

thus far controlled within the far right. This tension management operates by articulating the feminine and activist function within a nationalist framework, by distinguishing the ideal (mother who stays at home) and reality (the constraints or obligations pushing women to work and to become politically involved), by justifying women's activism as mothers' (or wives') responsibilities, and finally by integrating women's personal trajectories into the structuring models. The women who express themselves publicly in the FN's name appear to be perfectly integrated into it, and they reproduce the FN's discourse. The far-right also knows how to manipulate several registers of language, praising French women in their roles as mothers, as biological reproducers and transmitters of culture, and presenting them as victims of social ills, immigration, and the destabilization of the social and familial order, as well as political agents and fighters. The presence of women activists is essential to normalizing the image of the far-right and expanding its influence. However, these women hold secondary responsibilities and are few in numbers. This scant participation is not unique to the far-right: in this area too, the far-right is no exception. But women's lesser involvement, the fact that less women than men vote for the FN, demonstrates that women's reluctance and opposition toward the far right is greater than men's.

#### Notes

1. Foreigners constitute 5 percent of the population living in France. But the far right also rejects French citizens of non-European origin.
2. But there was not a single elected person, as the legislative elections with uninominal ballots in two rounds affect minority political structures unfavorably.
3. The defense of "French Algeria" simultaneously against the movement for Algerian independence from French colonial rule and against Charles de Gaulle provoked the reconstitution of a previously marginal far-right. Notably it gave birth to the *Organisation de l'armée Secrète* (OAS, Organization of the Secret Army), a terrorist organization that operated in Algeria and France in 1961 and 1962. A whole generation of today's far-right leaders and activists, including Jean-Marie Le Pen himself, was trained in this context.
4. Her husband, André Dufraisse, who died in 1994, was also a member of the FN from its inception and the leader of the *Circle Entreprise moderne et libertés* (Circle of Modern Enterprise and Freedoms), an FN group for CEOs and high-level staff of businesses. During World War II, he was a member of the *Parti populaire français* (French Popular Party, a group of collaborators with Nazism) and engaged in the *Legion des volontaires français contre le bolchevisme* (Legion of French Volunteers against Bolshevism), an organization composed of French people who fought on the side of the German army on the Russian front.
5. In 1998, Jean-Marie Le Pen was threatened with being declared ineligible after having been sentenced for illegal use of excessive force (he beat up a socialist candidate during the 1997 electoral campaign). So, he proposed placing his wife at the top of the candidate list for the 1999 European elections, in fact, without letting her know about it in advance. This proposal provoked some opposition inside the party. However, the problem was solved as Le Pen was finally allowed to run as a candidate.
6. Jean-Yves Le Gallou, a prominent leader of the new right and formerly of the FN, is Mégreys' main assistant in the MNR.

## Women in the Non-Nazi Right during the Weimar Republic: The German Nationalist People's Party (DNVP)

Raffael Scheck

Until 1930, the predominant party of the German right in the Weimar Republic was the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (German Nationalist People's Party, DNVP), which combined monarchist, reactionary, and anti-Semitic groups. In the early 1930s, the DNVP lost votes to the rapidly growing Nazi Party but remained strong enough to help this party gain power in 1933. Although the parties shared some ideological positions, such as an extreme nationalism and hatred of democracy and socialism, the DNVP differed from the Nazis with regard to women in politics. Whereas the Nazis excluded women from their parliamentary groups and higher party offices, the DNVP allowed women to occupy seats in parliaments and encouraged them to organize a National Women's Committee and regional women's committees from the start. The DNVP had several well-known women representatives in the *Reichstag* (national parliament) and the diets of many German states. By presenting the four most notable women from the DNVP, this chapter will trace their motivations for joining the party, the focus of their activities, and their ideologies. Each of these four women was in some way typical of larger groups that played a role in the party.

Research on DNVP women has just begun (Scheck 1997; Heinsohn 2000). With one exception (Käthe Schirmacher), none of the women presented here is known in Germany today. Yet, there is a body of literature dealing with the alleged affinity to right-wing positions of the majority of Germany's bourgeois women's movement. Scholars such as Richard Evans (1974) and Claudia Koonz (1987) have claimed that politically active bourgeois women increasingly focused on the community of the people and on separate gender spheres, with an emphasis on women's "inherent" maternal qualities. This is supposed to have prepared them for Nazism with its aim to consign women to motherhood and the household. This thesis has been disputed, however, by historians who argue that the stress on separate spheres for men and women was often combined with the claim for equal rights and that the emphasis on the community of the people did not imply Nazi racism. It has been argued that the concept of "spiritual motherhood," which was popular in the German women's movement, called for an extension of women's alleged "maternal" qualities to all of society, regardless of a woman's biological motherhood, and that this ideology often demanded equal rights even while claiming different gender spheres (Schaser 2000; A. T. Allen 1991). Whereas my contribution, dealing with women who were already on

the right before 1918, cannot address the alleged increasing tendency of German bourgeois women to embrace right-wing positions, it can show that the separate spheres ideology—even in the right-wing spectrum—did not preclude equal rights demands and did not predetermine a restriction of women to the role of a mother and housewife.

The DNVP was formed out of older conservative and anti-Semitic parties in November 1918. It opposed the democracy being established after the abdication of German emperor Wilhelm II on 9 November 1918 and advocated an aggressive, confrontational foreign policy incommensurate with Germany's power. In the mid-1920s, the DNVP moderated its stands and participated in government together with moderate parties (Trippe 1995; Hertzman 1963; Liebe 1956; Grathwol 1980; Hiller von Gaertringen 1960). In 1928, however, the party elected as its chairman Alfred Hugenberg, an intransigent rightist. After a career in the top management of heavy industry, Hugenberg had built up a strong media empire. Hugenberg's financial contributions and support from his media had become increasingly important for the DNVP before 1928 (Holzbach 1981; Walker 1976; Leopold 1977). Under his leadership, the DNVP adopted an obstructionist policy and made substituting an authoritarian state for the Weimar Republic its primary aim. Hoping to integrate the Nazis and other radical right-wing groups into a broad opposition front against the Weimar Republic, Hugenberg repeatedly cooperated with Hitler and prepared the way for Hitler's appointment as chancellor on 30 January 1933.

The DNVP's votes came mostly from the small-town bourgeoisie and the rural population in Protestant regions, the very groups that in the early 1930s provided the Nazis with the bulk of their electoral support (Childers 1983). The DNVP attracted aristocratic landowners, civil servants, entrepreneurs, Protestant ministers, teachers, farmers and rural workers, housewives (both rural and urban), and a sizable group of blue-collar workers and lower-level employees. It competed for the vote of most of these groups with several other parties, including small special-interest parties. The DNVP started out with 10 percent of the national vote in 1919 but had doubled its share by 1924 (for all election results, see Falter, Lindenberger, and Schumann 1986). An uneasy balancing act between participation in government and opposition cut the DNVP's electoral support to 14.7 percent in 1928. Hugenberg's radical opposition then drove the more moderate groups out of the DNVP. Still, the party retained about 8 percent of the national vote even in March 1933, at a time when the Nazis were dominant and the DNVP's other competitors virtually wiped out. The DNVP formed a coalition government with the Nazi Party upon the appointment of Adolf Hitler as chancellor, but the Nazis soon excluded the DNVP from power and dissolved it on 30 June 1933 (Hiller von Gaertringen 1960, 609–616).

The introduction of women's suffrage in November 1918 encouraged the German right to intensify its efforts to mobilize women. The DNVP won the support of well-known women leaders and their organizations and ensured the election of women to the Reichstag and most state diets. Women usually had a share of 3 to 9 percent in the DNVP's Reichstag group, which was comparable to the other nonsocialist parties although lower than in the left-wing parties (Scheck 1997; Boak 1990). In the diet of Prussia, by far the largest German state, women for many years made up about 10 percent of the DNVP representation. The party also funded a newsletter edited by its National Women's Committee and sent to

all local women's committees, many individual members, and the nationalist press (this was the *Frauenkorrespondenz für nationale Zeitungen*, renamed *Deutschnationale Frau* in 1931). Electoral analyses suggest that the DNVP usually got between 54 and 58 percent of its national vote from women (only the Center Party and its Bavarian sister party received a slightly higher share). At its electoral zenith in 1924, the DNVP thus must have been the choice of one quarter of the German women who voted. In the DNVP strongholds in the north and east of the country, this share may well have approached 50 percent (Falter et al. 1986, 81–85). Although the reasons for women voters to support the DNVP are difficult to assess, we can examine the motivation and thinking of those women who participated at the highest level of DNVP politics.

### Paula Mueller-Otfried

Paula Mueller-Otfried was the longest-serving Reichstag member among the DNVP women. She represented the concerns of women in Germany's Evangelical Church. Her policies were conservative in matters of morality and reproduction, but she also insisted on the expansion of women's rights. Born in 1865 to a family of a high-level civil servant, she became a teacher, one of the few professions open to an intellectually gifted woman at the time. She remained unmarried. (Until 1919, women in state employment, including teachers, had to quit when they got married, but whether this compelled Paula Mueller-Otfried to remain single is unclear.) Mueller-Otfried gained a national reputation as chair of the *Deutsch-evangelischer Frauenbund* (DEF, German Evangelical Women's League), an organization that sought to mobilize women within the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church and, unlike the numerous charitable women's groups in the churches, emphasized women's rights (Reagin 1995). In 1908, Mueller-Otfried made the DEF a member of the predominant umbrella organization of the German women's movement, the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (Federation of German Women's Leagues). But the membership contract stipulated that the DEF did not have to support the union's call for women's suffrage. Mueller-Otfried herself advocated women's suffrage in areas where women were already involved (the churches and the local community) but not on the state and national levels.<sup>1</sup> (The reform of state suffrage threatened to open a can of worms for conservatives because most German states still had property-based suffrages that minimized left-wing representation.) In the last year of the First World War, the DEF left the union in protest against the union's vigor in calling for women's suffrage. To build a counterweight to the union, Mueller-Otfried then formed a new umbrella organization, the *Vereinigung Evangelischer Frauenverbände Deutschlands* (VEFD, Union of Evangelical Women's Leagues of Germany). Already before the war, Mueller-Otfried had joined the Conservative Party, the most important predecessor of the DNVP, and chaired its women's committee. When the DNVP was founded, Mueller-Otfried joined the party, as did many leading DEF and VEFD members (Scheck 1997, 37–39).

In 1920, Mueller-Otfried was elected to the Reichstag. As a member of the Reichstag, the National Women's Committee, and the DNVP Party Council, Mueller-Otfried was mostly concerned with public morality and social policy. In the early 1920s, she became instrumental in orchestrating the hateful racist campaign against the presence of black African soldiers in France's occupation

army in the Rhineland.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the French occupation army in western Germany used soldiers from France's African colonies had triggered widespread outrage in Germany and concern in other countries as well. Some German newspapers reported that Africans had committed rapes and blew the few incidents out of proportion, presenting them as a deliberate policy by France to undermine the morality and strength of the German people. Mueller-Otfried was instrumental in drafting a protest note to the League of Nations that stated: "The French Government also forced several town administrations to the unheard-of measure of opening brothels with German women for the people of color, thus to lure black beasts with white flesh" (quoted in Scheck 1999, 27).

Mueller-Otfried also played an important role in drafting legislation restricting immorality in film and print and became the DNVP's most outspoken advocate of small rentiers, people who had lost their retirement savings during the inflation of 1923. Mueller-Otfried and her allies won some concessions for the small rentiers, a majority of whom were women, but they narrowly failed to pass a law that would have given the rentiers adequate compensation for their losses in 1928 (Hong 1998, 121–123; Crew 1998, 33, 67, 90; M. Hughes 1988, 22; Führer 1990). On some occasions, Mueller-Otfried also fought for women's rights. In the Reichstag, she opposed initiatives to reintroduce the celibacy clauses for women civil servants abolished in 1919 but insisted that a woman civil servant with an illegitimate child had to be dismissed.<sup>3</sup> In the course of deliberations on the right of women to serve on juries, Mueller-Otfried even voted against the majority of her party for a bill that would grant women full access to the legal professions.<sup>4</sup>

In August 1932, after having been reelected five times, Mueller-Otfried declared she would not run in the November election. The press hostile to the DNVP claimed that Hugenberg had forced her to give up her place to a lower-ranked man, but Mueller-Otfried herself, who had repeatedly expressed admiration for Hugenberg, denied these rumors.<sup>5</sup> Like most leading DNVP women, Mueller-Otfried watched the rise of the Nazis with ambivalence. Whereas she welcomed the destruction of the Weimar Republic and the Nazis' terror against the left, she worried about their antifeminist stands, their cultlike veneration of Hitler, and their contradictory attitude toward religion.<sup>6</sup> She consequently stepped down as chair of the DEF in February 1934 (she had resigned from the VEFD earlier) (Lange 1998, 104). She lived in retirement until 1946.

Mueller-Otfried represented the powerful symbiosis of evangelical and conservative political motives among the women and men of the DNVP. Prominent evangelical church leaders and many women from the DEF and the evangelical charity organizations participated in the DNVP. One of the most famous was Magdalene von Tiling, a teacher who had received an honorary degree in theology. Von Tiling succeeded Mueller-Otfried as chair of the VEFD and sat in the Prussian state diet (1921–30) and the Reichstag (1930–33). Mueller-Otfried and von Tiling represented conservative rather than radical right-wing positions. They detested the Weimar Republic, which they saw as an amoral state hostile to religion. They were deeply affected by Germany's defeat in World War I and the Treaty of Versailles and believed that their work for public morality would prepare the rebirth of a strong, united, and Christian Germany. They did advocate some women's rights, such as the right to vote and to be

elected in spheres where women had long done most of the work (such as the churches), but they were uneasy in the company of the mainstream women's movement with its more democratic orientation. Von Tiling, in particular, advocated a corporate state built on authoritarian and religious values.<sup>7</sup> Although Mueller-Otfried played an important role in the campaign against the black soldiers in France's occupation army, DNVP women associated with the Evangelical Church were not at the forefront of the radical racism advocated by many other DNVP women. One such DNVP activist from the province of Hannover, Else Meyer, openly questioned this tendency in 1931: "Such a controversial issue as the race question first needs to be clarified carefully before it is made into an object of mass education. Otherwise it becomes mere phraseology."<sup>8</sup>

### Margarethe Behm

Mueller-Otfried may have been the most important DNVP woman in the Reichstag, but Margarethe Behm clearly was the most popular one. She built up the DNVP's National Women's Committee and sat in the National Assembly 1919–20 and the Reichstag from 1920 to 1928. Behm was a leading DNVP authority on social policy. Her particular concern was the lot of preindustrial women home workers, who lacked the legal and social protection granted to workers in factories (Quataert 1979, 35–36). Yet Behm seemed less concerned with women's rights per se than Mueller-Otfried even though she voted with her for the bill granting women access to the legal professions. Behm wanted women to be religious and socially sensible educators of the nation and accepted a stereotypical hierarchy of gender roles: "Men should lead us [women] whenever reason has to decide, we want to lead them whenever reason becomes a hindrance for what is born out of feeling in us."<sup>9</sup>

Born in 1860, Behm was, like Mueller-Otfried, an unmarried teacher. She came from a wealthy landholding family from the border area between Germany and Poland. Behm gained a national reputation as leader of the *Gewerkvereiner der Heimarbeiterinnen* (Union of Women Home Workers). Supported by Empress Auguste Viktoria, Behm pushed the prewar Reichstag to pass a sickness insurance bill for the women home workers. Her interest in workers induced Behm to get involved in the Christian Social Party, another one of the DNVP's predecessors, whose founder hoped to woo workers away from socialism with a mixture of social welfare, Christian values, and anti-Semitism.<sup>10</sup>

As chair of the National Women's Committee of the DNVP, Behm was ex officio a member of the highest party committees. Until she resigned from the National Women's Committee in 1923 to devote herself more to her other duties, she was involved in all party decisions.<sup>11</sup> At the first national party convention in July 1919, she was given the honor of reporting on the DNVP's work in the National Assembly following the initial address by the party chairman. Behm appealed to the historic importance of that moment: "For the first time in Germany, possibly for the first time in the whole world, a woman stands up to report on the work of a parliamentary group."<sup>12</sup> Behm then called for the rebuilding of Germany in a national and Christian spirit and fiercely denounced both the Treaty of Versailles and the Weimar Republic. Behm won admiration across the political camps through her concern for socially disadvantaged women



and through examples of open-mindedness. In her speech at the party conference, for example, she called for the party to be open to everybody willing to build a new and united Germany—including Jews.<sup>13</sup> Although she admitted to having anti-Semitic views before 1918, she argued that most Jews had proven themselves to be patriotic Germans and should be welcome in the DNVP (Striesow 1981, 114–128).

In the Reichstag, Behm's greatest achievement was the passage of a bill granting extensive insurance coverage for the women home workers in 1922. Her crucial role in this success was recognized when the press dubbed the law the "Lex Behm."<sup>14</sup> Unlike the rather serious and grim Mueller-Otfried, Behm displayed sharp humor in her speeches. Her responses to male hecklers in the Reichstag often caused general amusement, as when she justified her opposition to lowering the voting age in Germany from twenty-five to twenty in the National Assembly: "The male youth, in particular, is real cider in this age group, (very good! On the right) it can turn into beautiful wine, better than the one we get nowadays, (laughter and approval) but it still is only cider, (very true! On the right) and we have to wish that it turns only into the most noble wine."<sup>15</sup> Relating to her compassion for the lot of poor women in the cottage industry, she cultivated the image of a just and caring mother (or grandmother), so that she came to be called "Muttel" Behm (a tender version of "Mother Behm"). On her sixty-fifth birthday in 1925, she received an honorary doctorate from the medical faculty of the University of Greifswald.<sup>16</sup>

Behm died in July 1929 and thus witnessed only the beginnings of Hugenberg's party leadership. It remains open to speculation what she would have done had she lived longer. Suffice to say that several members of the Gewerkverein left the DNVP in 1930, including Behm's closest friend and successor at the helm of the Gewerkverein (Opitz 1969, 150, 178, 217). Like Mueller-Otfried, Behm and her Gewerkverein colleagues were conservative but not radical right-wing leaders. Ardent nationalism and a strong religious identification led Behm into the DNVP, and her social-mindedness was important in the party before the Hugenberg years.

### Käthe Schirmacher

Although well acquainted with Mueller-Otfried and Behm, Käthe Schirmacher seemed to live worlds apart from them. She had a Ph.D. in French literature, had played a leading role in the left-wing women's movement before the war, and maintained a lesbian relationship until her old age. Her partner, Klara Schleker, for a short time served as DNVP deputy in the diet of the state of Mecklenburg and, at age sixty-eight, was appointed as the diet's president by seniority in 1920 (Walzer 1991, 26, 79; Rupp 1997, 96). Nobody in the DNVP was more outspoken about women's rights than Schirmacher. Though she moved to the right in the last years before the First World War, she never reneged on her strong commitment to women's rights. But Schirmacher also became a representative of extreme racist and anti-Semitic positions in the DNVP.

Schirmacher was born in 1865 in the east German port city Danzig (today Gdansk, Poland) as the child of a wealthy merchant family. She received a good school education and went on to study at the Sorbonne in Paris and later at the

University of Zürich, where she received her doctorate in 1895. She rose to high positions in the German and international women's movements, serving for many years as secretary of the International Council of Women. After 1900, Schirmacher displayed an increasingly fanatical and antidemocratic German nationalism. She became a prominent activist on behalf of the Germans in those parts of east Germany that had a Polish majority, defining their conflict as a racial struggle. At the same time, she expressed hatred of democratic practices, whose weakness and decadence she claimed to have observed in France and which she saw on the rise in Germany, too. By the outbreak of the war, Schirmacher had resigned, or been pushed to resign, from her positions in the women's movement (Walzer 1991, 66–68). During the war, she called for a compulsory women's service that would drill young women in housework, gardening, and child care and instill strict discipline and nationalist values in them. She stressed the national importance of housework: "The world war has taught us that cooking and housekeeping are a service to the country, a defense of the country, and a form of citizenship. Not only the sword is a weapon—in the 'hunger war,' the cooking spoon is equally important."<sup>17</sup>

The possibility of her home province falling into Polish hands after the war induced Schirmacher to join the DNVP and to rally Danzig's German majority in a spirit of national defense. She was elected as a representative of West Prussia to the National Assembly in 1919, but the DNVP did not give her a promising place for the Reichstag elections of June 1920 after her voting district had been separated from Germany (Walzer 1991, 89). (Danzig came under a League of Nations mandate, and the rest of West Prussia was awarded to Poland.) In the National Assembly, Schirmacher passionately protested against the transfer of ethnically mixed areas to Poland, claiming that the Germans in those areas faced cultural repression and economic ruin under their new masters. Hers was one of the angriest voices against the Treaty of Versailles, and she was among the first to attack the presence of soldiers from the French colonies in the Rhineland. She claimed: "The lust of white, yellow, and black Frenchmen for German women leads to daily violence."<sup>18</sup>

Schirmacher was active in the National Women's Committee and the party's committee on race, the Völkischer Reichsausschuß, until her death in 1930. In many articles and speeches, she developed paranoid scenarios of a Germany in the throes of a "negroized France" (an allusion to France's use of African soldiers) and an "animalistic Moscow" (her metaphor for "Jewish" bolshevism). To counter this threat, she urged the Germans to keep their race "clean" and to strengthen its Nordic elements, a task in which women as mothers and educators had to play a primary role.<sup>19</sup> There were (well-founded) rumors that Schirmacher and Schleker hid right-wing terrorists who had assassinated politicians of the Weimar Republic. With a fanaticism that raised eyebrows even in the DNVP, Schirmacher strove to keep alive a spirit of revenge for Versailles, stressing repeatedly: "There is no happiness before we have been avenged."<sup>20</sup> Shortly before her death, she called for support of a popular referendum submitted by the DNVP and the Nazis against a new settlement for German reparations: "It is exciting to say *no* in times of deepest national shame and national surrender—to resist, to fight. The Germanic people were always fighters; their sign was the light-spraying hammer. Be cheerful, optimistic—be Germanic! Swing the bright hammer of

the referendum against the lie of Versailles, against tributary payments, against national decadence, against the spoiling of our present and our distant future. We can win, if we *want* to win. Want it!"<sup>21</sup> Yet, Schirmacher also demanded that women be allowed to participate in the national struggle as equal partners: "Each social, political, or national equation that fails to include women is wrong, unjust, and breeds misfortune."<sup>22</sup> Thus, Schirmacher claimed a direct connection between the liberation of women and the strength of the nation.

Whether Schirmacher's lesbianism was known in the party and hindered her DNVP career is impossible to say. Following some liaisons with men and perhaps women, Schirmacher met Schleker in 1903, at age thirty-eight. Schleker, an independently wealthy woman, was fifty-one and belonged to the same women's organizations as Schirmacher. After reading their private letters, historian Amy Hackett concluded that their relationship became erotic in 1906 at the latest. In 1910, Schirmacher moved in with Schleker. Schleker experienced the same political transformation as Schirmacher from a left-wing position to the far right (Hackett 1976, 289–291; Walzer 1991, 24–26). Given that women's friendships in the period tended to be more openly affectionate even without erotic background, it often happened that lesbianism was ascribed to women who were simply good friends or shared a household. By the same token, however, it is possible that Schirmacher's lesbianism was not widely recognized because of the more affectionate style of friendships between women (Hackett 1976, 290, n. 123). Hackett does not say whether Schirmacher's and Schleker's lesbianism was known in the women's movement before 1914; in the DNVP, nobody ever seems to have mentioned it.<sup>23</sup> In any case, Schirmacher's left-wing past and her outspoken insistence on women's rights were enough to give her an awkward position in the DNVP, although the Third Reich later venerated her for her nationalism and racism (Hackett 1976, 291).

Many men in the party, and many women, too, could not forget (or forgive?) Schirmacher's dazzling feminist career before 1914, and some DNVP women professed that her insistence on women's rights even after 1918 bothered them.<sup>24</sup> Yet Schirmacher was widely respected in her party, as the outpouring of admiring obituaries in the DNVP press shows, and she helped inspire a group of DNVP women, mostly intellectuals, who sought a similar synthesis of women's rights and fanatical, often racist nationalism. These women, sometimes called "*völkisch* feminists" (which is a questionable term considering their advocacy of rights only for women of a certain ethnic group), played an important role in the publications of the National Women's Committee. Most of these women preached a Nazi-style racism and anti-Semitism. Pointing at examples of gender equality among the Germanic tribes, they claimed that the subjection of women in Western civilization was the outcome of a Jewish intrigue and that a truly Germanic nation would recognize women as equals to men (H. Arendt, Hering, and Wagner 1995, 22–24). Had the Nazis allowed women a more prominent role in their party, it is possible that the *völkisch* feminists from the DNVP would have joined them. Yet, their positions were not unusual in the DNVP. The DNVP always had an anti-Semitic and racist wing, which even gained prominence in the last years of the Weimar Republic. But no matter how much resonance the racism and anti-Semitism of the *völkisch* feminists may have found in the DNVP, their advocacy of women's rights probably went too far for most men and many women in the party.

### Annagrete Lehmann

As a personality, Annagrete Lehmann was less distinct than the three others, but she quickly emerged as a clever politician in the DNVP women's organization. In early 1923, she succeeded Behm as chair of the National Women's Committee and received a seat in some of the highest party committees. She also served as DNVP representative in the Prussian state diet and later the Reichstag. After 1928, she cultivated close contacts with Hugenberg and was even appointed as one of the vice chairs of the party.<sup>25</sup> It is probably to her credit that the DNVP did not roll back its commitment to women's issues in the last years of the Weimar Republic, when Hugenberg pushed the party to the extreme right. Lehmann, who was significantly younger than the three other leading DNVP women, gave strong support to racist views in the DNVP.

Born in 1877, Lehmann had worked as a teacher and played a role in women teachers' organizations before she joined the DNVP. She got elected to the Prussian state diet in 1921 and joined the Reichstag in 1928, where she remained until 1933. According to her own testimony, she was instrumental in mobilizing the support of academic women for the DNVP.<sup>26</sup> As a parliamentarian, Lehmann addressed an unusual variety of topics. She became notorious for her attacks against the left-to-center Prussian government, which ruled for most of the period 1919–1932. In 1927, she stood in the limelight after having been selected as her party's commentator on the budget of the Prussian Ministry of Science, Culture, and Education. Accusing Prussia's government of nihilistic mass worship, Lehmann extolled the virtues of a *Volk* constituted through "affinity of the blood, genetic heritage, community of culture, and community of fate throughout history."<sup>27</sup> In the Reichstag, she fought against the liberalization of abortion and the charge that Germany had started the First World War. This was definitely her favorite topic. Lehmann for many years cochaired a women's committee dedicated to fighting the so-called "war guilt lie." Pointing out that the war guilt charge introduced the article on German reparations in the Treaty of Versailles, Lehmann and her peers believed that they could unhinge the legitimacy of the treaty by consistently denying Germany's responsibility for the war.<sup>28</sup>

As a close confidante of Hugenberg's, Lehmann after 1928 justified his every move to the women in the DNVP. The DNVP women's newsletter in this phase often carried a Hugenberg quotation in bold type followed by a Lehmann article that interpreted the quotation like a minister preaching about a Bible passage.<sup>29</sup> Notes of the DNVP's top-level meetings from this phase, in which Hugenberg negotiated several agreements with the Nazis, show that Lehmann attended most meetings but hardly ever spoke even though many other DNVP women were afraid of the Nazis' antifeminism and openly said so (Weiß and Hoser 1989). Although Lehmann used her position to protect the women's organizational structure of the DNVP, she showed less concern for women's rights than Mueller-Otfried or Schirmacher. When unemployment inspired German politicians to tighten the rules on the employment of married women in 1931, for example, Lehmann stood at the forefront of those women who justified the new restrictions.<sup>30</sup>

Lehmann enthusiastically welcomed the end of the Weimar Republic, the bloody repression of the left by the Nazis, and the dawning of a state based on racial, nationalist, and—so she hoped—religious principles. A programmatic

document issued by the National Women's Committee, still under Lehmann's leadership, in February 1933 defined the first task of the German woman to be a "guardian and cultivator of the race."<sup>31</sup> Lehmann expected that the Nazis would allow the DNVP to cooperate in the buildup of the racial state, but what she did after the dissolution of the DNVP is unclear. Like Hugenberg, she may have sat out the rest of the Nazi years in retirement. She died in 1954.

Lehmann was not only important as an efficient, if colorless, organizer but also as a link to the young generation. Her racism, in particular, was shared by many young DNVP activists at the end of the Weimar Republic. The two most notable among them were Alexa von Porembsky, a party activist from Thuringia, and Dr. Irmgard Wrede, an economist from Silesia. Both propagated the same racial eugenics that was at the core of Nazi race ideology. Porembsky even warned the Nazis in February 1933 that their predilection for submissive women would produce further racial decay because it induced Nordic men to marry racially inferior women; the precious Nordic woman, Porembsky claimed, was as self-assertive and bold as the Nordic man.<sup>32</sup>

### Conclusion

Although the four most notable DNVP women cover a broad range of women's activism within that party, they leave open a few gaps. The most significant one is the absence of a housewives' representative. Housewife issues occupied an important place in the DNVP women's activities. As Schirmacher stressed, good housekeeping had become a national duty during the war. In "buy German" campaigns, DNVP women after 1918 stressed the power and responsibility of the German housewife as a consumer and producer. Several housewives and members of Germany's powerful rural housewives' union sat in the DNVP's parliamentary groups, yet none of them was famous for her party career (Bridenthal 1993). Another point to consider is that the four most prominent DNVP women, having built up or led independent women's organizations, entered the party from a position of strength. They knew how to deal with the hostility of men to the presence of women in politics. The situation was different for those women who lacked a prominent organizational role preceding their DNVP involvement. A telling example is Anni Kalähne, the wife of a professor in Danzig, who became the leading DNVP activist in this city. To get things done, Kalähne discussed her ideas with two powerful men in her party, inducing them to present her ideas as their own.<sup>33</sup>

In spite of these limitations, the four case studies show that the primary concerns of women who joined the DNVP were radical nationalism, often coupled with anti-Semitism and racism, and a religiously inspired conservatism. The women were generally able to assert their influence within the limits defined by the party statutes and broader ideological conventions, which assigned to them topics such as education, public morality, religion, and housekeeping. They occasionally protested if their share of parliamentary seats or funding for their activities was reduced, and male party leaders often lent an open ear to these complaints (Scheck 1997, 44–46). The limitation of women to fields that were deemed close to the work of housewives and mothers led to differences of emphasis between women's and men's stands in the DNVP. Still, no clear line separating their political stands in general exists, although it appears that DNVP

women in the late Weimar years took more strongly to racist and anti-Semitic ideas than did activist men in the same period.<sup>34</sup> The gender-specific emphasis of women's political work was typical of all parties in Weimar Germany and was rarely challenged (Koonz 1976).

With respect to women's rights, different priorities emerged among the DNVP women activists. They certainly agreed that the push for women's rights per se was not justified in a national emergency such as it existed for much of the Weimar Republic. But some DNVP women activists welcomed women's rights primarily as opportunities for women to infuse German politics with a stronger nationalist and religious spirit. Others, such as Schirmacher, believed that women, despite their differences from men, should be granted full equal rights and that the national liberation of Germany even hinged on that. Unlike Western feminists, these women tended to justify equality not with recourse to the natural rights discourse of the Enlightenment tradition but rather through the invocation of an allegedly egalitarian Germanic past. Those DNVP women most interested in racial eugenics even constructed a racial foundation for this argument by claiming that the Nordic woman was by nature self-assertive and bold.

Given that all four leading DNVP women—despite some inconsistencies—were assertive about women's right (and duty) to participate in politics, however, this chapter contradicts the thesis that the gender-specific emphasis of German women activists was decisive for German women's affinities with Nazism. Equal rights, even if tied to gender-differentiated roles, was not something Hitler and leading Nazi ideologues were willing to grant, as shown in their refusal to admit women to their parliamentary groups and higher party posts (Scheck 1999, 32). It is important, moreover, that the leading DNVP women rejected the separation of public and private spheres that usually came as an analogy to the division of "male" and "female" spheres (Yuval-Davis 1997, chap. 4). The food crisis of the First World War had shown how important housekeeping was, and the sharp social tensions after 1918 demonstrated the relevance of the so-called female sphere in the political realm. At a time of near civil war and—real or perceived—moral decay, the social policies and the legislation on public morality articulated foremost by women appeared to be a matter of national importance. Finally, one should consider that those women who, like Schirmacher and the *völkisch* feminists, came closest to advocating a Nazi-style racism, were often the most outspoken DNVP women with respect to women's rights.

It is safe to say that the DNVP women helped to make Weimar legislation more conservative and that they demonstrated—for the first time in Germany and perhaps the world—that women could be trusted to represent right-wing causes in parliaments and in the wider public. Their impact on the rise of the Nazis and the Third Reich, however, is harder to assess. In their critique of the Nazis, DNVP women defended the right of women to participate at all levels of politics (Scheck 2000, 242–247). Their own antidemocratic stance as well as their stress on the primacy of women's role as housewife and mother, however, threatened to undermine their credibility. If one opposed a democratically elected parliament and advocated an authoritarian state, what sense did it make to defend the right of women to vote and to serve in parliaments? The Nazis, once in power, swiftly brushed the DNVP women aside and built up a women's organization untarnished by women's rights stands. The leader of the Nazi women's organization after 1934, Gertrud Scholz-Klink, a young mother of five children,



was the widow of a Nazi martyr and had little political experience (Koonz 1987, xxxviii, 166–167). Still, the DNVP women's synthesis of religious concerns with racism and anti-Semitism may have helped pave the way for the Third Reich by preparing German women for the racism of the Nazis. Perhaps the definition of the German woman primarily as a guardian of the race, as expressed by the DNVP women in February 1933,<sup>35</sup> was the logical conclusion of a stand that rejected universalistic natural rights and democratic principles while embracing a racially underscored hypernationalism.

## Notes

1. Paula Mueller(-Otfried), *Weltanschauung und Frauenbewegung*. Berlin, 1910.
2. Protokolle über den 2. Parteitag in Hannover, Oktober 1920, in Bundesarchiv Berlin, 60 Vo 2 DNVP, vol. 53 (films 45125/6), pp. 46–48.
3. *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, vol. 354, p. 211, and vol. 355, p. 630.
4. See *Deutschnationales Handbuch*, vol. 8. Berlin, 1921, pp. 108 and 233. A different bill was passed in 1922 with the votes of the DNVP.
5. "Paula Mueller-Otfried," *Deutschnationale Frau (DnF)*, 15 September 1932.
6. Paula Mueller-Otfried, "Waffen für den Wahlkampf," *DnF*, 10 July 1932.
7. See, for example, Magdalene von Tiling, "Der alte und der neue Staat," *DnF*, 23 and 30 October 1932.
8. Else Meyer, "Nationalsozialismus und Bildungswesen," *DnF*, 1 July 1931.
9. "Tagung der deutschnationalen Frauen," *Frauenkorrespondenz Für nationale Zeitungen (FK)*, 6 November 1920.
10. Emma von Westarp, "Margarethe Behms Lebensgang," and Paula Mueller-Otfried, "Margarethe Behm im Parlament," both in *FK*, 8 August 1929.
11. On her resignation, see *FK*, 23 February 1923.
12. "Parteitag 1919," special issue of *Die Post*, July 1919, p. 2.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Reinhard Mumm, "Der Ehrentag Margarethe Behms," in *Der Parteifreund*, 15 April 1922.
15. For Behm's speech, see *Verhandlungen der Nationalversammlung*, vol. 327, p. 1266. See also Reinhard Mumm, "Weibliche Beredsamkeit," in *FK*, 12 March 1921.
16. *FK*, 7 January 1925.
17. Käthe Schirmacher, *Frauendienstpflicht*. Bonn: Marcus and Weber Verlag, 1918, p. 6.
18. See *Verhandlungen der Nationalversammlung*, vol. 341, interpellation no. 1898 (quoted), and vol. 343, interpellation no. 2771.
19. Käthe Schirmacher, "Frankreichs farbige Truppen," *FK*, 13 July 1925.
20. As quoted in Annelise Spohr, "Käthe Schirmacher. Zu ihrem Geburtstag am 6. August," *FK*, 24 July 1930. See also Walzer, 1991, 87.
21. Käthe Schirmacher, "Zum Volksbegehren," *FK*, 24 October 1929.
22. Schirmacher, "Margarethe Behms Todestag am 28. Juli," in *FK*, 17 July 1930.
23. A biography of Schirmacher published by her former secretary introduces Schleker merely as Schirmacher's "partner in struggle and life" (H. Krüger 1936, 131–37).
24. See Anni Kalähne, "Käthe Schirmacher zum Gedächtnis," *FK*, 27 November 1930.
25. Elisabeth Spohr, "Zehn Jahre Führerin der Deutschnationalen Frauenarbeit," *DnF*, 15 February 1933.
26. Annagrete Lehmann, "Der Frauenausschuß der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei." In *Der nationale Wille. Werden und Wirken der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei 1918–1928*, ed. Max Weiss, pp. 319–336. Essen: Wilhelm Kamp, 1928, p. 321.
27. *Verhandlungen des Landtags*, vol. 12, p. 18174.
28. Lenore Kühn, "Die Schuldfrage Deutschlands Lebensfrage," *FK*, 19 November 1921.
29. For examples, see *DnF*, 23 October 1932 and 15 November 1932.
30. Annagrete Lehmann, "Rechtliche Stellung der verheirateten Beamtin und Lehrerin," *DnF*, 1 May 1931.
31. "Was hat das bisherige System an moralischen Werten verwirtschaftet?" *DnF*, 15 February 1933. The article introduces a resolution by the National Women's Committee that includes the quotations.
32. See the summary of her talk "Woman and Race": "Die völkische Tagung am 4 und 5. Februar in Berlin," *DnF*, 15 February 1933.
33. "Lebenserinnerungen von Anni Kalähne, geb. Schäfer." Landesarchiv Bremen, Nachlass Dietrich Schäfer, vol. 7.2.1.
34. Whereas the DNVP women's newsletter after 1930 contains many racist articles, the general party newsletter (*Unsere Partei*) contained only one such article in the same period—written by Alexa von Porembsky ("Der völkische Gedanke in der DNVP," *Unsere Partei*, 1 September 1932).
35. "Was hat das bisherige System an moralischen Werten verwirtschaftet?" *DnF*, 15 February 1933.

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