back to “normal,” if they could


† Ibid., 2.
remember what that was. In addition, there was probably little time for the typical German woman to spend in activities that must have appeared frivolous compared to gathering food for families and fuel for heating. Thus, these groups re-formed with limited response at first.

This having been said, by 1947 an astounding number of groups were known to exist. The staff report for General Clay after Ms. Strauss’s first inquiry identified the following groups:

**Political Party Women’s Groups**
- SPD- Headquarters, Hannover  
  Secretary, Frau Herta Gotthelf
- LDP- (Liberal Democratic Party) Headquarter, Berlin  
  Key Leader, Dr. Marie Elisabeth Lueders
- CDU- Headquarters, Stuttgart  
  Key Leader, Helene Weber
- KPD- Headquarters, Hamburg  
  Secretary, Eva Steinschneider

**Trade Unions**
- Hesse, Secretary Frau Frieda Walter
- Bavaria, Secretary Frau Harmuth
- Berlin, Secretary Frau Agnes Moehrke
- Württemburg-Baden, Secretary Frau Klara Doehring
- Köln, Secretary Frau Kippe-Kaule

**Independent Organization of Non-Partisan Women’s Organizations**
- In Hesse (24 local groups)  
  President, Frau Fini Pfannes, Frankfurt

**International Leagues**
- International League for Peace and Freedom  
  National Secretary, Frau Betty Binder-Asch, Stuttgart
- World’s Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA)  
  National President, Oberin Zarnack, Berlin
- World Organization for Mothers of All Nations (WOMAN)  
  National President, Wilma Moenckeberg, Hamburg
- Association of Rural Women of the World  
  Munich, Frankfurt and Stuttgart
International Federation of University Women
  Unaffiliated, presently organizing

International Federation of Business and Professional Women
  Process of formation

Women Workers Association of Franken
  Key Leader, Dr. Wanda von Baeyer, Nuremberg

Women Workers Association of Southern Germany
  Key Leader, Frau Reventlov, Munich

Organization of Housewives
  Hesse, Frau Fini Pfannes, Frankfurt
  Bavaria, Fräulein Behringer, Nuremberg
  Württemberg-Baden, Frau Hamann, Stuttgart

Organization of Farm Women
  Hesse, Frau Oswald, Nonnenhof b. Friedberg
  Bavaria, Frau Bauer, Hartmannsberg
  Württemberg-Baden, Gräfin Leutrm, Stuttgart

Religious Organizations
  Catholic Women’s Federation
    Helene Weber, Essen
  Protestant Women’s Federation
    Hildogard Ellenbeck, Hannover
  Protestant Mother Service
    Frau Dr. Nopitsch, Stein b. Nuremberg
  Jewish Women’s Organization
    Frau Moses Kaplan, Frankfurt

Eastern Zone
  International Federation of Democratic Women
    Käthe Kern, Berlin

With most of the working age population being female, it may not surprise one to learn that these groups were formed. However, what is remarkable about these groups is that they formed all across the political spectrum. The roots of German women’s movements in the mid-19th century had normally been connected almost exclusively with

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the parties of the left. The KPD (Communist Party) and SPD (Socialist Party) had been effectively dismantled by the Nazis, in effect ending any chance at mass political support for any type of emancipating women’s movement during the Third Reich. True, other types of women’s movements had existed, most notably in the tradition of Mutterschutz, or in the defense of motherhood and free love. Another popular type of women’s movement in pre-war Germany was the conservative one. These were far removed from Western suffragette or equal rights movements as they tended to emphasize tradition and the role of the woman in nature and stressed the woman’s right to a place in the home and family. In fact, the author of Miss Bamberg’s Dank und Wunsch, Gertrud Bäumer, had been important in a conservative movement of this type. She was in fact “the BDF’s (Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine) most influential figure.” As such she had nominally supported the replacement of that organization by a Nazi organization by stating the BDF was simply “moving into a new phase.” Her name then becomes conspicuously absent in the women’s organizations after the war. Whether Bäumer was considered too close to the Nazis due to her frequent publication of articles in the state approved women’s journal Frau or if her conservative idea of women’s emancipation conflicted with that of Allied suffragettes is unclear. What is clear is that not all active German women worked with the Women’s Affairs Branch in the American Zone. Bäumer never


504 Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv in Zehlendorf, Berlin (SAPMO), DY 31 IV 2/17/100 Offener Brief an Gertrud Bäumer 12.7.48. The socialists in the Soviet Zone produced letters condemning Bäumer as a supporter of Nazism first, and then as a political opportunist trying to reinvent herself mainly to remain a force in women’s circles.
mentions the organization and the Women’s Affairs Branch certainly sought neither her opinion nor her connections in Bamberg, which appear to have been considerable.505 Despite evidence of mutual avoidance committed by OMGUS officials and women in the conservative tradition, clearly some sort of new political consciousness had been awakened among German women of all orientations in the process of defeat and reorganization. This new consciousness was not welcomed by all.

Resistance to Equality

The resistance of German men to the proposed and actual changes in the status of German women is best documented in the American zone. Though German women had acquired legal rights in 1900 and the right to vote in 1918, they had done so only against fierce resistance.506 Even among women’s rights activists there had been much disagreement and lack of unity in determining just what their goals should be. The dominant faction among women’s rights activists led by Clara Zetkin expressed its desire to overturn the entire capitalist system in order to find equality. This placed them in league with Marxists who often did not agree that gender equality was a goal of the revolution.507 With the rise of Nazism, all that was Marxist was considered suspect. This makes it easy to understand why German women’s movements were consolidated under Nazi leadership after Hitler’s appointment as chancellor.

In terms of women’s rights and equality, the Third Reich had been a veritable “dark ages.” Women were seen mostly as reproductive agents for German soldiers and

505 Marie Louise Bach, Gertrud Bäumer. Bäumer corresponded with several women in Bamberg during this period, concerning women’s rights, but it seems nothing ever got off the ground.
as a source of labor, but only when male workers were not available. The subjection of German women to conservative or traditional roles during this period has been well documented by Claudia Koonz, Lisa Pine and others.\textsuperscript{508} German women seeking to establish themselves politically must have known that such trends in society would die hard, notwithstanding the demographic majority German women had inherited. Even among German women themselves there was substantial resistance to accepting the new role of women as the “norm.”

The most typical type of resistance to the new role of women might occur within the family. Libussa Krockow demonstrated that after the war, her father had trouble accepting her new lifestyle of gathering and trading for survival. He found this dishonorable and tried to persuade her that it was inappropriate.\textsuperscript{509}

Men did resist the new paradigm. American officials noted the resistance to the work of the Women’s Affairs Section almost immediately. The aforementioned \textit{Frauenfunk}, or Women’s Radio, a modest 8 ½ hours per week program broadcast in Bavaria mostly for women caused men to complain. In fact:

“letters complaining about the women’s hour started coming in—from male listeners expressing their disapproval! One of these suggested that broadcasts directed at women should not be made at a time when men might want to listen to the radio. Another wrote a strong letter of protest after hearing over the radio that an article promulgating equal rights for women was being written into the Bonn Constitution.”\textsuperscript{510}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{507} Werner Thönnesson, \textit{The Emancipation of Women: The Rise and Decline of the Women’s Movement in German Social Democracy, 1863-1933} trans. by Joris de Bres, (Frankfurt am Main: Pluto Press, 1973), 66-68.
\item \textsuperscript{510} OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 156. Bavaria Monthly Report, April 1948, Robert Dawes signed for Charles Winning.
\end{itemize}
There is also evidence that resistance to women’s right to vote existed as well. The authors of the Bonn Basic Law, or Grundgesetz, officially gave women equal rights with men in January 1949. Even though women had been allowed full voting rights at a national level in 1919, they continued to be excluded from many local and state elections. The law governing this portion of the law was not revised, but postponed, to be considered and “revised before January 1, 1959.”\textsuperscript{511} This shows the limited reach of the Women’s Affairs section, the autonomy of the Bonn Parliamentary Council and the extent to which OMGUS (soon to be HICOG) would (or would not) dictate to the Germans how to construct their own laws.

A draft report for the OMGUS Educational and Religious Affairs Branch indicated “the mental ‘set’ and traditional attitude of the Germans is not in harmony with the actual situation in the German woman finds herself today.”\textsuperscript{512} In fact, a 1947 survey revealed the following:

“Majority of Germans believe the women still belong in the home, ICD Opinion Survey study shows. Survey also discloses that scarcely any Germans believe there are public jobs, which should be held almost exclusively by women. They believe a man should have preference in every occupation he can fill satisfactorily. Half of interviewees believe young German women are dissatisfied, disillusioned and lonesome. Majority of Germans convinced the chances for marriage of young German girls are worse than in any other country.”\textsuperscript{513}

Unfortunately we do not have access to the survey directly. This summary does not indicate the separate feelings of Germans by gender. In addition the fixation on happiness as connected with marriage prospects may tell us more about the bias in the survey than in the respondents. Regardless, the OMGUS officials who saw this type of

\textsuperscript{511} OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 155. Report on Women’s Affairs Section, 27 June 1949, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{512} OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 155. Report on Women’s Activities, 1947, 1.
\textsuperscript{513} Ibid.
survey were aware of the social and cultural tensions created by conflict between the actual and the traditional gender roles of German women.

As the *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* was about to be founded and military occupation government replaced by the HICOG in 1949, the report on the status of women’s affairs seems to confirm this assessment. It stated:

“The Women’s Affairs Section is confronted by two inter-related problems, (1) the traditional public opinion that the role of women is limited to the home and (2) the passive acceptance of this idea by the great majority of women, which results in a lack of experience in civic affairs. A referandum [sic] of public opinion concerning the question of the status of women in Germany would show little recognition of the need for any change to make possible the full contribution of women to German life. Due to the pressure of public opinion over a long period, German women lack realization of their capacity to participate in civic life. There is, however, an active minority conscious of the unreleased power of women, and with an urge for change in order that women may reach their full development and effectively play their role as citizens.”

German women themselves often recognized the problem in the same way. A German woman visiting America under the Women’s Affairs Branch program for exchange commented:

“Sometimes I feel that I can see the job ahead of me for years to come and the problems which have to be solved, and it does not seem entirely impossible to carry it through. But unfortunately I know our German people too well and know that I will get discouraged when I come back home to throw myself into the work which has to be done.”

This demonstrates the accurate perception that the battle for societal reform for gender equality would be an uphill battle in many respects.

If this mixed review of the political consciousness of German women is accurate, the Women’s Affairs Branch itself should receive similar marks. Like the German women who recognized the limitations of their own progress, the Women’s Affairs Branch judged itself to have made only limited gains. The final OMGUS report on

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Women’s Affairs was constructed to inform the new High Commission for Germany (HICOG) governor of its purpose and ongoing projects. The report is blunt in its assessment of what the Women’s Affairs Branch had accomplished:

“VI. Evidence of Progress

It is difficult to estimate progress in reference to the work of the Women’s Affairs Section, since it cannot be measured in statistical terms. The only valid criteria are indications of changes in attitudes in regard to the role of women in German life. These changes are registered in public opinion concerning women and in the thinking and action of individual women and groups.

There has been a notable increase of items on women in all types of news media. Public officials are more receptive to the idea that women should assume responsibility, as is shown by the increase of women in political parties, and appointments to administrative offices. German women show an increasing interest in public affairs, and a willingness to assume initiative. A comparison of the agenda of women’s conferences held in 1947 and in 1949 shows more understanding of their problems. It is fair to attribute this in large measure to the stimulation given by the Women’s Affairs program and visiting experts.”

Though this report does not seem to be overly optimistic regarding the role of the Women’s Affairs Branch, it must have been convincing enough in its sincere and pragmatic way. During the OMGUS period there had been virtually no budget for Women’s Affairs. The staff was paid from the community activities funds and whatever services they could provide were offered on a shoestring budget, basically out of the generosity of various competing agencies in the OMGUS bureaucracy. This had changed by 1951. At this point a budget of over 590,000 DM was allocated. In 1952, this increased to 616,000 DM. Though this amount of money must have been significantly short of what it would take to educate millions of German women, the fact that this

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515 Ibid., 12.
516 Ibid., 11.
517 Henry Pilgert, Women in West Germany, Historical Division, Office of the Executive Secretary, (US High Commissioner for Germany (HICOG), 1952), 9.
budget sprang to life almost over night shows that someone in a position of authority must have found the endeavor successful.\textsuperscript{518}

American Zone Conclusions

As the staff of the Women’s Affairs Branch recognized, success is often an illusive thing to measure. A successful program to aid German women might look different to the occupiers as compared to the women actually aided. The goals of OMGUS clearly did not include enforcing changing gender roles, or even of facilitating women’s movements. This would not fit into typical American views of the roles of women during this period, nor is it the job of occupying armies to emancipate women.\textsuperscript{519}

The goals of OMGUS were simply to provide the already existing demographic majority (which in this case happened to be women) with enough of a support structure to ensure stability. It is clear that OMGUS was also interested in spreading democratic ideas, but more importantly its officials wanted to avoid alienating the population, which might then turn to communism. The women of Adenauer’s Germany would be important consumers in the new world order and the occupation authorities must have recognized this important aspect of integration.\textsuperscript{520} This is confirmed in the continuation of the report on Women’s Activities:

“It should be emphasized, however, that the promotion of women’s activities in no way is intended to set up an artificial barrier between the sexes or to develop a generation of Lucy Stoneers and ranters for women’s rights. Since the vote was given to the German women much more easily than to the American woman, perhaps she is less appreciative and aware of her responsibility as a citizen. She must be educated to effective citizenship and community

\textsuperscript{518} It is quite likely that General Clay might have tipped off the new government that his newest section/branch of government was indeed making progress.\textsuperscript{519} Leila Rupp comments on American attitudes toward women in the workplace in \textit{Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945}. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978.\textsuperscript{520} See Mark E. Spicka, \textit{Selling the economic miracle: economic propaganda and political power in West Germany, 1949-1957}, (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 2000). (Locally published dissertation.)
leadership and brought to political and social consciousness. This applies to the married woman, the homemaker, as well as to the independent woman. She wields incalculable influence on husband and children, is open to ideologies and perhaps more susceptible to Communist indoctrination because of her struggle to obtain shoes and food for her children. Frequently, too, the husband is dead and she must take the place of both, father and mother.521

From this paragraph alone, one might ascertain some of the broader conclusions about the real motives of OMGUS policy toward women.

Without the war and the demographic shift that occurred as a result of defeat, women might have continued to be forced to strive for traditional roles in the home for as long as the Third Reich would last and probably longer.522 A victorious Third Reich would have been the greatest defeat for progressive women, but even in a separate peace without unconditional surrender, one can imagine women continuing to be subjugated in some form. Even after unconditional surrender, OMGUS had delayed official action upon knowledge of the demographic preponderance of women. They may not have acted at all to aid German women as a distinct group without the perceived threat of communism. Communism then gave OMGUS the impetus to appeal to German workers and the general population, which was composed mostly of women.

Even with this threat of communism’s appeal, it had taken two and a half years for OMGUS to activate the Women’s Affairs Section and when it did, it limited its goals to education and information. There was no attempt to force women out of traditional roles or into the work place, even though this might have helped American hopes for a swift German recovery, which would demonstrate the success of the Marshall Plan.

521 Pilgert, 2.
522 Even if Nazi propaganda did not match reality inasmuch as women were working more than before, this could only be seen by government officials as a temporary situation due to the war. Eventually, women would have had fewer opportunities to work if the rhetoric of the Reich is any indication. Leila Rupp, Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).
Instead, every attempt was made to identify what the German woman valued and then to educate her as to the opportunities American women enjoyed. While these definitely had their own limitations, the American women working for OMGUS saw themselves as progressive, like missionaries or agents of a new kind of opportunity for women. They were carrying the torch of equal gender rights into the heart of darkness. They had found some willing ears, as one can see from the Bad Boll Conference. But the majority of German women in the American zone, as in the other zones, still lingered in a halfway state of imbalance. Many women had one foot out of the door of the home by being forced to work to support children they were raising alone. Their other foot was often chained to idea that traditional life as a homemaker was preferable and that the current situation was only one of necessity, not preference. This dichotomy is definitely a much more complicated view of the immediate postwar German woman than the image of the *Trümmerfrau* suggests. Though the ‘rubble woman’ definitely was a reality, her agenda was often much more complex than stacking bricks and black-marketeering. If Germans remember her as being the simple family oriented woman who cleared German cities and laid the foundation for the German economic miracle, then they are overlooking the desire of a significant number of German women to be active politically. It was not the original intent of OMGUS to make German women’s issues part of their agenda. Once OMGUS realized the support German women received in the British and Soviet zones and American women became involved in helping German women in their quest for agency, the Americans began to support the German women as well.

The impact of the Women’s Affairs Branch upon the average German woman in the American zone of occupation is difficult to measure, however. In Bamberg the
Trümmerfrau image seemed to be accepted as the norm. Yet one can see from the evidence uncovered by the Women’s Affairs Branch that many German women were politically minded. Therefore, it seems appropriate to assess the Women’s Affairs Branch as having had mixed results. At the national level, it was a success in identifying and enumerating the need of German women. At the local level, as in Bamberg, it is fair to say that the impact was extremely limited. The late start afforded the section little opportunity to capitalize on the situation when it would have been most likely to have found grass roots support—immediately after the war.

Tempting though it is to condemn OMGUS for its failure to achieve more in its endeavor to aid German women, one must keep in mind the realities of postwar Europe and domestic politics in the United States. Any aid to the former enemy immediately after the war was greeted with hostility. Even Roosevelt found it hard to accept that American soldiers had begun fraternizing with civilians as soon as they crossed the borders of the Reich.523 The non-fraternization order, the denazification process, and the Nuremberg trials were all painful legacies of the destruction the Germans had caused Europe. This destruction could not be easily forgiven by the American public, which was tucked away neatly across the Atlantic where it could pass judgment on Germans without seeing the conditions German women and children endured. The path to the softening of such sentiments for the Americans was through the compassion American aid workers and soldiers, specifically in the form of the desire to the aid the German child and through German Youth Activities policies. Once General Clay exempted Germans born after 1919 from the denazification process, the door was open for Americans to aid
German children. When it became clear that American GI’s even when aided by Red
Cross and other aid workers were unprepared to deal with children, especially girls,
senior American officers realized that help from women was in order. When these
officials realized that resourcing enough American women to fix the problem was
unlikely, German women were the obvious choice to bridge the gap. In any case,
German women remained as the next “least guilty” group of Germans, next to those born
after 1919, in the minds of occupation policy makers.

Through the careful prodding of prominent American women, German women
benefited from the pragmatism of General Clay and the perceived threat of communism.
Here one might be tempted to give the communists sole credit for bringing the plight of
women in Germany to the teleological conclusion of liberation. It is exactly here that one
must proceed most cautiously. German communism had never been feminist in its
mainstream form. The party leaders treated the goals of German communist women of
the 19th Century separately from male worker’s issues and women were forced to limit or
postpone many of their goals of equality. Still communism had offered what many
women considered a more progressive platform of concessions to women in the Marxist-
Leninist form espoused by the German communist parties in the East and West. While
communist parties in the American zone found members easily immediately following
the war, support for them never reached the levels that the SPD and CDU would enjoy.
This became true quite possibly due in part to the recognition of the new political

524 Werner Thönnesen, The Emancipation of Women: The Rise and Decline of the Women’s
Movement in German Social Democracy, 1863-1933 trans. by Joris de Bres (Frankfurt am Main: Pluto
landscape, the generally impoverished KPD coffers and the stark realization in 1948 that the communists were willing to starve their enemies to death for concessions. Though German conservatives and moderate socialists perceived communism as a threat to democracy, there were enough Germans convinced of the merits of communism to make the battle for “the hearts and minds” of the Germans very real. Germany’s historical role as the birthplace of communism and the horrific economic conditions made Germany a very real breeding ground for communist ideas. To counter this, the Allies needed a program to convince Germans that capitalism had more to offer. Once the Allies realized that women made up most of the German population and that this majority was significant, they realized the significance of the communist policies toward German women in the East. This must have influenced the decision to create the Women’s Affairs Branch as a counter to Soviet and East German policies that were favorable to German women’s equality issues.

General Clay’s decision to authorize the Women’s Affairs Branch was motivated by a combination of all of these factors. The number of American women who took an interest in participating in this endeavor is a credit to human generosity. To leave America in order to aid former enemies in a Germany that was beset with economic, health and ideological turmoil must have taken courage. American women of prominence seem to have been willing to do so in greater numbers than OMGUS was willing to bankroll. There was a shortage of neither qualified applicants nor work for them to accomplish.\footnote{The Berlin Blockade and corresponding subsequent Berlin Airlift.}

\footnote{OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 155. Semi-Annual Report on the Status of Women’s Affairs, July –December 1949, 18.}
Despite its delayed start and limited resources, the Women’s Affairs Branch of OMGUS did have a positive impact on the lives of a limited number of German women in the American zone. The fact that the Americans and the British were in agreement on the importance of the position of the German woman in German society before 1949 was important in itself. The sanctioning of organized women’s activities by the Americans and the British might have even influenced the issues of gender equality in the Bonn Constitution. Though a causal relationship cannot be established precisely, German women might not have had the necessary support to demand such an adjustment to the Grundgesetz had their lobbying organizations not been sanctioned and organized at this critical moment.

Still, German women in the state legislatures in the US Zone held only 8.3 percent of the seats available in 1949.\textsuperscript{527} This reveals that although women were an absolute majority in Germany, most of them were not eager to break from traditional voting patterns in order to rearrange society. In fact, women generally voted 10 percent less often than men during the Weimar Republic and this was not likely to change overnight.\textsuperscript{528}

German women with the aid of the British and the American Women’s Affairs Branches did accomplish some important, if intangible goals. Women would find themselves with more opportunities in 1949 than they had had in 1933, 1939 or 1945. An important dialogue regarding gender equality experienced a renaissance of sorts which

\textsuperscript{527} OMGUS records, National Archives II, RG 260 stack 390/46/15/5 box 155. Report on Women’s Activities, 1947, Appendix C-3.
\textsuperscript{528} Henry Pilgert, \textit{Women in West Germany}, Historical Division, Office of the Executive Secretary, US High Commissioner for Germany (HICOG) 1952. Even voting 10 percent less often than
was desperately needed after the regression of Third Reich. Though there was the typical resistance and reaction to this liberalization of thought, it was no worse (possibly even milder) than the reactions of other patriarchal societies in the West. Just as women in America had, German women had shown during the war that they deserved to be treated as equals to men due to their hard work and independence during the long absences of their men. Though a majority of German women continued in traditional roles, those women interested in being politically active had awakened a new type of political conscience for German women in general, and it was much more complicated than the image of the Trümmerfrau.

As in all the zones, German women in the American zone were beset with a myriad of problems related to the destruction of their government, their cities and the social structure around them. The American occupiers, unlike the Soviets and the British, did not take special note of German women as an important interest group until over two years into the occupation. The Americans were interested in first ensuring that Nazism was dead, second in containing communism and finally, in rebuilding Europe (with Germany as a key component) to the point of self-sufficiency. In the planning stages of the occupation, the Americans developed no plan to target German women as a group of interest in the rebuilding of Germany. In fact the Americans did not move to specifically target German women for assistance during the occupation until late 1947 and early 1948. The impetus to do so had not come from ideological grounds as in the Soviet case, nor had it come in reaction to the International Women’s Conference in Berlin in March 1947 as in the British case. Instead the American occupiers recognized German women
as key in the rebuilding of Germany initially due to the suggestion of American women such as Jean Anderson, who understood that the non-fraternization policy was counterproductive and more importantly. Still the Americans did not actually move to aid German women to organize politically until Anna Lord Strauss, the President of the League of Women Voters, pointed out to General Clay that German women should be a source of support for the occupiers if they were properly aided. Due to the late start of the Americans in assisting German women, it is probable that the American effort had very little effect in influencing German women.

If the Americans had judged correctly that German women, being a majority of the population, would be the key segment of the population to ensure that Germany did not remain reactionary or slip into Communism, they did so too late. The issue was already decided by the time the Americans had harnessed sufficient resources to begin the process of implementing their plans. The series of Berlin crises and Soviet blunders in showing the world the totalitarian nature of their regime had already convinced a significant number of Germans, male and female, that a continued alliance with the West was the most prudent course of action.

Thus the Americans and their Women’s Affairs Branch of the occupation government of Germany amounted to “too little, too late” to really influence German women in any significant way. The efforts of the Soviets and the British, with their earlier start and more comprehensive commitment of resources set a standard with which the Americans could not compete given their late start. Therefore, most German women in the American zone survived on their own, and saw little if any benefit from the late number of voting aged men. Women were voting for men.
efforts of the Americans. The most important legacy of the Women’s Affairs Branch might be that by 1949 both the British and the Americans were in agreement that German women deserved formal equality in the Bonn Constitution.

From the American zone, military commanders should learn two important lessons beyond the fact that not planning for women as a majority is a mistake. First, if occupation duty is shared with coalition forces, whether or not unified policies are in effect regarding the education of civilians, the occupation forces must remain aware of what the other occupation armies are doing. The Americans had no idea that women’s affairs was becoming a major issue in the Soviet and British zones. The indicators were there, but the Americans were not listening.

Second, military commanders should learn that it takes time to implement sweeping social changes in a war-torn society. Once General Clay made the decision to begin helping German women, the Women’s Affairs Branch took at least 6 months to get off of the ground. Some of the aggregate time was wasted because OMGUS assumed that women would be necessary to help German women. While this may be culturally sensitive in societies where women are reluctant to mix with foreign men due to social custom, there was no reason for this type of taboo in Germany. If professional women were not available, men should have begun the work and handed it over to women later if this remained necessary and desirable.
CHAPTER 7
THE FRENCH ZONE

The French zone of occupation is known to German historians of the occupation as the “lost” or “forgotten” zone. Few studies of the occupation include much detail on what happened there, and how the French administered it. A dearth of secondary sources makes researching even the general course of events in the French zone, much less a topic so specific as the situation for German women there difficult at best. That is to say that little has been written about the French zone as compared to other zones. Almost nothing in English outside of Willis’ *The French in Germany* covers the French zone of occupation. There are, however, several German and French secondary sources which make it possible to achieve a coherent understanding of what is seemingly a black hole of information. It is useful to first understand the general situation of the French zone before embarking on an in-depth exploration of what German women there were doing. Still, some introductory comments bear mentioning.

First, the thesis of this chapter is that the French did nothing to formally recognize German women as an interest group in their zone of occupation, nor did the French materially aid German women as a group. Until 1947 they did not even acknowledge German women as a significant social demographic. The French used the non-fraternization policy to keep French military and government officials almost completely separated from the German population and used the strategies of reparations and security
to maintain French control and its by-product—aloofness. If some French government officials and their policies aided rapprochement, despite the apparent contradiction with the overall French strategy, the general feeling of most Germans toward the French was not one of fondness, especially in the first two years of the occupation. German women’s organizations in this period were in a stage of infancy but did contribute to the general recovery of communities.

Administration

While General Charles de Gaulle was organizing a French government, which he would officially take over in November of 1945, the commander of French Forces of in Germany was General Jean-Joseph-Marie de Lattre-de-Tassigny. After the cessation of hostilities and being the French representative at Reims to witness the German capitulation, de Lattre-de-Tassigny would continue to command French forces. General Pierre König, a supporter of de Gaulle, and equally important, the Commander-in-Chief of the collective resistance movement, La Force Française de l’Intérieur became the military governor of the French zone of occupation.

With a resistance leader at the helm of the occupation, rapprochement between French occupiers and German citizens was unlikely. The French did not set out to liberalize Germany. Instead, they set out to occupy the western portion of Germany as a permanent buffer zone and to extract enough resources from the French zone to pay for the occupation endeavor. In this environment, German women received no special attention from the French through the beginning of 1947.

In the middle of 1947, just after the founding of the DFD in the Soviet zone and within weeks after socialist women from that organization began their visits in the zones
of the West, the French policy toward German women changed subtly. About the same
time, women from the DFD made contact with French communist women in order to
effect changes for German women in the French zone of occupation through an appeal
for the general good of femininity. I claim that the influence of the socialists was enough
to make a small difference in French policy and probably spurred some German women
in the French zone of occupation to be more active in public life and women’s
organizations. As a result of French policies, whether or not the socialist DFD or French
communist women influenced them, German women in the French zone made modest
gains with regard to equal pay for equal work, university attendance, and in a few other
areas.

Though the French did not sponsor a single women’s conference in their zone, nor
did they found a women’s affairs branch or committee within their occupation
government, they did finally take notice of German women as an interest group. Instead
of moving to aid German women, however, the French merely began to document the
women’s organizations and movements in their zone, and even those outside of their
zone. Though the French committed no resources to aiding German women (in fairness
the resources were needed in France), they did relax the non-fraternization order slightly
and enact legislation to help women’s equality. By the time the occupation and high
commissioner periods were over in 1952, the French fully realized that German women
in their zone of occupation participated in public life to a lesser extent than in the other
zones. The French did not take responsibility for this, but explained it in terms of cultural
differences between the zones and in the approaches of the other occupation
governments.
In discussing German women in the French zone of occupation one must realize the situation in the French zone was totally different than in the other three zones. Two important facts bear mentioning from the outset. First, French resources for the occupation of Germany were scarce, so much so that the French offered almost no assistance to the German population and even required that the Germans pay for all aspects of the occupation in the French zone. The French had little sympathy for the Germans who had lived in relative comfort during the war (save for the bombed areas, largely outside of the French zone). The Germans had stripped French resources and forced the French to serve as workers in order to prosecute the war. This helps to explain the fact that the French were not interested in leaving Germany. DeGaulle envisioned a permanent buffer-zone territory administered by the French. Likewise, the French had no interest in a German economic recovery. In fact the French staunchly opposed any talk of such a plan until 1947 when the formation of the Anglo-American bizone proved to be very successful in relieving the occupation authorities of some of their burdens. After this, the French began to see that a German recovery was inevitable. Another angle of influence on the French decision process regarding German recovery was the recognition of that the coal and iron in Germany would be necessary for a general European recovery. When the French realized that they would not be able to monopolize these resources, they began the chain of events that led to the Schuman plan, which led to greater French and German cooperation, European cooperation and the successful adoption of the Marshall Plan.529

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The second important fact for German women in the French zone of occupation is that French conservatism dominated the politics of the German occupation, and even French domestic policy. French women did not have the right to vote in France until after liberation from Germany in 1944. German women had enjoyed the right to vote since 1919. While the French occupiers would not revoke this right, the French did not promote political activity for women. The French promoted traditional roles for women. That is to say that the French largely did not concern themselves with women at all. While the other occupation forces did not focus on German women to the exclusion of other demographic groups, they generally became aware of the fact that German women dominated the German population. Occupation authorities in the Soviet, British and American zones eventually established offices to manage German women’s affairs. The British and the Americans brought in women from outside of Germany to do this, while the Soviets promoted German communist women movements.

In the French zone, there was no occupation government office to support German women in any endeavor. That is not to say that German women were inactive. They did participate in rebuilding society, just not under occupation government sponsorship. German women in the French zone of occupation worked under the auspices of the Red Cross, religious groups, and women’s clubs. Very few of these organizations were political. In fact, not until the women of the French communist party became aware of the lack of political power of German women in the French zone did any French organization attempt to aid in organizing German women.

One result of this lack of French occupation government interest or support for political activity of German women in the French zone is a dearth of information about
the political activity of German women there. When I commented upon this situation to a caretaker of the French occupation archives in Colmar, France, the Alsatian woman acknowledged, “Oui, oui, on dit que les Français sont les chauvins” or “Yes, they say that the French are chauvinists.” This commentary by an educated French woman about her own people made me even more acutely aware of what I suspected. Perhaps the fundamental reasons behind the French, and perhaps even the other Allies’ treatment of German women should not be focused as much upon the German aspect, but on the feminine aspect. In other words, how an occupation army treats the indigenous women of a given territory tells us how the occupiers view women’s role in society in general. The process and the results of an occupation army dealing with women in an occupied territory tell us something about the culture of the occupying nation. The message may be more complex when the occupiers are attempting something new and progressive.

The Soviets, brutal as they were in the initial stages of occupation, attempted to radically alter the position of women in society. This tells the historian something about the way Soviet society worked. The British programs to educate German women in business and politics reflected the British belief, probably correctly, that German women were not as educated as women in Great Britain. The late recognition of the problem by American occupation authorities, and their quick formulation of bureaucratic methods to solve it probably tells us more about the lack of perception of the Americans and their pre-occupation with domestic politics than the American attitude toward women. In general, the separation of America from Europe made societal and cultural problems seem distant and less important than those problems of a political and military nature.
In the French case, the message about cultural perceptions is simpler: the French occupiers desired a return to traditional roles for women in German society, reflecting the like French desire for the same phenomenon to occur in France. Clearly the French military, even more so than its British and American counterparts, generally consisted of the conservative portion of its society. In a society where women had only recently earned the right to vote, it is not surprising that the military men of that nation would not consider the women to be politically valuable. French men saw German women as sisters, daughters and mothers of the German men who had ravaged their country. To the French, German women were just as guilty for the sins of the Third Reich as the soldiers.

To compound this, the Vichy government had bombarded French citizens there with propaganda about women belonging in the kitchen and in the family. Many French citizens believed that the problems with society had to do with the trends of societal change, one of them being the way women had moved out of their traditional roles. The military men of France who had escaped capture in France had not interacted with women from their own families for years and longed for a return to traditional family roles.

Risking a psychological interpretation of history, one can assume that conservative French men had been emasculated by the German victory of 1940, further

530 Klaus-Jürgen Müller, “The Military, Politics and Society in France and Germany,” Gerd Krumeich, “The Military and Society in France and Germany between 1870 and 1914,” and Rainer Hudeman, “The Army as an Occupying Power: The German Army in 1940-1944, the French Army in 1945-1949,” in The Military in Politics and Society in France and Germany in the Twentieth Century, (Herndon, Virginia: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995), 1-26, 27-42 and 139-164. The French Army had been a tool of the Monarchy before the revolution, and even during that period of liberalism, many conservative officers had stayed in the service. Under Napoleon conservatism had flourished in the military again. With the exception of the National Guard, conservative philosophies dominated thought in the military throughout the 19th Century. The Dreyfus Affair provides ample evidence of the results of this trend.
humiliated by the occupation, and wished to restructure society to normalcy by looking to the past. Perhaps the root of the problem for women lies even deeper. The French population was and remains mostly Catholic. This religion also supports the role of women in the family and in the home, rather than as active political members of society. One might interpret Catholicism as a deterrent to making political participants of women who practice this religion. It is beyond the scope of this historical study to explain French male chauvinism, and indeed entire fields of history dedicate many books each year to this sort of analysis. I merely wish to assert that I am aware of these issues. However, I intend to focus not on the cultural basis for French male chauvinism, but instead on the story of what German women in the French zone of occupation were doing, and how the French perceived the activities of these women during the period 1944-1949. Before this undertaking is possible, one must understand where the French stood in the context of the occupation.

The French Situation in Germany

The French situation in postwar Europe was unique. In 1940 Germany had utterly and totally humiliated France. As a result of losing their very sovereignty the French were in a position of extreme weakness. Even after liberation in 1944, France was no longer a world power. While the British were beginning to see the possibility of the loss of parts of their empire, they were still clearly one of the primary victors in the war, having stood alone against Germany from the fall of France in 1940 until the mid-1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union.

results of the World Wars and German occupation were detrimental to Liberalism and to innovation in the French military according to Müller and his collection of essays.
The Soviets and the Americans would largely determine the course of events in the postwar world. The Americans had paid and fought for the victory in Western Europe and in the Pacific. Somewhat reluctantly, the Americans had established themselves as a world power. Though the Soviets had suffered millions more casualties than the French, at least the Soviets had not lost their sovereignty. Likewise, the Soviets had been the major contributor of land forces to the final victory of the Allies in Europe.

By contrast French troops had not been a major part of that victory. This fact rang true in spite of Herculean French efforts to be involved in as much of the fighting as possible. The French were a second- or even third-rate power after 1940. DeGaulle, convinced that “without glory, France would not be France,” set out to regain the French colonial empire and desperately sought to keep France in the circle of decision making regarding Germany. The reality facing France from the eyes of its Allies was much different. The French of 1945 were not the French of 1918 or even 1940. The Allies tolerated the French but did not welcome them into the fold of the victors as equal partners. Some senior Allied authorities and many junior ones, civil and military, did not trust the French. After all Vichy France had even fought against the Allies briefly in North Africa in 1942. Indeed, Stalin remarked that it was Pétain rather than DeGaulle who represented “the real physical France.” The French communist movement was the largest in Western Europe.

If Allied authorities judged the French to be unreliable, the French had reason to have problems with the way the Allies had fought the war as well. The invasion of France came months after the liberation of Italy, an Axis power. In the battle of
Normandy entire cities had been destroyed. The Allies used carpet bombing in breaking out of the *bocage* of Normandy and in many other places where German forces concentrated. The medieval city of Caen suffered 90 percent destruction in this sort of fighting and French collateral damage was great elsewhere. First the liberation of France was delayed, then while Allied commanders denied the French the possibility of taking an active role in planning and executing the liberation of their homeland, Allied bombers destroyed French cities. Clearly the Allied decision to allow LeClerc and DeGaulle to “liberate Paris” (the Germans had not defended it) ameliorated part of the distrust between the French and the Anglo-American armies, but it also added to the myth that France could rise again to greatness.

Fortunately for the French and the Anglo-American Allies, Churchill and Roosevelt had agreed upon a Supreme Allied Commander, who was able to balance all of these concerns and keep the Allies focused on the defeat of Germany while still placating the fears of both the French and their pundits. General Dwight D. Eisenhower and the rest of his Allied high command (SHAEF) decided early in the planning for the invasion of France in 1944 not to grant the French a dominant role. Though the French did participate in the invasion at Normandy, the liberation of Paris and even in the final assault on Germany, the Allies had strictly limited their role. Many American units had French liaison officers with them during the battle for Normandy, and even in this early stage in France’s liberation, the US troops reported friction with the French representatives. By the time Allied troops were ready to move into Germany, American

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officers were requesting that the French liaison officers be recalled to their own units because the French were trying to take over tactical situations at critical moments and were a hindrance.533

General Eisenhower clearly understood the precarious international politics of including the French—and of the consequences of reprimanding them. By January 1945, more than a million Allied soldiers were in French territory making sustained French goodwill important for logistics and the end battle with Germany. Also, French participation in the occupation of a defeated Germany would relieve some of the American and British responsibility for doing so, allowing some Allied troops to go home earlier, thus saving taxpayers money. Many hands would make for lighter work. Eisenhower clearly valued French participation to a certain degree, but he did not wish to depend upon it.

Therefore, the Allies carefully doled out the privilege of French participation in fighting the Germans in measured doses. DeGaulle and the French saw this as a denial of French glory. The Allies saw this as prudent in ensuring that credit for the final victory and control of the situation remained where Churchill and Roosevelt felt it belonged: in the hands of American, British, and Soviet authorities. No one, including the French, doubted that the French contribution to the war had been less than that of the other Allies. At Yalta Stalin asserted his desire that the French be left out of the final peace settlement. Stalin preferred the simplicity of the Big Three. Stalin refused to compromise to

533 Office of the Military Government in Germany, (United States Zone) (OMGUS) at the United States National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives II, College Park, Maryland.RG 331 290/7/20/1-2 box 652/1, memorandum from LTG Gossett, Asst. Chief of Staff G5, 21 March 1945.
American overtures to include France in the process even as a junior partner, so the Americans and the British simply granted a piece of their share of Germany to the French.

In this roundabout way, the Big Three formally answered the question of a French occupation in February 1945 at the four-power Crimea (Yalta) Conference. While no one, not even Eisenhower had yet put this into formal policy, French participation in the invasion of Germany became a military actuality. French troops massed for an attack on the southwest flank of the Reich. Meanwhile, the Churchill and Roosevelt debated the dimensions of the zone. They finally agreed on a verbal compromise in February-March 1945, to be followed by a legal document in May 1945. The French would receive territory directly adjacent to France and linking it with their proposed zone of occupation in Austria. Württemburg, Baden, the Saar, Rhineland-Pfalz and the Palatinate consisted of 42,000 km² and 5.8 million Germans, making the French zone of occupation the smallest of all of the zones both in population and size.

While this did not completely please DeGaulle and the other French authorities, a combination of similar developments in the French position had worked in favor of French hopes for equality with the other Allies. On 16 September 1944 General Eisenhower made his policy clear to his Combined Chiefs of Staff by stating that "French

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535 Les Archives de l'Occupation d'Allemagne et de l'Autriche, Gouvernement Militaire de la Zone Française, Colmar, France (AdO-GMZFO), Anne Lemetayer, "La Politique Française d'Occupation en Allemagne à Travers la Revue des Troupes Françaises en Allemagne, 1945-1949," Mémoire de maîtrise, (Paris: Université Paris-Sorbonne, 1997-1998), 13. The French zone was the only one of the occupation zones to have a lower population after redistribution of refugees than at the beginning of the war. The French had decided they had no responsibility to accept refugees since they had not been invited to attend the major conferences.
personnel will take part in military government teams and detachments each of which will have a nucleus of United States Officers.⁵³⁶ The Combined Chiefs of Staff voiced their concern that French Military Government detachments must in all cases be under American or British Command.⁵³⁷ A SHAEF staff study reduced this requirement due to their perception that the French military commanders might react violently to being treated as apprentices. Instead, G5 recommended that French Military Government officials operate independently, but under the same regulations and directives as the American and British handbooks provided.⁵³⁸

The final directive to implement French participation in military government required "the inclusion of French officers in the G-5 staff of Sixth Army Group and of American officers in the headquarters of the First French Army and lower echelons if deemed necessary."⁵³⁹ To the French Military Government officers in the field this directive meant that they would operate with the same degree of independence that the American and British units did. It also made French an official language in the French occupied zone equal with the status of English.⁵⁴⁰

More importantly for the French than liaison rules was the fact that Roosevelt and Churchill had personally guaranteed the French a lasting and meaningful position in post-war Germany. Roosevelt had himself drawn a line on the map of Germany delineating

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⁵³⁷Ibid., Cable WX-58337 (FACS 106) 6 Nov 44.
⁵³⁸Ibid., Cable S-66513, 12 Nov 44.
⁵⁴⁰Ibid.
the Allied occupation zones so that the French could occupy the portion of western
Germany nearest to the French frontier.

The result of this hastily executed plan combined with the already precarious
French position of prestige was detrimental to the French occupation of Germany, and to
German citizens there. The French had invaded southwestern Germany in late 1944
with black African colonial troops. When Eisenhower called for a French halt and
withdrawal from Stuttgart back toward the French border in April 1945, the French first
refused to move on the grounds that there was no final plan in writing for their zone of
occupation. After Eisenhower threatened to cut off French supplies of fuel and
ammunition, the French reluctantly agreed to take up positions closer to France but they
did not do so immediately. DeGaulle gave his commanders specific instructions not to
move until the French zone of occupation was finalized. Only in late-May 1945 when
this occurred did the French replace their colonial troops with other regular French army
units and station them further west. Relations between the French and the Anglo-
American Allies remained strained in the aftermath of these events.

Certainly the French situation and their relationship with Germany in the last 5
years, and the last 75 years overall, was unique as well. France sought revenge,
reassurance of no further German military or economic threat, denazification, and
reeducation. DeGaulle went even further because he wanted a French zone of occupation
that would be permanent and act as a buffer zone between France and Germany, much
like that envisaged by Clemenceau after the Great War. In this manner the French zone

541 F. Roy Willis, The French in Germany, 1945-1949, (Stanford, California: Stanford University

374
of occupation would be an independent state, detached from the central German authority. This German buffer state would retain its German character but be under the administration of the French indefinitely and provide insurance against yet another German invasion.

The dual policies of reparations and security made the French seem draconian to the Germans in their zone of occupation. These Germans did not understand the deprivations the French had suffered during the war, nor were they readily able to accept the criminal nature of German expansion at French expense.

The German opinion of the French suffered still more from rumors of atrocities supposedly committed by French troops. Nazi propaganda in what was to become the French zone of occupation in the closing days of the war focused on the supposed cruelties of French African troops in 1944, which probably stemmed from similar rumors from the 1919 occupation of the Rhineland and the 1923 occupation of the Ruhr. When the March, 1945 invasion of Germany occurred, a rumor began that French soldiers had raped thousands of girls from Stuttgart in a tunnel over several days. The British tabloid press printed a story about the incident, and although there was no evidence to confirm that this actually occurred, Germans tended to believe it. Hence, German women were being portrayed as victims of French aggression. In reality it is more likely that local Germans had confused the Nazi propaganda with the reality of what had happened in the early days of the occupation and the press had merely propagated a myth.543

543 Rainer Hudeman, “The Army as an Occupying Power: The German Army in 1940-1944, the French Army in 1945-1949,” in The Military in Politics and Society in France and Germany in the...
The press campaign about the Stuttgart rapes damaged French prestige and little could be done to change that. The French position in Germany was one of a delicate balancing act. The relationship with the other Allies was precarious, the occupied population was skeptical and even the domestic French government expressed concern about the way the occupation progressed. The following report by the British Control Commission for Germany and Austria perhaps best sums up the French situation in Germany:

“The French position in Germany is a difficult one. Their defeat in 1940, their small contribution to the final victory, their own internal perplexities and their exclusion from the international conferences in which policy towards Germany has been decided, have inevitably placed them in an inferior position. Their zone of occupation bears all the traces of having been an afterthought. It was carved out of the British and U.S. zones and is shaped like a figure eight. The boundary goes through the provinces of Wurtemburg [sic] and Baden, leaving the capitals of both in the American zone. Desultory negotiations have for some time been in progress with the Americans for its rectification. Except for the Saar the zone is largely poor, agricultural territory.

Despite their weak international position the French have made strenuous efforts to impress upon the Germans under their control the glory and magnanimity of France, to reconcile them to French control by offering them the co-operation of France and to attach them to the ideas of western and French civilisation. But these efforts have been prejudiced by a certain inefficiency of administration, a certain insecurity induced by requisitioning of food and property, and a general tendency to exploit the resources of the French zone for the benefit of France. These derive from the national desire of the French troops to compensate themselves and to get their own back for the long-sufferings inflicted by the Germans on France. In this there is a marked difference of outlook between the forces of occupation and the paternalism on military government officers.”

This contemporary interpretation of the French occupation of Germany distinguished between the harsh military policies of the occupation Army and the generally more reasonable policies of the military government personnel.

Here a third French policy becomes ironically apparent. Simultaneously with implementing the dual policy of security and economic exploitation, some French
occupation agencies also attempted to implement the contradictory aim of *rapprochement* between the French and German peoples. In the area of reeducation, the mandatory second language in the zone was French, with the expressly stated purpose of helping the Germans to better understand French culture.

The tendency of different agencies in competition resulted in the French zone, as in other zones as various times, in the occupation government being labeled capricious and arbitrary. The lack of a strong central government for the French zone of occupation contributed to this by allowing each *Land* to autonomously make policies in all areas of German life. This must have added to the confusion for Germans who might recognize inconsistencies in French policies as incompetence or even cruelty. Despite the inconsistencies, some Germans in the French zone did learn to appreciate French culture. Indeed, according to British historian Percy Bidwell, some Germans in the French zone actually developed an admiration for the occupier’s culture that was not at all so apparent in the other zones of occupation—at least at such an early stage.\(^{545}\) With the outbreak of near-hostilities during the Berlin Crisis of 1947-48 (Blockade and Airlift) many German citizens in the French zone appealed to the French occupation authorities for the French to withdraw their representative from the London conference underway concerning the Marshall Plan.


Many Germans chose the French proposal of a “third option,” the first two choices being the Anglo-American capitalist alliance or the Soviet inspired socialism. The French presented themselves as a third side in this scenario, but were very surprised when German unions in their zone would actually go as far as to sacrifice the American offer of aid to separate themselves from the Cold War. Germans in the unions in the French zone of occupation preferred the isolation provided by French leadership over the unity offered by either the Anglo-American allies or communism, especially if that unity might mean war.

In the context of all of this background the German population of the French zone tried to eke out a day-to-day existence. As in the other zones of occupation German women made up the majority of that population. More than in any other zone of occupation, that fact would be ignored, or considered to be irrelevant.

A French Woman in Germany

Immediately after French troops poured into southwestern Germany in early 1945, thousands of auxiliaries who would comprise the bureaucracy of the military government were right behind them. These bureaucrats were not prepared to help German women, rather they came armed to denazify German bureaucracy, to reeducate German citizens and to build a democratic satellite German territory on the Rhine, administered by the French. Not until after 1947 and the more widespread participation of women in public life did the French military government formally begin to document the activities of German women in their zone.

When the French began to record the activities of German women at that time, they did so as if German women were a dangerous group of activists to be watched. The French really only recorded what German women were doing in much the same way that law enforcement keeps continuity files on members of organized crime. German women were seen as a potential source of unrest or even resistance against the French occupation government. Other than reports on the activities of German women in organizations maintained for the ministry of the interior, there are few open French sources that illuminate the experience of women in Germany in the French zone. Even census, education and denazification records do not record any information specific to German women as a group. For statistics on the general situation for women, we are left only with the fact that women consisted of 58 percent of the population. This is more than mildly interesting considering the way the French categorized and catalogued every other aspect of the occupation. Everything it seems, except women, is reported very specifically and broken down into subcategories. For example, farm reports detail the types of meat consumed by Germans and these reports are broken down by type of species. Within the broad category of “beef,” there exists the subcategory of “veal.” Elections on the other hand record the total number of “voices” (voix) but do not subdivide them by gender as occasionally did happen in the other zones. While this is an indication of how the French looked at the German population as a monolithic entity, which needed reform, it does not help the historian on a quest for information regarding German women in the French zone, especially for the first two years of the occupation. Alternative sources exist, but require imagination to find them.

547 AdO GMZFO Bade 2417. Memo from Reibel to Andres, 3 Mar 1948.
One source that fits this description is the story of Renée Bedarida, a former member of the French resistance who served as an interpreter for the French delegation at the Allied Control Council in Berlin. As a member of the French occupation bureaucracy from as early as October 1945, Bedarida was in a unique position to see conditions in Berlin and the French zone of occupation from the perspective of French woman. In the course of her duties, she also visited the other zones of occupation from time to time.  

Bedarida’s account of her time as functionary of the French occupation government is made all the more valuable by the fact that she seems to understand both the importance of history and her unique position in her perspective. Her description of Berlin contrasts with that of the French zone of occupation:

“The spectacle of Berlin is surreal….not a street remains intact…the metro and the Berliners are dirty and smell of death. Everyone is scurrying with a sack of potatoes or some dead branches….At the opera I believed I was dreaming in discovering the spectators in long dresses. How did these women maintain them in the ruins of Berlin?”

The surreal conditions of Berlin were matched by an almost opposite sense of order in the French zone of occupation. Bedarida confirms that the French zone was very much unlike Berlin, and other areas, such as the Ruhr, which has been the objects of so much bombing:

“What a contrast with the décor of the French zone of occupation which is planted firmly in the heart of traditional Germany, with its towns and picaresque villages, gemütlich, most often spared from battle and the bombings. In Berlin, on the contrary, the spectacle that imposes itself upon one is that of the freshly apocalyptic.”

The urban terrain of the other three zones was virtually absent from the French zone. Notably, most of the inhabitants, who Bedarida notices in Berlin are women. She notes

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549 Ibid., 149-150.
the women at the opera contrasted starkly contrasted with “the women of the NSDAP collected one by one the intact bricks” from bombed out buildings in Berlin. 551

It is curious that Bedarida would associate the women working in the rubble with Nazism, but not the women in the opera when quite possibly the opposite association might have been more accurate. Another fact of the situation in Berlin disturbed Bedarida more than the death and destruction: according to Renée Bedarida, rations for the Germans in Berlin were superior to what French citizens were getting in France, the French zone of occupation or in Berlin. 552 Bedarida went on to attribute the difference in the quality of food to the fact that the American and British Allies were helping to feed the Berliners while the French were responsible for most of the nutrition of their own people and the Germans in their zone of occupation.

Bedarida aptly explained without malice that the French, not the Anglo-Americans were responsible for the disparity in the situation. This practical, former member of the French resistance perceived that this would be part of the price the French would be forced to pay in order to be treated as one of the four major powers. In other words, the French would be expected to provide for their own people and to pull their own weight by providing for the German population in the French zone of occupation. Furthermore, Bedarida goes on to comment that “the principal cleavage is between the Soviets and the three Western allies, but the Germans know well that in the camp of the West, the French hold nothing but a secondary position of importance behind the

550 Ibid., 149.
551 Ibid.
552 Ibid.
For this reason, according to her, the French experienced almost no instances of resistance or hostile protests in their sector of Berlin: the average German saw them as impotent and unworthy of even a protest.

If this scathing 1945 indictment of German opinion of the French is at odds with those of later reports claiming that the Germans came to admire the French, the source has no reason to exaggerate or lie. She seems to be extremely perceptive and critical, perhaps even prophetic in her understanding of the situation. The concluding remarks of her analysis read almost like a summary of years of research into the question of Germans, particularly German women, and their desire to return to public life and/or take part in political activity after 1945.

While the term “Stunde Null,” or Zero Hour, has oft been applied to German life in 1945, it has come to mean new start, which almost carries with it the connotation of something fresh and exciting. Bedarida turns this idea on its head and uses it instead to confirm that rather than being a new beginning as an adventure, in 1945 the typical German was bewildered and exhausted. If 1945 was indeed “Stunde Null,” it meant being torn down to nothing and starting to rebuild from scratch. This situation produced a sort of denial in many Germans that made them nearly purely apathetic to all things political.

“The most striking thing in the attitude of Berliners was the impression that they would give of a most terrible indifference, they seemed animated by willpower as if they could continue as before, as if the cataclysm around them had not happened. Yet in Berlin one was confronted with horror, and the inhabitants who we would discover experienced a reality nearly unbearable, proper for the satisfaction of the most insatiable revenge.”

553 Ibid., 151.
554 Ibid., 150-152.
If Renée Bedarida had insights about German women, she captured them quite accidentally. She did not feel any sympathy for German women, nor did she attach significance to them. If a French woman, even one from the Resistance, who was in the French occupation bureaucracy did not recognize that German women would be the majority of the population and that this would be significant, perhaps it would be too much to expect more from French occupation authorities. They had their own problems. Almost every one of them was working in their job for the first time. Certainly occupation was something new for all French. On top of this, many French bureaucrats were deemed not qualified for service in the zone of occupation due their possible complicity in working for Pétain in Vichy France. It may not be too far of a stretch to say that the French government was itself orchestrating “de-Vichy-fication” simultaneously with denazification. In light of this, 4 years of a shrinking economy, loss of many key leaders to deportation, execution, and combat fatalities, it is easy to see why the French had problems in implementing an effective occupation government.

To judge the French on one policy alone would be overly harsh. The French did the best they could with limited resources, and in general that would mean that they did not have the luxury of treating German women as a distinct interest group worthy of additional resources. Conversely, if the French had considered women as a target group of Germans to whom to market their self-proclaimed “third option,” they may have had more lasting success in rapprochement.

German Women in the French Zone

Any research regarding the activity of German women in the French zone of occupation will be incomplete until the French government declassifies the documents
relating to some of the political groups to which some German women belonged. Several boxes of documents relating to the feminine activities of the CDU, KPD and even church groups are “réservé” or classified “secret” by the French Occupation of Germany and Austria Archives in Colmar. It would be pure speculation to attempt to guess at why such documents could be considered special enough to deserve such treatment in the 21st Century. Perhaps the French discouraged German women’s organizations and this fact might be harmful to some of the bureaucrats involved in that process. If those persons were still living and active in politics, there could be a current political reason for keeping certain information secret. Alternatively, perhaps some organizations were favored over others and if the balance of political favoritism slipped too far to the left or right, this could also be embarrassing to those who were involved in that process. Regardless of the reasons, the archives at Colmar housing the of French occupation government for Germany and Austria are not fully declassified, and any attempt to access the full picture of French policy regarding German women will be thwarted until this situation changes. Still there is enough information available from the combination of French, American, East German and British archives to illuminate some of the situation beyond the fact that the French did not actively support the activities and organizations of German women. The French did not do so at any point during neither the 1945-1949 occupation, nor the period of the High Commission, 1949-1952.

While the Soviets pushed communism from the top down, the British inspired economic recovery through education, and the Americans fraternized and reacted to the Soviet and British examples with regard to German women, the French preferred to simply return to a conservative status quo. One problem the French would face is that
they desired a return to the traditional roles for women from before the Great War. Though the French never took away from German women their right of vote, the lack of any organized policy or plan regarding women meant that there was little prospect for the advancement of women’s issues while under the rule of the French. The French did not desire or attempt to implement any type of progressive policy for German women in the French zone of occupation. Instead, the German women in the French zone recognized the French policies toward German women as having more in common with the three K’s of Kinder, Küche und Kirche from the Nazi or Vichy period than any other period in German history. Certainly the French would not have made this connection intentionally, but conservatism dictated the policies toward women.

One might assume that conservatism in this area might equate to French conservatism in other, or even all, social arenas. This would be untrue and unfair. While the French simultaneously pursued the policies of reparations and security, they did not set out to crush German society. Instead the French, like the other occupiers, set out to remake German society in the image of their own. If women did not specifically benefit as a group from this, German society did in some cases. In the areas of social insurance, co-determination policy, payments to war victims and veterans policy, the French often went far beyond their British and American allies.555 The importance of these issues in France had a direct correlation with how the French implemented policies in Germany.

Likewise, the perception of the French military as to the proper role for women had an effect on how German women were treated during the occupation period.

Over 3.3 million of the 5.8 million Germans in the French zone of occupation were women. In the age group 18-50 the disparity was almost two to one in favor of women. Despite this fact the French military occupation authorities gave no special consideration to German women as a demographic group of importance to be assisted. In fact, it was only after 1947 when the French became aware of the important role that German women were playing in the other zones of occupation. At the point, the French began to watch women’s organizations, but not to regulate or aid them.

Unlike the Soviet and British zones, where women were initially valued as a source of labor, the French in Germany encouraged German women to stay at home and remain good mothers, wives and maintainers of households. Though there was no official “office of women’s affairs” in the French zone of occupation to encourage this type of behavior, most of the active groups women who could get official sanction before 1949 were those who supported women’s activities in the home.

While the DFD in the Soviet zone of occupation reported that German women in the French zone were not organized politically at all, and that the French may have even banned German women from serving in regional parliaments, this is not totally accurate. Of the 222 seats in the five Landtagen, or state parliaments in the French zone, 8 of them were held by women for at least one year. No more than 12 women served.

simultaneously, and some women only served for one year.558 Still, with 3.6 percent of the seats occupied by women, the Landtagen of the French zone were not so dissimilar to those in the American zone (6.0 percent) with regard to the participation of women. The lackluster efforts of the occupation governments are not alone to blame for this phenomenon, however. In fact, whether the low numbers of women in the parliaments can be attributed directly to the activities of the occupation authorities at all is debatable. Possibly the difference in political activity of German women between the zones can be attributed to pre-existing cultural conditions in the specific areas of Germany. Southern and western Germany, the French and American zones of occupation, are generally Catholic regions religiously. The British and Soviet zones in the north and east are mostly Protestant. If the Catholic religion inculcates an attitude that women are not normally fit for leadership positions, this could partially explain the similarity in the low numbers of women in the American and French zones who won seats in the parliaments.

If there was little difference in the numbers of women in the state parliaments of the American and the French zones of occupation, there was a significant difference between the policies of the French occupation authorities and those of the other occupation governments with regard to women. The Soviets, the British and eventually the Americans each developed programs to support German women in their respective

558 Ina Hochreuther, Frauen im Parlament: Südwestdeutsche Abgeordnete seit 1919, (Stuttgart: Konrad Theiss Verlag GmbH & Co., 1992) in AdO GMZFO Library, Colmar. Hochreuther notes 3 women from Württemberg-Hohenzollern and 5 from Baden-Baden who were elected to seats in the Landtagen. None from Rhineland-Palatinate or the Saar are reported. It is likely from this fact that the DFD women in the Soviet zone deduced that there actually no women in the Landtagen. While this is not true, the fact remains that women fared worse in the French zone with regard to political representation than in the other zones. Another part of the problem lies in defining what a Landtag was. The French did not technically authorize full participatory status for the Landtags in their zone until 1947. Before this date, these assemblies were only given “advisory” status. Even then, however, German women, albeit few, were serving in these parliaments.
zones with regard to political education and even in running for public office. The French never had such programs for German women. There can be no doubt that this was a factor in causing the extremely low number of German women in the Landtagen of the French zone. German women in the French zone were not as politically active as women in the other zones were. Instead of attempting to prove that the French were to blame for this situation, I accept this as a starting point to explain what German women in the French zone were doing in lieu of political activity.

One might assume that German women in the French zone simply spent more of their time in the home and remained uninterested in all things civic. This would be too simplistic an understanding of the reality portrayed by the records of the French occupiers. Despite the lack of support from occupation authorities, some German women in the French zone did organize and remain active under French occupation, but in far fewer numbers than in the other zones. Not surprisingly then the activities of German women in the French zone of occupation were less likely to be linked to political causes and were more likely to be oriented towards church, charity and community, especially before 1947. In fact before 1947, German women in the French zone of occupation remained largely unorganized and concerned themselves mainly with day to day survival rather than with political considerations. In this period, the French authorities and the German civilians remained very much separated. The Germans focused mostly on their family and local communities. The French focused on developing policies for how they would interact with the local population.
“Les Règles Non Fraternisation”

The French were very active in their enforcement of Eisenhower’s non-fraternization order. In fact, instead of a gradual lightening of the rules, and even the revoking of the non-fraternization order in the American zone in July of 1945, the French continued to define and refine the intricacies of how French military and civilian officials could interact with Germans. In effect, this meant that the non-fraternization order not only remained in effect in the French zone of occupation, but that it began to be enforced more consistently. While the Soviets were allowing anti-fascist groups to organize and attempting to overhaul German society in the East, the British were concerning themselves with economics and education, and the Americans were focused on German Youth Activities, the French remained aloof in their limited interaction with Germans.

Initially the non-fraternization order’s simplicity made its enforcement simple. French troops were not to associate with Germans in an informal manner in public or in private. There were very specific rules regarding the interaction of French citizens with Germans. The rules for interaction in public places were so specific that there were deliberate instructions for sporting events, shopping areas, ceremonies and even in public soup kitchens. The French left almost nothing to chance. The planners of the administration understood that French officers might be required to visit, or even be quartered in the homes of Germans. For this, another specific set of rules applied. The simplest part of non-fraternization rules in the French zone applied to marriage. Marriage between German and French citizens was simply forbidden, with the notable exception of
the area of the Sarre (Saar).\footnote{Les Archives de l’Occupation d’Allemagne et de l’Autriche, Gouvernement Militaire de la Zone Française, Colmar, France (AdO-GMZFO) Bade 894 Femmes Allemandes mariées à des personnes deplacées 13 December 1945 DÉCISION: concernant les règles de “Non Fraternisation.”} The French hoped the Saar might again become a French possession or at least be “internationalized.”

The fact that there was now a substantial population of French men, and a reduced population of German men in the French zone of occupation made the situation less simple. When displaced persons began to marry Germans and then to marry French soldiers, General König, the Commander in Chief of French forces in Germany was forced to redefine the problem. Individual cases made it evident to French authorities that defining “German-ness” was not as easy as the non-fraternization order made it seem. In fact, defining who was German might have made French officials a bit uncomfortable in that they would then be forced to look at nationality in much the same way that the Germans had dealt with “Jewish-ness” and race.

While one might think that German-ness could most easily be defined by the vernacular or birthplace of a given individual, these each proved in turn to be hard-to-define variables with regard to a definition of what it meant to be German. For example, in 1947 when Xavier Alquier, the civilian French driver of an occupation official inquired regarding the legality of his marriage to a displaced person, who happened to speak German, the request had to be passed higher. The Alquier’s had been married since early 1946 and Xavier was simply inquiring as to how he could get the necessary papers to take his bride to France at the end of his tour. The question of the nationality of Alquier’s bride was not the only obstacle to the legitimization of his marriage. There was also
confusion as to Alquier’s status as a civilian in the French military occupation government.

One part of the French bureaucracy’s problem was that until 1946, the non-fraternization order had only been interpreted by some to be meant for military personnel. While the spirit of the law was no doubt intended to mean that no French authorities, civilian or military, would marry Germans, the wording of the law said “military authorities” could not marry Germans. Some bold French civilians undoubtedly took this to mean that civilians working for the French military were not subject to it. Xavier Alquier was one of these civilian French auxiliaries to test the rule when he tried to procure travel papers for his German-speaking wife.

Although Mme. Alquier spoke German and lived in Germany during the war, she was born of Polish parents in Switzerland. She did not think of herself as German even though she could speak German and French. Initially the French authorities denied the request for travel papers with the simple notation on the application that, “Marriage between a military government official (or auxiliary) and a German (non-Sarreois) was strictly forbidden.” Due to the fact that Alquier was not technically a military official per se, eventually the marriage was ruled to be legal, but not without an inquiry up the chain of command to the chief of the administration in Baden. This type of situation made for bureaucratic decision-making that could make or break families.

Undoubtedly the reputation of the French occupation authorities suffered due to this type of mini-controversy. While such spectacles happened in the American and

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British zones in 1945, certainly by 1947 when this case occurred in the French zone, the other western Allies had more lenient procedures. If the Soviets more harshly punished German women and Soviet men, who became romantically involved they also removed the “perpetrators” from the situation so that it would be hard to confirm exactly what had happened to them. In this way rumors could mitigate was happening in the Soviet zone. In the French zone, rather than punishment, the long bureaucratic decision-making process and a diligent administration made for a different type of languishing.

Due to the bureaucratic process of obtaining permission and the authorities’ strict interpretation of the non-fraternization order, very few French citizens in the occupation administration, if any, legally married Germans before 1947. In December of 1947, after a review of French occupation regulations the rule was amended to read that civilian employees of the occupation government could marry Germans after their application was approved expressly by the commander of French forces. Marriages of French military personnel to German civilians were strictly forbidden until the occupation period ended in 1949.562

German Women in Public Life: Organizations in the French Zone of Occupation

If very few women were affected directly by the French strictness in interpreting the non-fraternization rules, many more were affected by the gradual growth of women’s and charity organizations. Several such organizations existed in the French zone, some

\[^561\text{AdO GMZFO Bade 894b Femmes Allemandes mariées à des personnes deplacées, Memo to the Director of Information, Licenciement de L’Agent auxiliaire Alquier Xavier.}\]

\[^562\text{AdO GMZFO AC 1031/3 11 – Mariage entre Ressortissants Français et Allemands, 1er Bureau, Dated 17 December 1947.}\]
of which had existed since before the Weimar Republic. For example, in Württemberg alone, there were at least 14 such organizations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s Organizations</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Les groupements feminine du SPD</td>
<td>~500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les Femmes dans le KPD</td>
<td>28+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Katholische Frauenbund</td>
<td>~10-12.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Evangelische Frauenbund</td>
<td>~5.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les associations confessionnelles de jeunes filles</td>
<td>~25.000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le “Frauenring”</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Charity organizations with a pre-dominance of women

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Le Croix-Rouge</td>
<td>~15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Liga der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Caritasverband</td>
<td>~40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Elisabethverein</td>
<td>~10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Innere Mission</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Evangelische Hilfswerk</td>
<td>~1,072+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le “Württembergischer Wohlfahrtsbund”</td>
<td>6,954~</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 100,000, or about 3 percent of German women in the French zone participated actively in these volunteer organizations such as these by 1949. One is reminded that in the Soviet zone by 1950 the DFD boasted 1 million members, or more than 10 percent of German women in the Soviet zone. Considering that there was no French incentive for joining these groups, and no campaign of any kind by French occupation authorities to get German women actively involved in women’s organizations, these numbers are not surprising. Nor should they be considered low for a society that was surviving on a 1500 calorie per day diet. While the need for volunteers

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564 Note these numbers did not include all volunteer organizations, but only those monitored by the French occupation authorities for feminine activity.

393
was undoubtedly greater there were probably very few people who could afford the time to do much more than to provide for their own families.

While the French did monitor these organizations, their purpose was much narrower than that of the other occupation authorities. The French were simply noting which organizations were likely to give them trouble or be cause of concern. The fact that the report concerning these women is to be found in the archives of the Office of the Contrôle de la Sûreté of Württemberg is evidence in itself of how the French occupation authorities viewed the idea of German women’s organizations. The Contrôle de la Sûreté was a division of the French Ministry of the Interior and had control over police activity and other civil authority functions in France. The equivalent in the other zones of occupation would have been if the KGB, Scotland Yard, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation had had regional offices reporting to occupation authorities. If these authorities had been the only sources of occupation authorities concerned with women’s organizations in the Soviet, British and American zones respectively, then it is unlikely that German women would have organized in the way that they did in each zone.

The French were mainly concerned with German women’s organizations inasmuch as they were a possible threat to stability. A secondary concern of the French was the status of German education and women’s place in it. While this combined agenda may seem odd at first, the rise of what the French termed “militant communist feminism” in the Soviet zone in 1947--the DFD--made the correlation make more sense. Clearly the French were worried that German women might somehow influence society in ways unfavorable to the French if these German women rose to political power on a surge of communist support. Failing that, women in universities might undermine
stability by training new generations of women to commit subversion against occupation authorities or the new German government(s).

The opening statement of the prose of the Württemberg report determined that German women in the French zone of occupation posed little, if any, threat to stability:

“It would be exaggeration to say that Württemberg-at least in the southern part-is a land of election for feminism. Its traditionalism, the closed religious convictions of the population and the fundamental structure of the country have generally caused this result—or as a corollary—that the woman is remaining confined to her hearth. One will not find in the Province any great feminine organizations or even individuals playing a truly notable role.”565

If there was legitimately very little threat from German women in the French zone of occupation in the areas being documented, the French authorities from the Contrôle de la Sûreté were certainly incorrect in both parts of their reasoning. Despite the Württemberg report’s claim, there did exist large-scale women’s organizations and there were women in the Landtagen in the French zone and on some of the major municipal councils. In Ravensburg, Mathilde Bittner served as the CDU representative on the city council. In Schwenningen, Paula Acker represented the KPD and Hedwig Daur, the SPD. In Tübingen a political independent, Dora Schlatter served as well. If these few women prove the rule that German women generally did not hold political office, or even run for office or vote, a woman in an important position in each of the major local governments represented each relevant party in the French zone. If women were not necessarily

attracted to one particular party, they were part of the city councils of these mid-sized German cities.566

In addition to these politically active women, another individual stood out as she “could control an activity” which the French authorities deemed warranted monitoring. Hedwig Brender, described as “a fervent catholic, member of the CDU,” was a particularly powerful member of the Confederation of Unions, the secretary of the local union, a member of the union of chemists and secretary of the council of I.G. Farben in Rottweil. Clearly there were individual women, even outside of government positions then who played or could play important and notable roles.

The language and structure of the Württemberg report made it read like a police report on suspicious activity. Every woman who had a leadership capacity had her name typed in ALLCAPS. Each woman in the report seemed to be a potential suspect for determining some unspoken communist or feminist plot. Doubtless this was the fear of the French government, and hence the occupation authorities inherited a mission to document feminine activity as being possibly linked to a greater communist plan to infiltrate and subvert the French zone.

Education and the Universities

The French Contrôle de la Sûreté in Württemberg monitored and documented the role of the German woman in the university system as the second part of its report. That the university setting would be important to the French is not surprising. In order to understand the full implications of this line of reasoning in the French zone, one must

understand one very important fact: there were only two universities in the French zone at the start of the occupation, one in Tübingen and one in Freiburg. A third, the University of Mainz, was “re-founded” during the French occupation because many of the students in the northern triangle of the French zone were attending universities in other zones. This was causing a noticeable drain on the economy, and caused an annual exodus of the most educated citizens in the northern part of the French zone of occupation. The unique lack of universities in the French zone occupation magnified the importance of the three existing schools.

The universities in the French zone became a focus of French attention for all things intellectual and cultural in German society. Only here was there some measure of pride in German culture and only here could one expect to be able to discuss and argue the topics that would not be advisable in the normal life of occupied Germany. The fact that Freiburg was the center of the French occupation government and that Tübingen was the new capital of Land Württemberg-Hohenzollern made French authorities more sensitive to the importance of these towns as well. If a disrupting influence grew in the universities, the situation could easily grow into much more than a simple inconvenience or embarrassment for occupation authorities. The universities could be seen as places to inculcate educated Germans with French culture, or they might just as easily become the focal point for German intellectual resistance to occupation authority.

The French fixation with a link between women in the university and the monitoring of communist activity began after 1947, as the French became aware of the founding of the DFD and the seminars held in the Soviet, British and American zones.

567 F. Roy Willis, *The French in Germany, 1945-1949*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University
The French did not host any such conference (though the DFD did visit, they were not sponsored by the French). The French saw the DFD as a purely political, militant communist organization, and they feared that German women in their zone might be attracted to that organization.\textsuperscript{568} It would be dangerous for French occupation authorities if large numbers of German women chose to support a movement headquartered in the Soviet zone. The French occupation authorities were aware of the press coverage regarding German women in the other zones of occupation.\textsuperscript{569} German women seemed to be at risk for conversion to communism, especially since they seemed to be doing so in the Soviet zone, and the communists were even gaining an audience in the other Western zones. For this reason French authorities concerned themselves with keeping a careful eye on what trends developed in the universities. The number of female faculty and students was of interest to the French for this reason.

The University of Tübingen had been important in Germany even before the world wars. Women had always attended, and in greater numbers before the war. As a liberal arts university, its curriculum and enrollment had been regulated under the Nazi regime, and the number of students had dropped, not unlike other similar universities throughout the country. In 1929, there had been over 3,700 students enrolled, 12.5 percent were women. In 1937 enrollment was 1435, of which 170 (11.8 percent) were women.

\textsuperscript{568} AdO GMZFO RP 2263/2 and 1815/4 \textit{Le Chef de la Section de l’Education Publique a Monsieur le Chef de CABINET/DOCUMENTATION}, 22 March 1949, Palatinate. By 1949, the French considered the DFD to be simply one of a diverse number of German women’s organizations, but in 1947 and 1948, this was not the case.

\textsuperscript{569} AdO GMZFO RP 2263/2 and 1815/4 These files contain various memorandums discussing the attendance and discussion topics at the various women’s conferences. In 1947 the DFD was portrayed as a
French occupation authorities wished to reverse this trend, but first they would need to verify the political orientation of the faculty. In doing so, the French claimed to have “battled against the body of Germans who would had been put into power by the Nazi regime.”\footnote{AdO GMZFO WH 1005 Organizations Féminine, 25 March 1949 (Secret) Contrôle de la Surété du Württemberg, Les Organisations Féminines et les Organisations de Bienfaisance dans le Würtemburg-Sud. Sommaire, 2.} By 1948, the University of Tübingen had been reorganized and over 22 percent of the 3435 students were women. Oddly enough, the French report made this sound like a positive accomplishment despite the fact that the French were not active in specifically aiding female German students, nor was the French occupation government keen on advancing feminist causes. Perhaps the French author of the report simply noticed that the numbers might be somehow fairer if there were an equitable distribution of the student body by gender. One gets the impression that the French believed the Nazis had persecuted women by keeping them out of the university, but there is no direct evidence offered to show that this is the reason behind the low enrollment of women.

One issue the report avoids altogether is the fact that even though 10 percent more of the student body was female in 1948, in the age group 18-50, women outnumbered men 65-35. If men and women had had equal opportunities, women should have outnumbered men in the university, or at least been close to parity given the demographics. This makes the implication of French fairness seem less realistic. The 10 percent gain in the female student population at Tübingen can be attributed more to the lack of qualified German men and not necessarily to the progressive nature of French education policies.

Tübingen University Enrollment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Theology</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Theology</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Languages</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Languages</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Art</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3435</td>
<td>2673</td>
<td>762</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The raw numbers of the findings though not altogether surprising are interesting, but the prose of the French report is more so. The French were first interested in how many women physicists there were in the German university at Tübingen, probably because of the role German physicists had played in the race to build nuclear arms. If German women were regarded as “at risk” for conversion to communism, female German physicists would have been a particularly virile threat. However, the threat was low, as there was only one female physics professor. Next the French reported and commented upon the number of female instructors of philosophy—a possible source of communist power should they launch recruiting campaigns from the teachings of communists.

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The Tübingen report summarized the activity of women in the university with the following commentary:

“A quick glance at the chart permits one to ‘make the point’ and to identify the poles of attraction for the youthful German feminine student. Women are, in essence, “literary creatures” as demonstrated by the percentages of 30.3 percent in the subject of Philosophy, of 28.7 percent in History, or of 44 percent in modern languages.”572

Finally, the French report focused on the number of German women interested in the medical sciences because this was the only field that had attracted a majority of women (biology). Still the French report continued to focus on generalities with only mundane conclusions:

“By contrast, two figures prove to us that some of these young female German students are searching to escape from purely literary speculation and demanding to be admitted into fields previously reserved exclusively for men: 54.2 percent attending the courses in Biology, 30 percent the courses in Medicine, and 49.6 the courses in Pharmaceuticals.”573

More likely a much more pragmatic explanation would suffice. During the war many more women were admitted into the medical field to help tend to the wounded. Women who entered the medical field as hospital attendants or nurses aids might logically feel inclined to attend formal schooling in these subjects after the war. Unfortunately, there are no statistics available of how many of these university women had served in the medical field during the war to test this hypothesis.

The overall conclusion of the portion of the report regarding education and the university was equally unimpressive. The French conclusion that most female students were self-selecting to participate in “France” and “Italy” study groups is without supporting evidence. True enough, the French supported a program called the “Institut

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Français,” but little or no information about this institution was available as it was a brand new program. It seemed the French report on education used selective statistics to support conservative conclusions that matched what the French were hoping to achieve but did not really represent any effort to help German women. If the French took credit for a 10 percent increase in the female enrollment at Tübingen, they did so after the fact. The French did not expressly implement any plan for German universities with the equality of the German woman as the pretext for action.

German women in the French zone of occupation were at a distinct disadvantage in the realm of politics and university education. Without French policies to aid women in breaking the pre-existing gender barriers, only a tiny minority of German women participated in political organizations. In addition, despite the fact that young German women dominated the population of the French zone, they did not attend universities in proportion to the general population of women at large. Due to this situation, the rest of the 16-page report focused solely upon those women’s and charity organizations where women did have a chance to exercise agency and affect their communities.

Realization

With the media focusing on German women and the founding of the DFD in the Soviet zone in March of 1947, the French occupation began to acknowledge that German women were worthy of interest. Nowhere is there a French administration policy that confirms that the founding of the DFD was a key event, nor do the French records of the occupation administration even acknowledge the visits of the DFD women to their zone.

as important. Instead, the evidence that German women had become worthy of attention
to the French authorities comes from intelligence and security reports.

While mid-1947 seems to be a critical time in the shift in this area, there appears
to be no uniform zonal policy as to how German women’s organizations and movements
would be treated. Different agencies gathered the same type of information in different
Länder, thus the competing bureaucracies of the administration developed different
methods of collecting the information. Surprisingly, even though different parts of the
bureaucracy in each zone were gathering intelligence regarding German women, their
reports looked very similar. In the southern part of the French zone, particularly in
Württemberg, the French began to track the activities of women’s organizations and their
leaders. In the northern part of the zone, especially in Rhine-Palatinate, education
authorities gathered this information. In both cases, the occupation reports generated
from this activity read like encyclopedias of German women’s organizations.

While the Contrôle de la Surété du Württemberg report provided in-depth
information on the purpose and history of each organization, most of the purpose of
monitoring these organizations was simply to identify persons of significance for future
information. Certainly the French authorities already were familiar with organizations
such as the Red Cross and the various religious organizations. In these cases the report
focused solely on the key leaders and the membership numbers of the organization.
However, there were other organizations with which the French would have been
unfamiliar. In the French zone of occupied Germany there existed a few women’s and
volunteer organizations which were unique to this area.
The “Frauenring-Tübingen” was one such organization. This organization claimed to be similar to what the DFD in the Soviet zone claimed that it wanted to be: an inter-confessional that would rise above partisan politics. The Frauenring had six goals:

1) Realization of permanent peace.
2) Mitigation of physical and moral stress on society.
3) Cleansing of family life and the regeneration of the sense of human dignity in society.
4) A more active participation of women in public and social life in order to counter demoralization, leveling and the arranged nature of life.
5) Collaboration between men and women in order to bring about the condition of mutual appreciation of their activities.
6) Exchange of ideas and relations with women of foreign countries.

Every other women’s organization in the French zone had a portion of the report dedicated to it for the purpose of explaining these goals and listing the prominent members. The size of the organization seemed to matter less than the agenda. For instance, the DFD, which did not even have an active chapter in the southern part of the French zone, but could still influence the French zone from afar, still garnered as much coverage in the report as many other large organizations, which were active and relevant.

In an annex attached to the end of the report were several updates on the status of KPD women’s organizations that might cause concern for the French in the future. A 29 June 1949 update reported that the KPD “is trying to infiltrate all feminine organizations. One feminine communist activist functionary of the party in Mannheim sent questionnaires to the different women’s groups” to assess their status. Clearly the French concerned themselves with whatever the communists were doing. The French occupation authorities in the Controle de la Sureté du Württemberg must have considered the KPD to
be the absolute uncontested number one enemy of stability to have spent this much effort on an organization that was clearly in the minority.

If the DFD did not have an active chapter open in the southern part of French zone, its impact was not totally unknown. As previously stated, the French occupation authorities were well aware of the March 1947 founding of the DFD in Berlin. They were also very much aware of the all of the press coverage that the DFD and women in general received in the other zones of occupation. When DFD representatives visited the French zone and determined that the German women there were so apathetic to things political, the DFD decided to do something about it. The DFD women determined that the best way to influence French occupation authorities would be through communists in France who might exert pressure on the French domestic government. Then the French government might do something to bring the situation of German women to the attention of French occupation authorities.  

In the meantime the DFD had more success in the northern part of the French zone. In Altrip, a town in the Palatinate near Mainz, the DFD was able to found a chapter, or *Frauenausschuss*. Though this did not please French authorities, they could find no “unfavorable information” regarding any of the members, and they allowed

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575 SAPMO DY31 IV 2/17/109 Letter from *Kommunistische Partei Français (Parti Communiste Français)* 13 April 1948 to *SED Frauensekretariat*. There is no evidence of further collaboration or any evidence of any positive effects from this activity. The French communist women, however, did organize a 100,000 women in Paris to raise awareness of the plight of women everywhere. Thousands of smaller gathering “En Provence” coincided with International Women’s Day celebrations.

576 AdO GMZFO RP 2080/15, Memo to the minister of the interior at Neustadt, from Ludwigshafen “*Constitution de l’association intitulée ‘überparteilicher Frauenausschuss’ à Altrip.’*”

405
the committee to operate. The local French military government sent an official notification of permission to operate to the Altrip committee:

“I am informing you that I expressly authorize the ‘supra-party women’s committee’ at Altrip and its activities. I do remind you that the activity of the association is strictly limited as defined in its statutes. Any foreign activity or deviation from this authorization could result in the dissolution of the association with prejudice sanctioned with vigorous prosecution under the applicable laws.”

If the French were willing to allow this chapter of the DFD to exist, they certainly did not want it to have connections outside of the French zone of occupation. Additionally, the French clearly wished to keep an eye on this organization because they understood the connection of with communism and the threat that this posed.

However, due to the decentralized nature of the French zone, there appears to be no coordination of information between officials in the northern and southern portions of the zone. In other words, officials interested in the activities of German women in the southern part of the French zone had no ready access to the reports of their colleagues in the northern part of the zone. The two acted independently and seem unaware of what the other zones were reporting.

As for the case of Altrip, with its fledgling chapter of the DFD, the level of the threat may have been low enough (there were only 18 members of the Altrip committee) and further action or coordination was deemed unnecessary. As long as the Altrip committee was committed to its founding statutes, there should be nothing for occupation authorities to worry about. Since the statutes themselves were altruistic and generally beneficial for both Germans and occupation authorities:

“Goal: This gathering has the goal of assuaging the misery of the population of Altrip by practical aid for the community and by organizing the youth in particular to provide practical aid where it is most needed. The committee takes to heart all situations of

577 AdO GMZFO RP 2080/15 Memo from Ludwigshafen to the Landrat at Mutterstadt. 1949.
While these women appeared to have perfectly mirrored the founding precepts of the DFD, they would have to be very careful if they were to stay in contact with anyone outside of the French zone, as military government authorities made clear to them.

While these women from Altrip (in this organization that looked suspiciously like a chapter of the DFD) were attempting to improve the situation for German women in the French zone, American occupation authorities began to ask questions of the French and British authorities to determine what types of policies they had developed to help in the democratization process for German women. With the new interest in assisting German women since the founding of the DFD, authorities in all zones began to develop more coherent policies regarding the German women in their zones. No where was this more evident than in the American zone where American women were brought in to analyze the problem. Elizabeth Holt in the American occupation administration had heard that the “in the British and French zones are schools in operation” for women’s civics.579

While the British had done this both in the British zone of occupation and at Wilton Park near London, the French had done nothing of the kind. The French occupation authorities were not concerned with German women as an interest group until after the communist/socialists forced their way onto the scene.

While the DFD was an obvious choice for officials in Rhine-Palatinate to monitor, there were several other organizations in which the French were interested. The

578 AdO GMZFO RP 2080/15 Statuts de la comité indépendante de femmes à Altrip s/Rhin, signed, Johanna Haase.
579 OMGUS RG 260 390/46/15/5 Box 157. 17 October 1948, Survey of Local Government, Leadership and Vocational Training Schools in the British and French Zones, Elizabeth Holt.
French categorized women’s organizations as A) political; B) religious; or C) non-political. The DFD obviously fell within the realm of political organizations, but the French noted also that each political party had its own specific feminine organization affiliated as well. Interestingly, the French report notes, “The women of the SPD and the KPD all over the Palatinate seem to be more active than the women of the CDU.”\textsuperscript{580} The French administration had then confirmed the suspicions of Renée Bedarida, the French woman who had commented in 1945 that the conservative German Catholics of the French zone of occupation were traditional, and did not have the same perspective as women in the more war-ravaged areas.

This small piece of evidence explains more than is readily apparent. The French zone of occupation was almost exclusively rural and did not experience the widespread destruction that the Soviet zone and urban areas of American and British zones of Germany had. Most German communities in the French zone were still intact, if missing many of their men. Perhaps the women in these zones were less likely to desire a complete restructuring of gender roles like the DFD advocated because they had not suffered as much. In effect, the women of the French zone of occupation had experienced less upheaval in their world and this may have made them somehow less susceptible to the idea that they needed to change what was left of their traditional lives.

What does not follow from this argument is the fact that the SPD was very popular in the French zone, though most of their support came from the more industrialized northern portion of the zone. Bedarida’s other accusation—that most Germans she encountered were apathetic—seems to most accurately reflect this situation. Overall, only 70 percent

\textsuperscript{580} AdO GMZFO RP 2263/2 and 1815/4 Le Chef de la Section de l’Education Publique a
of Germans voted in the first national elections since 1933, but those from the left seemed to be more active in their belief. Those on the conservative right (as opposed to the fascists) seemed to be more reserved or even passive.

Here a key difference between the French and all the other occupiers becomes clear: none of this really mattered to the French. The French were not interested in making Germans more politically active, on the contrary, the French were interested in less German activism across the political spectrum. Furthermore, according to the evidence of what the French occupation government was monitoring, they were frightened by all forms of activism. The French were interested in security and reparations first. Denazification, reeducation, and disarmament were means to that end. Rapprochement was a distant third goal, and even this one could be sacrificed in the name of the first two. The French were not interested in helping German society rebuild for obvious reasons. The French were interested in what the Germans could do to help France rebuild.

With this in mind, one can see clearly that it mattered little to the French what German women were doing, as long it was not subversive to French goals. In the context of early socialism, women had played only a minor role, despite attempts for sweeping changes by women such as Olympe de Gouges, Rose la Comte, and Flora Tristan.\footnote{No doubt the French thought in these terms and in terms of Catholic men in thinking that German women should somehow have less than a full voice in the restructuring of Germany. German women should return to the home and reconstruct the German family, Monsieur le Chef de CABINET/DOCUMENTATION, 22 March 1949, Palatinate, 2.}
but leave it to the men to reconstruct German society politically and otherwise. While one can infer this type of French attitude from the French occupation archives, this is not prescribed anywhere as a philosophy. Rather, competing agencies were left to interpret the regulations as they saw best fit. Each part of the bureaucracy did that, as well as each region or Land administration did.

In this way the Americans and the French had more in common with regard to policies concerning German women until 1947. After this time, the Americans began to be more actively involved in helping women organize, but the French simply continued to monitor the situation and handled German women as simply another part of the German population at large. More specifically, the French monitored German women as a possible source of German discontent or resistance. While this never materialized into a sizeable threat to French authority, it is likely that this is because of pre-existing attitudes amongst Germans and not due to any French policy or activity. The French simply had no public policy to promote women’s activities in the public sphere and even the threat that socialist women were ready to mobilize women would not change this.

French Intellectuals Recognize the Problem

If the French government and the French occupation government seemed to have no policy formulated to aid German women, by 1949 it was not because the problem had not been identified. French intellectuals, some who had visited the French zone of occupation, began to recognize the situation of German women and debated it in a journal entitled, Allemagne D’Aujourd’hui: Réalités Allemandes or Germany of Today:

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581 AdO GMZFO RP 2263/2 Les Mouvements Feminines en Allemagne, 1949. The French administration report on German women in the Province of the Palatinate shamelessly traced all German women’s movements and organizations to the tradition of the French revolutionary women mentioned here.
German Realities. The French scholars who were aware of the problems and opportunities for German women had progressive ideas for change, firmly rooted in an understanding of German history. Edith Oppens, in her essay, “Portrait of the German Woman” shows a very advanced feminist approach to the problems of German women, which is typical of the essays in this series. While Oppens displays a complex understanding of the new situation for German women with regard to sexuality, job opportunities, and education, she couches all of her arguments in Marxist rhetoric. Not surprisingly, this type of argument probably did little to help German women interested in extending their experience into the public sphere. The combination of the growth of German socialist women’s movements and intellectual Marxist rhetoric might have worked to link feminism and communism in the minds of conservative minded men in positions of authority in German and in the governments of the Allied occupiers.

It is quite possible that the tensions of the Cold War and this linking of feminism and communism worked against the legitimate concerns of German women. It did so by causing French government officials to consider that any help given to German women might be a step in organizing a viable center of discontent, which could work against the French and the western Allies. In any event, despite evidence that there were elements of French society, which recognized the problems of German women, the French occupation government remained content in maintaining the conservative status quo.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

Overall Conclusions

The four occupation governments were very distinct in their policies toward German women. Each had a separate agenda and treated German women differently. German women experienced the occupation period differently due to the different methods of the various occupying governments. Stereotypes of the German woman as a simple “rubble woman” are incomplete and over-simplified. The role of women in the homelands of the occupiers directly impacted the role the occupiers expected German women to play in the rebuilding of Germany. That role was as varied and diverse as the attitudes of occupiers and Germans alike.

James C. Scott, in his book, *Seeing Like a State*, points out that states attempt to create order out of societies by attempting to make them more “legible.” Scott goes further and says that as attempts to make the populace more “legible” progress and the bureaucracy and government impose more restrictions upon the population at first an increase in the level of extraction of revenue from the population occurs. However, a particular method of making the environment legible using simplifying scientific methods, which Scott calls “authoritarian high modernism,” causes the environment to become fragile and even corrupts it beyond the capacity to produce even modest
revenues. It becomes sterile. This comes in part from the “authoritarian high modernist” urge to cultivate monoculture at the expense of the strengths offered by diversity.\textsuperscript{583}

It is possible that the rigid totalitarian methods of Soviet-style communism impressed upon the East Germans can be partially explained by the phenomenon of over-regulation defined by Scott. Still, the Soviets did not have total control; they did not force everyone into the SED or even into socialist organizations. The Soviets did control the environment of their zone of occupied Germany to such a degree that it could not produce goods, services or even Germans as quickly as the western zones did.

Conclusions for Historians

The Soviets and their East German communist allies were the first to recognize German women as a potential source of political support. The Soviets were successful in providing the Germans and the Western Allies with the perception that German women would play an important part in the rebuilding of German society. The Western Allies succeeded or failed in similar endeavors due to the degree to which they could compete with the standard set by the Soviet policy towards German women. Eventually, the western powers recognized the long-term nature of the occupation. Essentially, they joined the battle for the “hearts and minds” of German women, and began to include women in their plans to remake Germany in their own image.

By the end of 1945, the British occupiers in northern Germany had finally recognized women as possible political participants, and in 1947 attempted to educate selected German women in a POW re-education camp/school at Wilton Park, near London. They followed this with several aborted attempts to "import" German women as

\textsuperscript{583} James C. Scott, \textit{Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition}
a source of labor in exchange for their reeducation.

The Americans in southern and central Germany set about de-nazification proceedings and appointed mostly male Bürgermeisters to aid local military governments. Later, in 1947 they set up a "Women's Affairs Branch" as a sub-bureau of the Education and Religious Affairs Branch in the occupation government. It was staffed by American and German women to foster better relations, to develop democratic principles and apparently to keep up with the "Joneses" in the other zones of occupation. It really had only just gotten off of the ground when the Office of Military Government (United States Zone), OMGUS, became the Office of the High Commissioner of Germany, HICOG, with the founding of the Bundesrepublik in 1949.

The French in the far southwest corner of Germany, the Black Forest, did nothing to encourage German women to participate in politics or in any leadership roles until East German socialist women prompted communist French women to look into the problem of German women in politics. This should not be too surprising in light of the fact that French women themselves had not won their own suffrage until 1945. Still, French women had earned 5% of the representation in the National Assembly of France, but this did not translate into any kind of policy to help German women in the French zone.  

In each zone, the social role of women in the homeland of the occupying governments directly reflected how German women were treated with respect to political participation. This has implications for how occupation policy will be pursued today. Western ideas of women’s equality and the status of women in many of the lands which

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occupation forces will arrive do not match. This cultural difference must be addressed with a well-formulated plan, rather than by simply letting troops and leaders on the ground learn by on the job training. Without a plan that includes something to address this issue, occupation will be much less organized, and more unpredictable.

While it is clear none of the occupying armies planned on staying in Germany for 50 years, they might have all been better served to have considered planning earlier for women as a majority in order to aid their cause and make the transition to democracy more favorable for the system they wanted. While the fears of "werewolf" units and sabotage against all occupiers proved basically unfounded, it might still have pleased the Führer to know that it would take 3-4 years to get Germany back on its feet after its fall during his last stand. I would suggest that without the women of Germany breaking the mold of traditional roles, this time might have been extended greatly. Correspondingly, if any of the occupiers had implemented a plan to truly grant equality to women in the occupied Germany, they might have recovered even a few years faster, or even more importantly, they might have come to appreciate and cooperate with the occupying governments earlier and more completely. It should go without saying that during this critical time of establishing the initial conditions for the future of Germany, a small change in the level of participation of German women might have resulted in much greater influence of women on their own futures as well.

As it happened, the women in the Soviet zone of occupation were granted more equality sooner (if it can be measured as a quantity) than the German women in other

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zones of occupation. The fact that the Soviet Army had brutalized so many German women, driving many of them from their homes makes this seem somehow less credible or possible. German women in the Soviet zone participated in the East German system in far greater numbers than German women in any of the other zones did. Whatever the reasons behind the greater participation of women in the Soviet zone of occupation, it was not enough to reverse the effects of the Berlin Blockade/Airlift and the erection of the Berlin Wall. These events instead undid most of the good that socialist policies had done. The Berlin Blockade and Airlift, coupled with the slow East German economic recovery, were all that was needed to convince West Germans, and possibly many East Germans, men and women alike, of the sincerity of the Western Allies in aiding a general German recovery. Perhaps even more importantly, the Berlin Airlift and the West German Economic Miracle proved that not only were the Allies sincere, they were capable of backing up the promises they made. If before these events, it was unclear who the Germans should trust, afterwards people began to "vote with their feet" for the West in ever-increasing numbers until the building of the Berlin Wall became a necessity to keep the East German government viable. This was not due to the policies of the West toward women or any other minority group or gender, rather it was the value Germans placed on personal freedom and economic policies with which totalitarianism could not compete. The economic frugality of the East made the relative laissez-faire of the West seem a utopia in which both men and women could prosper. The personal freedom to dissent and travel freely played large in the minds of those from the East who felt oppressed. Still, the decision to flee would be made often by those who controlled the money and spending decisions of the family. In the earliest years of the occupation, these
decision makers would more often than not be women. If these women had not become convinced by belated and half-hearted attempts by occupiers that they were more modern and beneficial to them, then their economic policies would suffice as reasons for sympathy and eventually flight.585

After all of the activity or inactivity of the occupation forces in Germany, only 6.8 percent of the original 1949 Bundestag was female (31 out of 409). In the second election women fared a little better, 38 of them winning seats (9.3 percent). Women in the SPD fared best, but the CDU was not far behind:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CDU/CSU</th>
<th>DP/DPB</th>
<th>FDP</th>
<th>FU</th>
<th>KPD</th>
<th>SPD</th>
<th>Without Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly all the debate and all the activity had grabbed the attention of many, but had not convinced large numbers of people to vote for women. This would change over time during the Cold War, until in 2000, Germany led the world’s large democracies in women in legislative positions with over 30 percent of its lower and 20 percent of its upper house seats filled by women. It is possible that the founding of the DFD and the responsive programs of the American and British allies are partially responsible for this phenomenon, but there is no direct evidence to prove this conclusion. The fact that the male values of honor and military virtue had been discredited must have played a partial role. That alone was not enough or the results for women would probably have been felt more immediately after the end of the war. The combination of the loss of credibility of purely male values with the programs of reeducation led by the Allies must have had

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some effect on Germany, but most of the greatest gains came after the Germans were
firmly back in control of their own political destiny.

Figure 8.1--Percentage of Women in the Representative Assemblies of Large Western
Democracies (As of 2000)

While the world may never know exactly why women in Germany are now
serving in legislative positions in such great numbers and not in other supposedly
progressive nations, the comparison of the programs of the occupation powers is
hopefully a useful tool in understanding this phenomenon somewhat more. In addition, it
should be apparent that some methods of occupation are more likely to inspire real
change than others will.
Hopefully historians will have garnered a better understanding of what occurred in immediate post-war Germany with regard to women’s movements, organizations and public life, along with the way four different nations approached the fact that German women were the majority of the population.

Conclusions for Military Commanders

I hope military commanders will see the value in approaching occupation with an eye for seeing the entire population as critical to mission success. Initially, only the Soviets considered German women as key players in the reconstruction of Germany. They gained a useful advantage that may have affected the entire balance of the Cold War had the Soviet not have made the blunders they did in Berlin. The advantages enjoyed by the Soviets due to their inclusion of women in the plans for a new German society should not be lost on a commander planning a possible military occupation. As Army Major Kevin Murphy, a friend of mine, who served in a contemporary occupation scenario in Afghanistan in July 2002, said, “In this war, public opinion is ‘key terrain,’” meaning that holding a particular piece of ground is less important in modern occupation than winning the “hearts and minds.” If men are dead, hiding or captured, the population will consist mostly of women and the ability of an occupation force to meet their needs will mean the difference between gaining the advantage of public opinion, or a maintaining a lingering anger toward the occupiers as enemy. Some resources must be specifically earmarked to convince the civilian population consisting mostly of women that the occupation will significantly aid them if the population bends its will to the occupier. If the intent of the occupier is genuine, the occupied population cannot fail to see the benefit of cooperation. If history cannot be used to predict the future as I contend,
it still can be used to anticipate likely scenarios. In occupation, the use of history can do just that. It may take a long time to win a victory over “the hearts and minds” of the population with these methods, but it will certainly take longer to win that victory without them.

From the Soviets a military commander learns that women in occupied territories may respond to centralized organizations for women and that these may be key tools in rebuilding society. Women will often have political agendas of all forms. Military commanders may need only to identify those locals who agree with the occupiers’ position and allow them some autonomy in executing reforms and organization. German socialist women in the Soviet zone showed that they were capable of performing such tasks.

From the British zone, military commanders can learn that decentralized, local education programs can result in enhanced civic awareness of occupied populations. However, for military commanders to be able to influence this sort of program, they will need to emphasize the role of military officers in developing the “training plans” and/or in inspecting the implementation of these plans.

From the American zone military commanders should learn that even after ignoring a problem, it may still need solving. Civil affairs and military government officials need training in helping occupied territories and this training should include something about women’s affairs. Military commanders should consider that military officers may be required to initiate programs for civilian populations consisting of a majority of women during occupation duty. It will not be prudent to expect the civilian authorities of the occupying nation to provide trained women to conduct the necessary
implementation of training for local populations. The military will either be expected to perform this task. The failure to properly perform this may result in the occupation taking longer to succeed, or it may fail.

From the French zone, military commanders may choose to learn little. Alternatively, they may learn that continuing to ignore women as a majority of the population may inevitably result in those women organizing politically and remaining resentful of the occupiers for failing to recognize them as equal citizens to their men.

Commanders must understand their own troops’ assumptions and perceptions of the roles of women in society in order to be able to display the enhanced concern for indigenous populations in occupied territories. If the population of an occupied nation detects a lack of concern for the local needs, the battle for the hearts and minds will not be easy and cannot be won. The way to win it is in displaying a genuine concern for the occupied population. In order to display this, an actual understanding is a prerequisite. Furthermore, it may not be enough to have and display this concern alone. In the age of joint and combined operations, all of the Allies must be on board in sharing and displaying the genuine attitude of concern for the occupied. For Americans who are perceived as the representatives of western culture and the only superpower, this may mean careful selection and training of troops and of allies. It will do little good for a commander of a multi-national force to understand the nature of the complexities of occupation in light of this study if soldiers from other belief systems are included in operations and they act independent of the intent. Just as no commander would allow one unit to use artillery versus enemy in a town while forcing others to clear buildings in
hand-to-hand fighting, a coherent plan for occupation must include a detailed
understanding of the culture of occupied areas by all occupation soldiers and officials.

Occupation forces are not simply combat forces waiting to suppress guerrilla
activity. Each and every action of the occupation soldier is a political act. The decision
to help a stranded motorist or not is a political decision in this context. While
commanders who see themselves as combat leaders may wish to wash their hands of
sticky situations involving decentralized decision making by lower ranking soldiers
acting as ambassadors for western culture, no commander of occupation forces can afford
for his or her troops to be branded as insensitive to local needs. Resentment will breed
hostility. Occupation will always involve interaction with local populations and this
means that soldiers must understand local cultures.

Military planning staffs must be equipped with the knowledge of local custom and
culture in order to make informed decisions. This goes beyond the need for well-trained
civil affairs officers. This will mean enhancing the capabilities and responsibilities of
intelligence collecting and dissemination. It will mean better forecasting of supply needs
when assessing civilian occupation situations. It will mean incorporating cultural training
in plans for occupation forces. Staff officers with knowledge of the local situation need
to be involved in the planning of occupation operations. The problem of understanding
culture is an operational problem for commanders and not simply a civil affairs issue.
Commanders must influence their staff and subordinate commanders to see the mission
of occupation as that of providing the atmosphere for the population to take initiative, and
discover agency for themselves. This is the correct metaphor for occupation duty after
law and order has been restored. The idea that occupied populations, especially “helpless
women,” are simply mouths to feed and a problem to be solved, the occupiers should see them as a source of human resources, which needs only the conditions to be set for self-organization.

In order for commanders of occupations to influence the attitude of the populations of occupied territories they must remain vigilant to the needs of the population while implementing the policies of the occupying government. By recognizing in the planning phase of an occupation that women are likely to be the majority of the population and planning for their needs, military commanders will enhance the conditions for mission success.
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