**Women in Nazi Germany**

From their earliest years, girls were taught that it was the duty of all good German women to find themselves a proper Aryan man, marry young, keep a perfect home and have lots of children.

In June 1933, Hitler introduced the Law for the Encouragement of Marriage. This law stated that all newly married couples were entitled to a government loan of 1000 Reichmarks, which equated to about 9 months wages for the average worker. 800,000 newlyweds took up this offer. The birth of a child meant that 25% of the loan did not have to be paid back. Two children meant that 50% of the loan need not be paid back. Four children meant that the entire loan was cleared.

Women were not expected to work in Nazi Germany. In Weimar Germany there had been 100,000 female teachers, 3000 female doctors and 13,000 female musicians. Within months of Hitler coming to power, many female doctors and civil servants were sacked. This was followed by female teachers and lawyers. Couples could not apply for a marriage loan if the woman was still working.

Women were discouraged, even banned, from doing anything which might harm their chances of bearing children. For example, women were discouraged from slimming as this was considered bad for child birth. Women were encouraged to have a well-built figure as slim women, so it was taught, would have problems in pregnancy. Laws against abortion were strictly enforced and Aryan women were banned from using contraception.

The 12th August had been the birthday of Hitler’s mother. On this day each year, the Motherhood Cross was awarded to women who had given birth to the largest number of children. The gold cross went to women who had produced 8 children; silver was for 6 children and bronze was for 4 children. The women that received this award were honoured and given special status, for example, members of the Hitler Youth were expected to salute at these women.

In Nazi Germany it was not considered a social problem if an unmarried woman had a child, in fact it was encouraged. The Nazis established special maternity homes called *Lebensborns* which were designed to be breeding centres for the production of pure Aryan children. Unmarried women could go along to get pregnant by a "racially pure" SS man.