

VICTIMS OF THE PAST:
WALTER GROß, THE RPA AND THE NAZI PROPAGANDA WAR
AGAINST THE DISABLED

A dissertation to the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies
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ABSTRACT

Victims of the Past:

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Against the Disabled

Doctor of Letters Dissertation by

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To pursue its goal of racial perfection, Nazism waged a war of elimination against those whom they perceived to be genetically inferior and biologically unfit. Through draconian legislation and the all-invasive power of the state, the Third Reich incessantly worked toward the creation of a “national community” free from hereditary illness. Critical to the success of this biological policy was a massive propaganda campaign designed to galvanize public support and to “re-awaken” Germans to their racial inheritance. The Office of Racial Policy (RPA), under the authority of Dr. Walter Groß, created eugenic propaganda intended to educate every German, man, woman and child about the perceived threat to the health of the German *Volk*. Utilizing the power of the mass-media, the RPA developed and implemented a propaganda campaign against the disabled in the 1930s.

This dissertation will examine this Nazi organization and the man who guided the RPA in its work. As part of this propaganda war against the disabled, the Nazis relied heavily upon decades of eugenic thinking inside and outside of Germany. Therefore, to fully understand the RPA’s work, it is necessary to examine the evolution of eugenics as related to policies of the Third Reich. This dissertation will demonstrate the adaptation of eugenic theories and racial

studies into, not only legislation adopted by Hitler's Germany, but also the propaganda crafted by Groß and the RPA. Scholarly works which have examined Nazi eugenic policies and Nazi propaganda rarely detail Groß' organization in detail. The core mission of this dissertation is to provide scholarship into the intersection of Nazi eugenic policies and Nazi propaganda, demonstrated by the work of Walter Groß and the RPA. This dissertation will demonstrate the importance of Nazi eugenic propaganda and the critical importance of Groß and the RPA to the Third Reich's quest to create a genetically perfect Aryan race.

This work is dedicated to my beloved wife, Rebecca, whose love and unyielding support made this work possible.

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Introduction:
“Victims of the Past?”

To our amazement, we have all observed how the government and society mercifully and pitifully use their means to maintain the lives of criminals, lunatics, imbeciles, and idiots, wasting millions [of Reichsmarks] on them, while at the same time, there was hardly enough money for the average healthy citizen to buy a slice of bread.¹

Dr. Walter Groß 1933

In March 1937, hundreds of Nazi officials were invited to Berlin for the premiere of the latest RPA (*Das Rassenpolitische Amt* or Office of Racial Politics) film production. Entitled *Opfer der Vergangenheit: Die Sünde wider Blut und Rasse* (Victims of the Past, The Sin against Blood and Race), this film was commissioned by Dr. Gerhart Wagner, head of the *Reichärztekammer* (Reich's Physician Chamber) as a sequel to the 1936 RPA silent film, *Erbkrank* (The Hereditarily Ill). Unlike earlier RPA film productions, *Opfer der Vergangenheit* offered sound and a higher visual quality than the rather low quality, grainier films produced earlier by the RPA. Because of the narration and improved cinematography, this film represented not only a dramatic improvement in eugenics propaganda films, but gave a sense of authority and legitimacy to the language and images therein. Imagine sitting in the audience, the lights dim and as the projector rolls, dramatic music fills the theatre. The screen is then emblazoned with the title of the film and for the next twenty-seven minutes, two distinctly different Germanys are portrayed, existing side by side, but with very little knowledge of the other's existence until now. One is of the proper “blood and race” while the other is a threat to that “blood and race” which has been allowed to exist. As the title suggests, Germany had fallen victim to reckless racial policies. Who were the victims? Were

¹ Walter Groß. “Politik und Rassenfrage: Rede auf dem Kongress des Reichspartei (1933).” *Reichstagung in Nürnberg*. (Berlin, Germany: Vaterländischer Verlag C.A. Weller, 1934) 153-154.

the German people as a whole victims of policies that permitted thousands of mentally and physically 'inferior' to live and thrive in Germany? Or were the thousands that the Third Reich considered mentally and physically disabled victims of reckless and irresponsible population policies? Were they condemned to live, as German lawyer Dr. Karl Binding and German physician Dr. Alfred Hoche entitled their 1920 work a "life unworthy of life?" The issue of victimization would become critical to understanding the problem of Germany's defective population, for it was the German people who permitted this plague to be visited upon the *Volksgemeinschaft* or "national community." As we will see in future chapters, Dr. Walter Groß, among others within the Nazi regime, would clearly define the goal of the Third Reich in its desire to eliminate this biological threat to the German people. Victimization would rank among many arguments that Groß and the RPA would utilize in its task to educate the German people in this problem.

At its premiere, many Nazi officials witnessed the Germany of Hitler's Third Reich, exemplifying the strength and vitality of the German people, the *Volk*. It demonstrated through images of German farmers working the land, working class Germans engaged in hard work, German youth participating in group activities under the direction of the *Hitlerjugend* (The Hitler Youth) and the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (The League of German Girls) as well as images of a revitalized German military, that the Third Reich's quest to create a racially pure, racially strong Germany was becoming a reality. Such images were meant to create a sense of pride and belonging to this *Volksgemeinschaft*. However, there were startling scenes of healthy, but poorer Germans, living in squalor; where images of children playing in dimly lit, filth-laden streets, depicted a segment of the *Volksgemeinschaft* struggling to survive at the expense of supporting the physically and mentally disabled.

This film sought to exemplify the Germany of the racially pure and genetically strong while, at the same time, showing a Germany populated with those whose very existence burdened not only the poor, but the German people as a whole. According to the film, many of Germany's mentally and physically disabled were housed in spacious hospitals, surrounded by well kept, park-like gardens and cared for by trained healthcare professionals all at the cost of the German taxpayer. While the film decried the living conditions of Germany's poor, it condemned the resources wasted to provide for, as the film describes, "idiots, imbeciles and poor creatures," terms used by the Nazis to describe the disabled. Commentary by the narrator suggests that, if left unchecked, Germany will become victim to "an endless procession of horrors" which will "invade our nation" and "boundless misery would affect our valuable race which would march headlong to its doom!"²

Opfer der Vergangenheit had a profound impact on its audience at the premiere. Propaganda Minister Dr. Joseph Goebbels declared after screening the film, "It made my flesh crawl. Horrible Stuff."³ Hitler himself was so impressed with the film that he ordered it to be shown in every German theater.⁴ Although the film was the last of the RPA productions, filmed between February and March of 1936⁵ and as with all RPA productions, shown prior to the feature length film, its impact and message clearly demonstrated the extent to which the Third Reich intended to use eugenics propaganda to "re-educate" all Germans about their racial inheritance. Germans needed to recognize that, in order to secure the continued security and vitality of the *Volk*, certain measures were necessary to eliminate

² *Opfer Der Vergangenheit*. Dir. Gernot Bock-Stieber. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1937. DVD.

³ Claudia Koonz. *The Nazi Conscience*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003) 125.

⁴ Michael Burleigh. *Death and Deliverance 'Euthanasia' in Germany, c. 1900-1945*. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 188.

⁵ Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 188.

that section of German society which infected German blood with disease and disability. If the German people could be made to see themselves as “victims” of this plague, then the curative was to systematically prevent the hereditarily ill from burdening future generations of Germans with their plight.

In an October 1933 German publication, *Weltkampf* (*The World Struggle*), Dr. Ludolf Haase, former Gauleiter of South Hanover, called for the creation of an “Office of Racial Affairs.” In this article entitled, “Wir brauchen ein Reichsrasseamt” (“We Need a Reich Office of Racial Affairs”) Haase envisioned that such an office “must circumscribe the totality of life in the nation. It should imbibe them not only with a renewed will to live and reproduce, which is alarmingly weak today, but, as an office that establishes direction and guidelines, should bring about the species-specific course of our lives and facilitate the aims of selection.”⁶ Haase’s blueprint for such an institution called for its coordination with other Nazi agencies such as the Ministries of Propaganda, Economics and Culture, the German Labor Front, and the SS, for example, for the purpose of educating all Germans in the sciences of racial hygiene and selective breeding in order to cultivate only the very best genetic material. Although Haase’s vision of an “Office of Racial Affairs” included duties which would fall under the responsibilities of other Nazi bureaucracies, the overall emphasis on education, training, family and indoctrination of racial studies through propaganda, would, in fact, become the primary responsibility of Dr. Walter Groß, a physician, an early supporter of the Nazi Party and chief of the RPA. Haase and the Nazi state required that the German people fulfill their racial destiny by ensuring only the healthiest Germans procreate,

⁶ Ludolf Haase. “We Need a Reich Office for Racial Affairs (1933).” *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. Edited by Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman, 1st ed., (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2013) 153.

while at the same time, inhibiting the continued reproduction of those the state considered to be physically and mentally inferior. Hitler foretold of a crisis inflicting the German people when he insisted in *Mein Kampf* that, “A people that fails to preserve the purity of its racial blood thereby destroys the unity of the soul of the nation in all its manifestations.”⁷

This connection between eugenics and propaganda will be the focus of this study, specifically the role of Dr. Walter Groß and the RPA and to recognize that Groß was not one of the thousands of faceless Nazi bureaucrats history has forgotten or relegated to a few pages found in works dedicated to Nazi eugenic policy and/or Nazi propaganda. Rather, identifying the key role of Groß and his RPA within the structure of the Third Reich should be illuminated, for to understand this Nazi physician and his organization is to truly understand the breadth and scope of Nazism’s quest to create a biologically pure race populated by a healthy German people. It is critical to recognize, through Groß’s own words and the propaganda material created by his organization, that the pursuit of a racially pure German race, which represented the primary foundation of Nazi ideology, *required* the total indoctrination of the German people. Such complete adherence to the regime’s policies to create this Aryan utopia was predicated, in part, to the unceasing work of Walter Groß and the RPA.

While much of the scholarly research devoted to the topics of Nazi eugenics and Nazi propaganda, as separate entities, is extensive, rarely do they intersect. This is not to say that Walter Groß and the RPA are not found in such works. However, a detailed analysis of Groß and the work of his organization is still lacking. Burleigh’s work *Death and Deliverance* ‘*Euthanasia in German. 1900-1945*, on Nazi eugenic policy and euthanasia does provide a

⁷ Adolf Hitler. *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*. Trans. James Murphy. (London, England: Hurst and Blackett LTD., 1942) 192.

chapter entitled “Selling Murder: The Killing Films of the Third Reich” where he discusses the film productions of the RPA. Burleigh aptly described these films as portraying “a crudely Social Darwinian view of life as a perpetual struggle for survival amidst a hostile natural environment.”⁸ With additional commentary on other euthanasia films produced by different Nazi organizations, such as the *Reichsanstalt für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* (Reich Institute for Films in Science and Education, or RWU), Burleigh’s focus is primarily on the eugenic, propaganda, and medical training films created during the Third Reich. While this does represent an important part of the propaganda war against the disabled, Groß and the RPA came to utilize more than just film to mold public understanding of the Third Reich’s ultimate goal of perfecting a pure German race. It is the purpose of this work to add to the existing historiography of the Third Reich; to focus in detail on this particular area of Nazi history.

One of the key questions I seek to address is why was the creation of the RPA necessary in Nazi Germany? Just as Jews, Slavs, homosexuals and the Roma and many others that failed to fit the racial criteria were systematically and ruthlessly removed from the Nazi inspired *Volksgemeinschaft*, including the mentally and physically disabled. As will be explained in Chapter 3, The Third Reich enacted legislative measures designed to prohibit the procreation of those the Reich deemed as genetically inferior. The 1933 Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring, otherwise known as the Sterilization Law, represented only part of the legislative process enacted to further Nazi Germany’s genetic designs. Additionally, thousands of lawyers and judges were necessary to enforce eugenics legislation. However, this represented only a fraction of the tens of thousands of physicians,

⁸ Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 192.

teachers, nurses and medical professionals that were mobilized to create a Germany as envisioned by Hitler, one populated by genetically pure Aryan *Volk*. It stands to question then: why if the Third Reich used its power of eugenics legislation and the willing cooperation of thousands of professionals at its disposal to enforce its racial laws, was it necessary to create a bureaucratic organization with the specific purpose of creating and disseminating eugenics propaganda?

Hitler himself provided the answer to this question. The Nazi movement and the subsequent rise of the Third Reich became a political force driven by the power of propaganda. Hitler's first taste of political power came during the early years of the right-wing, nationalist German Workers Party, established in 1919. At first as a member, Hitler rose through the party ranks to become its propaganda chief and eventually party leader by 1920, renaming it *Die Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (The National Socialist German Workers' Party). Hitler's mastery of propaganda and his recognition that propaganda was an essential tool to achieve ultimate political power, eventually created a Nazi Germany which was driven by the power of propaganda. As author and historian David Welch explained in his work, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda*, "From its beginning, the Third Reich had set itself the ambitious task of re-educating the German people for a new society, based upon what it saw as a 'revolutionary' value system."⁹ Propaganda would be the tool by which the Third Reich would re-educate its people. The RPA, under the direction of Walter Groß, initiated a propaganda campaign vilifying the disabled and waged a war on the mentally and physically infirm, while at the same time, exemplifying those traits believed to be found in pure-blooded, healthy German stock. This dichotomy between the sick versus

⁹ David Welch. *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda*. (New York, New York: Routledge, 1993) 17.

the healthy, the weak versus the physically strong, the mentally diseased versus the intellectually gifted, became the standard which developed into the core theme of eugenics propaganda.

Who then was Dr. Walter Groß? At the time of his appointment as the head of the RPA in 1934, Groß was characteristic of the fanatical Nazi bureaucrat and obedient disciple to Nazi ideology. Joining the Nazi Party at the age of twenty-one in 1925, Groß quickly became enmeshed in Nazi politics. As a medical student, Groß founded the *Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (National Socialist Student League) at the University of Göttingen and was active in the National Socialist League of Physicians.¹⁰ A committed student of the eugenic ideas of Germany's leading racial hygienists and eugenicists such as Eugen Fischer, Alfred Ploetz and Fritz Lenz, Groß began his political career as a member of the Reich Leadership of the *Nationalsozialistischer Deutsche Ärztebund* (National Socialist German Doctors Alliance) in 1932 and a year later founded the *Aufklärungsamt für Bevölkerungspolitik und Rassenpflege* (Reich Bureau for Enlightenment on Population Policy and Racial Welfare).¹¹ In 1934, Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess appointed Groß to head the *Rassenpolitische Amt* (Reich Office of Racial Policy), a newly created office which integrated Groß's Reich Bureau into this new organization. Its purpose, as stated by Stanford University historian Robert Proctor, was "to concentrate and unify all schooling and propaganda in the areas of population and racial policy."¹²

Groß's role as head of the RPA reflected his complete adherence to Nazi ideology and eugenic science which was necessary to effectively administer an organization whose

¹⁰ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 107.

¹¹ Robert Wistrich. *Who's Who in Nazi Germany*. (New York, New York: Bonanza Books, 1982) 109.

¹² Robert Proctor. *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988) 87.



Fig. 1 Photograph of Dr. Walter Groß, head of the Rassenpolitik Amt. 1933. Photograph. www.wikipedia.com Web. 28 October 2017.

primary goal was to indoctrinate all Germans into recognizing that the concepts of “racial inheritance” and “racial purity.” Groß’ name does not rank among the top leaders of the Third Reich. Duke University professor Claudia Koonz wrote of Groß, “As a team player, he (Gross) remained in the shadow of flamboyant and more senior leaders like Alfred Rosenberg, Julius Streicher and Joseph Goebbels.”¹³ While it is true that Groß’ name lacks the notoriety of the leaders of the Third Reich, it does not dissuade from the fact that Groß, like so many other Nazi bureaucrats, would be an essential tool in the Nazi’s war for racial perfection. Just as Haase had imagined when he stated that his “Office of Racial Affairs” needed to develop a working relationship with other Nazi bureaucracies, Groß guided the RPA to interact with other Nazi organizations, such as the SS, the *Hitlerjugend*, the *Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund* (The National Socialist Teachers Union) and the *Reich Ausschuß für öffentliche Gesundheit und Wissenschaft* (The Reich Committee for Public Health and Science.) Through such interaction, Groß ensured that the RPA exercised a significant degree of influence within the structures of several vital institutions of the Third Reich.

¹³ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 106.

There can be little debate as to the importance of propaganda and the Third Reich. Welch's assertion that one of the main concerns that the Nazis faced was to galvanize public support for its policies proved to be a task the Nazis readily accepted. Academics and authors such as Randall Bytwerk, David Welch and Jeffrey Herf have studied either individual mediums of mass media used to manipulate public opinion or individual subjects (the Jews in particular) as the focus of such vitriolic propaganda. Through propaganda, the Third Reich mastered the manipulation of facts, the distortion of truth and preyed upon the emotions of the German people to create a state where propaganda permeated throughout the daily lives of all Germans. Central to this propaganda was the belief that, as a race, the German people were destined for greatness. One can argue that every policy, every ideological tenet of National Socialism was grounded in terms of racial identity. Eugenics propaganda would focus on this racial identity, and any perceived threat to creating and maintaining, what one can term "racial imperfection", had to be identified and "expelled" from the greater German community.

The connection of eugenics and propaganda was inseparable in Nazi Germany and ever-visible in the daily lives of every German man, woman and child. One could not go to any doctor's office in Germany without finding copies of the RPA publication *Neues Volk* (New Race), a publication dedicated to racial hygiene and eugenics propaganda. School children were taught their lessons in subjects such as, biology, history and mathematics based upon a structured curriculum derived Nazi policies of racial identity and Germanic superiority. Members of the *Hitlerjugend* and the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* were subjected to lectures provided by RPA trained instructors on subjects such as biology and German history. RPA produced films on subjects such as racial identity, the inherent superiority of the

German people and the dangers of infecting pure racial blood with genetically “inferior” blood were shown not only in the classroom, but also at HJ and BDM meetings. German theaters would routinely show RPA propaganda films as part of the movie-going experience. Posters created by the RPA to vilify the costs wasted in the care of the mentally and physically disabled (see Chapters Four and Five for visual examples) were displayed in schools, hospitals and RPA sponsored lectures throughout Germany. RPA propaganda evolved to become a constant in the lives of every German, designed to strengthen the concept of family and community by identifying such threats to the existence of these core units of German society.

In her work, *Disability in Twentieth Century German Culture*, Carol Poore devotes an entire chapter to explain the relationship between Germany’s disabled population and the Third Reich. Poore details the role of Groß and the RPA as an institution which bore the responsibility of racial education and its use of all venues of mass media at the time to promote racial hygiene and, in doing so, creating “innumerable negative images” of the disabled.¹⁴ In her analysis of eugenics propaganda, Poore explains that Nazi Germany “relied on crass binary distinctions between health and degeneracy that are tiresomely predictable. Once you have seen a few of these images, you have seen them all. Therefore it is unnecessary to try to document all of them— an impossible and boring task in any event.”¹⁵ There is validity to Poore’s assertion. It is true that Groß and the RPA created a vast array of propaganda material that relied on several key arguments, which are repeated to excess. It is also true that, in order for such propaganda to be effective, dramatic and, in Poore’s words

¹⁴ Carol Poore. *Disability in Twentieth Century German Culture*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2007) 100-101.

¹⁵ Poore, *Disability in Twentieth Century German Culture*, 100.

“crass” distinctions were necessary to demonstrate the radical differences between the sick and the healthy. This repetitious and crude assault on the disabled, whether in film, in print, through a classroom lecture, or in a speech Groß would give to a select audience, followed Hitler’s own concepts of propaganda. Hitler stated that propaganda, to be persuasive, must “convince the masses whose slowness of understanding needs to be given time in order that they may absorb information and only *constant repetition* [my italics], will finally succeed in imprinting an idea on the memory of a crowd.”¹⁶ It can be stated that all Nazi propaganda followed the same pattern of repeatedly driving its own ideological beliefs into the minds of the German people and Poore’s description of eugenics propaganda could apply to all propaganda created within the Third Reich. Simplistic in delivery and shocking in presentation, eugenic propaganda combined the dual forces of image and message to rouse all Germans to embrace their racial inheritance and to protect this inheritance by all means necessary.

While the task of this work is not to document every piece of eugenics propaganda created by the RPA, there is an underlying factor when examining eugenics propaganda and the role of Walter Groß and the RPA which requires attention and examination. While Nazi ideology is grounded in the belief that the Germanic peoples, as a race, are superior to all others, it would be erroneous to state that Nazism’s operation against the disabled and its subsequent propaganda campaign was created within the vacuum of the Third Reich and Nazi ideologues. Nazi Germany had the benefit of decades of published works of Germany’s leading eugenics thinkers who had promoted the practice of “selective breeding” and theories of eugenics decades prior to the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. In addition, the Nazis looked

¹⁶ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 110.

to nations, such as the United States, Denmark, and Sweden among others, which had already instituted policies of eugenics as a method of controlling their respective “inferior” populations and had blatantly incorporated respective eugenics legislation and eugenics research into a uniquely Nazi model. While these nations would not go to the deadly methods the Nazis did in implementing what Dr. Alfred Ploetz would call “racial hygiene” within Nazi Germany, the leaders of the Third Reich liberally molded the eugenic policies of others to fit their twisted conceptions of racial purity.

The history of Dr. Walter Groß and the RPA is not simply an account of yet another one of the numerous Nazi organizations created to execute the will of the Führer. Rather, through the examination of Groß and the RPA’s propaganda campaign against those the Third Reich determined to be mentally and physically disabled, one can see how the decades old concepts of racial hygiene, the belief that the human race was divided into separate distinctions based upon the ideas of genetic superiority and the need to protect those who possessed “valuable” genetic qualities were liberally adopted by the Nazi Party. If one understands the rudimentary doctrines of eugenics and racial hygiene, then one can make the direct connections between these ideas and those of Nazi ideologues, such as Walter Groß. Once established, the nature of eugenics propaganda can provide further understanding to both the subjects of Nazi racial hygiene and Nazi propaganda. Chapter One (*In Search of Racial Perfection*) provides an introduction to the study of eugenics and racial hygiene. My intention is to establish a basic understanding of the evolution of eugenics and racial hygiene and to draw upon the various works of several prominent eugenicists in order to demonstrate the foundations of eugenics and racial science. To better understand the Nazi eugenic policy, it is necessary to provide the reader with a basic foundation of eugenic thinking of the 19th

and early 20th century. To do this is to demonstrate that Nazi eugenic policies were the product of eugenics research which predated the rise of the Third Reich, where Nazi racial theorists and Nazi ideologues liberally absorbed such research into their own twisted views, in the name of racial perfection. No true understanding of Nazi Germany's victimization of the disabled can be fully acknowledged without recognizing the simple fact that other nations had attempted to resolve these same issues decades prior to the advent of the Third Reich.

As Chapter One seeks to provide the basis for racial thinking and eugenics, Chapter Two (*Life Unworthy of Life*) explains the rise of the German racial hygiene movement in the early part of the 20th century and how, in fact, German racial biologists and racial hygienists eclipsed their non-German counterparts as the leading authorities on eugenics, such as Alfred Ploetz, Eugen Fischer among others. The United States, for most of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, became the beacon for the study of race hygiene and its impact on society. This would significantly change during the early years of the 1920s, when race hygiene as a subject of academic study, became entrenched in German schools and universities. Through detailing the rise of Germany's eugenic community and the rise of race biology as a serious subject of study and research, Chapter Two will demonstrate quite clearly that Hitler's Germany had in place, a deep-rooted and well-respected scientific community in place which was committed to the improvement of the German race through scientific and social methods. Decades of defining and delineating racial distinctions and research into protecting superior racial stock, both inside and outside pre-Nazi Germany, laid the very foundations that Nazi racial policy would draw upon to create a healthy and racially pure German nation.

Through the works of these leading German and non-German academics, I intend to draw a distinct connection between the propaganda created by Walter Groß and the RPA and

the ideas and words of men who advocated for racial hygiene decades before the Nazis came to power. In Chapter Three (*Defending German Blood*), I focus on the Third Reich's implementation of legislative and political measures to rid Germany of these genetic contaminants. As early as 1933, the same year Hitler assumed power in Germany, Nazi designs to eliminate the contagion of mental and physical illness, were in full force. Coinciding with these measures was the creation of the RPA and the role Walter Groß would assume as head of this organization. As will be demonstrated, Groß created an organization equipped to implement Nazi eugenic policy through the use of mass media and the Nazi education system to re-educate Germans to their racial inheritance. Through his work, Groß will become an important, though often neglected, figure in the Third Reich's quest to create a pure Aryan race.

Through Groß' words and his development of an organization critical to the successful war against the disabled, I intend to draw Groß out of the shadows of Nazi bureaucracy and establish his and the RPA's significance in Nazism's intent to create a society where eugenic science and racial hygiene are at the forefront in creating a Germanic utopia. In addition to his role as head of the RPA, Groß' name would be linked to the issues surrounding the fate of the so-called "Rhineland Bastards," those children of mixed German-African parentage, the *Lebensborn* program, and policies surrounding the Nazi assault of German and non-German Jews. If Haase's suggestion of an organization responsible for racial education and requiring the cooperation of other Nazi organizations to succeed, with the goal to move the German people toward racial perfection, then Walter Groß would act as a standard-bearer of Hitler's new racially pure Germany.

Chapter Four (*Objects of Pity and Revulsion*) will discuss the “visualization” of the mentally and physically disabled and the manner in which Groß and his organization created the image of these individuals as “objects of pity and revulsion.” To graphically present the disabled in the most negative and, at times, horrifying light, the reception of such images was meant to generate emotions leading to one conclusion, namely that the life for these unfortunate men, women and children could barely be called “life.” It did not matter if one felt compassion for these human beings, trapped in bodies which prevented living a productive and fulfilling life or one was so deeply repulsed by these images that it was better to prevent such “monstrosities” from ever breathing their first breath. Ultimately, Groß wanted to imprint an image into the collective minds of all Germans which recognized that these lives were, as Groß stated in a 1934 speech to a Gau party rally in Cologne, “distortions of life” who experience “no joy either to themselves or others.”¹⁷

As Chapter Four focuses on the images created by the RPA, Chapter Five (*Arguments for Sterilization and Racial Purity*) will examine the arguments Groß and the RPA juxtaposed with the selective images of the disabled. Not only will this chapter integrate Nazi arguments for a concrete eugenic policy with imagery created by the RPA, it will also prove the unoriginal nature of Nazi eugenic policy and Nazi eugenics propaganda. By examining these Nazi arguments alongside the arguments of racial hygienists and eugenics thinkers of the early 19th and 20th centuries, it is clear that Nazi eugenics propaganda did not create any innovative defense for their racial policies. However, the innovation lies in the manner in which the Nazi regime disseminated their arguments and policies to the German people, a strategy credited to Groß and the RPA. Through the use of film, propaganda

¹⁷ Walter Groß. “National Socialist Racial Policy: A Speech to German Women (1934).” Trans. Randall Bytwerk. *German Propaganda Archive*. Web 2 February 2015. 6.

posters, lectures, speeches, and perhaps most importantly, the ingratiation of the RPA into other Nazi organizations, Groß set the RPA on a path to collectively alter the impressions of the German people as they related to Germany's disabled population.

Chapter Six (*A "Merciful" Death*) will examine the evolution and implementation of Nazi policies concerning the disabled from policies of sterilization and population control to extermination and how such changes influenced the role of Walter Groß and the RPA. At the outbreak of World War II, Hitler felt justified in implementing a policy to eliminate Germany's disabled population through extermination. The Third Reich's shift from only sterilization and the strict enforcement of racial laws to state sanctioned murder of Germany's disabled population changed the scope of Nazi attitudes toward the disabled. As part of this policy shift, in conjunction with the outbreak of war, the RPA ended its production of propaganda films and limited its production of eugenics propaganda which centered on sterilization and population control. This does not, however, lead to a complete dismantling of the RPA's influence in Germany and Groß's own influence in Nazi racial policy. Eugenics propaganda was still necessary to continue the re-education until the end of the war. However, Groß's work after 1939 was directed toward policies concerning the newly expanded control of European territory as the German armed forces expanded Nazi control over the continent. The expansion of Nazism's policies toward European Jewry offered Groß an opportunity to advance his anti-Semitic beliefs and involvement in the liquidation of the Jews.

By combining visual imagery, scientific study and racial propaganda, Groß and the RPA constructed an assault on Germany's disabled which relied upon, not only modern methods of communication, but also decades of eugenic study, which became a cornerstone

of Nazi eugenics propaganda. One could not effectively study Nazi eugenics propaganda without understanding the vital connection between the past and the present. What would evolve would be a relentless assault, by which Groß and the RPA's success would be measured through the complete elimination of future generations of Germany's disabled. In 1938, Groß wrote, "The National Socialist idea of state is the most peaceful conceivable, for it of all others, sees its duty in the preservation of the pure racial continuity of its people."¹⁸ Nothing could be further from the truth. There was nothing "peaceful" in the Third Reich's pursuit to create an ideal Aryan state. With Walter Groß and the RPA waging a vicious, maniacal and deadly propaganda campaign against a highly vulnerable and unprotected segment of German society, the disabled became one of many "inferior" groups victimized by the Third Reich in the name of racial dominance.

¹⁸ Walter Groß. "National Socialist Racial Thought." *Germany Speaks by 21 Leading Members of Party and State*. (London, England: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1938) 72.

Chapter 1

In Search of Racial Perfection

*Hitler is the first really influential politician who has recognized that race hygiene is a central task for politics as a whole and who actually committed himself to it.*¹⁹

Quoted in an article for the Nazi Party's official newspaper, "*Völkischer Beobachter*" ("People's Observer"), Fritz Lenz had already achieved prominence within the German scientific community. A student of the prominent race hygienist Dr. Alfred Ploetz, Lenz was among many German scientists who pioneered the study of genetics and race hygiene in the early part of the twentieth century. Appointed chair to the first German university to create a chair in race hygiene at the University of Munich²⁰, Lenz would play an integral role in the rise of race hygiene as an academic and scientific subject of study. Lenz co-authored a two volume work with fellow race hygienists Erwin Baur and Eugen Fischer entitled *Menschliche Erblchkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene (Foundation of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene.)* First published in 1921, it is a lengthy study which detailed various studies into human anthropology and genetics, seeking to explain several important subjects, such as natural selection, the physical and mental characteristics of various human races and the role of heredity and inherited traits in human biology. This collaborative work is a clear representation of the influence of Charles Darwin and British sociologist and anthropologist Herbert Spencer; applying their studies of evolution, the inherent traits of all creatures to adapt to their environment as human beings and Spencer's belief in the "survival of the

¹⁹ Martin Staemmler. "Race, People and the State (1932)." Detlef Mühlberger ed. *Hitler's Voice: The Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933. Volume II Nazi Ideology and Propaganda.* (Oxford, England: Peter Lang, 2004) 100.

²⁰ Henry Friedlander. *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution.* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1995) 12.

fittest.” Those of superior racial quality, as Lenz argued, possess both the mental and physical traits “rooted in hereditary equipment.”²¹ Lenz and other like-minded scientists would embrace a scientific approach to improving the racial quality of the German race and maintaining the purity of so-called Aryan blood. First termed by the British intellectual Francis Galton (1822-1911) the “science of improving the stock”²² or eugenics, would develop a method of protecting the genetically superior race from the hereditarily inferior traits of the weak and the infirm.

Perhaps what is most telling about Lenz’s praise for Hitler is the relationship between race hygiene and politics; that there is a symbiotic relationship between racial health and political power. Hitler and racial hygienists acknowledged the belief that for any nation to survive and thrive, its people had to be healthy, both mentally and physically. Conversely, for race hygiene to succeed as a method to protect the genetically valuable stock, the power of the state must adopt policies which ensure that only the most biologically fit survive and multiply. The core of National Socialist ideology was centered upon the unyielding belief that Nordic, Germanic peoples represented the very best of mankind, possessing superior hereditary traits. Utilizing their belief in Social Darwinism and their own belief in the dominance of the Germanic race, the Third Reich demonstrated the struggle for existence in very stark terms. Historian Peter Fritzsche states that Nazism, “posed the question of life and death, national survival or annihilation, in most racial terms.”²³ The reputation of German race hygienists would radically change with the advent of Hitler and the Third Reich.

²¹ Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer and Fritz Lenz. *Human Heredity*. Trans. Eden and Cedar Paul. (New York, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931) 565.

²² Stefan Kühl. *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism and German National Socialism*. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1994) 4.

²³ Peter Fritzsche. *Life and Death in the Third Reich*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008) 5.

However, their rise to prominence cannot be limited to the finite scope of 1920s and 1930s Germany. The history of German race hygiene, with its beginnings in the late 19th century, looked to other nations where race hygienists and eugenicists pursued their own scientific studies. The foreign influences on German eugenics would not be lost on Groß and the RPA. For example, this 1936 propaganda poster (see Fig. 1) from the RPA publication *Neues Volk* (New People) shows the stereotypical German couple with child standing behind a shield inscribed with the full title of the 1933 Sterilization Law. Surrounding the perimeter of the posters are the flags of twelve nations who have adopted some form of sterilization laws. In bold German Gothic print, the title of the poster reads, “Wir stehen nicht allein” (“We do not stand alone.”) It demonstrates that, not only were sterilization policies and sterilization laws not unique to Germany alone, it provided Nazi Germany with a justification to establish laws and policies meant to cleanse the German population of its less productive citizens through the example of other nations across the globe.



Fig II. *Wir stehen nicht allein* (We do not stand alone). 1936. Image. www.wikipedia.com Web. 10 March 2015.

The rise of eugenics and the science of racial hygiene were the result of several important converging forces during the mid to late 19th century. Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882) was a French intellectual and novelist whose 1853 work, *An Essay on the Equality of the Human Races*, delineated humans into superior and inferior racial groups. De Gobineau defined the “three great races” as the Negroid race, the Yellow race and the White race, claiming that the White race possessed a “monopoly of beauty, intelligence and strength,”²⁴ and such attributes were lacking in the “inferior” racial groups. Yet, other races could improve themselves through the mixing or, using a term frequently used in the United States, miscegenation, of non-white blood with that of white blood. De Gobineau warned of the detrimental impact such racial mixing would have on people of the white race. The “degeneration” of white blood loses “its intrinsic value” and over generations, if left unaltered, gradually dilutes the superiority of the white race through the dilution of their blood.²⁵ This veneration of the white race and the potentially damaging decline of its biological traits through intermixing certainly resonated with Hitler and the Third Reich. The infamous 1935 Nuremberg Laws criminalized what was recognized as deviant sexual behavior (inside or outside of marriage) between Jews and non-Jews (known in German as *Die Gesetz zum Schutze der Deutschen Blutes und der Deutschen Ehre* or the ‘Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor.’) Just as the Nuremberg Laws sought to criminalize intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, marriage laws also crafted by the Third Reich would seek to prevent the intermixing of racially pure blood with the inferior blood of the sick and disabled.

²⁴ Arthur De Gobineau. *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*. Trans. Adrian Collins. (Middletown, Delaware: Ostara Publications, 1853) 208.

²⁵ De Gobineau, *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*, 25.

De Gobineau's theories of racial distinction and the effects of racial cross mixing of the white race contributed to the Social Darwinian argument that if the fittest survive, then surely those people who possess the superior physical and mental abilities are destined to dominate the lesser races. Historian George Mosse in his monumental work, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, defined de Gobineau's theories as an essential component in the Nazi racial belief, asserting that, "To Gobineau, purity of race meant strength for survival, for mastery and domination of lesser races, while intermingling of racial lines would result in a rapid decline of cultures and national prowess, culminating in racial death."²⁶ The protection of the white race combined with the Social Darwinian belief that only the strong survive, while creatures of lesser ability perish, furnished eugenic thinking with the basis to integrate mechanisms which ensured only the best genetic material flourished. However, the Nazis condemned the medical and palliative methods in which the lives of those who were deemed to be inferior were sustained. As will be seen throughout this work, it was a standard argument made by the Nazis and Groß himself that mankind had deviated from the "laws of nature" where those who were weak or infirm would normally perish, if not protected by and cared for, at the expense of the entire community. Groß repeatedly addressed this issue of blood. A state, according to Groß, must protect its people from the "contamination" of its blood, "for good blood and the strength that comes from good blood is given a people only once and if allowed to degenerate cannot be regenerated as one would rebuild a city or restore devastated lands."²⁷

²⁶ George Mosse. *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*. (New York, New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964) 91.

²⁷ Groß, "National Socialist Racial Thought," 67.

If de Gobineau's belief in white superiority was predicated in the viability of the white race and the prevention of diluting that superiority via race mixing, then British intellectual Francis Galton's (1822-1911) eugenic theories, while reinforcing the significant differences between the races, emphasized that only healthy human stock should be permitted to procreate. Galton's ideas would lay the foundations for future policies of selective breeding and the value of heredity which resonated not only within Germany, but in other Western nations. A singular statement in his 1909 work *Essays on Eugenics* encapsulated his firm belief that if nations wished to create healthy, productive people or, in his words "augmentation of favored stock," then "the possibility of improving the race of a nation depends on the power of increasing the productivity of the best stock."²⁸ Who would then represent the best stock? For Galton, those who are physically and mentally healthy, those who contribute to society, rather than drain its resources, those who understand that the future generations of a nation are reliant upon the actions of their forbearers are invariably best suited to create genetically superior societies. Once identified, what then is to become of those who are genetically inferior? As a student of Lamarckian and Mendelian theories of genetics and heredity, Galton provides a litany of people who adversely impact the lives of their nations by their very existence. Habitual criminals, the insane and feeble-minded and the congenitally ill cause a constant and enormous drain of the vitality of a people. Such dire consequences to the uninhibited growth within this inferior population will always prevent the true potential of the genetically healthy.

Galton's solutions to a nation's inferior population reads as a blueprint to the policies that Nazi eugenics propaganda would aggrandize and Nazi Germany would implement as

²⁸ Francis Galton. *Essays in Eugenics*. (Middletown, Delaware: Ostara Publications, 1909) 24.

state policy. Using his native England as an example, Galton warned of the underestimation of the population of the hereditarily inferior. Galton asked his reader to parade before their mind's eye the "inmates of the lunatic, idiot and pauper asylums, the prisoners, the patients in hospitals, the sufferers at home, the crippled, and the congenitally blind"²⁹ and bear witness to the true enormity of the population of inferior peoples in England. The threat of a Germany overpopulated by the genetically inferior dominated eugenic writing and eugenics propaganda within the Third Reich. RPA films would parade dozens of the physically and mentally inferior living in Germany's asylums, warning that, as seen in the 1936 RPA film *Erbkrank* (The Hereditarily Defective), the "imbecilic" and the "mentally deficient" reproduce at a greater rate than healthy Germans and the effect is a new generation of defective children that are permitted to exist, whose constant care is borne at the expense of the entire *Volk*.³⁰

Advocating the physical examination of women to determine their suitability for reproduction; investigating one's ancestry as a tool to determine one's genetic worth, and ensuring those possessing inferior hereditary traits are denied the right and the opportunity to pass their defective genes onto future generations, Galton maintained that through a process of selective human breeding, only those of superior genetic quality will endure. For such a vision to become a reality, Galton insisted that mankind must actively engage in determining its own biological future, "watching for the indications of superior strains or races, and in so favoring them that their progeny shall outnumber and gradually replace that of the old one."³¹ What then becomes of the inferior stock? In his article, *Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and*

²⁹ Francis Galton. *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*. (Middletown, Delaware: Ostara Publications, 1883) 16.

³⁰ *Erbkrank*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1936. DVD.

³¹ Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, 201.

Aims, Galton admits that the Darwinian approach to Nature creates an environment which "blindly, slowly and ruthlessly" eliminates the weakest; however, mankind himself may, through selective breeding, create a process that "providently, quickly and kindly" perpetuates superior racial stock.³² Regardless of the wording, the end result would clearly ensure the future of the healthy, while casting aside those who do not possess suitable genetic qualities.

Certain declarations made by Galton in his works became fact in Germany during the years of the Third Reich. Galton expressed the need for marriage certification to ensure only suitably healthy persons would marry, banning persons determined to be genetically unsuitable and perhaps most importantly, the need to educate a nation of the laws of heredity. Such suggestions became reality in Nazi Germany. The 1935 *Gesetz zum Schutze der Erbgesundheit des deutschen Volkes*, (Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People) required health certificates for those wishing to marry, in an effort to prevent unproductive and unsuitable marriages.³³ In conjunction with this law, the RPA published "*Ten Commandments for Choosing a Spouse*" which guided people to select a spouse based upon their racial and genetic value.³⁴ Knowing one's ancestry became part of classroom education. Organizations such as the SS, the Hitler Youth and the BDM required knowledge and proof of one's ancestral lineage. The study of heredity and racial hygiene became a critical weapon in the war against the disabled, much of which be detailed later in this work. One point that should be acknowledged was Galton's prediction of the role of eugenics in the future. Writing in 1883, Galton envisioned that the study and application of

³² Galton, *Essays on Eugenics*, 42.

³³ Lisa Pine. *Nazi Family Policy: 1933-1945*. (Oxford, England: Berg Publishing, 1997) 16.

³⁴ Jill Stephenson. *Women in Nazi Society*. (London, England: Croom Helm Ltd., 1975) 41.

eugenics “will become recognized before long as a study of the highest practical importance.”³⁵ How prophetic his words would be. Eugenics would become a serious area of academic study and governmental policy in other nations prior to the rise of Hitler and the Third Reich and furnish Nazi leaders with numerous examples of state sanctioned population policies by which the Nazis would liberally borrow to craft their own more radical and deadly eugenic policies.

Determining racial and biological worth required assessing which members of society were inferior based upon genetics. De Gobineau characterized worth based primarily upon racial lines. Galton and others predicated biological value based upon one’s health and contribution to one’s nation. Racial hygiene would incorporate both factors and judge which “inferior” qualities should be relegated for extinction. Defining disability in relation to racial hygiene and eugenics expanded the definition to include social behavior. One such area was criminality and the predisposition to criminal behavior based upon heredity. Galton documents extensively the connection between criminal behavior and genetics. Using the term “bodily qualities”, Galton linked the physical study of humans and sought to explain criminal behavior with certain physical markers. Galton and Italian criminologist and physician Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) utilized the new medium of photography to support their hypotheses. Lombroso examined photographs of Italian prisoners to prove the connection between the “born” criminal and certain physical and mental defects.³⁶ Lombroso

³⁵ Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, 30.

³⁶ Anne Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect: Photography and Eugenics 1870-1940*. (Eastbourne, England: Sussex Academic Press, 2008) 57-58.

concluded through his photographic examinations that congenital defects were markers to criminal behavior, citing the “anatomical stigmata of atavism.”³⁷

While Lombroso and Galton endeavored to use photography and images of their subjects as a means of substantiating their theories of the connection between physical features and criminal behavior, Nazi eugenic policies and propaganda would find great value in both the connection between criminality and heredity and the use of imagery to justify their eugenic policies. Criminal and asocial behavior was not only a matter of social policy in Nazi Germany, but one of biological and population policy. Labeling people as ‘asocial’ and ‘habitual criminals’ based upon heredity broadened the scope of those the Nazis wished to purge from the German *Volk*, thereby advancing the push to sterilize criminals based upon the proposed link between criminality and biology. Gustav Boeters (1869-1942), a Saxon physician who admitted to performing sterilizations on the mentally handicapped without their knowledge, drafted a proposed law in 1923 to legalize the sterilization of the disabled, which included prisoners whose “hereditary inferiority is beyond doubt.”³⁸ A 1927 article by Fritz Bornhöft in the Nazi publication, *Völkischer Beobachter*, praised Boeters’ outline of a sterilization law, warning that, if left unchecked, the uninhibited reproduction of the mentally and physically inferior, would create, “...an army of social psychopaths, prostitutes, habitual thieves, vagabonds and criminals,” destined to surpass the lower reproduction rates of healthy Germans.³⁹ Nazism recognized and readily accepted the connection between criminality, asocial behavior and promiscuity with that of biological defects, for it permitted the Third Reich to encompass a larger population of potentially inferior people to be

³⁷ Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, 5.

³⁸ Gustav Boeters. “Lex Zwickau.” *German History in Documents and Images*. German Historical Institute. Web. 18 August 2015. 1.

³⁹ “The Road to Racial Recovery (1927).” Detlef Mühlberger ed. *Hitler’s Voice: The Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933. Volume II Nazi Ideology and Propaganda*. (Oxford, England: Peter Lang, 2004) 94.

identified. Historian and author Richard Wetzell, whose work, *Inventing the Criminal: A History of German Criminology, 1880-1945*, argues that the Nazis embraced the ideas of those psychologists and criminologists who advocated and supported the connection between criminality and genetics. He states that, "Although the Nazis were clearly oblivious to the complexities of criminal-biological research, those hereditarian and eugenicist views suggested that they would be sympathetic to the enterprise of criminal biology."⁴⁰ The Third Reich incorporated the opinions of Germany's legal professionals who condemned the overwhelmingly lenient, liberalistic and, what Wetzell described as Nazism's view of the pre-1933 criminal justice system, "emasculatation" of German criminal justice during the Weimar years.⁴¹ Therefore, this perceived liberalism of the Weimar judicial system and the acceptance of the proposition that most criminal behavior had its foundations in hereditary and genetic predisposition offered the Third Reich the ability to radically charge the German judiciary to function as a necessary extension of Nazi biological thought. Rehabilitation would be replaced with harsher prison sentences and punishment would move beyond incarceration and into the realm of physical abuse and, for biological reasons, sterilization.

As part of broadening the differentiation between the healthy and the unhealthy, the Third Reich extended criminal and biologically inferior traits to include those defined as 'asocial.' This group included people considered 'work-shy', vagabonds, gypsies, prostitutes, beggars, juvenile delinquents and any that failed to support the *Volksgemeinschaft* through honest work. British historian and author Lisa Pine contends that racial hygienists "were concerned with the issue of whether or not people who appeared acceptable were actually

⁴⁰ Richard F Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal: A History of German Criminology, 1880-1945*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina, 2000) 180.

⁴¹ Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal*, 233.

inherently 'asocial.'"⁴² Physical appearance could not always define characteristics defined as asocial; however, moral, cultural and social behavior did. Persons who fell into this category, but were deemed healthy and possessed a willingness to work were given the opportunity to work through programs established by the regime.⁴³ Those who did not, faced criminal prosecution under the *Das Reichsgesetz gegen gefährliche Gewohnheitsverbrecher* ('Law against Dangerous Habitual Criminals') of November 1933, enacted five months after the Sterilization Law and the subsequent 'Prevention Detention Decree' of December 1937. These laws empowered the state to place repeat offenders into "preventive custody" for an indefinite period, while those convicted of sex crimes and "race defilement" (sex between Aryans and non-Aryans) were punishable with castration.⁴⁴

Broadening the spectrum of undesirables in Nazi Germany to encompass criminals and "asocials" and linking abhorrent behavior to defective genes strengthened Nazi eugenic propagandists' war against the disabled. Numerous works of propaganda would erase any distinction between criminal behavior and mental and physical disability. The RPA would focus such propaganda and combine two premises together, namely heredity and imagery. Visual and graphic depictions of criminality, characterizing criminals as degenerate and loathsome creatures, would be presented to the German people with the understanding and acceptance that criminal behavior was genetically passed on to successive generations and that families with a history of criminal or asocial behavior would most certainly pass these defective genes onto their children, thereby continuing the process of populating Germany with families of inferior racial stock. Second, Nazi propagandists found great value in

⁴² Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, 124-125.

⁴³ Jeremy Noakes. "Social Outcasts in the Third Reich." *Life in the Third Reich*. Edited by Richard Bessel. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1987) 93.

⁴⁴ Frederick Hoefcr. "The Nazi Penal System-I." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*. Vol. 35 (1945): 389.

“educating” the *Volk* through the use of graphic images of the disabled and criminals housed in various asylums across Germany. An in-depth focus on the Nazi use of photography and film will be examined in detail in later chapters. However, it is worth noting here that, as Galton and Lombroso sought to explain behavior and its links with photography, RPA propagandists would find visual imagery, via film, posters and books, just as necessary to demonize the disabled in the eyes of all Germans and deconstruct the distinction between criminality and genetic illness.

The study of eugenics would certainly find root in Germany decades before the Nazi seizure of power. However, if one wanted to witness eugenics as a nationwide movement, it was the United States of the late 19th and early 20th centuries which first established the development of government sanctioned eugenic policies in the modern world. There are many instances where Nazi eugenic policies followed policies enacted in the United States. When the committee assigned to write Nazi Germany’s July 1933 Sterilization Law crafted the wording of the legislation, committee members sought guidance via U.S. state laws. The earliest state law enacted was in 1907 by the state of Indiana, which permitted the sterilization of the mentally handicapped.⁴⁵ By 1917, sixteen states passed laws permitting the sterilization of patients housed in public institutions and thirty states enacted laws prohibiting the intermarriage between “healthy” persons and those afflicted with some form of mental illness.⁴⁶ American eugenicist Charles Davenport founded the Eugenic Record Office (ERO) in 1910, which became the center of eugenics research in the United States. Research in the transmission of inferior hereditary traits and the connection between

⁴⁵ Kühl, *The Nazi Connection*, 17.

⁴⁶ Lynn H Nicholas. *Cruel World: The Children of Europe in the Nazi Web*. (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) 13.

biological defects and social problems led Davenport to support sterilization as a means to, in his words, “dry up the torrent of defective and degenerate protoplasm.”⁴⁷ Davenport and the ERO developed a close relationship with the German community of eugenicists and racial hygienists throughout the 1920s and 1930s, a relationship which would continue after the rise of Hitler and the Third Reich.

The utilization of eugenic policies in the United States followed the pattern of applying Darwinian and racist thinking prevalent in the mid to late 19th century. This stemmed from two major historical events after the U.S. Civil War: the abolishment of slavery and the great wave of immigration from Asia and Eastern/Central Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century. The fear of widespread miscegenation with African-Americans and the condescending attitude many had toward immigrants from non-Western European and Asian countries prompted political and legal action to be taken to preserve the Western European population of the United States. Applying racial theories which exalted the qualities of the white race, state anti-miscegenation laws criminalized sexual and marital relationships between whites and non-whites. Various U.S. anti-immigration laws sought to curb specific ethnicities entering the United States. American eugenicists viewed immigration from undesirable nations as, in the words of journalist and human rights activist Edwin Black, “an unending source of debasement of America’s biological quality.”⁴⁸ American eugenicists such as Charles Davenport, Madison Grant and Harry Laughlin were determined to influence American policy toward immigration, particularly those policies

⁴⁷ Friedlander, *The Origins of Genocide*, 7.

⁴⁸ Edwin Black. *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America’s Campaign to Create a Master Race*. (Washington, D.C.: Dialog Press, 2003) 185.

directed toward immigrants from countries which they believed were of inferior genetic quality.

Madison Grant's 1916 work, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History*, utilized the basic foundations of racial differences delineated in de Gobineau's work, while incorporating Grant's own racist and repugnant commentary. Arguments such as, "Slaves are often more fortunate than freedmen when treated with reasonable humanity" and, in describing African-Americans after the Civil War as "not a serious drag on civilization" until they were granted "the rights of citizenship and were incorporated in the body politic."⁴⁹ As disturbing as they are to the modern reader, these sentiments were not unfamiliar in the world of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Grant glorified the exaltations of the superiority of the Nordic race in particular, as proven by their superior physical stature, their natural predisposition to govern and their adventurous spirit and their artistic genius. According to Grant, great Renaissance masters such as Michelangelo, Dante Alighieri and Leonardo da Vinci were of Nordic descent asserting that other European races (Alpine and Mediterranean)⁵⁰ cannot measurably compete with the genetic stature of the Nordic peoples. Most telling is his chapter entitled, "*The Competition of Races*" which utilizes racial history as a foundation for racial discrimination and class distinction to attach social merit with racial lineage. Prosperity frequently leads to a lower birth rate among the "valuable" classes, while those of the lower classes remains unchanged. The unavoidable outcome of such disproportionate population changes would result in the indiscriminate "breeding" of those termed as "undesirable elements"⁵¹ which are invariably

⁴⁹ Madison Grant. *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History*. (New York, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916) 73.

⁵⁰ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 191.

⁵¹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 43.

to be found within the lower classes, racially inferior peoples. His solution was to promote the expansion of the desirable, while permitting the laws of nature to run its course uninhibited. Grant recognized that, if permitted without the artificial interference of man, the result would be the “obliteration of the unfit” while preserving that part of the population which is “valuable only when it is of use to the community or race.”⁵² One can read Grant’s words and immediately see their impact on Adolf Hitler when, while in prison after the failed Beer Hall Putsch of 1923, he read Grant’s work and liberally incorporated Grant’s ideas into his own work, *Mein Kampf*.⁵³

Other American eugenicists would overwhelmingly follow the same race-oriented apocalyptic view that Madison Grant saw at the dawn of the 20th century. Harvard educated Dr. Lothrop Stoddard (1883-1950) wrote several works warning of the rising threat “lesser” quality races posed to the inherently superior Western European race. His 1920 work, *The Rising Tide of Color against White-World Supremacy*, confronted the growing threat of the non-white races and the decline of European and American power around the globe, particularly after the devastation of the Great War and its negative impact on the white races. The fear of Asian expansion, particularly the rise of Japanese power in the Far East, the growth of what Stoddard called the “Mohammedan Revival” in the Middle East, and the loosening of control of the African continent by the current and former imperial powers, were forces combining to create a world where the power of the “white-world” was facing rapid decline. Stoddard glorified the great accomplishments of the white race. After four centuries, the white race created a world dominated by their power unprecedented in human history, exclaiming that, “Never before had a race acquired such combined preponderance of

⁵² Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 45.

⁵³ Volker Ullrich. *Hitler: Ascent 1889-1939* (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016) 176.

numbers and dominion.”⁵⁴ Now that world faced ruin from the combined forces of the declining power and the growing assertion of non-white races.

As part of the solution, Stoddard proposed an eugenics oriented policy which encouraged the “propagation of the fit” while “preventing the multiplication of the unfit.”⁵⁵ Applying eugenics as a resolution to this racial imbalance, Stoddard asserted that the white race could reestablish its dominance. A major concern was the uncontrolled migration, which Stoddard equated to “bacterial invasions” and suggested limiting these non-white races to their “native habitat” which would “as with all organisms, eventually limit its numbers and therefore its influence.”⁵⁶ Although Stoddard recommended such compulsory limitations to the encroachment of inferior races into the domain of the white races, Stoddard recognized that this only represented a partial solution. The foundations of the intrinsic dominance of the white race lay within its hereditary structure. Stoddard saw the “unerring action of heredity” necessary to continue the advance of white dominion over all other races. The modern world had strayed from the “supreme importance of heredity” (an idea embraced by Nazi ideologues, including Walter Groß) and Stoddard emphasized that accepting racial equality contributed to the decline of the “white world” as Stoddard saw it.⁵⁷ The blind endorsement to the theory that racial differences dictate the superiority or inferiority of certain peoples linked the modern concepts of racial biology and eugenic thinking. If, by asserting the dominance of one race over another or delineating biological markers as superior to others and then by limiting the reproduction of the inferior, the most logical solution to Stoddard’s insistence that racial dominance by the white race required both the reproductive limitation

⁵⁴ Lothrop Stoddard. *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*. (New York, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920) 145.

⁵⁵ Stoddard, *The Rising Tide*, 259.

⁵⁶ Stoddard, *The Rising Tide*, 259.

⁵⁷ Stoddard, *The Rising Tide*, 305.

of the inferior races while embracing the genetic belief that hereditary traits were inherently superior within white races.

Such an admission is further examined in Stoddard's 1922 work, *The Revolt against Civilization: The Menace of the Under Man*. While most of this text is a condemnation of the chaos following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, Stoddard's focus, by utilizing the Russian Revolution, is an assault on the very "civilization" Western society had developed over the course of centuries. Civilization, as Stoddard believed, depended upon "superior racial stock," and when races are faced with, what Stoddard termed "biological regression," civilization as known to man ceases to exist.⁵⁸ Warning of "racial impoverishment," Stoddard cited the underlying menace to civilization are those described as "primitive." Stoddard made clear the distinction between primitives from what he described as "degenerate." It is important to recognize such a distinction because Stoddard defined degenerates as either "true" degenerates or those from inferior lineage. This distinction defined the "true" degenerate as the imbecilic, the feeble-minded, the insane and/or the neurotic, all of which were "melancholy waste-products which every living species excretes but which are promptly extirpated in the state of nature."⁵⁹ While found in nature, Stoddard cited that humans are all too ready to artificially preserve such life, one of many points which the Nazis would fervently argue to justify the sterilization of the unfit in Germany. Through the acceptance of Galton's assertion that heredity rather than environment was the driving force of human betterment, Stoddard railed against a society which permitted the "inefficients, the wastrels, the physical, mental, and moral cripples" to thrive; a society which failed to

⁵⁸ Lothrop Stoddard. *The Revolt against Civilization: The Menace of the Under Man*. (New York, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922) 19-20.

⁵⁹ Stoddard, *The Revolt against Civilization*, 22.

systematically insulate society from the criminal or the insane.⁶⁰ In reading Stoddard's words, one can imagine Nazi eugenics propaganda lifting the words from the pages of Stoddard's works and transposing them into a RPA film or a speech given by Walter Groß on racial purity. Just by his description of the feeble-minded, Stoddard warned of their very existence "disturbing the social life and infecting the blood of whole communities, and thriving on misguided efforts to 'better their condition' by charity and other forms of "social service."⁶¹ This concept of the blood of whole communities and the misdirection of charity and social welfare would dominate Nazi racial ideology and, as will be demonstrated, was replicated within eugenics propaganda created by the RPA.

Through the examination of several prominent racial theorists and eugenicists who advocated the very policies Hitler and the Third Reich would institute and enforce, it is clear that the science of eugenics became, and dominated the "biological state" that was the Third Reich. Many others within the eugenic community would repeatedly define the necessity of eugenics as a weapon against the decay of humanity as seen within the scope of biological worth. Others, such as American eugenicist Paul Popenoe (1888-1979), advocated a litany of measures that almost mirrors the policies of the Third Reich. The need to impose laws to prevent "unwise marriages" to those of inferior genetic quality; the need for physical examinations to determine one's fitness to marry; the segregation of the unfit from the rest of the population, detailed in Popenoe's work, *Applied Eugenics*, first published in 1918, quite literally reads like a blueprint the Nazis followed to establish their racial utopia.⁶² The Nazis possessed a wealth of scientific and theoretical information which, if implemented on a

⁶⁰ Stoddard, *The Revolt against Civilization*, 91.

⁶¹ Stoddard, *The Revolt against Civilization*, 94.

⁶² Paul Popenoe. *Applied Eugenics*. (New York, New York: The Macmillian Company, 1933) 135.

massive scale, would guarantee National Socialism's ultimate goal of creating a master race, or *Herrenvolk*. However, for Walter Groß and the RPA, the greatest obstacle was not the message itself-but how to transfix such arguments to fit into a National Socialist mold which could easily be understood and readily accepted by all Germans.

Chapter 2

Life Unworthy of Life

*If we facilitate the propagation of healthy stock by systematic selection and by the elimination of unhealthy elements, we shall be able to improve the physical standards not, perhaps of the present generation, but those that will succeed us.*⁶³

Dr. Arthur Gütt, 1938

At the age of seventy-six, Dr. Alfred Ploetz (1860-1940) was appointed to a professorship at the University of Munich in 1936 by Adolf Hitler.⁶⁴ At the time of his appointment, Ploetz had become the most eminent of German scientists who had made human heredity and racial biology his life's work. He was the first to use the term "Rassenhygiene" or "race hygiene" in his 1895 work, *Die Tüchtigkeit unsrer Rasse und der Schutz der Schwachen* (*The Fitness of Our Race and the Protection of the Weak*) and pioneered the German eugenics movement. Race hygiene embodied the incorporation of the scientific study of heredity, genetics and anthropology with the ultimate goal of improving the biological material which constituted a healthy, genetically superior people. Race hygiene as a scientific discipline would expand greatly in Germany and, as time would prove, the work started by Ploetz would provide Nazism the scientific justification for the sterilization and eventual extermination of thousands of the genetically "unfit."

Ploetz would work not only to broaden the science of race hygiene in Germany, but also to coordinate its organization into a single institution, while demonstrating to the world that Germany had much to contribute to the international study of racial biology and

⁶³ Arthur Gütt. "Population Policy." *Germany Speaks by 21 Leading Members of Party and State*. (London, England: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1938) 52.

⁶⁴ John Cornwell. *Hitler's Scientists: Science, War and the Devil's Pact*. (New York, New York: Viking, 2003) 78.

eugenics. In 1905, along with fellow German scientists Ernst Rüdin, Anastasius Nordenhold, and Richard Thurmwald, Ploetz founded *Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* (The Society for Racial Hygiene),⁶⁵ an organization dedicated to the preservation of healthy German blood. Two years later, Ploetz renamed his organization *Internationale Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* (The International Society for Racial Hygiene), with himself as president, with the intention of placing Germany at the forefront of the international eugenics movement. International eugenic organizations and societies met in 1911 at the German sponsored International Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden, followed in 1912 with the creation of the First International Congress for Eugenics in London. Delegates from Britain, the United States, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and other countries met to hold discussions on a variety of topics, such as the impact of eugenics on legislation, the influences of eugenics on social and historical research and methods of preventing the “unfit” from procreating via segregation of society into healthy and unhealthy, and sterilization.⁶⁶ Despite the failure of Ploetz in his attempts to transform the International Society for Racial Hygiene into the leading international eugenics organization due to the overwhelming influence of British and American eugenicists, it would become clear that German racial hygienists and eugenicists would advance the science of racial biology and, under the Nazi regime, dominate an entire society which premised its existence on racial superiority.

If Ploetz established the fundamental concepts of race hygiene as a scientific study in Germany, the foundations of German Social Darwinism and the recognition of racial identity as paramount to the survival of the German people were well established by

⁶⁵ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene under the Nazis*, 17.

⁶⁶ Kühl, *The Nazi Connection*, 13-14.

zoologist and German nationalist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919). Although Haeckel would not live to see the rise of Nazism in Germany, his influence on the racial and biological dynamics of National Socialism as a genetically driven ideology are indelibly linked. Historian Daniel Gasman wrote that Haeckel “contributed to that special variety of German thought which served as a seed-bed for National Socialism”⁶⁷; it was that special variety of German thought which linked biology and genetics to Aryan supremacy and dominance. A disciple of Darwin, Haeckel identified the growing adaption of Darwinian principles to human society and furthered this argument by augmenting the Darwinian precepts of natural selection and survival of the fittest to remove the delineation of man’s relationship to nature. Deemed as Monism, Haeckel subscribed to the belief that there was an inseparable link between man and nature where human civilization was just as bound to the laws of nature as any other living creature, an argument constantly repeated by Hitler in *Mein Kampf* and the numerous writings of Nazi ideologues, including Walter Groß. The amalgamation of Darwinian thinking with the racist belief in the overwhelmingly superiority of the Germanic race fashioned a movement of Haeckel’s design which, over time, found acceptance within the nationalist and pan-German circles of the late 19th and early 20th century Germany.

By subscribing to such ideas, Haeckel formulated views concerning the sick and the diseased. As Drs. Binding and Hoche would advocate in their 1920 publication *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens: Ihr Maß und ihre Form* (*Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life: its Measure and Form*), the practice of euthanasia was not only an act of compassion, but one of practicality. Some afflictions were seen as

⁶⁷ Daniel Gasman. *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism: Social Darwinism in Ernst Haeckel and the German Monist League*. (New York, New York: MacDonald and American Elsiner Inc., 1971) XVII.

“evil”: an incurable burden on these, what Binding and Hoche termed “poor creatures,” leaving a painless and merciful death as the only rational response to this suffering.⁶⁸ This represented a compassionate approach to justifying euthanasia. The practical approach rationalized euthanasia in terms advocated by the Nazis decades later; namely that it was unjustifiable to artificially extend the lives of those, “without the slightest profit to themselves or the general body.”⁶⁹ In stark terms, the termination of lives that can only be described as evil was condoned when balancing that life against the lives of the society as a whole. Haeckel would argue that a policy of “artificial selection” best represented by the ancient Spartans who only allowed the healthiest children to survive, served an essential purpose within the greater context of human evolution. While writing this idea within his 1880 book *The History of Creation* within the section entitled “Military Selection,” Haeckel suggests civilization can learn and benefit from their example.⁷⁰ However, Haeckel, and the eugenics community as a whole, condemned a modern world which had created an environment where the diseased and sickly can flourish. For Haeckel, the advances in medical science had enabled science to artificially prolong the life of the ill, and, through the man-made intervention of artificial “medical selection,” the ill not only survive but are given the opportunity to pass their defective genes to future generations.⁷¹ Haeckel’s justifications for the termination of the unproductive and genetically inferior led many Monists to advance the causes for ending the perceived biological decay facing Germany at the turn of the century. Gasman writes that Monism evolved from Haeckel’s

⁶⁸ Ernst Haeckel. *The Wonders of Life: A Popular Study of Biological Philosophy*. (New York, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1905) 114-115.

⁶⁹ Haeckel, *The Wonders of Life*, 118.

⁷⁰ Ernst Haeckel. *The History of Creation: or the Development of the Earth and its Inhabitants by the Action of Natural Causes*. (New York, New York: Appleton and Company, 1880) 170-171.

⁷¹ Haeckel, *The History of Creation*, 173.

teachings to advocate, for example, the link between criminality and deviancy to feeble-mindedness, the submission to the idea that the needs of the community supersede those of the individual and the use of capital punishment for criminals whose criminal behavior was believed to be the result of hereditarily acquired mental defects. Based upon Haeckel's opinions and the beliefs of his Monists followers, how could Nazism not fail to embrace his words? How could someone such as Walter Groß and his RPA propagandists not fail to recognize the propaganda value of Haeckel's teachings and transpose his and his followers arguments into the Third Reich's war against the disabled?

While Haeckel and the Monists provided a forum for German racial ideologues and German nationalists, it was additionally helpful for the Nazis that Germany possessed many prominent academics and scientists who strengthened the racially exclusive nature of Nazi ideology prior to the rise of Hitler in 1933. National societies such as *Der Thule-Gesellschaft* (The Thule Society,) *Der nordische Ring* (The Nordic Ring, a group founded by Alfred Ploetz), and *Der Alldeutscher Verband* (The Pan-German League) were representative of numerous groups in Germany which were determined to establish the superiority of the Nordic, Germanic race. However, it is through German science which the Nazis sought to prove Aryan/Germanic superiority. After the defeat of Germany at the end of the First World War, the growth of right-wing German political parties and societies became more and more entrenched with the leading racial hygienists and eugenicists in Germany. The government of the post-imperial Weimar Republic became a focus of condemnation and revulsion from those academic and political critics hostile to the regime's liberal policies. The loss of the war, the political chaos and the destabilization of the German economy during the first years of the Weimar Republic were easy targets for

the Nazis and other nationalist groups. For academics and scientists who favored a biological solution to Germany's crises, the Weimar Republic was associated with the creation of the German welfare state that furnished enormous costs for the unfit, which, without reproductive restrictions, would create "an army of the genetically inferior, cripples, idiots, mentally ill, neurasthenics, psychopaths and hypochondriacs."⁷²

During the 1920s, eugenic thinking and the science of racial hygiene proliferated. The defeat of Germany after the First World War, the devastation to the German economy and the expansion of eugenics in the Western world added impetus to the growing eugenic movement in Germany, with the intention of strengthening the German people through science and state sanctioned policies. Numerous works targeted Germany's "feeble-minded" and "defective" population as a source of artificially prolonged misery with the intention of transforming ideology and scientific research into government supported policy. It is necessary to examine such works in some depth, for they reflect a growing fear among some within the German scientific community, a fear readily adopted and exploited by political parties such as the National Socialists. In 1920, Dr. Karl Binding and Dr. Alfred Hoche published a work that did not argue for sterilization, as so many German eugenicists argued, but a state sanctioned policy of euthanasia of the severely disabled. *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life Its Measure and Form* argued for the legal and medical methods necessary to permanently remove the genetically inferior from the German *Volksgemeinschaft*. Karl Binding (1841-1920), a professor of law and jurisprudence at the University of Leipzig and, as Michael Burleigh describes, "one of

⁷² Hans-Walter Schmuhl. *The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics 1927-1945: Crossing Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Springer Science+Business Media B.V., 2008) 12.

Germany's leading specialists in constitutional and criminal jurisprudence"⁷³ and Alfred Hoche (1865-1943), a professor of psychiatry at Freiburg University and a specialist in neuropathology, sought to author a work with the goal of validating a policy where the state could sanction assisted killings or "mercy" killings for those whose "quality of life" was beyond the means of medical science.

The work is separated into two chapters. The first written by Binding sought to argue the necessary changes to the German legal system to justify euthanasia. Binding states by asking his reader, "Should the lawful destruction of life, as per today's laws prompted by a desperate situation be limited to suicide, or should it be legally extended to include the killing of others, and under which circumstances?"⁷⁴ Presupposing that those terminally ill or afflicted with a debilitating disability would prefer death to a continued existence of pain and misery, Binding attacks the preconceived notions that suicide is "an immoral action" or a "cowardly and despicable act."⁷⁵ Individual right to life and the act of suicide should not be subjected to the same laws that criminalize murder or manslaughter, and as Binding further argued, if one so chooses to terminate one's life, he or she "may be able to bestow this right onto others on his behalf"⁷⁶ which, in essence, legalized assisted suicide. Nevertheless, it stands to question: how does this argument impact those who are not terminally ill or those whose mental faculties are incapable of making such a drastic decision? Binding addressed this dilemma by defining not only the quality of one's life but the value of that life. Binding draws upon both the enormous financial burden placed upon the family of a disabled person and the costs spent by the German state for sustained care

⁷³ Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 15.

⁷⁴ Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche. *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life Its Measure and Form*. Trans by Dr. Cristina Madok. (Suzeteo Enterprises Publishing, 1920) 1.

⁷⁵ Binding, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, 3-4.

⁷⁶ Binding, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, 5.

of those whose affliction was beyond cure. Binding and Hoche presumed that, if those who are mentally and/or physically debilitated beyond expressing rational thought, "the sick person would have consented without any doubt" to assisted suicide.⁷⁷

Hoche's contribution to this work focused upon the ethical and medical issues surrounding euthanasia and mercy killing. Hoche questioned the ethical dilemmas facing the medical profession in relation to the care of the incurably ill. Contrary to the belief that the duty of physicians is to ease suffering and pain, Hoche condemned "life-prolonging interventions" by physicians, nurses and the families of the incurably ill as "in reality a multiple evil, an annoyance and ordeal."⁷⁸ Such interventions are a waste of resources, a constant physical and emotional drain on the families and most significant, the "state organism" must remove those "individual parts or particles that become worthless or damaged in the interests of the well-being of the whole"⁷⁹; a clear indication that the German nation must view itself as a biological unit with the power to remove its "diseased" parts. Determining the definition of "life unworthy of life" would, under Binding and Hoche's plan, fall upon German physicians and lawyers. Binding advocated the formation of committees comprised of two physicians and one lawyer to determine, on a case by case basis, the viability of patients deemed as mentally and physically disabled. Their plan for determining life and death would eventually become state sponsored policy because, under the Nazi regime, Germany would witness the creation of health courts; these courts were established to judge which Germans would be subjected to forcible sterilization, once sterilization became legal in Germany in 1933. The evolution of their work, from suicide to

⁷⁷ Binding, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, 24.

⁷⁸ Binding, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, 32.

⁷⁹ Binding, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, 37.

state-sanctioned euthanasia, interjects a more radical solution to the eugenics argument, advocating mercy killing rather than the less drastic procedure of sterilization. It was an argument well suited for Nazi ideologues who readily adopted *any* measures necessary to protect the *Volk* and using the guise of war when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, Hitler approved the killing of Germany's disabled population.

Written in a manner so that its language was easily digestible to all readers, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life: Its Measure and Form* advocated both a legal and moral justification for eliminating the disabled. German eugenicists and racial hygienists would provide the scientific justifications for sterilization, based upon heredity, race hygiene and the application of Darwinian theories to man. Three of Germany's leading eugenicists collaborated on a work which would greatly impact the cause and evolution of eugenics in Germany. Drs. Fritz Lenz, Eugen Fischer and Erwin Baur's two volume work *Menschliche Erblchkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene (Foundation of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene)*, first published in 1921, combined the science of heredity, sociology and racial theory to ultimately conclude that the preservation of a nation or a people relied upon processes that eliminated inferior hereditary traits. Each author brought a great deal of expertise to this work. Fritz Lenz (1887-1976), a student of Eugen Fischer at the University of Freiburg, was deeply interested in the study of eugenics. In his doctoral dissertation, "The Diseased Genes of Males, and the Determination of Sex in Humans" Lenz sought to prove that the elimination of genetic illness succeeded through the elimination of hereditary defects via the prevention of afflicted families from further procreation.⁸⁰ His work as editor of Ploetz's journal *Archiv für Rassen-und Gesellschaftsbiologie* (Journal for Race

⁸⁰ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 49.

and Social Biology) secured his standing as a leading expert within the German eugenic community.

His mentor, Eugen Fischer (1874-1967) possessed credentials equally impressive in the German eugenics community as those of Alfred Ploetz. As director of the Anatomical Institute at the University of Freiburg, his educational background ranged from anthropology, zoology and medical science. Perhaps his most important work prior to his contribution to *Foundation of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene* was his 1908 study into the offspring of German and Boer settlers in German colonial Africa and the native women of Rehoboth, which today is the African nation of Namibia. His study into the physical characteristics of these children of mixed parentage (derisively termed as ‘Rehoboth Bastards’) drew the conclusion that such offspring of mixed races were, as de Gobineau had argued decades earlier, of inferior genetic quality and such intermixing of races can only lead to the “spiritual and cultural” degeneration of the European colonial powers that allow such relationships to continue.⁸¹ His research into these relationships would prove useful, when in the early years of the Third Reich, the Nazis began a campaign to sterilize the children of German women and French colonial troops who had been stationed in Germany after the First World War. Fischer would prove to be one among several scientists and party leaders, including Walter Groß, to recommend the forcible sterilization of these “Rhineland Bastards” as part of Nazism’s plan to eliminate the risk of these racially-mixed children from procreating.

Edwin Baur (1875-1933) was a well-established botanist and expert in the experimentation with plant hybridization when he co-authored *Foundation of Human*

⁸¹ Friedlander, *The Origins of Genocide*, 10.

Heredity and Race Hygiene, with Lenz and Fischer. Graduating with a medical degree from the University of Kiel, Baur's academic focus was the study of plant genetics with an emphasis on plant-breeding and cultivation. As a professor of botany and director of the Botanical Institute at the Berlin School for Agriculture,⁸² Baur's contribution to the study of plant genetics would further the overall study of genetics and heredity in Germany and strengthen the arguments that genetic and hereditary factors determine the viability of life. These three eminent German scientists would co-author a work which, not only became a testament to the study of genetics and heredity in the existing literature of the time, but one that would gain greater recognition for its influence on the path of racial hygiene in Germany under the Nazis.

Each of the co-authors of *Foundation of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene* first developed arguments based upon the core belief that inherited physical and mental qualities are not only inviolable but inalterable. Baur wrote that because of this fact, "selective processes are of the utmost importance to the preservation and to the development of a 'species.'"⁸³ When unhealthy, or what Baur termed as "mutations", do arise, Baur insisted that natural selection would eliminate "all that are not fitted to survive."⁸⁴ All three emphasized the common Darwinian belief that species that are strong and adaptable to their environment are more likely to survive and thrive than those which Fritz Lenz described as "living on its frontier of adaptability."⁸⁵ Furthering this argument, each agree that race and the hereditary health of a people is paramount for survival. Degeneration of a race manifests itself through a dilution of hereditary traits which equip races and nations to

⁸² "Erwin Baur" *The Eugenic News* Volume 26, No. 1 (1934): 55.

⁸³ Erwin et al., *Human Heredity*, 106.

⁸⁴ Erwin et al., *Human Heredity*, 106-107.

⁸⁵ Erwin et al., *Human Heredity*, 213.

survive and prosper. Fischer writes that degeneration of a race or nation are the outcome of what he termed as “reversed selection of racial constituents”⁸⁶ whereby the injection of inferior genetic material through the intermixing of races invariably leads to the degeneration of a race. Lenz saw no distinction between “hereditary” and “racial” factors as it applies to the mental and physical health of a race.⁸⁷

The consensus among the writers was that heredity and race are inseparable and predominate the struggle for life. Once established, each author cited the existing issues facing racial inheritance and the causes of racial degeneration. Baur cited the inference with the natural selection process as responsible for creating “low-grade mutations.”⁸⁸ Fischer described the dilution of a people’s “racial composition” as endangering the “cultural and mental” efficiency of a people.⁸⁹ Lenz emphasized that “degeneration is the central problem of racial hygiene”⁹⁰ and the main purpose of the book was to reaffirm the idea that racial and hereditary health are of tantamount importance to any race or nation struggling to survive. To recognize that degeneration posed as a constant threat to those who choose to ignore the very simple truth that measures must be in place to prevent the furtherance of the defective and “mutated” to plague scores of future generations was critical. There is one particular statement made by Fritz Lenz in the section of the book entitled, “*Erbliche Vererbungsfaktoren*” (“Morbific Heredity Factors”) which could aptly describe the Germany Hitler and the Nazis wished to create once they came to power. He wrote, “Inasmuch as this book is intended for cultured general readers as well as for medical practitioners, it is intended for all those who are keenly interested in the healthy

⁸⁶ Erwin et al., *Human Heredity*, 183.

⁸⁷ Erwin et al., *Human Heredity*, 625.

⁸⁸ Erwin et al., *Human Heredity*, 107.

⁸⁹ Erwin et al., *Human Heredity*, 181.

⁹⁰ Erwin et al., *Human Heredity*, 490.

and the future of our race.”⁹¹ For the Nazis, all Germans were to commit themselves to the health and future of the German race where the responsibility to indoctrinate every German fell to Walter Groß and the RPA.

The genesis and proliferation of the German eugenics movement does not solely lay with the numerous German scientists, academics and physicians who stood as the vanguard of Germany’s racial hygiene community. During the 1920s, German universities broadened the study of such subjects as biology, medicine, sociology and psychology to include subjects pertaining to race hygiene and human heredity. Author and Holocaust historian Henry Friedlander stated that, by 1932, forty courses in race hygiene were offered in various German universities,⁹² a number that would increase after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. Many of the leading German racial hygienists and eugenicists were academics, who taught at many of Germany’s leading universities. Binding and Hoche both taught at the Universities of Leipzig and Freiburg respectively. Fischer taught biology at the University of Freiburg. When the University of Munich created the first university chair in eugenic studies in 1923, it was Fritz Lenz who was appointed to its first chairmanship. German universities throughout the 1920s and into the early 1930s enabled the study of eugenics and racial hygiene the opportunity to flourish and most importantly, influence the thinking of many future physicians and other healthcare professionals. This would become necessary to the Third Reich in its execution of its eugenic and, after 1939, euthanasia policies.

Perhaps no single institution enhanced the study of heredity and racial hygiene more significantly than the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute (KWI), specifically the *Kaiser-*

⁹¹ Erwin et al., *Human Heredity*, 221.

⁹² Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, 13.

Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik (Institute for Anthropology, Human Genetics and Eugenics) established in 1927. Founded in 1911, the KWI was created as Germany's leading scientific center and established itself as an institution to promote Germany's research into areas such as biology, anthropology and psychology. Attracting many of Germany's best scientific minds, it also became a focal point for Germany's eugenic community. As race hygiene became a discipline of study in German universities in the 1920s, the study of eugenics, genetics and racial biology became an ever-growing subject of interest and required a separate institution within the KWI whose purpose was to study eugenics and racial hygiene. Through funding by the German state, including grants from the American institution, the Rockefeller Foundation, the *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik* was able to flourish and attract Germany's leading scientists specializing in eugenic studies and racial biology. Selected as its first director was Eugen Fischer and from its creation in 1927 through to the fall of Nazi Germany in 1945, it became the leading research center into the study and application of human genetics, race hygiene and eugenics. It was an institution well familiar to Walter Groß. A year after Groß was appointed to head the RPA, he was appointed to the KWIA's Board of Trustees.⁹³ As part of this appointment, Groß worked to ensure that the KWIA would become a necessary and cooperative extension of Nazi population and race policy.

The overall mission of Germany's racial hygienists and eugenicists reflected the same mission as their American and European counterparts; to cleanse their national gene pool of its defective and diseased parts. Those mentioned in this chapter reflected only a

⁹³ Schmucl, *The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics*, 139.

part of the overall scientific community in Germany which worked to create a German people free of the ravages of genetic illness and mental and physical disability. As right-wing, nationalist organizations proliferated in Germany in the late 19th and early 20th century, race biology and eugenics became part of the political and social environment in Germany. Perhaps none supported race hygiene as a political and state matter more than Hitler and the Nazi Party. The Nazi official newspaper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, published articles prior to the assumption of power by Hitler in January of 1933, identifying race hygiene and racial thought as critical to the future of the German people. A 1923 article entitled, "Racist Thought and Volkisch Thought" posed a simple question to its reader: "How do we achieve a human society in which the competent and healthy elements reproduce themselves, while the sick and unhealthy do not spread their defective inherited traits any further?"⁹⁴ This question is central to the application of eugenics. The article explains that racist thought need only pursue policies which ensure the future of a people, specifically encouraging the reproduction of the healthy, while "preventing individuals with hereditary defects from reproducing."⁹⁵ This is at the core of what would become policy in Germany under the Nazis. How then does the state mobilize itself and its people to secure a future Germany free of the genetically inferior and mentally and physically disabled? Part of this policy would require an organization dedicated to disseminating this message to the German people. It would become the responsibility of Walter Groß and the RPA to campaign for the minds of every German to blindly accept Nazi racial ideology.

⁹⁴ "Racist Thought and Volkisch Thought (1923)." Detlef Mühlberger ed. *Hitler's Voice: The Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933. Volume II Nazi Ideology and Propaganda*. (Oxford, England: Peter Lang, 2004) 70.

⁹⁵ "Racist Thought and Volkisch Thought." *Hitler's Voice: The Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933. Volume II Nazi Ideology and Propaganda*, 71.

Other articles, such as the 1927 article, "The Road to Racial Recovery" and the 1932 article, "Population Policy based on Racial Hygiene" reflected the Nazi commitment to a racial ideology which incorporated the need for the state to act as the bulwark against the continued contamination of Germany's genetic future. One common denominator to the proliferation of race hygiene and the growth of eugenics during the 1920s was the perceived weakness and failure of the post-World War I Weimar Republic to protect the racial future of the German people. Binding and Hoche condemned the current German laws criminalizing assisted suicide which existed in Germany. Author Hans Walter Schmuel in his study of the KWI, wrote that many race hygienists saw the Weimar Republic as the direct cause of a Germany that "rears an army of the genetically inferior, cripples, idiots, mentally ill, neurasthenics, psychopaths, and hypochondriacs."⁹⁶ The assault on the Weimar Republic was drawn largely by what many critics of the Weimar government saw as the creation of a "welfare state" which spent millions of Reichsmarks for the care of the disabled. The use of the "cost/benefit" argument would prove a dominating argument for the Nazis and for Groß and the RPA. After the 1929 stock market crash and the onset of the Great Depression, this argument became even more prevalent. *Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Ärztebund* (National Socialist German Doctors' League) leader Dr. Leonardo Conti condemned the estimated 200 million marks spent on institutional care as an unnecessary expenditure for those who contributed nothing to the German state.⁹⁷ German psychiatrist Berthold Kihn wrote in a 1932 article, "The Elimination of the Inferior from Society" of the enormous costs to house and care for the

⁹⁶ Schmuel, *The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics*, 12.

⁹⁷ Leonardo Conti. "The Burden of Death. The Decrease in the Birth Rate, Population Policy and Family Compensation (1932)." Detlef Mühlberger ed. *Hitler's Voice: The Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933. Volume II Nazi Ideology and Propaganda*. (Oxford, England: Peter Lang, 2004) 71.

mentally ill, estimating an annual cost of 150 million Reichmarks.⁹⁸ These estimates not only showed the wasteful expenditures allocated for the care of the disabled, but further proved the ineffective and destructive policies of the Weimar government. When Hitler assumed the chancellorship in January 1933, the dismantling of the Weimar welfare state was a priority of the new Nazi government. As part of this plan, the Nazis moved forward with policies intended to systematically eliminate the needs of the state to provide those members of the *Volk* whose existence burdened the racial community rather than contributed to it.

⁹⁸ Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 38.

Chapter 3

Defending German Blood

*One of the primary responsibilities as a member of the community is to see to it that the increasing reproduction of those who are inferior is stopped.*⁹⁹

Otto Steche, 1937

Less than six months after Hitler became chancellor of Germany, the Third Reich began its campaign to eliminate Germany's disabled and hereditarily ill. Following the example of other nations including the United States, Denmark and Canada, Nazi Germany would craft and enact its own sterilization law; a first step toward racial perfection. Two months after becoming chancellor, in March 1933, Hitler gave a speech which reiterated the ultimate goal of Nazism as recognized from the original Nazi Party Program written in 1920, stating that, "We seek our strength in our people, we wish to establish solidarity of our own community and then employ its strength for the maintenance of that which our life demands."¹⁰⁰ Writing of the law began in May of 1933 with the formation of a committee under the direction of Nazi Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick. Among the members of the *Sachverständigen-Beirat für Bevölkerungsfragen und Rassenpolitik* (Expert Committee on Questions of Population and Racial Policy) were Drs. Ploetz, Lenz and Baur, Nazi Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture Richard Walther Darré, Reich Leader of Physicians Gerhard Wagner and SS leader Heinrich Himmler. At the first meeting of the committee, Frick warned of the growth of the "degenerate and genetically diseased" within

⁹⁹ Otto Steche. "Guide to Racial Science and Eugenics, Fostering Congenitally Sound Progeny and Family Science for the Intermediate Level." *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. Anson Rabenbach and Sander L. Gilman eds. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2013) 331.

¹⁰⁰ Norman H. Baynes ed. *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922-August 1939*. (New York, New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 259.

the German population, advocating a policy of compulsory sterilizations.¹⁰¹ Frick expressed his frustration with current German policies toward the hereditarily inferior. German society was burdened through excessive taxation to provide for the “unfit, the antisocial, diseased, feeble-minded, insane, deformed (meaning only hereditary deformities and not those acquired by disease or injuries) and criminal.”¹⁰² Due to the indiscriminate spending on the “inferior” segments of the German population and the negative effects of such policies in limiting the procreation of “healthy” Germans, Frick justified to the committee that Germany possessed “the right and moral obligation to eliminate hereditary defectives from procreation.”¹⁰³

Three men were selected to draft the necessary legislation. Dr. Ernst Rudin, professor of psychiatry at the University of Munich and a founding member of Alfred Ploetz’s *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* (German Society for Racial Hygiene); Dr. Arthur Gütt, director of the Public Health Division within the Ministry of the Interior and Dr. Falk Ruttke, lawyer and professor of jurisprudence at the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin, were given the task of crafting legislation that would empower the state to sterilize those determined to be hereditarily unfit. Examining the sterilization laws that existed in other nations, the committee crafted *Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses* (Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring), which although approved on July 14th, 1933, did not go into effect until January 1st 1934. This law was the first, but certainly not the last piece of legislation the Nazis would enact to justify their

¹⁰¹ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 96.

¹⁰² Wilhelm Frick. “German Population and Race Politics” *Eugenical News*. Volume XIX (1934): 35.

¹⁰³ Frick, “German Population and Race Politics,” 36.

draconian measures, which they believed were required to eradicate Germany's unfit population.

The first paragraph of the law clearly stated the intentions of the Nazi regime.

Anyone who is suffering from a hereditary disease can be sterilized by a surgical operation if according to the experiences of medical science, it is to be expected with great probability that this offspring will suffer from serious hereditary mental defects.¹⁰⁴

The subsequent wording of the law not only specified what the Nazi regime considered "hereditary disease" but also the legal processes in which sterilization could be mandated.

The law specified seven categories where sterilization was warranted (including Huntingdon's Disease, hereditary blindness and hereditary epilepsy.) However, illnesses such as "mental deficiency from birth" and "serious hereditary physical deformation" would be broadly interpreted to permit the utilization of sterilization on a wide spectrum of diseases and disabilities not specified within the letter of the law. According to British historian Richard J. Evans, three-fourths of all sterilization applications were made using the diagnosis of "congenital feeble-mindedness."¹⁰⁵ The processing of those to be sterilized required members of the medical and legal professions to make the final determination of hereditary illness and subsequent judgment for sterilization. Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the law empowered medical personnel, for example, physicians, directors of nursing homes and sanitariums, to submit applications for sterilization where they believed it was warranted.

¹⁰⁴ Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle eds. *The Nazi Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (London, England: Taylor and Francis, 2002) 154.

¹⁰⁵ Richard J. Evans. *The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939*. (New York, New York: The Penguin Press, 2005) 508.

The law included stipulations where patients themselves could “make an application” for sterilization.¹⁰⁶ If patients, for reasons such as age or mental incapacity could not make the application themselves, then a legal guardian, parent or spouse could act as proxy for the patient and submit a request for sterilization.

Specifically created Health Courts, consisting of physicians and lawyers, would make the final determination if sterilization was warranted based upon the application. Based upon such a system, it was nearly impossible for a patient to escape sterilization. Appellate Genetic Health Courts were established to adjudicate cases where patients could appeal the lower court’s decision. However, based upon the statistics of such court cases, an overwhelming number of cases ultimately resulted in sterilization. Robert Proctor, author of *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis*, cites that within the first year of the enactment of the 1933 Sterilization Law, 84,525 applications were submitted to the Genetic Health Courts for sterilization, with 64,499 cases adjudicated, and, out of these cases, 56,244 men and women were sterilized.¹⁰⁷ By the fall of the Third Reich, between 300,000 and 400,000 Germans would be sterilized in the name of racial hygiene.

The Sterilization Law heralded the first step toward constructing a racially “healthy” German community. Author Hans Löhn proclaimed the law to be “a pillar of the National Socialist state” and described the role of the German physician as a “biological soldier” waging a war against the hereditarily defective.¹⁰⁸ Hans Weinart, author of *Biologische Grundlagen für Rassenkunde und Rassenhygiene* (Biological Basis for Racial Science and Race Hygiene) acclaimed the law as a “biologically based marvel” of National

¹⁰⁶ Stackelberg, *The Nazi Sourcebook*, 155.

¹⁰⁷ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 106.

¹⁰⁸ George L. Mosse. *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich*. (New York, New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1966) 233.

Socialism.¹⁰⁹ On the day that the Sterilization Law was announced, Walter Groß, as head of the RPA, gave a radio address proclaiming that National Socialism and the Nazi state were determined to create “new human beings” based upon National Socialist ideology and principles.¹¹⁰ Groß would hail Germany’s Sterilization Law as a beacon for the world, boasting that, “We are happy meanwhile to be able to discern that other nations have come to realize that Germany is, indeed, taking new paths, but they are right ones and are necessary and, more than that, Germany is in many respects blazing a trail for others.”¹¹¹

Praise for Germany’s new law came from other voices, voices outside of Germany. Within the American eugenics community, Nazi Germany’s first move toward biological purity met with resounding acclimation. Paul Popenoe, a California eugenicist and head of the Human Betterment Foundation, applauded Germany and its Sterilization Law as “the first example in modern times of an administration based frankly and determinedly on the principle of eugenics.”¹¹² The Eugenics Records Office publication, *Eugenical News*, applauded the law as “a milestone which marks the control by the most advanced nations of the world of a major aspect of controlling human reproduction.”¹¹³ Dr. C.G. Campbell, Honorary President of the Eugenics Research Association, wrote in his 1936 article for *Eugenical News* that Germany’s law was a greater achievement than those sterilization laws existing in the United States, arguing that many U.S. states sanction only the sterilization of institutionalized patients.¹¹⁴ Germany’s eugenic policies clearly enhanced

¹⁰⁹ Gretchen Schafft. *From Racism to Genocide: Anthropology in the Third Reich*. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004) 76.

¹¹⁰ Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, 93.

¹¹¹ Groß, “National Socialist Racial Thought,” 66.

¹¹² Paul Popenoe. “The German Sterilization Law” *Journal of Heredity* Volume 25 (1934): 260.

¹¹³ Clarence Lusane. *Hitler’s Black Victims: The Historical Experience of Afro-German, European Blacks, Africans and African Americans in the Nazi Era*. (New York, New York: Routledge, 2003) 133.

¹¹⁴ C.G.Campbell. “The German Racial Policy” *Eugenical News* Volume XXI (1936): 27.

Germany's standing within the international eugenics community, overshadowing other nations as the leading western nation to advance the science and politics of racial hygiene and eugenics.

As part of this campaign, Walter Groß, as head of the RPA, would wield significant influence and demonstrate the power of racial hygiene and eugenics propaganda in Nazi Germany. In the same article defining the need for a "Reich Office of Racial Affairs," Ludolf Hasse cited that Germans lacked a true understanding of their racial heritage; a lack of understanding which created an apathetic attitude among members of the *Volk* towards its "will to live."¹¹⁵ Most telling about this assertion is that it placed the onus of disregarding the dangers of racial degeneration on the German people themselves. A neglect of racial education and outright defiance of the true laws of Darwinian science destined the German people to blindly march toward a path of racial destruction. Germans had cast aside the inheritance of their Germanic forbearers. This concept of inheritance will figure greatly in eugenics propaganda and permitted the propagation of unhealthy and genetically inferior Germans to thrive, infecting the *Volksgemeinschaft* as a whole. Only through the concerted efforts of a government agency, such as the RPA, which was devoted to the racial education of the German people can Germans reclaim their genetic birthright. Groß would ensure that eugenics propaganda would silence any doubt or criticism of Germany's new path toward racial perfection. As head of the RPA, Groß would become one of the regime's most vocal advocates of the Third Reich's eugenic policies. Groß defied those who sought to criticize and condemn Germany's racial awakening:

¹¹⁵ Haase, "We Need an Office for Racial Affairs," 153.

A fruitful propaganda was rolled out that had to prove that Germany was doing what it was doing out of complete brutalization, contempt and disregard for the most basic laws of charity, humaneness, of culture etc. This propaganda was enhanced by the completely insane claim that foisted upon the German law for the prevention of hereditarily diseased offspring completely foreign and inappropriate goals in order to demonstrate better the foulness and brutalization of the Germans.¹¹⁶

This excerpt from Groß' work, "German Racial Thought and the World," written six years after the institution of the Sterilization Law marked not only a defense of the Nazi law but an attack on those who criticized Nazi Germany's actions as brutal and inhumane.

Walter Groß would not only oversee the RPA in its work, but would become one of the regime's most loyal disciples, instrumental in the transformation of Germany's racial future. Through his speeches and writings, Groß embodied the zealous Nazi, the racial-warrior and master propagandist who was needed for the Third Reich's war against the disabled. Central to Groß' racial beliefs and critical to Nazism itself was the connection between race and blood. All human endeavors were products of their symbiotic relationship. Groß proclaimed that "culture and spirit, art, learning and science...are and have to be based and dependent on Race and Blood."¹¹⁷ Such a connection was indivisible; however, such a connection can become contaminated and perverted. Groß praised Hitler and the Nazi Party in its ceaseless struggle to overthrow the Weimar Republic, seen as that

¹¹⁶ Walter Groß. "Der Deutsche Rassengedanke und die Welt." *Schriften der Hochschule für Politik: Idee und Gestalt des Nationalsozialismus*. (Herausgegeben von Paul Meier-Benneckenstein, Berlin, Germany: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1939) 18.

¹¹⁷ Office of Strategic Services. *Research and Analysis Branch. Principal Nazi Organizations involved in the Commission of War Crimes: Nazi Racial and Health Policy*. (Washington DC.: GPO, 1945) 6.

“harmful post-war regime.”¹¹⁸ As part of the Nazis’ seizure of power, the influence of propaganda and the dominance of racial thinking were indelibly linked to, what Groß proclaimed “the deepest revolutionary nature of the new spirit.”¹¹⁹ Now with the Weimar Republic a discarded relic of Germany’s not so distant past, the work of Walter Groß and the Third Reich began feverishly to expunge the genetic damage inflicted upon the German people. Through reckless government spending to care for the disabled, and the perceived moral and cultural decay of 1920s Germany during the years of the Weimar Republic, Nazism would expunge the Weimar Republic from the collective memories of the German people and transform this ailing Germany into a vital and dynamic state, driven by the search for racial perfection.

Groß’ rhetoric would testify to the adoption of racial science and eugenic thinking central to Nazi racial ideology and Nazi eugenics propaganda. Groß reinforced the concept that blood and race transcended beyond the strict limits of what he termed as “biological thinking.” Rather, it is a “political and worldview attitude” that forms the basis of racial thinking; the emphasis on inherited characteristics rather than the “overestimating outward influences of education, training and welfare policies.”¹²⁰ This dismissive attitude toward one’s environment and potential benefits of one’s surroundings reinforced Groß’ belief in “inheritance” of racial traits, passed down generation to generation. Repeatedly, Groß differentiated between inherited characteristics versus outside influences, such as

¹¹⁸ Office of U.S. Chief of Counsel. *OCC Brief. Section I/The Nazi Conspirators Adopted and Published a Program of Relentless Persecution of Jews*. By S.M. Peyser and S.L. Sharp. Vol IX. N.p. N.D. Ser 17.03. *Donovan Nuremberg Trial Collection*.

¹¹⁹ Office of U.S. Chief of Counsel. *OCC Brief. Section I/The Nazi Conspirators Adopted and Published a Program of Relentless Persecution of Jews*. By S.M. Peyser and S.L. Sharp. Vol IX. N.p. N.D. Ser 17.03. *Donovan Nuremberg Trial Collection*.

¹²⁰ Walter Groß. “Blood is Holy: A Radio Speech by Dr. Groß” Trans by Randall Bytwerk. *German Propaganda Archive*. Web. 2 February 2011. 1.

environment and nutrition, and argued that one's inherited characteristics greatly outweighed the determinations of one's biological worth in comparison to outside influences.¹²¹ Once established, hereditary traits are weighed against those that benefit the community versus those that burden the community. Through this assertion of benefit versus burden, Groß vigorously reasserted the standard Nazi belief that the needs of the community, the *Volksgemeinschaft*, greatly outweigh that of the individual. As Groß wrote, "Civilization is only possible through the individual becoming part of the whole."¹²² In that same statement, Groß placed the power to create a genetically perfect community with the state, giving it the right "to implement such measures for the benefit of the community as are scientifically proved expedient in the way of population or eugenics."¹²³ For Groß, only when Germans begin to realize the consequences of their actions in terms of benefit or burden to the community, only then can the state mobilize to enforce policies to maintain the collective health of the nation.

Germans needed to recognize the massive strain the hereditarily unfit placed upon the community as a whole. Groß condemned the actions of the past, defining the same arguments that Nazi ideologues, race hygienists and eugenicists had made for decades. Germany had created an artificial life-sustaining system for those who, if the laws of Nature and Social Darwinism were strictly obeyed, would never have existed. By ignoring such laws, Germans have allowed the degeneration of their genetic inheritance. Through such unnatural processes, Groß castigated a Germany that had permitted the reproduction of the disabled. In the eyes of the Nazi state, Germany now keep thousands, even tens of

¹²¹ Groß, Walter. "Race: A Radio Speech by Dr. Groß" Trans. by Randall Bytwerk. *German Propaganda Archive*. Web. 2 February 2011. 2.

¹²² Groß, "National Socialist Racial Thought," 70.

¹²³ Groß, "National Socialist Racial Thought," 70.

thousands of unhappy creatures alive, but failed to discourage their reproduction. Again, Groß used the argument that a civilized nation would not permit the existence and maintenance of the unfit to negatively impact the living standards of its healthy population. According to Groß, it was far worse to ignore the fact that defective genes will be passed down to future generations of the unfit and, if Germans do not accept that by doing nothing, healthy children of the present will face a greater burden in the future by having to provide care for the next generation of the unfit and disabled. This cycle had to be stopped and with Hitler and the Nazi Party in power, the rejuvenation of German blood was within the grasp of the Germans and of Germany itself.

The persecution of the disabled, while dominating the work of the RPA and Walter Groß, did not confine Groß' core racial and biological beliefs within the parameters of developing eugenics propaganda. Groß recognized, as did the entire Nazi hierarchy, that to purge the so-called contaminated blood from the *Volksgemeinschaft*, other undesirables had to be eliminated, which enveloped countless others in Nazism's cleansing of German society. For instance, Groß' involvement in Nazi policy toward the Afro-German Rhineland children and the Jews, while not as pervasive as his work as head of the RPA, demonstrated the blind commitment Groß had to a Nazi regime determined to eliminate Germany's "alien" enemies. As part of the Nazi effort to campaign against genetic undesirables, Herman Goering, minister of state for Prussia, ordered the "registering" of the "Rhineland Bastards" in April 1933 through the authority of the local police in the cities of Dusseldorf, Cologne, Koblenz and Aachen.¹²⁴ Determining that these children of mixed parentage were racially inferior fell to Goering's appointee Dr. Wolfgang Abel to

¹²⁴ Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims*, 138.

investigate this problem. Abel's report concluded that many of these "half-breed" children were of very poor health and of sub-normal intelligence and, therefore, subject to sterilization. In conjunction with Dr. Fritz Lenz's work which studied the results of miscegenation conducted in Africa at the turn of the century, the regime began working on plans to erase the "living stain" of German humiliation after the loss of the First World War. However, when the Sterilization Law was written, it did not specify children of mixed racial parentage as a sole determining factor for sterilization.

Therefore, to ensure a policy of sterilization of this small segment of the German population, or as Minister of Agriculture Richard Walther Darré described these children, "the black shame at the Rhine" in 1935, select members of the Committee of Experts for Population and Racial Policy met to discuss the Rhineland problem.¹²⁵ Among those in attendance was Walter Groß, who strenuously advocated for the sterilization of the Rhineland children. Groß' presentation at the meeting, "Paths to Resolving the Bastard Question" cited that it was within the rights of the German government to utilize sterilization as the only available method to solve this issue.¹²⁶ (The RPA film *Erkrank* depicted a mentally disabled Rhineland child with the caption, "Idiotic nigger bastard from the Rhineland. In as much as physical traits are inherited, mental traits are inherited. What is inherited from the ancestors, will be passed on."¹²⁷) Through a joint operation between Heinrich Himmler's Gestapo and the genetic health courts, organized in part by Walter

¹²⁵ Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims*, 139.

¹²⁶ Schmuhl, *The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics*, 228.

¹²⁷ *Erkrank*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1936. DVD.

Groß, Ernst Rüdin and Fritz Lenz, 500 of these children were sterilized as part of the Third Reich's policy of cleansing the *Volk*.¹²⁸

Pivotal to Germany's plans for racial cleansing was its policies toward Germany's Jewish population. Groß' vitriolic anti-Semitism, a footnote in the vast history of the persecution and extermination of the Jews, reveals the extent of his involvement in racial cleansing beyond the sterilization and eradication of Germany's 'unfit' population. Groß wanted Jews to be added to the list of "defectives" encompassed in Germany's Sterilization Law. After the 1935 Nuremberg Party Rally, which saw the enactment of the infamous Nuremberg Laws, Groß was appointed to *Der Reichsausschuss zum Schutze des Deutschen Blutes* (The Committee for the Restoration of German Blood) whose duties were to process applications for marriage between Jews and non-Jews, as stipulated by levels of ancestral degree to determine who were Jews and who were not.¹²⁹ In 1936, Groß attended the first meeting of the Research Department for the Jewish Question held by the *Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschland* (Reich Institute for the History of a New Germany), an organization which assembled academics, party ideologues and writers to discuss academic research into Jewish studies. Alfred Rosenberg, Nazi Party ideologue, Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 and founder of the *Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage* (Institute for Research in the Jewish Question) utilized Groß' position as a key Nazi bureaucrat involved in the racial education of the German people. Groß was asked to attend the official opening of the Institute in

¹²⁸ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 112.

¹²⁹ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 135.

Frankfurt in March of 1941. As part of the conference, Groß presented a paper he had written for it entitled, "The Radical Political Premises of Solving the Jewish Question."¹³⁰

In his paper, Groß reemphasized the criteria of "race" as "a group of people who by common possession of hereditary dispositions of physical as well as mental-psychical kind differ from other human groups."¹³¹ Based upon this definition, Groß adamantly argued that Jews represented a racial mixture between peoples of the Near Eastern and Oriental races, peoples which, seen separately as distinct races, possess what Groß' termed as "esteemable and agreeable traits."¹³² However, in Groß' opinion, because the Jews were products of the intermixing of distinct races and by definition racially inferior, those of mixed German/Jewish parentage must be prevented from creating future generations of mixed-race descendants. Rebuking the concepts of "degrees of Jewishness" as originally proscribed in the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, Groß, as Hitler had prophesied in 1939, Groß offered a prediction for the future of the Jews in Europe:

We look upon Jewry as quite a realistic phenomenon which was exceptionally clever in matters of earthly life but which likewise is subject to historical death. And as far as the historical phenomenon of the Jew in Europe is concerned, we believe that this hour of death has come irrevocably.¹³³

The early phases of The Final Solution, already under way at the time Groß wrote this paper for the 1941 Frankfurt Conference, would evolve into the systematic murder of

¹³⁰ Max Weinrich, *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes against the Jewish People*. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1999) 107.

¹³¹ Weinrich, *Hitler's Professors*, 110.

¹³² Weinrich, *Hitler's Professors*, 111.

¹³³ Weinrich, *Hitler's Professors*, 112.

millions of European Jews, setting Nazi Germany on the course as predicted by Hitler and Groß.

For as much as Groß was dedicated to the tenets of National Socialism and consistently involved himself in the machinations of other Nazi bureaucracies, some of his beliefs did come into conflict with other agencies within the power structure of the Third Reich who were also committed themselves in expanding the Germanic race through racial and biological awareness. Groß would face competition from the SS, which developed its own programs of racial education. In particular, Groß railed against the SS inspired *Lebensborn* program. Created in 1935, this program was developed as part of Himmler's plan to increase the Nordic population in Germany by providing support to pregnant women or unwed mothers. Once determined to be of pure Germanic blood, care centers throughout Germany were established to provide unwed mothers with pre and post-natal care. If the mother could not support the child, the program would arrange for the adoption of the child by genetically healthy parents. By removing the stigma of illegitimacy, Himmler sought to utilize the program to encourage the reproduction of biologically fit women without the legitimacy of marriage. Groß took a much more rigid attitude toward illegitimacy, convinced that illegitimacy was linked to the degeneracy of the family unit.¹³⁴ However, his initial rejection of such measures would, over time, change, particularly after the invasion of the Soviet Union. As the course of the war began to turn decisively against the Third Reich after 1943, leaving Germany with massive losses in the field, Groß came to accept the reality of a Germany where the male to female ratio would stifle the growth of racially pure Germans, guaranteeing a re-evaluation of Germany's population policy.

¹³⁴ Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, 42.

In a memo written between June and July of 1944, Groß outlined this problem facing Germany and the potential solutions to ensure that procreation along genetic lines would continue. Addressing such issues as increasing the number of children born within the family unit, the possibility of recognizing polygamy as a potential answer to this crisis and indeed, discarding the disgrace of illegitimacy, Groß defined the pros and cons of adopting such policies. Regarding the issue of illegitimacy, an issue Groß initially found to be socially and morally taboo, Groß stipulated that procreation outside of marriage could be justified "if the state approves the principle of necessity of such relationships and is prepared to provide appropriate material support."¹³⁵ If such children are cared for and the state accepted the responsibility of providing for these children, Groß accepted the view that if the dictates of necessity require women to have these healthy children out of wedlock, then such a policy is justified. Groß would further amplify his reconsideration of the entire issue of reproduction and marriage. He argued for the broadening of Germany's 1938 divorce law, suggesting that biologically fit men should possess the option to divorce wives past their child bearing years and/or incapable of producing healthy children, in order to produce more children with other, albeit genetically healthy women.¹³⁶ Groß recognized the potential disturbance and resistance that such policies would in all likelihood create. However, the needs of the state outweighed the impact of such policies on society and the traditional family unit. Part of his summation reads as follows:

The question of what measures are feasible in appropriate cases in the light of the surplus of women, to secure the birth and upbringing of illegitimate children of

¹³⁵ Jeremy Noakes ed. *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4 The German Home Front in World War II*. (Exeter, England: University of Exeter Press, 1998) 380.

¹³⁶ Noakes, *Nazism 1919-1945, Volume 4*, 380-381.

parents who are worthy of procreation and how to preserve them from being materially disadvantaged and subjected to moral insults are of secondary importance...¹³⁷

With the expansion of the Nazi empire after the invasion of Poland in 1939, racial concerns dramatically increased. The largest population of Jews in Europe was located in Poland and territories of the East destined to become part of Hitler's *Lebensraum* program. Millions of "undesirable" Slavs also accounted for the future victims of Nazi racial policies of relocation and extermination. How to incorporate these new territories into the German Reich and how to begin the process of "Aryanization" brought the matter to the attention of Walter Groß. In 1939, Groß had drafted his own proposal for the expulsion of indigenous populations and the resettlement of Germans into these conquered lands.¹³⁸ Depopulating such territory not only meant mass exterminations, but as conquerors, slave labor was required to keep the German economy (military, industry, agriculture) running during the war. Exposure to non-German peoples drew concern from Groß. Himmler's *Lebensborn* program expanded into the initiation of a policy which permitted the kidnapping of children determined to be of Aryan blood. Such children would be transported to Germany to be adopted by healthy German couples. While a small minority of these conquered peoples might possess the genetic worth derived from Aryan blood, Groß believed it necessary to address the issue of absorption of these non-German children into the *Volksgemeinschaft*, in particular the potential issue of what he termed "mixed marriages," marriages between non-German and German peoples. Due to the potential "contamination"

¹³⁷ Noakes, *Nazism 1919-1945, Volume 4*, 382.

¹³⁸ Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 540.

of non-Aryan blood, and, despite the racial precautions utilized to determine who possessed Aryan traits, Groß warned that such measures were not definitive to ensure “a sufficiently reliable picture of the actual hereditary biological value” of a non-German.¹³⁹ It was therefore Groß’ conclusion that mixed marriages, “in most cases will bring into one’s own people undesirable inheritance,” and it was imperative that a strict refutation of mixed marriages remain part of the basic preservation of Germanic blood, and any deviation was “dangerous and undesirable.”¹⁴⁰ Despite this objection, kidnappings and relocations of selected Aryan children would continue.

Notwithstanding his anti-Semitic rants and declarations and his attempts to ingratiate himself in Eastern policy and his differences in policy with the SS, Groß would make his greatest impact through the leadership of the RPA. The RPA with Groß as its administrator would lead the German people into a new age of racial awareness. Groß would oversee an organization with the dedicated purpose to re-educate Germans through all means at its disposal. Within the RPA, special subgroups were created to focus on specific issues as they pertained to racial policy. Departments which focused on foreign policy, public relations, education, propaganda, counseling, racial science and specific programs for women and children were established to better disseminate racial education throughout Germany.¹⁴¹ This, in turn, permitted Groß and the RPA staff to work beyond the confines of the RPA organization itself. One vital demonstration of such a working relationship is the role the RPA played within the medical profession in Nazi Germany. As stated earlier, physicians and medical professionals were critical to the Nazi plans toward Germany’s

¹³⁹ Weinrich, *Hitler’s Professors*, 172.

¹⁴⁰ Weinrich, *Hitler’s Professors*, 172-173.

¹⁴¹ Poore, *Disability in Twentieth Century German Culture*, 100.

disabled population. University of Berlin faculty member Rudolf Ramm wrote that physicians were “biological soldiers” whose main function was to place the health of the *Volk* above the individual needs of the patient.¹⁴² Hans Löhn, author of *Über die Stellung und Bedeutung der Heilkunde im Nationalsozialistischen Staate* (About the Position and Importance of Medicine in the National Socialist State), declared that the German physician had a “holy obligation to the state” to ensure the identification and the sterilization of patients afflicted with congenital diseases, proclaiming that physicians were required to see themselves as biological soldiers, waging a war of extermination against hereditary illness and genetic defects.¹⁴³ A physician himself, Groß appreciated the pivotal role the medical profession would play, utilizing the title of “racial wardens” for physicians, entrusting physicians with the critical responsibility of eliminating the “defective” population within Germany through sterilizations and the registration of the hereditarily unfit with Nazi authorities.¹⁴⁴

If physicians were to become the biological soldiers, as defined by Rudolf Ramm, then Groß and the RPA would ensure these soldiers were adequately armed to defend the *Volk*. Medical students were provided with lectures on racial hygiene and genetics sponsored by RPA lecturers. The RPA established its own *Reichsschule für Rassenpolitik* (Reich School of Racial Policy) in Neubabelsberg, training, not only medical students, but members of the SS in racial medicine.¹⁴⁵ In 1934, twenty SS physicians were recommended by the RPA to attend a nine-month training course at the Kaiser Wilhelm

¹⁴² Robert Jay Lifton. *Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*. (New York, New York: Basic Books Inc., 1986) 30.

¹⁴³ Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, 233.

¹⁴⁴ Michael H. Kater. *Doctors under Hitler*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 187.

¹⁴⁵ Proctor, *Medicine under the Nazis*, 87.

Institute for Anthropology, which included training in racial hygiene and race science.¹⁴⁶

The RPA magazine *Neues Volk* was provided to physicians as reading material for their waiting rooms. The RPA worked jointly with the *Reichanstalt für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* (The Reich Institute for Film and Images in Science and Education, also known as RWU), an organization which produced racial hygiene films for schools and universities, in the communication of racial consciousness throughout German schools.¹⁴⁷ The RWU would go on to produce films specifically directed for medical students, creating a series of films depicting disabled patients in horrifying acts and humiliating surroundings. Patients were filmed naked and were forced to perform physical acts, which were clearly difficult due to their disabilities, and they were indiscriminately treated as less than human by the physicians who were responsible for their care with the direct purpose of justifying medical sterilization and later euthanasia. The medical profession within Nazi Germany emerged to become more than complicit in the destruction of “life unworthy of life”; becoming an obedient instrument in the biological cleansing of the German people.

As the RPA collaborated closely with the medical profession to expand its racial education, it is important to recognize that certain sectors of the German population were specifically targeted by the RPA and German eugenics propaganda. While it is true that every German had a responsibility to the general health of the German *Volk*, genetically healthy women and children of Nazi Germany drew special attention from the Third Reich. As part of the original Nazi Party program devised by Hitler and Anton Drexler in 1920,

¹⁴⁶ Schmucl, *The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology*, 205.

¹⁴⁷ Ulf Schmidt. *Medical Films, Ethics and Euthanasia in Nazi Germany: The History of Medical Research and Teaching Films of the Reich Office for Educational Films/Reich Institute for Films in Science and Education 1933-1945*. (Husum, Germany: Matthiesen, Germany 2002) 152.

Point 21 of the party manifesto addressed the issue of the value of German mothers and children, stating that:

The State must ensure that the nation's health standards are raised by protecting mothers and infants, by prohibiting child labor, by promoting physical strength through legislation providing for compulsory gymnastics and sports, any by extensive support of clubs engaged in the physical training of youth.¹⁴⁸

Hitler's 1934 speech to the *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft* (The National Socialist Women's League of NSF) defined the role of every healthy German woman. Motherhood "means giving life to healthy children, bringing to fruition all the physical, mental and spiritual faculties in these children and creating a home for them which represents a place where nationalist and racialist culture is nurtured."¹⁴⁹ Five years later, Hitler would amplify his position of the German woman in Nazi society. While the German man contributes to the survival of the German race through his "heroic courage on the battlefield," the German woman contributes "in ever-patient suffering and endurance" through procreation and the maintenance of the pure blooded German family.¹⁵⁰ As part of these gender specific roles, Walter Groß articulated and set forth a goal for German men and women to recognize their critical and respective roles in what Groß termed as "the eternal chain of life."¹⁵¹ As partners in this great struggle for existence, men and women, hand in hand, must go forward, recognizing their racial and biological inheritance and build

¹⁴⁸ J. Noakes and G. Pridham eds. *Nazism 1919-1945 Volume 1 The Rise to Power 1919-1934: A Documentary Reader*. (Exeter, England: University of Exeter Press, 1983) 15.

¹⁴⁹ Jeremy Noakes and G. Pridham eds. *Nazism 1919-1945 Volume 2 State, Economy and Society: A Documentary Reader*. (Exeter, England: University of Exeter Press, 1984) 260.

¹⁵⁰ Hans Peter Bleuel. *Sex and Society in Nazi Germany*. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1973) 56.

¹⁵¹ Groß, Walter. "National Socialist Racial Policy: A Speech to German Women," 3.

a future “rooted deep in their blood”¹⁵² to create a German Reich populated by only the most genetically valuable.

The Third Reich provided several agencies to assist women who either produced healthy children or were biologically acceptable to become mothers of the Reich. The *Reichmütterdienst* (The Reich’s Mother’s Service) provided courses in cooking, sewing, post-natal care and most important, educated women in selecting a racially suitable spouse.¹⁵³ As part of the *Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* (The National Socialist People’s Welfare Program of NSV), a program established in 1933 to act as a social welfare program for Germans, the *Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind* (The Relief Program for Mother and Child) was created with the NSV to provide post-natal care for new mothers, establishing recuperation centers and housing for those who lacked the means to care for their children. As with the *Lebensborn* program, the *Hilfswerk* program did not distinguish between married and unwed mothers, as long as the mothers and their children were “racially valuable” and that these new mothers raised their children, as author and social historian Lisa Pine states “in the spirit of National Socialism.”¹⁵⁴ Combined with the various laws instituted to encourage healthy Germans to produce large families, the healthy German woman was essential to the rearing of future generations of Germans.

German women who did not belong to the hereditarily healthy population of those who were considered genetically suitable but failed to produce healthy children faced grave consequences within Nazi Germany. It was the duty of every genetically fit woman to provide Germany with the future generations of healthy German boys and girls. Monetary

¹⁵² Groß, “National Socialist Racial Policy: A Speech to German Women,” 5.

¹⁵³ Matthew Stibbe. *Women in the Third Reich*. (London, England: Arnold Publishers, 2003) 37.

¹⁵⁴ Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, 26.

incentives granted to healthy families were denied to those considered genetically inferior. Healthy women who failed to produce children were looked upon with particular scorn. Hitler himself condemned such selfish actions, calling it "reprehensible conduct" on behalf of women who failed in their womanly duties.¹⁵⁵ Physician and author Dr. Hermann Paull, writing in 1934, stigmatized the childless woman as inferior: as equally inferior as those who suffered miscarriages or worse brought "deformed, sick or sickly children into the world."¹⁵⁶ As with families who profited from the Nazi economic programs which incentivized large families, hereditarily fit couples who produced no children were penalized through higher taxation. Abortion, which was anathema to Nazism, was permitted as early as 1934, when Hitler informed Reich Physician Leader Dr. Gerhard Wagner that abortions would be permitted in cases where either the mother or father was determined to be hereditarily unfit. Initially, this proved to be problematic for German physicians, due to the existing stringent anti-abortion laws already in place in Germany, which made no racial or biological distinctions for abortion, except only in cases where the mother's health was at risk. Even so, Hitler, through Wagner, assured physicians that cases of abortion involving hereditarily unfit parents would go unpunished.¹⁵⁷ By 1935, German law changed existing legislation concerning abortion, stipulating that abortions could be performed on women determined to be biologically unfit as part of the sterilization process. However, access to abortions to genetically healthy women was still to remain illegal. Through such measures, Nazi Germany sought to control the reproductive rights of German women, encouraging those who produced the greatest number of healthy children,

¹⁵⁵ Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 61.

¹⁵⁶ Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, 37.

¹⁵⁷ Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, 30.

while condemning those who failed to give the Reich healthy children, or ensuring the hereditarily unfit could not reproduce via sterilization or abortion.

Because of the RPA's role in racial education, Groß collaborated with many of the Nazi women's organizations to heighten racial and biological awareness among Germany's female population. As stated earlier, the RPA developed its own subdivisions within its organization dedicated to programs for women and girls, such as the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* and the *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft*. The RPA provided screenings of its propaganda films to meetings of the NSF and the BDM. Lectures and slide shows were provided to these organizations which concentrated on racial health, how to ensure a racially beneficial marriage and motherhood, emphasizing the establishment of a clean, proper German home for hereditarily fit children, in order to train these girls to become, as author and Nazi historian Lisa Pine describes, "...the founder and protector of a healthy fit German family."¹⁵⁸ An outgrowth of Nazi population policy was the creation of the *Reichsbund der Kinderreichen* (The National League for Large Families or RdK) which encouraged the genetically healthy to produce many children. Through its affiliation with the RPA at the end of 1934, all new members of the RdK were required to submit to physical examination to determine what Pine describes as their "hereditary fitness."¹⁵⁹ Female students of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Nationalsozialistischer Studentinnen* (National Socialist Women's Student Group) and female medical students were recruited as unpaid part-time workers for the RPA.¹⁶⁰ By interacting with various Nazi women's organizations, the RPA sought to ensure that all genetically fit German women recognized

¹⁵⁸ Lisa Pine. *Education in Nazi Germany*. (Oxford, England: Berg Publishers, 2010) 125.

¹⁵⁹ Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, 93-94.

¹⁶⁰ Kater, *Doctors under Hitler*, 102-103.

their indispensable role with the greater *Volksgemeinschaft*, while proceeding to reinforce Nazi policies which, in effect, removed reproductive rights from the individual woman and brought this very basic right of choice under the auspices of the Third Reich.

If population policy and the encouragement of large families represented the primary initiative for racial hygiene and the future of a genetically fit German Reich, then maintaining this racial inheritance would fall upon the Third Reich to guarantee future generations of Germans that a return to a Germany which failed in its responsibility to perpetuate a healthy German race would never reoccur again. Children, educated during the Third Reich, were instilled with an ideological understating of racial hygiene and genetic health, thereby succeeding where past generations of Germans have failed. Representing life in Darwinian terms by inculcating the superiority of the Germanic people into the minds of Germany's youth and recognizing one's health directly impacted the community, became the basic foundations of Nazi educational policies. Writing in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler expressed his wish concerning the education of German youth, declaring that "No boy or girl must leave school without having attained a clear insight into the meaning of racial purity and the importance of maintaining the racial blood unaltered."¹⁶¹ From the youngest child to the university student, the "Nazification" of education followed a path where race became a nexus point of all areas of study, with the desired goal of creating generations of race conscious Germans.

Racial education required teachers trained in National Socialist thought and race hygiene to transform German schools into institutions where Germanic superiority and Social Darwinism dominated every subject and every classroom. In 1933, Minister of

¹⁶¹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 240.

Education Bernhart Rust ordered that subjects such as genetics, eugenics, racial hygiene and genealogy were to be adopted into the Prussian school system. By 1935, all German schools were required to adopt racial education in their respective curricula.¹⁶² The Nazification of German schools followed Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick's December 1934 decree which outlined the fundamental purpose of the German school system: "...the principle task of the school is the education of youth in the service of nationhood and State in the National Socialist spirit."¹⁶³ Students as young as six were introduced to the study of racial hygiene. For example, a 1941 syllabus for training kindergarten teachers, emphasized the need for educators to introduce concepts such as racial identity and racial awareness to students.¹⁶⁴ All subjects taught in German schools were to be taught from the view of racial biology and the supremacy of the Germanic race. Classes in German history and philosophy would be taught incorporating racial hygiene and race biology. Germans of its glorious past, such as Frederick the Great, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Nietzsche demonstrated to the German student the inherent genius of the German people, genius predicated on the racial purity of Germanic blood.

Groß wrote of the critical nature of education and its connection with eugenics propaganda. It was vital, for example that racial biology and education occupy "an entirely different position" as compared to the education, training and propaganda found with the "economic and intellectual life" of the Reich.¹⁶⁵ German research and breakthroughs in racial science, through decades of work, would now become standard curricula German

¹⁶² Sheila Faith Weiss. *The Nazi Symbiosis: Human Genetics and Politics in the Third Reich*. (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2010) 219.

¹⁶³ Noakes and Pridham eds., *Nazism 1919-1945 Volume 2*, 351-352.

¹⁶⁴ Noakes, *Nazism 1919-1945 Volume 4*, 274.

¹⁶⁵ Walter Groß. "Rassenpolitische Erziehung." *Schriften der Deutschen Hochschule für Politik*. Edited by Paul-Meier Benneckenstein. (Berlin, Germany: Junker und Dunnhaupt Verlag, 1934) 2.

teachers were required to pass onto their students. Defining the importance of inheritance, of the impact of racial value to the survival of nations throughout history, the argument between "quantity versus quality" in the biological worth of nations defined what Groß saw as essential to racial education and propaganda. Groß wrote, "...we are engaged in education, propaganda and training in the field of racial policy" and stated without any reservation that this process was "no longer a means to an end" when embarking on a crusade to instill racial awareness to all Germans, but merely "a part of the purpose itself."¹⁶⁶ The state and the German *Volk* remained of singular importance, outweighing the life of the individual. Accordingly, Groß demanded that the state wield its power, through sterilization legislation, and through the control of state finances, to protect the nation from those that would infect the blood of the German people. However, all this effort and work is useless if, through continued ignorance, genetically defective Germans continued to produce generations upon generations of mentally and physically disabled children. If, however, a state which engages its population through education and through propaganda and recognizes that racial education is "infinitely more than a task for professionals" it is the responsibility of the *Volk* as a whole; a responsibility which Groß defined as "a matter which concerns us all and every single day-to-day and hour-by-hour of our lives."¹⁶⁷ Only then can Germany succeed in its quest to create a healthy and biologically pure nation.

Due to the enormous influence of biology in all subject matter taught in German schools during the Third Reich, the very basic foundations of selective breeding and *Weltanschauung* (world view) in Darwinian terms transformed German education from schooling for the purpose of education, to indoctrination of all German children to the very

¹⁶⁶ Groß, "Rassenpolitische Erziehung," 7.

¹⁶⁷ Groß, "Rassenpolitische Erziehung," 12.

core of Nazi ideology; namely that race and genetics dictate the survival of peoples. A significantly important method of applying racial biology into the classroom was to equate the concepts of animal breeding and agriculture to human reproduction. The Nationalist group *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil) which viewed the German peasant and his connection with the soil as the truest form of Germanic purity and viewed the modern industrialization of society as a major factor in the degeneration of the German *Volk*, advocated the application of animal breeding and plant cultivation to the procreation of the genetically healthy Germans. Nazi Reich Minister for Agriculture Walther Richard Darré, the leading voice of the *Blut und Boden* movement, encouraged the ideas of animal husbandry and agriculture as essential to human breeding practices. From Darré's 1930 work, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden* (A New Aristocracy Based on Blood and Soil), Darré emphasized the Germanic nature of selective breeding among its people, claiming that all Germans, not only those of noble birth, were destined to pursue "a policy of selective breeding."¹⁶⁸ However, for Darré and other German nationalists, Germans have discarded such practices. For the proliferation of the genetically sick and hereditarily inferior demonstrated the abandonment of racial purity as a prerequisite toward population policy in Germany. Darré examined the old German marriage laws, which protected Germans from populating Germany with inferior and undesirable children, citing that such laws were "the wall which protected valuable German humanity" and prevented "subhumans" from entering into the "German social order."¹⁶⁹ Metaphorically, Darré wrote of the German people as a "garden" that, if left unattended, becomes "overgrown by weeds and that even

¹⁶⁸ Richard Walter Darré. "Marriage Laws and the Principles of Breeding." *Nazi Ideology before 1933: A Documentation*. Trans. Barbara Miller and Leila J. Rupp. (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1978) 111-112.

¹⁶⁹ Darré, "Marriage Laws and the Principles of Breeding," 114.

the very basic characteristic of the plants have changed.”¹⁷⁰ Only through a carefully crafted population policy, which Darré emphasized as “a political matter” controlled and regulated by the state could the institution of marriage guidelines based on genetic and racial criteria reverse decades of unprofitable and damaging marriage to the German community.¹⁷¹

Darré and his “agricultural” approach to human eugenics and selective breeding would find much in common with German eugenicists and biologists that advocated a need to utilize the science of animal and plant breeding as it applied to the German people. Anthropologist Otto Ammon suggested that if animal breeders kill defective stock to ensure a genetically healthy bloodline, then why not apply the same method to human beings to create genetically pure Germans.¹⁷² Biologist Paul Brohmer in his 1933 work *Biologieunterricht und völkische Erziehung* (Biological Studies and Volkish Education) articulated the effectiveness of the teaching of plant cultivation and animal breeding as part of the study of racial hygiene. Brohmer argued that by teaching racial hygiene, incorporating the science behind animal breeding and agricultural cultivation, one can, in his words, “effectively program the way for conceptions of racial biology” in German schools.¹⁷³

Minister of Education Bernard Rust’s decree outlined the critical role of the German teacher in the struggle of racial perfection. Through the Ministry of Education’s order,

¹⁷⁰ Darré, “Marriage Laws and the Principles of Breeding,” 115.

¹⁷¹ Anna Bramwell. *Blood and Soil: Richard Walther Darré and Hitler’s Green Party*. (Buckinghamshire, England: The Kensal Press, 1985) 68.

¹⁷² Richard Weikart. *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics and Racism in Germany*. (New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 79.

¹⁷³ Paul Brohmer. “Biological Studies and Völkisch Education.” *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman eds. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2013) 165.

“Racial Instruction and the National Socialist Community,” the German teacher must constantly emphasize the importance of race and heredity for the life and destiny of the German people and to ensure that German children were aware of “their responsibility toward the community of their nation.”¹⁷⁴ As seen with German physicians, teachers were “coordinated” into their own Nazi organization, the *Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund* (The National Socialist Teachers Organization, or NSLB.) German teachers were required to attend conferences and seminars which focused on the teaching of racial hygiene and the incorporation of race hygiene into the classroom for all age levels. Teachers were “entrusted with the task of producing an unbreakable national community” by becoming what would be termed “people’s educators.”¹⁷⁵ Just as physicians were required to become racial soldiers, so it was for members of the teaching profession who would train to become “racial soldiers” themselves. A significant part of these conferences, seminars and training of German teachers was developed with the assistance and/or sponsorship of Walter Groß and the RPA. For example, the Ministry of Propaganda, the NSLB and the RPA sponsored a contest for high school teachers to develop school curricula which focused on students studying their racial lineage.¹⁷⁶ Propaganda films produced by the RPA which focused on the disabled and hereditarily ill were shown in schools across Germany (The RWU would also distribute its own films to German schools.) Tours to mental asylums were instituted, what one could call “racial field trips” to provide stark and horrifying evidence of negative reproduction. To assist with the educational process necessary in Germany, the RPA would train its own racial educators to give talks and lectures throughout Germany, which included speaking to German students. Historian and author Claudia Koonz cites that

¹⁷⁴ Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, 283.

¹⁷⁵ Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 31.

¹⁷⁶ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 87.

during the 1930s, the RPA had 1,400 trained speakers, who after completing an eight day course in racial science, were given the task of speaking at various venues, such as meetings of the HJ and the BDM, NSV meetings, and at schools to promote the regime's racial hygiene policies.¹⁷⁷

If schools became indoctrination centers of Germany's biological education, they also served a much more sinister function. German schools would provide the state an additional tool to identify and isolate children suspected to be hereditarily unfit. German textbooks regularly emphasized ancestry as a necessary component to racial education by stressing the continuity of the family blood line.¹⁷⁸ An important resource, which not only taught racial education to children, but identified potentially unfit children, was the construction of family trees. Part of the stringent requirements of the SS was that all members provide ancestral proof of their Germanic bloodline, going back to the year 1800 (1750 for officers). Such an idea was advocated as a classroom exercise for German children of all ages. Collecting detailed family histories and transposing this information into family trees not only gave students the opportunity to prove their Germanic ancestry, but provided information which potentially identified mental or physical disability within a child's family. German schools of the Third Reich devolved from centers of learning which focused on the student's academic achievements to ideological institutions which cultivated healthy German youth, while simultaneously isolating and excluding those children who failed to conform to the racial and genetic standards enforced by Nazism and its "racial educators."

¹⁷⁷ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 123.

¹⁷⁸ Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, 66-67.

While German schools sought to transform racial education into the core requirements for every subject matter taught, German universities, which began the process of racial education prior to the Nazi rise to power, trained future racial educators and the future physicians and lawyers who would officiate over the genetic courts. Many of Germany's leading eugenicists were university professors. Fritz Lenz taught at the University of Munich, Eugen Fischer taught at the University of Freiburg, Paul Brohmner at the College of Teacher Education, Hans Günther at the Universities of Jena, Berlin and Freiburg, Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer at the University of Frankfurt am Main. University education drew upon leading academics to advance racial education and transform racial hygiene as a serious subject of study. Author Robert Proctor cites that during the Winter semester of 1932-1933, racial hygiene was taught as twenty-six separate courses within the medical facilities of many German universities.¹⁷⁹ As the study of racial hygiene began to permeate within the academic community of higher education, so too would Walter Groß and the RPA. Several German universities developed their own institutes of racial hygiene giving the RPA the opportunity to ingratiate itself into these academic institutes, where they functioned as local RPA offices for their respective administrative region, or Gau.¹⁸⁰ RPA cooperation with the RWU helped in the screening of RPA produced films for German medical students. Through its interaction within the German educational system, from the earliest years of grammar school to the university level, the RPA ensured its influence upon the minds of Germany's students.

Drawing upon the pervasive nature of eugenic indoctrination permeating throughout Nazi Germany, there can be little question that Groß and the RPA figured largely within

¹⁷⁹ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 38.

¹⁸⁰ Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, 513.

the governmental function of racial education meant to transform all Germans into racially aware citizens of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. As Nazi Germany sought to dominate all aspects of German life as it impacted the racial health of the community, so Groß and the RPA were determined to become a critical part of the state's domination of Germany's biological future. By examining subsections of German society which were targeted by the RPA, for example, women, German youth, and the academic and medical professions, one can witness the RPA's resolve to become the dominant voice of Nazi eugenic policy. Still, the role of the RPA required a voice to rise beyond the scope of specifically selected groups in Germany. Its message needed to be disseminated to all Germans, which required not only the necessary methods to reach every German, but the development of such a message which would ensure a variety of reactions from the German people. Again, the words of Adolf Hitler resound as they relate to the relationship between eugenics and education.

Through educational means, the State must teach individuals that illness is not a disgrace, but an unfortunate accident which has to be pitied, yet it is a crime and a disgrace to make this affliction all the worse by passing on disease and defects to innocent creatures out of mere egotism.¹⁸¹

Germans should take pity on these "poor creatures" while tying their existence to the negligent disregard of those who knowingly pass their defective genes onto successive generations. Eugenics propaganda would seek to fulfill Hitler's view of the disabled; to be pitied and yet reviled, and to address their lives in terms of "life unworthy of life." Through the selfishness of parents who disregard their actions and pass their defective genes to their

¹⁸¹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 227.

children without comprehending the consequences and negative impacts of such actions, places the responsibility upon all Germans. Eugenics propaganda would seek to demonize the disabled as objects of pity and revulsion, determined to force all Germans to accept full blame of uninhibited reproduction which discarded the fundamental role of every German to produce healthy children for the benefit of the *Volk*.

Chapter 4

Objects of Pity and Revulsion

Good natured feeble-minded persons attach themselves to those who give them food and drink and a bed. Their relationship to other people is therefore essentially of an egoistic nature, hence not a relationship in the true sense.¹⁸²

Dr. Kurt Gauger, 1934

Dr. Herman Pfannmüller (1886-1961), neurologist and psychiatrist, represented thousands of German physicians who hailed the rise of Hitler and Nazism in Germany. Joining the party in 1933, Pfannmüller was a committed party member, who believed in the biological mission of the Führer to cleanse Germany of its genetically burdensome population. Pfannmüller spent much of his professional career working at various mental hospitals in Germany, before receiving the directorship of Eglfing-Haar mental hospital in 1937. In doing so, Dr. Pfannmüller was placed in a decidedly important position to help orchestrate one of the most shocking methods the Third Reich implemented to awaken genetically healthy Germans to the overbearing burden placed upon them by the disabled population. Mental asylums and psychiatric hospitals in Germany, presented as “palaces” in Nazi eugenics propaganda, were utilized as first hand proof of the misery and suffering which the disabled supposedly inflicted on the greater community. Beginning in 1933, asylums and mental hospitals became settings for tours engineered by various Nazi organizations, including the RPA, with the explicit purpose of exposing the end result of negligent racial policies and the economic costs Germans were forced to bear through taxation by housing and caring for these patients. One report cites that over 2,000 people toured mental asylums in the Rhineland, mainly members of the SS and the SA, the Hitler

¹⁸² Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, 221.

Youth, the NSF and members of the German press.¹⁸³ Other asylums across Germany would follow suit, but perhaps the most infamous was Pfannmüller's Egfling-Haar asylum. Beginning in 1933, Egfling-Haar opened its doors to the public as proof of the type of "life unworthy of life" permitted to exist in Germany. Pfannmüller himself described his patients as "creatures" and explained that, as a committed National Socialist, all patients and inmates throughout Germany constituted a "living burden" for the entire nation, whose existence marked Germany's unwillingness to commit to a racially driven population policy.¹⁸⁴ Ultimately, Egfling-Haar would "welcome" over 20,000 persons who toured the facility between 1933 and 1939.¹⁸⁵

What was to be expected from such tours? Recorded impressions of the tours offer the opportunity to read testaments from those who were given access to Germany's hidden shame. In 1934, the Bavarian office of the Reich's Propaganda Ministry invited the local press to tour Egfling-Haar with the sole purpose, according to Michael Burleigh, of "disseminating racial hygiene propaganda to a wider audience."¹⁸⁶ According to a Munich newspaper, *Der Münchener Zeitung* article, inmates were described as "grinning grotesques who bear scarcely any resemblance to human beings."¹⁸⁷ Historian Peter Fritzsche writes of an account of a student who wrote after her class visited the asylum in Keunznach in 1935 that she and her fellow students came face to face with "numerous girls, all of them half-crazy, crippled and deformed."¹⁸⁸ Such school outings and tours by German officials were meant to provide proof of the abhorrent results of unfettered

¹⁸³ Poore, *Disability in Twentieth Century German Culture*, 98.

¹⁸⁴ Jeremy Noakes and G. Pridham eds. *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 3 Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination: A Documentary Reader*. (Exeter, England: University of Exeter Press: 1998) 400.

¹⁸⁵ Poore, *Disability in Twentieth Century German Culture*, 98.

¹⁸⁶ Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 43.

¹⁸⁷ Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 44.

¹⁸⁸ Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, 94.

procreation. Regardless of the reaction, whether it was based upon disgust of these “grinning grotesques,” pity for these “poor creatures” or the fear for Germany’s future if such people are provided for without constraint, the ultimate object of such tours were to imprint upon the minds of every German that the only rational solution was the biological prevention of allowing future generations of disabled to burden the German population.

One can argue that such reactions were ostensibly the basis of the Nazi propaganda war against the disabled. Walter Groß and the RPA would exploit any reaction based upon racial propaganda which would guide German opinion to the ultimate conclusion that Germany’s racially defective and disabled population had to be eradicated. By examining the work of the RPA and the manner in which eugenics propaganda was explained to the German people, it is not entirely outside the realm of reason that RPA propaganda, while emphasizing the state’s role in the prevention of future generations of disabled upon Germany, emphasized that only through the removal of the physically and mentally disabled can there truly be a racially insular, genetically protected German *Volk*. When explaining the overshadowing growth of Germany’s hereditarily defective population, Walter Groß wrote that while many did not possess the mental faculties to appreciate the gross negligence of their erroneous disregard for passing defective genes onto their children, there were those who, in Groß’ words “still possessed a sense of responsibility” and were “horrified at seeing the ‘sins of the father’ visited upon their children.”¹⁸⁹ Taken within the context of singular responsibility, Groß’ assertion that generations of the biologically defective may recognize the negligence of their actions, distinguishing those capable of understanding the erroneous nature of reproduction versus those oblivious to the

¹⁸⁹ Groß, “National Socialist Racial Thought,” 68.

course of such actions is further proof that the very foundations of natural law and natural selection have been ignored. Eugenics propaganda would focus the blame for these biological aberrations on all Germans; for it is the community as a whole which must bear the responsibility for this modern-day plague.

Presenting the German people with visual proof of the abject horrors of Germany's disabled provided Groß and the RPA with its most penetrating, vicious and grossly distorted attacks on the mentally and physically disabled. It should indeed be emphasized that eugenics propaganda merely employed the perceptions of Germany's disabled by German eugenicists, members of the German medical and academic world and supporters of the Nazi biological view of those considered to be unfit. Derisive terms such as "imbecile," "moron," "idiot," "defective," and "lunatic," while seen as abhorrent to our modern sense of morality, were common and accepted terms used to describe the disabled. Eugenics propaganda would continue to use such terms and juxtapose such labels with visual representations of those determined to be unfit. Galton and Lombroso sought to prove the relationship between abnormal behavior and physical defects through the use of photography as a *scientific* method in which to prove their hypotheses. Eugenics propaganda, while utilizing science as a means to justify eugenic policies, liberally used the visual representation of the disabled not to generate rational and empirical justifications for the Third Reich's eugenic policies, but to foster an emotional response to such disturbing images. The visualization of the disabled in RPA propaganda brought before its audience a world inhabited by, what Groß would call in the 1936 RPA production, *Erbkrank*, (The Hereditarily Defective) "drunkards, criminals and morons."¹⁹⁰ By presenting visual proof

¹⁹⁰ *Erbkrank*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1936. DVD.

of Germany's failure to ensure the healthy propagation of its own people, by presenting the German populace with chilling evidence of this collective failure, the RPA appealed to all Germans to end this continuing cycle of racial suicide.

Consider the visual representation of those considered "defective" as compared to racially healthy Germans. Figures III and IV represent two pieces of propaganda advertising the RPA publication, *Neues Volk*, depicting the sharp contrast between the



Figs. III & IV. *Neues Volk*. Poster and Calendar Cover. United States Holocaust Museum and Memorial. Washington, D.C. Web. 2 September 2017.

healthy and the infirm. The image on the left (Figure III) is a 1937 poster promoting the RPA publication *Neues Volk* magazine which shows a patient from one of the many German institutions that care for the mentally and physically ill. It depicts him with a shaved head, grimaced face, and an inability to balance himself in the chair without assistance. Furthermore, the poster reads, "This genetically ill person will cost our people's community 60,000 Reichmarks over his lifetime. Citizen, that is your money. Read *Neues*

Volk, the monthly of the Racial Policy Office of the NSDAP.” Compare this to the image on the right (Figure IV) from the cover of a 1938 calendar issued by *Neues Volk*, depicting the perfect Aryan couple with child, blond hair, blue eyes, physically healthy, a clear representation of pure German blood. Apart from the economic argument made in the 1937 poster (economic arguments will be addressed separately), the visual representation of the healthy versus the unhealthy is meant to amplify the dramatic physical differences between the disabled and the physically fit. Selective and graphic depictions of Germany’s disabled population were readily exploited through RPA propaganda, both in print and on screen. Ill-conceived government policies which funded the care for children and the total lapse of biological thinking and planning permitted the genetically inferior population of Germany to grow and develop into an unseen, yet harsh strain on the German nation.

Figure V is a poster used for one of several racial exhibitions which toured Germany during the 1930s. Although this poster was printed in *Volk und Rasse* (People and Race) magazine, while not a RPA publication, it nevertheless addresses the vital importance of visual imagery. Here we see a copy of the July 1933 Sterilization Law to the left, with the top caption reading, “Sterilization: not Punishment, but Liberation” and the sub-caption reading, “What parents want such a terrible fate upon their children?” It concludes at the bottom of the poster with the more significant question, “Who would want to be responsible for this?” The final question concerning responsibility poses the possibility of several responses. Certainly, those who willingly bring unhealthy children into the world are directly responsible for a continuing cycle of such children and the burden they present to the *Volk* as a whole. However, if responsibility is placed on the German community, then it is through the combination of ill-conceived government policies and the total lapse

in biological thinking and population planning which permitted the genetically inferior population to grow and evolve to become a hidden, but tangible strain on the German nation.



Figure V. *Volk und Rasse*. August 1936 issue reprint of a poster used in racial hygiene exhibition in the 1930s. German Propaganda Archive. Calvin College, Michigan. Web. 2 September 2017.

An ever-present argument made by German eugenicists and Nazi ideologues was specifically where to focus blame on the national issue of Germany's disabled population. Beyond the repeated arguments which targeted the failure to adapt Darwinian ideas and eugenic policies to German society and the contemptuous lack of biological forethought, attacks on the manner in which Germany was governed prior to the ascension of Hitler to power left many to subscribe to the belief that the years of the Weimar Republic, in their view so corrupt and bereft with immorality, placed Germany on a path to racial destruction. While the 1920s witnessed the widespread teaching of racial hygiene at German universities, the growth of the eugenics community in Germany and the rise of nationalist political parties which preached the doctrine of Aryan supremacy and Social

Darwinism, many saw the post-World War I years as the beginning of the collapse of German culture and German society. Those who were most vocal for the sterilization of the disabled saw postwar Germany, as German historian and author Gisela Bock writes, as a nation riddled with social problems, possessing at most a passive resistance to deviant sexual behavior (prostitution or illegitimacy for example), a rise in poverty and shiftlessness and most disturbing, the ever-increasing number of the physically and mentally ill.¹⁹¹ The German welfare state created under the Weimar government, as envisioned by Nazism and German nationalists, benefitted not the racially pure, genetically healthy Germans, but those whose lives burden the healthy; a constant reminder of the failure among all Germans which allowed the state to care for the disabled. Hitler criticized the state's ill-conceived policies which provided care for the sick and genetically diseased, when in *Mein Kampf*, he wrote:

“In the present State of ours, whose function it is to be the guardian of peace and order, our national bourgeoisie look upon it as a crime to make procreation impossible for syphilitics and those who suffer from tuberculosis or other hereditary diseases, also cripples and imbeciles. But the practical prevention of procreation among millions of our very best people is not considered as an evil...”¹⁹²

If the visual representation of the disabled potentially proved to be the most effective tool to mold German sentiment toward the disabled population, then the incorporation of film as the broadest reaching instrument of eugenics propaganda required

¹⁹¹ Gisela Bock. “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization and the State.” *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*. Edited by Renata Brindenthal, Anita Grossman and Marion Kaplan. (New York, New York: Monthly Press Review, 1984) 274.

¹⁹² Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 226.

images of the disabled which were as graphic and shocking as those found in RPA publications. From 1933 to 1939, the RPA produced seven propaganda films aimed to substantiate the extent to which the racially and biologically disabled were permitted to exist and thrive within the borders of the German nation. As part of the production process, RPA filmmakers were given access to German asylums and prisons to film patients, which, as far as RPA propagandists were concerned, most effectively represented Germany's disabled population. As authors Michael Burleigh and Carol Poore agree, RPA film makers wanted to create images that not merely shocked their audiences, but clearly justified the Third Reich's campaign against the disabled. Selecting those patients and inmates whose features were most distorted, whose behavior was most disturbing, such as a patient eating grass in the 1937 film *Opfer der Vergangenheit* or a patient walking on all fours as seen in the 1936 film *Erbkrank*, created an image of the disabled designed to envelop the viewer with feelings of revulsion at the sight of such images, feelings of pity for these "poor creatures" whose lives are spent in either physical pain or mental darkness or that of resentment that such lives are artificially sustained at the expense of the state. In one such film, the 1935 *Abseits vom Wege* (Off the Beaten Path), a scene showing patients being hand fed by hospital staff or, in extreme cases, force fed via feeding tubes are described as "idiots" who, without the resources provided by the German state, would otherwise die.¹⁹³ Regardless of one's personal reaction, these images carefully crafted and manipulated by the RPA had only one intended goal: to convince the German people that the regime's sterilization policies were justified and even greater dramatic measures were possibly required to exact a permanent solution to this biological crisis.

¹⁹³ *Abseits vom Wege*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: Rassenpolitische Amt der N.S.D.A.P., 1935. DVD.

As part of its use of images of the disabled and the hereditarily unfit in Nazi propaganda, the RPA engaged in not only the use of individual images of patients and inmates of Germany's mental facilities and asylums, but it recognized the value of exploiting images of large groups of patients as evidence of the wayward policies of the past which allowed the population of Germany's unfit to reach apocryphal levels. This argument, which correlated disproportionately high percentages of those considered unfit as compared to the German population as a whole was an argument advocated by eugenicists and racial hygienists long before the Nazis came to power and eugenics propaganda warned of the dangerously high reproduction rates among the genetically inferior. Francis Galton utilized Malthusian ideas of population control and the relationship between limited resources and population growth to justify his approach to his eugenic doctrines, cautioning his readers that those of an undesirable race would leave a smaller proportion of descendants as compared to those who would "crowd the vacant space with their progeny."¹⁹⁴ Madison Grant had warned of the lower reproduction rate among the able-bodied as compared to what he termed "indiscriminate breeding" among the "undesirable elements."¹⁹⁵ American eugenicist Charles Davenport, while examining fit versus unfit marriages in his work, *Eugenics, The Science of Human Improvement by Better Breeding*, used a case study where a "feeble-minded" man of 38 years of age and his "delicate wife" produced 19 "defective children" after 20 years of marriage."¹⁹⁶ Eugenicists argued that the disparity between birthrates among the healthy versus the unhealthy are interconnected, resulting in the continual decline of the physically and mentally desirable

¹⁹⁴ Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*, 207.

¹⁹⁵ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 43.

¹⁹⁶ Charles Benedict Davenport. *Eugenics, The Science of Human Improvement by Better Breeding*. (New York, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1910) 15.

population at the expense of undesirable, biologically afflicted population. By restricting resources to those segments of society which are productive and enhance the overall vitality of a people enables humankind to redistribute scarce resources in favor of the healthy versus that wasted on the sick and infirm.

German eugenicists and Nazi ideologues would come to accept these same conclusions. However, application of such hypotheses would become ingratiated into a particular problem facing the German people. The severe drop in the German population, due to emigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the enormous casualties from the Great War and the overall declining birth rate among "healthy" Germans were decidedly disturbing factors which required immediate action. Hitler himself had warned of the potentially disastrous effects of Germany's population policies upon the German people. In the same 1929 speech where he called for the elimination of seventy to eighty percent of Germany's births per year to ensure only the strongest twenty to thirty percent survive, he condemned policies which, through "modern sentimental humanitarianism" have allowed "degenerates" to artificially increase in numbers, while healthy people refrained from procreating due the economic strain of supporting the unfit through the ill use of state resources.¹⁹⁷ Others within Germany would heighten the alarm of such disproportionate population rates within Germany. Dr. Walter Schultze, *Reichsdozentenführer* (Reich Leader of University Teachers) from 1935 to 1943, in his article, "*Bevölkerungspolitik auf der Grundlage der Rassenhygiene*" ("Population Policy based on Racial Hygiene") prophesied that if Germany did not correct its current population policies, what would follow would be an ensured decline in the viability of our race" while the "degenerate

¹⁹⁷ Jeremy Noakes and G. Pridham eds. *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 3 Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination: A Documentary Reader*. (Exeter, England: University of Exeter Press: 1998) 394.

genetic stock with serious physical and mental afflictions” would grow in numbers.¹⁹⁸ A 1932 article from the Nazi publication *Völkischer Beobachter* utilized a study conducted in Bavaria examining female criminals. The study concluded that while genetically healthy women produced on average 3.4 children, the birth rate among female criminals was 4.5 children, thereby demonstrating a higher birthrate among criminal women. This same study concluded that among these women, almost half were determined to be “mentally defective.”¹⁹⁹ Again, the link between criminality and mental illness is reinforced, as it will be repeatedly in RPA propaganda.

Groß addressed this population crisis in Germany. He predicted that based upon the current birthrate, Germany, by the end of the 20th century, would have a total population of only between 40 to 50 million. This left a Germany facing encirclement by nations with increasingly growing population rates. Accordingly, “Sooner or later, these peoples will come into conflict with a shrinking and dying German people, and the result of the supposed doctrine will be a hard and bitter national death for our children.”²⁰⁰ Groß intrinsically linked the decline of healthy Germans to the overly compassionate attitude Germans developed toward the growing population of genetically inferior peoples, again using the policies of the Weimar Republic as his target. Six years after the Nazi seizure of power, Groß heralded the impact of Nazi thinking and Nazi racial policies and the inroads made to ensure the survival of the German people. The Nazi state inherited a Germany which, according to Groß, encouraged by “an intellectual attitude” and “various practical

¹⁹⁸ Walter Schultze. “Population Policy based on Racial Hygiene (1932).” Detlef Mühlberger ed. *Hitler's Voice: The Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933. Volume II Nazi Ideology and Propaganda*. (Oxford, England: Peter Lang, 2004) 90.

¹⁹⁹ “Counter-Selection: Supplement No. 1, Race, People and State (1930).” Detlef Mühlberger ed. *Hitler's Voice: The Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933. Volume II Nazi Ideology and Propaganda*. (Oxford, England: Peter Lang, 2004) 97.

²⁰⁰ Groß, Walter, “National Socialist Racial Policy: A Speech to German Women,” 3.

lifestyles” that vindicated a policy of family planning leading to a “disturbing and frightening reduction in births.”²⁰¹ Through measures designed to encourage the repopulation of Germany by only genetically suitable men and women, Groß hailed the rebirth of Germany under Nazi control, which witnessed within the first years of the Third Reich an increase of births by 23%. A significant increase, yet still not at a level which Groß recognized as necessary to stave off what he called, “the specter of the shrinking of our people.”²⁰² Complementing this step toward racial revival was the implementation of Germany’s Sterilization Law, defined and defended by Groß as “the truest and most correct thinking,”²⁰³ an act of salvation which gave Germany the necessary instrument to correct the decades of misguided and misinformed thinking.

The result was a strenuous effort by Groß and the RPA to interconnect the lower birthrate among healthy Germans at the expense of supporting the biologically and mentally inferior, while exposing the uninhibited reproduction rates among the genetically undesirable. What author Fritz Bornhöft warned in his 1927 article for the *Völkischer Beobachter*, where he predicted that Germany was artificially creating “an army of social psychopaths, prostitutes, habitual thieves, vagabonds and criminals of all kinds”²⁰⁴ would become stern reality and yet another indication of Germany’s failed policies to protect its racial stock. Eugenics propaganda which demonstrated the grossly uneven population rates between healthy versus unhealthy Germans would predict that Germany would succumb to an ever expanding inferior population, resulting in the eventual extinction of genetically healthy stock. Figure VI on page 97 is a poster printed in *Volk und Rasse* magazine from a

²⁰¹ Groß, “Der Deutsche Rassengedanke und die Welt,” 9.

²⁰² Groß, “Der Deutsche Rassengedanke und die Welt,” 12.

²⁰³ Groß, “Der Deutsche Rassengedanke und die Welt,” 31.

²⁰⁴ Fritz Bornhöft. “The Road the Racial Recovery” (1927) Detlef Mühlberger ed. *Hitler’s View: The Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933 Volume II Nazi Ideology and Propaganda*. (Oxford, England: Peter Lang, 2004) 94.

eugenics exhibition in 1935, graphically shows the disproportionate reproduction rates among Germany two populations, the healthy and the unhealthy. Although not a publication of the RPA, the journal *Volk und Rasse* was created by the Reich Committee for the Public Health Service and the German Society Racial Hygiene in 1926 and an important tool in the racial education of the German people.²⁰⁵ (Groß would become a member of its editorial board.) The title of this particular poster reads, “Qualitative population decline with low reproduction rates of superiors” with a side by side comparison of a visually healthy man compared to a typical representation of a genetically defective man. The lower caption reads, “So it will come, if inferiors have 4 children and superiors have 2,” graphically utilizing side by side comparisons with the stereotypically healthy German compared to the visually disturbing product of defective genetic stock.



Figure VI. A 1935 Poster from a Berlin eugenics exhibition, reprinted in *Volk und Rasse* magazine. History and Headlines. <https://www.historyandheadlines.com/history-july-14-1933-nazis-begin-eugenics-program-evil-common-sense/> Web. 2 September 2017.

²⁰⁵ Poore, *Disability in Twentieth century German Culture*, 101.

RPA film productions would incorporate this same image into film. Just as it was important to provide visual and statistical proof of the disparity of Germany's populations, divided among genetic lines, films would exhibit its proof of this disparity. Men and women, suffering from some form of disability would, according to RPA propaganda, inevitably pass their defective genes down to future generations. The 1935 RPA film *Abseits vom Wege* (Off the Beaten Path) filmed individual patients whose defective genes were passed on to their children. An imbecilic mother is described as having produced five illegitimate children. Filming families within the same institution showed the direct impact of unfettered reproduction among the hereditarily defective. The movie *Erbkrank* devoted a significant amount of time filming members of the same family who have demonstrated genetically defective mental and physical disabilities. One scene shows two "moronic" children of an alcoholic, stating that "If the father had been sterilized earlier, then he would not have produced 14 children, from which 6 are still alive and a burden to the state."²⁰⁶ A scene from *Abseits vom Wege*, after presenting genetically defective members of the same family, warns of the mentally ill that breed unrestrained, with the end result showing their descendants who are "mostly lunatics and criminals."²⁰⁷ Groupings of mentally ill siblings, mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, generations of families living in institutions, were further evidence that Germany's hidden crisis, through decades of racial neglect, had become a life or death threat to the *Volk*.

Presenting Germany's population crisis in shocking and graphic detail did not confine itself to exploiting the physical and mental disabilities of Germany's disabled population. Since Nazism connected deviant behavior, such as criminal and asocial

²⁰⁶ *Erbkrank*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1937. DVD

²⁰⁷ *Abseits Vom Wege*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1935. DVD.

behavior, with inferior and defective genes, appropriating Galton's and Lombroso's ideas which used photography to prove the connection between deviant behavior and physical disability, granted the RPA yet another outlet to confirm the belief that Germany's current population crisis had reached dangerous dimensions. As part of the war upon Germany's inferior population, RPA propaganda utilized the Nazi doctrine that deviancy promoted future generations of men and women plagued with a predisposition to asocial and criminal behavior. As seen, for example, in the 1937 RPA film *Alles Lebens ist Kampf* (All Life is Struggle), Germany's unfit population represented two different, but interconnected groups: those whose physical and mental illness had left them incapacitated and unable to care for themselves, and those whose mental deficiencies have devolved into criminal and asocial behavior. The film marks this delineation by introducing various patients who have committed violent acts due to their mental illness. The audience is reminded that, "Genetically defective people of unsound mind commit murders, acts of arson, and violent crimes" with the further reminder that such people are "the scourge of their nations."²⁰⁸ A succession of male and female inmates (lunatics), whose crimes range from arson, murder-robbery, patricide and infanticide, are paraded on film, providing further proof that genetically ill people, not only burden society through their mere existence, but they pose a violent threat to the community as a whole.

Whether in a propaganda poster, an article from a RPA publication, or from an RPA film production, the image of the genetically ill provided a powerful tool which the RPA exploited for its "re-education" designs on German racial thinking. It is important to recognize the nature of the visual image as essential to eugenics propaganda. True, the

²⁰⁸ *Alles Leben ist Kampf*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1937. DVD.

justification for Nazi Germany's eugenic policies would find it necessary to implement several key arguments critical to explain racial hygiene to all Germans. However, the arguments involving economic savings, biological protection, racial survival and genetic inheritance, in itself, prove to the German people the dire consequences of unobstructed racial and genetic protection without providing the visual evidence seen on film and in print. Nazi ideologues and German eugenicists furnished the RPA with the fundamental justifications for eugenic policies. In turn, the RPA transformed such evidence into easily understandable and yet emotionally disconcerting propaganda and fused the visual representation of the hereditarily ill with the "rational" arguments for curbing Germany's genetically ill population.

Central to the perceptions of the genetically ill was the pervasive connection between a healthy population and breeding. As Nazi racial hygienists and Nazi ideologues declared, good breeding determined the future of the German race. The Nazi perceptions of human breeding are basic and crude, consistently drawing comparisons to the plant and animal worlds. One can argue that, while placing such an enormous value on healthy German stock, Nazism converted its racially dominated conceptions of the *Volk* in less than human terms, debasing humanity and human procreations to terms more akin to animal husbandry and plant cultivation. In his work, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics and Racism in Germany*, Richard Weikart explained that the interpretation of Darwinian principles in human reproduction and evolutionary terms enabled eugenicists to view humanity in strict biological terms of reproduction and breeding. Writing that eugenicists, "often compared the selective breeding of animals, which they saw as rational and

scientific, with human reproduction, which seemed irrational and arbitrary,"²⁰⁹ Weikart's assertion that eugenicists consistently equated human reproduction with other species enabled the Nazis to not only simplify their arguments for a transformation of German breeding habits, but encouraged Germans to rationalize their individual views of racial hygiene and racial breeding into a simple basic concept; eliminate defective genes through eugenics while, at the same time, promoting the increase of the genetically healthy through careful and selective reproduction.

To further such an argument, eugenicists and Nazi ideologues were convinced that if Germany could accept the "laws of nature" which not only permitted the strong and vital to survive while creating an environment which eliminated the weak, only then could the German race develop and encourage the racial perfection the Nazis believed was central to the future of the Germanic people. George Mosse recognized such thinking as forming an integral part of his 1964 book, *The Crisis of German Ideology*. As German *volkisch* ideologues and German nationalists embraced the Darwinian application of survival of the fittest to the human race, it became obvious that, through the natural law of selection, the fit survived, the unfit perished, leaving only one rational conclusion; mankind must only permit the healthy to breed.²¹⁰ German eugenicists and racial hygienists such as Ernst Haeckel, Walter Schallmayer and Alfred Ploetz argued that nature itself provided the methods necessary for Nordic and Germanic peoples to evolve into the biologically healthy, mentally and physically superior species. It is by the misapplication of human emotion and the misdirection of the *Volk's* priority to ensure its future that allowed the

²⁰⁹ Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler*, 79.

²¹⁰ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 98.

disabled to flourish within a society and if such trends did not change, then the biological destruction of the *Volk* is all but guaranteed.

The relationship between nature and mankind became a repeated and interconnected feature within the tenets of National Socialist thought. Throughout *Mein Kampf*, Hitler repeatedly embraced the belief that nature is the great arbiter of life and death, the one constant which mankind cannot and should not pervert for its own selfish and empathetic reasons. Hitler admitted that, "Nature herself tends to check the increase of population in some countries and among some races" through methods which are perceived as "quite ruthless as it is wise."²¹¹ Hitler argued that the will of Nature had been perverted by a society which, emotionally and misguidedly, believed in the equality of all life, even those whose quality of life is relied upon by the effort of others. The eventual outcome of such blatantly misdirected thinking would egregiously alter the course of Nature's selection process, "For as soon as the procreation faculty is thwarted and the number of births diminished, the natural struggle for existence which allows only healthy and strong individuals to survive is replaced by a sheer craze to 'save' feeble and even diseased creatures at any cost."²¹² Hitler specifically accused mankind for creating an artificial environment where the weak survive, condemning mankind's failure to permit nature to take its course in the ever present struggle for life. According to Hitler, mankind had created "something that contradicts the iron logic of Nature" which "brings him into conflict with those principles to which he himself exclusively owes his own existence."²¹³ By condemning mankind as the root cause in its own injurious racial future, Hitler was

²¹¹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 82-83.

²¹² Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 83.

²¹³ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 162.

insistent that the only solution required man to readopt “nature’s will”, and to accept the undeniable law of natural selection, which would preserve the strong while eliminating the weak.

Walter Groß featured this connection within his own writings and speeches and, in turn, integrated it into the propaganda of the RPA. In a 1934 speech, Groß condemned man’s interference with the “ancient laws of life” which, through such interference, had changed the “laws of struggle and existence” to permit those cursed with “unfortunate physical and mental characteristics”²¹⁴ to live and benefit from the society’s failed grasp of the realities of man’s existence. However, Groß augmented this connection of man’s perversion of natural law by invoking the name of God or the “Creator” into his biologically charged rhetoric. While Hitler sparingly used God or the idea of a “Creator” within the pages of *Mein Kampf*, he realized that he could not exclude God entirely. In fact, according to Hitler, God did have a divine purpose for the German people. His belief that God himself approved of racial purity and natural selection is egregious in itself. As part of the State’s role, Hitler emphatically believed that by sanctioning only the racially fit to marry and procreate, the end result would be generations of Germans who possessed, “the likeness of the Lord” rather than “monsters that are a mixture of man and ape”²¹⁵ indicating that the continued bastardization of Germanic blood would only produce future generations of biological aberrations. Hitler would further this argument to a rather unlikely direction by indicating that unhealthy couples do possess some function within this divinely inspired *Volk*. Hitler offers an explanation by again rationalizing selective breeding with sacred design:

²¹⁴ Groß, “*Der Deutsche Rassengedanke und die Welt*,” 5.

²¹⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 226.

It is more pleasing to God if a couple that is not healthy stock were to show loving kindness to some poor orphan and become a father or mother to him, rather than give life to a sickly child that will be a cause of suffering and unhappiness to all.²¹⁶

This clearly demonstrated Hitler's willingness to manipulate religion and the belief in a higher being as a natural extension of racial biology and to justify eugenics as a God given right to be executed within those natural laws granted to man by his Creator.

Groß adapted this connection between natural law and God's plan for the Germanic people. Groß claimed that the "laws of blood and race" were God given gifts which require strict adherence. In one speech, Groß asked, if humans are bound by race, then how can mankind, determined to "follow and act according to the laws of blood that God himself has placed us under,"²¹⁷ consider it heretical to protect the purity of German blood and adhere to such a greater law which would, in effect, exclude those whose very existence is a living reminder of mankind's failure to protect the strength and purity which comes from "pure" blood. Such disingenuous use of God as mandating the purity of blood and the sacredness of the genetically healthy, while vilifying man for artificially supporting the weak and the infirm, perverts humanity's belief in charity and mercy. Yet, Nazi ideology and, subsequently Nazi eugenic propaganda demonizing the disabled would take those beliefs and twist their meaning to mold charity and mercy as justifiable reason to prevent, and eventually eliminate, Germany disabled population.

²¹⁶ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 227.

²¹⁷ Groß, "Blood is Holy," 3.

By envisioning the future of the German race in terms which reduces human procreation as what can be described as biological cost/benefit analysis, it is not so hard to imagine that Nazi eugenics propaganda would seek to dehumanize those that were to be excluded from the Nazi master plan in creating a genetically perfect race. By applying the concepts of Social Darwinism and these laws of nature to all humans, humanity becomes a simple formula of preserving the healthy, while actively supporting the eradication of the weak and infirm. Critical to Nazi eugenic policy and to the effectiveness of Nazi eugenics propaganda was the simple presumption that the genetically ill and hereditarily inferior resembled nothing remotely close to what the Nazis considered human life. Nazi eugenic policy applied a very simplistic methodology to its view of those possessing defective genes. Defective genes create human life that is not regarded as human, devoid of the very basic requirements of biologic worth, which the Nazis adopted as essential to the survival of the *Volk*. Through the use of phrases such as "life unworthy of life," and the labeling of Germany's disabled as "creatures," or persons of "lesser hereditary value" and "parasitic," Nazi propaganda, as seen with the propaganda assault against the Jews, maintained that those that did not fit the racial criteria of the Aryan model were not only considered sub-human, but represented a constant threat to the existence of the German people. It was essential for eugenics propaganda to create an image of the disabled whereby empathy and pity would focus not on the care for these helpless victims, but refocus such emotions to rationalize sterilization and even perhaps "mercy killing." Although the Third Reich's state-sanctioned killings of Germany's disabled population would not become "official" policy until the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, there are glaring indications within the

propaganda created by Walter Groß and the RPA that alluded to its sanctioning of elimination as necessary to protect the German people.

Chapter 5

Arguments for Sterilization and Racial Purity

It is necessary to point to how sizable a part of the gross national product is being continuously thrown away today due to the non-introduction of the sterilization of the inferior in the form of the totally unproductive welfare support of the inferior.²¹⁸

Dr. Fritz Bornhöft

Nazism assessed the value of human life based upon the value that an individual's life contributed to the *Volk*. This biological assessment of value was not only predicated on racial identity and the tangible belief in the assumed superiority of Aryan blood, but the assertion that economic resources were "wasted" on those who failed to contribute to the overall welfare of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This argument reflected a frame of mind consistent with proponents of racial hygiene and eugenic science. Nazi eugenics propaganda overwhelmingly defined the costs in providing for the sick and disabled as an unnecessary burden placed upon all Germans, via taxes which, translated into government welfare assistance to house, feed and medically sustain Germany's disabled. Again, this cost/benefit analysis, while dominant in Nazi racial ideology, was an argument well-documented in the literature of eugenicists and racial hygienists decades before the Nazis came to power. This connection is a clear representation of the Nazis' willingness to assimilate racial and eugenic thought into their ideological belief system. The singular and most outstanding difference is the scope and the severity by which Nazi propaganda would exploit this argument to justify the sterilization of the disabled and suggest that more

²¹⁸ Bornhöft, "The Road the Racial Recovery," 94.

definitive solutions were warranted to ensure that Germany would never inflict this unnecessary hardship on future generations of Germans.

Justification for an effective eugenic policy shared established arguments absorbed and molded by the Nazis to fit their plans to create a healthy German *Volk*. The idea of economic waste and the misuse of precious resources were established ideas found within the theories of racial hygiene and supporters of eugenics decades prior to Nazism's justification of eugenic policies based upon simple economics. Francis Galton, while conceding that society will never escape from some form of human misery and that man's compassion will always find "objects" to attach itself to, it faces a difficult future. Galton metaphorically asserted that, "the supply vastly exceeds the demand" which directly led to a society, "overstocked and overburdened with the listless and the incapable."²¹⁹ His assertion that available resources could not compete with the demands made upon society by that segment of the population which did not contribute to its general welfare necessitated policies which would decrease that demand through eugenically inspired reproduction policies. Galton's generalization of resources versus demand would evolve to become the cost/benefit analysis that 20th century eugenicists, racial hygienists and, under the Nazi Party, ideologues would reconfigure into actual monetary costs, providing proof that economics directly correlated with the institution or the failure to apply eugenic policies.

American eugenicist Charles Davenport adopted Galton's basic assumption that these resources could not compete with the supply of the genetically inferior and placed a monetary figure on the cost of care for them. In both his 1910 work, *Eugenics, the Science*

²¹⁹ Galton, *Inquiries into Human Heredity*, 19.

of *Human Improvement by Better Breeding* and his 1911 work, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, Davenport outlined the annual costs derived through his extensive research and estimated the total costs spent on insane asylums, almshouses, prisons and hospitals to care for the estimated ½ million “insane, feebleminded, epileptic, blind and deaf:” 80,000 prisoners and 100,000 paupers to 100 million dollars annually.²²⁰ Based on these figures, Davenport lamented about, “...a *new* plague that rendered four percent of our population, chiefly at the most productive age, not only incompetent but a burden costing 100 million dollars yearly to support.”²²¹ Davenport argued that a fraction of this sum could be used to promote the further study of genetics and defective inherited traits, with the ultimate goal of diminishing defective genes from plaguing mankind. By applying a monetary amount to the enormous allocation of resources spent to care for the disabled, the feebleminded, the criminal and the poor, Davenport offered a compelling argument supporting a policy which transcended the science of eugenics through the implementation of simple economic and fiscal policies; resources allocated for the care of the disabled would be better spent on the prevention of future generations of genetically inferior people.

German racial hygienists and eugenicists would apply this same argument in their call to institute selective breeding and eugenic policies in Germany. As part of Alfred Hoche’s contribution to *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung Lebensunwerten Lebens* (Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life), Hoche argued that, as the lifespan of what he termed “complete retards” is artificially prolonged through the care received by the state, German society bears the heaviest burden through the allocation of money necessary to the

²²⁰ Davenport, C.B. *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*. (Middletown, Delaware: Ostara Publishing, 1911) 3.

²²¹ Davenport, *Eugenics, the Science of Human Improvement by Better Breeding*, 32.

care of these unfortunate individuals.²²² Based upon the information Hoche examined, he argued that the cost to the German economy to fund and care for the “mentally retarded” was 1.3 billion marks annually.²²³ Given the estimated lifespan of fifty years for each individual, Hoche not only saw this economic misappropriation of resources not only continuing, but growing, as future generations of healthy Germans, would contribute through taxation, using “national assets toward an unproductive purpose.”²²⁴ Hoche maintained that this figure represented only a fraction of the burden placed on the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Medical staff and caregivers who spent their entire careers caring for “these empty human shells” were deprived of meaningful work; work which would find a greater purpose caring for those who can actually contribute to German society, instead of draining it of much needed resources. Ultimately, Germans must understand and recognize that resources are better suited for, what Hoche described as, “more productive purposes.”²²⁵

From this first attempt to affix a definitive monetary amount to the cost of care for Germany’s disabled population, others would latch onto this theme quite vehemently. German history under the governance of the Weimar Republic, with its hyperinflation of the early 1920s and the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, created an environment exploited by the Nazis where they condemned the exorbitant amount of funds delegated to the care of the insane and the disabled. Not only was Germany descending into what was derisively labeled a “welfare state” but it wasted its precious resources on those who contributed nothing to the *Volk* which, in itself, was viewed as a crime. A 1932 article

²²² Binding, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, 35.

²²³ Binding, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, 36.

²²⁴ Binding, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, 36.

²²⁵ Binding, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, 36.

from the *Völkischer Beobachter* condemned this “erroneously targeted welfare” utilizing scarce resources to support the “idle.”²²⁶ A November 1932 *Völkischer Beobachter* article written by Dr. Leonardo Conti, future head of the *Reichsärztekammer* (Reich Physicians Chamber) and future *Reichsgesundheitsführer* (Reich Health Leader) entitled “The Burden of Death, The Decrease in the Birth Rate, Population Policy and Family Compensation” estimated that the annual costs for institutional care alone was 200 million marks.²²⁷ Once the Nazis assumed power, this frivolous use of state funds would come under attack. Through eugenics propaganda, it was critical to convince the German people that such funds would benefit the *Volk* only if such funds were redirected to support racial and genetic health.

Spending became an immediate target for the Nazis after Hitler’s appointment to the German chancellorship in January 1933. At his June 1933 meeting which selected those to draft Germany’s Sterilization Law, Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick applied the economic costs to support the “inferiors, asocials, the sick, the feebleminded, the insane, cripples and criminals.”²²⁸ As part of his support for Germany’s Sterilization Law, Otto Steche compared the costs per day to support a “mentally disturbed individual” (4.5 marks) versus the daily salary of a German civil servant (4 marks).²²⁹ Groß frankly addressed the concept of “value” in terms of an individual’s worth in a 1934 speech, where he stated that, “each person does not have the same value as anyone else.”²³⁰ While embracing the economic arguments and using statistical data to demonstrate the enormity of the economic strain

²²⁶ “Counter-Selection: Supplement No. 1, Race, People and State (1930),” 96.

²²⁷ Conti, “The Burden of Death,” 101.

²²⁸ Poore, *Disability in Twentieth Century German Culture*, 75.

²²⁹ Steche, “Guide to Racial Science and Eugenics, Fostering Congenitally Sound Progeny and Family Science for the Intermediate Level,” 331.

²³⁰ Groß, “National Socialist Racial Policy: A Speech to German Women,” 4.

upon Germany's population dedicated for institutional care, Groß argued that Germans failed to realize the greater costs associated with this wasteful spending. In the same speech, he declared, "The German people do not realize the enormous sums that have been spent for decades, money that is taken from those who are healthy, who could do something useful, but cannot because the money is lacking."²³¹ This connection between government spending to provide for the disabled at the cost of providing for genetically healthy Germans would play a significant part in eugenics propaganda to validate the wastefulness of providing such expensive care for the disabled.

Eugenics propaganda illustrated both the vast sums needed to sustain the disabled and how these same sums could be used to provide for Germany's healthy population. The image of the disabled man from the cover of *Neues Volk* magazine on page 84 is only one representation of the manner, in which the RPA sought to convey the cost/benefit argument to the German people in visual terms easily understood by the masses. Stark representations of the burden placed upon all members of German society were meant to awaken the realization that government care for the disabled drew resources away from the German population. As seen with the poster in Figure VII, reprinted in *Volk und Rasse* magazine from one of the Third Reich's eugenic exhibitions, the economic waste in the care for the disabled is vividly clear. The title caption reads, "Here is what you are carrying" explaining that based upon a 60-year life expectancy, a disabled person will cost the German taxpayer 50,000 Reichmarks. As this poster demonstrates, it is the healthy, stereotypical blond haired, light skinned German who is supporting the grimaced, dark haired, unproductive genetically inferior burden to the state.

²³¹ Groß, "National Socialist Racial Policy: A Speech to German Women," 6.



Figs VII. *Neues Volk* 1937 issue. Poster "Here is what you are carrying." <http://www.historychron.com/eu/3R/propaganda-2wk-ENGL.html> Web: 24 September 2017.

Nazi eugenics propaganda presented this wasteful spending not only in relation to the enormity of the costs, but as Groß explained, these same funds can provide greater service to the *Volk* through assistance to genetically healthy Germans. As shown in this poster below, on the left is the atypical image of the genetically inferior with the caption stating that the state pays 5.5 Reichsmarks per day for his care. On the right, that same 5.5 Reichsmarks could provide for a "healthy" family of five. By providing a clear and easily understood example of how money wasted on the care of one of the thousands of Germany's disabled could provide for healthy families, eugenics propaganda sought to



Fig. VIII Comparison of Daily Living Costs for an Individual with a Hereditary Disease and for a Healthy Family (from the Slide Series "Blood and Soil") c. 1935. German History Documents. <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org>. Web. 24 September 2017.

configure German opinion to support eugenic measures and sought to appeal to the potential resentment Germans may experience after discovering the enormous and wasted costs.

Arguments based upon economic costs would intersect with other arguments meant to validate the wasteful spending of the state for the disabled. Several RPA films incorporated the visual representation of patients and inmates from Germany's asylums and hospitals and draw upon the cost for their care to reinforce the message that such lives symbolize both an unnecessary burden and also the benefits such funds could provide for healthy Germans. The 1936 RPA film *Erbkrank* opened with a quote from Walter Groß describing the inequity within Germany between those poor, hardworking Germans and the mentally and physically disabled as follows: "There where palaces are built for drunkards, criminals, and morons, while workers and peasants have to dwell in measly shacks, such a nation is moving towards its end with giant steps."²³² This opening scene shows palatial

²³² *Erbkrank*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1936. DVD.

hospitals and asylums that house Germany's disabled, with expansive grounds and well-kept gardens, while poorer, yet healthy Germans are forced to live in dark, dank slums where children must play in filth-laden streets. While this image in itself is meant to reinforce the disparity between the well fed, well cared for disabled versus the struggling, poorer lower classes, it is further explained that such a disparity was a result of "Jewish liberalistic thinking" which condemned thousands of Germans to live in such conditions.²³³ Nazism viewed the Weimar Republic as an abomination, grounded in liberal democracy under the influence of Jewish politicians and Jewish capitalists, so it is not unremarkable that eugenics propaganda would blame Germany's biological crisis on Nazism's most hated enemy, the Jews. To augment this connection, the film informs its audience that, "The Jewish people represent a high percentage of the mentally sick," thereby linking Jewishness to mental and physical illness.²³⁴ The overall statement made in all of the depictions gravitates to the core issue of waste. The narrator of the RPA film *Opfer der Vergangenheit* condemned the wasted funds and argued that such funds be "put to better use helping a good many strong, healthy, talented children in our population in their lives and careers."²³⁵

Other films and visual representations capitalized on this argument. RPA films such as *Alles Leben ist Kampf* (All Life is Struggle), *Opfer der Vergangenheit* (Victims of the Past), *Abseits Vom Wege* (Off the Beaten Path) and *Die Sünden der Väter* (Sins of the Father) would depict the deplorable living conditions of Germany's poorer classes, while Germany's disabled were provided with medical care, food and housing at the expense of

²³³ *Erbkrank*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1936. DVD.

²³⁴ *Erbkrank*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1936. DVD.

²³⁵ Erwin Leiser. *Nazi Cinema*. Translated by Gertund Mander and David Wilson. (New York, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1974) 90.

all Germans, including those same poorer, working class Germans who were forced to struggle for their meager existence. These films itemized the costs of a sampling of institutionalized patients. In *Alles Leben ist Kampf*, four siblings from a family of ten are shown on screen with a caption indicating the costs accrued to care for this “genetically defective clan” to date were 153,000 Reichsmarks.²³⁶ Not only does the viewer bear witness to the argument condemning unfettered reproduction among genetically inferior families, but it is shown tangible proof of the economic waste involved in their care.

German schools used this economic argument to educate German youth to the wasteful allocation of resources as part of its overall design to instill racial awareness and genetic identity into German students. In one such tool, a collection of seventy-one educational posters and diagrams, which included commentary emphasizing racial biology, anti-Semitism and German history was compiled by educator and headmaster of the *Volksschule* in Baden, Alfred Vogel, in his book *Erhlehre, Abstammung und Rassenkunde in bildlicher Darstellung* (Heredity, Pedigree and Race Studies in Pictorial Representation.) This text was used by German school teachers to emphasize the critical importance of teaching biology and genetic health. Published in 1938, Vogel’s work became a standard guide for German teachers, from as early as grade four to the middle school level.²³⁷ This text educated German students in racial biology by applying lessons which related the dangers of the growing disabled and genetically inferior population within Germany to that of the entire German people. Figure IX from Vogel’s text identifies the potential uses of reallocated resources and the coupled the connection between eugenics and economics. The

²³⁶ *Alles Leben ist Kampf*, Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1937. DVD.

²³⁷ Gregory Wegner. *Anti-Semitism and Schooling under the Third Reich*. (New York, New York: Routledge Falmer, 2002) 75.

student is shown the “typical” hospital for the mentally and physically disabled (left), housing one hundred and thirty patients and costing the state 104,000 Reichsmarks annually. On the right is a demonstration of what these same funds could provide for healthy Germans; seventeen houses for German working families. The title of this illustration reads, “Costs for the genetically ill,” which is meant to enhance the visual images between a state funded hospital versus housing for Germany’s poor. The bottom caption of the illustration reads, “The genetically ill are a burden to the people” further emphasizing the need to reallocate funds to sustain the Volk, rather than squandering limited resources on the disabled.



Figure IX. “Costs for the genetically ill” from Vogel’s *Erhlehre, Abstammung und Rassenkunde in bildlicher Darstellung* (Heredity, Pedigree and Race Studies in Pictorial Representation) German Propaganda Archive. Calvin College, Michigan. Web. 2 September 2017.

While this argument became a recurring theme within eugenics propaganda, two important factors require examination when weighing the originality and need for this particular argument. First, the RPA films and print propaganda depicting the luxurious

surroundings of the asylums and hospitals and the slum-like conditions that healthy, but poorer Germans are forced to endure, were not the creation of RPA propagandists. Many RPA arguments for eugenic policies and the prevention of the unfit to marry can be found in the 1917 film, *The Black Stork*. This American film encapsulated all the preconceived arguments justifying eugenics and racial science. *The Black Stork* assimilated the basic foundations of eugenics into the relatively new medium of film and demonstrated that film was a crucial tool in disseminating eugenic thinking. Written by Chicago American reporter Jack Lait, *The Black Stork* became an important representation of the American eugenic forces in early 20th century United States. It was based on the story of Chicago Dr. Harry Haiselden. Haiselden became famous, or infamous, for his policies toward the care of deformed and disabled newborns. Appointed chief surgeon and hospital resident of the German-American Hospital in Chicago, Illinois in 1902, Haiselden was an outspoken opponent of measures which would prolong the lives of newborns who were born with a terminal or life-long disability. His notoriety became nationwide when in 1915 he advocated the withdrawal of life saving measures of a child born with severe medical and physical defects. Using the argument that although the child may be saved through extensive surgery, the child would likely live a life of misery and become a burden to society. Consequently, the parents were convinced to withhold care and let nature take its course. After five days, the child died. The news story gained nationwide attention when a coroner's inquest was called to determine if Haiselden was guilty for the death of the child. This attention seemed to fit into Haiselden's plan to bring the issue of "merciful deaths" before a wider audience. The inquest determined that Haiselden was "morally and ethically within his rights in refusing to perform an operation" which would have saved the child's life, citing that "a surgeon is fully

within his rights in refusing to perform any operation which his conscience will not sanction."²³⁸ As the title of this article suggests "Jury Clears, Yet Condemns Dr. Haiselden," Haiselden was not fully exonerated. It was cited that evidence while evidence was lacking which would have definitively predicted that, because of the child's deformity, the child would have become "morally and mentally defective."²³⁹ Therefore Haiselden's belief that deformity was linked to moral depravity was condemned as not established fact.

This was not the last case in which Haiselden would face prosecution for his actions. Several other cases where Haiselden withheld care for severely deformed newborns would make headlines, which Haiselden welcomed as opportunities to advance his cause. He enthusiastically contacted the newspapers and reporters directly to publicize these cases.²⁴⁰ *The New York Times* ran an article on July 25th, 1917 citing Haiselden's refusal to operate on the newborn child of a Mr. and Mrs. Meter, determining that the child, due to its deformities would be "an imbecile" and "that its parents and humanity would be better served by its death than by the prolonging of its life."²⁴¹ Haiselden's adamant belief that society would be better served if children such as these were allowed to die became the subject of his 1917 film, *The Black Stork*. The film encapsulated many of the arguments made by leading eugenicists and racial hygienists of the time and provided RPA film-makers and propagandists with the framework in which to craft Nazi eugenics propaganda.

The movie presented the case for eugenic policies through the dramatized story of Claude and Anne, a couple who were afflicted with the birth of a severely deformed child,

²³⁸ "Jury Clears, Yet Condemns Dr. Haiselden." *The Chicago Daily Tribune*. 20 November 1915. 1.

²³⁹ "Jury Clears, Yet Condemns Dr. Haiselden." *The Chicago Daily Tribune*. 20 November 1915. 1.

²⁴⁰ Martin Pernick. *The Black Stork: Eugenics and the Death of "Defective" Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures since 1915*. (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.) 31.

²⁴¹ "Surgeon Lets Baby Born to Idiocy, Die." *The New York Times*. 25 July 1917. 11.

caused by the husband's "tainted" ancestry. The central focus of the original 1917 film highlights the couple's friend and physician, Dr. Horace L. Dickey, played by Haiselden himself, who, knowing of Claude's "defective" ancestry, warns of the potential to pass such defective genes onto future generations. When the child is born severely deformed, the parents must come to a decision, either to prolong the child's life, or allow nature to take its course and let the child die. Dickey (Haiselden) advises Claude and Anne that: "There are times when saving a life is a greater crime than taking one."²⁴² Anne envisioned a future riddled with pain for the child, a social outcast who turns to crime and a life of depravity. The audience witnesses the story of their child and his descent into crime and brutality, all connected to his deformed body and diseased mind. Seeing a horrific future for their child, Anne and Claude make the grim determination that the child possesses no real future and decide not to offer any life-saving measures for their newborn. In one of the most dramatic scenes of the movie, the deformed child is brought to an examination table, where the audience bears witness to this suffering child. Haiselden and the attending nurse leave the child exposed and unattended. Eventually, the child dies and the film depicts the child rising to Heaven into the arms of an awaiting Jesus Christ.

When re-released under the title "Are You Fit to Marry?" in 1927, the added story line promoted eugenic policies, in a sense, much more directly than the original film. The 1927 release is much more akin to the Nazi eugenic films of the RPA. While still using the footage of "The Black Stork", "Are You Fit to Marry?" centered on the story of yet another young couple wishing to marry. The father of the prospective bride is a Professor Robert Worth, an expert on heredity and proponent of marriages based upon genetic criteria. As the

²⁴² Neil Marcus. "Are You Fit to Marry?" YouTube video. 1:30:07. 20 May 2016. Web. 07 Oct. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rWkGCsEuxY>.

bridegroom, Jack, asks for Worth's daughter's, Alice, hand in marriage, the professor explains to Jack the importance of genetically sound marriages. Worth uses the analogy of horses and the concepts of "selective breeding" to justify why these same concepts should apply to humans as they do to livestock. Worth describes to Jack that millions are spent to prevent disease in cattle, but no such "safeguards" are in place to prevent defective breeding among mankind.²⁴³ The audience is then presented with a scene depicting the spacious grounds of the Chicago State Hospital where "thousands of poor demented souls" are incarcerated.²⁴⁴ The direct correlation between this scene and the scene depicted in Figure IX from page 116 are clear. As Worth explains, millions are spent on their care, stating the same economic arguments of waste the Nazi repeatedly incorporated into their films, articles and lectures.

While this economic argument became a recurring theme in Nazi eugenics propaganda, it is certainly not an original creation of Nazi propagandists. Haiselden's 1917 film examined the same disparity between the living conditions between the hospitals and asylums provided to care for the disabled and the slums of the American poor. One quote from the film declared, "Our defectives housed in palaces costing fortunes, while our unfortunate normal children live like maggots in filthy hovels."²⁴⁵ The 1927 re-release described the Chicago State Hospital as a "park like campus" where "patients loll idly under the trees" while poor healthy children are forced to live in unhealthy slums.²⁴⁶ One can see the direct connection between *The Black Stork*, *Are You Fit to Marry?* and the RPA documentaries which utilized

²⁴³ Neil Marcus. "Are you fit to Marry?" *YouTube*. YouTube. 20 May 2016. Web. 07 Oct. 2017.

²⁴⁴ Neil Marcus. "Are you fit to Marry?" *YouTube*. YouTube. 20 May 2016. Web. 07 Oct. 2017.

²⁴⁵ Pernick, *The Black Stork*, 95.

²⁴⁶ Pernick, *The Black Stork*, 145.

the image of the beautifully landscaped, well-staffed hospitals, the “palaces” for the unfit, while abled-bodied poorer citizens are forced to live in deplorable conditions.

Economic and cost/benefit analysis represented a physically tangible argument that the RPA sought to exploit. However, unlike other arguments for policies of racial hygiene, it did not embrace any particular extension of Nazi ideology or Nazi philosophy. While powerful as a *practical* argument for sterilization and race hygiene, Nazi eugenics propaganda regarded an ideological and cultural approach to convincing the German public of the necessity of state enforced eugenic measures as equally, if not more, important. From the justification of a German society which predicated its very existence on the precept of “survival of the fittest” to the belief that the needs of the *Volk* superseded those of the individual, eugenics propaganda demanded Germans to think beyond the scope of only the present and reflect on the past, while thinking forward to a greater, biologically healthy German future. A September 1923 article from the *Völkischer Beobachter* wrote of this connection between the past and the future with the health of the *Volk* by subscribing to the premise that, “Racist thought points to the future, and concerns itself with the past in order to learn how one should conduct oneself in the future.”²⁴⁷

Central to Nazi ideology and eugenic policy was the zealous adaptation of Social Darwinism as the core tenet of human existence. The “struggle for existence” which dictates population control, survival of the fittest which operates within an environment where the natural extinction of creatures of lesser ability is an established fact, and non-interference with these processes, thereby allowing nature to take its course, dominate eugenics propaganda. If one examines each of these within the context of Nazi eugenics propaganda,

²⁴⁷ “Racist Thought and volkisch Thought (1923).” Detlef Mühlberger ed. *Hitler’s Voice: The Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933. Volume II Nazi Ideology and Propaganda.* (Oxford, England: Peter Lang, 2004) 71-72.

then it becomes apparent that the Germany which the Nazis “inherited” grossly deviated from its racial and biological birthright. In its crudest form, depictions of the struggle for existence, particularly in RPA films, are replicated in eugenics propaganda through the images of animals fighting for survival. During the first few minutes of the 1937 RPA *Alles Lebens ist Kampf*, a variety of animals are shown fighting, some for food, others for dominance while the captions describes this struggle on earth as a “fight for survival” and “a fight for the conservations of the species.”²⁴⁸ Such a struggle is applicable to humans as well. As the film implies, the “harsh laws of the Creator” apply to all living beings.²⁴⁹ This film utilizes scenes of animals who were once dominant creatures of the great forests and woods of Germany, now exhibited in German zoos. Such a scene is meant to reinforce the dominance of the human species over the animal kingdom, However, this film warns, as do other RPA productions, of the failure of mankind to allow these laws of nature to take their course uninhibited, resulting in the proliferation of the mentally and physically disabled.

The integration of animal images to portray the concepts of survival of the fittest as the purest representation of Darwinian theories are replicated elsewhere in eugenics propaganda. The 1935 film *Das Erbe* (The Inheritance) produced by the German film company Excentric-Film Zorn und Tiller, in coordination with Groß’ RPA office, opens with a professor and his students filming two stag beetles engaged in a struggle for dominance. The professor explains to his young protégé, Fraulein Volkmann, that all life is engaged in the eternal struggle for life. The professor then invites her to watch other film clips which demonstrate the harsh realities of the survival of the fittest and selective breeding. Scenes such as a mother bird feeding only her healthy chicks, two roosters fighting for survival, using

²⁴⁸ *Alles Lebens ist Kampf*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1937. DVD.

²⁴⁹ *Alles Lebens ist Kampf*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1937. DVD.

pedigree to determine the best hunting dogs and the best horses are used to underline this message. After watching these clips, Fraulein Volkmann exclaims, "So then animals have their own racial politics."²⁵⁰ The film continues to depict patients and inmates from various sanatoriums, special needs schools and mental asylums, explaining that by interfering with the natural selection process and artificially maintaining the sick and infirm, mankind has perverted the natural laws of selection. The film ends with a representation of healthy Germans from the HJ, the BDM, and the SS, ending with a typical Aryan family with six children saluting troops marching past their home with arms extended in the Nazi salute. The culmination of this film ends with the basic premise that humans have failed to adopt the natural laws of selection that all creatures live and die by.

Through the process of creating this concept of a nation seen as a biological unit designed to protect the healthy and eliminate the diseased, Nazi eugenics propaganda broadened the expectations of the German people. It was imperative for propaganda to place such conceptions of racial superiority within the context of the legacy and how such actions would impact future generations of Germans. Germans of the Third Reich were expected to think of the historical legacy of the German past while ensuring that its future was secured. Of course, any teaching of history was promoted within the narrow confines of Nazi historical interpretation. Hitler saw history not only as the exemplification of the glorious past of the German people, but as a blueprint for Germany's future. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler stated, "For history must not be studied merely with a view to knowing what happened in the past but as a guide for the future, and to teach us what policy would be the best to follow for

²⁵⁰ *Das Erbe*. Dir. Carl C. Hartmann. Germany: Excentric Film Zorn und Tiller, 1935. DVD.

the preservation of our people.”²⁵¹ Hitler required that the instruction of history necessitated that the great figures of German history “will have to be selected and presented to our young generation in such a way as to become solid pillars of strength to support the national spirit.”²⁵² This reflected what author Gilmer Blackburn, author of *Education in the Third Reich: Race and History in Nazi Textbooks*, called Hitler’s “ethno-biological” view of history,²⁵³ whereby history followed a Darwinian view of human events; man is perpetually engaged in a struggle for survival where certain races thrive and those superior races produce historical figures which transcend history itself.

This ethnic-biological interpretation of history easily adapted to the nationalist and Social Darwinian disciples within Germany. From the early Germanic peoples to the rise of Bismarck and German unification, the German people were expected to embrace their history as an inheritance unequal in human history. Nazi Germany offered a variety of ways in which Germans could demonstrate their “belonging” to the greater national community. As previously mentioned, school children were encouraged by their teachers to create ancestral charts to demonstrate their racial heritage. The passing of the April 1933 Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (*Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*) required those holding civil service positions to document their ancestry and were required to validate proof with documented certification of Aryan ancestry, the *Ariernachweis*.²⁵⁴ The SS created various offices within its organization which studied ancestral lineage, applying its own strict criteria for membership based upon Aryan lineage.

²⁵¹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 235.

²⁵² Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 239.

²⁵³ Gilmer Blackburn. *Education in the Third Reich: Race and History in Nazi Textbooks*. (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1985) 51.

²⁵⁴ “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service.” *German History in Documents and Images*. German Historical Institute. Web 23 December 2015.1.

The connection to the Aryan race was only one facet of the Nazi obsession with ancestry and the purity of German blood. Equally important was the impact of racial education on future generations of Germans. A leading official, Hermann Althaus from the NSV, the National Socialist Welfare Organization, wrote in 1936, "The nation reaches out from the present into the past and the future, to the ancestors whose biological inheritance is carried by the present individuals" and predicted that future generations were called upon to ensure "the holy shrine of the hereditary values of their nation into the future."²⁵⁵ Althaus' assertion that Germans had to look to both the past and present to guarantee the future for generations of unborn Germans, obligated Germany to determine its biological destiny, which meant strict adherence to the Third Reich's population and race policies.

Groß would repeatedly use this relationship between the past, present and future as part of the regime's campaign promoting policies of racial hygiene and eugenics. While Groß repeatedly used the various arguments which sought to explain the low reproduction rates among healthy Germans and, at the same time, criticized those who chastised Nazi reproduction policies as "inhumane and barbaric," Groß insisted "that it is the duty of men and women to continue the eternal chain of life, a chain that begins in the distant past and continues into the future, a chain of which we are only a link into the distant future."²⁵⁶ Actions of the present generation through their negligence and ignorance of the past had created a Germany that permitted the propagation of inferior peoples and, in order to end this cycle, all Germans must act in the best interests of the community, rather than the individual. In his 1935 speech "*Blut ist Heilig*" (Blood is Holy), Groß attacked those who condemned Nazi biological policies, in particular the idea of "inheritance." He assaulted this

²⁵⁵ Noakes, *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4*, 265.

²⁵⁶ Groß, "National Socialist Racial Policy: A Speech to German Women," 3-4.

interpretation where, "the idea of inheritance, for example, was suddenly dangerous, since it removed individual responsibility for one's actions and gave everyone an excuse to be lazy, bad or depraved, since those things were the result of one's inheritance."²⁵⁷ Groß would seek to discredit this criticism, through propaganda, by effectively arousing the racial spirit and racial inheritance of every healthy German. Otherwise, the German people would continue to jeopardize their future inheritance.

This concept of "inheritance" and whether or not Germans under the Nazi regime were equipped to accept this inheritance from their forbearers figures largely in eugenics propaganda, particularly in film. If one merely examines the titles of RPA propaganda productions, one can see the apparent connection between eugenics and inheritance. The 1935 film *Das Erbe* (The Inheritance) and the 1938 film *Was du ererbt* (What you Inherit) are self-explanatory. Much like all RPA productions, these two films contrast the physical characteristics of the disabled versus that of the genetically healthy Germans. Scenes of the Hitlerjugend, the BDM, German athletes from the 1936 Berlin Olympics (seen in *Was du Ererbt*), scenes of the German armed forces and scenes depicting the typical German family, with blond hair and fair skinned, dominate these films as a demonstration of the biologically superior Aryan race. One particular scene from *Was du ererbt* provides the viewer with images of the greatest German leaders, artists and thinkers of the past, including Martin Luther, J.S. Bach, Frederick the Great, Albrecht Dürer and Immanuel Kant to act as a testament to the greatness of Germany's past. Utilizing great figures of the past as representative of distinct racial traits is reminiscent of Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race*. The accompanying subtitle prior to this list of great Germans reminds the

²⁵⁷ Groß, "Blood is Holy," 2.

audience that they should be proud to descend from a “bloodline” of historically talented and gifted people, proclaiming, “We are proud of belonging to a bloodstream which has brought forth an infinite number of significant people.”²⁵⁸ Prior to the last images in this film; scenes of Nazi party rallies and the German armed forces, demonstrating the very epitome of German racial revival, the audience reads, “This is how a strong race is evolving; close to nature and truly ready for action,”²⁵⁹ an indication that Germany’s s revival, is predicated upon its own racial awareness and its willingness to defend this inheritance.

Nevertheless, this notion of inheritance was portrayed both positively and negatively in Nazi propaganda. For the greatness of Germany’s past was marred by events of Germany’s most recent history, particularly the years of the Weimar Republic. The creation of the “welfare state” and the decadence of German culture and society of the 1920s literally erased the achievements of a Germany that produced Bach, Schiller and Goethe. A Germany that permitted the genetically unfit to reproduce, a Germany which failed to contain the infestation of deviancy and moral decadence to infiltrate into German culture and German society became a grave indication of the descent of German racial thought and understanding. For example, RPA propaganda would repeatedly reference the abnormal discrepancy between healthy versus unhealthy Germans. Walter Groß, as author of the chapter, “National Socialist Racial Thought” in the 1938 book, *Germany Speaks by 21 Leading Members of the Party and State*, a collective work of Nazi writings, published under the auspices of German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, decried the falling birth rate among healthy Germans, while condemning the “unrestrained propagation among the

²⁵⁸ *Was du ererbt*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS Rasse und Politische Amt, 1938. DVD.

²⁵⁹ *Was du ererbt*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1938. DVD.

hereditarily unfit, the mentally deficient, imbeciles and hereditary criminals."²⁶⁰ To further this point, Groß cited that over the past seventy years, the population increase among healthy Germans was 50%, while among the unfit and unhealthy it was a staggering 450%. This same statistic was used in the RPA film productions *Opfer der Vergangenheit* and *Erbkrank*. By confirming this single statistic as an example, all accusations of blame are placed at the feet of the German people, for it was they who distanced themselves from the racial and historical inheritance of their illustrious forbearers.

One can see the varying interpretive meanings of inheritance and the connection with Germany's past within the titles of the RPA films themselves, revealing both positive and negative connotations. *Was du Ererbt* (What You Inherit?) can be interpreted as both the positive racial and cultural inheritance of present-day Germans from their ancestors and the negative inheritance of a Germany which allowed the reproduction of tens of thousands of genetically defective Germans. *Opfer der Vergangenheit* (Victims of the Past) is open to several different interpretations. To begin with it is worth examining the word 'victim.' The connotation of victimization is predicated on the execution of some sort of crime, where one party suffers at the hands of another. Since Nazi racial ideologues and politicians condemned the unmitigated failure of the German people to protect themselves from the genetic "infection" of the weak and the infirm, it is possible then that the German people can both claim to be victim and perpetrator of their own racial negligence.

In examining the words of Walter Groß and the propaganda of the RPA, it is evident that the German people are viewed as bearing a great responsibility for the "debasing" of Germany's gene pool. In this regard, Groß outlined the concepts of the reclamation of

²⁶⁰ Gross, "National Socialist Racial Thought," 68.

Germany's racial inheritance at the 1933 *Reichsparteitag* Congress in Nuremberg. As part of his address, Groß described the rise and fall of nations:

The certainty that the lifespan and vitality of nations [Völker] and their creations is also limited, like that of individual men, and must in this manner decline must fatefully follow ascent and blossoming, senility and decline must follow youth and creative manhood...became the internal precondition for that personal and moral decay of the post-war era, which we have experienced with horror.²⁶¹

By implying the cycle of ascent and decline experienced by nations, Groß, as any loyal Nazi would, acclaimed the rise of Nazism as a historical turning point in the history of the German people. The time of the ill-conceived, politically liberal era of democratic Germany was over. What would rise from the depths of Weimar degeneracy would be a regeneration of German blood, a reclamation of this inheritance that was so easily cast aside by the ashamedly ignorant policies which most Germans embraced. While Groß was addressing the dangers of the comingling of Nordic blood with the blood of lesser races, his overall message addressed the failure of the German people to assure the purity of German blood:

Their greatness remained only so long as the Nordic blood was sufficiently strong and influential. But as soon as the sentiment and purity of blood...was lost, as soon as the alien was introduced, the downfall of cultures and states began and we can follow with consternation in the history of all times how the introduction of morals, of faith, of worth, of character and of ethics, and how,

²⁶¹ Roy J Schwartzman. "Toward a Critical Hermeneutic Methodological Quandaries in Studying Nazi Racial Doctrines." *The Theory and Practice of Political Communication Research*. Edited by Mary E. Stuckey. (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1996) 212.

thereby, the foundations upon which had once been erected the edifice of blossoming culture are irretrievably destroyed.²⁶²

Although Groß did not single out Germany's disabled population as a contributing factor to the degeneration of German blood in this particular statement, his overall criticism that the Nordic inheritance had been infected with alien and inferior blood furthers the argument that the Germans themselves failed to protect themselves from the dilution of pure "Nordic" blood. The "alien" about which Groß speaks in the above quote can easily translate to identification of any imperfection, including hereditary illness, as detrimental to the *Blutgemeinschaft* (Blood Community) of the German people. Groß repeatedly referred to the interconnection of blood with racial purity; consider the title of his speech "Blood is Holy" on page 129. Nazi ideology so fervently accepted blood purity as scientific fact that any contaminant defiled the superiority of Nordic blood.

Considering the failure to preserve this purity of blood with the Nazi belief that through the transgression of God's law, the German people had created the biological predicament they face, it is not surprising that the concept of "sin" would work its way into the vocabulary of Nazi ideologues and Nazi eugenic propagandists. Hitler and Groß exploited the name of God or the "Creator" as part of their racially charged writings and speeches. Dr. Arthur Gütt, head of the *Nationale Hygieneabteilung* (National Hygiene Department) within the Ministry of the Interior, linked the welfare policies of past German governments with the concept of sinful transgression, "A mistaken sense of charity prompted people to commit acts of ruthless cruelty towards those who-being racially inferior or suffering from an incurable disease furnished visible evidence of 'the sin against the

²⁶² Lawrence Pruess. "Racial Theory and National Socialist Political Thought." *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*. Volume 15 (1934): 109.

race."²⁶³ Groß condemned this same "compassion and false humanity" that Germans felt toward the unhealthy and marked these emotions as transgressions and "sins against the will of the creator who established the laws of life..."²⁶⁴ Reading these quotes, there are two distinct issues which both Gütt and Groß addressed, issues which eugenics propaganda would readily assimilate. The issue of sin and the mistaken sense of charity would further the arguments for sterilization and the critical need to protect German blood.

Who is to accept responsibility for these sins? For the Nazis, the blame was, in their view, inarguably the responsibility of all Germans. While the issue of "victims" could produce a variety of different interpretations, there is little room for interpretation when exacting blame for the contamination of German blood. By permitting future generations of the hereditarily ill to flourish, the German people are committing themselves to racial extinction, an act viewed by the Nazis as a "sin against the blood." The belief in maintaining the purity of German blood was well rooted in Nazi ideology and the Nazi belief in the superiority of German blood while condemning those of inferior blood. The distinct classification of the races, particularly the Jews, was predicated on the premise that blood itself determined racial value. Throughout Nazi writings, there was a fear that the comingling of races would lead to the extinction of the Germanic people. Germans guilty of *Rassenschande*, or racial shame, were looked upon as the greatest of traitors to the purity of the *Blutgemeinschaft*; one need only look to the 1935 Nuremberg Laws designed to punish this crime, entitled "Law of the Protection of German Blood and German Honor. While the Nuremberg Laws and the connection between race and blood overwhelmingly targeted the

²⁶³ Gütt, "Population Policy," 57.

²⁶⁴ Wolfgang Bialas. "The Eternal Voice of the Blood: Racial Science and Nazi Ethics." *Racial Science in Hitler's New Europe, 1938-1945*. Edited by Anton Weiss-Wendt and Rory Yeomans. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2013) 347.

Jews, after 1939, the peoples of Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe became the target of this campaign in the protection of German blood. The potential fear of intermixing inferior Slavic blood with that of Germanic blood was of particular concern to the Third Reich.

The incorporation of “sin” in eugenics propaganda is witnessed in two films produced by the RPA. The 1935 *Die Sunden die Väter* (The Sins of the Father) which by its title is accusatory in tone, concerns those who are genetically ill and who knowingly or unknowingly pass their illness onto their children. The film presents its audience with a series of images-criminals, the mentally ill and the physically disabled in the context of how defective traits are passed on to their children. In one image, a “completely stupid genetically defective father” is said to have produced “five imbecile children” thereby demonstrating that, “The sins of the father are passed on to their children!”²⁶⁵ With other RPA productions, the audience is asked to answer several questions presented throughout the film. After a barrage of graphic images of institutionalized criminals and asylum inmates, the film asks, “Should this cycle continue perpetually?” and “Is it right to create more misery through carelessness and fault?”²⁶⁶ Naturally, the only answer that any racially conscious German should answer is projected onto the screen in bold lettering, “No, no, never!”²⁶⁷ Such sins, guided by Nazi eugenic policies, were to end so that the German nation and German culture could thrive, free from the ravages of the genetically diseased.

The subtitle of the 1937 film *Opfer der Vergangenheit* proclaims “*Die Sünde wider Blut and Rasse*” (The Sins Against Blood and Race), which connects the double premise of victimization and sin. The errors of the past are portrayed as the sinful act of blood

²⁶⁵ *Die Sunden der Väter*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1935. DVD.

²⁶⁶ *Die Sunden der Väter*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1935. DVD.

²⁶⁷ *Die Sunden der Väter*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS-Rasse und Politische Amt, 1935. DVD.

contamination resulting in the highly disproportionate population of the disabled, the criminal, the asocial and the undesirable elements permeating the *Volkgemeinschaft*. The film follows the same structure of all RPA productions; healthy Germans working and toiling for the greater good versus the ill and disabled cared for through taxation. On the subject of wasted resource, the film posits that such funds, “could probably be put to better use helping a good many strong, healthy, talented children in our population in their lives and careers.”²⁶⁸ The narrator suggests, “If today we artificially reinstate by humane methods the great law of natural selection, then we shall also be paying respect to the law of the Creator and acknowledging His Order.”²⁶⁹ Again, the connection between eugenics and God’s divine laws further acknowledged the sins in which both healthy and unhealthy Germans committed.

Through the creation of the welfare state which permitted the numbers of the hereditarily ill to flourish, German charity and emotions of mercy and pity were ill conceived and dramatically misplaced-charity not only in the monetary sense, but charity in helping those who cannot care for themselves. If anything, Nazi policies and eugenics propaganda sought to transfigure the concepts of mercy and charity to fit their racial purposes. This is directly connected to the image of the “poor creature” described by Walter Groß and witnessed in the propaganda of the RPA. By portraying the disabled as pitiful creatures, eugenics propaganda could justify sterilization as a charitable act. The RPA film *Erbkrank* sought to reassure its audience by equating the prevention of future generations of the hereditarily ill as a “moral value” and an act of “practical charity.”²⁷⁰ Sterilization prevented

²⁶⁸ Leiser, *Nazi Cinema*, 90.

²⁶⁹ Leiser, *Nazi Cinema*, 90.

²⁷⁰ *Erbkrank*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS Rasse und Politische Amt, 1936. DVD.

the disabled from “passing on their misery and suffering to innocent children” as stated in the film *Abseits vom Wege*.²⁷¹ The images of the deformed and disabled children seen on screen, replicated in numerous RPA publications and eugenic posters sought to invoke an emotional response in which Hitler had emphatically stressed as necessary for propaganda to succeed. By presenting sterilization as an act of mercy and benevolence, Nazi eugenics propaganda offered the German people an alternative justification for sterilization, one that shifted away from statistical and tangible rationalities of these policies to one that offered a merciful excuse to sterilize hundreds of thousands of innocent people against their will. However, by 1939, Hitler’s territorial plans provided the opportunity to enact a much more permanent and insidious solution to Germany’s disabled population, one that would have horrifying effects throughout the remaining years of the Third Reich.

²⁷¹ *Abseit vom Wege*. Dir. Herbert Geddes. Germany: NS Rasse und Politische Amt, 1935. DVD.

Chapter 6

A "Merciful" Death

*We are sincerely sorry to be compelled to inform you that on September 25, 1940, your husband, George H...who was moved to this institution on September 10, 1940, pursuant to a directive of the Reich Defense Commissioner, died here, suddenly and unexpectedly, of heart failure. Considering his grave mental illness, life for the deceased had meant torture. Thus, you must look upon his death as a release.*²⁷²

A letter from Grafeneck Nursing Home

From the inception of the Third Reich until the outbreak of war in September of 1939, eugenics propaganda overwhelmingly focused on sterilization and responsible reproductive policies as the primary solution to Nazi Germany's perceived biological crisis. The institution of the July 1933 Sterilization Law legally permitted Nazi Germany to mobilize the German medical and legal professions to perform compulsory sterilizations on a variety of German citizens judged to be medically, physically or socially "defective" as a means to protect healthy German blood from future contamination. Through this process, hundreds of thousands of German citizens would find their basic reproductive rights now the responsibility of a regime resolved on creating an Aryan utopia designed to only permit those biologically fit to survive. Through those first six years of Nazi rule, Walter Groß and his *Rassenpolitische Amt* worked to galvanize support for Nazi eugenic policies and educate every German to their racial and biological inheritance. Writing in 1938, Groß defended the path laid out by Hitler and the Nazi regime:

In the end—and I am convinced of this, as every German will be—victory will be on both sides; just as we stand strongly and untouchably as a power in Germany

²⁷² Joachim Remak ed. *The Nazi Years: A Documentary History*. (New York, New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1969) 138.

and in Europe, so strongly to the idea of race and racial politics will stand among the people, among all people who are of good will.²⁷³

For as much as Groß heralded the accomplishments of Nazi Germany in the war against the weak and the hereditarily ill, sterilization could not solely accomplish this great task.

Supposing that Nazi Germany successfully sterilized every person judged with some form of illness or chronic condition that effectively made the person a burden of the state. Could such a single action assure that Germany would truly be free from future contamination of some form of genetic disease or defect? Hitler and the Nazi state would answer this question through the adoption of a more permanent solution to prevent any future criminal, asocial, mentally or physically ill person from contaminating the *Blutgemeinschaft* (The Blood Community.)

By adopting a lethal approach to Germany's disabled population, the Third Reich followed a path which many had advocated as the most rational and humane solution to eliminate the suffering and burden of that patient, the family of the patient, and the community as a whole. Harry Haiselden's approach, as seen in his controversial film, *The Black Stork*, justified withholding care for a disabled newborn because of the misery it would bring to the child and to the parents, who spend their lives caring and supporting for a child destined to exist in great pain and anguish. Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche's work focused, not on the prevention of the hereditarily ill through sterilization, but advocated the practice of euthanasia as a means to end the suffering of the patient. Whether by their own decision or through the wishes of a legal guardian or relative. Binding clearly equated the act of euthanasia as well within the meaning of the Latin phrase from the Hippocratic oath,

²⁷³ Groß, "Die deutsche Rassengedanke und die Welt," 31.

“Primum non nocere” (First do no Harm.) Binding applied his own interpretation quite simply, “The removal of pain is also an act of healing.”²⁷⁴ His co-author, Alfred Hoche, provided a simple guideline for physicians when faced with the decision to terminate a life, “Is there a human life that has lost so clearly the quality of legal protection, that its continuation has permanently lost any value for both person in question and for society?”²⁷⁵ Asserting Haiselden’s view, Binding’s and Hoche’s approach to euthanasia as a most merciful act continues presently provoke great emotional responses by those who either advocate or condemn the act of mercy-killing. For Nazism and the Third Reich, this controversy was immaterial. Through the guise of mercy killing, Nazi Germany embarked on a murderous path to cleanse the German people of alien and inferior blood, a path which would envelop Europe into a horror so profound and so extensive that its stain upon human history will never be erased.

The genesis of the escalation to eliminate the disabled and racially inferior from German society was marked by a single case brought to the attention of Hitler’s Reich Chancellery in early 1939. The fate of a single child, born in Pomssen, Germany on February 20th, 1939 would accelerate the Third Reich’s initiative to inaugurate the killing of Germany’s disabled population. The child’s name was Gerhard Herbert Kretschmar, identified for years as simply the “Knauer child.” Born with severe disabilities, the child’s father Richard had requested that the child be euthanized by Dr. Werner Catel, director of the University Children’s Clinic in Leipzig.²⁷⁶ When Dr. Catel refused, an appeal was made directly to Hitler via the Chancellery of the Führer (Kanzlei des Führers, or KdF.) After

²⁷⁴ Binding, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, 9.

²⁷⁵ Binding, *Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, 33.

²⁷⁶ Ulf Schmidt, *Karl Brandt: The Nazi Doctor: Medicine and Power in the Third Reich*. (London, England: Hambledon Continuum, 2007) 117.

reviewing the request and seeing pictures of the child, Hitler dispatched his personal physician, Dr. Karl Brandt to investigate the legitimacy of the case and determine if euthanasia was warranted. After careful review, Brandt agreed that euthanizing the child was a legitimate course of action. Gerhard Herbert Kretschmar was killed on July 25th, 1939.

To be sure, this case was not unique in the history of Nazi Germany. Karl Brandt's biographer, Ulf Schmidt has asserted that, with the Nazis rise to power in 1933, Hitler's Reich Chancellery received similar requests to that of Gerhard Kretschmar's father. Brandt further added that a correlation existed between the rise in such requests and the introduction of "racial propaganda" into the fabric of German society.²⁷⁷ While we may never know the exact statistical data supporting this claim which cited eugenics propaganda as a deciding factor of such requests, it is certainly within the scope of reason that eugenics propaganda, used as a force to convince Germans of the future hardships that face families "burdened" with disabled children, prevailed upon some that "mercy killings" may offer the best cure for invalid and disabled children. The year 1939 would prove to be a watershed year for the Third Reich. Not only would the German invasion of Poland bring about a war that would engulf the world for the next six years, it demonstrated the ultimate decision made by Hitler and the Nazi regime, to enact a more permanent solution to the problem surrounding the continued existence of Germany's disabled. Under the clouds of war, the Third Reich approached this problem by sanctioning state sponsored murder of its disabled population.

During the Summer of 1939, as Hitler began to mobilize Germany for war, meetings within Hitler's Reich Chancellery began work on plans to move to the next phase of racial cleansing in Germany. Various staff officials within the Reich Chancellery, including Karl

²⁷⁷ Schmidt, *Karl Brandt*, 119.

Brandt, Hans Lammers (Head of the Reich Chancellery) *Reichleiter* Philipp Bouhler (Chief of the Chancellery of the Führer of the Party) and *Reichgesundheitsführer* Leonardo Conti met to establish the *Reichsausschuss zur wissenschaftlichen Erfassung erb- und anlagebedingter schwerer Leiden* (Reich Committee for the Scientific Registering of Serious Hereditary and Congenital Illness). On August 18th, 1939, this committee issued a decree which ordered the compulsory reporting of newborns afflicted with any disability by the medical community.²⁷⁸ The directive instructed midwives to report cases of a number of illnesses and deformities (microcephalus, mongolism, any physical deformities, etc.) to local Health Offices.²⁷⁹ Physicians would receive two Reichmarks for every case disclosed “in return for their trouble” in reporting these cases.²⁸⁰ Under the authority of the Reich Chancellery, policies and actions were made to begin the process of killing Germany’s disabled population. Final authorization came from Hitler himself after the Poland invasion was completed. A brief document signed by Hitler sealed the fate of tens of thousands of Germany’s disabled under the misapprehension that a policy of euthanasia was much more humane than letting these “poor creatures” endure the pain and suffering of their affliction.

This memorandum signed by Hitler in October of 1939, but backdated until the first day of the invasion of Poland succinctly condemned thousands to state-sanctioned death. This memorandum placed into the hands of Karl Brandt and Philipp Bouhler, “the authority of certain physicians to be designated by name in such a manner that persons who, according to human judgment, are incurable can, upon the most careful diagnosis of their condition of

²⁷⁸ Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, 45.

²⁷⁹ Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 3*, 398.

²⁸⁰ Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 3*, 398.

sickness, be accorded a mercy death.”²⁸¹ The decree is a blatant lie. There was nothing merciful about the killing of innocent men, women and children. Techniques used to murder these patients would lay the foundations for the industrialization of the Holocaust, and many members of the Nazi euthanasia program, known as *Aktion 4*, commonly referred to as the “T4 program,” would utilize these skills in the Nazi death camps. There was no “careful” diagnosis for many of these victims. Diagnoses were made without examination or any sort of justification for euthanasia. The document paved the way for medical professionals to commit state-sanctioned murder protected in the name of racial perfection.

The outbreak of war and the institution of the T4 program impacted the role of Groß and the RPA in several different ways. To understand why requires a look at the T4 program’s impact on German society. The name of the program was based upon the location of the Chancellery Office (*Tiergartenstraße 4*) responsible for establishing and organizing the mechanisms necessary to identify, transport and ultimately murder thousands of genetic undesirables. Institutions, such as Hadamar, Brandenburg, Grafeneck and Sonnenstein, became death centers for Germany’s disabled population. Euphemistically called “institutional care centers” tens of thousands were murdered in Germany’s killing centers. The perpetrators of the T4 program used deception to justify the deaths of their victims, routinely fabricating death certificates as proof that loved-ones had died of some disease. Trucks transporting victims to their final destinations had their windows painted over to conceal from view of the public those destined to die in the T4 killing centers. Despite bureaucratic efforts to conceal the truth of the program, the true purpose of the institutional care centers became known. Protest from family members of patients made their way to

²⁸¹ “Signed Letter by Hitler Authorizing Euthanasia Killings.” *German History in Documents and Images*. German Historical Institute. Web 23 December 2015.1.

Hitler's Chancellery, and the German Catholic Church became an outspoken critic of the euthanasia program. The most vocal opponent was the Roman Catholic Bishop of Münster, Clement August Graf von Galen. In a sermon given on August 3rd, 1941, Galen, relying on information concerning the rounding up and transportation of patients deemed as "unproductive members of the community," quite cleverly cited sections of German penal law which focused on those who commit murder and those who possessed knowledge of such crimes, but failed to report such information to the proper authorities. As someone who claimed to have evidence of such crimes perpetrated against patients at several mental hospitals, Galen saw it as his civic duty to, in his words, "report the matter in accordance with my obligation under article 139 of the Penal Code and request that steps should at once be taken to protect the patients concerned by proceedings against the authorities planning their removal and murder."²⁸² A ranking member of the German Catholic Church defiantly challenging the authority of the state, combined with the opposition from the German public forced Hitler to "officially" suspend the T4 program on August 24th, 1941. Nevertheless, the killings of the disabled would continue throughout the remaining years of the Reich, ultimately claiming the lives of 70,273 men, women and children.²⁸³ Does this not perhaps suggest that Groß' organization failed in its task? One can certainly make the argument that because of the overwhelming condemnation of the euthanasia program, eugenic propaganda failed to convince the German people of the necessity of taking this dramatic step in guaranteeing Germany's racial future. RPA propaganda did not directly suggest the murder of disabled men, women and children. However, how could Nazi Germany truly become a

²⁸² "Excerpt from Bishop von Galen's Sermon (August 3, 1941) and Government Correspondence Regarding the Sermon and the Charges Raised against Galen as a Result (August 12-13, 1941.*)" German History in Documents and Images. *German Historical Institute*. Web 28 October 2017. 2.

²⁸³ Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 160.

racially pure state if it did not cleanse the *Volk* by eliminating the thousands of disabled living in Germany? RPA propaganda repeatedly weighed the life of the disabled against the life of the *Volk* in such a manner to affirm the belief that some lives are not worth living. It is no great leap of the imagination that by presenting the disabled in such terms, death certainly would present a more “humane” method of relief, for both the patient and the *Volk*.

When the Third Reich escalated its racial policies to incorporate the murder of the disabled, it proved problematic as to how the regime would use propaganda to transition the German public to see “mercy killings” as a viable option to cleanse the *Volksgemeinschaft* of its sick and “useless” population. The routine documentary style of film seen in the RPA productions was not the most appropriate method of introducing the subject of euthanasia to the German people through film. Author Michael Burleigh stressed this concept when writing of the “killing films of the Third Reich” stating that these new films were meant “to divert popular disquiet into a discussion of the actions of characters in what amounted to soap operas.”²⁸⁴ Films such as *Drei Menschen* (Three People) and *Der Vorarbeiter* (The Foreman) revolved around stories of fathers who murder their disabled sons. In *Three People*, the movie ends with the murder of the child, unlike *The Foreman*, where the father is placed on trial for the murder of his son. Wherein, the judges conclude that, since the laws against euthanasia are to be changed, a two month prison sentence was deemed as appropriate.²⁸⁵

Perhaps the most famous movie of this genre was the 1941 film, *Ich Klage An* (I Accuse.) Based on the 1936 novel, *Sendung und Gewissen* (Mission and Conscience) written by Hellmuth Unger, an ophthalmologist and a senior member within the RPA Press division,

²⁸⁴ Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 202.

²⁸⁵ Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 205.

Ich Klage An focused on the story of a professor and his wife, Thomas and Hanna Heyt, who are deeply in love and preparing a new life in Vienna when Thomas receives an important teaching position. As the movie progresses, it is discovered that Hanna suffers from multiple sclerosis, a rapidly debilitating disease. Thomas researches night and day searching for a cure, as his wife succumbs to the illness, limiting her mobility and hindering her breathing. In one scene, she declares, "I can't take it anymore," and implores her husband to end her life.²⁸⁶ Thomas complied with her wishes, but found himself accused of her murder and was arrested. Thomas' friend, Dr. Lang condemned his actions, as he had deep feelings for Hanna, and believed in the sanctity of life. As the trial progresses, Dr. Lang discovered that a child whose life he saved has fallen seriously ill and is subsequently confined to a hospital. The audience never sees the child, but the viewer is lead to believe that the child is severely disabled as a result of the illness, which changed Dr. Lang's opinion of Thomas Heyt. During the trial, questions of the current laws and the German legal system surrounding the issue of mercy killing are questioned. At the conclusion of the trial, the trial judges and lawyers convened a recess to debate the moral and legal issues surrounding the case, defining arguments for and against euthanasia. The final scene of the movie is Thomas Heyt making an impassioned plea to the court:

I accuse the law which hinders doctors and judges in their task of helping people.

I confess I have delivered my wife from her sufferings, following her wishes. My life and the lives of all people who will suffer the same fate as my wife, depends on your verdict. Now pass your verdict!²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ *Ich Klage An*. Dir. Wolfgang Liebeneiner. Germany: Tobis Filmkunst, 1941. DVD.

²⁸⁷ *Ich Klage An*. Dir. Wolfgang Liebeneiner. Germany: Tobis Filmkunst, 1941. DVD.

At this point, the movie fades to black, without a final verdict, giving the audience the opportunity to pass its own verdict on, not only Professor Heyt, but the issue of euthanasia itself.

This film marked an important test case to gauge public response to Nazi policies of mercy killings. In a February 1941 diary entry, Joseph Goebbels discussed with director Wolfgang Liebeneiner on euthanasia.²⁸⁸ Karl Brandt thought the movie could be used to persuade the German people to accept policies that would legitimize the murder of the disabled.²⁸⁹ Two weeks prior to the movie release, Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels wrote in his diary addressing the possibility of using *Ich Klage An* if the policy of euthanasia became an issue of public debate. In his entry dated August 15th, 1941, Goebbels wrote, "I must ask the Führer whether he currently wishes a public debate about the euthanasia problem. We could perhaps link the debate to the new film by Liebeneiner 'I Accuse' [*Ich Klage An*]...one should keep all inflammatory matters away from the people at this moment."²⁹⁰ Upon its premiere in Berlin on August 29th, 1941, *Ich Klage An*, unlike RPA productions, would be the subject of opinion polls, in what we would term today as "market research." Joseph Goebbels praised the film as "splendidly made and thoroughly National Socialist"²⁹¹ and hoped similar responses would be found within the film audience. Reports compiled by the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) gauged public sentiment among audiences based upon responses collected, showing reception to the film was generally positive. Based upon these reports, men of the medical professions, particularly younger physicians viewed the film positively and saw the responsibility of such an act as mercy killing solely left to the

²⁸⁸ Rolf Giesen. *Nazi Propaganda Films: A History and Filmography*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2003) 39.

²⁸⁹ Leiser, *Nazi Cinema*, 90-91.

²⁹⁰ Schmidt, *Karl Brandt*, 165.

²⁹¹ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 113.

discretion of the physician. Many saw the publicity surrounding the movie and its central theme as potentially unwise and counterproductive to building public support for euthanasia.²⁹² Catholics were much more vocal in their disapproval than their Protestant counterparts, hence the disapproval by Bishop Galen and the Catholic Church. Regardless, one report found, "it emerges that in general the practice of euthanasia is approved [*when decided by a committee of several doctors with the agreement of the incurable patient and his relatives.*]"²⁹³ This did not happen. In the overwhelming number of cases, no such agreement would exist between the family of the patient and/or the patient him or herself to sanction euthanasia. While on film, the love of one spouse for another and the act of relieving excruciating pain through death may be seen as a compelling justification for euthanasia. However, the reality in the killing centers in Germany was grotesquely different. The fictional representation of mercy killing witnessed in *Ich Klage An* was another deliberate attempt to mold public opinion with deception and fallacy. Regardless, Hitler's public termination of the T4 program did not end the killings of the disabled. Killings would continue until the end of the war and become part of the greater group of inferior and alien enemies of the German *Volk* based on racial grounds.

Although the T4 program did not find it necessary to employ the skills of Groß and his organization, Nazi territorial expansion and the exportation of Nazi anti-Semitic policies would open an outlet for Groß to apply his fervent ant-Semitic views outside Germany. In March of 1938, the Anschluss of Austria opened Hitler's homeland to the Nazi Party and, with it, its racial laws and policies. The exportation of laws similar to the Nuremberg laws to Austria gave Groß and his organization an opportunity to expand its influence outside of the

²⁹² Leiser, *Nazi Cinema*, 147-148.

²⁹³ Leiser, *Nazi Cinema*, 149.

realm of racial propaganda. In conjunction with the *Reichsamt für Reichssippenamt* (Reich Kinship Office or RSA), the RPA established offices within Austria. Its main purpose was to determine the status of all Austrians of mixed-Jewish ancestry. Located in Vienna, the District Racial Political Office's main purpose was to review cases of "compatibility", meaning cases involving those who were considered *mischlinge* (those of mixed Aryan/Jewish ancestry.)²⁹⁴ This district RPA office was the first level of appeal to review cases which warranted granting applicants the status of Aryan or Jewish depending on documentation provided by them. As Austria became the first focal point of Nazi inspired anti-Semitic persecution outside Germany, the importance of Austria's RPA offices were critical in the Nazification of Austria and the establishment of Nazi anti-Jewish laws outside the Reich.

Germany was not the only nation that pursued policies of racial propaganda and the significance of Aryan blood. Mussolini's Italy embraced the concept that the Italian people were part of this exclusive racial community. This "Nordicist" view of Italian racial identity prompted Mussolini and Italian Social Darwinists to not only to embrace the belief that the Italian people must protect their racial inheritance, but to mirror Groß' organization and create a *Ufficio Razziale* (Racial Office) of its own. Established in August of 1938 under the leadership of the editor of *La Difesa della Razza* (In Defense of Race) Guido Landra, Italy embarked on a campaign to promote the "new fascist racial doctrine" of Mussolini's Italy through the use of cinematographic, photographic and printed materiel with the goal of enlightening the Italian people to the "exaltation of our own race."²⁹⁵ Part of the role of the

²⁹⁴ Evan Burr Bukey. *Jews and Intermarriage in Nazi Austria*. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 33.

²⁹⁵ Aaron Gillette. *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*. (New York, New York: Taylor and Francis, 2001) 85-86.

Racial Office was to “send fascist scholars to make contact with the offices and institutions of the various states in Europe that concern themselves in the most diverse points of view with the problem of race.”²⁹⁶ In response to this policy, the RPA, as the German counterpart to Italy’s Racial Office, would interact with Italy’s move toward policies of racial hygiene and eugenics.

In December 1939, Guido Landra and Lino Businco traveled to Germany to meet their German counterparts, Dr. Walter Groß and the Vice-Director of the RPA, Dr. Rudolf Frercks. Their meeting led to the creation of the Italo-German Committee on Racial Questions, a committee designed to examine their respective racial propaganda and ensure that such propaganda generated by Germany and Italy would not infringe on the racial identity of the other.²⁹⁷ Certain contentious issues arose, such as debates over the claim that Italians were in fact, of Aryan descent, the ‘Germanization’ of the Renaissance, and the “spirituality” of German racism, which Landra found to deviate from the strict confines of biological racism.²⁹⁸ At the conclusion of these meetings, Landra, disillusioned with many of the high ranking members of the Nazi regime he met while in Germany (Hess, Himmler and Rosenberg, for example) collaborated with Groß to agree upon several negligible proposals concerning the racial propaganda, including the review of “racial composition” of material disseminated within their respective countries. Issues surrounding German anti-Catholic rhetoric and Italy’s lack of virulent anti-Semitic propaganda would continue to dog the relationship between Landra’s *Ufficio Razziale* and Groß’ organization.

²⁹⁶ Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, 87.

²⁹⁷ Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, 90.

²⁹⁸ Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, 90-91.

What would prove to be pivotal for Groß and his career beyond his work as RPA director was the expansion of German territory and the institution of anti-Jewish policies which would culminate into The Final Solution. The expansion East into Eastern Europe and, after June 1941, into Soviet territory, brought the Nazi dream of establishing a German empire within Europe closer to fruition. The concept of *Lebensraum* (living space) had dominated Nazi ideology in conjunction with its conceptions of racial superiority. Germany, and the German *Volk*, could not grow if left within its existing borders and the 19th century concept of “*Drang nach Osten*” (Drive toward the East) required military conquest and colonization of Germans into these newly absorbed lands. However, expansion East came with obstacles; perhaps the most critical in the eyes of the Nazi regime, was the annexation of lands representing the largest concentration of Jews in Europe. Slavs in these areas would face deportation, enslavement and extermination to accommodate their German overlords, but the particular dilemma of the millions of Jews living in areas the Nazis sought to conquer forced the Third Reich to adapt policies much more radical and murderous policies. Creating a new Germanic empire, populated by German colonists and free of Jews, required the creation of bureaucracies within the Nazi state with the sole purpose of accomplishing this massive task.

Groß’ association with Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, as head of the *Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage* (Institute for Study of the Jewish Question) and as *Reichsminister für die besetzten Ostgebiete* (Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories) granted Groß an opportunity to broaden his influence in racial policies inside and outside of Germany. As stated in Chapter Three, Groß’ involvement with Rosenberg’s organizations provided an additional outlet for Groß’ virulent strain of anti-Semitism. His participation at

the inauguration of the *Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage* (Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question) in March of 1941 where he called for the stricter classification of those of Jewish lineage (Groß advocated measures to reduce the number of “quarter Jews” to a minimum in Eastern Europe)²⁹⁹ became part of the ominous policies developed at the January 1942 Wannsee Conference. As part of this meeting to expand Germany’s plan to systematically exterminate European Jews, the identification and classification of “persons of mixed blood” set the racial guidelines based on marriage and lineage” to determine which Jews were to be sterilized, which were to be evacuated from German territory and, although not specifically outlined in the Wannsee Protocol, exterminated. Drawing upon Groß and the RPA’s participation at the Frankfurt Conference, Adolf Eichmann met with representatives from the RPA in August 1941 to identify the “Jewishness” of persons selected to be deported for extermination.³⁰⁰ Through the selection process as defined at Wannsee, millions would be murdered in the name of racial perfection. Although not a direct participant of the conference, the link between Groß and The Final Solution, while a footnote to the cataclysmic history of the Holocaust, is indeed testament to the invasive nature of the Nazi bureaucratic system in the execution of the Holocaust. Walter Groß’s name may not elicit the same recognition as Adolf Eichmann or Reinhard Heydrich for example, but this does not dismiss his participation in this decimation of Europe’s Jewish population.

Groß would continue this course of delineating European Jews into degrees of Jewishness and the “Jewish Problem” facing an ever-expanding Nazi empire. In his “*Die Rassenpolitischen Voraussetzungen zur Lösung der Judenfrage*” (Racial Political

²⁹⁹ Benno Muller-Hill. *Murderous Science: Elimination by Scientific Selection of Jews, Gypsies and Others, 1933-1945*. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1988) 45.

³⁰⁰ Mark Roseman. *The Wannsee Conference and The Final Solution: A Reconsideration*. (New York, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002) 118.

Prerequisites for the Solution of the Jewish Problem), written in 1943, Groß emphasized the “alien” nature of the Jewish people and the unbridled need to prevent “any form of assimilation” between the Jews and the German people.³⁰¹ Groß denied any form of “exemption” from such classifications (nationality, religious affiliation or social standing, for example.) He reaffirmed the need to keep the reproduction rates among the second-degree *mischlinge* at a minimum, as stated in his 1943 policy paper from the Frankfurt Conference. Most tellingly, Groß demanded that the “new order of Europe will arrive at a final elimination of that ever-so catastrophic Jewish problem.”³⁰² Groß did not merely see the elimination of the Jewish problem solely for the benefit of the German people, but for all mankind. Through the insight of “one great German man” (Hitler), Groß declared that “the path will be cleared for all nations to develop freely for themselves and for humanity” safe from the corrupting, degenerate influence of the Jew.³⁰³ Maintaining Groß’ assertion the *Die Judenfrage*, the Jewish question, was beyond the scope of Germany itself, Alfred Rosenberg called for an International Anti-Jewish Conference to meet in July 1944 to discuss furthering the protection of European civilization from the Jews. Set to meet in Krakow with the participation of not only Nazi leaders, but participants from countries allied with Germany or under Nazi occupation, Groß was to deliver an address entitled, “The Parasitic Qualities of the Jews.”³⁰⁴ As it would turn out, the Congress never met due to the turning tide of the war.

The war years exemplified the Nazi dual desires of conquest and racial extermination. Set upon this stage, Nazi propaganda became more and more entrenched in galvanizing the

³⁰¹ Walter Groß. “Racial Political Prerequisites for the Solution of the Jewish Problem.” *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. Edited by Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2013) 770.

³⁰² Groß, “Racial Political Prerequisites for the Solution of the Jewish Problem.” 771.

³⁰³ Groß, “Racial Political Prerequisites for the Solution of the Jewish Problem.” 771.

³⁰⁴ Weinrich, *Hitler’s Professors*, 232.

German people for the war effort and through film and radio, the defense of the Reich was pitted against the capitalist powers of Britain and the United States from the West and the Jewish-Bolshevik Soviet Union from the East. Outside of the military campaigns and the continuing years of war, the Germans pursued their "Final Solution" to exterminate European Jewry. Defending the Reich from enemies had been an on-going process from the rise of the Third Reich in January 1933, using biology and a standard litmus test to determine who those enemies were, whether it was international Judaism, the degenerate Slavic peoples of the East, or the hereditarily unfit within the Reich itself. The voice of Walter Groß and the RPA continued to herald the Nazi's battle against the "*Fremde*", the alien, the foreign, the biologically inferior and the constant danger it posed to the survival of the Reich and the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The changes to that danger after the outbreak of war in 1939 may have dramatically changed the scope of the Nazi quest to destroy the alien and expand the boundaries of the Reich, but Groß ensured that at some level, the RPA would continue its purpose to ensure genetic purity and racial identity would continue to be a constant presence in the minds of all Germans.

After the outbreak of war, Nazi propaganda redirected its focus toward the war effort, especially after the disastrous defeat at Stalingrad in 1943. Germans would read about the great efforts and strides made by the German military in the field and call upon the German people to mobilize in what Joseph Goebbels would term as "*Totaler Krieg*" (Total War.) However, total war did not completely displace Groß and the RPA's efforts to continue its work to protect the Reich from the undesirables Groß and the RPA had been attacking since 1933. German school children would still find themselves watching RPA films in school and at HJ and DBM meetings. German cinema still ran RPA films until the end of the war.

Author Claudia Koonz estimates that an estimated 20 million German people viewed at least one RPA film per year.³⁰⁵ *Neues Volk* magazine, reaching its highest circulation of 300,000 in 1938, refocused its articles on the war and the constant threat of the enemies powers on the German people. The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute continued its scientific studies into anthropology and racial hygiene as the war raged on, with Groß active in its work, using his influence to have *Reichsgesundheitsführer* Dr. Leonardo Conti appointed chairman of its board of directors.³⁰⁶

By 1945, the great quest by the Nazis to create a racially pure German Reich which would last a thousand years was in its last death throes. Advancing Allied armies from the East and West could not prevent the inevitable. The destruction of Hitler's Reich was reaching its finale with many Nazi leaders either trying to broker some form of a deal with the Western Powers (as seen with Goering, von Ribbentrop and Himmler) or following the example of their Führer, waiting for some miraculous victory which would turn the tide of the war-an event which would never come. Those Nazis who could not endure the thought of a world without Hitler and the destruction of a Germany so many had worked to build, saw death as the only alternative. With the Reich in ruins and the Allies launching the last assaults on the Reich, Walter Groß, the rabid Nazi ideologue, the loyal Nazi bureaucrat and the leader of one of the Third Reich's most dedicated organizations to the cause of Aryan dominance, committed suicide on April 25th, 1945. While his death heralded little attention, as compared to the suicides of many top Nazi leaders, including Hitler's on April 30th, 1945, Walter Groß symbolized the perfect Nazi leader; blindly loyal to Hitler, possessing an unyielding belief in the superiority of the Aryan/German race and the total commitment to

³⁰⁵ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 126.

³⁰⁶ Schmucl, *The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute*, 257.

use his influence and the influence of his organization, *Das Rassenpolitische Amt*, to achieve the racial perfection so many had sought to create in Hitler's Third Reich.

Conclusion: Aftermath

*If Germany was to get a million children a year and was to remove 700-800,000 of the weakest people, the final result might even be an increase in strength. The most dangerous thing is for us to cut off the natural process of selection and thereby gradually rob ourselves of the possibility of acquiring able people...*³⁰⁷

Adolf Hitler, 1929

Nuremberg 1945. Once proclaimed “the most German of German cities” by the Nazi Lord Mayor of Nuremberg Willy Leibel, lay in ruins, a shell of the once vibrant and majestic city. Across Europe, thousands of cities shared Nuremberg’s fate, ravaged by six years of warfare. The medieval city which became the spiritual center of Nazism, infamous for the grand spectacles of the Nazi party rallies, and perhaps most infamous for the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, was transformed from the most German of all cities to a veritable wasteland. This tainted image of Nuremberg seemed destined to pass into the pages of history, forever remembered as the city where the evil of men was sanctioned by a state determined to create an Aryan utopia at all costs. However, after the defeat of Hitler and his Nazi state, Nuremberg would become a city where justice for the millions of victims of Nazi crimes would be prosecuted. For it was within the medieval walls of Nuremberg that Nazi barbarity and Nazi inhumanity itself would face the justice of the world. Nuremberg would become the focal point of a world determined to punish those responsible for the deaths of millions and for the misery of untold millions more.

Allied plans to prosecute war criminals after the war had been discussed almost from the outbreak of the war in 1939. A formal agreement of the three major Allied powers, Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States, came to fruition in October 1943, after a

³⁰⁷ Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 3*, 394.

conference of Allied representatives in Moscow. Dated November 1st, 1943, the Moscow Declaration asserted that those “German officers and men and members of the Nazi party who have been responsible for or have taken a consenting part” in the perpetration of atrocities and war crime will face justice.³⁰⁸ Those who were accused of crimes against a specific nation would stand trial within the respective countries. The declaration did, however, permit prosecution where offenses “have no particular geographical location” through a joint commission established by the governments of the Allies.³⁰⁹ As part of this pledge to prosecute war criminals, a meeting of seventeen Allied nations established the United Nations War Crimes Commission, an international body whose purpose was to gather evidence to be used in the prosecution of war crimes.³¹⁰ Through extensive research, the UNWCC prepared the identification of war criminals and the gathering of documents to be used as evidence of war crimes. As witnessed by the Moscow Declaration and the establishment of the UNWCC, the Allied determination to prosecute Nazi war criminals became a work in progress two years before the actual end of the war. Such conviction on the part of the Allies that victory, while two long and costly years away, demonstrated the determination to punish those responsible for such much misery and death to countless millions.

The most notorious of what would be collectively called the Nuremberg Proceedings, was the prosecution of twenty-four of the ranking members of the Nazi party and the German military. Names such as Herman Goering, Rudolf Hess, Alfred Rosenberg, Wilhelm Keitel

³⁰⁸ “Moscow Conference October 19-30, 1943: Declaration of the Four Nations on General Security” *United Nations Documents 1941-1945*. Royal Institute of International Affairs. (London, England: Oxford University Press, 1946) 15.

³⁰⁹ “Moscow Conference October 19-30, 1943: Declaration of the Four Nations on General Security”, 16.

³¹⁰ Ariel J. Kochavi. *Prelude to Nuremberg: Allied War Crimes Policy and the Question of Punishment*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) 54.

and Albert Speer, rank among the most infamous of the defendants from the first of twelve Nuremberg Proceedings. From November 1945 to October 1946, the world bore witness to the enormity of the crimes committed by leaders of the Third Reich in the name of German expansion and German racial superiority. This first trial set the stage for subsequent trials of lesser known, but equally infamous, war criminals and those who committed "crimes against humanity." Hundreds of Nazi bureaucrats, members of the SS and the Gestapo and members of the medical and legal professions were as equally culpable for their role in the implementation and execution of Nazi plans to create a genetically pure Aryan empire dominating Europe.

On December 9th, 1946, opening proceedings began in the prosecution of twenty-three German physicians and bureaucrats for their role in the Holocaust, Germany's T4 program and the Third Reich's eugenic and sterilization policies. Among the defendants was Dr. Karl Brandt, architect of Germany's euthanasia program. Charged with "crimes against humanity," the "Doctor's Trial" brought to light the Third Reich's use of the medical profession to create a biologically pure Germanic race, which included the sterilization of the unfit, the murder of the disabled and the use of concentration camp inmates for the most unspeakable medical experiments. Although the inhuman treatment of patients and camp inmates perpetrated by physicians and medical personnel clearly represented the definition of crimes against humanity, the issue of the sterilization of the unfit and the Nazi policies of eugenics proved to be more problematic. The International Military Tribunal, created to prosecute and judge cases against Nazis suspected of war crimes, recognized the implications of placing German eugenic policies on trial. The UNWCC, when initially called upon to gather evidence for this trial, did not recognize the medical atrocities committed by the Third

Reich as a separate category of war crimes.³¹¹ When the International Military Tribunal concluded that, indeed, such acts of medical atrocities could be prosecuted, defining the criminality of sterilization focused upon the acts of sterilization based upon those procedures outside the scope of the 1933 Sterilization Law, in particular the experimentation of sterilization techniques in Nazi camps. It was apparent that the leading German eugenicists and racial hygienists were not to be part of the focus of prosecution. Investigations on the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute and of individual German eugenicists who survived the war (Ernst Rüdin, Otmar von Verschauer and Fritz Lenz, for example) by the UNWCC and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) did take place, but no such prosecution of the work of the institute or the men that worked for it took place.

It is an interesting indication of the manner in which the defendants in the trial would be prosecuted. This takes us back to Karl Brandt. As part of his defense at the trial, and the most compelling argument Brandt made, was to justify his actions based upon several pieces of evidence Brandt wanted introduced. Brandt cited Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* as proof of the international influence on Nazi eugenic and euthanasia policies.³¹² Films such as *Ich Klage An* and *Dasein ohne Leben* were requested by Brandt to be added into evidence to demonstrate the "humane" nature in which the Third Reich instituted its euthanasia policies. What was the purpose in these requests? Simply, Brandt sought to justify these policies in two important ways. First, methods necessary to protect the health of the nation were critical to its survival. Second, Germany was not the only nation which instituted laws and policies meant to eradicate hereditary illness and disease. Regardless of any

³¹¹ Paul Julian Weindling, *Nazi Medicine and the Nuremberg Trials: From Medical War Crimes to Informed Consent*. (New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 33.

³¹² Weindling, *Nazi Medicine and the Nuremberg Trials*, 229.

evidence Brandt, or any other of his fellow defendants sought to use at trial, their guilt was undeniable. Brandt, along with fifteen other defendants, was found guilty and he and only six others were sentenced to death.

Why does Brandt's trial hold any relevance to the story of Walter Groß and the RPA? It would be impossible to imagine that, if Groß survived the war, his crimes would not become part of the history of international justice at a time when the world sought to punish those accused of unspeakable crimes. As a fervent Nazi propagandist who tirelessly led the campaign against Nazi Germany's biological enemies, Groß' single greatest crime was this attempt to transform Germany's population into racial soldiers, disregarding the lives of those who were "unworthy of life." Groß and the Third Reich sought to justify their policies by emphasizing that, not only Germany, but all mankind engaged in the eternal struggle of survival. Eugenics and biological identity was not a German phenomenon. As Brandt sought to explain during his trial, as did the former members of the Nazi regime, racial policies were crafted to protect what was believed to be the most sacred of possessions to any race; its purity of blood and its defense against genetic contamination. The history of eugenics and racial science gave much to the Nazis to work with. As racial identity was central to the core understanding of Nazi ideology, it would seem "logical" that Hitler and the Nazis drew upon decades of racial thought, inside and outside of Germany, to guide Nazi policies and absorb what could be absorbed into the structure of Nazi racial identity. It is no coincidence that Hitler read Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race*, the same text Brandt sought to use as part

of his defense,³¹³ or that the Nazis drew upon American and European sterilization laws to craft their own eugenics legislation.

The major deviation from Nazi eugenic policies and the eugenic policies of other nations is the scope and extent the Nazis implemented and executed their “cure” for Germany’s genetic illness. For as much as the Nazis drew upon others to mold eugenic policies to fit a specific Nazi concept of racial hygiene, they created eugenic policies which dwarfed their Western counterparts in scope and invasiveness. The Nazis wanted to create a Germany destined to become a unilaterally German nation, free from the infection of genetic illness or racial impurity. How the Nazis sought to achieve this goal is further proof of the inherent evil of Nazism. Walter Groß once spoke of the National Socialist “idea of state” as “the most peaceful conceivable” because the state took measures into its hands to protect the racial inheritance of the German people.³¹⁴ Groß’ words symbolize the delusional and flagrantly deceptive nature of the Nazi regime. How could a regime which approved the sterilization of hundreds of thousands of its citizens, implement social legislation which prevented thousands from marrying or having children and murdered tens of thousands deemed to be “unfit” promote itself as peaceful? It would fall upon Groß and the RPA to validate the Third Reich’s eugenic and sterilization policies through the use of propaganda.

That niche which Groß created for himself within the hierarchy of the Nazi state is a paradox of the history of the Third Reich. In one way, the RPA did not possess the notoriety of other Nazi bureaucratic organizations such as Goebbels’ Ministry of Propaganda or Himmler’s SS. For example, Claudia Koonz cites that by the late 1930s, the RPA possessed

³¹³ Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler*, 10.

³¹⁴ Groß, “National Socialist Racial Thought,” 72.

an estimated 3,600 representatives throughout Germany and Austria.³¹⁵ In 1934 alone, Goebbels and the Propaganda Ministry employed around 14,000.³¹⁶ In one sense, Groß promoted the importance and the relevance of the RPA through interaction with these Nazi organizations. Ingratiating himself and the RPA into the vast network of Nazi fiefdoms, whether in a substantive or marginal way, proved beneficial for Groß. However, the very structure of the Third Reich and its various ministries created an environment that made it necessary to jockey for influence and power. Thus, Groß' assertion in establishing the RPA as the central organization for racial education and propaganda brought about fierce competition from other Nazi bureaucracies, especially Himmler's SS. Racial education did not fall to one singular Nazi bureaucracy, and each attempted to monopolize this very important task. Thus, the critical responsibility of the RPA met resistance from these various Nazi offices it had to work with to remain part of the Nazi state's responsibility in creating a racially conscious German nation.

If we examine Groß himself, one can argue that he was a true fanatic of Nazism and racial hygiene which, in many respects, made him more of a disciple of Nazi ideology than many with the Nazi leadership. His criticism of the 1933 Sterilization Law because it failed to incorporate Germany's Jewish population; his belief that the 1935 Nuremberg Laws were too lenient as written, his original opinions on illegitimacy, which indirectly criticized Himmler's *Lebensborn* program and his condemnation of Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry in the late 1930s because of the lack of "racial beliefs" of German movies produced by the Ministry,³¹⁷ portrayed a Nazi bureaucrat who was disenfranchised with the direction of many

³¹⁵ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 114.

³¹⁶ Z.A.B. Zeman. *Nazi Propaganda*. (London, England: Oxford University Press, 1964) 39.

³¹⁷ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 128.

of the Third Reich's policies and the leaders who executed such policies. His fanatic adherence to the racist doctrines of the Third Reich and his inflexible attitudes to Nazi policies concerning racial hygiene and eugenics made him both the perfect Nazi bureaucrat to govern the RPA, while at the same time, portraying him as one of its critics. Perhaps Groß' greatest asset to the Nazi regime was his ambition. He did not permit his criticisms to interfere with the promotion of the RPA as a crucial tool to the racial education of the German *Volk* and through such ambition, developed an organization which became embedded into the fabric of the history of the Third Reich and its maniacal quest to create a pure German race.

How then should history judge the Nazi propaganda war against the disabled? The answer cannot be narrowed down to any one specific response. Inarguably, Nazi eugenics propaganda represented an amalgamation of eugenic policies and theories which existed decades before the rise of the Third Reich. The correlation between image and message found in all eugenics propaganda was presented in such a manner that one can witness the influence of racial science and eugenics within the work of Groß and the RPA. This is significant because it demonstrates the international and historical nature of eugenics propaganda. Through the RPA films, posters and articles one can draw the influences of Lombroso's theories of the connection between the physical image and disability, one can read the economic arguments by Galton, Davenport and Popenoe for sterilization and eugenic policies, one can read the words of Walter Groß and see the influence of Lenz, Fischer and Ploetz in his demands for state-sanctioned policies governing reproduction and the need to govern through the lens of racial hygiene. In a sense, Nazi eugenics propaganda is not merely a Nazi phenomenon. Rather, it illustrates a culmination of decades of eugenic

thinking into one mass movement dedicated to racial perfection. However, it is through the work of Walter Groß and the RPA represented the penultimate culmination of eugenic propaganda as a force working to create the ideal Germanic state, where society and state sought to eliminate its weakest elements.

Where the Third Reich deviates from all others who preached racial hygiene and the protection of their race is the sheer scope and implementation of its plan for racial purity. If the United States was the leading nation to promote eugenic policies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was eclipsed when the Nazis came to power in 1933. Racial hygiene and eugenics in the Germany of the 1920s and early 1930s prior to Hitler's rise to power became a significant force within the international eugenics movement of the early 20th century, but few could compare any application of such policies on such a scale as seen in Nazi Germany. An entire nation became a great experimentation in the theories of racial hygiene, with a government more than willing to justify and implement the most heinous of measures to secure the purity of its nation's blood, leading to the death of tens of thousands of Germany's disabled. This incessant drive to genetically perfect the ideal Aryan man and woman required an equally exhaustive propaganda campaign to instruct the German people on how to achieve such a lofty goal. The task of Walter Groß and the RPA was partially successfully in achieving this goal. The average German man, woman or child was absorbed into this campaign. Going to the movies, attending school, attending various Nazi sponsored social organizations, professional training in the field of teaching and medicine involved some sort of involvement by the RPA. It was present in the daily lives of a great proportion of the German populace during the years of the Third Reich. Clearly, the intersection between Nazi eugenics policies and Nazi propaganda, as created by Walter Groß and the RPA, deservedly

ranks among the significant areas of study of Nazi history. As this work was written to establish a study of this link, it is also meant to create the foundations of further academic research into this area of Nazi history. As future historians delve deeper into German archives and historians examine other works by Walter Groß, the scope of this particular area of research will most certainly grow, as so many studies of Nazi Germany have over the course of time. My intention is to act as a catalyst for future historians and researchers to further explore such overlooked aspects of Nazi history and continue to further define the scope and depths in which Hitler, Walter Groß and the Nazi regime pursued its radical and murderous vision of racial perfection. It can be said that by drawing Groß and the RPA out of the shadows of the history of the Third Reich, a clearer comprehension of eugenics and propaganda may be seen. Not only through the study of Nazi eugenics propaganda, but through an understanding of eugenics in its entirety and how a nation determined on creating racial perfection, necessitated a propaganda campaign to bring its vision to fruition.

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