

Verhaltensmuster von Frauen im NS Alltag (1933-1945): am Beispiel Denunziantinnen

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**Women's Modes of Behaviour
in National Socialist *Alltag*
(1933-1945): A Study of
Denouncers**

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Introduction

It is only in recent years that women denouncers and their role in Nazi crimes have started attracting anxious attention of feminists and historians. Following the collapse of the Third Reich, the issue of denunciation was eclipsed in public memory. It is not that this specific aspect of crime against humanity was not known; post-war trials did bring it within their ambit, and notable criminals like Helene Schwärzel were sentenced for it. The theme, however, was not taken up further in the broader context of everyday life. Why is it that even today, when we have a barrage of literature on denunciation in general, there is no serious historical study on women denouncers as an everyday phenomenon of the Third Reich? Most of the writings that have appeared in the recent past on this subject deal with exceptional, spectacular and exemplary cases that have done much to sensationalise the theme, but contribute little to the understanding of it as an everyday social reality. These writings suffer from ideological preoccupations and gender biases, and pass moral verdicts on the denouncers. Such approaches fail to grapple with the dynamics that this whole mode of behaviour set in motion in the power struggle of ordinary women who used it as an instrument to fight their individual battles at various societal levels.

There is sufficient amount of literature that deals with the role of denouncers in enabling the Gestapo to sniff out deviance and dissent from the innermost spheres of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. That the Gestapo achieved its omnipresence and omnipotence through popular co-operation is no more a secret of its success story.

My aim in this work is not so much to study how the widespread phenomenon strengthened the hands of the police state but to examine the societal and gender aspects of denunciation and study the role of ordinary people as denouncers in the Third Reich. The present study shows how ordinary people, especially women used this as an instrument to gain a share in the apparatus of power. If the Gestapo derived its strength from the co-operation of the masses, certainly, the masses did not do it with the intention

only of rooting out the enemies of the state. In fact they did it to appropriate the power, that was handed down by the system and to exercise it against their enemies. Power was not something that was just enjoyed and exercised at the top level; through denunciation every ordinary man or woman had an easy access to it. It is therefore not just a question of the Gestapo exercising power with popular support; by the same token it was also the people who were claiming this power as their own. It is therefore important to study what potential or real dynamism set itself rolling in the social landscape of interpersonal conflicts at different levels.

Why is it particularly important to study ordinary women denouncers?

The gender aspect of denunciation, I find, is doubly interesting because it provides us with a magnifying lens to locate the apparently 'powerless', 'subordinated' and 'weaker sex' playing the game of use and abuse of power in an uninhibited and fearless way. When we look at the Nazi State from above, it distinctly looks a *Männerstaat*, with hardly any women as ministers, administrators, field marshals, police officers, storm-troopers and other paramilitary personnel. Though after the labour crisis and outbreak of Second World War women did appear in public as professionals, they still occupied the lower rungs of the ladder as far as the exercise of power and decision making was concerned.

Having said this, it remains equally important to understand how Nazis managed to have the biggest ever organisation of women led by Gertud Scholtz-Klink. Forced or compulsory membership is not the complete answer. Women did join both the mass and elite organisations with enthusiasm. It must have given them a sense of power and a channel for self-realisation. While a mass organisation might have given them power in being united, *denunciation gave them power as individuals and groups.*

Bearing this in mind, when we look at Nazi society from below, *we can see clear cut niches and pockets carved by women as denouncers for exercising power.* While a previous study of denunciation

showed how an unassuming female denouncer finished off a leader of the July 1944 uprising by simply betraying him to the Gestapo when he was in hiding, the present work focussing on ordinary denouncers will demonstrate that the female denouncer could be particularly dangerous even as a disgruntled, oppressed or frustrated wife or as an envious relation. She could be really deadly for a Jew living next door. The possibility of exercising power against all those whom they hated was immense and excited the female counterparts of the power-hungry males of Nazi State. Centre-stage was a game of power. The desk-perpetrators might be playing it at the level of high politics in order to translate their hate ideology into practice. At the lower level however, there was no dearth of men and women, the weakest of the weak and the poorest of the poor, who in their own small context of life used denunciation to achieve what they considered important - sometimes realising a wish for emancipation, at other times deriving sheer sadistic pleasure or gratifying their ego or self-interest, still other times communicating a trouble at home to higher authorities. One was playing it at the national level, the other within the confines of the four walls, or in the neighbourhood. It was just a matter of who wielded how much power to make the maximum of the given situation. This study grapples with the complexity of the phenomenon of denunciation in everyday context-specific situations to restore these women to the historical canon. By going into conflict-situations that resulted in denunciation, this work points to the limitations of the neat framework based on binary opposites of perpetrators and victims which assumes that the denouncer was essentially a perpetrator and the denounced essentially a victim.

I instead place the whole problematic in different contexts and in different life-world situations. Who was the actual instigator and who the formal denouncer? Where did the initiative come from? Who actually had an interest in doing it and who helped the Gestapo in establishing the 'crime'? How far did women use this instrument for resolving gender conflicts within the families and society at large? And how far did it go beyond the gender divide? What were the gender responses towards racial others, and how was

the power of denunciation exercised over the racially marginalised people? Raising such questions and finding answers is an important task of this work.

I now review the existing feminist writings on women's role in Nazi State and society. This is followed by a discussion on the various definitions of the term denunciation and a critical assessment of the existing works on women denouncers. In addition, I suggest further considerations that are vital for any study of denunciation. In the end a brief outline of the chapters is given. These have been organised thematically on the basis of compelling qualitative and rich quantitative evidence.

Trajectory of women's history writing on National Socialism

Women's roles and later gender roles in the National Socialist past have been difficult issues for feminist historians. The National Socialist era was a terrain of crimes and atrocities committed against the civilian population of selected groups of people, a terrain, which no one dared to tread. This became even more complex as feminist history writing often took upon itself the task of finding a positive identity for women through recovering their past. Feminist theory and writing, as young disciplines, did not want to get soiled with the murky past of inhuman crimes and atrocities. Feminists thus maintained an uneasy silence on these matters for long.

Earlier paradigms that developed in the 1970s and 1980s to tackle this problematic saw women either as pure victims of or at most, passive accomplices to Nazi crimes.

Women as victims of patriarchy: It was comfortable to see women as victims of the National Socialist regime, as mere objects, who were discriminated against by the *Männerstaat*.¹ Margret Lück, for example, characterised the National Socialist state as a dictatorship of men. Only men occupied leading positions in the government and elsewhere. Because of their position as leaders, it was, in her view, men who defined the status of women

in the system and ascribed a feminine role to women, casting them out of the spheres of public life and active politics.² Some feminist historians declared women to be particularly resistant to fascism and by implication considered them to be totally uninvolved in the crimes of National Socialism.³ Most saw the National Socialist regime as an extreme form of patriarchy, which snatched away all the rights hitherto won by women through concerted efforts of the women's movement. It was a period described in terms of degradation with disastrous consequences, or regression into an existence marked by humiliation and deprivation of rights. Feminist historians usually started with the description of the women's emancipation movement before 1933, outlined its gains, and then portrayed a backward march with the seizure of power by the Nazis. The list of discriminatory measures was endless: ban on double earners, removal of women from the job market, marriage loans for those who left work to get married and indulged in procreation, compulsory labour service, restriction on female students to 10% in the universities, recognition of women primarily as mothers and so on.⁴ Even the gender-neutral measures of the Nazis in the realm of the house and family were put forward as evidence for the terrorist basis of gender politics.⁵ Ute Frevert suggested caution:

"For political ideology and policies should not be confused with social reality. It should not be forgotten that the actual outcome of the policy was some times different, and often diametrically opposed, to its intended effects. Moreover, an approach which holds that Nazism exercised absolute tutelage and deprived citizens of their rights, tempts us to regard women as nothing but victims of an omnipotent, totalitarian polity which excluded them, and as the helpless prey of a chauvinist, elitist band of male rulers. The logical conclusion from this argument is that if women allowed themselves to be 'mastered' by an instrument of repression for a whole twelve years, they must have been pitifully stupid, naïve and cowardly".⁶

Besides, characterising house and family as women's domain is itself problematic. Did men, as heads of the household, have no role to play there? Did they not exercise their powers in this realm to subordinate women? Was it really women's uncontested domain?

Such a scheme of thought could barely find women as active agents in the Nazi regime. But this could hardly be inspiring for building a positive identity among women. So where did they find positive impulses? The answer was found in the resistance movement. The same powerless, innocent victims were turned into active agents in the form of resistance fighters.⁷ Furthermore women in the post-fascist context suddenly become the procreators, nurturers and protectors of positive social values and sensibility. They were visualised as bearers of anti-fascist culture and builders of post-Nazi society in view of their role in the reconstruction. Why, however, should these productive qualities be restricted to anti-fascist culture, why asked Gudrun Brockhaus, should they not to be applied also to the fascist disregard of culture (*Unkultur*)?⁸ Besides, the argument about women's activity as being vital for sustaining the war-torn and post-war societies could well be turned into a counter-argument against it for sustaining a criminal regime like National Socialism. Thus the same qualities become weaknesses when the question of involvement in the National Socialist past came up, and strengths when the question of resistance was raised.⁹

This feminist self-projection faced criticism on other counts as well. Frigga Haug, for example, pointed out that women could also be in a position to be active agents. Unless external pressure could be proved, every subordination-even patriarchy-could only function with the consent of the subordinate¹⁰. Similarly, Ute Frevert suspected that the immense ability of the regime to mobilise the population, and the relative rarity of deliberate acts of political resistance, suggest that women who satisfied the political, racial and social requirements - and the vast majority did - did not perceive the Third Reich as a women's hell.¹¹

Women as accomplices: To escape this mutually contradictory stance and still save women from active involvement, a second position was developed with two representative variants. The first one was Margarete Mitscherlich's psychoanalytical model.¹² She diagnosed antisemitism as a disease prevalent

among men, which resulted from their unresolved Oedipal crisis. The unconscious psychological motives for the development of antisemitism, such as the projection of hate for fathers, the shifting of incestuous desires onto a different group of people (i.e. Jews), aggression and rivalry, were of relevance primarily to the male psyche.¹³ Mitscherlich gendered antisemitism by arguing further that there was a male and a female antisemitism that derived from the difference between the two sexes in the development of their superegos. She supported the controversial position of Freud that ascribed a strong superego to men and a weak superego to women and argued that superego deformation in men was narcissistic as it resulted from the fear of castration, psychological conflicts and projection, the ego-ideal of male antisemites. The weakly developed superego of women made them less vulnerable to this kind of narcissistic antisemitism. Their antisemitism rather stemmed from their identification with male prejudices. “Women like all other oppressed ones of the society tend to identify themselves with their aggressors. This tendency to conform is tied to the great fear of losing love.”¹⁴

Strongly critical of this explanation, Karin Windaus-Walser in turn feminised the Oedipal crisis. She asked: How about the resolution of Oedipus complex in women? How about the female projection of incestuous desires and hatred of mothers on to Jewesses? Were there no women living in the antisemitic, narcissist paradise where everything evil was shifted on the Jews and everything good to the Aryans? Did women not integrate themselves into this narcissism of men by projecting everything evil on to the Jews?¹⁵ Mitscherlich’s escape into psychoanalysis served her to establish that it was only the longing for love that compelled women to become antisemitic, that they were only secondarily antisemitic, that their inner psychic world had remained pure, unpolluted by hatred, sadism, murderous and persecutory instincts.¹⁶ One has to really ask oneself if women only followed men or if they had their own agendas, their own motives in being antisemitic. Mitscherlich’s explanation saw women as lacking in initiative, denying them both positive and negative agency, and attributed perpetration to them only indirectly in the context of Nazi crimes.

The second model of female complicity was forwarded by Christine Thürmer-Rohr. It was different from that of Mitscherlich's in that it attributed an active role to women in complicity by ascribing an active interest to women in perpetuating patriarchy. Women had an active interest, so went the argument, in playing the role assigned to them by men for it promised them *free spaces, the guarantee of a definite sphere of life and a piece of their own world* as premiums for their good conduct.¹⁷ However, she adhered to the idea that the 'murderous normality' in which women lived was man made and to the idea that men have been the prime perpetrators in the past and present. What Christine Thürmer-Rohr simply meant by complicity was that women prepared themselves for a world conceived and determined by men and that they followed the ideas of men about themselves, that they supported the man and his world. Complicity reduced itself to corruptibility through the patriarchal system and its ideology. Instead of passive victims, we have active victims, commented Walser.¹⁸ What was new about this explanation was that conformity did not come from compulsion but from self-interest in the reward.

Thus, the feminist dilemma of not being able to overcome the status of the 'second sex' remained unresolved and was reproduced further. The message was that women shared the guilt of Nazi crimes but only secondarily and insofar as they supported and reaffirmed the doings of men. They did so by denying their own feminine self.¹⁹

Women as perpetrators: The real polemic, which took the shape of a *Historikerrinnenstreit* of sorts, however started with the publication of American feminist historian Claudia Koonz's book 'Mothers in the Fatherland' in 1987. While Koonz was looking for gender participation at the societal level among the perpetrators, her critic Gisela Bock was preoccupied with gendering victims and ascribing victimhood even to Aryan women in the same vein as Jewish and Gypsy Women. This was a problematic proposition as the two kinds of victims, if both could be considered victims at all, did not share the same destinies, which varied from survival to extinction in quality

and monstrously in quantity. This difference in perspective between the two became visible in Bock's criticism of Koonz's book which started with a juxtaposition of a large number of sterilised female victims to a handful of policy makers and desk perpetrators. This approach treated victims as a gendered mass and found hardly any women among the perpetrators.²⁰ Koonz brought lower level women functionaries like nurses, teachers and social workers to book for making sterilisation policies a reality with their active collaboration.²¹ Her contribution lay in dragging female professional murderers, activists of various women's organisations, who were cogs in the wheel, average wives and mothers alike into the arena of active perpetration. Though she talked most of the time about Nazi women, SS wives and women of Nazi organisations, she also implicated ordinary women who maintained an atmosphere of normality inside the homes in an environment of hatred.

“In Hitler's Germany, women provided in a separate sphere of their own creation the image of humane values that lent the healthy gloss of motherhood to the 'Aryan' world of the chosen. In addition wives gave the individual men who confronted daily murder a safe place where they could be respected for what they were, not what they did.”²²

Koonz's anchoring of female guilt to sacrificing mothers and dutiful homemakers proved to be hazardous and invited criticism from German feminists. For me, however, what is problematic is Koonz's portrayal of the 'Aryan' family as a safe and sane place, giving strength and warmth to men who were acting as murderers and resistance fighters alike. This implied that the Nazi rhetoric about *Volksgemeinschaft* and the family was really able to melt away gender differences and gender troubles at home and turn the family into a harmonious, safe and cosy retreat for all husbands.

“The private sphere, a 'place' apart from the brutal world, offered respite to people at both extremes of the moral spectrum. Guards and commandants, victims and resisters- at the outer flanks of the Nazi world, all needed the psychological 'space' offered by a home (or at least the myth of one), to gather strength with which to face the

deformed world outside. In the Nazi world, man and woman operated in radically separated spheres.”²³

What she mentioned in the parenthesis ‘at least the myth of one’, should be brought to the centre of the discourse. The Nazi family was neither so traditional nor so private. The ideology and practice of the Nazi State permeated the family so deeply that it radically altered family relations and behavioural patterns, often upsetting the neat patriarchal order. It is this dynamic that needs to be captured rather than assuming that every thing was fine inside the family. Nevertheless, Koonz did raise many important questions about women’s role in Nazi Germany as social mothers, wives, relations and neighbours. These women played an important role in the selection and extermination policies of the regime.

In her work, Bock highlighted the gender agony of those women who became victims of the sterilisation policy of the regime. Others found the sterilisation policy more racist than sexist and rejected the same parameter to judge the victimhood of sterilised ‘Aryans’ and gassed Non Aryans.²⁴ Further, Bock exonerated all housewives and mothers of any responsibility for Nazi crimes. For her the real contribution of women to Nazi crimes was in their non-traditional function external to the home.²⁵ Adelheid von Saldern found this position hardly productive, for denying any notion of a ‘specifically female guilt’ in the ‘traditional female sphere’ neglected the structural interconnection of the private sphere and the public sphere. While women were certainly less powerful than men were, they were by no means powerless.²⁶ The question that we should ask is not whether women enjoyed power or not, but rather what kind of spaces and possibilities were available to women as housewives and mothers where they could and did exercise power? Housewives and mothers should not be seen and judged as merely bearers and nurturers of children. They performed many other functions at home and for the *Volksgemeinschaft* at large. In Nazi Germany they were seen as repositories of the Nordic race and as guardians of the purity of Aryan blood. The regime entrusted to them the responsibility of keeping the

Volksgemeinschaft racially pure and of guarding it against ‘political enemies’. Women internalised these teachings very well when they denounced Jews, racially foreign workers and political opponents of the regime including sometimes their own husbands. They ostracised and boycotted Jews, and ‘averted their gaze’ (Koonz), when Jews were being deported. They enriched themselves with the belonging of deported Jews. As mothers and housewives they reared their children in the Nazi spirit and sent them to Hitler Youth or BDM. They even organised themselves in women’s groups, where they drew psychological and emotional strength from each other, felt like a strong female collectivity, even against their own men at home. They psychologically and emotionally supported their warring sons and husbands.²⁷ They separated their children from the children of the *Volksfeinde* at home, in schools and in neighbourhoods. Windaus-Walser rightly asked, “Should we not think about the power of the mother or matriarch, which showed its ugly side in National Socialism, when we are talking about the power of the father or patriarch?”²⁸ Around the same time when Koonz was pointing her finger at German women for collaborating with the regime, a critical self-reflective effort began on the part of German feminists towards problematising women’s role in the perpetration of crime. Angelika Ebbinghaus and her team wrote biographical accounts of women perpetrators like social workers and concentration camp supervisors in a victim/perpetrator paradigm.²⁹ In a sharply polemical way, Windaus-Walser attacked all previous feminists who had offered apologetic explanations of victimhood, of an allegedly abused, functionalised or corruptible second sex in the National Socialist regime. The blessing of female birth could henceforth no longer be used as an excuse. The high point of the polemic reached with the publication of *Töchter Fragen NS Frauengeschichte*, the leading voice of which claimed Auschwitz and Nazi crimes as negative feminist property and placed women's role therein at the centre stage of feminist discourse.³⁰

Feminists increasingly realised that just as terms like ‘collective guilt’ were dubious, talking about women in history in general terms and using women as a blanket term or social category did not serve as a good tool of

analysis. At the same time the actual perpetrators in the NS regime were not confined to the podium and the desk alone, and the social base of its crimes was much wider than is known to us. A meaningful study should concentrate on specific categories within society rather than passing moral judgements on a merely speculative basis. Reflecting this very understanding, feminists are now concentrating on groups like the women doctors, nurses, SS housewives, concentration camps supervisors etc.³¹ However, ordinary women like denouncers who did not fall into any of these categories of perpetrators and did not hold any positions of power, and yet terrorised others citizens with tip-offs to the Gestapo of some supposed or actual anti-regime activity, have not become the issue of a serious study till now. These women denouncers are the subject of this work. Before going into the historical writings on this issue, let us briefly discuss the works on denunciation in mainstream history writing.

Denunciation: Definitions, historiographical trends and the specific context of National Socialism

In the barely decade-old discourse on the practice of denunciation, the most accepted definition, often quoted in the works of other historians, is the one given by Robert Gellately and Sheila Fitzpatrick. Dealing with the practice of denunciation in the larger context of modern European history, they define denunciations “as spontaneous communications from individual citizens to the state (or to another authority such as the church) containing accusations of wrong doing by other citizens or officials and implicitly or explicitly calling for punishment”.³²

German scholars take recourse to various encyclopaedias to define the term. Thus, roots of the term denunciation are traced to the Latin word *denunciatio* meaning reporting or informing.³³ The original term, which was known in the German language from sixteenth century, was not loaded with negative connotations.³⁴ In 1734 the *Universale Lexikon Zedler* described denouncer as one who merely “informed the authorities about something”,³⁵ and a denunciation was simply a report or an information about a wrong doing

to the authorities. This either followed through the concerned officials or spies or through persons who did not want to be burdened with producing evidence or the rest of the procedure. They left the investigations and penalisation for the reported crime up to the authorities. With this the denouncer got a characteristic feature attached to his person, namely direct perpetration. In the nineteenth century, 1843 to be precise, the term denouncer acquired a pejorative connotation that reflected itself in the most quoted proverb coined by Heinrich Hoffmann, “the denouncer is, and remains the biggest scoundrel in the entire country”. It was a critical expression by a freedom loving person and reflected the *Zeitgeist* of pre-revolutionary times when the denouncer came to be understood popularly as a person siding with authorities in the prosecution of individuals fighting for freedom. The state naturally saw it in a different light and considered all kind of support to the prosecution legal and legitimate.³⁶ In the “Great Brockhaus” of 1929 denunciation is still defined as value free: “a report accusing someone of a punishable act addressed to the concerned authorities (police, public prosecutor, court) for prosecution”.³⁷ But after the experience of the Third Reich, the 1968 addition of the Brockhaus says:

“In the broader sense denunciation is a signed report directed to the police or the public prosecutor through which someone is accused of a punishable act. In a narrower sense, only that report which follows from discreditable motives or a false report or a report misrepresenting facts”.³⁸

The *Bertelsmann Volkslexikon* of 1956 describes denunciation as reporting of a punishable act especially for mean motives by a denouncer.³⁹ In 1966 it says, even more explicitly:

“Denunciation is a term for reporting such facts which can initiate governmental, especially criminal measures, particularly when it happens for revenge seeking or when followed by arbitrary measures on political and racial grounds”.⁴⁰

As the terms, denunciation and denouncers, popularly possessed negative properties, the state which depended on them and supported or

shielded them, did not employ these terms in its workings. Instead, it preferred to choose neutral words like reporting or informing for denunciation and *Informelle Mitarbeiter* (in the German Democratic Republic) or *Anzeigerstatter* (in Nazi Germany) for the denouncer. Gellately rightly points out that in different societies denunciation has been the subject of two opposing discourses, one exalting it as a duty to the state, the other deploring it as a betrayal of fellow human beings.⁴¹ For Colin Lucas, denunciation lies along the faultline dividing those who find themselves in tension with the state and those who see some of their own identity in the state; it marks the division between a state that is ‘externalised’ and one that is ‘internalised’ by the citizens.⁴² This sharp contradiction in its representation is captured in the French language, which has two terms for the English ‘denunciation’. *Dénonciation* stands for good (public-spirited) denunciation and *délation* for bad (treacherous, morally bad) denunciation.

For the first time in the post war Germany, the term denunciation entered the German penal code as a legal concept. It was declared a crime against humanity. The *Kontrollratsgesetz* Nr. 10 of 20 December 1945 mentioned denunciation in § II, 1c as “persecution on the basis of political, racial or religious grounds without considering if it damages the national right of the country, in which the act has taken place”. Denunciation appeared explicitly in the *Kontrollratsdirektive* Nr. 38 of 12 October 1946. In paragraph II, Article II, 9, it characterised denouncer as a person who had actively worked with the Gestapo, the SD or with similar organisations for selfish or profit seeking motives, in that he denounced the opponent of the national socialist terror regime, or contributed in other ways to their prosecution as major bearers of guilt.⁴³

The collapse of Communist regimes

The study of the phenomenon of denunciation acquired fresh impetus from the collapse of communist regimes, symbolised by the dramatic fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989. The fall of the Berlin wall was the result of popular

participation, which in turn broke the taboo on many difficult questions of German history including denunciation, which had remained a 'Dark Continent'. A rethinking started on the workings of pre and post war terror systems. Witnesses from the old Soviet block came forward with testimonies. Dissidents and victims alike offered telling insights into everyday terror through individual experiences.⁴⁴

This turning point in European history turned out to be a boon for historians and social scientists, who could now study the functioning of the terror state of the GDR as the files of the *Stasi*, the secret police, now became available for scholarly examination. The opening up of and access to new treasures that could throw light on the actual workings of the terror systems in recent times had repercussions for the history of earlier totalitarian systems like Nazi Germany. Historical inquiries now started at two levels: in depth studies of particular systems and comparisons between systems. Conferences and seminars were organised encouraging further research on the question of the degree to which people participated in the functioning of these systems and the role of denunciations in particular.⁴⁵

A theme that was first explored mainly in the context of dictatorships is now broadening its horizons. Various papers presented in these conferences pointed out the universality of the appeal of denunciation for common people. Historians come to agree that denunciation is not a mode of behaviour limited to dictatorial regimes. Denunciatory practices come to the fore particularly in politically volatile situations such as revolutionary and counterrevolutionary phases; police, terrorist and theocratic state formations, including 20th century totalitarian states. Situations of war, civil war and enemy occupation offer fertile grounds for denunciation because the authorities encourage the practice for maintaining ideological purity, control over the population, further consolidation and defence. Such eras therefore, have become periods of scrutiny and we have a barrage of literature on them now.

In the Middle Ages for example denunciations from the population came in response to the call of authorities during inquisitions,⁴⁶ persecution of homosexuals⁴⁷ and witches⁴⁸. The *Ancien Régime* employed professional spies to help the Paris police⁴⁹ while there was no dearth of voluntary denouncers either.⁵⁰ In the *Ancien Régime*, the practice of writing letters of complaint called *lettres de cachet* had a denunciatory character whereby it was popular among the subjects to narrate their tales of woe to the king, assigning the king magical healing powers. They evoked the authority of the king to redress their grievances and help them out against erring sons, drunk and irresponsible husbands, unworthy wives and so on.⁵¹ The French revolution offered a conducive atmosphere for denunciatory practices.⁵² The two World Wars provided an opportunity for people to feverishly demonstrate their patriotism and loyalty for the system and also put forth their individual problems through denunciation.⁵³

Though denunciation became an important weapon in the hands of dictatorial regimes to cow people into submission, interestingly, even democratic regimes have not always shied away from recourse to denunciation. The theme is now therefore being explored further in the context of other state systems, like the McCarthy period⁵⁴ in the United States and the Weimar Republic⁵⁵ in Germany. Similarities in denunciatory behaviours have led historians to go beyond eras and social formations to look for continuities. Inge Marbolek's current project on Germany spans from 1933 to 1955 as an uninterrupted narrative on denunciation. Her team member Olaf Stieglitz dares to draw analogies between the DDR and the era of McCarthy in the USA in denunciatory behaviours of the populations living under two different rules.⁵⁶

These recent studies on denunciation have given new meanings and interpretations to the concept that go far beyond encyclopaedic definitions, allowing us to comprehend the phenomenon in its various manifestations, colours and dimensions. This ever-evolving discourse has given different, multifarious accents to the term and different scholars have offered context-specific meanings making the whole field a richly textured one. This can be

seen from the titles of works on denunciation that carry a social meaning attached to it. For example, denunciation or the small power of the *Volksgenossen* (Gisela Diewald Kerkmann); denunciation: the power of words (Katrin Dördelmann); denunciation: the language of vigilance (Olaf Stieglitz), denunciation: self-justice without punishment (Gerd Krüger); denunciation as self policing (Gellately); denunciation as self disciplining (Pamela Swett); denunciation as social practice (Gerhard Sälter). These are terms that one will not find in dictionaries or encyclopaedias as synonyms, but that have emerged from a lively discourse on denunciation conceiving this phenomenon as a social practice, as a practice that was put to use for purposes other than those intended by the state.

Denunciation was a political act of collaboration, but what must not be overlooked is the fact that most of the time it also had a hidden social aspect. It is this dual component which makes it so fascinating for a social historian. One component is political (real or fabricated) but the other component is social and may hide personal/moral/domestic/sexual/civil or gender discords. This double edge explains why this practice has been so widespread. If the denunciation did not offer the possibility of hiding the social behind the political, it would have been much less widespread. It is this aspect that broadened the consensual social space of dictatorships and offered a chance for ordinary people to play the game of power once in a while. Power, thus resided not just in the upper echelons of society but in everyday situations, everyday working of systems of terror, compliance and collaboration. It is therefore, equally important to study the motive behind the denunciation and not just the act of denunciation and its consequences for the system. It is this aspect that gives us insights into the power struggle going on among ordinary people.

The context of Nazi Germany

The Nazi model of dictatorship for its plebicitary elements has become a favoured destination for researcher working on denunciation. As has been

pointed out before, in spite of being recognised as a crime against humanity, denunciation as a problematic was not taken up seriously for a social scientific enquiry in Germany. For long it remained a taboo subject disowned by successive generations as unclaimed property. It took German scholars to outlive two different types of dictatorial rules, the Nazi dictatorship and the DDR regime, to finally break the taboo and participate wholeheartedly in the discourse.

Before the 1990s, there were merely three German historians who referred to this phenomenon at some length or even in passing. Richard Grunberger discussed political denunciations, along with its gender manifestations, in a small chapter in his social history of the Third Reich.⁵⁷ In 1977, Martin Broszat unveiled this new face of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, while working in the State Archives, Munich, on his *Alltagsgeschichte* project on Bavaria. Among other things he pointed out how a major dent was made on the earlier symbols of authority like the father, teacher, priest or the boss in the office, through acts of denunciation, and how the organising units like the village communities, factories and even homes could not remain immune.⁵⁸ Broszat however, never attached so much importance to it in his project and treated it more as a by-product of his archival findings, while his six volumes dealt with forms of resistance and dissent. In 1987, Reinhardt Mann's study offered rich quantitative evidence on how firmly rooted and widespread denunciations were.⁵⁹ But even here, the larger body of the work was devoted to forms of systemic control and protest in everyday life. Only the last chapter dealt with the theme of denunciation more in terms of statistics rather than quality.

A paradigm shift occurred with the works of Robert Gellately, who argued that everyday behaviour was far more dominated by forms of collaboration rather than forms of protest. Gellately placed denunciations at the centre stage of the social history of the Third Reich by dismantling the top down approach of portraying the Gestapo as an omnipresent and omniscient agency at the hands of a terroristic dictatorship.⁶⁰ He characterised Nazi

society as a 'self- policing' society, which went a long way in strengthening the hands of the Gestapo and in making the instruments of terror more effective. For him the Gestapo was a 'reactive' organisation rather than an 'active' one. Subsequent research on the subject confirmed Gellately's findings both quantitatively and qualitatively.⁶¹

Unqualified support for Gellately's thesis ascribing a 'reactive' role to the Gestapo came from German historians who produced their works within the next few years after the publication of Gellately's book. Together they did a great task of demystifying the idea of the Gestapo as an omnipresent and omnipotent instrument of terror. Their significance lay in shifting the historian's gaze from the Gestapo as a terroristic state instrument forcing ordinary people to submission, to ordinary people who themselves policed each other. So Mallmann, while equally emphasising the role of informers along with spontaneous denouncers, argued that the Gestapo:

"stood as a metaphor for a multifaceted functional mechanism, in which some sections of the public made considerable contributions to the establishment and consolidation of the dictatorship. In reality the interface between state and society was not a clear cut demarcation line, but the site of complex processes of reciprocal penetration and recruitment, a sphere of rampant collaboration structures which documents the reciprocal dependence of power and complicity... The exercise of power was not a one-way street but an interaction on a rough terrain."⁶²

However, once the euphoria created around the theme of denunciation, now no longer a taboo, died, Eric Johnson offered a nuanced explanation on the role of denunciation in Nazi terror in 1999. Johnson spoke of selective terror rather than an indiscriminate terror in Nazi Germany. It was against selected groups of people that terror was exercised while ordinary Germans were not affected by it as long as they followed the norms set by the regime. The targeted groups were Jews, communists, socialists, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses and eugenically unfit. He argued that the Gestapo was 'reactive' most often in cases of little consequence. When it mattered most, the

Gestapo was more 'proactive' than 'reactive'. It could afford to be lenient and less than vigilant with most ordinary Germans, for they did not need to be watched. Even without the threat of denunciation, most Germans probably would have remained loyal to the Nazi leadership.⁶³

In the persecution and destruction of Jewish population and other politically targeted groups, the Gestapo routinely took 'proactive' measures and received most of its information through forced confessions, reports from designated informers and paid spies, house searches, police raids, information supplied by Nazi party officials, SS, SA and police auxiliaries, long existing police registers of political opponents and known criminals and other official sources.⁶⁴ Johnson therefore, argued for a 'proactive' approach of the Gestapo in the persecution of targeted groups and a 'reactive' one in the case of ordinary Germans.

Johnson may be appreciated for introducing this distinction, but he may also be criticised for arguing that most Germans would have remained loyal irrespective of denunciations. Even for ordinary German the regime adopted a carrot and stick policy. The policy of giving rewards in terms of personal gains or personal gratification for denouncers and for loyal citizens in different forms, and punishment or threats of punishments for the disobedient ones can not be overlooked. Even though ordinary Germans did not belong to the targeted groups, repeated indiscipline was not tolerated in their ranks. For the regime it was important to ignore minor verbal assaults on the state and the party for it drew its support from these very Germans. But, at the same time it wanted to create an atmosphere of order and discipline. Ordinary Germans were also discouraged in many ways from expressing disregard and disapproval for the regime in public. What was important was to create an overall atmosphere, which discouraged protest and encouraged compliance. Also, while Johnson may be right in shifting the focus from the 'merely reactive' to the 'proactive' role and in relativising the importance of denunciations for the Gestapo, the issue at stake is not just who belonged to the targeted group and who did not. The categories of crime under which

people were booked are equally important to understand the difference a denunciation could make in a particular case. Also, it is important to keep in mind where the minor verbal offences were committed - in public or in private. The Gestapo made this distinction clear while 'dispensing justice' in each case.

Johnson is right in stressing the role of the Gestapo in tracking down the communists for example. Here, house searches, police raids, forced confession and police registers of political opponents did play a significant role. However, the role of paid informers or *Vertrauensleute* was also very important. Though they can not be equated to denouncers, the Gestapo machinery would have been paralysed had it not received vital clues, and detailed information about whole groups, at times, from these informers. Many of the police raids and house searches were made on the basis of this. In the case of the Jews, however, it was a case of both 'reactive' and 'proactive' stance. My study will show that there were many Jews who concealed their identity and were not registered as Jews at all. Such cases were brought to light by denouncers usually for private motives. Many of them living in mixed marriages could have fared much better had they not been repeatedly denounced; many would not have been forced to live in constant fear and anxiety. Still others would not have fallen into the clutches of the Gestapo for committing *Rassenschande*, a private act made public mostly through denunciations.⁶⁵ Moreover, a distinction has to be made between what was traditionally considered a political crime and what came to be considered a political crime. These were deviations from Nazi norms, which lay in the realm of sexuality, morality and faith and were stigmatised as racial, religious and political crimes. The Gestapo on its own initiative could not have discovered these crimes, as they were 'committed' in private. Co-operation from ordinary citizens was therefore very crucial to unearth such crimes. The very nature of these crimes was such as to arouse the curiosity and interest of neighbours, acquaintances and fellow citizens. They were more adept at discovering them rather than the Gestapo. Also whether the Gestapo was reactive or proactive in the case of foreign workers could not be established

with certainty, as the files under the category *Fremdarbeiter* mostly dealt with Germans who had illegal contacts with foreign workers. It is true that the Gestapo adopted a ruthless stance towards them and dealt with them on the spot when the need arose, it is difficult to assess how they discovered their infringements, minor or major. For there were no proper files maintained on foreign workers who were executed.

These issues raised by Johnson will be dealt with in the present work. Right now we will shift the focus to historians who have written on women denouncers. A critical enquiry into their sources, perspectives and approaches will reveal that a lot still needs to be done to understand the behaviour of women denouncers in the Third Reich.

Works on women denouncers

While we have a reasonable amount of literature on denunciation in general, a proper gender study dealing both with the quantity and the quality of this mass phenomenon is still lacking. Helga Schubert, with her work *Judasfrauen*⁶⁶, for the first time brought this issue into the open. This book stood between a literary and historical work, where she presented ten cases of female denouncers selected from *Volksgerichtshof* and post war trials. She chose to tell the stories only of female denouncers and male victims, conjuring up black and white gender images of female perpetrators and male victims and giving an overall impression that denunciation was a typical feminine trait. This projection of a typical female complicity invited much criticism, not just from the female historians but from their male counterparts as well.⁶⁷ Other accounts namely on Helene Schwärzel⁶⁸, who became rich and notorious, and Stella, the blond Jewish informer in Berlin⁶⁹ have a top-down approach. These works might have attracted wide media and public attention, but they were essentially based on spectacular cases far removed from everyday reality involving either extraordinary personalities or extraordinary actions. Other accounts like those of Rita Wolters too show us only the tip of the iceberg, namely cases from the *Volksgerichtshof* or cases resulting in mostly death penalties for the victim.

There are other works that deal with quantities and numbers. For example, Giesela Diewald-Kerkmann in “Politische Denunziationen” argues that out of the 292 cases analysed by her, only 32 were reported by women.⁷⁰ She further argues that their denunciations were more targeted towards the work-shy people rather than the Jews. This runs against the claims of Sarah Gordon, based on the Düsseldorf Gestapo case files, that women were simply more antisemitic than men.⁷¹ The present work will later deal with both of them in detail.

Reflecting on these works, I feel that there is a need to distance oneself from adopting a moralist or escapist stance towards women’s roles. Projecting women merely as evil was what Helga Schubert did, disturbed as she was by the elevation of women as better human beings. She contended the assumptions that women are merely sensitive, tender, motherly, sympathetic, creative, authentic and so on. They are also evil and dangerous in their own way. Through her work on *Judasfrauen*, she tried to prove this point. Kerkmann, in reaction, projected women as less evil, firstly because they denounced far less frequently than men, and secondly because they denounced more defeatists and work shy people rather than the Jews.

Women historians need to treat women as a gender with all its virtues and vices; as ordinary human beings without carrying a special moral responsibility and answerability towards their gender. Further women need to be placed within the web of societal, gender and interpersonal relations and rooted firmly in these context-specific situations to render a balanced account - closer to reality- rather than one determined by moral and ideological prejudices and preoccupations.

Eric Johnson’s article on the role of German women in Nazi society gives us a far better insight into various roles women played in the terror apparatus.⁷² Johnson combined Special Court files and prison records of Cologne to evaluate women’s involvement in the Third Reich. His

computerised data analysis of some 30,000 Special Court cases and an in-depth analysis of about 200 cases along with prison records indicates numerical preponderance of women as denouncers and witnesses. Most women conformed to Nazi norms and still more played significant role as witnesses. In his pyramid-shaped graph on women's role, the denouncers stand at the base with 25% followed by the witnesses at 21%, the position of the accused is third at 18% and at the apex stand only 4% women as the executed ones.⁷³ Women were therefore most active as denouncers, even though their participation in this sphere was nowhere close to their male counterparts. Johnson suspects that this percentage could actually well be higher than this, but the constraints imposed by the sources did not allow him to say this with certainty. Further, he elucidates who could be on the inflicting side and who on the receiving end. It was mostly housewives with a middle class background who were over represented among the denouncers and the single, working class women on the receiving side of the system. Though his generalisation about the participation of women in various activities might be close to reality, he does not dwell upon women's perceptions, motives and modus operandi as denouncers. I would not like to go into the specifics of the differences I have with Johnson, as these will come out in the course of the present work which adopts a different approach to gender behaviours as denouncers. Suffice here to say that these problems are bound to come up if one deals with the question of women in terms of statistics and counting of heads. The social side of the phenomenon of denunciation remains untreated in such an approach. Questions like who denounced, why and under what circumstances go unanswered. What kinds of gender and power struggles were at play and how was the racial doctrine of the regime being translated in practice by ordinary women similarly are not addressed in his study.

Drawing upon a large number of samples from the Gestapo files, my study tries to bring out that contrary to the picture painted by impressionistic accounts, denunciations in everyday life may not have yielded such dramatic and fatal results for the victim as projected. The study shows that most of the denunciations did not result in the execution of the denounced. Many cases

were ignored and dismissed at the level of the Gestapo. Some were dismissed at the level of the party and never even reached the Gestapo office. The majority of the cases did not reach the judiciary. Many, which were referred to the *Sondergericht*, *Landgericht* and *Oberlandesgericht* and other courts were dismissed there too. This means that the mass phenomenon of denunciation and particularly its gender aspects can not be captured in its totality by studying exemplary cases alone. The everyday reality was much more varied and differentiated and the rewards/punishments were not so extreme for the denouncer and the denounced as has been depicted in previous studies. Not every denunciation resulted in a high level drama that became public spectacle at a national level. But every denunciation resulted in some kind of drama played at the level of the family, neighbourhood, work place or other centres of assembly and gossip; like an air raid shelter, a pub, a locale or another informal public space where people met on a regular basis. Such small and large, significant and insignificant dramas of everyday life need to be reconstructed in their various hues. In many of these dramas women took the lead, and tried to resolve conflicts within families, neighbourhoods, offices or other places of assembly violently.

Further considerations for a study of denouncers

Any study on the role of denunciation in Nazi regime needs to relate to its policy of inclusion versus exclusion to understand its workings at the societal level. It is important to further qualify the terms denunciation and denouncer. These qualifications that I now add on may have universal applicability but I mention them in this section because they emanate from my study of sources situated in the specific context of National Socialism.

Who denounced? It is important to spell out: Who had the moral duty to denounce, which many appropriated as their right? Who played the game of power at whose cost and who was excluded from it? Who remained silent or was silenced?

Most definitions place the denouncer and the denounced on par when they define denunciations; for example' as "spontaneous communications from individual citizens to the state containing accusations of wrongdoing by other citizens or officials" (Gellately and Fitzpatrick). What about those who were not citizens? Or "voluntary passing on of information about politically undesired utterance or acts of other persons" (Dördelmann).⁷⁴ Particular caution has to be exercised in case of the Nazi State, which was an *Unrechtsstaat*. Apart from the fact that it was a dictatorial regime, what for us, is of special concern, is the fact that it did not accord the status of citizens to all its subjects. It was a racial state that regimented its people sharply into racially hierarchised peoples. Only the Aryans enjoyed the status of *Staatsbürger* i. e. citizens, while all other ethnic groups who earlier enjoyed citizenship rights like the Jews and the Gypsies were reduced to being *Staatsangehörige* i.e. subjects without any civil rights. During the war, the German social landscape underwent a marked change with the presence of foreign workers who were accorded the status of *Staatenlose* i.e. stateless; even the earlier *Staatsangehörige* were later reduced to the status of *Staatenlose* during the execution of the final solution. In the everyday Nazi parlance racially different people were divided: German blooded people were *Volksgenossen* and all other were *Volksfeinde* and *Volksfremde* or *Gemeinschaftsfremde*, making the distinction between the 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' very clear and real. These groups excluded from the mainstream culture need to be restored to the discourse on denunciation and their presence or absence among denouncers needs to be noted and commented upon.

Denunciation as an event-based participation in the power structure: For ordinary people, away from the corridors of power, denunciation was an event-based appropriation of power. This might have had long ranging consequence for the denounced, but for the denouncers it was the event of denunciation that gave them a moment to assert their individuality and indulge in self-gratification. Even this had its limits. This moment might have given them a chance to subvert hierarchies of power but only at an individual level and only once, which could not have affected the hierarchies of domination

and subordination at a broader level. It was not a weapon that could be used repeatedly against a targeted enemy or enemies. For as soon as they started doing it, particularly, for settling their own scores, the authorities stamped the denouncer as directed by private motive, revenge or enmity and considered their denunciation as dysfunctional. The Gestapo functionaries often used the terms *streitsüchtig*, *rachesüchtig*, *klatschsüchtig* and *verfeindet* for habitual denouncers.

A Brief Outline of Chapters

The first chapter, “**Methodology and Sources**” sets the agenda of the present work. It locates ‘Aryan’ women’s status and position in Nazi *Weltanschauung* vis-à-vis ‘Aryan’ men and ‘community aliens’ to understand their behaviour as denouncers and denounced. It discusses the approach adopted in the present work, the primary sources and the research methodology.

The second chapter, “**The ‘Private’ became ‘Public’: Wives as Denouncers in the Realm of the Family**” discusses denunciation as a gendered behaviour to which mostly women resorted. The site for this chapter is the Nazi family where husband and wife were engaged in a battle for power and influence inside the four walls. Most of the stories for this chapter were found under the category *Heimtücke-gesetz* or Law Against Malicious Gossip, which was a very rich category of ‘crime’ in terms of reflecting gender struggles at home. But cases from other categories like the Communist party / Communism, foreign workers, foreign minorities have also been incorporated. There was enough evidence in other categories of crimes to suggest that this phenomenon was all pervasive. The succeeding two chapters, however, are based on specific categories of ‘crimes’.

The third chapter, “**Fishing in Troubled Waters: Gender Perspectives on Denouncers and their Jewish Victims**” highlights the role of Aryan women as self-appointed racial watchdogs of their community and locates their power in persecuting the most targeted group of victims, namely the Jews. ‘Aryan’ women are seen here as exercising powers over their

victims who may have been socially and economically better located, but who now faced constant discrimination and degradation. This process initiated by the state was heightened and intensified by ordinary Aryans, men and women alike. This chapter deals mainly with women's involvement in racial persecution, but in a relative perspective. A comparative quantitative analysis further presents a gender differentiation between men and women denouncers. Through a deeper analysis of these men and women, it tries to show how far the motives were gender neutral or gender specific. This chapter also points to the limitations of tools like class analysis to establish the social status of the denouncer and denounced. By tracing the downward shift in the social and economic status of the denounced individuals it shows that class analysis just cannot handle this phenomenon. We also see how the Aryanisation policy of the regime was translated into practice by denouncers who sought, in their own ways, to enrich themselves with the belongings of the Jews. Aryan men figure in this analysis insofar as their numbers are shown in the comparative table of denouncers, and qualitatively in so far as their motives are concerned.

The fourth chapter, **“Faces of Gender Oppression: The ‘Aryan’ interface with ‘Racially Foreign’ Workers”** brings forth the sexual, moral and racial violence inflicted upon foreign women and Aryan women alike. Based on the files under the categories ‘racially foreign workers’ and ‘racial minorities’, it highlights the gender agonies of young adolescent Polish and Russian girls who were forcibly employed in factories and households and exploited ruthlessly, both physically and sexually by the *Herrenmenschen*. Aryan women figure here both as denouncers and denounced.

The **“Conclusion”** rather than reiterating quantitative and qualitative results of individual chapters all over again, places them instead in relative perspective and knits the chapters together by way of thematically discussing broader issues. It begins with a discussion of individual acts of denunciation at the micro-level and goes on to incorporate the broader issues of overlap between the ‘private’ and the ‘public’ and the ‘consent’ and ‘dissent’ in Nazi Germany.

At this juncture, it is important to state why one aspect of denunciation has been omitted while other modes of behaviour have been included in this work, even if they were not part of the central theme. *Überzeugungstäterinnen* (loyalty denouncers) have been omitted because such cases were rare to find. The evidence found in the files mainly points towards instrumental denunciations. Therefore, even if there was some evidence of this nature, there was no compelling need to write a separate chapter on them. The web of interpersonal relations in which female denouncers were caught strongly suggests that women were mostly and predominantly instrumental denouncers. The content analysis and statistical accounts bear this out as well. Women denounced mostly those with whom they interacted in their everyday life, and those with whom they had conflicts of whatever kinds. In the chapter “Fishing in Troubled Waters”, therefore, a separate table has been added to show the relationship between the denouncer and the denounced. There are hardly any strangers there. This should however, not mislead us into thinking that only women denounced for private reasons while men were more moved by their loyalty towards the fatherland. Naturally, a majority of men also denounced for private reasons and we shall talk about it in some length in the present work also. This work, however, focuses its attention on female denouncers, in whom loyalty denunciations were few and far between. By saying this I am not arguing that affective motives were totally absent. But there is compelling evidence to suggest that it was the so-called ‘personal reason’, whatever it may have been, which prompted a denouncer to go out of her/his way to report. Many denouncers explicitly stated that they were apolitical in nature and did not belong to any political party. There is no doubt about the fact even there the denouncers were collaborators. But we have treated it as an undercurrent to highlight societal conflict at play.

While searching for denouncers in the Gestapo files, I came across patterns of gender and racial subversion. These were important and could not be ignored. I have therefore treated them as by-products of the findings and included them in this work. These patterns sometimes run through the main

body of the text and at other times are mentioned separately, depending upon the context and the subject under consideration. Thus in the chapter "Fishing in Troubled Waters" I have tried to make visible those 'Aryan' women who dared to have physical relations with Jews and were persecuted because of it. The punishments meted out to them cannot compare with their Jewish counterparts who were punished more severely, in spite of equal involvement in the 'crime'. The racist-sexist rulers always perceived the Jewish male to be the initiators of the relationship though this was not always correct. Though treated mildly by the state, these 'Aryan' women had to suffer humiliation at the societal level at the hands of their own people. They were vulgarised by the Nazi press, boycotted by their own relations and ignored by their friends. These German women, their individual journeys of courage and defiance and their personal tragedies have been traced in this work. Similarly, *Kriegerfrauen*, soldiers' wives are conceptualised as victims of denouncers and the regime for their involvement with racially foreign workers. They were perceived by the regime as a challenge, a danger and a disease in the *Volkskörper* that had to be fought, persecuted or expelled from the *Volksgemeinschaft* depending upon individual cases.

Chapter I

Methodology and Sources

This chapter outlines the research methodology and discusses the primary sources used in the present work. The first section spells out its central concerns, mainly issues relating to the position of gender and race in the Third Reich. The following section explains the approach adopted and goes on to pose vital questions regarding the behaviour of the denouncers, their *modus operandi*, concerns, tactics, strategies, and of course their motives. The third section deals with the primary sources. The fourth section briefly states why Düsseldorf City has been chosen for this work and the next section discusses at length the organisation of the Gestapo files, our main source of information, in the State Archives of Düsseldorf . In the next section, I elucidate the selection criteria and various stages of sample collection. The section thereafter offers a critical assessment of earlier works that have used the same source material. It demonstrates how a lot more can still be explored and achieved from it that earlier works have left unsaid and untreated. In the final section, I will go into the details of what I consider an act of denunciation.

Setting the agenda

This work focuses on women denouncers, but not in isolation. Before doing that there is a need to place women, ordinary women, in the broader perspective as a category of analysis. Issues related to racial and foreign identity in the racially determined Nazi society are taken into consideration to locate women in a relative, hierarchised plan.

The basic agenda is to study gendered and racial othering in Nazi society. For doing that it is important, in the first place, to locate them precisely in the Nazi world-view and organisational structure so as to avoid unreasonable and invidious comparisons between the two otherings and at the same time to identify overlaps if any.

Nazi society i.e. the *Volksgemeinschaft* was a racially organised community of people. The Nazis claimed to replace traditional divisions in society like class and gender, through a homogeneous ideological construct called the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Yet, these divisions continued to persist. Nevertheless, the *Volksgemeinschaft* ideology and practice came to occupy a central place in the Nazi world-view, and created new divisions along racial lines. These divisions further divided the society vertically. To understand the position of class, gender and race in the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, we will now talk about two types of divisions, horizontal and vertical.

The horizontal divisions primarily applied to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, which gave the status of *Herrenmenschen* to Aryan people. Here, 'Aryan' men stood at the top of the hierarchy. They were the ruling gender and race. Though there were class-based divisions among them, many transgressed these boundaries and managed to wield enough power. Many might have come from modest social background such as the petty bourgeoisie but ended up being powerful people. Political opponents, particularly serious ones like hard core Communists were persecuted and hounded out of this game of power.

The Communist party was overwhelmingly male in its composition. Thus it was men who were more vulnerable compared to women, by virtue of their sheer numbers in Communist activities. Ordinary men were however, given the chance and encouraged to shed their earlier political allegiances and join the mainstream.

Below the 'Aryan' men stood the Aryan women. They might have been discriminated against in the job market initially or even otherwise. But, they were very much wanted in the society and had important functions as wives, mothers, social mothers and guardians of the race. While emphasising that state and politics were spheres of the man and would remain so, Alfred Rosenberg believed that the sphere of the Volk manifested the equal worth of

the sexes. “The woman represents a world which in its beauty and uniqueness does not stand below but at par with that of the man”.⁷⁵ Hitler told women that politics was a dirty business not suited for women. Women were first of all wives and mothers. They become true citizens of the Reich once they got married and became mothers. In very definite terms, he outlined his two-worlds theory:

“ When one says that the man’s world is the state... perhaps one could also say, the woman’s world is a small one. For her world are her husband, her family, her children and her home. But where would the big world be, if no one wanted to take care of the small world? How could the big worlds exist if there were nobody who would make the worries about the small world as the primary content of their lives? No, the big world is built upon the small world. The big world cannot exist if the small world is not stable “.⁷⁶

This often quoted statement of Hitler elucidating his two worlds theory had clear-cut hierarchies in the division of labour. But, at the same time one was made dependent on the other. In fact the lower one was given an apparent sense of indispensability for the existence of the higher one. The Nazi ideology of ‘different spheres yet of equal worth’, gave women roles as racially worthy wives, mothers, social mothers and educators of the future generations from which they derived power in the social life.

The vertical division was based on the principal of selection and exclusion dividing people between members of the *Herrenrasse* i.e. master race and *Untermenschen* i.e. sub-humans. Their racial credentials determined whether they were wanted or unwanted, desirable or undesirable, valuable or worthless. It is this division which was most crucial when it came to the question of life and death. Who was to live and prosper and who was to be condemned to death, liquidated and eliminated? The question of race was most crucial here. This vertical divide did not run through the centre of the social landscape. From the outset the vertical line divided society into the mainstream and the margins. All people characterised as *Volksfremde*,

Volksfeinde or *Gemeinschaftsfremde* were placed at the margins and finally driven out of there in the course of the Nazi rule. The process of exclusion itself was a long drawn out one, which subjected the marginalised to legal discrimination, pauperisation, degradation, public humiliation, ghettoisation, open branding, extra legal torture and extermination through labour before finally annihilating them en masse.

What was the role of Aryan women in this so-called struggle of the *Volksgemeinschaft* against the *Gemeinschaftsfremde*? In his address to women in the Nüremberg Party Congress, where Hitler articulated his two-worlds theory about different genders, he spelled out women's role in the fight for preservation of the Aryan race.

“The woman is the most stable element in the preservation of a Folk because she emanates from the most causal root. Ultimately, she has the most unerring sense of everything that is important to not let a race disappear because it is her children who would be affected by all this suffering in the first place... That is why we have integrated the woman in the struggle of the racial community just as nature and providence have determined it. So, our women's movement for us is not something that writes the fight against the man as its programme on its flag. Instead, it is something that sets its programme as a collective struggle with the man. Because it is through this that we have established our National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* and have won loyal, fanatic co-fighters in millions of them; fighters for a collective life in the service of the collective preservation of life; fighters who do not set their eyes on rights, which reflects Jewish intellectualism, but on duties, which the nature has imposed on us collectively.”⁷⁷

Women's role was therefore, clearly envisaged not just as nurturers and procreators of the 'Aryan' race but also as its defenders. The responsibility of fighting the racial struggle was put on their shoulders together with men against the *Gemeinschaftsfremde*.

It is in this context that we need to locate Aryan women and make a clear distinction between gendered and racial othering. While both kinds of

othering were based on biological determinism, the two did not stand at par. Racial othering defined the *Volksgemeinschaft* and *Gemeinschaftsfremde* as each other's negation. In the struggle for survival the racial 'other' had to be eliminated physically. On the other hand, the gender divide within the *Volksgemeinschaft* was conceptualised as complementary. One could not exist without the other. They had complementary roles that were different, but had equal significance. They had different but equal worth for the regeneration and well being of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. They forged a broader unity against the racial other. Men and women represented the small and the big world together. Women thus cannot be conceptualised as mere victims of the state, they were also its beneficiaries. Many participated in the power structure and many benefited from the policies of the regime. Many derived psychological strength and a sense of power from the Nazi eulogisation and valorisation of motherhood. They were victims only when they chose consciously to break the norms of society; political, social, moral, sexual and above all racial. Even here punishment varied depending on the norm that was violated.

The term victim can only be applied to racially marginalised, vertically segregated people, i.e. Jews, Gypsies, mentally and physically handicapped, 'asocials', homosexuals and the Rheinland bastards. Later Russians, Poles, and other races considered as 'subhuman' and 'inferior' joined this vertical divide. Even here, subjective experiences were gendered, and racially 'other' women had to put up with added discrimination and victimisation on account of their sex. Physical violence and abuse were inflicted on them in the form of sexual and verbal assaults by ordinary 'Aryan' men, and abortions and sterilisation were conducted on them by the racial state. It should be noted that the chauvinistic patriarchal morality of the state let go most 'Aryan' men for violating the norms of race defilement, while men of 'other' races, particularly Poles and Russians were punished by death for the same offence.

Specific features of the reorganised Nazi society undermined traditional class divisions. When it came to the Jews for example, a community with mainly middle-class standing, class analysis was rendered

meaningless as their class position was in a state of constant flux in the face of a barrage of laws that constantly redefined their status in society. The state dispossessed them of their belongings and means of living before finally eliminating them. Racial legislation reflected no specific class differences. They were directed against rich and poor alike. The 'Final Solution' had no class distinctions. However, wealthy Jews were in a better position to escape than their poorer co-religionists. But, at the societal level the existence of a wealthy Jew could well be an eyesore for a neighbouring 'Aryan' who could have him removed through a mere denunciation. This is not to say that there were no classes but to argue that racial considerations overweighed class differences.

Similarly old dichotomies like private versus public, political versus social etc. have to be revised in view of the workings of Nazi society and new dichotomies have to be placed at the centre to understand multiple layers of power structure. Selection/exclusion, racially healthy/unhealthy, sexually healthy/unhealthy, mentally healthy/unhealthy, *Volksgemeinschaft/Gemeinschaftsfremde*, these new dichotomies governed the lives of people living in the Third Reich.

Defining the approach

This work adopts a synthetic approach combining methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Both have their advantages. A rich quantitative analysis of women's numerical participation in reporting the cases of deviant behaviour to the Gestapo puts at rest the speculations that have been made till now in various studies regarding gender roles. I have looked at 465 Gestapo case files of private individuals from a wide range of categories of crime (details of sampling method and the final numbers of cases evaluated for the study will be provided in a later section of the chapter, that deals with primary sources and quantitative data). The quantitative data have helped me in determining how many cases came to light because of a denunciation. There were denunciations that were ignored by the Gestapo and not followed up after establishing private motives. Women filed many of these denunciations.

Though they eventually may not have been of much consequence, quantitative analysis brought them to the surface. They would have otherwise remained hidden. Quantitative data helped to establish the spread of the phenomenon. But statistics and figures alone are not sufficient for they just show us the surface. They ignore the individual agonies, pains and traumas suffered by the victims. Every statistical figure had a story to tell: stories of bad faith, sour relations, betrayals, petty animosities, rivalries and jealousies that only an in-depth analysis can unveil. A qualitative analysis therefore, becomes essential to bring out the grey areas more realistically, rendering the whole victim versus perpetrator paradigm sometimes rather simplistic for a judgement of the situation. The qualitative approach incorporates the following elements in the investigation of Gestapo files:

The interaction between the state (Gestapo/law), the denouncer and the denounced: This entails an analysis of the subjective perceptions of the denouncer in reporting someone, and the hiatus or the correlation, if there was any, between the original intention of the regime in declaring something an offence and the function it served for the denouncer.

The real nature of denunciation: Was the denunciation purely political by nature? Or was it a reflection of social/gender conflict at home or in the semi-public realm? Many denunciations were 'false' accusations, where the political accusation could not be established. Though the Gestapo might have dismissed them, they were important from a social angle.

Denunciations as context-specific actions or responses: Rather than jumping to conclusions we will go into this aspect to determine the role of denouncers. Further, a gender-specific analysis of the denouncer's sphere of activity will be done to establish if there were any perceptible differences in the behaviour of a male and a female denunciator, or if one group denounced more in a particular context or setting than the other. Similarly we will ask ourselves if a different type of group of victims fell pray to a particular gender. Was there a

certain kind of 'crime' that was more exposed to denunciation typically by a man or a woman?

The primary sources

The Gestapo case files of private individuals in the Third Reich provide the main primary source for the study. Unfortunately the Nazis themselves destroyed most of these, when they sensed their approaching defeat. However, the bureaucracy at that time had reached such levels of efficiency that the documents were always maintained with several copies. In spite of the desperate efforts of the regime to destroy them all at the end some still evaded their attention and managed to survive. These are serving historians today as precious records from that era. Out of these rare records of the Gestapo, the Düsseldorf State Archives alone can boast of some 70,000 case files, while the Würzburg State Archives house something to the tune of 19,000 files. The third place is the Speyer Provincial Archives, where the surviving files number around 12,000. Even in the Düsseldorf archives, which has numerically the richest data available, the files are not complete. Of all files opened for private persons only about 70% of the original number have survived. Each of these so called *Personalakten*, or files of private individuals, who came to the notice of the state police for political reasons, was normally opened for one individual. There were however cases where more than one individual appeared in one file. This happened when a group was arrested for a collective political activity (especially underground Communists), but also when a couple was in question or when two or more individuals were caught in the same connection. Such cases were however rare.

The first document in the files was a typed standard personal record sheet consisting of four pages called *Personalbogen*. It contained three passport size photographs taken from three angles, name, address, date and place of birth, religion, marital status, previous political and criminal record, record of military service etc. The last column, with a lot of free space, had a summary of the case including the crime, position taken on the case, mention of protective custody or concentration camp and at times the eventual fate of

the person. These remarks were sometimes very brief, at other times a little more detailed. Every time the individual reappeared before the Gestapo, fresh dated remarks were written again. Another standard format was used at the time of the interrogation that again ascertained personal details. The last column of the format titled 'About the Case' (*Zur Sache*) had a lot of free space to record the testimony of the person. It had the signatures of the person giving the testimony and the Gestapo functionary who recorded it. This format was used for all witnesses and denouncers. In addition, there were standard formats for protective custody, transfer to a concentration camp, 'education camp' or labour camp etc. Other documents varied from case to case. There could be denunciation letters, sometimes love letters intercepted by postal surveillance in cases of race defilement, incriminating evidence seized during house and office searches, correspondence with NSDAP functionary or other official organs like the finance office (if the case was reported by them), copies of the court verdict, divorce proceedings, and so on.

While these Gestapo records are very useful for reconstructing the everyday history of the Third Reich, they must not be taken at face value. Like any other sources they have their limitations. One has to be careful while reading them, as they invert our whole understanding of right and wrong, moral and immoral. This was a regime that rewarded the criminals and punished the innocent. The language used in the Gestapo files reflected the *Weltanschauung* of the regime at its worst. The Gestapo files reported the very minimum on a case, firstly because the officers did not always give the orders in writing so long as word of mouth sufficed. Secondly, there were no visible traces of the exercise of the extra-legal powers for which the Gestapo was so notorious. There was, for example, no explicit mention of the 'third degree' methods of torture practised on the victims to extract information or confessions. One can however sense them while going through victims' testimonies. Particularly, in cases of suspects of 'race defilement', the testimonies are full of such minute facts from their personal lives, that it is easy to guess the torture they must have gone through, before giving such intimate details. Also, repeated and intensified interrogations betray signs of

torture on victims. There are testimonies where victims, after denying the charge, finally broke down and confessed. Such a testimony started with a denial, was interrupted, and then the accused said, “After being warned once again to tell the truth, I now confess...” However, the extent of physical torture and psychological pressure can also be sensed from the difference in timing between two or more interrogation sessions, and the place where the accused spent his/her time in the meantime. If it happened to be the protective custody, which was most often the case, obviously, the time spent there would have been so harrowing as to force them to break down and confess. Sometimes one even came across remarks of Gestapo officials like, “After repeatedly and obstinately denying the charge, the accused ultimately admits his/her crime and confesses the following...” Often in the cases of the victims persecuted under the “Law Against Malicious Gossip”, who were left alone after a warning, one came across a document of apology signed by the victim swearing not to repeat such behaviour in the future otherwise he/she would have to reckon with harsher state police measures. These were certain hints that one could get of the psychological, physical and mental torture inflicted upon the victims.

In cases of race defilement the Gestapo files gave no clue as to whether the Gestapo employed any scientific method to probe the matter. There were a few cases where the statements of the involved parties suggested that there might have been a physical relationship between the two, and the Gestapo set them free for lack of evidence. Since there was not enough evidence to put them through a medical examination, it was the discretion of the Gestapo that decided the fate of the accused. They went by the statements of the involved parties and those of the denouncers, their relations and acquaintances. Also, the body language of the involved parties at the time of interrogation may have been a determining factor, which got lost in the written records. The prejudices of the Gestapo must have played a role in deciding on a case and the trustworthiness of the victim. The timing of the denunciation or opening of the file and the racial origins of the victims must have played a role in the final assessment of the case. In the cases of foreign workers, it was a lot more

complex as they came from all possible racial origins and were graded differently according to the racial policies of the regime. Their treatment therefore differed from case to case.

In these files there was also no mention of the transport *en masse* of the Jews to the east, which led to the ‘death factories’ or the execution of the Jews under the open sky before that. Though once in a while, especially in the case files that were opened after 1941, Jewish victims were sent immediately with the Jewish transport to the east on the simple pretext of not wearing the yellow Star of David which they were obliged to wear on their clothing from September 1941 onwards.

The Düsseldorf City Address Book has been used to determine class and religious background and procure additional information on the denouncers and the denounced. Reich Statistics Book has also been consulted to establish the percentage of people from different religious communities, marriage patterns, and conversion patterns etc. Specific cases of the denouncers and the denounced have been followed up further by studying Special Court files housed in Schloß Kalkum branch of the State Archives of Düsseldorf. This has happened especially in the case of wives who denounced their husbands, where the purpose was to gain more information on marital discords and to establish differences or similarities between the attitudes of the Gestapo and the judiciary in persecuting the victim.

Why Study of the Düsseldorf City?

Firstly, the choice of the Düsseldorf City was made because of availability of sources. Previous studies on the theme of women denouncers used either the post war trials or the judicial proceedings of the *Volksgerechtshof* or the party records of denouncers. The problem with judicial files as the primary source was that apart from giving a schematic picture they present a mediated account of the denouncer. Thus, the subjective perceptions, aspirations, motives and desires of the denouncer got only partially represented. The true face of the

denouncers remained hidden as the judiciary was mainly occupied with establishing the political aspect of the charge. On the other side, studying party records of denouncers stopped short of capturing the true drama that a denunciation could unfold, as only a few of such denunciations reached the Gestapo office for investigation.

Secondly, out of all cities whose files were available in the State Archives of Düsseldorf, housing quantitatively richest materials as far as the Gestapo is concerned, Düsseldorf City possessed additional advantages. Düsseldorf Gestapo files covered a broad range of individuals coming from diverse religious, racial and class backgrounds. Düsseldorf was the third largest city of the Ruhr at this time. As of 1933, it had 498,600 inhabitants. Out of this 61.2% were Catholics, the highest percentage in the Ruhr area, 31.5% Protestants and 1% of Jewish population representing the normal average of a big city.⁷⁸

As the provincial capital it was the site of many government buildings, splendid parks, city and hunting palaces. Located on the right side of the river Rhine, a short distance below Cologne, it was the most attractive city of the region. For this reason, it had a somewhat different character from the other neighbouring cities. While neighbouring cities like Essen, Duisburg, Cologne had a predominantly working class or lower middle class character, Düsseldorf, as the provincial capital, attracted the elite and upper middle class sections of the population as well. The Zoo-Viertel was the elitist part of the town, inhabited by factory owners, businessmen, managers and civil servants, followed by the Hofgarten-Viertel having doctors, lawyers and managers among its population. The Mittelstadt had a predominantly middle class profile while the Östliche Friedstadt was definitely a lower middle class area. The Ständelhaus-Floraviertel was a mixed lower middle class and working class area and the last district, Dehrendorf-Golzheim, the second largest of the city had mixed population. Benerath, recently integrated, had a section of affluent people, a middle class component and along the railway track, one found working class communities.

Being a part of the Ruhr area, 48.6% of the adult population in Düsseldorf consisted of the working class, while the proportion of the blue-collar workers and officers together was 30.8%. The self-employed represented about 11.8% and the tertiary sector consisting of household helpers and helping hands from the family comprised about 9% of the population.⁷⁹ In 1933 the industry employed 85,000 (36% of gainfully employed) persons. Trade and transport employed about 30% and Bank and insurance sector followed at 10%.⁸⁰ In brief, Düsseldorf had a politically multicoloured and cosmopolitan profile, which could serve as a good yardstick for broader generalisation.

The organisation of the Gestapo files in the Düsseldorf Archives

I shall now go into the details of the archival material available in the Düsseldorf State Archives. It houses the case files of all administrative units that came under the jurisdiction of the head quarter of the Gestapo Düsseldorf, for example, Essen, Duisburg, Wuppertal, Krefeld and other surrounding smaller places apart from Düsseldorf. There are two ways of approaching the same set of files. One way of doing it is to look under the main catalogue (*Hauptschlagwort*), where the files are arranged according to the type of ‘crime’ or ‘racial community’, which are altogether 52 like the Communist Party, the Jewry, the Law Against Malicious Gossip, Foreign Workers etc. The other way of approaching the same material is, to go to the local card catalogue (*Ortskartei*). Under this head the files are arranged according to the name of the place in an alphabetical order, for example Düsseldorf, Essen, Duisburg and so on, and the type of crimes are arranged further as subcategories again in an alphabetical order. I chose my cases from the *Ortskartei* Düsseldorf and find it important to present the entire range of ‘crimes’ catalogued under it. The entire range of subcategories and the number of files available under the *Ortskartei* Düsseldorf are as follows:

Table No. 1:

S.No.	Main Categories	No. of File Cards
1	Communist Party (KPD)	1440
2	KPO	27
3	Communism	200
4	Circle of Red Fighters	3
5	SPD	70
6	SAP	1
7	Marxism	4
8	Catholic Centre	13
9	Catholic Church	300
10	Evangelical Church	78
11	Sects	100
12	Free Churches	1
13	Geheimlehren	13
14	Free Masonry	3
15	Pacifists	2
16	Opposition	300
17	Law Against Malicious Gossip	700
18	German People's Freedom Movement	1
19	Steel Helmets	6
20	Christian Social People's Service	1
21	German Social Party	1
22	DNVP	3
23	Economy Party	2
24	Monarchists	9
25	Black Front	8
26	Resistance Movement	1
27	League of Imperial Air Defence	2
28	Vereinswesen	22
29	Economy related matters	4
30	War Economy	4
31	Trade Unions	46
32	NSDAP	480
33	League of Youth	54
34	Press	95
35	Radio	26
36	Fine Art	35

37	Theatre, Music	2
38	Army	25
39	Treason	35
40	Sabotage	13
41	Police	35
42	Returning Emigrants	14
43	Foreigners	73
44	Jews	1289
45	Emigrants	948
46	Foreign Workers	68
47	Prisoners of War	184
48	Military espionage	23
49	Economic espionage	5
50	Separatism	15
51	Foreign Legionaries	6
52	Foreign Minorities	18

Total Categories: 52 Total number of file cards: 6832

Selection criteria and various stages of sample collection

In this study the quantitative assessment will be given chapter wise rather than giving a generalised account of denunciations. The behaviour and number of the denunciations differ from ‘crime’ to ‘crime’, even though some generalisations can be made about them. I found it useful to concentrate on some specific categories rather than choosing random samples from all ‘crimes’. Concentrating on the categories severely persecuted by the regime has special relevance for our study from the point of view of racial othering at the societal level. I have therefore concentrated upon the Jews, the common *Volksgenosse* falling prey to the “Law Against Malicious Gossip”, Communists, foreign minorities and foreign workers.

When I first set out to work in the Düsseldorf Archives, I had just a rough idea of what I would be searching for, and where I could possibly find material for that. The work of sample selection therefore followed in different stages, which involved giving up the hunt for denouncers after a stage in

certain categories and intensifying the search in certain others. At the outset, I suspected that certain categories of crime would have more denouncers than others so instead of choosing samples from all categories, I decided to concentrate on some of them. My obvious choice, in terms of studying racial othering, was clear. I had to select samples from the categories *Judentum* (Jewry), *Fremdarbeiter* (Foreign Workers) and *Fremdvölkische Minderheiten* (Foreign Minorities). I collected 34 random samples (50 %) from *Fremdarbeiter* and 5 random samples (33%) from *Fremdvölkische Minderheiten*. The category *Judentum* however, presented some problem for it was further divided into 20 subcategories. For a meaningful search therefore, one had to first find out what these categories were all about and where one could possibly find more denouncers. After picking a handful of random samples from various subcategories (not included here in the final count), I decided to concentrate on a few. I selected four subcategories namely, *Rassenschande* (Race Defilement), *Judenfreundlich* (Friendship towards Jews), *Kennkartebestimmung* (Verification of Identity) and *Staatsfeindlich* (Anti-State Activity). Altogether I selected 138 files from these four categories. The exact numbers of case studies from each category has been detailed in the chapter “Fishing in Troubled Waters” dealing exclusively with the Jews.

To investigate the issue of gendered othering and possibly gender conflicts within the *Volksgemeinschaft*, I turned to the category of crime, *Heimtücke-gesetz*, loosely translated as the ‘Law Against Malicious Gossip’. This law was promulgated basically to curb the freedom of expression. It was passed on the 20 December 1934 in order to combat attacks with malicious contents against the state and the party and to protect the party uniform against misuse.⁸¹ Normally, when ‘Aryans’ criticised the state and the party openly they were booked under the *Heimtücke-gesetz*, but if a Jew violated the same law his/her file was placed under the category *Staatsfeindlich*. *Heimtücke-gesetz* was a numerically rich category containing 700 case files. Besides, I suspected denouncers at work under this category. In the first round I picked up 70 files, about 10% of the total. The search was not in vain. I got

compelling evidence from this round that brought into focus a gender struggle going on in the 'Aryan' families. I had ready material in hand to write a chapter on wives as denouncers of their husbands. However, my search continued. I did one more round of sample collection, randomly picking up some more samples and selectively picking some others, where cases were referred to the Special Court, to find more wives as denouncers. The search rendered some useful results. In the third round, I picked some 50 samples from the surrounding countryside to establish if this phenomenon was restricted to the city life or pervaded village communities as well. This search rendered no results. This established that denunciation by wives was a big city and working class phenomenon. Altogether, I selected 70 files from the *Heimtücke-gesetz* in the first round, 70 more in the second round, combining random sampling method and choosing from the files referred to the Special Courts, and 50 in the third round consisting of the files from the hinterland. That makes a total of 200 files from the category *Heimtücke-gesetz*.

I also picked up 68 random samples, about 5% of the total from the categories *KPD*. This round of sample collection did offer some results, but I observed in the process that victims from this category primarily did not come to the notice of the Gestapo through acts of denunciation. House searches, raids, information from spies or informers gave the Gestapo vital clues to apprehend the Communists. Wives as denouncers were not totally absent, but not so many in number, so I left my search after the first round. Next I selected 20 cases, 10% of the total, from the category *Kommunismus*. There was a difference between *Kommunismus* files and *KPD* files. While the former category dealt with cases suspected of Communist involvement, they were mostly dismissed after warning. The latter category represented cases of hard core Communist functionaries. There were more similarities between *Heimtücke-gesetz* files and *Kommunismus* files. The files pertaining to the *KPD* were of very different nature both in terms of the discovery of the cases as well as their handling by the Gestapo. The total number of files examined from the Gestapo *Personalakten* is 465. Table 2 offers a break down:

Table 2:

Selected Subcategory under	No. of Samples
<i>Ortskartei Düsseldorf</i>	
<i>Judentum</i> (Jewry)	138
<i>Fremdarbeiter</i> (Foreign Workers)	34
<i>Fremdvölkische Minderheiten</i> (Foreign Minorities)	5
<i>Heimtücke-gesetz</i> (the Law Against Malicious Gossip)	200
<i>KPD</i> (Communist Party of Germany)	68
<i>Kommunismus</i> (Communism)	20
Total	465

Critical assessment of earlier evaluation of the source material

This is not the first time that the Düsseldorf case files are being studied. Reinhard Mann had done a very thorough quantitative analysis of the same in the 1970's for his work "*Protest und Kontrolle*". Unfortunately he died before he could complete his work and it was published posthumously in 1981. Though this work dealt primarily with forms of protest in everyday life, the last chapter presented a quantitative analysis of denunciations. This was the first ever attempt made by a German historian to provide rich quantitative data both on forms of protest and compliance and collaboration. Especially commendable about his work was the fact that he explained the status of the Gestapo files and his methodology in a transparent manner. His work later inspired many historians to study the Gestapo files with different questions and from different angles. The present work obtained important information from Mann's pioneering work. However, it poses different questions, and searches for answers in categories, which Mann did not consider in his work at all. He altogether left out some vital groups of people from his study. In the Table 1 all the categories starting from migrants downwards, that is 11 of them, were not included in any selection procedure by Mann, which amounted to roughly half of the files. Out of the remaining 3700, he chose some 825 cases for a closer analysis on the basis of random sampling technique and snowball effect. Another limitation in his procedure was that he chose more

cases from those heads that had less than 90 files and fewer cases from those that had more files. For example categories like fine arts, music, sabotage etc. were 100% represented, while from numerically rich categories like the KPD, The Law Against Malicious Gossip etc. only one out of ten cards was chosen. According to Mann's own estimate the latter categories were 100% underrepresented.⁸² What it in effect implied was that the people like Communists or other political opponents who were more likely to fall prey to denunciation were very much underrepresented. Further, the other 11 categories, which were not treated in Mann's account at all, were actually much more important from the point of view of denunciation, particularly Jews and foreign workers. Out of the total 825 cases studied by Mann 213 (26%) cases were reported from the population.⁸³ Typical beginnings in the case files like "as we have come to know" or "as has been brought to our knowledge from a confidential source" etc. were treated by Mann as the Gestapo's own observation, if there was no further information supplementing it. However, he hinted that some of it could well have originated from ordinary people as such, and also that the reports coming from the NS organisations could have been tip-offs from the population. Taking all this into consideration, Mann thought that the actual number of denunciations from the population could be larger than estimated by him.

The Canadian historian Robert Gellately further followed up what Mann had merely hinted at. He showed that the total percentage of the denunciations from the population was around 57%.⁸⁴ The two important points of difference to note here are, firstly, that Gellately worked in the Würzburg State Archives and more importantly, that he studied only the category "Jews", precisely what had been omitted by Mann. Further there were differences in their methods, for example, Mann's categories "information via communal and state organisations" and "information from business" have been treated by Gellately as bogus, as the latter considered information coming from these sources to be actually emanating out of the population. This resulted in an increase in the number of denunciations from the population. Cases starting with vague beginnings like, "as has been told to

us from a confidential source” or “as we have come to know” etc. have also been treated by Gellately as information coming from the population. To quote him:

“It is possible that some cases were sparked off by a tip from official sources, as when a Gestapo official merely wrote in the file that “according to a confidentially disclosed report made to me today, it is alleged that the butcher Hans Drat remarked as follows” and so on. Still there would seem no reason for the dossier to be silent if the tip came from an official or even semi-official body. In all likelihood the source was from the population, but the full details of this side of the story remain hidden”.⁸⁵

If we go by this assessment of Gellately, we can understand why Gellately's column “Gestapo's own observation” draws a blank. I feel that Gellately's estimate of the information out of the population was too liberal. His assertion that in all the stereotypical beginnings, where the source of information was not clear, the information must have come from the population, and that there was no reason not to mention the source if it was official or seemed official appears to be a bit problematic. One often came across the mention of a common man in the remarks of the Gestapo functionary, when the information came from him but one seldom saw the name of an official there in the files, if the information came from him, probably for the reason that it was his job to gather information. One found the mention of other officials like the NSDAP functionaries or the officials from other state organisations, if the information came from such a source. One even found the letters of these officials, and if the source was a common man, even his name was also sometimes found in the letter. So if there was an identifiable common man or other official, it figured in the files and it was reasonable to put such cases under “information from the population” as Gellately did, but to assume that all unidentifiable cases also stemmed from the population is questionable. They could well have been observations of the Gestapo men and in such cases it was rare to find their names in the files. I would like to state the complications involved in such cases by citing a few examples.

This was a case of a Jewess suspected of concealing her identity and being involved in a “race defilement” act.⁸⁶ The case file opened with a letter dated 12 January 1943 from the Gestapo Headquarters Vienna to the Gestapo Düsseldorf. The contents of the letter were :

"E. F. Sara is an illegitimate child of a full Jew, and therefore is to be treated as a Jew. Confidentially it is informed to me that she is employed as a leading chemist in the chemist shop at the Bahnhofstraße 60... "

In the file there was no further information available on the source of information and the rest pertaining to the suspicion of ‘race defilement’ was extracted from her in the course of interrogations. It did not seem feasible that the information could have come from the population. If that were the case, she would have been denounced in Düsseldorf itself. It was quite possible that the Gestapo officials may have come across her mother living in Vienna while checking out her racial identity. But to say for certain about such a case would be difficult.

Another case in point is taken from the category “anti-regime activities of the Jews”.⁸⁷ The case file started with a letter dated 1 July 1934 of the Gestapo Berlin to the Gestapo Düsseldorf. The letter started with a typical beginning,

“As has come to our knowledge, there is a committee for the Defence of the German Jews in Paris. One Dr. Heymann is a member of this committee. It is further known that the newspaper ‘Westland’, which appears in a Saarland publishing house is edited by a Dr. Heymann, born on 28 August 1897 in Bocholt, who is at the moment working in Düsseldorf. I would like to know what is known about this Dr. Heymann’s political life and also if the two Heymanns are identical.”

Here again the information came from such far off and different sources that it was difficult to trace it down to a denunciation. Very often, especially in the case of Jews, one sees a case coming to the light as a consequence of postal surveillance. This again found no mention in either Gellately's or Mann's study.

What counts as an act of denunciation in my evaluation

Only signed and anonymous reports from private individuals have been counted as denunciations. Such reports normally started with a sentence, *Unaufgefordert/freiwillig erscheint Frau/Herr... und gibt folgendes an:*”. Reports, filed by the party, if they explicitly did not mention the source as being a private person are not treated as denunciations by the population. Also if the NSDAP report was traced eventually to a social workers of the welfare agencies or somebody who denounced in an official capacity, it is not counted as a denunciation from the population. But if a party member, who was not specifically assigned the job of reporting, did it in his individual capacity as a member of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, it is treated as denunciation from the population. Typical phrases like, *wie es hier in Erfahrung gebracht worden ist, wie uns mitgeteilt worden ist etc.* are put under the head “no exact information”. *Vertraulich wurde uns mitgeteilt* is understood as report from an informer but no separate category exists for that. Such cases have been put into the account of the Gestapo. Anonymous denunciations have been separated from signed ones. Further, I am not just concerned about denunciations that resulted in initiating a case but all those that surfaced in the files at a later date. For the Gestapo may open a file on a routine matter like considering some Pole or other foreign national for Germanisation but the process was later revoked due to a denunciation. These have been added to the original number of denouncers. So not just the initiation of a case or opening of a file was important but the whole journey of the victim, so far as it could be traced in the Gestapo files, and all encounters with the Gestapo have been taken into cognisance.

Names of all private individuals, both the denouncers and the denounced, whose stories have been narrated here, have been changed on account of the *Datenschutzgesetz*, the law requiring the identity of private individuals to be concealed. All other information is however, correct. Some notes on style are in order here. Normally lengthy quotations have been indented, but some, especially in Chapter II, III and IV, have also been italicised. These are voices of female denouncers and sometimes witnesses. They are witnesses in cases where they use male denouncers, mostly their boy friend, but later support the accusations of the denouncer. Italics have also been used for German words from the Nazi parlance to retain the uniqueness of the era. These expressions engrained in public memory and everyday reality illustrate the Nazi world-view more accurately than their English translations possibly can. Italics have also been used sometimes for emphasis. Endnotes serve the purpose of both citing the source as well as supplying additional information and data. They sometimes include even a sub-text to strengthen the main narrative by providing further dimensions on the issue under discussion or by citing evidence from other secondary writings. Translations are mine unless mentioned otherwise.

Chapter II

The 'Private' became 'Public':

Wives as Denouncers in the Realm of the Family⁸⁸

Feminist historians have so far projected the 'Aryan' family as a 'doll's house of *ersatz* goodness', as an institution which acted like 'a shield against all-pervasive Nazi ideology'. Some have even declared all wives and mothers innocent and ignorant of Nazi crimes. They assert that the 'Aryan' family remained a unified front unaffected by the destructive politics of the era. Such interpretations ignore the fact that the regime managed to intrude into family life and sniff out dissent from within this personal sphere by a number of means, including the provision of political denunciation. A view from below, in addition, suggests that this intrusion was made possible with the active co-operation of spouses, particularly wives.⁸⁹ This important gender behaviour has, however, neither been thematised properly nor researched quantitatively.

This chapter sets out to do just this by probing the issue of gendered othering in Nazi society. Here, the site of examination is the family, the smallest unit of the National Socialist regime and the germ cell of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. A healthy, racially pure, 'Aryan' family had a special place in the Nazi *Weltanschauung* as far as the Nazi ideology and propaganda were concerned. Women's place within the family was given particular importance. The Nazis sought to wipe out the influences of liberal and socialist feminist past and restore women's place where they 'naturally' and 'truly' belonged at home. Nazi rhetoric valorised women's roles as wives and mothers. Symbolically, the regime elevated their status by equating the two battles, one at the battle front and the other at home front and by equally rewarding the 'brave' and the 'sacrificing'. Prolific mothers received state honour and crosses just like the soldiers fighting at the battle front. The reality however, was not quite the same. At the home front, governed as it was, by power relations, the status of a soldier vis-à-vis his 'brave' and 'sacrificing' wife remained unchanged. Here, he was the boss. The chapter argues that though this power equation between husband and wife went unmentioned in

the Nazi rhetoric it was challenged by wives. In Nazi Germany, as I see it, the family was not a static and changeless institution, where the patriarch ruled unconditionally over his wife and children. It was a dynamic institution. It had its own tensions, frictions and every day dramas whereby the husband and wife constantly fought for power and influence. We explore how wives fought this battle at the home front through the means of denunciation.

Denouncing a spouse to the Gestapo or other control agencies was not an infrequent occurrence in everyday life. In my wide range of sample, I rarely came across a case, where a husband denounced his wife while denunciation by wives was ran through almost all selected categories like a red thread. In all Gestapo files whether pertaining to the Jews, racially foreign workers and foreign minorities, Communists, or ‘offenders’ of the Law against Malicious Gossip, a wife as the accuser surfaced under all heads. Since denunciation was not a direct means of overpowering the husband, she could only indirectly hope to affect a change within the four walls for the ultimate decision regarding the fate of her target lay in the hands of the Gestapo. In this family drama therefore, there was no one-to-one struggle going on between the accused and the accuser so to say, but a triangular interplay whereby the perception of the Gestapo and its interpretation of the whole story became very crucial. The stories narrated here highlight this triangular interplay of perceptions. Secondly, they dwell on actual motives of the wives as they played a crucial role in bringing into focus their ‘personal problems’ through a political agency. Thirdly, they unveil the *modus operandi* of these wives. Did their denunciation come from some *NSDAP* office or directly to the Gestapo or the criminal police?⁹⁰ This was vital in understanding how well these wives knew the system and how directly they participated in it. Fourthly, we investigate how they presented their case before the authorities and how vocal or subtle they were in articulating what they wanted to achieve through it.

A separate section deals with the wider network of relationships where women denouncers surfaced as daughters-in-law. Yet

another section deals with the perceptions of the Gestapo about the denouncers. The concluding reports of the Gestapo helped us to some extent to reconstruct how seriously such cases were taken. What were the criteria adopted by the Gestapo for dismissing a case at their level or referring it further to the Special Court or other higher courts? It was in the hands of the Gestapo to judge the case at the first instance. Given the uncontrollable power that the Gestapo could exercise over the people in the National Socialist system before presenting the 'criminal' or the 'law breaker', the Gestapo offices were functioning as pre-trial court rooms of sorts; most of the times denying access to legal trials to the accused altogether.

In the last section, we try to arrive at some generalisations about this particular gender behaviour and see if it varied on class and region specific lines and also if certain categories of 'crime' were more affected by it than the others. It also deals with the private/public dichotomy and shows how it was differently perceived by different parties involved.

Wives as denouncers

The documents of denunciation by the wives against their husbands provide us with an insight into the houses of "*ersatz* idealism kept insulated from the inhuman outside world of violence and horror" as portrayed by Claudia Koonz. The thesis of C. Koonz "far from being helpless or even innocent, women made possible a murderous state in the name of concerns they defined as motherly"⁹¹ and "mothers and wives. . . . made a vital contribution to Nazi power by preserving the illusion of love in an environment of hatred",⁹² has been questioned in the light of the evidence presented in this work. I would like to argue that while some women might have contributed to the sustenance of Nazi regime through fulfilling their duties as housewives and mothers, some others went against the stereotypical image of subservient housewives, caring mothers and passive accomplices to their husbands. This variant behaviour came to light in denunciation reports where housewives and mothers worked in their own ways to undermine this popular belief. The documents demonstrated compellingly that women indeed made a vital

contribution to the Nazi power, not through preserving the illusion of love, but through making their disillusionment public. They took the initiative in their own hands by denouncing and turning in their spouses who they thought disillusioned them in matters of love, companionship and marriage. The 'environment of hatred' rubbed off on them too and they very much took part in it by trying to eliminate those whom they hated in their 'separate sphere'. The very notion of the family as the 'safe haven' was turned upside down by these disgruntled wives as never before. The possibility of political denunciation unleashed its own dynamics of power relations within the family and conjugal life into the open in unimaginable forms.

Far from being the place of 'ersatz goodness' as characterised by Koonz, the family was a battlefield with its own frictions and everyday dramas. One witnessed these everyday dramas of conjugal life being played in all their colours, ranging from total incompatibility of partners to marriage turning sour, to a partner turning cold, insensitive and even deceitful or simply degenerating into being brutal and aggressive. What however, was new in this whole scenario was the provision of political denunciation, a possibility that provided these ever fighting partners with an *extra-legal, extra-judicial and pseudo-political stick* for beating the other one. And most often it was the otherwise powerless wife, the 'weaker sex', who sheepishly reported on her husband and thereby delivered him to an unknown destiny. This allowed us to speak of denunciation in the conjugal context as a gender specific behaviour in the dictatorship, whereby the weaker sex in the socio-familial milieu tended to exercise the newly acquired power handed down to all and sundry by the system.

With the thorough politicisation of the private realm under the motto 'everything private is public', and with the special provision of denunciation, the regime had hoped to intrude inside the four walls of the house and sniff out dissent from within the very personal spheres of life. However, from a socio-historical point of view it needs to be stressed that this whole idea of the regime was subverted when housewives used this opportunity to make their personal grievances public through this political channel. The 'personal' was

made 'political' by them in various ways to highlight gender inequalities and gender oppression within the four walls. In their denunciation letters where they reported their husbands or their relations to the police, the family was projected as an institution determined by power relations. These wives used denunciation to tilt the scales of power in their favour, to appropriate power and influence, to fight for their dignity and to subvert the patriarchal code of domination and subordination. The personal therefore, was not being made political/public from above but also from below. The assertion of Hitler that the 'big world' could not exist if the 'small world' was not stable may have had its bearing on these women who reported their husbands to the authorities hoping that 'the disorder' of their 'small world' might be put 'in order'.

These reports were in that sense documents on social dramas, where the accusing wives stood at the centre stage. They demolished the boundaries between the private and the public and sought to appropriate this newly found opportunity. Through the politicisation of the private realm, these wives attained the agency and power and thereby directly participated in the power structure and used some bit of it for their own agendas.

What were these grievances that the wives made public? How did they use the political denunciation in the milieu of the family? Was denunciation a weapon in the hand of the socially subordinated 'weaker sex' or a defence mechanism, a shield, to protect oneself from the violent and recurrent onslaughts of an aggressive husband or else a desire for emancipation of a subjugated wife? Was it a complaint to the higher authorities of a wronged wife, or else as a dagger in the hand of a wife, who turned to other men and just stabbed her partner at the back at an opportune moment? Was it the first means or the last resort to master the situation at home and gain control over their love life which was getting out of hand?

There is no ready-made answer to this. The canvas on which the family drama is portrayed is vast. It has varying representations of feminine identity, nature, psychology, sexuality, desires and emotions. These

denouncers ranged from oppressed and ill-treated housewives to subjects of a relationship gone sour. They could be deserted and disappointed partners, who sought to take revenge, 'teach a lesson' to their erring partners or intended to destroy them totally without themselves directly getting directly involved in the whole affair. There were however, instances where wives or partners, who had meanwhile found some one else, did not hesitate in using denunciation to get them out of their way.

Nature of denunciation reports on conjugal dramas

Before we get into the crux of the problem, we must throw light on what kind of historical documents these denunciation reports were. These reports were not uniform in nature. Some times they were well thought out statements on the husbands' behaviour presented in a written form and reflected a cool and calculating mind behind it, making it fairly transparent for the reader what the accused planned to achieve. The self-representation of the accuser, the portrayal of her personal world with her hopes and aspiration, what she considered as correct and desired from her partner could also be found in some documents. At other times, these were results of hurriedly reported events narrated to a Gestapo functionary on the spur of the moment without much calculated thinking. In such cases, it was impossible to establish whether the accuser said a particular thing out of her own accord or whether it was an answer to a query made by the Gestapo official. Such documents, rather oral reports, were essentially mediated through the pen of the Gestapo functionary. The documents might have resulted from a question-answer session but the Gestapo presented it as an uninterrupted narrative. Some other times, these narratives had broken sentences, missing words or incorrect sentence constructions reflecting the tensions and dilemmas in the mind of the accuser who ran away from home to report a matter at once, but this was intermingled with words and phrases typical of the Gestapo. So, a verbatim account of the accuser was seldom to be found in the oral reports making the difference between the spoken and the recorded version ambiguous. In spite of all this, and despite the fact that the Gestapo was mainly interested in

extracting the political contents from the reporter, the reporter managed to take liberty with the Gestapo and narrated what she wished to, which was more of a social and personal nature, albeit laced with political content. The primary document of denunciation was supplemented by subsequent hearings and interrogations, which gave a more detailed picture of the domestic discords apart from elaborating the political behaviour of the accused. Hence, the documents that were processed by the political police and had apparently some political content also turned out to be more of a social nature than one might expect. It was however, not always easy to reconstruct why a woman denounced her husband. Firstly, because the dossiers were not complete in each case. In one case for example, the file opened with the remark of the Gestapo that the person in question was reported by his wife but then, the actual report of the wife simply missing in the record. In another case, the denunciation was mentioned in the concluding report with a cursory mention that the most likely person behind the denunciation was the wife and the matter is not pursued further. But, mostly the files contained the report of the denouncer and the Gestapo also investigated the matter in great depths so that the whole family drama was not so difficult to reconstruct. However, the real reason for the denunciation even in such cases was never disclosed so blatantly and openly. It was always camouflaged with a political reason whereby the husband was usually portrayed as an opponent of the regime, a stubborn deviant or a member of the unwanted race as in the case of a Jew or a Pole. In most of these cases, the hierarchy of causes for the denunciations interestingly betrayed what the real reason could have been, even though camouflaged by the accuser.

Other supplementary documents were the subsequent hearings, interrogations, clarifications, investigation reports and concluding reports of the Gestapo. These gave us insights into the conjugal drama and helped us in ascertaining motives and in sketching the profiles of the accuser and the accused from three different angles; the self projection of the accuser, the projection of the accused by the accuser and the assessment of both by the Gestapo.

The accuser, in our case the wife, often took liberty with the Gestapo for indulging in self-projection. She portrayed herself as a responsible mother, a well meaning and dutiful wife, in search of justice, and justice at all costs. Not seldom did she portray herself as a politically correct National Socialist, particularly in cases where the husband was a political offender like a Communist, or a racial enemy like a Jew or a Pole. She emphasised her 'feminine virtues' like endurance, perseverance and patience in trying to maintain peace at home, and it was only when she ran out of all other options that she finally landed up at the Gestapo office or the police station. The battered wife often requested the Gestapo to keep the information secret for fear of further violence, some even suggested that the husband should be told only after being put behind the bars or in a concentration camp. The husband was typically projected as an insolent, irresponsible and aggressive head of the household. He was a chronic alcoholic; violence and alcohol were generally put together. He was a deviant, but first of all, a moral one who did not fulfil his responsibility towards his home and children as the bread-winner. He could be a sexual deviant, suffering from a venereal disease or a sexual criminal, a rapist, an incestuous father or a pervert. He could be deceitful and unfaithful to his wife. And in the end came his political deviance. For it was this which gave her the opportunity to come to the Gestapo in the first place. Even here, she conveyed a sense of responsibility in that she warned the husband many times against issuing anti-regime statements and indulging in politically provocative behaviour. Phrases like 'it is the anti-regime attitude of the husband that I can bear no longer' are common place.

The accused normally started on a defensive note. He knew most of the times that his wife was behind his denunciation and denied the charges levelled by the wife as personally motivated or as an act of revenge. Every allegation was countered by denial. It was easier to do so if there were no witnesses to the incident. He sometimes accepted having hit the wife when provoked or under the influence of alcohol, but neither regularly nor so badly as to cause permanent damage or serious physical injury. He would often allege that the wife simply wanted to get rid of him for she had someone else.

It was very seldom that he would admit having maligned the state or the party in front of the wife. And when faced with the wife would simply say that he was under the influence of alcohol and therefore, could not remember what exactly he said.

The Gestapo on its part investigated all the charges levelled by husband and wife against each other. How seriously it took each individual charge ultimately depended on the Gestapo functionaries and on the directives they got from above. The Gestapo recorded the previous criminal involvement of the accused in the file. Here, both the social and sexual crimes of the accused were looked into, and his previous political behaviour was checked to determine how his case would be treated. In spite of a record of sexual deviance, the accused might be set free after a warning, if interrogated on the charges of malicious gossip. Having considered the nature of these documents, we now present some case studies categorised on the basis of the actual motive behind the denunciation.

Battered wives

This section mainly deals with wives who used denunciation as a defence mechanism against domestic violence in the hope of somehow getting the situation under control. In the name of the deviant, anti-regime behaviour of their husbands, they wanted an outside agency to intervene into the matter and relieve them of the constant aggression of the patriarch at home. The abstract authority of the *Führer*, embodied in the form of such ‘disciplining’ bodies like the Gestapo, was evoked to counter the authority of the husband, an authority, which was more real, personal and omnipresent in their every day life. Women’s perception of the state and the *Führer* was refracted through their subjective experiences of gender oppression within the family. In a ‘crisis situation’ they sought to appropriate the much-propagated ‘*Führer Prinzip*’ for their domestic matters. If Nazi rhetoric promised to restore the dignity and respect of the housewife and mother within the family, which had apparently got lost in the ‘asphalt culture’ of the Weimar Republic, these wives called upon the state and its agencies to show it in deed as in words.

They perceived the *Führer* as the ultimate guarantor of their unquestioned status as the queens of the house and hearth. And while they expected the regime to fulfil its duty, they projected themselves as loyal citizens of the Fatherland in that they reported the anti regime attitudes or acts of their husbands.

In most cases a set pattern could be discerned. The accuser reported or wrote down the accusation in two phases. The hierarchy of reason for denouncing the husband was almost similar. It started with the erring behaviour of the husband that led to regular quarrels at home often ending up in bouts of physical violence against the family members. This was the main reason for reporting the head of the household. It was followed by the other reason, the political one. Here, the husband was portrayed as an enemy of the state, regularly cursing the state and its leaders. The basic agenda was therefore, presented in a camouflaged manner by labelling the husband as an opponent of the state. There was thus an underlying wish for emancipation, which was expressed in an ‘inverted manner’. Projecting the oppressor as an enemy of the state was perceived as a more effective means to achieve the end. We understand this behaviour as a kind of ‘inverted emancipation’ for it was sought to be achieved in an inverted manner, whereby the real agenda wore the garb of a more workable one. Let us now look at some examples:

Case 1: This was a report filed at the office of the Police Chief, Düsseldorf (*Polizeipräsident*), which found its way into the Gestapo records on 10 June 1939.⁹³ The narrative did not flow very smoothly, had incomplete sentences and abrupt endings. The text contained grammatical errors and the language was not very refined which could be expected of a woman coming from a working class milieu. It was filed by Frau Hof and read as follows:

“This report concerns my husband. I am forced to take this step for there is no other way out. I married in 1926. I have been fond of my husband though he used to drink a lot, which he continues to do even today. Soon after our marriage, he told me one day, “I have not married you to feed you, you lazy sow! Go and work! For the sake of

peace I went to work as a cleaning woman. Before I got to know him, he had lived with a whore. He looks at all women as whores and sows, and so am I in his eyes. I have only recently got to know that he lived with such a woman. He also has a venereal disease. He himself never told me all this, when we got married. He often beat me up. He has always been left oriented, now even more so than earlier. I have reported him to the health authorities to find out if he still suffers from the disease, but till date I do not know the status. On 12 May he beat me again and on 6 June he beat me half dead. He sprang upon me like a wild beast, and kept hitting me till I turned blue and on the 17 September 1933, he hit me with a bucket and broke my leg, I got three stitches and a small side bone was fractured. No one can love such a man. I have filed a divorce case against him where I also enclosed the statement of the doctor.

And now to the main point: He is left oriented, I can not take it any longer. He always curses the govt. He says that he would never become a National Socialist. He has a loaded pistol and often threatens to shoot. On 6 June, when he beat me, he took out the burning coal from the fireplace and wanted to set the house on fire. He wanted to kill me. He said that Hitler and Göring were criminals, the government would soon go down and the reds would come, all those who were ruling would be hanged....”⁹⁴

The Gestapo inquired into the matter in depth to find out the real reason behind the report, and came to the conclusion that the wife denounced her husband for following reasons:

“At the time of the marriage, Herr Hof kept quiet about the fact that he went to prostitutes and that he was suffering from venereal disease. Both the facts were revealed to the wife by other sources in 1937. Since then, there have been fights between the couple, which became more and more violent. She was often wounded and had to seek medical help. After Frau Hof got to know about the venereal disease, she denied any sexual contact to the husbands whatsoever, and he beat her more in fits of rage. To save herself from further beatings, Frau

Hof asked for a ban on his entry into the house. As was apparent from her report, she wanted to get rid of her husband at all costs. Frau Hof claimed in her report that her husband used derogatory language for leading personalities of the German Reich. According to her own statement, this took place in her presence alone. So there were accusations and denials. There were no further witnesses in this case. Frau Hof handed over the weapon, which her husband had hidden in the poultry. The husband was not available at the time of the enquiry, so he could not be questioned on it. The arrest of Herr Hof as asked by his wife is not recommended in the light of the evidence.”

A further document titled “Position taken on the case” signed by the criminal councillor reads:

“After examining the circumstances, it becomes clear, that the reporter wanted to get rid of her oppressive husband. There is no need to take him into custody for this matter. A procedure however, has been started with the health authorities about his venereal disease.”

Frau Hof was again called to the Gestapo office to make further inquiries about the political views of Herr Hof. She stated in her declaration that she did not belong to the *NSDAP* or any of its organisations. She also stated that her husband wanted to register himself as a member of the *KPD*, but as he did not pay the contributions, he was not a registered member.

Herr Hof, when called by the Gestapo, stated the following in his defence:

“I served in the navy from 1905 to 1938. I was also at the front for four years. I do not belong to the *NSDAP*, however, I belong to the German Workers Front. Before 1933 I had been a member of the *SPD* from 1909 to 1923, after which I have not been politically active. On the present case I have the following to say: The reason for my interrogation has been communicated to me. I must deny all the charges levelled against me as I have never said such things. The report of my wife is just an act of revenge who apparently wants to get rid of

me. It is not true that I beat up my wife. I only grabbed her tightly, whenever she denied sexual contact to me. She has been doing this with rare exceptions for about a year. Because of this, I assume that she has another man, and she is looking for reasons to get rid of me. In May 1939, she filed a divorce case against me, and I was ordered by the court to leave the house. When I wanted to leave, she requested me to stay behind. Since then we have been living together again. I do not know if my wife would withdraw the divorce case. On being asked, I state again that I have, under no circumstances, used abusive language against the state or the party. I am not against the state. On the contrary, I cut out pictures of the leading personalities from the newspaper, and put them up on the wall. I have been warned today to behave properly and not abuse the party or the state in future. I shall behave accordingly otherwise I shall have to reckon with harsher state police measures.”

The Gestapo closed the file with the remarks:

“The accused denied all political charges. He blamed it all on his revengeful wife who wanted to get rid of him, and who had also filed a divorce case against him. There were no further witnesses to support her alleged statements. Nothing unfavourable has been proved against him. Of all things he has not come into notice politically before. There were no remarks about him in the Section I A (political Section of the Gestapo Records). From the whole episode, it can be concluded, that Frau Hof made all these statements to get rid of her husband. Herr Hof has been warned. There are no grounds to pursue the matter further. He has been fined RM 10 for being in possession of an unauthorised weapon.”

We could clearly decipher from this story that the denunciation did not follow out of any political conviction and the denouncer did not belong to the *NSDAP*. The only sentence, where her reaction to her husband’s alleged political view could be read was “he is left oriented and I can not bear it any more”. In the rest of the report, she was totally preoccupied with her personal troubles and was visibly using the alleged political views of her husband for

her own agendas. The option of denouncing the husband came not as a first means, but as a last resort after the long drawn out process of negotiation within the household failed. Before taking this step, she tried out other means of living in peace with her husband, like going out to work, putting up with constant physical and verbal abuse before finally saying no. Here also it was not just a matter of 'getting rid' of the husband as the Gestapo remarked. The situation was far more complex. She was caught in a love and hate situation. The husband Herr Hof himself admitted that she filed a divorce suit and sought physical protection from him. But when he prepared to leave, she stopped him.

This story was a classic one of an oppressed wife yearning for love, care and respect from her husband. Her husband hurt her self-respect and dignity time and again but she put up with it. All bonds of love broke the day she realised that he cheated her. Her conjugal life came under fire as she got to know about his past and its legacy, namely the venereal disease. Beyond this point she could no longer go on making peace. She reported him to the health authorities. The subsequent beating and bullying of the husband traumatised her completely and led her to take resort to police protection.

Here the female body was a site of power relations, of domination and subordination in the conjugal life and interestingly, also a site for gender resistance and subversion. Frau Hof's denial of access to her body was an act of resistance and a challenge to the male authority of her husband who took it for granted. His statement showed clearly that it was this, which provoked him to beat up his wife. Physical violence thus became the ultimate assertion of the masculine power. It was at this point that Frau Hof sought the intervention of Nazi authorities to 'discipline and punish' her husband at two levels. At one level, she invited the intervention of the medical authorities to examine her sexually diseased husband, and at another level the political police to put her home 'in order' by disciplining her morally erring, drunk and violent husband. In appealing to the health authorities, she was responding to the eugenic propaganda and policies of the regime that had the concept of a 'healthy

Volkskörper' at its core. Reporting a sexually diseased husband as unfit for the intercourse and reproduction might have helped the regime in implementation of its eugenic policies as much as it would help her out of the 'sexual disorder' at home. This example showed that while most of the eugenic and racist policies regarding abortion, sterilisation and so on did affect women more damagingly and deeply, as argued by Gisela Bock, even here there was some scope for a 'healthy Aryan woman' to exercise control over her body (denial of sexual contact) and that of her husband, if he proved to be sexually unfit for intercourse and reproduction. In fact, Frau Hof retaliated against her husband's violation of her body by making his body vulnerable in that she reported Herr Hof's venereal disease to the health authorities. Here the racial ideology of a healthy *Volkskörper* came in handy.

Sexual disease⁹⁵ or sexual deviance was a motivating factor in many of the denunciations. When the husband was considered morally and sexually unfit, the intervention of the Gestapo was sought to stop the relationship immediately.

Case 2: Fred was denounced by his wife for indulging in malicious gossip in 1936. She also stated that he put pressure on her to vote for the Communists before the seizure of power.⁹⁶ We can only speculate whether Fred's wife denounced him for seditious activities alone as the denunciation report was missing from the file, and the Gestapo report stated that the accused was in the judicial custody for committing incest with his daughter. While the charges of malicious gossip and Communist leanings were dropped for lack of evidence, Fred was sentenced to 4 years penal servitude on the charge of incest. Besides, a castration had also been ordered. His criminal record also revealed that he was sentenced to five years rigorous imprisonment for raping a French woman in the First World War.⁹⁷

At the core of such denunciations lay the concept of deviance and its varied interpretations by the involved parties. The totalitarian regime demanded from the *Volksgemeinschaft* a total co-ordination and expected the *Volksossen* to report all kinds of political deviance. Here, we see a clear-

cut hiatus between the perceptions of the Gestapo and those of the subjects' i.e. wives, in what they considered as deviance. While the Gestapo was interested only in political and racial deviance, for the wife the sexual, social and moral deviance of the husband were equally or even more worth reporting. Alcoholism and resulting violence by the husband, sexual disease or sexual crimes of the husband and the irresponsible attitude of the husband were therefore, packaged together with his political deviance. The wife conjured up an image of her husband as a deviant on all fronts. He was a social and political deviant, which somewhere implied that a political deviant had many socially unacceptable, unwanted characteristics too, and therefore, was unwanted and undeserving of life in the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Even where she could not convince the Gestapo about the political deviation of the husband, by projecting him as a deviant in other spheres, she hoped to consolidate her case.

In the above cases the charges of malicious gossip against the husbands were dismissed by the Gestapo on the grounds that the alleged derogatory statements were not made 'in public' by the accused. Further, given the circumstances, there was no fear that they would enter into public sphere.⁹⁸ Besides, in cases where spouses denounced each other the Gestapo suspected ulterior motives and did not quite take the denouncer's accusations at face value, especially that of a wife's. However, it was not so easy for a husband to get out of the clutches of the Gestapo if the wife could rally neighbours or relations behind her cause.

Case 3: Frau Kremer, a battered wife, was encouraged and helped by her neighbours, who obviously had their own reasons to do so, to make a political case of the matter and send the erring husband behind the bars. While the menacing attitude of the aggressive and irresponsible breadwinner was a constant source of trouble for the family, the political views of the husband may have been provocative and disturbing for an enthusiastic Nazi neighbour. The party political interests of the neighbour in this case colluded with the harassed wife of a left oriented husband. In this family drama, the wife was not the sole actor, but was supported by the witnessing neighbours thereby

making the matter a serious one for the husband whose case was referred to the judiciary.

The victim Kremer was denounced, once by his neighbour in 1936 for indulging in malicious gossip and then by his wife for the same offence in 1939. The first denunciation routed through the neighbour cost him six months imprisonment. Kremer was again denounced in 1939, this time by his wife, and the denunciation was routed through the *NSDAP* functionary, the cell leader. The letter of the cell leader written to the Gestapo on 24 October 1939 carried the following contents:

“Kremer, who has been in the prison for many months can still not mend his ways of talking about our Führer and the fatherland. On Friday, 13 October 1939 at 19 O’clock Frau Kaufmann, who lives in the same house reported his anti-regime attitude to me. I made inquiries in this matter and found out that Kremer was in Kaufmann’s house for a visit shortly before that. On the 17 October 1939 Frau Kremer came to me confidentially and confided in me the derogatory and insulting manner in which her husband talked about the *Führer* and the state. The information given by Frau Kremer should not reach Kremer under any circumstances, as she fears to be beaten badly. As the cell leader, I am aware that Kremer disturbs the peace of the family and squanders all his money in drinking. His son was thrown out of the house by him when he objected to his father’s behaviour ...There is an enclosed declaration of the wife, with the request to treat it confidentially.

German salute.

The cell leader.”⁹⁹

The cell leader furnished a sworn statement of the wife testifying that Herr Kremer was opposed to the state. The Gestapo called Frau Kremer for further inquiries upon which she reproduced conversations between husband and wife. Kremer abused the regime as “a criminal state and a state of whores” Upon rapprochement, Frau Kremer was said to have been beaten up

so badly that she went running to the air raid shelter warden Herr Kaufmann, who resided in the same house and requested him for protection. She also told the Gestapo that her husband had been punished three years back for the same offence. Kremer was supposed to have been a member of the *KPD*. Her accusations were supported by the witness Kaufmann, who added his own version of anti-regime statements of Kremer that the latter had made before him. Kaufmann also bore witness to the fact that Kremer beat his wife very often and she took refuge in his house on some of these occasions. Further, he added that about half a year back his wife had an argument with Herr Kremer on this issue. He retorted that he would beat his wife, as long as he wished. He would shoot anyone who came in his way.

Herr Kremer said in his defence that he had not been politically active and had not been a member of any political party, though he belonged to a red trade union from 1919 to 1923. Since 1934, he had belonged to the *DAF*. Having confessed his previous political leanings to the Gestapo, presumably under pressure, he also admitted having hit his wife once. He was sure that the denunciation came from his wife. Though he denied having made any anti-regime statements either in public (before the neighbours) or in private, the statements of the pro-regime neighbours were found to be more ‘reliable’ and Kremer was sentenced for one year and four months imprisonment. In his appeal for mercy to the Gestapo, Kremer said that he would act as a responsible breadwinner of the family in the future.

Case 4: In the case of Frau Wolf, the Gestapo entered the scene to play the ‘patron’ of the battered wife, who sent her daughter to the police station to file the report while her husband was beating her.¹⁰⁰ The copy of the arrest warrant said that on the night of 10 March 1941, the daughter of Frau Wolf appeared here and requested the police for help as Wolf was threatening his wife with a knife. By the time the police arrived, Wolf had left the house. After some time he came back and started quarrelling with his wife again. According to the statement of Frau Wolf, he threatened her with a knife and said that he wanted to kill her. As Wolf was dead drunk at that time, he was

taken into custody to protect the family. Frau Wolf later told the Gestapo that her husband said, "Hitler is responsible for our hunger and the war". He also said, " Hitler wanted to hang the Jews, but they should hang him first ". The wife was then summoned to the Gestapo office on the same day for the Gestapo wanted to know more about the political views of the husband. She obliged the Gestapo with more details and said that her daughter could bear witness to it. Her fifteen-year-old daughter was sleeping in the next room. She woke up on hearing loud noises and came to the kitchen. Wolf got distracted and put the knife away. He threw a chair at his stepdaughter. He was totally drunk and did not know what he was doing. Before this he had never made any critical remarks about the government.

The husband contested all claims of his wife about having made any anti-regime statements. He claimed that his wife was hysterical and threw fits at the slightest pretext. They did not get along well. He assumed that she must have twisted his words. He admitted having come home on the said night in a drunken state and having had an argument with her. He could not remember any more what exactly he said on that particular night, but he did not think he said anything against the state. He did not remember how he took out the knife, though he had one in his hand. He had no intention of injuring his wife, it was done just to intimidate her.

The Gestapo summoned the fifteen-year-old stepdaughter of the accused for hearing. She said:

"I woke up suddenly in the middle of the said night on hearing loud sounds and abuses. I heard my stepfather fighting with my mother. He was drunk and I heard him say, " Now it makes no difference. England will definitely win. Germany has no ammunition left". On this my mother retorted, "If you talk like this, you are not a German and I shall report you to the police". Through the gap in the kitchen door, I observed that my step father took out a knife and pointed it at my mother saying ,"Before you betray me, I will kill you". I came out to help my mother, but when my stepfather saw me, he put the knife away

and tried to hit me with a chair. I quickly dressed myself, and ran to the police station. He was later taken away by the police. My parents do not get along very well. My stepfather comes home drunk very often and abuses every one. “

Herr Wolf was left by the Gestapo in the evening after warning as there were allegation and denials. The daughter was considered only a partial witness to the event. Therefore, his political crime was not considered ‘sufficiently proven’. His weapon was confiscated and the case file was closed.

The above cases basically had gender troubles at the core. Here the Gestapo was not dealing with hard core political crimes, but basically disposing off matters of civil and social nature whereby it used its own discretion and figured as a *conflict resolution agency*, albeit with a male bias. It judged the erring, oppressive or drunken husbands with some compassion. Such behaviour was actually very typical of the males from the lower rungs of society and many of the functionaries who dealt with such cases may have found themselves in the same situation at home. In these cases where battered women appeared before the Gestapo to accuse their husbands, the pure black and white categories of the perpetrator and the victims seemed to get blurred. And the Gestapo functionaries sitting on the chair of judgement seemed not to be taking the offence of the oppressive husbands very seriously. The violent acts of the husbands under the influence of alcohol, which often turned the whole atmosphere of the household vicious and violent, were overlooked by the Gestapo, who dismissed the cases immediately with a cursory comment like “a reason for following the case is not present” or “this act of the husband is no political offence and therefore the case should be closed”, and so on.

Divorced Wives¹⁰¹

Interestingly, a lot of women who were already separated or divorced from their husbands did not hesitate in denouncing their husbands.¹⁰² The Gestapo files gave useful insights into this phenomenon. They revealed that not only were the majority of denunciation cases filed by women but also that it was

mostly women who filed divorce suits.¹⁰³ The most frequently cited reason for wanting a divorce was the violent character of the husband. While in most cases the husband was found to be the guilty party¹⁰⁴ and the divorce granted, this was not enough for these wives. They sought to inflict violence upon their husbands through the Gestapo. Ex-husbands' crude ways of subjugating wives were countered by wives in equally crude ways years afterwards. Obviously, this kind of justice was outside the ambit of the civil court. The bitterness and the hardships they may have suffered before the divorce could now be undone by harassing ex-husbands through the Gestapo. The desire to avenge husbands' physical and verbal violence during their period of togetherness was so great some times that wives wished to turn in their husbands. Sometimes they even wished that their husbands land up in a concentration camp. Such wishes were however never expressed blatantly and they emphasised that their reports did not come as acts of revenge against their husbands but that they honestly meant to report anti-regime words or deeds of the husbands.

Case 1: Frau Paul, upon learning that her husband was interrogated by the Gestapo for maintaining contacts with foreign workers wrote to the Gestapo claiming that he continued to do this.¹⁰⁵ Her hand written letter addressed to the Gestapo dated 21 July 1943 read:

I recently learnt that my husband, Paul was summoned and interrogated by you for having been found to be in the company of the French prisoners. I can tell you that he still continues to do that. As stated above, he talks to them and later narrates their stories. My husband and I are divorced, because he used to beat my mother and me very badly. He told a resident of the house, if he had to support me, he would go to France, where he has relations.

Frau Paul was summoned by the Gestapo for a hearing soon after. The first part of the statement related to her unhappy marriage with her husband where she reiterated that within seven months of the marriage she got divorced from her husband as he beat her very badly. Even her mother was

not spared his aggression. She felt so let down mentally and physically, that it was not possible for her to go on living with her husband. Then she emphasised that the report filed by her was no act of revenge but corresponded to the reality. She knew that in September last year her husband was interrogated and warned by the police for entertaining contacts with prisoners-of-war. Besides he also had to pay RM. 20 as donation to the Red Cross. Even this did not deter her husband from talking to prisoners of war. She could not specify what they talked about, but he could not deny that he interacted with them for they often had arguments about it. He also smoked foreign cigarettes. The conversations took place mostly in trams. He often spoke to the prisoners, who worked in the bombed houses. He told her that the prisoners were through and through against the government and did not have a very good opinion of Germany. She closed the statement by saying that she could swear upon the statements she had made and was ready to repeat them if required.

The husband denied the charges and said that ever since the first warning he had severed all contacts with the foreign workers. He held his wife responsible for falsely accusing him to avenge herself on him and said that his wife had told him a few days back that she would be happy if he landed in a concentration camp. The concluding report of the Gestapo said that the matter did not have to be pursued further as the reason for the report was the hatred of the wife against the husband. He was left alone after another warning.

Even in the cases of divorce we observe that all links were not severed between the couple, especially in cases where the husband was paying alimony to his wife and children. The husband maintained regular contact and exerted influence upon his wife and children, which was countered by the wife through denunciation. The husband in fact, continued his interface with the immediate surroundings of his previous wife. And if the wife had better relations with the neighbours, she could use them to her advantage before the Gestapo and the courts by presenting them as witnesses. Frau Schmidt, our next denouncer presented one such instance of divorced wife who rallied a

whole bandwagon of relations and acquaintances as witnesses, to make sure that the husband did not go scot-free.

Case 2: The Gestapo report dated 12 July 1940 informed us that the denunciation was routed through the *Ortsgruppenleiter* Düsseldorf-Glashütte in which the wife blamed the accused Schmidt of issuing anti-state statements.¹⁰⁶ He was supposed to be sympathetic to Poland. Further that he listened to the foreign radio broadcasts. The witnesses included one neighbouring couple and a woman, her son (Schmidt's stepson) and his girl friend. The statements of the neighbours revealed that she was on friendly terms with them and that they often visited each other. They all had something to report about her ex husband's anti- German and pro- Poland views. The girlfriend of the stepson who was herself of Polish origins and was subsequently granted German citizenship lent credibility to the anti-German stance of Schmidt by bearing witness to his anti-German statements.

The victim Schmidt in his defence projected himself as a responsible divorcee who 'lay his weekly salary before his wife on the table' and therefore felt that it was his moral right to tell his family who was living off his income what he considered 'right' and 'wrong'. He said that he was being victimised by the mother and son because he objected to the 'immoral relation' between his stepson and his girl friend. His wife had been tolerating all this but he felt 'duty bound' to take a stand against this. He also banned the entry of his stepson's girl friend to the house and therefore the denunciation etc.

He contested all allegations about being anti-regime and pro-Polish. The Gestapo enquired in his work place about his political credibility. A remark on this dated 26 August 1940, said that the leader of the *DAF* considered Schmidt a good worker. However, since he never bought badges from the donation collectors, there was reason to think that Schmidt could be opposed to the state. Schmidt's superior gave a favourable report about him. His self-defence did not suffice because of his Polish origins and he was not found to be trustworthy in spite of good reports from his work place. A case was filed against him and he was sentenced to six months imprisonment on

charges of malicious gossip by the special court. This was a classic case of a wife gaining added strength as a mother, where she used her son as a witness successfully to get the 'interfering' divorced husband out of her way.

One can well understand Schmidt's the state of mind, who empathised with the pains and sufferings of his fellow countrymen. At the same time however, it is interesting to observe how the other Pole, the girl friend of his stepson sided with the denouncers even being a Pole. Apart from being emotionally involved with a German she was a beneficiary of the system, as she was declared capable of Germanisation. She would not have wanted to be thought sympathetic, since she could have been degermanised again. The case demonstrated how compliance to the regime worked at various levels.

Wives seeking divorce also denounced their husbands of anti-regime and pro-Communist involvement in the hope of getting a favourable decision from the court.¹⁰⁷ As a routine matter, a copy of the letter of denunciation or the oral statement was forwarded by the Gestapo to the judiciary in cases where divorce proceedings were on.

The Gestapo took up cases where the wives pointed to pro-Communist involvement of the spouse very seriously and extensive enquiries were made.

Case 3: In this case, the party loyalty of the father seems to have rubbed off on the avenging daughter. The advice of the patronising father to report her husband and father-in-law came just at the right time for the recently separated daughter.¹⁰⁸ Of her own accord, Frau Bauer appeared at the Gestapo office on 16 January 1936 and stated:

Since November 1935, I have been living separately from my husband. Due to constant quarrels and ill treatment by my husband, I filed a case of divorce against him in October 1935. My husband has always been staunchly Communist in his views, and I have very often had arguments with him on this. The same holds true for my father-in-law.

I am not sure, if they both have been members of the Communist party. (Both father and son have the same first names and thus will be referred to as senior and junior Bauer). Since my marriage in October 1933, I have often stayed in the house of my father-in-law who is in possession of a big radio. Almost every evening he listened to the Moscow bulletin. After the news, the "Internationale" was played which both of them - also my husband - sang with clinched fists. The witnesses on one such occasion are my sister-in-law and her husband.

As I am myself of apolitical nature, I have never paid attention to the bulletin. Moreover, I could not have done anything against it at that time for fear of physical violence. I would like to clarify at this stage that my report does not come as an act of revenge. Now that I live separately from my husband, I feel obliged to report the anti-state activity of my husband and father-in-law. My father is a party member and has been informed of this by me. According to him, I am duty bound to report this to the official agency.

Frau Bauer

All those roped in by the denouncer were thoroughly interrogated by the Gestapo. The inquiry revealed that senior Bauer's wife often used to dissuade them from listening to the Moscow radio, which was used as an argument by their daughter in defence of her father and brother. It also turned out that the information given by the denouncer was correct and the senior Bauer had earlier been penalised on charges of theft. His case was referred to the *Oberlandsgericht* (High Court) Hamm for high treason and he had got a sentence of 2 years imprisonment.

Deserted wives

Unfaithful husbands or lovers who left their partners in a lurch often became the target of denunciation by their partners. When a husband turned away from his wife or started living with his mistress right under her nose, the feeling of being dishonoured and abandoned lead many a wife to knock at the doors of the Gestapo.

Case 1: This denunciation by the wife cost the husband his life. The florist Frau Hoffmann denounced her husband, a policeman, for his defeatist attitude at his office.¹⁰⁹ Married to the police sergeant since 1933, Frau Hoffmann suddenly found her life ruined when she discovered some love letters of a woman from Estonia addressed to her husband. This happened in 1944. Frau Hoffmann had to leave for Bavaria early that year to visit her mother. In March, Herr Hoffmann brought home the Estonian woman and lived with her in the married couple's bedroom. On hearing this from her sister, who had taken refuge in the same house ever since her house got bombed, Frau Hoffmann rushed back. She tried her best to dissuade her husband from continuing the relation with his mistress but got no sympathetic hearing. Very often the involved parties had heated arguments and fights. Frau Hoffmann approached all authorities like the housing authorities, the *NSDAP* local leaders as well as his office, but no one seemed to help her out with her 'private problems'. On her own, one fine day she reported the defeatist attitude of her husband at his office. As evidence, she produced some letters with the defeatist contents that she had received from her husband. In October 1944, he was arrested, and in November was tried on the charges of undermining the morale of the folk (*KSSVO*) before the SS and the police courts. On the basis of the statements of the wife and his confession, he was sentenced to death in early 1945.

Frau Hofmann possessed a secret knowledge that no one else did, in the form of a written testimony, namely letters sent to her by her husband, who confided his anti-regime, anti-war/ defeatist feelings to his wife in all confidence. This possession of a secret knowledge was used by the wife as a weapon, which she misused to eliminate her husband.

Case 2: In this case, a jilted wife charged her husband of carrying out illegal abortions, which cost her husband imprisonment and much more. Both husband and wife were doctors and had one child. When the man passed on to his wife a venereal disease that he had contracted during an illicit affair, she was angry but forgave him until she discovered that he was continuing the

affair. In a moment of rage she telephoned the criminal police and alleged that her husband had conducted illegal abortions. This information eventually led to a trial at which her husband was found guilty and sent to gaol for eight months. Consequently, his career was ruined. Later, he instituted divorce proceedings on the grounds that his wife's complaint to the police about her suspicion amounted to breaking her vows of trust as a marriage partner. The judge in the case granted the divorce and found the woman at fault. Such a verdict would probably have given her no grounds for claiming financial damages, and might have denied her custody of their child, although there is no mention of these matters.¹¹⁰

Case 3: Leonard Gross tells the story of a young Berlin Jew, known as ladies man, who chanced to meet a Gentile woman, a former intimate friend who had not taken their parting lightly; she got her revenge in 1939 by turning him in to the nearest policeman.¹¹¹

In most of the cases so far, the women who turned in their spouses to the terror apparatus of the regime were women at the receiving end of the relationship. Many may have felt totally disoriented, humiliated and let down, and so, after a point decided to hit back irrespective of the means they employed. But to conclude that only the frustrated and the helpless made use of this instrument would lead to faulty judgement. There were wives among the ranks of denouncers, who were themselves involved with other men and found this the best and quickest means to get rid of their husbands. If they resorted to divorce they would perhaps have been declared guilty in such cases and therefore could not have risked it. Interestingly, however, they let their lovers take the lead, while they surfaced as accomplices or witnesses in this game.

Deserter wives

Case 1: Nowack, a Polish hairdresser, who ran his own saloon, was denounced simultaneously by a female friend of his live-in partner Melanie Oldenberg and his helper, Baum in September 1939.¹¹² The first denunciation

report was filed on the 3 September 1939 directly at the Gestapo office by a friend of Melanie Oldenberg, Lora, born on 25 June 1894. The report read as follows:

“Ever since our government is involved with the Polish government, the barber Nowack gets into worst kind of abusive outbursts. He talks in the most demeaning manner about the *Führer* and the *Volksgenossen*. He uses expressions like “the *Führer* must rot bit by bit, a bomb would tear him into pieces”. He calls German people “German pigs”. I have warned him many times but he does not mend his ways. Nowack is a Pole but has the status of a stateless now”.

As witnesses surfaced Nowack’s helper Baum, a neighbouring chemist and another female neighbour Lora. Soon after this came another denunciation, this time from of the helper of the accused, born on 21 April 1911, who also appeared at the Gestapo office and stated:

“I have been employed by Nowack since March 1939 as a helper in his saloon. As we both work in the same place, we also get talking to each other. In the course of time, I have got to know that Nowack is an opponent of the *Führer* and the Third Reich. He is a Pole. He himself told me that he had escaped from Poland along with three Jews some 15 years back as he broke some law of the army there. He had gone to France some years back without a passport, from where he was deported. By telling all this Nowack wanted to give an impression that he could get away with anything. He also claimed that if one dared to throw him out of Germany, he would come back illegally and would take revenge upon those who did it. He always talked to me in this tone. The political relation between Germany and Poland have become tense since August 1939. On the day of the big Speech of the *Führer* in the Parliament on the 1 September 1939, Nowack told Melanie Oldenberg, with whom he lives out of wedlock, in my presence that the *Führer* would have to rot and would be hacked into pieces. I can not tell you in which context he said this as I did not listen to the whole conversation between the two. In any case Melanie and her son who were also present there and they would be able to give more details on

this. I could also confirm a whole lot of things that Nowack said to Melanie and her son against the state, but I do not remember the details right now. For this reason, I would like you to inquire further from the said witnesses. I am willing to come again to confirm their statements”

Curiously, the first denunciation report was not followed up by the Gestapo but the later report filed by the victim’s helper, where the main witness was Melanie Oldenberg, was taken seriously. The Gestapo report said that unmarried Melanie Oldenberg born on 29 August 1901, in Hanover, residing in Düsseldorf, appeared here and on being told the reason for the interrogation declared the following:

“I came to know the barber Nowack some eight years back. A love relationship developed between us, and I told him that I already had a son out of wedlock. We had plans to marry, but they could not be realised as Nowack was married and his wife lived in Poland. At our present address we have a common house. I have rented it, and I sublet it further to tenants. Nowack has set up a saloon there where he works with his assistant Baum. In the course of time, Nowack told me that he belonged to Poland and had married there. He ran away from Poland where as a soldier he violated the norms of the army. He landed up in Germany along with many Jews and stayed here as a stateless person. Once he stayed in Paris for almost a year without a passport. But then he was told to leave, which he did. Since then, he has been continuously staying in Germany.

From the beginning, I have known him as a Pole from the heart and soul. Ever since Germany and Poland have become enemies, and the German troops have marched inside Poland, Nowack is mad with anger. He is out of his wits and does not know how to let out his wrath. My son and I who live with him are the ones who have to bear the brunt. Since the German troops marched in Poland, Nowack has been listening to the foreign broadcasts to keep himself informed of the political situation. When I requested him to stop it, he said that they at least reported the reality. What the German bulletins and the newspapers told were all lies. Though he is aware of the fact that

listening to foreign stations is banned, he continues with it as before. When my son and I warn him, he turns mean and cheap. I would also like to point out in this context that the accused is very dangerous and does not hold back from acts of violence. I have had to experience this many times in my life. Nowack is filled with so much hatred for the Führer that he says things like, "The Führer and his cronies would rot and be hacked in pieces. All German would have to rot. A bomb would fall down and finish all Germans. It was a matter of great pleasure that the Polish people were fighting the German troops bravely". In his view the Germans could not overcome Warsaw so easily etc.

I have repeatedly been threatened with beating by Nowack whenever I contradicted him. Expressions like " You German pig!, you fanatic German pig!" are a part of his everyday vocabulary. Before the German-Polish tension the condition of the accused was still tolerable. But after the occupation of Poland, his anger and frustration know no bounds. One can no more get along with him. The informer Baum has often had arguments with the accused on the issue of his attitudes towards the regime. In the end, I would like to request you, that my statement should not be known to Nowack , till he is taken into custody. Otherwise, as I have already pointed out, my son and I will fall prey to his violence and fury."

On 20 September 1939 the accused was arrested by the Gestapo, he accepted almost all the details given by the denouncer Baum, but added that he had no criminal record in Poland or elsewhere. He however, deserted his troop, which was fighting the Russians in 1920. Since then he had been in Düsseldorf where he set up a saloon. During the course of the interrogation the reason for his denunciation was explained by him as follows:

" I have been told about the accusation levelled against me by the witnesses. The only thing that I have to say on this is that I have fallen prey to an intrigue. I have been noticing for quite some time that Melanie and Baum entertain intimate relations. She has gone out with him many times and he has been in our house in my absence. Once I came home unexpectedly and saw that Baum was in the kitchen with

Melanie. The door of the kitchen was open so I could hear that they were both criticising me. She told him that she was sick and tired of me. This all happened when the tension between Germany and Poland had not yet begun. I appeared on the scene when they were in their real element. I reproached Melanie regarding her behaviour and about Baum's presence in the kitchen. She retorted at me and said that she had not done anything unbecoming of her. She only spoke to Baum about her fears if he were to be interned in the case of war for being a Pole. That I got enraged with this is but natural. For this reason I forbade my house to Baum. And ordered Baum to go to the saloon at once, where he should actually have been. Similarly Lora, another witness is a close friend of Melanie. She can not stand me as I banned her entry into my house. She used to be perpetually in our house and got things from Melanie to drink and eat. She wanted to borrow some money from me and I refused to oblige her. One can understand her behaviour towards me in the light of all this. All the allegations against me are fabricated and have been levelled against me by all of them together to finish me off as I come in Melanie's way. It is also noteworthy that only these three witnesses have come up against me. Melanie's son is influenced by his mother. I request to interrogate the other tenants of mine in this matter and see if they have something to say against me. "

Melanie came to the Gestapo office on two consecutive days after Nowack's arrest, on 21 and 22 of September to narrate more of his anti-regime statements. The Gestapo remarked on the 22 September as follows:

"Nowack is a Pole by birth and loves his fatherland as he himself accepts. He is accused of having always taken a pro-Poland stand. Since the tension between Poland and Germany started, as the statements of the witnesses so clearly demonstrate, he increasingly behaved in an anti-German and pro-Polish manner. Though Nowack has been earning his bread in Germany for years now, he still has the cheek to insult our Führer, his colleagues and the German people. The assertion of the accused that the charges against him are fabricated is not correct. The witnesses make a very good impression and have

reported only out of a sense of duty to put a stop to his goings on, particularly as the accused acted with such impudence in Germany in spite of being a Pole. There is a need to make it clear to the accused by taking away his freedom for a long time that there is no place for instigators in Germany.”

His case was transferred to the Special Court, which sentenced him for one year and six months imprisonment on the charges of listening to the enemy broadcasts¹¹³ and indulging in malicious gossip. After his release, he was again taken into custody on 20 March 1941 and transferred to the Buchenwald concentration camp on the 9 June 1941. Thereafter there is no clue as to what happened to him.

Needless to say that the Gestapo did not believe Nowack’s story even if it was true. His status as a stateless Pole and his obvious sympathies for Poland sealed his fate. Even though a clear ‘private motive’ for denunciation can be found in the file, it is not considered as one by the Gestapo who found the denouncer and the witnesses more ‘trustworthy’. Had there been no private motive Melanie would not have come to the Gestapo office time and again to bear witness against him.

Case 2: In this case again the wife played the role of an accomplice of the denouncer. The Pole Schneider fell victim to his tenant. On 20 August 1940, the barber Knut phoned up the Gestapo to say that he wanted to give in a letter probably containing anti-state contents to the police.¹¹⁴ The letter was collected from the residence of Knut. Upon inquiry he also informed the police that he lived in the house of Schneider as a subtenant. Therefore the behaviour of Schneider and family was known to him from close quarters. Schneider, who had been living in Düsseldorf for quite some time, had a citizenship of Germany whereas his parents to whom the letter was addressed, and who lived in Warthegau, were Polish. The lord mayor had expropriated the property of his parents in Gnesen. Schneider was extremely provoked by this and had said “Germans are thieves, who want to become rich on the property of others. But the day of judgement would come”. Knut depicted

Schneider as a person who did not approve of the NS state and still interacted with persons, who earlier belonged to the Communist party of Germany. Frau Schneider was on the contrary favourably disposed towards the regime and it was with her consent that the letter had been given here.

The said letter was written in Polish. The Gestapo immediately arrested Schneider. During his interrogation, Schneider told the Gestapo that he did not belong to any political party. He was living in the second marriage since 1931 with his present wife and two children. The fact that his parents were deprived of their property in this old age naturally enraged him. He was made to sign an apology letter for the harsh words used in the letter. His case was referred to the Special Court and the Gestapo in the meanwhile inquired from neighbours and colleagues about his political views and nothing negative was reported by anybody. In the file there was no statement from the wife. It is difficult to say whether her statement went missing or if the Gestapo did not interrogate her at all. But in his statement the denouncer again stressed the political credibility of Schneider's wife as a staunch National Socialist and Schneider's Communist leanings.

It was easy to guess that the wife and the tenant acted hand in glove. How else did he get hold of the letter which was supposed to be posted to Schneider's parents, if not through his wife? Apparently, there was something cooking between the two, who wanted to get rid of Schneider by incriminating him through the false charges of indulging in Communist activities.

Case 3: In yet another rather extreme case, where the denounced husband was sentenced to death, the wife swore to finish him off as she had turned to other men in the meanwhile and wanted to go on with her sexual exploits unhindered.¹¹⁵ In October 1944 Hilda Berthold went many times to the local NSDAP leader to report on the written and oral anti-state comments of her husband. The party did not take her seriously for it knew the personal reasons behind the act. The real reason apparently, was that after her husband went to the front in 1940, she turned to other men and was often found soliciting the

travelling soldiers at the railway platform. She had become quite notorious for her behaviour.

Berthold's husband came home in February 1945 from the front unexpectedly. He was utterly shocked to find a soldier in his house, who was moved to her mother's house first and later to the house of a neighbour who happened to be a friend of the wife. The wife herself moved in with the soldier. When she came back to her husband's house, a massive fight broke out between the two. According to the wife she was beaten up and the husband threatened to kill both her and her mother. The next day she went to report her husband this time she was determined to do something definite. Her husband was arrested. He was accused of undermining the morale of the military. When the court wanted to release the accused for lack of evidence, the wife said, "What? Lack of evidence? I can prove his anti-regime attitude and I swear to do it." She repeated her statements under oath and her husband was sentenced to death. She severed all contacts with her husband and never appealed for mercy. However, as the war came to an end soon after, the sentence could not be carried out. The husband remained in prison and returned in 1947. Two years later he got a divorce.

Case 4: In our next case the real reason for the denunciation is not clearly discernible. The denunciation comes via the *NSDAP* office.¹¹⁶ Frau Bäumler born on the 9 May 1893 in Saarbrücken, working at the *Rheinische Landeszeitung* made following statements against her husband, Herr Bäumler employed in the Construction Company Bläser as a worker:

"My husband comes home drunk at least thrice in the week and starts abusing the government. On Friday and Sunday too, he came drunk. I told him that should let me sleep as I had to get up at 5' O clock to distribute the newspaper. He retorted, "you work for the 'Hurrenblatt'(A paper of whores). The whole government is a bundle of whores" He often expressed his sympathies for Russia and said he would go to Russia. Such statements were issued by him not only in a drunken state.

Frau Bäumlner thought that he should either be sent to a concentration camp or a workers camp. She again came to the Gestapo office on the 26 November 1937 to add to what she had said in her earlier denunciation:

My husband came back home last Saturday in a drunk state and kicked up such a row that the whole house was disturbed. I am not in position to say, whether my husband makes such (political) statements in public. I have not been involved in politics before the seizure of power. Today I am a member of the DAF and NSV. For the past two years I have been working in the Rheinische Landeszeitung as a Newspaper vendor. “

Frau Bäumlner seemed to be a new, and therefore enthusiastic convert to the Party ideology, and she stressed this aspect after some days of filing the case, apparently upon noticing that the Gestapo had not made any progress on the matter so far, and so definitely wanted to see the husband penalised. The real motive for her enthusiasm to have the husband punished was not clear from the file and the Gestapo also did not make further enquiries on the matter. The past record of the accused said that he was imprisoned thrice in 1907, 1910 and 1923 for a period of 6 months and a day altogether and fined R. M. 6 in addition for various cases of theft. He had been a member of the *KPD* before the seizure of power. Now he was not a member of any party.

Herr Bäumlner had the following to say in his defence:

“It often happens on a Saturday or a Friday that I drink. Especially when I get angry about the fact that I work and still do not get anywhere. I do not remember having said, “The whole government is a bunch of whores”. It may be possible that I spoke about Russia, by that I meant White Russia. I would like to mention in this context, that I was in Russia between 1914 and 1920, and I had enjoyed good times there and had earned well then. However, I promise to be careful with my words in future and take the warning seriously.”

Herr Bäumlner “

Though not many details of the personal life and tensions between the couple are revealed in this file, it seems like one of those families, whose lives were radically altered by the last phase of economic crises when people shifted loyalties from one political party to another. While the husband chose to march with the *KPD*, the wife was carried away by the *NSDAP*. Once the latter came to power, the wife got a job in the party news paper, which again reinforced party values and propaganda in her to the extent that she reported her husband to the police. Though, the political conviction does not seem to explain the whole story, for lack of evidence, we can only contemplate on other possible reasons. One thing is however clear that she wanted to get rid of her husband, but the handling by the Gestapo did not correspond to her desire, and she could not be successful in her mission.

An ‘Aryan’ wife of a Jew

In the following case the ‘Aryan’ wife did not hesitate in approaching the Gestapo in 1942 against her Jewish husband knowing fully well that it could mean a death warrant to him. The report filed by the Criminal Assistant on the 14 September 1942 stated that his attention was drawn to the fact that some Jews were present as spectators at the freshly bombed site. On further observation, he found L. Reinhardt among the crowd, hiding his star with a file. The Criminal Assistant followed him to the tram and asked him if he was a Jew. He at once removed his file from the breast and replied in the affirmative. At the next station, he was taken into custody. On the 29 September 1942, however, the story took a curious turn when his ‘German blooded’ wife entered the scene. On her own accord, she appeared in the concerned Gestapo office to state that she wanted to get a divorce from her Jewish husband. At the same time she requested that her husband be transported along with other Jews to Theresienstadt. She submitted a copy of the divorce papers for the information of the Gestapo.¹¹⁷ The divorce case was filed by the “German blooded” wife on 26 September 2001, on the plea that their marriage was long broken and it was not possible for her to carry on with a Jew who was irritable and perpetually in a bad mood. She was so

exhausted with the everyday tensions that she could no longer function in her full capacity as a designer. In the meanwhile, she sent a letter to her husband in the jail, which was intercepted by the prison postal surveillance. The contents of this letter were in sharp contrast to what she claimed in her divorce appeal. The letter said:

“My dear husband,

In my whole life, it has never been so difficult for me to write a letter as it seems today. My heart is full of sorrow and pain. How could it happen at all, that you, the righteous of all, could be so careless about the file? I think that you must have been so affected by the destruction in the city, that you did not pay any attention to it. But now you must act bravely and bear it with dignity. You have neither stolen nor cheated nor murdered. Just because of a careless mistake they have put you behind the bars. I think about you day and night, and would do every thing for you that lies in my limited capacity. You must promise me that you would remain strong and healthy as far as possible. The punishment can not be very severe and I hope to see you soon.

Your wife”

A copy of this letter was sent to the civil court by the Gestapo and it adversely affected her divorce proceedings. Her case was dismissed on the 10 November 1942, as the court was not convinced after looking at the letter that their marriage was in the doldrums as claimed by the wife. The Gestapo on its part sentenced her to 21 days of imprisonment for giving them wrong information about her personal life. The wife had probably written this letter, so full of love and concern, to keep her husband in the dark about her plans of divorce and he, till the end remained oblivious of it. The Gestapo, on the other hand did not allow even the show of false compassion on her part towards her Jewish husband and punished her too. The Jewish husband’s fate was sealed for good anyway. He was sent to the concentration camp on 15 December 1942 where he perished on 27 January 1943.

Women denouncers as relations

In the case studies, it has also been observed that the women used denunciation not just against their husbands but against his relations as well, particularly against the female relations of the husband. So, parents-in-law, and sisters-in-law often fell prey to the daughters-in-law.

Case 1: The widow Schade was denounced by her daughter-in-law on 25 July 1940 to the criminal police for having aired anti-regime views.¹¹⁸ Upon this her son and her daughter came to the rescue of their mother and portrayed the denouncer as a quarrelsome woman given to fits of anger. The husband of the denouncer added that she was divorced from her earlier husband as the guilty party. The denouncer later herself withdrew the case in the interest of her husband.

Case 2: In the following case where the victim happened to be a Jew, she almost suffered from a persecution complex at the hands of her sister-in-law.¹¹⁹ The Jewess Frankenberg came on the 13 May 1941 to the *Regierungsvizepräsident* to narrate her tale of woes of being constantly chased out of every rented house soon after she moved in there. A Gestapo officer, she claimed, knocked at the door of the land lord to tell that she was wanted by the police. This said Gestapo officer was acting at the behest of her sister-in-law, an 'Aryan', who did not want her to live in peace. She said that this forced her to change houses more than fifty times and from all of them she was chased out. On the 10 May 1941 she was arrested by the Gestapo for concealing her identity and later shifted to Ravensbruck where she eventually died on 14 September 1942. The Gestapo reports portrayed her as mentally unstable and unfit for any questioning. Her story was not believed by them at all. The Gestapo reports also revealed that Frankenberg tried committing suicide while in custody. She tried jumping out of the transport carrying her.

Case 3: Another instigating sister-in-law of a Jewess pushed her brother and the husband of the Jewess to denounce his wife, which resulted in her death.¹²⁰ Herr P. married the Jewess Frau P. on 18 March 1908. They had got

to know each other in their work place. The two were initially happy with each other and twenty years later in 1928, the wife started to create trouble, which may have been due to her menopause. She became nervous, jealous and picked up fights with her husband. In 1934, the husband, Herr P. filed a divorced case, which he withdrew on his wife's apologies. In 1944 however, Herr P.'s sister Frau K. shifted in their house after her house got bombed out, and the fights began all over again, this time more frequently between the sisters-in-law. On 18 February 1944 Frau P. asked Frau K. to leave the house after a fight. The *NSDAP* block leader 'volunteered' to help out the fighting parties. At first Frau K. hesitated but later came with her brother to the block leader and they both spoke among other things of the anti-state attitude of Frau P. The block leader advised Herr P. to take divorce from his Jewish wife.

In March 1944, as the situation at home became 'unbearable', Frau K. denounced the Jewess sister-in-law for sedition. Her brother supported her in front of Gestapo officers. In addition, on 20 March 1944, Herr P. filed a case of divorce and the case was decided on 5 April 1944 declaring Frau P. as the guilty party. Frau P. was arrested by the Gestapo on 22 March 1944 and shifted to Auschwitz in July. By the end of October she ended her life there.

The attitude of the Gestapo

We now take up the third angle of the story, namely the Gestapo, which was used by the wives as the means to avenge themselves on their husbands. This angle was most important in the ultimate analysis as it played the most vital role of deciding the fate of the accused.

By the assessment of the Gestapo's response to the issue of denunciation by the spouses, it can be gauged that the Gestapo was quite concerned about this phenomenon. The willingness to accuse a spouse alarmed both the Gestapo and the Reich's Justice Ministry. In the war years, when the strain of separation and general conditions of war placed an increased burden on marriages, steps had to be taken. On 24 February 1941, Gestapo headquarters in Berlin sent a letter to all local Gestapo posts

concerning the matter of relatives-particularly married couples.¹²¹ That such cases were not isolated ones, is made clear by the circular letters sent to local judges by the Minister of Justice. Thierack, the minister of justice, wrote to the judges on 1 November 1944 about how they should react in separate kinds of cases where either husband or wife denounced the spouse. He pointed out that there was no generalised duty to denounce whenever there was a suspicion of a crime and that the state did not demand breach of the marriage trust as a matter of routine. On some occasions, such as in the event of milder crimes, the community had a 'fundamentally greater interest' in the 'continued maintenance of the mutual trust of the married couple'.¹²² While the citizen's duty to the community had to take precedence over marriage vows in cases of serious offences (such as high treason, undermining the morale of the military, murder, providing abortions), the minister explained, every denunciation of a spouse which eventually resulted in the discovery of a serious crime did not automatically provide grounds for winning in a divorce court. Nor were judges to conclude that the denunciation of one spouse by the other in itself constituted grounds for divorce.

Even though the official line pointed out only the 'serious political offences' in this particular context, our study tells us that the 'racial deviance' was treated more harshly. A Jew, for example, brought to the Gestapo at the high point of the final solution could hope for no salvation, he had to land up in the concentration camp and subsequently in the death factory, if he could survive the concentration camp. A Pole similarly, could not hope of getting away with just a warning. Irrespective of whether the alleged crime was proved or not, or whether there was a clear personal motive behind the denunciation, as in the case of the Pole Nowack, he had to reckon with harsh measures. An 'Aryan' could hope to get away if his wife was the sole accuser without any other witnesses. Drunkenness, a 'clean past record', a service record in the army were factors that could save him from the venom of his wife, but if he proved to be a functionary of the *KPD* or even sympathiser, a wife alone sufficed to ruin him. Similarly, the crime of undermining the moral of the army was taken very seriously by the system and here again a wife's

testimony could prove fatal for the husband. If the spouse could gather more witnesses, the accusation was more likely to bear fruit, even though the motive was private. Airing the disapproval of the regime in front of neighbours or guests could endanger the effectiveness of the dictatorship, if it went unheeded.

Even for those wives who falsely accused their husbands, the Gestapo carried out the function of a 'disciplining' and 'moralising' agency, which did to some extent serve the purpose of the denunciation. Things like speeding up the case with the health authorities, as in the case of Herr Hof who was suffering from venereal disease, or getting such confessions out of the irresponsible and aggressive husbands that they would act as responsible heads of the household, as in the case of Herr Kremer, are but a few examples. This role that the Gestapo took upon itself of 'disciplining and punishing' the 'erring husbands' points to a very interesting aspect for the social history of the Third Reich. There is no doubt that the Gestapo was a political police and it was the primary duty of Gestapo functionaries to deal with matters relating to political crimes. But the cases presented here show that the dynamism unleashed by the provision of denunciation willy-nilly dragged the Gestapo into matters relating to social and civic nature and that they did spend their time, energies and meagre resources, human and material, in such matters to a considerable extent. Since they had orders to investigate cases where the spouses were denouncing each other, they could not shove them aside and had to make detailed inquiries. Even if they discovered that the denunciation was 'personally motivated' or was an act of revenge by the spouse, they did assume the role of a 'patronising' authority some times in putting homes 'in order'. This means that wives were to some extent able to use this organ of the state quite effectively for their own agendas. The use and abuse of power was not just happening from top to bottom, it was from the bottom upwards too. The interplay of denouncers with the Gestapo was not a one way zone but a two-way traffic. The role of the Gestapo was eventually modified or extended to deal with matters of social nature. In some files consisting of 20 pages we find 15 or more pages relating to the investigation of the real

motive behind the denunciation of the spouse, the resulting correspondence to various agencies and ultimately concluding reports. This shows how much time was invested in these cases.

The state, by punishing the denounced, if 'found dangerous for the state' was itself acting as a home breaker. It still wanted to keep up the facade of being concerned about the welfare of the family. The state could not overlook the fact that it derived its legitimacy from these very people. The state and the authorities therefore, would not have liked to go a long way in supporting any one of the spouse, who dismantled the sanctity of the institution of the family and marriage. But ironically still handed out the option of denunciation to the partners to denounce each other, if it were done in the interest of the state and if it helped the state to weed out the enemy from within.

Social milieu, the private and the public

In the light of this evidence, it can be said that denunciation in the family remained predominantly a niche of women. We may see a number of men as relations denouncing their women counterparts especially under the categories prisoners of war, forced labour etc. for their wives' illegal involvement with foreigners, but in all the other categories researched so far, family and marriage, remained the spheres where women dominated as accusers. Quantitatively though, the numbers do not run in hundreds but certainly in dozens. Besides, it is the quality of the evidence presented, which calls for historical inquiry. It points towards trends that are disconcerting at times and compelling at other times making it impossible to ignore them.

Denunciation gave women an extra-judicial forum to vent their frustrations and agonies of conjugal life. The Gestapo offered a different space and different solutions to conjugal lives, different from divorce, for example. There were situations when a husband became overbearing but not to the extent that the wives would have wanted a divorce. Besides, initiating a divorce suit in the civil court would have cost a lot in terms of money. These

wives were essentially housewives, mostly confined to homes and thus financially dependent on their husbands. There were cases where a constant negotiation of power was going on between the spouses rather than a wish for an abrupt end to the relation. Some merely wanted to teach their husbands a lesson and show them that it was not only they who wielded power. Even a wife could exercise it when the need arose. Especially in cases of women who were abandoned by their husbands and who still wanted them back, the intervention of the Gestapo was sought by means of denunciation to get back their husbands. The cases of divorced wives are even more interesting. The reason for divorce was very often cited as a violent disposition of the husbands and the husbands in such cases were declared as the guilty party. Still the wish to avenge the physical and verbal abuse did not go and these women resorted to the Gestapo to do the needful. Just as alcoholism, sexual and physical violence and sexual promiscuity surfaced as peculiar masculine behaviour, denunciations and divorce as defence mechanisms or as desire for emancipation remained specific to female behaviour.

It can not be reconstructed from the sources how aware the wives were of the consequences of their denunciation or whether they had really wished for the verdict that their husbands got from the Gestapo. It was as if the wives removed all blinds and curtains from the glass windows and doors of their houses for the inquisitive and searching eyes of the Gestapo functionaries. This made their lives and their troubles transparent for observers and investigators who then forced their entry into homes. Equipped as these onlookers were with arbitrary powers, it was no longer possible for the hostesses to determine, what the Gestapo functionaries could lay their hands on and what they should spare. Subsequent searches, interrogations, and turning the house upside down snatched the agency from the initiator of the process. What destiny awaited the accused party, was outside their control. they could not wind back the process. But at the same time it is true that wives neither withdrew their cases (except in one against a mother-in-law) nor appealed for mercy.

As far as the milieu and class background of denouncers is concerned, it remained predominantly an urban and working-class phenomenon. With the exception of the lady doctor, who accused her husband of conducting illegal abortions, all the other reports were filed by working class wives.¹²³ It does not however, indicate that women of the middle class were not subjugated by their husbands, but the means they resorted to may have been different, besides middle classes morality and codes may have come in their way in undertaking such measure. In any case, working class women did retaliate more openly and blatantly to the oppression at home.

A common perception of these working class wives, which may have been derived from their working class reality, was that they would be able to get rid of their husbands merely by stamping them as ex-Communists or Communists. They believed that their husbands, if not eliminated forever, would at least 'be educated' in a work camp or a concentration camp. Given the kind of ruthless persecution Communists were subjected to right from the onset of Nazi rule, it is not surprising that these wives thought so.¹²⁴ But they were probably not so much educated on the fact that the Gestapo had its own mechanism of sifting denunciations. In most cases, the husbands were accused without any basis of being Communists. Wives found this to be an effective means to retaliate against constant mishandling and beating by husbands. But this should not lead us to conclude that the Communists were averse to the idea of beating their wives or treating them in callous manner.¹²⁵ In some instances, Communists were reported by their battered wives as well. These wives chose to turn to 'higher patriarchal' authorities as an antidote.¹²⁶ They had their own reasons to be disenchanted with the Communist politics and its talk about equal rights to women. They perhaps had more faith in Hitler's valorisation of motherhood¹²⁷, which prompted them to go and complain about their husbands to Hitler's men.

This whole generalisation however, would have to be revised in case of Jewish and Polish husbands who were degraded to the lowliest of ranks by the racist regime. Race was a bigger determinant than gender, and in those

cases women were in any case not the oppressed lot. They rather took advantage of the racial policies of the regime to get rid of their husbands. For these husbands, such denunciations were fatal, irrespective of the intention of the denouncer. A purely personal reason for denunciation was no reason for acquittal and also the seriousness of the crime also did not matter much.

Our stories contradict the claims of Diewald-Kerkmann that the family as a primary unit had a great tendency to act like a shield even in National Socialism, which could not be penetrated even by the all pervasive National Socialist ideology.¹²⁸ Her position can be explained by the kind of sources she used. Her study was based on the cases of denunciations that were reported to the party. Our cases however, show that the NSDAP was most often not the place where the housewives went to denounce. They preferred to approach the Gestapo or the police directly. Among the fifteen cases from the Gestapo files of Düsseldorf, only five denouncers reported the matter to the *NSDAP* control organisation, nine of them preferred to take up the matter directly with the Gestapo or the criminal police, while in one case this information could not be traced. Moreover, in those cases that were routed through the party instances, we observe a cell leader or a party member encouraging and supporting the wife in her actions. It is in such situations that the report is first launched at the party office. When the wives decided to act entirely on their own, they preferred to take up the matter directly with the Gestapo or other police services. In fact, not in just my study but a whole lot of other works on denunciations have made a mention of denunciations within the family.¹²⁹ Our stories also contradict Eric Johnson's claim that denunciation by wives against their husbands was a 'myth', and further show that they denounced not because of 'the all pervasive Nazi *terror*'¹³⁰, but for their own agendas.

We also observed that the *Heimtückegesetz* really provided wives an ideal opportunity to accuse their husbands. Eleven out of the fifteen cases were found under the category *Heimtückegesetz!* This tendency very much

corresponded to the fact that more than 80% of the files under the head Law Against Malicious Gossip started with a denunciation!

Some of the questions that can be raised, if not answered are: Was denunciation a particular kind of gender behaviour that surfaced in a dictatorial regime? Or was it present in earlier societies and political eras? Did women in earlier periods of history behave in extra-judicial, extra-legal manner to solve these problems? Did they take the law in their hands? And if they did, what other means did they adopt, when an easy option like denunciation was not there?

Finally, a comment is perhaps required in the conclusion on what was happening to the private versus public dichotomy of the civil society. What threat perceptions made people cross the boundaries between the two? We shall look at it from three angles: that of the Gestapo, the wife and the husband.

For the Gestapo, as already pointed out, it was dangerous if a ‘serious enemy’ of the state like a Communist, a defeatist, a Jew and so on went unreported even by a spouse. Even if it led to the break up of the family, it was still desired. Here the state did not hesitate to intrude into the private realm of the family with total disregard for the right to privacy of the marriage partners or for breach of trust by the spouse. These documents showed the contradiction between the political expediency of the state and the theoretical ideal that it professed and propagated about the ‘Aryan’ family and marriage.¹³¹

The same privacy of the household however, became dangerous, isolating and alienating for a wife who was being beaten, ill-treated, deserted or betrayed by her partner and she herself chose to invite intrusion into the private realm by a political agency. Here, ‘gender troubles’ forced her to break into the ‘big world’ of politics. Though these troubles originated in the context of the family and the family was so to say the arena, where the struggle was going on, the whole discourse reached the wider public and entered the realm

of state and politics as soon as the state agencies, witnesses and others entered the scene. The agency that a woman thus acquired and practised was a socio-political one in that political and social concerns were drawn into the private. The 'big world' of politics was enacting itself in a miniature form in the 'small world' of the family. Just as the 'private' was dragged into the 'public' by the state from above, the political was drawn into the private by house wives who denounced their men for 'political offences' as well as for social and moral offences. It was not just a matter of settling scores with the patriarch of the house. They were openly expressing a wish for emancipation, claiming their rights within the household for individual freedom, for freedom over their bodies. They were making an issue out of rape within marriage, domestic violence, sexual and physical abuse and so on.

In the behaviour of the husbands, we see the 'big world' of politics quietly moving into the 'small world' of family when the public realm became dangerous. These husbands who had a public life in their work place situations were living a dual existence of obedience in public and defiance in private. The dictatorship silenced them in matters that belonged to the public and political realm, which forced them to withdraw into the inner realm of privacy within the family. Typical comments of the Gestapo like "politically the accused has not come into notice before" bear testimony to this silence in public. These husbands came back home frustrated and drunk after work and criticised their leaders, the state, prevailing circumstances, war, Jew baiting and whatever else they thought was wrong with the system. Privacy within the household was perceived by them as a space for unmasking, for releasing tensions and anxieties that had got accumulated due to curbs on their freedom of expression. It is another matter that even this private realm had got so polluted with the hatred and aggression of the outside world that it no longer remained safe for the act of unmasking. Sometimes, the head of the household became 'the other', an outsider, and found himself in minority. This situation arose in families where the wife was living in second marriage and had brought her children from the earlier marriage to live with her. The mother, being the biological mother of the children derived added

strength from them against the stepfather. She could use her children as ready witnesses any time a conflict-situation arose between husband and wife. In such situations the act of unmasking became even more dangerous for the husband who was opening himself out before potential and real denouncers who threatened to reach out to wider circles of friends and relations resulting in serious consequences for him. The historian Karin Windaus-Walser rightly suspected that it was not only the power of the father but also the power of mother that showed its ugly side in National Socialism. She argued that they created a destructive cosmos together.¹³² Our stories, in addition, show that the mother power could also be directed against the father on certain occasions. The private versus public dichotomy was not just being dismantled from above but also from below. The public and political did not remain isolated from private, domestic and personal. Therefore, The 'big world' of politics did not stand over and above the 'small world' of family. The two got inextricably intertwined.

Chapter III

Fishing in Troubled Waters?:

Gender Perspectives on Denouncers and Their Jewish Victims

This chapter starts by touching upon contentious issues in the historiography of the Holocaust and state sponsored mass killing of the Jewish population. By focussing on the ‘small perpetrators’ and their behaviour as denouncers largely in the context of the pre-Holocaust period, it tries to understand how popular complicity and collaboration made eventually the Holocaust possible. The next section gives a brief sketch of the social landscape of Jewish life in order to capture the gradual tightening of the legal noose and to contextualise how ordinary men and women used this for their own battles with the Jews through acts of denunciation. A further section goes on to describe the nature of Gestapo files on the Jews, my selection criteria, and the subcategories studied in the chapter. The main body of the text thereafter presents quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Gestapo files in terms of numbers of men and women denouncers, their spheres and motives, and the attitude of the Gestapo towards the denouncer and the denounced. A separate section traces patterns of non-compliance and subversion of women that emerged as a by-product of the findings. The last section raises questions about the possible range of persecution of Jewish women that remained hidden in the Gestapo files. These may initiate further inquiry.

Historiographical Setting

History writing on Nazi Germany has still not been able to shrug off the weight of collective guilt thesis, from the times of post war Nuremberg Trials through the *Historikerstreit* in the 1980’s¹³³ to the controversy raised by the publication of Goldhagen’s book ‘Hitler’s Willing Executioners’¹³⁴.

The Holocaust represented institutional persecution par excellence. It was the climax of a long and protracted process of the

persecution of Jews. It harnessed enormous resources, human and material, to solve the 'Jewish Question' at a time when the regime needed them most. Mechanical killing and mass murder, however, do not tell the whole story of the persecution. There were many stages of persecution and there was a gamut of perpetrators' acts preceding the 'Final Solution'.

The state and the party acted hand in glove to persecute the Jews by combining legal means and random violence - starting with the April boycott and reaching a high point on the *Reichskristallnacht* - before the mechanised mass murder. In each of these stages, it demanded the co-operation of ordinary people. This cooperation came in the form of denunciation.

Socio-economic, cultural and legal landscape of Jewish life

Before we go on to study the behaviour of men and women denouncers a brief sketch of the socio-economic and legal existence of the Jews is in order. So much has been written about these aspects that reproducing it here will not contribute anything new. However, a brief mention of some facts would help us understand the context within which the actors of my stories are placed.

The statistics of the German Jewry reflect that at no point did they exceed 1.09% of the total population. By 1933 roughly 500,000 Jews lived in Germany.¹³⁵ Most German Jews were concentrated in large cities. In most of these big cities, the total number of Jews did not exceed 1% of the total population and Düsseldorf was no exception to it.¹³⁶ This concentration in big cities gave a relative anonymity which protected them from racial persecution and pogroms in normal times. Besides, big cities offered more employment opportunities to them. They were mostly in middle-class professions that could be acquired by learning and talent. In the course of Nazi regime, Jews were gradually de-classed as a result of their step by step pauperisation. Various laws and decrees dispossessed them of their government jobs, private practices, properties, businesses and in the end even their personal belongings. This legal attack was combined with terror attacks on them through the SA men, which culminated in the *Reichskristallnacht* on the night of 10-11

November 1938.

There were some 400 pieces of anti-Jewish legislation promulgated by the Nazis.¹³⁷ Though the laws were rendered insignificant in the light of the secret operations from 1942 resulting in their mechanised murder, they are important for the present study as they empowered ordinary citizens against their Jewish ‘offenders’ whom they denounced. The first two laws came in April 1933 namely, the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service and the Law Concerning Admission to the Legal Profession. These resulted in large-scale dismissal of Jews from these professions. Further discriminating laws came in 1938, which were promulgated to expel them root and branch from businesses, legal, medical and teaching professions. The pauperisation drive was intensified after the *Reichskristallnacht*. By the Decree of 12 November 1938, all Jewish property and businesses, retail or wholesale were to be Aryanised.¹³⁸ Jews were forced to sell their properties to the Aryans at a throwaway price. Our stories will show how Aryans grabbed the opportunity to appropriate Jewish assets. All these legal measures were enacted and executed openly, in full public view. The widespread rejection of the violence and hooliganism unleashed by the party on the *Reichskristallnacht* made the Nazis take another route leading to Auschwitz, and the organised mass killings. Henceforth, wild actions and legal persecution gave way to deportations and destruction.

Not all Jews, however, went through the same process at the hands of Nazis. Even in the Third Reich, Jews were not a mass of undifferentiated people. Not all had escape routes, just as not all were physically eliminated. Certain categories of Jews got a differential treatment. The Jews who had fought for the ‘Fatherland’ in the First World War comprised the first category.¹³⁹ They were given some ‘concessions’, and ‘milder punishments’ in the initial years. The differential legal treatment could not shield them for long. Finally, their destiny led them to the death factories via Theresienstadt. *Mischlinge* or persons of ‘mixed Jewish blood’ was another category.¹⁴⁰ The Jews living in mixed marriages or *Mischehe* also enjoyed certain immunities.

Mischehe were divided into two categories, privileged and not privileged. The 'privileged Jews' consisted of Jewish husbands, who had German wives, provided the couple had one or more children classified as *Mischlinge* of the first degree, and Jewish wives who had German husbands, provided that the children were classified as *Mischlinge* of the first degree, or that the couple was childless.¹⁴¹ At the time of the deportations, privileged status was enjoyed by the Jewish parents of a *Mischling* child, and if the only *Mischling* child had been killed in action, and the childless Jewish wife in a mixed marriage for the duration of the marriage. The Jews living in privileged marriage also escaped unscathed from the Holocaust to a great extent. The 'non-privileged Jews' were the Jewish parent whose half Jewish children were classified as Jews and the childless Jewish husband in a mixed marriage (unless his only *Mischling* child had been killed in action).¹⁴² In the above categories of mixed marriages and *Mischlinge*, it was not so much blood and race that decided the fate of the victims as was their religion. Jews who survived also included those who emigrated - if they were not captured and killed from the neighbouring countries. They left the frontiers of the Reich before it was too late. In the initial years, the regime forced the Jews to leave the country. For the Jews, it was never emigration, always only escape.¹⁴³ The highpoint of this tendency was witnessed during the aftermath of the *Reichskristallnacht*, the night of 9-10 November 1938. The Jews were rounded up en masse and thrown in concentration camps. The Gestapo files show that a large chunk of them were set free on the assurance that they would leave the country for good.

Düsseldorf case files and the denouncers

Under the catalogue *Judentum* or Jewry,, there were altogether 1289 files. Considering that there were only about 5053 Jews in Düsseldorf at the time of *Machtergreifung* and that this number was reduced to a mere 1831 after the *Reichskristallnacht* - it was a phenomenally large number. If we exclude the number of minors from the total population of the Jews, it will not be an exaggeration to say that almost all Jewish households had brushes with the Gestapo at some point or the other. They were indeed the most persecuted of all groups in the Third Reich.

All files pertaining to the Jews were stamped with a huge ‘J’. From 1 January 1939 onwards, their names had a middle name, Israel for men and Sara for women. This style of branding, reminiscent of mediaeval practice, was extended to the shops they owned, the houses they lived in, the ration cards they carried, the passports they possessed, the identity cards they were issued, and eventually on their person.

The main category *Judentum* or Jewry was divided into subcategories. These are listed below:

Table 1:

S. No.	Category of Crime
1	Treason
2	Activities for the KPD or SPD
3	Anti – State Activities
4	Protective Custody
5	Ban on Marriage (with ‘Aryans’)
6	Travel Confirmation
7	Illegal Boarder Crossing
8	Breach of Exchange Control Regulations
9	Application for Passport
10	Application for passport with Expatriation
11	Application for Passport with Expatriation and Property related matters
12	Ban on Working and Termination of Jobs
13	Examination of Racial Identity
14	Confiscation of Radio, Telephones etc.
15	Search, Inquiry, Preparations to Leave the Country
16	Verification of the Jewish Identity Cards/ Stars
17	Others
18	Friendly Behaviour towards the Jews

19	Hostile Behaviour against the Jews
20	Race Defilement

Out of this long list, there were some heads where the number of files ran into hundreds, particularly heads 4, 9, 10, 11, where denouncers were rarely found. In most of the cases under categories 9-11, there were passport applications of the Jews who subsequently left the country. Under the category 'protective custody', one came across the *en masse* rounding up of the Jews on the eve of 'night of broken glass'. In all such categories, therefore, it was psychological pressure, emotional insecurity, economic uncertainty and physical threats exercised by the state and the party, that were at work rather than denunciations. It was another matter that people at large remained apathetic and looked away as this happened.

There was a better likelihood of finding denunciations under those categories where the titles betrayed interaction between 'Aryans' and Jews, for example, *Rassenschande* or race defilement '*Judenfreundlich*' or friendly behaviour towards the Jews, *Staatsfeindlich* or anti-state activities of the Jews, and *Kennkartebestimmung* or verification of identity cards /star etc. These are the cases studied in the present work.

Let me briefly outline basic features of these offences:

Rassenschande: This term was an invention of the Nazi regime. Under it fell all those Jews and 'Aryans' who had a physical relationship or who were suspected of having one. This term can loosely be translated as race defilement. No distinction was made between love and rape. Client-prostitute relations, sexual assaults, sexual favours sought in return for material or other returns, sexual advances of an employer towards his secretary or maid were treated in the same spirit as a genuine, emotional involvement between a Jew and an 'Aryan'. In the sexist perception of the regime the assumption dominated that the Jew was a man and the 'Aryan' a woman. It was always the man who sought out, who propositioned and who pursued his sexual desires with aggression whereas the woman was at the receiving end, mostly

responding to male desires. For the racist regime the Jew was an ‘eternal seducer’, a ‘lecherous parasite’ with insatiable sexual urge, who trapped innocent ‘Aryan’ girls. With such a ‘sub-human’ there was no question of a genuine involvement and love, it was always a ‘*Schande*’, a matter of shame for the ‘Aryans’ and a moral, ethical and racial crime on the part of Jews, who defiled the racial purity of the ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’.

Ever since the Nazis came to power all such relations where ‘Aryans’ were involved with Jews came under attack. People involved in such affairs became the target of the SA. The SA men took pleasure in pillorying German prostitutes who failed to be racially selective in choosing their clientele.¹⁴⁴ The Nazi press, especially ‘*Der Stürmer*’, a semi-pornographic antisemitic official Nazi newspaper took upon itself the task of the moral and racial policing of the ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’ by finding and publishing such cases with graphic details of the love lives of the involved couple. The term *Rassenschande* was well entrenched in popular culture and society in National Socialist Germany. The party, police and the Gestapo considered relations between Jews and ‘Aryans’ as criminal before it was legally done. Ordinary people were some times way ahead of the authorities in making such relations public by denouncing them. They derived pleasure in reporting such cases to the Gestapo, *Der Stürmer* and the authorities spontaneously, even before such relations became a ‘crime’ punishable by the law. Soon the need was felt to make laws to ban such relations of race defilement, and legally persecute the ‘lecherous’ Jews and the ‘traitors’ i.e. ‘Aryans’ who dared to indulge in such relations.

This law came into existence on the 15 September 1935, known as ‘Law for the Protection of the German Blood and Honour’. Under this law all marriages between Jews and citizens of German or related blood were banned. Marriages contracted after the passing of the law were declared null and void. Extramarital relations between Jews and citizens of German and related blood were banned. Jews were not allowed to engage citizens of German or related blood as household help under the age of 45. Violation of any of these was

punishable with imprisonment or rigorous imprisonment up to 3 years and fine or both.¹⁴⁵

This law was a major violation of human rights. The personal life of Jews and those involved with them was exposed to all kinds of interference. Last but not least, it opened the floodgates of denunciation. All Jewish male gynaecologists and their patients and female employees, women employees working under a Jewish boss, 'Aryan' maids, as also women prostitutes having Jewish clients came under the scrutinising eyes of the neighbours and colleagues. People who had scores to settle with their Jewish bosses, colleagues or neighbours accused them of race defilement, wearing the mask of law-abiding citizens. Even if the charge could not be proved upon enquiry, the accused had to reckon with protective custody up to fifteen days and mental and physical harassment during interrogations. This traumatic experience often led to emigration, if one could afford and manage to do so, and suicide, if one felt totally helpless.

Serious relationships were forced to disintegrate upon pressure by the Gestapo and the party. This often resulted in the emigration of the Jewish partner. In cases where genuine and long standing relations were discovered, the Gestapo reports gave such graphic details of their personal lives that it was not difficult to imagine how much of mental and physical torture the victim must have gone through. The portrayal of the Gestapo almost bordered on pornographic style, and words like the Jew 'in his true element', 'the obstinate liar' 'Jewish lies' were commonplace.

2. *Staatsfeindlich*: Jews who uttered a word against the regime, the party or its leaders were charged of indulging in anti-state activity. For the same offence normally the 'Aryans' were booked under *Heimtücke-gesetz*. While the content of the charges may have been the same in *Staatsfeindlich* and *Heimtücke-gesetz*, the treatment could vary as the Jews were 'declared' enemies of the state. If they dared to criticise the state or the party they were frequently charged of spreading atrocity rumours and indulging in atrocity propaganda. No matter how they were treated they were not supposed to open their mouth.

3. *Kennkartebestimmung*: As per the laws enacted on 23 July 1938 called *Kennkartezwang*, it became mandatory for all Jews to register themselves as Jews with the authorities and they were issued identity cards branding them as Jews. They had to carry these identity cards on their person; non-compliance was a criminal offence. In addition, by the decree of 17 August 1938, they were forced to add the middle name Sara in case of women and Israel in case of men. The climax of the branding of the Jews came on 1 September 1941 when they were forced to wear the yellow Star of David on their breast. All those violating this law were booked under the head *Kennkartebestimmung*. This branding made them vulnerable to all laws passed from time to time, and if they failed to register themselves as Jew they exposed themselves to further charges of breaking all laws promulgated by the state from time to time. It became very easy for the Gestapo to frame one charge or the other to take them into protective custody and decide their fate independently thereafter.

4. *Judenfreundlich*: Under this category, all those ‘Aryans’ were persecuted who showed sympathy and friendship towards the Jews. Any kind of help extended to the Jews by the *Volksgemeinschaft* was liable to be punished by the Gestapo.

We have thus chosen four representative categories where the likelihood of being denounced was greatest. While the categories *Staatsfeindlich* and *Judenfreundlich* and *Rassenschande* cover the entire period of the Third Reich. *Kennkartebestimmung* typically had cases starting from the time of increasing separation of the Jews from the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Quantitative participation of the *Volksgenossen* in Denunciation

The following table shows the participation of the ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’ in pointing out non-compliance to the Gestapo or other control organisations that in turn forwarded the matter to the Gestapo.

Table No. 2: Causes for initiating a case by the Gestapo Düsseldorf for the following ‘crimes’ of the Jews (1933 - 1945):

Causes	Race Defilement	Anti-regime Activity	Verification of Identity	Friendship with Jews	Total
Reports from the Population	19	17	10	15	61
Own Observation of Gestapo, Postal Surveillance, V-persons, Searches	3	9	7	15	34
No Exact Information	22	4	5	12	43
Total	44	30	22	42	138

Gender differentiation and gender behaviour

The following table further shows the number of men and women among the denouncers separately.

Table 3: A Gender specific Break - up of the denunciation out of the population:

Gender of Denouncer	Race Defilement	Anti-regime Activity	Verification of Identity	Friendship with Jews	Total
Women	4	7	4	5	20
Women Accomplices	2	2	0	0	4
Men	8	8	5	8	29
Anonymous	5	0	1	2	8
Total	19	17	10	15	61

There is a methodological difficulty in making a table like this. There were victims who were repeatedly denounced whereas this table counts only one of them to avoid confusion in the final tally. It was difficult to show it in

this table. In one race defilement case a Jew was denounced twice, once anonymously and once by a man. The table counts only the male denouncer. This in effect increases the number of anonymous denouncers by one more. In another instance a Jew falls victim to women denouncers twice. Further, a case file of *Rassenschande* opened with a denunciation from 'Der Stürmer', but the same victim was denounced again by a woman for the anti-regime activity. This adds two more to the list of female denouncers and makes the total number 22. There were cases where many people or women denounce together. Such cases will be mentioned at length later.

A note is perhaps required to explain the category women accomplices in Table 3. By the women accomplices we mean those women who did not appear on the surface at the first look in the file, but later ended up playing a more important role as witnesses in the course of the inquiry. They might have acted behind the scene or incited a husband or a male neighbour to go to the Gestapo to denounce, or might just have denounced together with the husband or the male neighbour. These women were very important for a gender analysis of the data and should not go unmentioned and unaccounted for. This point can be illustrated with the help of examples from the Düsseldorf files. Here is a case in point:¹⁴⁶

This is a case of 'race defilement' against Leo, a Jew who was charged of having sexual relations with various German women. The case file opened with a report dated 23 August 1938, which said that a businessman, Peter, Leo's tenant - as was apparent from the address and statement of the denouncer and the denounced - appeared here on his own and said that he was informed by the Reichmann couple that an 'Aryan' maid, Bertha, stayed in Leo's house in the state of advanced pregnancy last year. Leo's wife was not there at that time. Bertha started bleeding, upon which Leo consulted a doctor. The treatment cost to the tune of RM. 200. Since it was a large amount, it led to a tiff between the two. After the birth of the child Leo went around telling people that he was the grandfather of the child.'

The denouncer Peter then suggested the Gestapo to get in touch with the Reichmanns to get exact information. First Herr Reichmann was contacted. He could not be of much help. He just aired his suspicion that from the behaviour of Leo towards his maid anybody could gauge that there was more between the two than a mere acquaintance, and suggested turning to his wife for inside information. Now the main witness entered the scene and seconded the statements of her husband. Frau Reichmann had worked in Leo's house after the maid in question stopped working there. She however had the following to add: Leo brought Bertha home to take care of her, early last year when she was in the state of advanced pregnancy. Leo himself told Frau Reichmann about Bertha's pregnancy and bleeding. She was later shifted to another place on the insistence of Leo's wife, who wanted Bertha to go away before she started on her journey to the south. But as soon as she left, Bertha was again in Leo's house and they both went to the doctor regularly. After the delivery, Frau Reichmann asked Leo if he had slept well. Leo's reply to that was that he could neither sleep peacefully nor go to Bertha as she was too tender at that time.

After having finished with her story, Frau Reichmann told the Gestapo that it could get in touch with Frau Neumann to get more information about the whole episode and more. She also said that Leo had made advances towards her too, but she turned a cold shoulder towards him and later left that job. The Gestapo then got in touch with Frau Neumann who had again a thing or two to say about the whole matter. She further suggested the names of a few more women who could help the Gestapo in this matter. The point of narrating the whole episode is that at the first look it seemed like a case filed by a male denouncer but all the incriminating evidence was given not just by one woman but many. Their statements carried more weight than the original denouncer.

Another typical case in point is cited from the category 'anti-state involvement' of the Jews¹⁴⁷. A Jewish woman was denounced by Paul. The letter of denunciation said that his wife, the public prosecutor and the party were maligned by the Jews. He named his wife as the witness. Obviously, when the inquiry started it was not the husband whose statement would carry

weight but that of the wife. It is also easy to guess that he went to the Gestapo upon the insistence of his wife.

Similarly, a war veteran, Baer, who had received the Cross of Honour for his services at the front was denounced by a bartender for entertaining 'Aryan' prostitutes in his house in 1937. Some businesswomen in the vicinity aroused the bartender's suspicion about the activities of Baer. He subsequently gave a tip off to the Gestapo. Baer was caught red handed with an 'Aryan' woman. The interrogation revealed that he had had sex with six 'Aryan' women for money. The *Landgericht* Düsseldorf sentenced him to four years rigorous imprisonment. After his release he was arrested again, taken in protective custody, and sent to a concentration camp from there.¹⁴⁸ Such women who either instigated men to denounce or gave vital information to men with the intention that they go to the authorities and denounce eventually count as no less guilty for their act, and equally responsible for denunciation. They acted as instigators, accomplices and active witnesses. They should not go unaccounted in the whole episode. If we now look at the above two tables, it is clear that roughly about 50% cases came to the attention of the Gestapo as a result of denunciation, and women stopped only a little short of being equal to their male counterparts. (27 women as against 29 men out of the total figure of 62 denunciations). The faceless data hides tragic destinies of Jewish victims, which will be unveiled in the subsequent part of the chapter by citing cases of victims.

Spheres of denunciation

In the table below, we would see the relation and interaction of the denouncer to the denounced. This would help us in determining whether the Jews were plain victims of antisemites, or whether 'Aryans' also combined their race hatred with other gains, or used the pretext of antisemitism to grind their own axe.

Table 4: Place of denunciation and relation to the denounced

Gender of Denouncer	Race Defilement	Anti-regime Activity	Verification of Identity	Friendship with Jews	Total
Women	4 2 neighbours 1 sister 1 unknown	7 5 neighbours 1 colleague 1 employer	4 2 neighbours 2 relations	5 3 neighbours 1 colleague 1 official	20 12 neighbours 3 relations 4 at workplace 1 unknown
Women Accomplice	2 neighbours	2 neighbours		0	4 neighbours
Men	7 5 neighbours 1 relation 1 unknown	8 4 unknown/ public place 2 business rivals 2 neighbours	5 3 neighbours 2 workplace	8 4public place 1 workplace 2 neighbours 1 relation	28 12 neighbours 2 relation 5 workplace 9 public place
Total	13	17	9	13	52

While men and women alike denounced their neighbours and relations to the Gestapo their motives varied at times as I shall show later. Women, especially housewives, expressed their desire to make the community free of Jews more vehemently and openly, especially in the families and neighbourhoods. They virtually acted as *self-appointed neighbourhood watchdogs* and *social mothers of the community* and pointed out Jewish neighbours, fellow Jewish passers-by or inconspicuous fellow shoppers in the supermarkets, groceries and provision stores to the control organisations. These areas were, so to say, the niche areas of female ‘*Volksgenossen*’. This behaviour will become apparent through individual examples discussed in the course of this chapter.

In the light of the numerical data presented in table 3, the claim of Diewald-Kerkmann that women denounced more defeatists and work shy rather than the Jews does not hold good.¹⁴⁹ In our survey we have found very few cases of work-shy and defeatists falling pray to women denouncers. Denunciations by female employers of the work-shy was more of a war time phenomenon when more and more women worked outside the home as able bodied men marched to the front. Diewald-Kerkmann relied on the

denunciations reported to the Nazi Party, where the number of denounced Jews might have been small. But the Nazi party office was not the ultimate destination of the denunciations. It was the Gestapo, which was vested with the authority to deal with this phenomenon and even the party had to redirect such information to the Gestapo. Since 'criminal behaviour' on the part of the Jews was taken seriously, I suspect that people must have turned to the Gestapo or other police agencies at the first instance to report infractions on the part of the Jews. In the earlier chapter also I have pointed out that, even women preferred to land up at the Gestapo office straight away to denounce. Findings of Robert Gellately, who has dealt with denunciations against the Jews also show that merely 13% of all such information came via Nazi Party while 59% came straight from the population.¹⁵⁰

Further, a tendency was found in 'Aryan' women to gang up against Jews, typically a neighbour or sometimes even an employer. We have already seen it in the case of Leo how a neighbour and his wife along with several maids in the employ of Leo bore witness to the *Rassenschande* activities of the accused. Similarly a German soldier's Jewish wife, Frau Müller was denounced by her neighbours, two women and one man, of having illicit relations with a German, Herr Mann while her husband was at the front.¹⁵¹ The letter sent to the Gestapo on the 23 July 1942, was full of moralistic overtones, charging the Jewess of indulging in the 'shameless act' of race defilement and treating her six children callously. The neighbours were 'rightly' enraged about this immoral act and were forced to report the matter to the Gestapo.

The Gestapo took the charge very seriously and enquired about the character of the 'Aryan', Herr Mann, as well as the Jewess involved in the affair. The employer of Herr Mann gave a very positive report about the accused, and the neighbours could not give any eyewitness account of the race defilement. It was also found (out) that the accused had been colleagues in the same firm earlier and Frau Müller had to leave her job when she was pregnant.

In her defence Frau Müller said that Herr Mann was her husband's friend. It was her husband who had asked the former to help her out in times of need before leaving for the front. One day Mann did some repairs in the toilet, which was interpreted by the neighbouring women as something suspicious going on between the two. In fact, on that day Herr Müller was also at home. The Gestapo report concluded that the charges of the race defilement were baseless. However, the Müllers did not go scot-free. A new enquiry started about the origins and religious background of Frau Müller. It was found out that her parents were 'full Jews'. She was, therefore, to be treated as a Jew. It was mandatory for her to have a Jewish identity card and add 'Sara' to her name, which she had not done. She was charged of hiding her racial identity and fined RM. 80. Her husband was expelled from the army in January 1943 for being married to a Jew. Had he not been denounced she would probably have been freed from wearing the star and enjoyed the privileges of mixed marriage. Even a false accusation made in 1942 could have serious consequences! The regime was looking for the smallest possible excuse to transport the Jews to the death factories. Living in a privileged marriage with six children could not shield the victim.

Our next example goes on to show how various women neighbours first fought their own battles with a Jewess living in privileged marriage, a fact not hidden from the Gestapo, and then eventually joined hands together in 1943 to persecute her.

The file of the fifty three-year-old Jewess Frau Schimmel, married to an Aryan, opened with charges levelled against her by the neighbouring women for regularly abusing them and creating disturbance in the neighbourhood apart from issuing anti-regime statements. The denunciation was routed through the circle leader of the *NSDAP*, which was sent to the Gestapo in late 1940.¹⁵² The letter informed the Gestapo that the Jewess Frau Schimmel had regularly been cursing the Rosenthal couple living in the same house who were understood to be decent people. During these fights, which

had had a disturbing impact in the neighbourhood, the local police had to intervene on some occasions.

The Schimmels were characterised by the complainant, a party member, Eberwald as 'asocials'. Besides Frau Schimmel was also accused of issuing anti-regime statements. The circle leader requested the Gestapo to take appropriate action in the matter. The Gestapo's efforts to meet the Schimmels failed thrice as they were not available at their residence for about two months. Eventually they were traced and interrogated. The enquiry revealed that it was just enmity between two neighbours. Frau Rosenthal called the Jewess names, who, on her part was forced to defend herself. Frau Schimmel's husband was a heart patient who also suffered from epileptic fits. Recently, Schimmel had served an eviction notice on the Rosenthals. Besides, Frau Schimmel had filed a defamation and damages suit against Frau Rosenthal. In the latter matter Frau Rosenthal had failed to respond twice to reconciliatory efforts on the part of the arbitrator. Till this issue was resolved, the court could not proceed on the matter of eviction notice.

The enquiry report concluded by saying that the state police had no interest in the matter as there was nothing more to it than just trivial domestic gossip. According to neutral parties the fighting couples had lived in perfect harmony for years. They used to visit each other quite often. The Schimmel couple was summoned and Frau Schimmel was especially instructed to exercise restraint as a Jewess. As far as Frau Schimmel's anti-state statements were concerned, Frau Rosenthal no longer stood by her accusation as she could not remember exactly what Frau Schimmel had said. The case was suspended.

The case file opened again in September 1943 with a letter from the *Sicherheitsdienst* head office at Düsseldorf Neuß to the Gestapo regarding the indecent behaviour of the Jewess Frau Schimmel. It stated that for years the *Ortsgruppenleiter* had had to involve himself with the Schimmels, particularly due to the provocative behaviour of the full Jewess Frau Schimmel. The *Ortsgruppenleiter* reported that all warnings went unheeded as the Jewess knew

that the police were powerless in this matter. A denunciation letter signed by Frau Rosenthal, Frau Eberwald and Frau Jochum was enclosed with the SD letter, which in turn had arrived there from an Army Welfare Officer (*Wehrmachtsfürsorgeoffizier*).

The SD letter warned, “the Jewess can no longer go on like this. The matter should be settled by removing the Jewess along with her Aryan husband, if he does not want to separate from her. Herr Schimmel is a kind of man who is totally under the influence of his Jewish wife and who would not be a loss to anyone”.

The most interesting part of the case file was the enclosed letter of denunciation written by Schimmels’ neighbours, all women, who were determined to get rid of the Jewess and her Aryan husband at a time when deportation of the Jews were in full swing and they were being gassed in Auschwitz and liquidated in Polish and Russian ghettos.

The letter was written on Herr Eberwald’s letter pad with a stamp: *Dipl. Kfm. W. E.* The letter was written in Frau Eberwald’s handwriting and signed by two other women. It was not addressed to any particular office or person so it could be assumed that it was posted to various authorities for taking action, out of which an Army Welfare Officer took an action within a matter of four weeks. The letter read:

“As a soldier’s wife (a prolific mother with six children) I hereby make a request to sternly warn my neighbour, a full Jewess, for once. It has been observed that the Jewess has adopted a particularly provocative stance in the last few months of the war, in spite of the fact that I have already put up with it for so long. Ever since my husband has become a soldier (he was earlier block warden), the situation has become unbearable. The Jewess pours two barrels of liquid manure on the hedge on hot days so that one can no sit outside. I work a lot outside and even eat there. She continuously belches loudly with

open mouth making me feel sick. This goes on the whole day. But she does not do this while talking to others, which she does rather pleasantly. She does not do it either when she sits for hours in the bunker or when she queues up to get the milk. It is only towards us that she turns provocative in every way.

In these times one is happy if one gets an hour of relaxation but one does not get it and boils in rage. I have been patient for many years, but it has become too much now and I can not bear it any longer. On top of this comes the preferential treatment that the Jewess enjoys when the firewood is being distributed in the nearby bunker. Another neighbouring woman whose fortyfive-year-old husband has been a soldier for the past four years asked the polisher for some firewood. She did not get it, and the Jewess got two carts full. This polisher even told Mr. Schimmel, convicted and invalid, who gives himself out as a war invalid, that if he required things like roofing felt, cement etc. he would get it from him. Thereafter roofing felt and cement got stolen and was recovered from Schimmels' house hidden under the plants. I can only tell you that these are only some glimpses of what goes on here. I plead to you to help the parties in this matter urgently. You will also get to know that Schimmel is a cheat. One should revoke his pass for the severely wounded, which has not been obtained through fair means. Even the party knows that he was expelled from the army for insulting His Majesty. If something is not done fast we, soldiers' wives of the neighbourhood, would resort to self help and take action against the Schimmels. There is no other way out.

Hail Hitler,

Frau Eberwald

Frau Rosenthal

Frau Jochum

Note: Frau Rosenthal is a war widow from 1914. She lost her son-in-law in Russia who left three children behind.

Her own son is in the field. The party has warned Schimmel three times. The fourth time she was not there and we have no idea about what followed... Frau Jochum is the soldier's wife I mentioned in connection with the firewood."

This was a crafty, well thought out letter of a highly aware and literate 'Aryan' housewife who knew what kind of ingredients a denunciation letter should contain to make a palatable recipe for evoking a sympathetic response from the authorities. She consciously conjured up black and white images of the denouncers and the denounced projecting all evil on to the Jewess and her husband and all good and virtuous on to the denouncers. Projecting herself as a prolific mother and a soldier's wife and other denouncers as soldiers' wives who had done immense sacrifice for the fatherland, their sufferings during the war year and so on were all efforts in this direction. The men were projected as upright National Socialists, e.g. her own husband was serving as a block warden before being conscripted. Men of successive generations of Frau Rosenthal's family were projected as brave soldiers of the fatherland and so on.

The Jewess was projected as a mischiefmaker, (also alleged to have been a matchmaker earlier) and a quarrelsome woman constantly inventing tricks to harass and irritate the neighbours. While the denouncers were deprived of essential items like firewood, 'the evil incarnate', Frau Schimmel was apparently living in abundance and luxury. Herr Schimmel was accused of procuring his invalid war veteran's card through fraudulent means and therefore should be revoked.

What was equally interesting about the letter was the silence in the letter and not just what was well articulated. Repeated mention was made of the war years and resultant hardships for the ordinary 'Aryan' women like the denouncers, but the letter was silent about any knowledge that they may have had as to what the war years meant for the Jews. Considering that they were

all soldiers' wives, who were themselves quite aware of the realities of the Third Reich, they certainly could not have been totally oblivious of it. Even then they constantly address Frau Schimmel as 'the Jewess'. The letter demanded that the Jewess be 'warned sternly', even though the denouncers were aware that the couple had already been warned thrice and the Gestapo was still searching for them. They knew very well that 'warning' was being used as a euphemism. They actually wanted much more, which should not have been difficult for any correct National Socialist to understand. When Frau Eberwald wrote with much pride that all complainants were soldiers' wives, she completely overlooked that she was filing a complaint against a soldier's wife. It is from the Gestapo record that we learn that Herr Schimmel was a war veteran who sustained major injuries in the First World War, which left him as a physically challenged person for the rest of his life. It was not just his sacrifices for the fatherland that were forgotten by the denouncers, they even projected him as a cheat who procured his pass for severely wounded through fraudulent means. Silence also prevailed upon the serious illnesses that the denounced couple suffered from. Frau Schimmel was a diabetic, who as per the Gestapo reports could not be found at home as she was under medical observation on such occasion including the last enquiry. Similarly, Herr Schimmel suffered from heart problems and epileptic fits in addition to being physically challenged. How could such politically vulnerable and physically ailing people afford to be provocative towards their neighbours all the time? No mention was made of the fact that Frau Rosenthal turned vicious towards the Schimmels only after they filed an eviction suit against her. So possessed was Frau Eberwald by hatred and wrath against the Jewess and so preoccupied with small irritants that the Jewess apparently presented her with, that she hardly even bothered to fabricate anti-regime charges against her, something that was done on earlier occasions. Past prejudices of some and present differences of some other complainants were dished out to the authorities in an anti-Semitic garb. Frau Eberwald perhaps thought that in late 1943 it would have been enough to report a Jewess to make her 'disappear'. There was no need to charge her of any 'offence' so to say. But as we can see these charges were not enough for the Gestapo to take any major action

against the denounced. The file closed with the following remark of the Gestapo:

“Frau Schimmel appeared here in the company of her husband. The Jewess Schimmel was taught to behave herself as a Jewess and not indulge in fights of these kinds with her neighbours otherwise she would have to reckon with harsher state police measures. Frau Schimmel is still under medical supervision due to her diabetes”

In the whole case the Gestapo seemed to be more considerate towards the denounced couple than the denouncers. They had to be so, tied as they were to do their obligation towards an invalid war veteran. If Frau Schimmel survived the Third Reich, which we can not say with certainty as the file closed in 1943, it was because her invalid ‘Aryan’ husband supported her to the bitter end.

‘Aryan’ neighbours friendly to the Jews were not spared either. Two neighbouring woman Frau Rambach and Frau Berg denounced another ‘Aryan’ woman Frau Frei for interacting with two Jews, whose names were also mentioned. The enquiry revealed that there were no objectionable personal relations between the Jews and Frau Frei. However, Frau Frei had to confess that she took up stitching assignments for them once in a while. She was warned strictly. She had to give a written apology and assurance of compliance in future otherwise she would have to reckon with stern state police measures.¹⁵³

Denouncing the Jews while shopping was nothing unusual for women either. Frau Jakob denounced the physically challenged *Mischling* Voss in 1940, while shopping at butchery for indulging in inciting conversation with women present on the occasion. He was charged of saying, “If the idiot British had attacked 6 years back when we were not armed, it would have looked quite different now”.¹⁵⁴ During the enquiry it was established that Voss’s mother was a full Jewess, even though he was a Catholic. Voss contradicted the charges, but the testimony of the denouncers and the cell leader, who had

forwarded the denunciation, were found to be reliable and the *Mischling* was warned sternly.

Women denouncers at the workplace, even though not frequent, were not entirely absent. One such report came from Frau Eller, local leader of the Reich's League for the Physically Challenged. In her letter to the *NSDAP*, she accused Miss Schade, an 'Aryan' nurse, to have sent another 'Aryan' nurse of the league to a Jewish nurse for the purpose of serving Jewish patients. The letter dated 17 December 1937 called for punishment:

*"It needs to be investigated in the first place if the nurse Miss Schade, who recommends a German sister a job in the Jewish Welfare Agency, authorised to call herself a nurse at all and to wear the uniform. She gave the address of the Jewish Welfare Agency to our nurse without having said that it concerned Jewish patients. She learnt this afterwards from the Jewish nurse. I request for protection against Miss Schade and punishment for the latter."*¹⁵⁵

The accused was interrogated and warned. The request for 'protection' in this case demonstrates the extent to which the whole concept of threat versus protection was inverted in the Third Reich. Perpetrators now donned the garb of victims.

Professional rivalry among women working in the same firm could lead to slyly denouncing a colleague as the next case demonstrates. A thirty-five-year-old sales girl, Miss Wollenburg was repeatedly denounced from her work place. The first denunciation letter was sent anonymously but in the second one, two names appeared. The denouncers wanted to keep their identity secret as was apparent from the letter written to the Gauleiter, Düsseldorf. The letter written on 2 March 1943 was a rather crude piece of writing containing innumerable grammatical errors that have been corrected in this version¹⁵⁶. It read:

“We have been writing repeatedly to the Gauleitung, but till today the letters have not been followed up. I would now like to very politely request you to urgently take up the matter of Miss Wollenberg, employed in the firm Brenningmeyer. Miss Woolenberg has relations with men from the Gestapo that involve intimate matters. Her father is a full Jew, so are her mother and brothers. Frau Wollenberg comes to Litzmannstadt where she gets news and objects that are smuggled. Frau Wollenberg is also oriented against the present government, which comes out in her talks. She presents a danger through her exchange of letter from Litzmannstadt. She hides all that she gets from different Jews like money, clothes, silver and other stuff. Frau Wollenberg does not deserve a place as sales girl in the firm. There are definitely more upright women who can take her place.

Miss Wollenberg is extremely refined and cultivated and has put hurdles on the way of many colleagues. Our boss is also (as) cultivated as her. We politely request you to undertake something in this matter urgently or else we shall direct the whole matter to Berlin.

With German greetings,

Two salesgirls from the same firm.

I would like to also request you not to name us before Wollenberg.

Frau Hess

Miss Persil”

Professional rivalry, jealousy, cultural inferiority, and fear of reprimand from the boss, who seemed to be cultured as well as favourably disposed towards the accused, and the fear from apparently high and mighty who were allegedly on good terms with the accused compelled these women

to remain faceless at first. Yet the desire to harm Frau Wollenberg was so intense that when anonymous denunciation did not work they filed a signed report, but turned faceless again when confronted with an enquiry. The inquiry was initiated into the matter immediately and within ten days the Gestapo came up with following findings about Miss Wollenberg:

“Wollenberg is racially ‘Aryan’ who was orphaned at the age of two after which her aunt, married to a Jew, assumed her guardianship. This mixed couple had two sons, one of whom left for France in 1938. The other was evacuated to Minsk after he married a Jewess. Both sons were considered first degree *Mischlinge* as they belonged to the Jewish community. Miss Wollenberg referred to her foster parents as her father and mother and their sons as brothers.

Although Wollenberg had her own house at the time of action against the Jews in 1938 (*Reichskristallnacht*), she kept coming back to her foster parents’ house. She also went to the authorities to find out the whereabouts of her brothers frequently. According to her employer, who seemed quite satisfied with her work, she had lately been deployed in the Air Force as news assistant and sent to Hamburg”.

As far as the two denouncers were concerned, the Gestapo could not make much of headway. One of them had earlier worked in the firm. She was now married and had changed her name. Upon asking she showed her total ignorance in the matter and the other denouncer could not be traced. It is no wonder that the Gestapo could not trace them as they had already cautioned the Gestapo to keep their identity secret. In fact, to be on the safer side they perhaps never revealed their actual identity. One could, however, say for sure that they were her female colleagues, who wanted to see her dismissed and her carrier ruined.

The Gestapo report ended by saying that since the Wollenberg had become Jewish in her ways, she was no longer fit to serve in the air force and should be dismissed. Within three days a letter was sent to the Air Force saying:

“In spite of warnings the German blooded Wollenberg had proven through her behaviour that she felt herself closely tied to the Jewish religion. Therefore her reliability to serve as news assistant stands questioned. It is desired that she be dismissed from her services.”

The denouncers thus managed to save their face and achieved the desired result as well.

Motives

Social jealousies: A jealous neighbour Frau Lambach wrote a letter to the Gauleiter denouncing an ‘Aryan’ woman living next door for having suddenly become rich and being in possession of things that did not go with her status as a sales woman.¹⁵⁷ The denunciation took place in 1940 and the reason for this sudden richness was given as her friendship with a Jew from Cologne, who emigrated long back and with whom she had travelled to Brussels and Spain in 1935. The letter ended with the comment that by reporting this she was “responding to the wishes of the *Führer*, who had called upon his comrades to fight for the community in the same spirit as in the days of struggle.” The victim had to reckon with a postal surveillance but it did not render any results as the Jew had migrated long back.

Our next case would demonstrate how social jealousy towards a better-off Jewish neighbour mixed with racial hatred made this denouncer come out in her true colours. Even though the denouncer tried to give an ideological garb to her denunciation, she failed to hide her jealousy and meanness. The denunciation letter was written on 15 September 1941 and was addressed to the *Schwarzes Korps*, the SS mouthpiece. It read as follows:¹⁵⁸

“Dear Schwarzes Korps,

After much thought, I have decided to write to you, to inform you of a matter relating to the Jewish question and in strict confidence. Before this, I must point it out that it is not now that my ‘Aryan’ consciousness has awakened. In 1903, as a young woman, I lived in the family of a teacher to learn Italian. Once a gentleman came to visit them and asked me if I had heard the beach concert. I said, ‘I did not go there’.

He said, ‘how sad! There was German music there.’

‘What was that’, I said.

‘Pieces of Mayerbeer’.

I replied, ‘Since when has Mayerbeer become a German? He is a ‘Jud’ (a derogatory term used for a Jew). And then I gave a piece of my mind to them on the question of race...Now back to the point, I want to know who is obliged to wear a star? Is a Jewish woman, (though converted since her childhood), married to an ‘Aryan’ freed from wearing the star? (The Gestapo remark in the margin said yes!). I find that disgraceful. I feel that she should wear the star and her husband should do the same. For me an ‘Aryan’ who marries a Jew is a thousand times more to be condemned than the Jewish spouse. In our neighbourhood there are two rich Jewish sisters living with their ‘Aryan’ partners. One of these Jewesses has often been seen without a star, the other one is not seen in public at all. The Aryan husbands had to give up their jobs as conductors after the Jewish laws were passed. One of these couples travels a lot and the Jewish woman lives in Aryan hotels. Is it allowed? Is the race of only the husband taken into account? Then an Aryan woman with a Jewish man must be suffering more under the race law, when she has her husband marked as a Jew.

The family in our neighbourhood possesses a house with 32 rooms. They have two Aryan maids and other helpers, two central heating systems. My daughter and I, (On the contrary) are both widows. We have a small house and not even enough coal to heat our house properly and we have to manage with that. Some time back, I was in Hanover. There I saw that the barracks meant for the bombed out families, had been given to the Jews.”

Hail Hitler

Frau Wunder

The cases of social jealousies resulting in denunciations demonstrated how the newly acquired political power was utilised by the *Volksgenossen* to attack the economic superiority of Jews. This tendency worked at two levels. At the professional level Jews as bosses or owners of enterprises and businesses, big or small, became targets of their ‘Aryan’ subordinate staff or business rival’s denunciations. At another level all middle-class or better-off Jews living in mixed localities were targeted by their poorer ‘Aryan’ neighbours, who could now use their antisemitic hatred to make some material gain by reporting the wealth and property of their Jewish neighbours to the Gestapo. They hoped to appropriate some of it, or simply derived sadistic pleasure in someone’s ruin.

Reichskristallnacht, the night of 9-10 November 1938 was a big watershed in Jewish history, and in the history of civilised nations. The whole Reich witnessed an orgy of arson and violence unleashed by the *NSDAP* under the pretext of taking revenge for the murder of Ernst von Rath in Paris by a young Jew Herschel Grünspar. Ninety-one Jews were murdered in the Reich; many were injured and about 30,000 rounded up and sent to various concentration camps. At least 7,500 Jewish stores were destroyed, 267 synagogues burnt down. And to top it all, on November 14, the Jews were ordered to pay a collective punitive fine of one billion Reichsmark for the

damages incurred to ‘the property of the *Volksgemeinschaft*’ as the perpetrators called it.¹⁵⁹

In Düsseldorf, the party directives for ‘spontaneous action’ were carried out with great drive and enthusiasm. This was an occasion when the higher authorities of the Reich like Hitler and Goebbels had given a blank cheque to their regional and local leaders to organise mass violence against the Jews, and to prove their commitment to the race ideology. It was, however, not the plain zeal that drove the *Gauleiter* Florian to give the Jews a particularly harsh treatment. Florian was apparently involved in a case of corruption in the city administration and big industry, known as the Esch-scandal. This had tarnished the *Gauleiter*’s image, who seized the opportunity the *Kristallnacht* provided him to prove to his party bosses that he was the same old fighter of the *Kampfzeit*. The *Gauleiter* and a crowd of 3000 cynical mob of SA and the Hitler youth broke into the house of *Regierungspräsident* Schmidt, who was married to a Jewess. Amidst the violent chanting of ‘*Schweine-Schmidt heraus*’, the mob turned the whole house topsy-turvy. They were possibly searching for the Esch-scandal investigation documents, which were in the possession of Schmidt. Thus, Florian carried out his revenge in the most primitive way, apart from boosting his image with the party. In Düsseldorf alone, the *Reichskristallnacht* left five dead, hundreds injured and homeless, and five others who ended their lives.¹⁶⁰

Florian was a powerful man, who could rally behind him an army of fanatics to destroy his rival, but no less powerful was the woman next door, who chose to denounce a Jewish widow rendered homeless on the *Reichskristallnacht*. The ‘Aryan’ Frau Schultz landed up in December 1938 at the *NSDAP* office with a post card dated 15 December 1938 addressed to her.¹⁶¹ The sender was anonymous, and the post card was a request to her saying that every time she went shopping, she should greet people with a good morning rather than Heil Hitler! One had already had enough of it on the 9th and 10th of November. It further read that a synagogue was a house of God and

he/she who burned it, committed a crime against God. He/she had no religion. That is why the Germans were suffering so much now and so on.

The anonymous letter gave Frau Schultz the power to name and thus victimise any Jew she wished to, and she used this power to point her finger at a Jewish widow, Hanna, living opposite her house. Frau Schlutz did not know that Hanna was a Jewess until she saw her furniture and other belongings lying outside on the street on the night of the 9 November. Frau Schultz assumed that Hanna must have noticed from her window how she had been greeting every one with Heil Hitler! And thus the letter.

Both the denouncer and the Gestapo went to ridiculous lengths to confirm if it was actually Hanna who had written the letter. And if not she then who? The Gestapo made enquiries from the income tax office about Hanna and found out that the handwriting of the letter did not match either with the said culprit or her daughter. Then the handwritings of all Jews in the office were examined and another women were suspected of the crime. Her house was raided but upon further examination of her handwriting no incriminating evidence could be found. This might just have been a letter of some 'Aryan' neighbour who sympathised with the plight of fellow Jews on the *Reichskristallnacht*, but the brunt had to be born by the Jews.

Antisemitism: Pure antisemitic hatred, which was so prevalent in society, could also be the cause of a denunciation some time. The people who were close to the party or those who did believe in the racist doctrines of the regime mostly did this.

Frau Kohl, a Jewess living in mixed marriage, was denounced by her male neighbour, Langmann who, however, named his wife as the main witness. Frau Langmann told the Gestapo that ever since she had got to know that Frau Kohl was Jewish, she had kept her distance from her. Frau Kohl did not like this and looked for reasons to pick up a fight. Every time she saw Frau Langmann or her children she started abusing them. Once Frau Langmann

warned her, that if she continued this she would report her to the public prosecutor. Frau Kohl maligned both the public prosecutor and Frau Langmann in a fit of rage and even tried to hit her with the floor scrubber.

Frau Kohl said in her defence that the complaint was lodged out of pure hatred of the Jews. Frau Langmann regularly harassed and insulted the Jewesses in the house and called them *Judenweiber*. On one such occasion she confronted Frau Langmann for using abusive language. She blew the whole thing out of proportion and fabricated the story. Frau Kohl never tried to hit her with a scrubber, as she never had one. However, to sound trustworthy to the Gestapo Frau Kohl had to throw light upon her racial origins. She managed to convince the Gestapo with documents, which established her credentials as a half Jew married to an 'Aryan'. Her birth certificate stated that she had been born to a Jewish mother out of wedlock and the father was an 'Aryan'. Her eldest son from the first marriage was an SA member and her husband was also a party member. To prove further that Frau Langmann was by nature a troublemaker in the house, she named a few other neighbouring women as witnesses. Among them figured one more Jewess, who characterised Frau Langmann as a Jew hater who had insulted her on certain occasions.

The concluding report of the Gestapo said that the whole incident was a fight between neighbours and there was no punishable offence found. The Langmann couple had denounced another neighbour on baseless charges. The statements of Frau Kohl were found to be trustworthy as all records regarding her origins and the political leanings of the family were found to be genuine.¹⁶²

'Aryan' women also acted all by themselves in digging out Jews concealing their racial identity, requesting or even cajoling the Gestapo to make inquiries and punish them. One such typical case of denunciation was routed through the *NSDAP*. One 'Aryan' woman Frau Heller wrote on the 10 November 1937 to the *NSDAP* that a Jewess living on the periphery of Düsseldorf lived separately from her husband and received R. M.100. She was

not satisfied with the sum and tried to earn extra. She posed as an 'Aryan' to her employers. The denouncer thought it desirable to find out if the Jewess was still telling lies to everyone. She also wondered how was it still possible for the Jewess to get away with such insolent behaviour everywhere.¹⁶³ The denunciation cost three weeks jail to the victim.

This case was also indicative of the fact that many 'Aryans', even after the introduction of the star of David, showed their inquisitiveness about various laws stigmatising the Jews and helped the regime to hound out Jews who were not complying to these laws. In our table no. 3 and 4 we have seen that out of a total cases of 22 *Kennkartebestimmung*, the *Volksgenossen* pointed out at least 10 to the authorities. In the light of this Bankier's thesis that the Star of David aroused a sudden sympathy for the Jews needs to be revised. He argues that people remained apathetic to anti-Jewish laws in general and most of them approved of legal discrimination against the Jews, but when Jewish persecution crossed the boundaries of decency and civil behaviour, there was widespread disapproval, for example, against the atrocities on the *Reichskristallnacht* and upon the introduction of the *Judenstern*. The open stigmatisation of Jews suddenly blocked the route to inner emigration and ordinary Germans had to face their conscience. He also argues that as long as anonymous Jews were persecuted the population could remain emotionally distant from the moral consequences of the affliction they had helped to cause, easily coming to terms with persecution since shame and guilt were not involved.¹⁶⁴

Contrary to his hypotheses about the sudden shift of the pendulum from indifference to overt kindness, our evidence shows that neither this nor the thesis 'anonymous is distant' is tenable. There were large-scale denunciations of acquaintances and neighbours to the Gestapo for hiding their racial identity. Most of such victims were either *Mischlinge* or Jews living in mixed marriages, categories that were handled relatively mildly by the system and therefore, overlooked sometimes. It was the 'Aryan' neighbours and

acquaintances who were more capable of sniffing them out efficiently and sufficiently and they did so by reporting them. They were enthusiastic about it for their own individual calculations whatever they might have been.

Bankier bases his theses mainly on eyewitness accounts, which are a problematic source for assessing public response to the yellow star. Eyewitnesses were essentially survivors. Among them many may have survived in hiding with the active help of 'Aryans'. Even in the National Socialist period they might have moved around in anti-Nazi circles that were anyway opposed to Nazi policies and optimistic about the downfall of the regime. The eyewitnesses would never forget the merciful behaviour and help of the 'Aryans' extended to them and their accounts would reflect it too. What about the experiences of those who went to the gas chambers? Many may have been denounced and deported. They never survived to tell their part of the story. We can merely gauge it from the Gestapo files. Those who showed sympathy towards the Jews may have been few and far between but those who chased them out of their immediate surroundings were many. Our files did not show that the number of *Judenfreunde* increased with the introduction of the star. They may have covered their tracks well or were probably not denounced. Our sources did not show any break in the pattern of behaviour as suggested by Bankier.

The above denunciations show that motives like social jealousies, antisemitism, sadism and the like could be gender neutral some times. But the gender specific motives abound. I would like to demonstrate this by way of citing some examples. Here is one from the files of race defilement:¹⁶⁵

In 1935 a Jew, Gerson, was denounced by a woman, which cost him seven days in the protective custody. The remark of the Gestapo official said that he had exhibited before a German girl under the pretext of getting her a job. Gerson, who was supposed to drop the accuser home, drove out of the city and exhibited before her with the intention of having sex with her. He kept obstinately denying the charge, till he was brought face to face before the

witness. He was again denounced by two women for insulting them and calling them lesbians, when they refused to take lift in his car. In such a case the reason for denouncing was sexism and not so much racism and the women would have gone to the police in any case.

Jewish people who were related to ‘Aryan’ women through matrimonial alliances had a particularly tough time. A mother-in-law or a sister-in-law of Jewish origins fell prey to daughters-in-law, as pointed out in the previous chapter, but some times, even a sister involved with a Jew was not spared. To cite an example, here is a case of sibling rivalry, where the elder sister swore to destroy the younger one. The case was reported to the cell leader of the *NSDAP*, which made its way to the Gestapo in 1935.¹⁶⁶ The cell leader’s report said that he had been repeatedly told that a German woman Fenny had had an objectionable relation with a Jew, Jacob. As he went around looking for the said culprits, people told him that Fenny’s sister; Claudia could help him in this matter. Claudia willingly obliged the cell leader by bearing witness to a case of ‘race defilement’ against her own sister. The following was Claudia’s version of the story of *Rassenschande*.

Claudia worked as a propagandist in Jacob’s milk company. Right from the beginning the Jew Jacob was not happy with her for reasons not known to her. In the course of her job, she needed a helping hand, and suggested her sister Fenny to Jacob. On seeing Fenny, he said to Claudia, “You old hag! Why didn’t you tell me before that you had such a nice sister”. Claudia retorted at this “You can do with the others what you like. But Keep your hands off my sister.” After some time she was told by her sister-in-law that Jacob was found kissing Fenny openly. Claudia looked for an opportunity to catch them red-handed and soon found one. When she asked Fenny for an explanation, Fenny told her to mind her own business. Since then their relationship became public. Jacob gave gifts to Fenny and they often went on pleasure trips. As Claudia was now coming in their way, Jacob sacked her on baseless grounds. She found another job in a coffee company, which happened

to be related to the previous company. The Jew exercised his influence to throw her out of the job from there.

On the basis of her statement, the Gestapo went ahead with their inquiries and summoned the boss of the Coffee Company. He said that the reason for expelling Claudia were purely professional. He also pointed out that the witness wanted revenge against her sister, and was said to have sworn to destroy Fenny. The Gestapo went by his version and did not take any action against the Jew. The relationship between Jacob and Fenny, however, came under the watchful eye of the Gestapo and disintegrated under pressure. The File ended with Jacob's migration.

Similarly, non-Aryan sisters-in-law and mothers-in-law often fell victim to their 'Aryan' female counterparts who took advantage of the state policies to get rid of the eye sours. Detailed case studies have already been given in the previous chapter about daughters-in-law as denouncers.

Excluding and expelling the Jews from families and friends circles, breaking old ties with them, with or without the means of denunciation, came naturally to some. Within the family, where a daughter or a son was married to a Jew even parents and siblings started to distance themselves from those married to Jewish persons. Charlotte, a blond 'Aryan', married to Julius, a Jew, recounted how she had all the courage to face the Gestapo but when it came to her mother she tried to hide her involvement with a Jew as long as she could, only to break the news of her engagement with him in a large gathering to muzzel an angry response from her.¹⁶⁷ Charlotte's mother tolerated Jews, yet beneath the surface there was a carefully maintained notion that Jews were different – different in a way that drew gossipy discussions with her own non-Jewish kind, whispered allusions to the Orthodox eastern European Jews of the Scheunenviertel, with their flowing beards and weird diets, and rumours about the assimilated secular Jews, who just made money and weaselled their way into positions of power that really belonged to 'Germans'.¹⁶⁸

In a completely different situation, which had nothing to do with antisemitism, wives and children of Aryan men used denunciation as a means to subvert patriarchal authority. Jewish connection of the patriarch came in handy here. In her autobiography, Inge Deutschkron recounted her experience with a denunciation during her days of hiding in Berlin. Their 'Aryan' friend Rieck, who found a big uninhabited house for them to hide, helped her and her mother. They occupied the bedroom, which was the safest of all, being in the middle of the house. Just as they had started to feel comfortable in this new shelter, one evening on their return, they found a yellow cardboard of the same colour as the Jewish star, on which capital letters pasted from the newspaper said: Rieck-Deutschkron-Juden. This sent chill through their spines. They had to flee their earlier hiding as they suspected of being denounced, and now, another denunciation, this too in 1944! Apart from the Riecks and Aunt Lisa no one knew their whereabouts. Could someone have followed them? Even this seemed implausible. Luckily, Aunt Lisa came over to visit them the same day. When she saw the cardboard, she turned pale. She told them that Walter Rieck had been called by the Gestapo and was informed that some one had denounced him for hiding two Jews. He contested it vehemently. Upon his request the Gestapo officials produced the letter of denunciation. He immediately recognised the handwriting. It was Jenny, his wife! The matter was dismissed as Rieck could convince the Gestapo that the denunciation was personally motivated.¹⁶⁹ And why had she done it? She had been extremely nice and helpful to Inge and her mother all along. The mystery was unravelled by Aunt Lisa. Walter Rieck had developed a relationship with a film star while Jenny and their daughter were away in Bavaria. Jenny was so upset about it that she had tried to commit suicide on an earlier occasion. Even this denunciation was done to scare the husband, to make him insecure, and to exercise just enough power to get him back.

A daughter was not far behind in denouncing her father. Sixteen-year-old Methilda landed up at the Gestapo office to report her father, Boremann. She claimed that he was hiding property related documents and other

valuables of a Jew. Boremann's house was immediately searched and some Jewish books were found there. Boremann explained this by saying that a Jew owed him some money, which he was unable to pay. He got the books as a compensation for that. After saving his skin, he told the Gestapo that the denunciation was an act of revenge by his daughter. She was turned out of the house for sleeping around with soldiers and leading an immoral lifestyle. Boremann had also reported this matter to the police.¹⁷⁰ Methilda's denunciation was a retaliation to this. She just refused to learn the lessons of morality from her father. She did not want to lead the disciplined life her father wanted her to. Denunciation gave her a good opportunity to hit back at her father.

Separate spheres, slanderous gossip and its function in Nazi Germany

Having analysed 'Aryan' women's spheres, motives, gender specific and gender neutral actions as denouncers, let me now go a little deeper into the tendency in women to target people within their 'separate sphere', mostly their neighbours and relations. I would like to place this problematic of 'separate sphere' within the broader context of gossip and its function in a racial society, and the role and responsibility of women in their traditional sphere of motherhood and housewifery: issues that have been in the eye of the storm during the *Historikerinnenstreit* that ensued between Claudia Koonz and Gisela Bock in the late 1980s.

Bock launched a scathing attack on Claudia Koonz for locating women's guilt in the Nazi crimes in their 'seperate sphere', in their function as dutiful wives and nurturing mothers - things that I have already discussed in the previous chapter - however from a different angle. She found Koonz's concept of the separte sphere as ill concieved, ambiguous and contradictory.¹⁷¹ Bock on her part exonerated all housewives and mothers from the Nazi crimes argueing that Koonz's diagnosis of women's roles and responsibilites was wrong and that her search for women criminals was misplaced. According to Bock, Koonz looked for guilty women precisely where they were absent and

failed to see them where they were present i. e. in their ‘non-traditional functions outside the home’. In her view it is in women’s role as unmarried–paid workers- outside the home - employed in the destructive state machinery, and working within the evil-male-world where women’s guilt should be probed and found.¹⁷²

What does Bock herself mean by the traditional separate sphere? Isn’t she herself defining it in very narrow terms of household activity, the daily chores of housekeeping, feeding and rearing the children and taking care of the husband? Such narrowly defined role of the housewives and mothers ignores vital roles that housewives and mothers played in the Third Reich. The Third Reich bestowed upon women the responsibility of guarding the purity of Aryan blood and honour, which many women carried out religiously as has been cited through individual examples in this study. Most of our denouncers here were housewives and mothers working in the capacity of *self-appointed neighbourhood watchdogs* of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Secondly, when one is talking about housewifery and motherhood as professions, one only takes into consideration the work that it entails and leaves out the leisure activities of the housewives that were part and parcel of the everyday lives of these housewives. Gossip was an important component of it. Melanie Tebbutt in “Women’s Talk” discusses gossip and its functions in working class neighbourhoods from 1880 to 1960. She shows how gossip had an important function in a community that stretched from socialization to integration of individuals in the community; how women shared their joys and sorrows in these informal gossip sessions and how these bonding evolved into friendships and mutual assistance in times of need. Tebbutt, however, also points to the negative aspects of the interactive mechanism of gossip, especially for those who were consciously not integrated into these informal gatherings and sessions because of their otherness.¹⁷³

The right to gossip about certain people is extended to a person only when he or she is accepted as a member of a group or set. It is a hallmark of membership. There is no easier way of putting a

stranger in his place than by beginning to gossip: this shows him conclusively that he does not belong.¹⁷⁴

Translated in the context of the Third Reich, the stranger was none other than one's racially unfit neighbour, in this context the Jewish neighbour, defined as an alien to the racial community of 'Aryans'. He/she was consciously cast outside the web of informal, interactive, gossip sessions of the *Volksgemeinschaft* of men and women alike, but especially of women in the neighbourhoods. And the gossip that was traded there turned discriminatory, malicious, slanderous and venomous towards these *Volksfeinde*. This gossip, this slanderous gossip, was not just an exercise in character assassination, but could mean the end of life for a Jew. This tendency manifested itself in e.g. exchange of notes between maids about the employer Leo and his sexual exploits, gossipy discussions of Charlotte's mother with her non-Jewish acquaintances, cooking up stories of *Rassenschande* between Frau Müller and Herr Mann by her neighbouring women, Frau Lambach's spying on an Aryan neighbour who suddenly became rich courtesy her Jewish boyfriend or Frau Wunder's concern that she shared with the Gestapo about the disturbing prosperity of the Jewesses living next door, Frau Langmann's calling her Jewish neighbours *Judenweiber*, picking up fights and provoking Jewesses while cleaning the staircase and later charging them of anti-regime activities, pointing out to the Gestapo how she kept her distance from the Jewess when she got to know about her racial origins. This entailed conniving with other antisemitic neighbours and converging all material and personal interest together and repeatedly denouncing a Jewish landlady Frau Schimmel on frivolous grounds, spitting hatred and venom against her, just as what Frau Eberfeld, Rosenthal and Jochum did. This entailed exchanging glances and passing snide remarks at Aryans friendly to the Jews, talking about and observing visitors that frequent a Jewish neighbour, or a Jewish looking visitor to an Aryan neighbour, things that Frau Rambach and Berg did. These were all activities that 'Aryan' women so happily indulged in. In the Third Reich this gossip mongering, eavesdropping, spying and story telling had fatal results for the Jews who

landed up at the Gestapo office as denounced trapped in an unending downward spiral of harassment and torture.

Fear of the neighbours, relations and acquaintances - women figuring quite prominently there- haunted Jews who were on the run and Aryan who were helping them in any way. This comes across in accounts of survivors and their helpers. Marianna, a Jewess who survived the holocaust in hiding, was plagued by the fear of denunciation. She was given shelter by various Bund members. Her first refuge was the Blockhouse in Essen, which served as the school of Dore Jacob, a founding member of the Bund, a kindergarten and Sonja's (another Bund member) residence. Sonja was herself denounced for publicly expressing her outrage at the treatment meted out to the Jews. Marianna could venture out of the Blockhouse only after dark for denunciation represented the biggest threat to her safety and to that of everyone involved in her escape.¹⁷⁵ In Essen people knew her so she could not appear in public but elsewhere where nobody knew her, people who gave her shelter subsequently, had to be ready with a cover story that could convincingly explain the sudden presence of a healthy young non-working girl inside their house. Sometimes she had to pretend to be a mother, at other time a bombed out victim with no paper so as not to arouse suspicion of neighbour and provide material for neighbourhood gossip.¹⁷⁶

This informal power of housewives and mothers, which was elevated to the level of state and politics as it reached the Gestapo office; this variant of the politicisation of the private and the privatisation of the politics¹⁷⁷, needs to be taken into account while dealing with the question of the roles and responsibilities of housewives and mothers. The separate sphere did not *just* involve housekeeping, cooking and looking after the children, it also involved keeping a watch on the neighbour, cooking up malicious stories, eavesdropping, guarding the morality and sexuality of the neighbour, things which housewives and mothers seemed to be doing with much relish in the Third Reich. This activity required no formal gathering at the fixed place. Shop floors, house floors, doorsteps, staircases and bunkers provided space

enough for this gossip to do rounds. *Kaffeeklatsch* and *Haustratsch* took antisemitic colour just as living rooms turned into venues for drafting letters of denunciation signed by groups of ‘disgruntled Aryan women’. Thus, Koonz’s point about ‘the averted gaze’ when the Jews were being transported, ‘Aryan’ mothers’ insistence on separate socialisation of ‘Aryan’ and Jewish children, boycott of Jewish shops and similar discriminatory actions of mothers and housewives is quite in place when talking about their roles and responsibilities in the Third Reich.

Male denouncers’ preserve

Where men were concerned, their social jealousies worked at two levels. In a neighbourhood it could be directed against a better-off Jew and in the work place against a boss or a business rival and in both cases it was not an abstract social jealousy but they sought to make some concrete material gain through it. We will first look at male denouncers acting in the professional world, where their denunciation could ruin a Jewish business rival.

In 1940 Luis appeared at the Gestapo office to report a Jew, Gerschenkron, for supplying all kinds of stuff to the telegraph and other offices. He posed as an ‘Aryan’ separated from his Jewish wife. Gerschenkron’s house was immediately raided but nothing objectionable was found. His son who was present on the occasion told the Gestapo that his father had stopped his business from 31 December 1938 after the passing of the Law Barring the Jews from the Economic Life. The reason for denunciation turned out to be business rivalry. Luis again went to the Gestapo to now tell that Luis did not carry out the business in his name. The information turned out to be true. Gerschenkron assured the Gestapo that he would leave the country. Only on this plea he was fined and left alone. Luis was successful in eliminating his rival¹⁷⁸. Similarly in the neighbourhood, when it came to concrete material gains, for example, appropriating the Jewish landlord’s house, it was men as tenants who jumped to grab such opportunities. In most of the cases if a male neighbour denounced a Jew, the hidden agenda was to expel the Jew from his property and also to prevent him

from helping his community by renting his house to other Jews. The Gestapo, equipped with the extra-judicial powers to harass and terrify such victims, played to the tune of these property hungry sharks, who on their own initiative sought to Aryanise Jewish property. How rampant this phenomenon was especially among the party men will become apparent from individual cases that I now discuss. These case profiles of the Jewish victims were illustrative in two ways.

Firstly, all denounced victims were living in privileged marriages. As we have observed in the beginning of the chapter, Jews living in privileged mixed marriages belonged to one of those very lucky groups who were excluded from the most extreme fate of deportation and eventual destruction. They were even freed from wearing the star upon request. There were some that came out of the clutches of the Gestapo as a result of remarkable courage shown by few wives of such victims.¹⁷⁹ There were however exceptions to this rule. All of them were not so lucky as will become evident from the following case studies. Secondly, all of them were denounced by ‘Aryan’ men; neighbours, relations, tenants, even husbands and so on.

Case no 1: Karl, once a director of a big insurance company, was denounced twice. The second time by his tenant. In 1936, Karl was denounced anonymously, presumably by somebody in his office, for being a ‘dangerous race defiler’, and sexually abusing his subordinates and maids. The inquiry revealed the charges as baseless. The second denunciation came from his ‘Aryan’ tenant Wolfgang in September 1939. It said that the Jew Karl came to him the previous year in October to say that he was the new owner of the house and expected Wolfgang to pay the overdue rent. Since Karl could not prove to Wolfgang that he was the proprietor, the latter refused to pay the rent.

Wolfgang charged Karl of working for foreign agencies for he allegedly sat at his typewriter the whole day. Wolfgang as a good German and a National Socialist felt duty bound to report it to the Gestapo. He also complained that the Jew had drawn a fence in the middle of the house to

cover his garden, which was a major obstruction in his freedom of movement. Once he claimed to have knocked against the fence and injured himself and demanded a sum of couple of hundred Marks as damages.¹⁸⁰ A National Socialist hid his ulterior motives behind his system-loyalty by pointing out anti-regime involvement of a Jew. The enquiry of the Gestapo proved the charge of anti- regime involvement baseless. The real reason of the denunciation can be found in the statement of the victim.

Wolfgang had sold the house to a Jewess in July 1938 on the condition that he would still occupy the first floor as a tenant for a monthly rent of RM. 10 for a period of ten years. He subsequently terrorised the poor Jewess so much that she resold the house to Karl. Wolfgang was trying the same trick with Karl to force him to sell the house to Wolfgang on his terms. Karl said that Wolfgang's daughter herself gave him this information. The Gestapo seized the opportunity to harass Karl and make him aware of his status 'as a Jew'. The Gestapo gave him the 'friendly advice' of leaving Germany in his best interest. Karl's wife, an 'Aryan' complained to the authorities of constant harassment by Wolfgang and listed more than two dozen witnesses, who would vouch for his criminal acts. She also said that he and his wife sang antisemitic songs to tease them and hurled obscenities at all those who worked for them or were friendly with them. All her complaints fell into deaf ears. Karl's file closed with a note of the Gestapo written on 31 October 1942. It stated that Karl committed suicide for fear of being dispossessed of his house.¹⁸¹ Karl decided that only death could snatch away his house from him and not a greedy and aggressive neighbour.

Case no 2: Found under the category 'verification of the identity'¹⁸², this is a classic case of gradual pauperisation of a war veteran.

Ludwig served in the military from 1898 till 1900 and again from 1914 to 1918. He started his life as an architect and had his construction company in 1930. In 1938 he was thrown out of the Imperial Chamber of Fine Arts on the plea that he did not fulfil the criterion of reliability. At the time of his denunciation he was reduced to a simple worker.

In 1942, Kaiser, a party member sent the letter of denunciation to the Gestapo saying that the full Jew Ludwig disturbed the complainant by operating the central heating system of the building very loudly early in the morning. (This was, by the way, a job assigned to the accused). On being asked for an explanation, the Jew allegedly threatened him with a coal shovel that he was holding in his hands. In the ensuing argument Ludwig allegedly told him: "Thank God we have a war now. At the end of it you and your party will experience the blue wonder". As a member of the party he felt obliged to file a report.

The Gestapo soon sprang up to act and in the course of the inquiry found out that though he was living in a privileged marriage, his wife had taken divorce in the meanwhile and his daughter had left for England. The Gestapo, therefore, decided that he was not authorised to have the privileges of mixed marriage. He was immediately arrested on the charges of having violated the rules of identity verification and failing to register himself as a Jew.

A remark within two months of his arrest said that he was to be sent with a Jewish transport but this could not take place as he developed erysipelas. He was shifted to a concentration camp and then to a work camp. In August, however, new orders were released by the Reich Security Head Office to take him into custody again for having tried to attack an 'Aryan' with a shovel and having issued anti-regime statements. Later he was transferred to the concentration camp Mauthausen where he was shot dead on 24 July 1942 while 'trying to escape'.

In this rare Gestapo file, we find the documents of the post-war *Schwurgericht*, Düsseldorf of 26 July 1949. The document said that the court sentenced the denouncer Kaiser to one and a half years of penal servitude on the charges of crime against humanity. The document also mentioned that Kaiser had denounced another Jewish neighbour and the motive behind both denunciations was to grab their houses for two of his colleagues. This case

demonstrates that a denunciation, which on the surface looked like that of a fanatical Nazi antisemite, had a hidden agenda.

Case No. 3: his neighbours repeatedly denounced Siegfried, an engineer. The case file opened on 25 March 1935 with a letter from the Gestapo addressed to the concerned *NSDAP* circle office with a newspaper cutting of *Der Stürmer*. It reported a relationship between the Jew and an 'Aryan' Ms. Neumann, who in spite of being dissuaded by her parents carried on her relationship with the Jew.¹⁸³ The Gestapo wanted to know more details in this matter from the *NSDAP* office. The *NSDAP* office in turn invited the Gestapo in their office to come and look at the available material on this issue. However, the whole controversy started before the Nuremberg Laws and the two denounced got married in the meanwhile. This goes to show that much before the sanction of the law the party and the Gestapo acted on their own on the matters of such 'blood mixing'. The next charge against the Jew came in December the same year for issuing anti-state statement for which he was taken into custody for four days and left after a serious written warning.

The third denunciation came from a Nazi tenant, Gerhard, accusing him of renting his house to the Jews. On 6 July 1938 he informed the Gestapo that his Jewish landlord (Siegfried) not only had no regard for the '*Volksgenossen*', he provoked them in addition. Recently, when his Jewish tenant left the house, he still rented it to another Jew in spite of protests from other fellow 'Aryan' tenants against having new Jewish tenants. This complaint was supported by two other documents enclosed in the denunciation letter.

1. A court verdict titled: Is a house owner authorised to rent out his house to the Jews?

The High Court of Cologne dealt with this very important question... and said no for an answer. The decision of the court said that if any one of the tenants, for whatever reasons, objected to living with a Jew under the same roof, it was expected of all other fellow tenants, in view of the present situation, to make it clear to the landlord that they would not like to live under

any circumstances with a Jew who had shifting recently in the premises. (Judgement passed on 18 November 1937, 9U 273/37)

2. A copy of the letter addressed to the Jewish landlord Siegfried dated 22 March 1938. It read as follows:

“In a meeting held on 17 March, the residents of the house complained that you are particularly interested in renting out your vacant houses to the ‘non-Aryans’. It was found out that earlier only one of the twenty tenants was a ‘non-Aryan’ but recently the number has increased to four. In view of the fact that lately only ‘non-Aryans’ have moved into the premises, it is feared that in future more and more community aliens would be residing here. The German comrades protest against this and expect of you to put a stop to it immediately. Any further renting out to the ‘non-Aryans’ would be treated by German people as a conscious provocation on your part, which is directed not just against them but against the collective soul of the Germans and their public sensibility.”

18 fellow ‘Aryan’ tenants of the house signed the letter. This was a classic example of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, irrespective of their class and gender, coming together to make their surrounding free of Jews of their own accord. This also demonstrated openly the greed and jealousy of some *Volksgenossen*. His neighbours could not swallow the fact that a Jew even in such times of antisemitism continued to possess a big house with more than twenty tenants and a firm. They all ganged up and tried their best to dispossess him of his belongings and throw him in a camp, but he came out unscathed as his wife stood by him through thick and thin.

Case no. 4 Anna was a widowed, propertied Jewess. Her file opened with a note of the *Dauerdienst*, suspecting her of smuggling foreign currency. The widow was reported to be a regular grumbler and was denounced repeatedly.¹⁸⁴ She was charged of spying at one point for indulging in anti-state, atrocity propaganda abroad at other point as she was a frequent traveller. All these complaints were found to be baseless. Her son and three brothers had committed suicide. This left her all alone to face the hostile world around her.

Unable to bear the shock of the untimely deaths of her dear ones, she suffered from nervousness and fits of hysteria. Such a helpless and lone woman was not spared by the Gestapo and the neighbours!

In 1937 she applied for the renewal of her passport. This was rejected on the grounds that she was 'hysterical' and 'quarrelsome' and would therefore, not give a good impression of the government abroad. In 1938 as per the police orders her 'Aryan' maid was removed from her house. In 1939 she married a Dutch citizen and lost her citizenship of Germany. Her husband turned up at the Gestapo office within days to denounce her. He suspected that her motive behind marrying him was to exchange her house in Germany for one in Holland and to transfer her assets abroad through him. Within months after that, her 'Aryan' tenant, a businessman, denounced her of listening to the enemy broadcast. The enquiry revealed that she never had a radio. The tenant himself had lent it to her a few days back. The actual reason behind the report was the notice served on him to vacate the house. As a result of the denunciation by the husband Anna's application for the transfer of property was rejected. She was taken into police custody in August 1940 and transferred to a concentration camp. In 1941 she was shifted to a mental asylum for the Jews. What happened to her after that is not difficult to guess, though the file did not say anything further on this case.

Thus, we see that even those who had the protection of the law did not all survive the Third Reich, the denouncers willed something else for them. The denouncers and the Gestapo decided different fates and different destinies for them ranging from survival to suicide, death, mental asylum and extinction. Those Aryan partners who held on to the mixed marriages could end up losing their jobs as the case of Müllers demonstrates.

In three of the four cases of male denouncers, three were Nazis. They must have been antisemitic. But is difficult to say that antisemitism alone drove them to denounce their Jewish landlords. The ulterior motive was to grab their property. Some openly demonstrated this, as is evident from the

case of Wolfgang while some were clever enough to totally omit it in their denunciation reports, thus making a strong case of an anti-regime activity of a Jew and their system loyalty, as the case of Kaiser highlighted. If it were not for the document of the *Schwurgericht*, we could not have established with certainty that the actual motive was the appropriation of the Jew's house. Gerhard did it under the pretext of making his surroundings free of Jews and rallied willing followers for this broader cause. Such everyday participation in the expropriation of Jewish property did not even require any antisemitic justification at times. Many felt that showing their requirement, urgency and interest in Jewish houses was good enough.¹⁸⁵

In the Gestapo files one does not get a detailed information on the denouncer. The denouncer did mention with pride when he was a party member. But other details like when he joined the party, whether he was an SA member, how deep his involvement was in the party activities and so on did not come out clearly. From the other background information, one can gauge that these were probably the disgruntled party men from the lower middle class or working class backgrounds. These were the people who had swollen the ranks of the SA in the *Kampfzeit*. These followers were indeed antisemitic to the core and did create constant pressure on the party right from the time of the *Machtergreifung* to destroy Jewish big businesses and warehouses and to promote small-scale German enterprise. The April Boycott was organised by the party to appease this section, but no effective measures were undertaken by the party to destroy the Jews economically in the initial years for this could have put the already weak German economy into jeopardy. Apart from being radical antisemitic these SA men also cherished the dream of a socialist revolution, which was shattered by the party on the 'night of long knives' when all the top leaders of SA were murdered. With this action the issue of 'a second revolution' was resolved once and for all. The same SA men that had ruled the streets of Germany in the *Kampfzeit* and had established the terror regime was rendered incapacitated as far as their socialist agendas were concerned. This filled the ranks of SA with a feeling of disillusionment, frustration and hopelessness. However, their energies were

channelised now even more vehemently in the antisemitic direction. The SA continued to play an important role in antisemitic public actions. The acts of denunciation with the hidden motive of appropriating the property of business of the Jews in this context can be seen as individual efforts of such elements to degrade and dispossess the hated Jews and simultaneously upgrade themselves by appropriating their property. While they may have remained powerless against the higher ups in the party, they were still in a position to exercise power over those who were marginalised, declassified, helpless and hapless, the Jews. Denunciation gave them the power, which the party denied them.

In a larger context however, the question of antisemitic propaganda and its influence on the people in Jewish persecution is not so simple to answer. The racist antisemites used elements of religious antisemitism that was deeply imbedded as the longest hatred in Christian cultures and Germany was no exception to it. Therefore, to propagate a thing, which was already present in the conscious or subconscious mind of the people, and find supporters was not a very challenging task. Bankier very rightly points out that the bulk of the public did not need Nazi propaganda in order to ostracise Jews.¹⁸⁶ Our evidence goes to show that mere racial hatred did not move people to persecute Jews even though it may have been a factor. People took extra effort and initiative to prove themselves as committed antisemites in order to make some material gains, resolve some matter violently with a Jew, like a tenant landlord conflict, or an argument with a neighbour. Since antisemitism was the state doctrine, they could be sure of winning an individual battle with a Jew, which they could not have done in normal times, more so if their denunciation was camouflaged with their loyalty to the state doctrine of antisemitism.

The Attitude of the Gestapo towards the Jews

As pointed out before Jews were the most persecuted lot, but the Gestapo meted out a phased treatment to the Jews rather than an indiscriminate one. Even though the exercise of authority was arbitrary and varied from case to

case, the picture painted by Schleunes of a twisted road to Auschwitz more with the *modus operandi* of the Gestapo.

Generally Gestapo's treatment of the Jews became harsher with time. For example, in Leo's case, who had a whole bandwagon of 'Aryan' neighbours and his maids accusing him of *Rassenschande*, he was left after protective custody. For it could not be proved if he continued with *Rassenschande* after the passing of the Nuremberg laws. This was in 1938. Had the same charge come up in the 1940s, it would have had fatal consequences.

False accusations against Jews were never discouraged and the denouncer was never reprimanded. Even if the Gestapo realised that the charge was motivated by hatred, jealousy or revenge, it nonetheless took it upon itself to see if a more substantial case could be made against the denounced. If nothing was apparently 'criminal' on the part of the Jew, he could simply be disciplined and warned to behave himself. Warnings like "as a Jew you are not to pick up fights with your neighbour" were common place. The Jews were made to realise that they were living in Germany devoid of all civic rights. If it did not suit them, they had better leave the country was a 'friendly advice' of the Gestapo.

Qualitatively the treatment meted out to them by the Gestapo was much harsher than the members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, equalled probably only by the Communists in the initial years. In these files we witness the Gestapo making use of its extra-judicial powers quite liberally. Any Jew coming to the notice of the Gestapo was called to the Gestapo office and a long drawn process of harassment and maltreatment started against him or her. It started most conventionally with protective custody, which involved mental and physical torture. In the course of interrogations in the Gestapo's underground cell, confessions were forced out, and then depending on the seriousness of the charge, the victim landed up in a concentration camp or a case was initiated against him or her with the Judiciary. If the victim got a

prison sentence, after completing the term, she or he would be taken in protective custody again and sent to a concentration camp or a labour camp or a mental asylum and so on, finally ending up in death factories. In the later stages, once a Jew came into the clutches of the Gestapo and they succeeded in making a serious case against him/her, trapping him/her in a never-ending vicious circle of torture and oppression, finally leading to physical annihilation. Besides house searches, plunder, loot corruption, humiliation, call up for the labour services became the order of the war in the war years as the policies towards the Jews radically changed. Survivors' diaries and memoirs are scarred with this fear of house searches, plunder and humiliation at the hands of the Gestapo. The booty was not just pocketed by the Gestapo functionaries, even the Red Cross and the National Socialist Welfare Organisation had their fair share in it.¹⁸⁷ Though the real implications, experiences and details of house searches can only be gauged by the accounts of the survivors, we do get to know from the Gestapo records under the category *Kennkartebestimmung* that such searches were rampant even without any tip off.

Another way of grasping the treatment of the Gestapo towards the Jews is by capturing how the Gestapo managed to instil fear in their psyche heart and soul, something that Charlotte Beradt does. How fears, anxieties and traumas of the Jews differed from the ordinary Germans or 'Aryans' has very sensitively and penetratingly explored by Charlotte Beradt by analysing nightmares of people in the Third Reich.¹⁸⁸ A common fear, which reflected in the nightmare of the 'Aryans', was that of betrayal of expressions of verbal or internal ideological disapproval of the regime. For example, they dreamt of a talking oven or the bedside lamp, cosy cushions, a mirror, a desk and other household objects turning into traitors and testifying against them. The private lives in bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens became 'lives without walls'. The ghost of denunciation haunted ordinary 'Aryans' in their dreams. Such dreams were quite close to the reality of the Third Reich considering that the large majority of cases under the *Heimtücke-gesetz* - curbing the freedom of expression - some of which we have narrated in the previous chapter, were

brought to the notice of the Gestapo by denouncers from their innermost, private sphere. This fear, of betrayal forced people in their dreams to fall in line by silencing themselves when, for example, they expressed their defiance or criticism in a foreign language making their ideas incomprehensible for everybody including themselves or when they sent blank letters of protest to the authorities or made telephone calls and failed to speak up.

The nightmares of the Jews on the contrary centred around the fear of betrayal of their racial identity through physical features like the colour of the skin, eyes, hair and the shape of the nose. Their nightmares were full of such images and references like hooked noses, black hair and eyes, typical Jewish looks. They were afraid of being cast as outsiders, as suspect and disreputable. Fear of the loss of identity as Germans, and most of all fear of the unknown, which certainly could not have been better than their stifling present plagued the psyche of the Jews living in the Third Reich. Denunciation in this context made this reality, these fears, even worse for even those Jews were denounced to the Gestapo whose looks, life styles and religion could not have betrayed them so easily. The denounced in most cases were the fully assimilated Jews who were living in mixed marriages or were *Mischlinge*. Only people close to them could have betrayed them.

Patterns of subversion and non-compliance in women

This section of the chapter does not cover the full range of patterns of subversion visible in the files of the victims but covers only a fraction of it . The reason is simple; this section has emerged as a by-product of the core area of study, i.e. denunciation. While I was collecting material on this, I was struck by the sheer range of women who were hidden in the files and therefore went unnoticed in studies relating to any kind of deviant behaviour in the Third Reich. This is more of an exercise towards making them visible in the discourse relating to opposition, deviance or subversion in the Third Reich.

In this section I point out the behaviour of women, both 'Aryan' and Jewish who did not conform to the order of the day. This is reflected in their activities that came to the notice the Gestapo. The files sometime mention it

openly and sometimes in a hidden manner. When it came to the notice openly, the file is opened in her name, which did not happen so often. More often they remained hidden as non-conformists in the files. Typically, in the *Rassenschande* cases the file was opened in the name of the Jewish man, but if the 'offence' was proved, even the defiant 'Aryan' woman faced consequences. She obviously did not surface in the Gestapo catalogue.

Before taking up this matter in detail, I would first like to elucidate the position of Sarah Gordon, who worked on the same source material, namely the Gestapo case files, albeit, of *Regierungsbezirk* Düsseldorf. Her generalisations about women are important for this section. Sarah Gordon's work runs into some 400 pages. She devoted about one page to the question of gender roles on the Jewish question and in the specific context of opposition to the Nazi racist policies. She concentrated on the *Rassenschande* and *Judenfreunde* files (452 altogether) for her study of opposition, and put them in three categories on the basis of the intensity of the punishment meted out to them, as high, middle and low level of opposition. She proceeded with the assumption that all of them were opponents of the regime, which might be problematic at the first instance. Among them, there must have been many who were falsely accused or denounced, as was the case with present Düsseldorf city case files, where out of the 44 cases of *Rassenschande*, at least 10 were falsely accused including the cases of mistaken identity, where both the accused were either Jews or 'Aryans'. She reached the conclusion that males were more likely than females to aid Jews and to have sexual relation with them. This was true at all levels of opposition. She quoted others in favour of her position: "In fact, overrepresentation of males among other opponents of Nazism was even more extreme. For example, in the study of 355 socialists who opposed Nazism between 1933 and 1938 in the North Rhein-Westphalia and were tried before Nazi courts, William S. Allen found that only 4 percent were women. Also members of the conspiracy against Hitler on 20,1944 were practically all men".¹⁸⁹

In both cases she was talking of organised opposition and in the latter of the military conspiracy of the conservative elite. It is therefore hardly surprising that we do not find women there. Women were absent or only marginally represented in these circles. To judge then on the basis of these two categories is problematic. She further went on to argue,

“This leads us to suspect that males were simply more likely than females to engage in all types of political opposition, including opposition to racial persecution. War service may have prevented even many more men from aiding Jews in Germany. Because Jews were concentrated in commercial enterprises in which women were more likely to shop than men (assuming that women typically purchased food, clothing, household goods, etc.), it is unlikely that women simply had fewer contact with Jews. On the contrary, they probably had more. Considering this, and since only 30 per cent of the *Judenfreunde* were women, one can legitimately hypothesise that underrepresentation of females among opponents of racial persecution reflected easier intimidation, less frequent denunciation, political impassivity or higher levels of antisemitism than existed among men. The weight of accumulated evidence, especially the consistently higher levels of antisemitism found in the post war surveys, indicates, that they were simply more antisemitic, even though these other factors may have also played a role”.¹⁹⁰

Gordon’s conclusion drawn on women’s antisemitic behaviour seems hasty and sweeping. Even here there were some peculiarities in the gender behaviour. They denounced on an average less frequently than men did, this applies even in the denunciation cases of the Jews, and be it the *Rassenschande* files or those of *Judenfreundlich*. Do we, therefore, conclude that men were simply more antisemitic than women were? Our findings, contrary to Gordon’s assertion, suggest that more ‘Aryan’ women were discovered by the Gestapo as indulging in ‘*Rassenschande*’ than ‘Aryan’ men.

This kind of non-compliance with Nazi doctrines remained hidden and was ignored in the case files of the victims. It was a typical example of preparing a case with gender biases on the part of the Gestapo, which permeated the analysis of historians like Sarah Gordon.

In the Düsseldorf City case files, like in any other, the cases of *Rassenschande* were divided in two heads in the catalogue. Most of the cases were to be found under the head *Rassenschande Jews* and some were arranged under *Rassenschande non-Jews* implying the ‘Aryans’. Since *Rassenschande* was a ‘crime’ that includes one Jewish and one ‘Aryan’ partner, it was difficult to decide whether a Jew was committing the crime or the ‘Aryan’, as both were equally involved. Interestingly however, under the head *Rassenschande Jews*, I typically found Jewish males as the main accused and ‘Aryan’ women came as the secondarily involved party. Though there were three or four cases where the Jewish women surfaced as the main accused, such cases apart from one exception, were either false accusations or cases of hiding the true racial identity. So no real involvement of an ‘Aryan’ man was proved. In the category *Rassenschande non-Jews*, we found mostly male ‘Aryans’ having alleged or genuine relations with Jewish women.

Upon numerically analysing the given cases, which were altogether 44 and separating out bogus cases, I found that at least 19 ‘Aryan’ women had genuine relationships with Jewish men, 15 in the *Rassenschande Jude* and 4 in *Rassenschande Nicht Jude*. This did not include prostitute-client relationships and occasional sexual encounters, but serious love relationships, both pre-marital and extra marital. If we add the above categories and also those who went to Jewish gynaecologists and doctors, the number of ‘Aryan’ women would probably more than double. In a case of a Jewish gynaecologist alone, we find at least 21 women who regularly visited this gynaecologist, a criminal offence for both the involved parties. The interrogations of these clients resulted in 2 years rigorous imprisonment for the doctor on the charge of having attempted or carried out at least five abortions. In addition, his German assistant, who had a love relationship with the accused was also

sentenced to imprisonment on charges of *Rassenschande* and for providing assistance to the latter.¹⁹¹ Further, in the case of a Jewish client six German prostitutes were involved.¹⁹² Altogether these hidden ‘Aryan’ female participants in the crime of *Rassenschande* alone far out numbered their male counterparts, only six of whom were found as having relations with Jewish women. Further, if we include the cases mentioned under the head ‘Ban on Marriage’ which had only three files of ‘Aryans’ seeking permission to marry their Jewish friends, (obviously all were rejected) we find that all of them were ‘Aryan’ Women, who wanted to marry Jewish men.

This revelation led me to inquire further on the gender behaviour in the marriage pattern during the National Socialist regime, and I looked up the data on mixed marriages contracted in the Düsseldorf city. The table below shows the available data from 1925-45. Between 1936 and 1941 no marriages were contracted between Jews and ‘Aryans’. Between 1942 and 1944 no marriages took place even among Jews. In 1945, 4 Catholic women married Jewish men.

Table 5: A gender specific table of the marriages contracted between Christians and the Jews in from 1925 to 1935: ¹⁹³

Year	Catholic	Protestant	Total
	Men/ Women	Men/ Women	Men/ Women
1925	4/2	3/7	7/9
1926	1/8	1/4	2/12
1927	8/10	5/5	13/15
1929	3/6	4/2	7/8
1930	1/3	1/9	2/12
1933	1/6	1/6	2/12
1934	0/7	0/0	0/7
1935	0/2	0/2	0/4
Total	18/44	15/35	33/79

So, during the years of rabid antisemitism the number of ‘Aryan’ women marrying Jews was more than double the number of ‘Aryan’ men marrying Jewish women, both among Catholics and Protestants. This gender behaviour became more pronounced in those years of the Nazi rule, when the number of ‘Aryan’ men marrying Jewish women almost reduced to nothing, whereas the number of ‘Aryan’ women marrying Jews became remarkably high in comparison. Further, more Catholic women married Jewish men than their Protestant counterparts. To check if this pattern could be found elsewhere, I looked for other sources, and found that even the city of Cologne showed a similar pattern of behaviour.

In the study of Lekebusch dealing with Jewish Christians in the Rheinland, the theme of mixed marriages between the Christians and the Jews has been explored. She has drawn a table with a gender breakdown of the confessions. It shows remarkable similarities with mine. It is quite pertinent to cite this table here.

Table 6: Marriages contracted between Christians and Jews in Cologne from 1927 to 1935:¹⁹⁴

Year	Catholic Men/ Women	Protestant Men/ Women	Total
1927	8/22	8/11	49
1928	17/21	9/15	62
1929	10/22	5/7	44
1930	14/24	4/11	53
1931	17/27	4/11	59
1932	10/23	7/11	51
1933	5/29	6/16	56
1934	6/12	2/15	25
1935	2/6	1/1	10
Total	89/186	46/88	409

The table shows that while 89 Catholic men married Jewish women between 1927 and 1935; 186 Catholic women married Jewish men. Similarly, while 46 Protestant men married Jewish women, 88 Protestant women married Jewish men. In total, 135 ‘Aryan’ men married Jewish women as against 273 ‘Aryan’ women who married Jewish men.

Even if we go by the popular assumption that more Jewish men must have sought marriage alliances or liaisons with ‘Aryan’ women to circumvent the antisemitic persecution and would have found such relations beneficial for their social mobility, professional life or assimilation, we are snatching the agency from those ‘Aryan’ women who were a party to such relations. They obviously did not passively get involved in such relations. In fact, in an atmosphere of rabid antisemitism, choosing a Jewish partner must have been a challenging task and a conscious decision. Nathan Stolfus’ account of ‘Aryan’ women who protested for days before the Rosenstrasse prison in 1943 to have their Jewish husbands released proves this. Perhaps, this was the only brave civilian protest ever held against Nazi atrocities. Whether it was a conscious act of political defiance, an urge to pursue one’s personal decision and liking irrespective of the prevailing circumstances, or just a normal behaviour in abnormal circumstances, the point is that they were making a political statement. ‘Aryan’ women dared to marry Jewish men in times when the regime was ruthlessly persecuting the Jews and their friends, especially those who had sexual relations with them. Many were still seeking permission to marry their Jewish friends. Some married hurriedly before the Nuremberg laws were passed, some left Germany well in time so as to marry in a friendlier atmosphere. In most of these cases the man was Jewish and the woman German.¹⁹⁵ This points to the civil courage, a near extinct behaviour in National Socialism, of the ‘weaker sex’.

Another pattern of non-compliance can be regularly observed in the files pertaining to the *Kennkartebestimmung*. This concerns the Jewish women. Under this category, we find the maximum number of Jewish women as victims. Their ‘crime’ invariably, was not registering themselves as Jews

and not being in possession of their *Kennkarte* and the Jewish star. The behaviour was so common among them that we came across a Gestapo remark in one of these files. It read:

“It has always been a cheap excuse to claim that one did not know anything. The Jewess Helena claims to know nothing about the laws relating to the Jews. It is typical of Jews to give such lame excuses. In reality they just assume that if they are not known as Jews, they need not bring it to the notice on their own. So far, so good and if their racial identity becomes public, they can get away with a mild fine. Lately, the Jews living in mixed marriages are committing this offence. Therefore it seems necessary to impose a jail sentence instead of a fine.”¹⁹⁶

Another remark of the Gestapo in a different case observed that it was particularly the Jewish women married to Aryan men who neither possessed nor wore the star.¹⁹⁷ Jewish women did hide themselves behind their ‘Aryan’ men to remain out of the reach of the Gestapo. They just refused to register themselves as Jews with the authorities and fall in line on their own. This deviance saved them as far as it could from getting stigmatised and from the exposure to open and direct harassment.

Yet another device the Jewish women worked out to shield their children and themselves was to tell the authorities that their offspring was born out of wedlock from an ‘Aryan’. They hoped in this way to give the status of a *Mischling* to the offspring. Martina Sara saved her life by putting up her case before the *Polizeipräsident*. She reasoned that her lover Schumacher, an ‘Aryan’, died in the First World War and her son was born out of wedlock. The son Hans was loyal to the fatherland and was serving in the army. She was freed from wearing the star.¹⁹⁸ John Mayor was however not so lucky. Upon being summoned by the Gestapo to clarify his racial origins, he sent his ‘Aryan’ wife to the Gestapo. She tried to convince them that John was informed by her dying ‘Aryan’ mother that he was not the biological son of her Jewish husband. He was born out of wedlock and his biological father was

an 'Aryan'. Mayor was a Protestant by religion and considered himself as a *Mischling* after the confession of his dying mother. He thought of himself as a German. So did his wife who was a Catholic German. Her two children, Anna and Udo were born from her first marriage that was contracted with an 'Aryan'. They were later given Mayor's name but they were not Mayor's children. After examining the birth certificate of three generations of John Mayor the Gestapo decided that Mayor was a Jew, while the two children were to be considered as 'Aryans'. John therefore had to register himself as a Jew. He was thrown out of his job and was to be treated like a Jew living in a non-privileged marriage.¹⁹⁹ Even 'Aryan' women married to Jews resorted to making false claims of bearing 'Aryan' children from extra-marital relations to save their children and grandchildren. While recounting her experiences in the Third Reich, Frau Verena Groth of 'mixed blood' told Alison Owings that her 'Aryan' grandmother signed a statement that her children might not be descended from her Jewish husband Goldmann, but she had had a relationship with a manufacturer from the black forest. That was flat out perjury. But she did it to facilitate the Aryanisation of her children and grandchildren. The descendants were then ordered to present themselves before researchers in Tübingen who were to establish their origins through 'scientific' tests. Luckily the war was over by then. Frau Gorth laughed and laughed and said, "Thank God, the Americans were faster."²⁰⁰

Thus we see that a close examining the files renders a far more nuanced picture rather than a black and white one. The everyday life in Nazi Germany was not coloured with open resistance and blatant opposition in the conventional terms. We have seen that such blanket labelling of all the victims in the case files as opponents by Sarah Gordon has proved to be erroneous. In *Alltagsgeschichte*, more women can be found as deviants and non-conformists just like women perpetrators than it appears on the surface. One has to go deeper to find them because of the male dominated patterns of categorisations, not just on the part of the Gestapo but also the official agencies like the statistical office, where the tables containing the confessional marriage patterns put 'Aryan' or Jewish men as the contracting parties and the women

come as the contracted ones. I had to rework the data and tables of the statistical office to present a gender-neutral picture of the inter-confessional marriages. If historians simply take this system at its face value, it lends to simplistic generalisations.

Accounting for the silence

Lastly, I feel compelled to raise some questions, even if I cannot answer them due to the constraints of sources selected for this narrative of perpetration and victimhood. *The questions relate to Jewish women victims who may have faced a particular type of gender victimisation i.e. sexual harassment and sexual abuse at the hands of Aryan men.* It has been established by various studies that in civil wars, disturbances, inter-community clashes and conflicts, men, women and children of minority communities fall prey to an orgy of arson, loot, physical, emotional and psychological violence. Even here women become double victims of physical and sexual violence. Going by this and given the fact that a proportionately higher number of Jewish women were left behind in the Third Reich to fend for themselves as more and more men emigrated, one should assume that there must have been cases of sexual violence and rape by 'Aryan' men. The Gestapo records are absolutely silent on this issue. Was it because such Jewish women could never muster enough courage to report such cases to the Gestapo for fear of draconian punishment under the *Rassenschande* laws or was the Gestapo not willing to register them? I have no answer to this. I can just pose it as a question.

Other sources like oral history accounts tell us that Jewish women were subjected to rape, sexual exploitation and sexual assault in forced labour camps and other situations. In one of the rare accounts of the gender agony of sexual harassment, Felicya Karay recounts that collective and individual rape and sexual assaults were commonplace in the workers camp set up for the Jews in Radom district of Poland.²⁰¹ In addition to the degrading and inhuman conditions that existed in the camps where Jewish forced labour was housed since 1942, female inmates became victims of sexual orgy, assault, rape and murder. Not just the camp commanders but also smaller functionaries took

advantage of the situation, even Poles. Based on the testimonies of the survivors, Karay's account tells us that there were rumours of forbidden sexual liaisons and exploitation of Jewish women²⁰² At work B, one of the three HASAG (Hugo Schneider Aktiengesellschaft) factories, the manager Walter Glaue occasionally picked up a young woman in addition to his steady lover. When Bella Sperling was executed on charges of sabotage, rumour had it that Glaue had impregnated her and therefore wished to get rid of her.²⁰³ German commanders were reluctant to deprive themselves of any of life's pleasures and in all three works, there were known cases of individual and collective rapes of Jewish women. Dozens of testimonies mention the security commander Fritz Bartenschlager, who would sometimes attend selections in order to choose 'escort girls'. In October 1942, for example, five of these women were taken to a feast at his apartment, where they were ordered to serve the guests in the nude and were ultimately raped by the revellers. In January 1943 when two other SS district commanders visited him they raped three women and later murdered them. Rape and murder thus became eventual destinies of particularly beautiful and young Jewish women. Some were also used as "housemaids" and were forced to satiate the sexual lust of their masters.

Oral history account of Frau Charlotte Müller, an underground communist activist, tells us that a Jewish girl was shot to death because of antimilitary work. But before gunning her down the SS collectively raped her until she almost died. She was pretty as a picture.²⁰⁴

Silencing of such accounts in the Gestapo records makes the files on Jews quite different from the files on foreign workers which we shall be examining in the next chapter.

Chapter IV

Faces of Gender Oppression:

The 'Aryan' interface with 'Racially Foreign' Workers

This chapter is based on the findings from the Gestapo case files pertaining to forced foreign workers and foreign minorities. It mainly reconstructs gender oppression as it manifested itself in these files. It looks at gender oppression, first from the angle of forced women workers, mostly young girls, who were employed in industries and households and put up in camps or private houses. By virtue of their legally defenceless and vulnerable position vis-à-vis their 'Aryan' male superiors they were exposed to all kinds of sexual and physical exploitation both in the workplace and 'at home'. Secondly, it explores gender oppression faced by 'Aryan' women who dared to have friendly and even physical relations with foreign workers. While female foreign workers denounced their 'Aryan' tormentors to the higher authorities for harassing them sexually, 'Aryan' women who had sexual or friendly relations with foreign workers became victims of predominantly male denouncers who sought to punish them for daring to break the racial laws of the regime, for choosing 'racially inferior men', and for rejecting their own husbands. The chapter is divided into four categories of 'victims'. The first category consists of female foreign workers who were sexually abused by their German superiors. The second deals with foreign workers, mostly young girls, who were selected for Germanisation. The third comprises *Kriegerfrauen*, soldiers' wives, a particularly challenging category for Nazi officialdom. The state was compelled to support them financially to keep up the morale of soldiers at the front. But it found it increasingly difficult to keep them morally, racially and sexually under control as more and more cases of their involvement with foreign workers became public knowledge. Ideological and disciplinary mechanisms were devised to 'cure' them, but it remained a sore point for the administration, and *Kriegerfrauen* continued to be targeted by the state and the public. The last category talks about male 'Aryans' and their interaction with female foreign workers.

Reported cases of sexual and physical violence against female foreign workers by camp directors

Case 1: Unable to bear the torture and agony that tormented her and that still threatened to continue, a 20-year-old Russian worker, Olga, employed in the *Werkschutzrheinmetall-Borsig* joint stock company, Düsseldorf, went to the *Abwehrbeauftragte* who recorded her complaint as follows:

*The Deputy director of the camp Schultz called me to his room on 17 May 1943 and ordered me to undress. When I refused, he threw me on the bed, tore my clothes off and raped me. I cried constantly. After fifteen minutes he allowed me to go and threatened to send me to a concentration camp if I talked about it to any one. On 18 May 1943 he called me again. When I refused to go with him, he removed me forcibly from my barracks and raped me again.*²⁰⁵

This complaint was lodged two weeks after of the incident. It took time before Olga could muster enough courage to report it to the *Abwehrbeauftragter* of her firm. The *Abwehrbeauftragter* denounced Schultz on 1 June 1943 with the comment that the accused had repeatedly committed a serious moral offence against an inmate of the foreigners' camp. As this was a crass case of 'dereliction of duty', Schultz should be brought to book.

The Gestapo interrogated Olga the same day. She stood by her statements. Schlutz was interrogated for the first time on 24 July 1943. He denied having raped her, though he admitted having gone to the cinema with her once, having kissed her once, and having played mouth organ for her to dance. These were evidently all attempts to camouflage the rape by introducing elements of her willingness to engage eventually in sexual intercourse. On 27 July 1943, when he was interrogated again, he admitted having had sex with her, but insisted that it had happened with her consent. She had herself removed her clothes and so on. The Gestapo did not believe his version. The Gestapo report dated 28 July 1943 stated:

“Although Schultz denied having raped Olga, he should be seen as the main culprit. He himself admitted that as a camp leader he was well

schooled about the code of conduct to be observed with eastern workers. Olga's explanation that she tolerated the sexual intercourse with him because he, as the camp leader, was in a position to determine her existence, is understandable. However, she should also bear the blame for not informing immediately. Schultz's offence becomes more serious in the view that he received Olga in an SS uniform, which he was not authorised to wear. Even if he denies having done so, Olga's version should be believed."

Schultz was arrested immediately and his case was referred to the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA)²⁰⁶ with a note from the Gestapo that he should be sent to a concentration camp. The RSHA ordered protective custody with immediate effect till a further decision had been reached and from there he was sent to Sachsenhausen, where he remained from 6 October 1943 to 9 June 1944. The reason given by the RSHA read as follows:

"Schultz misused his position to have 'intimate relations' with an eastern worker. He did not exercise restraint towards the citizen of an enemy state. His blatantly offensive attitude towards healthy racial feeling of his national community would spread unrest in broader circles."

This verdict of the RSHA is a good indicator of the Nazi sense of judgement and morality. The rapist was neither charged with rape nor punished for it. He was charged of and sentenced for 'dereliction of duty', 'misuse of his official position' and 'hurting healthy racial feeling by having 'intimate relations' with a woman of an 'enemy state'. The punishment that he received therefore, was not for rape but for above mentioned offences. A blatant case of rape was projected by the RSHA as 'intimate relations'. A sexually offensive act was robbed of its aggression and violence. The violation of a woman's body was not at all at stake for the RSHA. Olga's subjective experience of this trauma was of no concern to the RSHA either. A 'racially inferior' foreign worker was not supposed to have the same civil and human rights over her body as her 'Aryan' counterpart. The RSHA account also silenced Olga's voice and will. That her body was forcibly violated found no

mention in the RSHA verdict. For the Nazis it was the act that mattered: the act of having ‘intimate relations’ with an ‘Aryan’ man. Here, in Schultz’s case what was even more objectionable to Nazi officialdom was the abuse of his official position and not his abuse of a woman’s body.

Another side of the story is that he was sentenced. Until now, we have mostly heard from historians that in sexual relations where Germans and foreign forced workers were involved, under whatever conditions, the foreign workers were always punished more harshly. ‘Racially alien’ women were sent to a concentration camp as a rule while German men were treated more leniently.²⁰⁷ For example, Frankenberger argues: “Soviet Russian women, even when the nature of their sexual intercourse with German men was clearly that of a violated women, were sent to the concentration camp as a rule”.²⁰⁸ In another place, where she talks about sexual violence against them by camp directors and other male superiors, who abused these women by virtue of their official position, she says: “These men hardly needed to fear being held accountable because the eastern workers had no rights to legal redress. What is more, they endangered themselves by denouncing, for they could be sent to a concentration camp, while the men expected only a negligible period of protective custody”.²⁰⁹ Further: “As far as I know, there are no indications that women reported their rapists in anyway whatsoever.”²¹⁰ The above story contradicts Frankenberger’s position on three counts. Firstly, it assumes that all, even those, who were raped by their camp directors or superiors, landed up straight away in a concentration camp. This did not happen in our case, nor did the culprit get away with it. Our story shows that if there was an element of force on the part of a ‘responsible German official’, such as Mr. Schultz, who misused his official position there was a price to pay for breaking the racial code of conduct, while no harm was done to the eastern worker.

Secondly, while it is true that the racially foreign workers did not have the right to approach the judiciary, they could reach out to the Gestapo, and we cannot overlook the powers of the Gestapo during the war years, particularly towards the end. It had sidelined the judicial apparatus to a very great extent

and had taken up the role of dispensing 'justice'.²¹¹ The Gestapo took seriously its imperative to enforce racial policy. As long as there was information whether from official sources or the population at large, it was willing and able to press home Nazi behavioural codes. As its record of arrests made clear, the Gestapo had to devote an increasing amount of time to policing foreigners, and after the opening of hostilities against the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 this activity consumed the great majority of all the Gestapo's work.²¹²

Thirdly, Fankenberger's position snatches agency from these women. It is correct when, for example, Frankenberger argues that Russian workers were completely desubjectified and deindividualized on the basis of their supposed 'racial inferiority'. But such a viewpoint presupposes that these Russian women were mere victims with no voice. In fact, the title of her book "Wir waren wie Vieh", which she selects from one of the interviewed Russian women's statements, betrays this position of mere victimhood. This reinforces the identity given to them by the state and its enforcers rendering them as desubjectified and deindividualized slaves, precisely the position that Frankenberger criticises in other places in her work. Our story shows that even after being intimidated by the rapist with a concentration camp sentence, she brought the matter to the light. This was not an isolated case. Our next example shows that a group of another Polish female workers showed the courage to report a matter of sexual and physical harassment to the police.

Case 2: Five Polish female workers came to the police station on 17 April 1943 and reported the following:

"Ever since we have been put up in the camp, the camp director Tischler and the supervisor have been beating us regularly. Once when one of us came to the air raid shelter, Tischler grabbed her in an immoral way. These men are particularly fond of Ukrainian women. Tischler often comes to the bedrooms of the workers, pulls our quilts off and tries to indulge in immoral acts. On Sundays, when we have our day off, the supervisor often throws us out of our beds, where we lie during the day due to extreme cold. We are forced to pay fines or

are confined to an arrest cell for the rest of the day. When we arrived here, the Polish women had to give all their money to Tischler, who gave us negligible amount of Marks in exchange and threatened to confine us in arrest cells, if we complained to the police. Our lives have become miserable not just because of these men; other inmates like the Ukrainians too misbehave with us. The reason for this treatment is that we refused to submit to Tischler's sexual demands".²¹³

Tischler was interrogated by the Gestapo. He contested all charges and said that the account of the Polish women was exaggerated. He denied having beaten them. Tischler got away with a warning because the Gestapo thought that there was just a threat of sexual violence but apparently he committed no crime. Why Tischler was fond of Ukrainian girls was not clear from the account. Either it could be because of the ambivalent attitude of the regime towards the Ukraine, or because these girls responded to Tischler's sexual advances. The Ukrainian workers were allowed to go to shops, cinemas, church and restaurants, which was not allowed for the Russians (and Poles).²¹⁴ Till 1942 the National Socialist leaders were ambiguous about their handing towards the Ukrainians. The Foreign Office and others did not want to torpedo the existing German-friendly potential of the Ukrainian population through appearing inappropriately harsh. The RSHA, on the other hand, placed Ukrainians next to the Russian to be treated as eastern workers.²¹⁵ This mutually contradictory position at the higher political level must have given some room to lower functionaries to exercise their discretion in individual cases.

Other studies also show that cases of sexual harassment and assault on foreign women workers could not remain hidden from the authorities and were led to calls for punishment.

Case 3: W., a 14-year-old Polish girl worked in Torfwerk in Sedelsburg. In September 1940 the boss of her firm tried to abuse her sexually and also used force. In December 1941 he hit her with a horsewhip and forcibly raped her, which led to pain in her lower abdomen. The news spread in the firm among

the Germans and the Poles. W. also informed her father about the incident, who in turn denounced the accused. In his judgement, the judge had to take into consideration the fact that the matter had become public. The defendant could not be treated leniently in spite of having a 'clean record' because he had badly damaged the reputation of the German people. Besides, his behaviour had come to the knowledge of broader circles of Poles.²¹⁶ The defendant was sentenced to four years' penal servitude. Similar cases of sexual exploitation of Polish girls by their employers have been cited by Gellately in his recent work.²¹⁷ Gellately however points out that these girls were reluctant to report such cases for the obvious reason that they feared to be punished with protective custody and concentration camp sentence for it while the employer could get away with a warning. In spite of this many brought it to the notice of higher authorities and sometimes when the case was referred to the *RSHA*, it corrected the verdict of the Gestapo, and believing the version of the girl in question also acquitted her because of her 'dependency relationship' to the employer.²¹⁸ Polish girls also used denunciation to protect themselves from sexual onslaughts of their countrymen.²¹⁹

Polish and Russian female workers showed agency, courage and defiance in many other ways. Their non-co-operation and non-compliance manifested itself in small everyday acts like producing rejects in the factory, job shirking, fleeing from the camp, refusing to eat the food dished out to them, roaming around in public without wearing the identification marks ('P' for Poles and 'Ost' for Russians).²²⁰

Becoming pregnant²²¹ was another way of circumventing forced labour. Non compliant behaviour also surfaced in women who were considered *Eindeutschungsfähig* (capable of Germanisation) by the regime. This was another category of files among the *Fremdarbeiter/Fremdvölkische Minderheiten* that could not be ignored. We will turn to them now. These women were chosen by the regime as privileged and beneficiaries of the system, provided they followed the code of conduct prescribed for them by the

enforcers, but many refused to adhere to them even at the risk of losing their privileged status and facing persecution.

Eindeutschungsfähige Women

In the course of consolidating the German race in the General Government, German officials tried to locate families capable of Germanisation. Fundamental Declaration of December 1940 by the Reich Commissioner for Consolidating the German race, pertaining to the “Re-Germanisation of lost German Blood” stated:

Utilisation of those Poles, who can be Germanised: Purging all incorporated eastern territories of persons of alien races is one of the most important objectives to be attained in the German East. It will be a cardinal police task of a national nature which the *Reichsführer-SS*, Reich Commissioner for Consolidating Germanism, will have to accomplish in the incorporated eastern territories. In carrying out his assignment, which is most closely connected to the problem of national identity in the eastern territories, overriding, and decisive importance must be given, next to such aspects as language, education and religion, to racial selection...It is equally imperative to reclaim German blood extant in these parts for Germanism, even if the bearers of such blood have become Polonised in attitude and language...it is an absolute necessity from a national-political perspective to ‘comb’ the incorporated eastern territories as well as the *Generalgouvernement* in search of just such blood-bearers so as to restore again the blood that was lost to our own German people. What measures are to be taken against renegades may well be of secondary importance. Imperative is that at least their children must no longer remain hostages to Polish ways but shall be brought up within a German environment. However, Germanisation can not take place in the hitherto existing Polish environment, but solely in the *Altreich* or in Austria.

The following two vital factors make a reclamation of lost German blood absolutely essential:

- a. We must prevent Polish intellectual strata from reproducing further at the cost of originally German, albeit Polonised, kinship groups.
- b. We must stimulate racially desirable population growth for the German people, and we must obtain a work force that is unobjectionable from a national-biological viewpoint from the German build up of agriculture and industry.”²²²

This status could be granted to selected Poles and Czechs etc. if they had the ‘physical appearances’ and ‘racial characteristics’ of Aryan or related blood. The colour of the eyes and hair was important in determining racial worthiness. This had to be further checked through various tests that they had to undergo. The head was measured from various angles by phrenologists. Another criterion for suitability for Germanisation was family name.²²³ If it sounded German, the person was given an offer to enrol for Germanisation²²⁴.

The Gestapo files of such individuals informed us that there was a prescribed code of conduct that the *Eindeutschungsfähige* had to follow. Among other things, they had to sever all contacts with other people of their country who were not capable of Germanisation, They had to show a ‘good moral character’, avoid changing sexual partners frequently, be hard-working and show punctuality at work and so on. Further, their political attitude had to leave no doubt about their will to become German citizens.²²⁵ These people were mentioned in the Gestapo files as *Reichsdeutsche auf Widerruf* (German citizens subject to revocation). Such people stood under close observation of the Gestapo and quarterly reports were supposed to be filed on their conduct. We now show some such examples:

Case 1: In 1942, the Gestapo opened the case file of fifteen-year-old Schura, a Polish girl, who was considered ‘capable of Germanisation’. Schura was to be kept under close observation.²²⁶ Special care had to be taken that she did not interact with Poles, who were not capable of Germanisation. Within forty days of her placement in a household as a domestic help, Schura ran away from her mistress’s home. A report filed by an SS- and *Polizeiführer* said that she went to Braunschweig where her sister was working as a domestic help. An arrest

warrant was issued and Schura was arrested at her sister's house. She was put in protective custody. On her release, she was handed over to her mistress. Her file closed with a remark that she was no longer capable of Germanisation. A small girl, placed in hostile surroundings and compelled to work in a household was punished for visiting her sister. The drive to consolidate German race created boundaries between two sisters. One was seen as capable of Germanisation and the other was not. For Schura it became a criminal offence to meet her sister. It cost her protective custody and the loss of her 'privileged status'.

Case 2: Fourteen-year-old Walja was brought from Poland. Because of her physical appearance, she was considered capable of Germanisation.²²⁷ She was henceforth to be kept under close observation and reports on her conduct were to be filed by the Gestapo every three months. She was sent to a German doctor's house to work. The doctor complained that he was not happy with her work and she was taken into protective custody for eight days. After that she was sent to another house as a maid. Walja was accused of interacting with a Pole, who she said was her uncle. Meanwhile, a German took her to a hotel, where he spent a night with her. In order to present her as an adult, he forged her date of birth in her passport. He was arrested for forging her documents. This sexual intercourse resulted in her pregnancy. She was arrested on 16 April 1942 for a month. She delivered a baby on 30 September 1942. Six months later a Gestapo report said that she was seen in the company of 'suspicious people'. On 16 March 1943 she was again taken into 'protective custody'. The report also said that she was no longer capable of Germanisation and would be sent to a concentration camp if she did not mend her ways.

A fate such as this could befall an innocent Polish girl who at first glance seemed to be a beneficiary of the system. Small girls, minors and adolescents were forcibly pulled out of their socio-cultural milieu and compelled to work as domestic helps where they were at the mercy of their 'masters' and 'mistresses'. If they happened to fit the racial criteria of the

enforcers, it further intensified their feeling of alienation and isolation. Meeting relatives and friends was declared criminal, while those 'Aryans' who abused and mistreated them could get away with it. Here again we see racist persecution combined with sexism. When a German woman was sexually or emotionally involved with a Pole, the regime tried to establish whether the Pole was capable of Germanisation or not. If he could produce a recommendation by the doctors about his 'positive' racial characteristics, he could be acquitted and the two could get married. If he failed, he was executed in public. Such executions took place particularly in the early phase of war to create a terrifying impact upon people, especially German women.²²⁸ But 'Aryan' men who seduced, abused or raped these young girls seldom expressed a wish for marriage. They were mostly victims of promiscuous behaviour of men who were otherwise leading normal family lives.

Kriegerfrauen

It seems a little strange and contradictory to talk about *Kriegerfrauen* i.e. German 'Aryan' women who happened to be soldiers' wives, in a chapter that deals with foreign workers. Yet they were prominent in the Gestapo files dealing with foreign workers. They fell victim to male denouncers, mostly relations and superiors, who took upon themselves the guardianship of their households and families. They were also subjected to double sexual standards of the racist-sexist regime, which allowed their soldier husbands all access to civilian Russian and Polish women for sexual exploitation in brothels in the name of comforting them. The same regime penalised their wives back at home for entertaining friendly and sexual relations with men of racially foreign origins. They appeared as victims of the sexist-racist regime in the files yet they were makers of their own destinies in that they openly rejected their soldier husbands and got into relationships with foreign men knowing very well that this would invite the wrath of the state.

All case studies in this category tell us that these *Kriegerfrauen* were either gainfully employed, or were engaged in tertiary jobs in the war years

while their husbands were away. Their alleged or actual sexual involvement with racially foreign men provoked male friends, relations and party men to denounce them, which perhaps reflected the loss of power that they felt vis-à-vis these soldiers' wives. This male behaviour has to be seen in the context of men's experience during the two world wars, which by necessity empowered women. Soldiers' wives threatened the position of men in civil society on the home front. To counter this ideologically, a consciously negative image building of the *Kriegerfrau* had been undertaken by state and people alike since the First World War. The state took upon itself the responsibility of supporting the *Kriegerfrau* and her family while the husband was away at the front. But along with the allowance came a whole package of duties, which were not only of financial nature but also laid down a specific moral and sexual code of conduct for her. She was expected to work outside the home and also manage her household and children efficiently. She was supposed to practice the virtues of thrift, loyalty, modesty and chastity till her husband returned. To make sure that she adhered to these norms, a whole negative discourse, developed around the persona of *Kriegerfrau* to keep her under constant social and cultural vigil. This happened not only at the level of the state but ordinary people and political parties participated in this as well. For example, how she spent her time and money became a public spectacle. The Duisburg magistrate publicly stigmatised the *Kriegerfrauen* who did not cook lunch because of laziness and slovenliness. A USPD deputy stated, "In the eyes of a normal citizen, the *Kriegerfrau* is the most fortunate woman of the world today. She gets her state allowance and earns her own money, buys away the velvet and silk from under the noses of the rich, dresses up, goes to cinema and theatre."²²⁹ At the base of this condemnation of prosperity, luxury, enjoyment and independence on the part of the *Kriegerfrau* lay the patriarchal cliché of the soldier's holy family. But at times, it also perhaps reflected factors like social jealousies. In the Second World War, the racial doctrines of the Nazi regime added to this. The state demanded loyalty from the

Kriegerfrau not so much for moral reasons as for racial and political ones. The minister of justice, Thierack, assigned to the 'Aryan' soldier's wife

the task of fulfilling her duty towards the house and hearth in the absence of the husband. She was to provide him with the strength to fight through her loyalty, a loyalty that had to stem from her racial origins.²³⁰ In 1944 the SD warned about the loose morals of the *Kriegerfrau* in an article. Even though the proportion of such women had not crossed the 1914-1918 levels, the tendency to live oneself out sexually had increased among the women and girls, particularly among the *Kriegerfrauen*:

“The consequences of adultery by a soldier’s wife are to be seen as particularly grave. The husbands get disturbed at the front when they are told about the change in the conduct of their wives by the neighbours. Many would blame the state for not being able to keep their families in order while they stood at the Front.”²³¹

In an alarm raising tone, a senate counsellor Dr. Käthe Petersen pointed out in 1943 that the immoral behaviour of *Kriegerfrauen* had deteriorated further. Though the great majority of them were still not affected by it, and in any case, among debauched women, there were those who had already attracted attention as ‘asocial’ women, yet the growth in the number of those who would have definitely led a orderly life under normal circumstances was worth noticing.²³² *Kriegerfrauen* were targeted by people and state alike for public harassment and persecution. They easily became suspects of indulging in sexual relations with foreign men. Even though the above statements made it clear that the majority of *Kriegerfrauen* did not lead a debauched life style, a halo was created around the *Kriegerfrau* whose duty it was to remain racially loyal to her husband and the fatherland. The loose morals of the *Kriegerfrau* were considered a serious health hazard for the *Volkskörper*. Because she was supported by the state and hence with public money, the public, so to say, acquired a moral right to sit in judgement over her moral character. Her conduct was closely observed. Her body and her space became sites for public scrutiny, dissection and control. It was predominantly men, be it in the office or at home, who assumed her guardianship and reported any unwanted behaviour on her part to the Gestapo. *Kriegerfrauen* became immediately suspect if they even slightly deviated from

the moral code of conduct prescribed to them by the regime. They were suspected of having turned into prostitutes or changing their sexual partners frequently. In fact, this suspicion rent the air so much that soldiers were regularly fed with stories at the front about their wives going stray.

The general atmosphere that prevailed among the soldiers can be observed from the correspondence between couples during the war. Although one such couple, Toni and Renate consciously tried to avoid the topic of the fear of infidelity by soldiers' wives, like any other fear or anxiety, and tried to write only about positive things in their communications, it was betrayed in Toni's letters. He wrote: "I am so thankful to you for sending me letters so sincerely, each letter of yours brings so much joy to me. Some of the comrades get angry with their wives when they have to wait for eight days or more for a letter". After a holiday, when Toni returned to the front he wrote to her about how grateful he was to her for having spent a lovely time together with him and added, "it could have been otherwise".²³³ The much-propagated figure of the unfaithful and debauched soldier's wife was forever present like a ghost at the front haunting the soldiers. This fear surfaced when there was irregular communication from the wife, or when a superior told the soldier that his wife had turned to other men. Those soldiers whose wives remained loyal to them were only too thankful to them.

Having made clear that not many *Kriegerfrauen* led a debauched existence while their husbands were at the front, we will now discuss some cases of *Kriegerfrauen* who realised their dreams of sexual freedom with a foreign worker. The cases reflected that the absence of an oppressive husband at home opened out a possibility of having a fulfilling relationship. It gave these wives an opportunity to realise themselves sexually with a foreign worker who perhaps came as a negation of the husband, not so domineering, overbearing and overpowering.

Case 1: Frau Kohl, a tram car employee, was denounced by her brother-in-law, an SS *Stürmführer*, on 17 December 1941 as he came home on leave. His

father, a worker, told him that Frau Kohl entertained a relationship with an Italian while her husband was away at the front. The Italian had been sleeping in her house for about three months. His father raised objections to this but she did not listen to him. She told him that it was none of his business. His father was forced to tolerate this as he was dependent on her and lived in the same house. She took medical leave from work and had a party in the house where she danced with many Italian guests.²³⁴ Later the father-in-law of Frau Kohl supported the testimony of his son.

In her defence Frau Kohl said that she learnt Italian from the accused Italian. Whenever he came to the house, he slept on the sofa. A female friend of hers was always present on these occasions. Her father-in-law was blowing things out of proportion. She was warned by the Gestapo not to maintain any contacts with the Italian. She was again denounced to the Gestapo, this time by her husband who wrote a letter to the Gestapo from the field. When summoned by the Gestapo, she again denied having physical relations with the Italian. She also said that she had filed a divorce case against her husband the previous December. She did not like her husband, as he often beat her up. Even while she was pregnant he did not refrain from acts of violence. She had wanted to file the divorce case earlier but she was prevented by the husband, who threatened her with a knife. She was warned again not to keep in touch with the Italian.

In most of the cases where the *Kriegerfrauen* were denounced for alleged or actual love relations with foreign workers the marriage was already dead. Physical violence and brutal behaviour on the part of the husband were often given as reasons for the broken marriage.

Case 2: Frau Müller, a packer, was denounced by the *Betriebsobmann* on 11 November 1941. He confronted her for having a relationship with a Belgian. She slapped him on the face for shouting at her in public. In her statement to the Gestapo, she said that she had no longer been living with her husband in a husband-wife relationship. Her husband had other women who had also borne

his children. Since he became a soldier, he has entered into relationships with other women. She wanted to file a divorce case, but was advised by the public prosecutor to postpone it till the end of the war. She admitted having relations with the Belgian²³⁵.

She was warned by the Gestapo and had to submit a written statement that she would behave as a *Kriegerfrau* in future, otherwise she would have to reckon with harsher state police measures. No matter how fractured the husband-wife relation may have been, a *Kriegerfrau* was supposed to keep up the morale of her husband at the front. If she sought a divorce because the marriage was already broken, the public, the state, and its agencies forced her to continue to maintain the facade of a united family at war against the outsiders and the enemy states. No intrusion by another man, who happened to be of racially foreign origins, was tolerated in the life of the *Kriegerfrau*.

Case 3: Frau Pätzold was denounced by camp director to the DAF. The denunciation said that groups of Italians visited her house frequently. Since there were young girls below 16 living in that house too, the situation called for an inquiry. It was suspected that a secret brothel might be developing there.²³⁶ The enquiry established that the house was indeed being frequented by the Italians, and that a security servant's wife had earlier threatened Frau Pätzold with denunciation but the latter did not care.

In her defence Frau Pätzold told the Gestapo that she laundered the clothes of these Italians. They came to her house to collect their clothes. She could get away with this explanation. After a while Herr Pätzold's nephew informed him about the behaviour of his wife. Herr Pätzold came home on leave and 'disciplined' his wife. Frau Pätzold's case highlights the tension between the state, the soldiers and their male relations who denounced the *Kriegerfrauen*, and demanded stern action against them. They also zealously kept the soldiers informed at the front about their erring wives. The husbands however, chose to resolve the matter themselves. It can also be observed that the prevailing circumstances of war, which forced women, especially

Kreigerfrauen, to come out of their houses to join war efforts, upset gender hierarchies at home. This led to women becoming more independent, self-conscious and self-sufficient. Women used this opportunity not just to replace men at work but to experience and enjoy the freedom that came with it. This was considered outrageous by the male observers who wanted to stop it at once by means of denunciation or ‘popular justice’. But on a soldier this could have an emasculating effect. If he paid heed to official or unofficial reports about his wife going astray, it would have been tantamount to publicly accepting his undermined position at home. In a society where conservative sexual morals on the part of a wife were upheld as a virtue, this could have meant a failure on the part of the soldier to protect his wife, control her sexuality or prevent her from turning to other men. Perhaps, also because of this he might have preferred to resolve the matter himself. Many such husbands may have themselves refrained from openly denouncing their wives and thereby inviting state and party intervention in their private matter. Precisely this reason, i.e. the loss of power at home, which made housewives go to the Gestapo with their personal problems as we saw in the second chapter, might have deterred a soldier from reporting the matter to the Gestapo.

It is also worth noting that while these women were repeatedly warned by the Gestapo to refrain from getting involved with foreigners, threatened with concentration camp or even with losing the guardianship of their children if they continued with their immoral ways, such warnings were normally not followed by harsh punishments. There might have been a lurking fear of antagonising the soldiers who could have perceived it as destructive for the family or as too much of interference in their private matters.

Our next example, goes on to show how the consistent moral policing by the Nazi Party leaders and the social welfare agency, NSV forced the Gestapo and the *Kriegerfrau*'s husband to take stern action against her.

Case 4: On 16 September 1941 the *Ortsgruppenleiter*, Düsseldorf, Wersten wrote a letter to the Gestapo reporting against 32 years old *Kriegerfrau* Kirschbaum saying:

Frau Kirschbaum's husband was drafted a long time ago. As imparted to me by a social welfare sister, Frau Kirschbaum has been loitering about and has lately taken in a barely eighteen year old Belgian in her house as a guest. Apparently she wishes to marry him after obtaining a divorce from her present husband. Frau Kirschbaum's behaviour has been so provocative that a social welfare sister had to intervene and transfer her children to a children's welfare home. The shameless conduct of Frau Kirschbaum has led to a lot of bad blood in the *Stahlhaussiedlung*, (the locality apparently inhabited by many other *Kriegerfrauen*), and it is high time one intervened. Frau Kirschbaum has become notorious for soliciting soldiers. The above mentioned Belgian named A. H. works in a dispatch firm in Düsseldorf. There is a witness in that firm who can give information about the goings-on between Frau Kirschbaum and the Belgian. Even the social welfare sister Lilli has met the Belgian in Frau Kirschbaum's house.

In the interest of the drafted husband and in the interest of maintaining order and discipline, I beg you to intervene and send her to a labour camp. She may still be rescued. Similarly, the Belgian has to be driven out of this adulterous relationship, especially because it is a case of a soldier's wife who has herself not shown any consideration for it.²³⁷

Frau Kirschbaum was summoned by the Gestapo on 23 September 1941. In her defence she said:

"My husband was on leave between 23 July and 6 August. Though he lived with me, he neither bothered about me nor about his children. Even before joining the army he used to squander most of his earnings on drinks. I admit that I had rented out a room to the Belgian A. K.. I had to do this as my allowance was not sufficient for I have five children. In spite of my protests these children have been taken away

from me by the social welfare. I registered myself voluntarily at the labour exchange and got the job in Düsseldorf-Reisholz. I earn RM 30 per week.

I have given a notice to A.K. to vacate the room just now. He will be leaving in three days. He will be shifting to his girl friend's house. I have had no relations with either him or the soldiers. I have had no sexual intercourse with A.K.

I receive a warning due to my behaviour. I have been told that if I am found loitering about in future, I will have to reckon with harsher state police measures.”

Frau Kirschbaum's effort to go to the labour exchange and ask for a job 'voluntarily' came soon after the denunciation. It should be noted that she could not have been forced to work in normal circumstances given the fact that she had six children, one out of wedlock, between the age of one and thirteen. It is obvious that she did so after being pressurised by the party men and the NSV so that there would be no excuse left for renting out the room to a foreigner. This was one way of breaking the relationship and of controlling her.²³⁸

On 26 September 1941 A.K. was interrogated by the Gestapo. He said that he would be vacating Frau Kirschbaum's room immediately. He disputed the allegation of sexual relations with her and denied having stayed overnight with her in the same room. He had to sign a letter of apology, which said that he was still suspected of having a relationship with Frau Kirschbaum even though he did not admit it. Further, that he had received a warning and had been taught a lesson. In case of any complaints in future, harsher state police measures would be taken against him.

Not satisfied with the way the Gestapo had handled the case, the *Ortsgruppenleiter*, on 10 October 1941, once again brought to the notice of the Gestapo his belief that the relationship between the two was going as strong as ever. One day when A.K. was absent from work, the *Beauftragte* of his firm found him lying naked in bed with Frau Kirschbaum. He could see that Frau Kirschbaum had tattooed a heart with the letters A.K. in her thigh. A.K.

himself went about narrating fantastic stories about their relationship to the neighbours. The residents of the *Stahlhaussiedlung* found it shameful and outrageous at the present time and showed the inclination to resolve the matter themselves if the situation did not change through police intervention. Frau Kirschbaum refused to break the relationship with A.K. and told the administrator of the *Stahlhaussiedlung* that even foreign workers need to be looked after by someone. “This is what a soldier’s wife had to say! The Gestapo must not be unaware of the efforts we have to constantly make to check the prevailing moral degradation in the interest of upright residents and of school children in the *Stahlhaussiedlung*.”

He warned the Gestapo:

“If such a gross case is tolerated without any intervention, it will definitely have unpleasant repercussions and it will not be surprising if people laugh at us in future. It should not be forgotten that more and more soldier’s wives are shamelessly entertaining extramarital relationships in the *Stahlhaussiedlung* and their homes are regularly frequented by men. My party men and I do not have the power at our disposal to intervene in the matter. It is a concern of the Police. I am convinced that a forceful intervention is the only way to improve the situation.”

The *Ortsgruppenleiter* therefore requested the Gestapo to urgently satisfy this public outrage by ensuring that:

“The Belgian disappears from the *Stahlhaussiedlung*. Frau Kirschbaum is immediately transferred to a labour camp in order to bring her back to discipline and order because she, as a soldier’s wife and mother of his children, has thrown herself shamelessly at a foreigner. A mere warning serves no purpose in such a situation. One has to act here and act at once.”

A physical examination of Frau Kirschbaum was undertaken to establish if she had A. K.’s name on her body but no such thing was found. However, Frau Kirschbaum’s next round of interrogation betrayed clear signs of third degree methods used on her to force out confession. She started her

testimony saying, “the reason for my interrogation has been communicated to me. As before, I deny having been in a naked state with A.K. in the same room.” Soon after comes the forced confession when she says in the next sentence:

“After being warned sternly once again to tell the truth, I confess having had sex with him in my kitchen. But it happened when he had not yet shifted to my house. Since then we have not had any sexual intercourse. I contest the claims of the *Beaufragter* of A.K.’s firm that he found us naked in the same bed. No one has ever come to my house from this firm. A.K. already left the house three weeks ago. Since then he came only thrice to collect his butter and clothes, which he will do no longer as he has taken every thing from my house. After being warned once again to tell the truth, I deny having had sexual intercourse with him more than once. I have been told that my testimony is not believed and that I am being put under temporary arrest. My children have been taken away from me by the social welfare sister and they are in the social welfare home.”

On 16 October 1941 the *Kreisleiter* wrote to the Gestapo demanding stern action against Frau Kirschbaum, particularly in the interest of her children. Having spent some time in police custody Frau Kirschbaum had to ultimately confess having had sex with A.K. at least nine times. The *Ortsgruppenleiter* sent another communication to the Gestapo on 30 October 1941 claiming that he had learnt from the social welfare sister that Frau Kirschbaum was being released from the custody. He angrily noted:

“If such a woman is set free so soon, she has had the last laugh. We might as well pack up with out efforts to achieve some degree of order in the *Stahlhaussiedlung*. Both the social worker and I are of the opinion that after such a quick release of this person the rest of the women in *Stahlhaussiedlung* will now have even lesser inhibitions than ever before about their misdemeanours. She should be put in a labour camp for a long time, where she actually belongs. She can only be cured there.”

On 15 November 1941 the Gestapo wrote to the *Kreisleitung* and on 17 November to the *Ortsgruppe* Wersten that Frau Kirschbaum had been taken in police custody for three weeks and that her case had been referred to the relevant criminal police station for sending her to a labour camp.

Frau Kirschbaum could perhaps avoid being sent to a labour camp. This can be discerned from a letter of her husband addressed to the Gestapo from Tilsit written on 16 March 1944. Till the end of 1941 when there was such a hectic exchange of information going on between the NSV, the party and the Gestapo, the husband did not surface openly in the file. He chose to stay away from the issue. After four years he came into the picture as he got an anonymous letter at the front informing him about his wife's continued relationship with foreigners. Herr Kirschbaum's letter also informed the Gestapo that he had filed a divorce suit against his wife due to her immoral life style. He had himself thrown such men out of his house at mid-night on certain occasion when he came home on leave. His children were put in social welfare home with his consent. His wife was also kept in custody, after which she promised to behave properly and to break all contacts with foreigners. "I tried to bring back the children. But she did not keep her promise and even I lost the guardianship rights over my children. Her allowance has stopped²³⁹ and she earns her living through selling tobacco wares in the black market, which are being supplied to her by French prisoners. I obtained all this information from the anonymous letter and would like to verify the facts from you."

Nothing much came out of this request. But this indicated that the soldier's life was plagued even at the front by letters informing him about the debauched life style of his wife, so much so that he ultimately had to seek divorce and take up the matter directly with the Gestapo in spite of having avoided it for so long.

This was another variant of the Nazi party's behaviour against non-compliant German women, apart from putting German women in the pillory

for having affairs with foreigner workers of which there were ample examples. By constantly reminding the Gestapo to do ‘their duty’ the party men were exercising their moral authority in matters of *Kriegerfrauen* and exercising consistent moral pressure over the Gestapo to persecute Frau Kirschbaum for having relations with a Belgian. Telling the Gestapo that they were powerless in the matter and that only the Gestapo was vested with powers to deal with such matters, the party men were in fact threatening the Gestapo with taking the matter in their hands and subjecting the *Kriegerfrauen* to ‘popular justice’. The authority of the party men was further reinforced with the backing of the NSV sisters who were keeping a constant moral vigil on Frau Kirschbaum. Frau Kirschbaum was stamped as an ‘asocial element’ in the denunciation letters. Such women, often referred to as ‘hwg’ or ‘häufig wechselndem Geschlechtsverkehr’ (frequently changing partners) were subjected to the control mechanisms of welfare agencies like the NSV who visited the houses of *Kriegerfrauen* frequently and reported all unwanted behaviour to the authorities.²⁴⁰ Their way of disciplining the *Kriegerfrauen* was to warn them first, take away their children and put them up in homes, demand from them that they take up a regular job and also report the higher authorities to reduce their allowance or stop it altogether. This pattern of disciplining can be seen in Frau Kirschbaum's case in progressive stages. Her children were taken away first, then she was pressurised to take up a job. Her case was followed up with the Gestapo until she got the harshest treatment from them while in custody. And ultimately her allowance was stopped, as is evident from the letter of her husband to the Gestapo.

This case, along with others, underlined the fact that there was gendered policing in the Third Reich, where moral, sexual and racial concerns were inextricably entwined. But this particular example highlighted for example, that pillorying women was an extreme method of ‘popular justice’ adopted by the party and other agencies. Not every deviant *Kriegerfrau* was subjected to such treatment. This was more of an exemplary measure adopted to instil the fear of ‘popular justice’ and state authority, which tacitly supported it. The issue was far more complicated as it involved the morale of

the soldiers at the front. The children could not be taken away from the wife without his consent and he was kept informed regularly about the developments at his 'home front'. There were other lenient ways to discipline the erring wife. The severity of the punishment increased corresponding to the non-compliance of the *Kriegerfrau* in question. The everyday behaviour of the disciplining agencies was as varied as the everyday behaviour of their victims.

While there was such a significant public discourse on the loose sexual morals of the *Kriegerfrauen*, there was no such parallel discourse on the sexual morality of the soldiers at the front. On the contrary, sexual urges on the part of the soldiers were understood to be a natural factor for maintaining their strength to fight. The soldier required, so to say, both the loyalty of his wife and his sexual promiscuity during the war, to keep him going. Hitler said, "when the German man is prepared to die unconditionally as a soldier, he must also have the freedom to live unconditionally"²⁴¹. Brothels were set up since 1940 in the occupied regions to channelise male sexuality and to avoid rape, lechery and homosexuality. Polish, Russian and even Jewish women were forced into these brothels.²⁴² The double standards of morality of the regime on the one hand created brothels for the soldiers and on the other hand constantly fed the soldiers with alarmist stories of their sexually debauched wives at home. Soldiers could indulge in sexual promiscuity and find chaste women when they returned. They remained heroes of the war beyond stigmas, taboos and ostracism. The double standards of morality justifying promiscuity on the part of men and prescribing chastity for women did not go unnoticed even among party members. A party member who witnessed pillorying of two German women in Bad Aibling for having relationships with French POWs, commented disapprovingly as follows: If each soldier's ear were to be cut off for having a French woman, two thirds of them would have returned home without an ear.²⁴³

Civilian 'Aryan' men and their relations with female foreign workers

While there was such a wide spread public discourse on the morals of the *Kriegerfrau* and such a big issue was made out of it, no such discourse existed

on the civilian men who had relations with foreign women who were forced to labour in Germany. They were denounced for indulging in sexual relations, mentioned more frequently as *Geschlechtsverkehr* or *GV Verbrechen* in the Gestapo files, with racially foreign women and for violating the racial laws but were not subjected to moral verdicts or ostracism by the community. The punishments meted out to 'Aryan' women were harsher and had an added element of stigmatisation, ostracism and public humiliation. They were 'the honour' of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the repositories of the 'Aryan Blood'.²⁴⁴ Considering that there were more civilian women as compared to civilian men at the time of the war, men reported for having illegal relationships with the foreign workers surface in the files in relatively higher number.

Moreover, the way they sought to establish sexual contacts with Polish or Russian workers was indicative of the fact that they just wanted to satisfy their lust. Those who were officially in a superior position inflicted physical and sexual violence upon the foreign workers with impunity as pointed out the beginning of the chapter. Even the authorities were aware of this and they were forced to treat Polish women leniently as compared to Polish men. In September 1940 Heydrich while writing to the Gestapo posts himself had to admit:

"The detailed reports show that almost all intimate relationships to Polish women were initiated by the German men involved. In addition, these Polish women were very often in a relationship of dependence to these men. Very often they are farmers' sons or immediate bosses. In individual cases, even owners themselves initiated the sexual relations. And it is precisely those Polish women who fulfil their duties at work and who want to retain their place, who tend to yield to the demands of their employers. For these reasons, sexual relations between German men and women workers of Polish nationality are not to be dealt with by special treatment (euphemism for killing).²⁴⁵

According to the new policy, Polish women were to be arrested for up to three weeks, forced to change their place of work, and in cases of

recidivism, especially if they tempted young men, sent to a concentration camp.²⁴⁶ Sexual exploitation of these women continued however.

Others, who could not lord it over these foreign workers directly, resorted to subtler ways, like doing small favours and expecting sexual favours in return. Roadside acquaintances or colleagues gave gifts to the Polish and Russian female workers or treated them to drinks, took them out for a break, disappeared with them during lunch hours and had sex with them. One such German, when questioned by the Gestapo, admitted having taken a Russian girl to a pub and having drunk beer with her, but denied any sexual contact, even claiming that his wife could vouch for the fact that he returned home every night. No one bothered to inquire what he did during the day, and he could get away with it.²⁴⁷ The Gestapo did not even bother to ask his wife. With their superior social and economic status these men could allow themselves a great deal. The files revealed several situations, in which foreign, mostly Polish and Russian girls became targets of all kinds of physical and sexual abuse. Their abject poverty and inferior status compelled them to surrender themselves to German men for small favours like provisions, cigarettes, lenient handling from camp directors and so on.

But it would be wrong to assume that everyone could get away with it. In many cases, where the involved parties accepted their 'guilt' they were sent to a concentration camp. Foreign women were sent to the notorious women's camp at Ravensbrück, while the 'Aryan' men got the sentence of concentration camp, level I, reserved for relatively mild offences and could hope to return.

The hierarchy of suffering

The hierarchy of suffering and punishment was clearly based on racial- and gender-political considerations. At the apex of this hierarchy stood the Aryan man, who could, most of the time, get away scot-free or with a warning, if the crime was not proven. In cases where the crime was proven, at the most a three months' concentration camp or labour camp sentence awaited him. His

case became serious when he raped a foreign worker on duty or as a responsible officer. The rape here was not so much a consideration as dereliction of duty and misuse of his official position. It was his ideological deviance from the official racial code of conduct that bothered the authorities more than his sexual crime. Moreover, if the racial deviance became public knowledge he stood to lose much more.

Next in the hierarchy were German women as they were the 'repositories of Aryan culture' and 'carriers of future offspring'. Any exercise in moral or racial pollution by them was to be checked much more severely. They were warned or taken into custody for minor racial offences or where there was a distinct lack of evidence. But if the crime was proven they were sent to a concentration camp or an education camp. In addition they were subjected to public humiliation and social death. Almost in every town there were cases of pillorying German women with shaven heads.²⁴⁸ Subjecting German women to 'popular justice' - social shame and public humiliation - was considered more effective for 'disciplining' them. Moreover, as has been pointed out in various studies, putting such women on the pillory was mostly undertaken by party men who were supported by the state to do so in the name of the people. The whole scene was enacted by a masculine public. It was entirely a collective male exercise which must have had a cathartic impact on German men. Their self-esteem was corroded by women who increasingly became self-conscious, economically independent and self seeking in the inter-war period. Pillorying such women momentarily dispelled fears of impotence and emasculation that were generated in the male psyche by the illicit affairs of these women with foreign men. Publicly humiliating these women might have given the German men a narcissistic and sadistic pleasure. *Kriegerfrauen* were specially targeted for such treatment for they were supposed to be betraying dying soldiers at the front and indulging in sexual promiscuity. Sexual promiscuity was only allowed to the soldier and his wife had to face draconian measures if she dared to ape him. Social shame, ostracism and public boycott had a much worse impact on women than any judicial punishment.

It was far worse for female foreign workers, who were normally punished with a concentration camp sentence even when they were raped. They were double victims of the state and individual German male citizens who abused them sexually. Rape was called having ‘intimate relations’ with a German and punished correspondingly. Gender agony in this case remained totally ignored. Their fate was far worse, ranging from long stays in concentration camp to ‘special treatment i.e. killing, if willingness on their part could be proven.

The worst sufferers were indeed foreign men who had sexual intercourse with German women. They were supposed to be sexual aggressors preying on innocent German maidens. Such was the perverse sexist and racist logic of the regime that even if there was a mutual emotional involvement between a Slav/ Polish man and a German woman, the man was understood as the violator of the woman’s body and hanged whereas a German rapist was understood to have had ‘intimate relations’ with a Slav/Polish woman. In both cases however, the female voice remained unheard. Even here there were distinctions. Western and southern European civilian workers got long jail sentences but Polish and Russian men were publicly hanged for involvement with German women in the initial years. Later such hangings took place in jails. But it remained a capital offence.²⁴⁹

Statistical Account of denouncers and denounced

Let us shift our focus to numbers and statistics.

Table no. 1: Causes for initiating a case by the Gestapo:

Cause	Foreign Workers	Foreign Minorities	Total
Reports from the Population	25	2	27
Own Observation of Gestapo, Postal Surveillance, V-persons, Searches	5	0	5
No Exact Information	4	3	7
Total	34	5	39

Out of a total number of 34 cases from *Fremdarbeiter* and 5 cases of *Fremdvölkische Minderheiten* analysed for this chapter, at least 27 files opened with a denunciation, whereas in seven cases no names were mentioned in the files. In these cases the information filtered through an official source from the workplace and it can be inferred that a superior or a colleague was behind it. But we have categorised them separately under ‘no exact information’. Five files were opened by the Gestapo itself and they pertained to the Polish female forced workers who were selected for Germanisation and were to be kept under close vigil by the Gestapo. Two out of these were denounced by the employer/neighbour of the employer. This brings the total number of denunciations to 29 out of 39. This means that around 74% of these files would not have existed had their subjects not been denounced. Only one case resulted from postal surveillance.

The files under the category *Fremdarbeiter* were again a telling category, like the ones on ‘*Heimtückegesetz*’ where the ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’ controlled both the foreign workers and the Germans who maintained contacts with them of whatever kind. A gender break-down of the denouncers looks like this: Seven women denounced the cases to higher authorities i.e. police, Gestapo or the superiors. Two of them were foreign workers, a Russian and a group of Polish female workers who denounced their camp directors for physical, verbal and sexual abuse. They do not fall under the category of denouncers as we have understood them to be till now in this work. They are to be seen as victims with a voice. They were victims of male sexual aggression by the enemy country. They mustered the courage under the continued threat of sexual abuse and a concentration sentence in order to report the matter to their superiors or the police. This reduces the number of actual female denouncers to five. To this we must add one more. This was an ‘Aryan’ woman who was denounced for expressing anti-regime attitudes in her workplace . She in turn denounced two ‘Aryan’ women colleague for kissing French prisoners in lieu of cigarettes, and they were subsequently punished with either fines or jail sentences. So the total number goes to six. Men far outnumbered women as denouncers again. A total number of 18 cases opened with male denouncers

and two more can be added to this list, who denounced Polish female workers from the *Eindeutschungsfähig* category. Their Germanisation process was thereafter reversed and they landed up in protective custody or concentration camps.

A far more differentiated picture emerged of victimhood. Just because a file opened with a denunciation should not mislead us into believing that the denounced person was necessarily a victim. Among those who were reported, there were German men who sexually and physically abused female foreign workers by virtue of being in an official position where they exercised control over their body, space and movement. Besides, female foreign workers, who were mostly in their teens, were so vulnerable to sexual and physical abuse that we cannot classify all civilian German men who had sexual relations with them as opponents of the racial policies or as victims of the regime. They just used these women to gratify their sexual urges. By the same token those women who denounced others should not necessarily be considered as perpetrators. Those who entered the files as *Eindeutschungsfähig* were to some extent victims, as they were uprooted from their socio-cultural context and grafted in the land of an enemy state; yet there was a possibility of crossing over to the other side and becoming beneficiaries of the system provided they went by the rules of the system. There is evidence, though rare, where such *Eindeutschungsfähige* considered themselves superior to their fellow brothers and sisters and showed open hostility towards them to prove their loyalty to the system. Further, among victims there were also German men and women who were denounced for showing sympathy to foreign workers and maintaining physical or social contacts with them.

Having said this, let us draw a statistical picture of the victims. Seven foreign female workers fell victim to the sexual lust of their German superiors or citizens. In one particular case five Polish women reported their camp director for sexual and physical harassment. Four *Kriegerfrauen* were denounced, one by the party at the behest of the social workers, for entertaining sexual relations with foreign workers. Eight other civilian German

women were punished or harassed by the Gestapo for maintaining social and sexual contacts with foreign workers. One Polish female civil worker was victimised for expressing her good wishes to an *Eindeutungsfähig* Polish woman. This makes the total number of women to twenty.

In comparison eighteen men, foreign or German, were victimised by the Gestapo. Out of this eleven men were of foreign origin and were punished more harshly for minor crimes. The common 'crime' of German men was sexual and friendly contact with female foreign workers from Poland and the east, for which six were suspected but only four got punishments of any kind, mostly minor sentences.

Foreign men were usually accused of sexual relations with German women, work shy attitude, spying and expressing anti-regime attitudes. Harsher measures were taken in cases where sexual contact was discovered, though no scientific or medical procedure was used to verify the crime. Oral statements of the accused were the only way to judge. And even if foreign workers contested mostly they were sent to the concentration camp. The Gestapo files on *Fremdarbeiter* were mostly silent on serious cases of sexual offences by foreign men against German women. The reason for this could be, as pointed out by Eric Johnson, that the Gestapo did not keep case files on foreign workers who were chosen for capital punishment, euphemistically called 'special treatment'. The records they did keep of these people were mostly in the form of a mere note card, sometimes containing the letter L (for 'liquidation') or S (for 'special treatment').²⁵⁰ Illegal sexual relations with German women mostly resulted in a death sentence for a foreign man, especially if he was a Pole or a Russian. But since Gestapo records on them are not available we can not say with certainty how many were actually sentenced to death for this offence.

From a gender-historical viewpoint the files on *Fremdarbeiter* were different in nature from the files considered in the earlier chapter on the Jews, where women were seen to be guarding the home front and the

neighbourhood. There seems to have been a gender role reversal in the war years as far as the denouncers are concerned. Now women appeared as denouncers more often in the work place situations like the factories, big community kitchens, post offices and other service sectors like hotels, private enterprises etc. The reason is that their area of activity shifted from home and neighbourhood to jobs outside the home. It was in their work place that women increasingly spent their time and the usual gossip, mostly related to the sexual behaviour of people around them, took place in these locations. In other words, their sphere of activity, accountability and vigilance shifted during the war years from home to the work place. So the same rigour that was applied in driving out the Jews from the neighbourhoods now shifted to the factory halls and other work places, in driving out sexual and moral deviants, German and foreigners alike. And curiously, men took up the surveillance of the homes left without male guardians, who had left for the front. As more and more women ventured outside, they enjoyed the liberties that came with working outside especially sexual liberties. This became very disturbing for men who now consciously or unconsciously started playing the part of the moral guardians of these women. Party men and male relation came forward to report the 'way laid' and 'loose women' to the Gestapo in the absence of the inner control of the patriarch. Neighbours and colleagues sent anonymous letters to soldiers at the front about the immoral behaviour of their wives. A constant threat of denunciation or the actual event of one was always present to keep the soldier's wife under control in the absence of the patriarch. Fear of denunciation hung like a sword of Damocles above a *Kriegerfrau*.

Conclusion

The concluding section unfolds itself in layers, starting from the basic enquiry rooted in the everyday context-specific situations of women denouncers, and goes on to deal with broader social and political context of Nazi society and state. My study was driven by the quest to find answers to why, how and how many women denounced. The archival findings revealed, as shown in the foregoing chapters, that women's acts of denunciation were responses to different context-specific, life-world situations. This compelled me to reflect on the relevance of women as a category of analysis. The first part of Conclusion therefore deals with this issue. It then goes on reiterate gender differences observed in denunciatory behaviour. The question - who denounced? raised in the introduction, is answered next. Denunciatory practices have then been placed in the larger context of private and public where women's spaces and niches as denouncers have been traced as ever expanding through the three preceding chapters. Lastly, denunciatory practices have been used as a yardstick to comprehend patterns of consent and dissent in the broader context of Nazi society.

Women as a category of analysis

Can one really talk about women as a uniform and all encompassing category? My study shows that, in the non-racial context, the self-perception of 'Aryan' women differed from how the state, society and family perceived them. What are popularly understood as 'instrumental motives' in the discourse on denunciation mainly had at the core gender troubles and conflicts within the family and workplace that drove them to side with the state and betray their own family members, husbands and the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This basic realisation compelled me to conceptualise women primarily as wives placed in a specific context. So, I categorised these 'Aryan' women as battered wives, divorced wives, deserted wives, *Kriegerfrauen* and so on.

These housewives, mothers and daughters of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, who have lately been perceived as the non-persecuted lot and the beneficiaries of the system in the capacity of 'Aryan' wives, turned out to be perpetrators in one context but victims in the other. As wives, they were victims of gender inequality and gender oppression within the patriarchal family. They were victims of sexual and physical violence, of polygamous or promiscuous relations of their men. At the same time they were perpetrators within the larger context of a terrorist dictatorship. They curbed the freedom of (political) expression of their husbands by bringing their seditious statements to the notice of the Gestapo. They perpetrated violence upon their men through the political police.

These abused or wronged wives took recourse to denunciation as the law, defined and operated in a patriarchal sense, especially so in the Nazi era, did not really allow women the possibility of defending themselves against verbal and physical violence by their husbands. In this patriarchal discourse, where there was no room for wronged women, they had to invent a story of an anti-regime husband belonging to the subculture of alarmists, grumblers, deviants, Socialists and Communists. They had to talk in the language of the Gestapo to be able to raise their stories above '*Haustratsch*' and '*Hausklatsch*', and make it audience-worthy for the Gestapo. Further, to put the final seal of authenticity, they had to remind the authorities that they did not do it out of hatred or revenge but out of a genuine concern for the fatherland. This took their problem into the arena of politics and gave them a chance to articulate their 'gender troubles' beyond the dense network of oppressive familial relations, and raise their problems above the routine *Haustratsch* or *Klatsch*. It provided them with an escape - no matter how short lived - into political space. This device, however, had its own limitations. This could not have gone on. Even the audiences before whom they chose to articulate their problems could not sustain them. They had to ultimately submit to the normative patriarchal order. Sometimes, we were not sure whether they were merely inventing a story or if it had some element of truth, for the Gestapo did not take the word of a woman as reliable. Such cases were

dismissed for lack of evidence or on the grounds that the anti-regime statements were made in 'private' i.e. in front of the wife alone. There were two factors at play here. Firstly, it was obvious that the Gestapo did not consider an accusing wife as a reliable witness and secondly, it considered anti-regime statements made in private as not very grave and serious offences for first-timers. In a racial context however, these considerations were overruled and the husband was punished no matter how private the motive and the context might have been. The accusing wives encountered little difficulty in getting rid of their husbands. It is only in this context that they resembled the 'pure type' of perpetrators.

The present work also explores spaces within the patriarchal-sexist state that women appropriated as denouncers. True, the state was patriarchal to the core but cases studied here also point out to the role of the state as a patron. It was from this virtue of the state that women derived power within their small world of family, neighbourhood and larger network of relations. Hitler was a patronising patriarch. Similarly state agencies including the Gestapo seemed to project themselves as followers the *Führer Prinzip* in this matter. The fact that women could evoke such patronising authorities, like the *Führer* and his men in times of crisis, tension and stress caused by immediate male oppressors, made them side with their patron against their immediate oppressor. Sometimes they did it blatantly by presenting their gender troubles in the garb of the loyalty to the state while at other times they managed to even state that they were apolitical, a fact corroborated by circumstantial evidence. Still, whether or not they expressed their loyalty, the state and the Gestapo took up such grievances and dealt with them seriously to convey to the offender that they were there to discipline unruly elements and restore law and order.

In the whole process, 'Aryan' men as husbands, once reported, could no longer act as uncontrolled oppressors of the *Männerstaat*. They fell prey to their wives' denunciations. Their wives betrayed them to the regimes on the basis of what they had told them in confidence. Confidential admissions by

husbands on their anti-state views to their wives was a kind of secret knowledge that only wives possessed, which they sometimes successfully used as powerful weapon to eliminate their husbands, especially when they turned to other men. Such husbands were victims of the terrorist regimes who had to reckon with imprisonment, rigorous detention, concentration camp and the like. They were also victims of their wives who delivered them to the Gestapo.

Gender similarities and differences in denunciatory behaviour

Both Aryan men and women appeared as perpetrators in the racial context. The evidence clearly showed that 'Aryan' women were as enthusiastic as their men in denouncing Jews. Sometimes, both the husband and wife together denounced their Jewish neighbours and acquaintances, realising the dream of their *Führer* of a collective racial struggle against the *Gemeinschaftsfremde*.

While the motives could be the same or vary at times, a gender difference can be established in terms of niches and milieux. Aryan men denounced Jews in offices and other public places of assembly, economic rivalries being a primary driving force here, while women denounced more in neighbourhoods and families. They carried out their duty as faithful racial watchdogs of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in hounding out Jews from their neighbourhoods and families. Very often they did not go directly to the Gestapo themselves, preferring to send a man. However, when the actual inquiry started, they never shied away from bearing witness and providing incriminating evidence against the accused. In some cases women acted as a racial collectivity to persecute their neighbours. They did so mostly to derive sadistic pleasure, boost their egos, seek emotional revenge or translate antisemitic hatred into practice and so on. Men intervened in the neighbourly quarrels with the Jews mostly when they hoped to gain materially from of the situation, like appropriating the property of the denounced Jew.

At another level, differences in gender behaviour that could be traced back to gender struggles within the family or *Volksgemeinschaft*, can be

discerned in the chapters “The Private Became Public” and “Faces of Gender Oppression”. As pointed out before, the evidence under the category foreign workers did not only deal with foreign workers. It also brought forth tensions within the *Volksgemeinschaft*. A quantitative as well as qualitative shift can be seen here. While ‘Aryan’ women denouncers abound as wives in “The Private Became Public”, the ratio was reversed in favour of men when it came to forbidden contacts with foreign workers in “Faces of Gender Oppression”. Men as denouncers acted as racial guardians of their womenfolk and family against the foreign workers who inhabited the countryside, factories, towns, streets and homes. Male relatives, neighbours, factory managers and sometimes even husbands forbade contacts between German women and French, Italian and other prisoners, more vigorously than women did.

In this context the *Kriegerfrauen* were subjected to denunciation as debauched and immoral persons, who were accused of having no sympathy for their husbands dying at the front, and of indulging in shameless promiscuous acts with foreign workers. It was considered as traitors to their husband and the fatherland. A closer look at the cases of *Kreigerfrauen*, however, revealed that their marriages were either dead or were disintegrating. Their husbands had either abandoned them or they themselves wanted a divorce. Even here, sexual and physical violence lay at the core of many such disintegrating relationships. The patriarchal state did not want to recognise the failure of marriages, particularly in soldiers’ families. It wanted and even demanded from the *Kriegerfrauen* that they maintain the façade of a happy married life and present the home front as united.

Sexual and physical violence by ‘Aryan’ men

What was common between the categories of ‘Aryan’ wives and ‘other’ women was the fact that ‘Aryan’ men *perpetrated physical and sexual violence on both with impunity*. These men, whether they were husbands of ‘Aryan’ wives or camp supervisors and bosses of foreign workers, inflicted violence on women with the idea that they could get away with it, that it was

within their rights to do so, and that the women deserved it. This masculine behaviour ran like a red thread through all categories of ‘crimes’ studied here. When it was directed against the ‘Aryan’ wife, she was threatened with more violence and often with a knife or a pistol. And when it was done against a Polish or a Russian woman, it was done with the threat of concentration camp or confinement in the punishment cell of the camp, if she dared betray her oppressor. I suspect that Jewish women may have fallen prey to this as well, but went unreported perhaps, as they could never muster the courage to report it, fearing further persecution. The Gestapo files are totally silent on this.

Denunciation: moral duty or citizens’ i.e. ‘Aryans’ right and privilege?

Let me now shift the focus to the wider context of Nazi Germany and answer the question I raised in the last part of the introduction, namely, who had the ‘moral duty’ to denounce in the Third Reich? It was very clear that the regime demanded co-operation from its citizens in tracking down enemies through acts of denunciation. But this was never forced upon the citizens as a statutory duty. Heydrich’s project of a people’s information services (*Volksmeldedienst*), including penalties for those who failed to report relevant information collapsed in 1939 on the grounds that it might undermine national solidarity.²⁵¹

Given the predominantly private and social nature of denunciations, it is reasonable to argue that what the state envisaged as a moral duty was too willingly grabbed by the citizens as their right and privilege, thus making the whole exercise sometimes dysfunctional for the state. It was only the *Volksgenossen* who enjoyed the right and the privilege of denouncing other *Volksgenossen* or *Volksfremde/Volksfeinde*. To the *Volksfremde* or *Volksfeinde*, it was obvious that they did not enjoy this ‘privilege’. The consequences of pointing accusatory fingers at the *Volksgenossen* must have been very clear to them, without having experienced it themselves. There was enough evidence in the Gestapo files that showed that even when the Jews were denounced for no fault of theirs and out of mean motives, it was they

who were warned by the Gestapo to live like ‘Jews’ and not behave in a ‘provocative’ manner towards the members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

It is no wonder therefore that we did not find Jews, Poles and Russians as denouncers as a rule in the Gestapo files. In very exceptional cases we did have forced foreign workers, mostly young and adolescent girls from Poland and Russia denouncing their ‘Aryan’ bosses and camp directors for sexual assault and rape. They did it at the risk of being sent to a concentration camp on charges of forbidden sexual contact. They did so when they were left with no alternative to save themselves from constant sexual abuse. While the *Volksgenossen* felt free to denounce anybody on frivolous grounds or even without any basis or for purely selfish and mean motives, the *Volksfremde* never made use of this provision for reporting their genuine hardships, inhuman living conditions and irregularities by their ‘Aryan’ bosses. In a gender neutral context, there must have been bosses who crossed all limits of civilised behaviour in their treatment towards their slaves subjecting them to excesses, but for fear of retribution no one reported such incidents. Cases abound where they ran away from their work places only to be nabbed by the Gestapo again. They were assigned another place of work after a stay in protective custody.

In the case of the Jews, it was much worse. Female victims of sexual assault and rape could never dare to denounce their ‘Aryan’ tormentors even by way of exception like their Polish and Russian counterparts. That no denunciations or criminal reports were ever filed by them demonstrates how much degradation, deterioration and humiliation these ex-citizens faced in the Third Reich. The whole behaviour of accusatory practices in a wider social context demonstrates that it was not just the regime that was practising the policy of selection versus exclusion in terms of making laws and executing them; even public behaviour reflected how deeply rooted this whole logic was in popular perception.

In this sense then, to talk about Nazi Germany in terms of a denunciatory society is not appropriate if we include the 'excluded groups' of people in the Third Reich. We cannot talk of only one denunciatory milieu and culture but of different milieux and cultures within the Third Reich i.e., a mainstream culture of the ruling race and other subcultures and milieux of targeted races. While denunciatory practices mushroomed in the mainstream culture, the subcultures of Jews and foreign workers were the ones where group solidarity of the persecuted prevailed as the only survival strategy. Literature based on eyewitness accounts and memoirs often highlights this solidarity in Jewish Ghettos - bereft of 'Aryan' relations who could turn out to be denouncers - and the camp culture of foreign workers. We did not come across a single denunciation filed by a Jew against his/her fellow brother or sister. The much sensationalised account of Stella - the blond Berlin Jew, known as the '*U-Boot*', who denounced many underground Jews - remained an isolated example of Jew denouncer²⁵². Even here one cannot dismiss the role of the Gestapo, who tortured her into submission and virtually forced her to switch loyalties. Further, we did not come across a single denunciation by a Pole or a Russian against their own community. Eyewitness accounts also tell us that there were instances of denunciations sometimes in the concentration camps. Here it was mostly 'asocial' and criminal elements who denounced their politically and racially persecuted inmates.

Ruling race as a collectivity of denouncers

This point is closely related to the previous one. People of the ruling race i.e. the 'Aryans', not only denounced the *Volksfremde* in their individual capacity but also as groups, hounding them out of their neighbourhood, work places and other public places. State and community interests coalesced to forge a broader unity. Such denouncers spelt out clearly to the victim that it was their land, their laws, their government and that the members of the 'out groups' were unwanted. It demonstrated that the perpetrators were not sitting far away on the Prinz-Albrecht-Straße, but were present next door, at all times, intensifying the feeling of vulnerability and isolation in the victim. It was an

individual as well as a group assertion of strength and superiority over the vulnerable and the defenceless. This group behaviour came out in crude forms as shown in “Fishing in troubled Waters”, where groups of women in the neighbourhood collectively wrote letter of denunciations to the Black Corps, Army Welfare officer and the like, while men denounced in pubs, offices, restaurants and other places of assembly where men usually came together. This group behaviour could also be observed in mass media, especially in newspapers like *Der Stürmer*, which openly denounced the Jews and their lovers or friends. It was a media of the ruling race. As a rule these newspaper clippings were filed by the Gestapo, as records of the persecuted.

A collectivity was also formed around moral and religious behaviour whereby moral, sexual and religious offenders were selected for collective persecution. Prostitutes, homosexuals, Jehovahs Witnesses and others deviating from racial-moral and now political norms of the society fell into this category. In this specific context, even wives of soldiers and unmarried women were persecuted both by the state and the society.

Denunciation as a communication strategy

In the non-racial context, denunciation was often used as a communication strategy. It was used as a defence mechanism by those subordinated by virtue of their gender or class. They used denunciation to voice their grievances and complaints against their superiors for which they found no other communication channels. Particularly, wives who were mishandled and beaten by their husbands at home or women workers who were sexually assaulted and violated by their male superiors at work took recourse to denunciation to defend themselves against male onslaughts. It was also used by workers against their bosses in workplace situations and by children against their parents to subvert the hierarchy of power. There is a need therefore, to avoid broader generalisations and to talk about niches, milieux and enclaves and contextualise actions and responses both in terms of the denouncer and the denounced.

The private and the public in broader context

Here I shall discuss how 'Aryan' women's spaces and niches as denouncers shifted and broadened as demonstrated through the three chapters, namely "When Private became Public", "Fishing in Troubled Waters" and "Faces of Gender Oppression". Closely related to this problematic, is the question of 'malicious gossip' from a socio-historical viewpoint. As discussed previously in chapter III, by malicious gossip, I do not mean what the regime meant by it, namely malicious gossip by the opponents against the regime, but the gossip that was traded between friends, neighbours, colleagues and acquaintances which turned malicious, often with fatal consequences for the target of the gossip.

This slanderous gossip, a private form of talk, became political in that it was now shared with a state agency, namely the Gestapo. So the Gestapo office became the site of slanderous gossip mongering and the state became a partner in it. This was directed against deviant members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the racial minorities and sexual out-casts, both racially foreign or similar. Registering this slanderous gossip with the Gestapo in the form of denunciation, and publishing it in the Nazi rag like '*Der Stürmer*' set a departure from earlier traditions of how gossip was traded in communities. In lower class and working class neighbourhoods gossip was a part of the oral tradition where women were particularly active²⁵³. It was also to do with the fact that they were not so literate as men, and did not write diaries, as they did not possess writing skills.

In the Nazi Germany, however, gossip peppered with antisemitic, racial or nationalist content about the 'deviants' became a palatable recipe for the Gestapo and the media alike. It was considered worthwhile to write it down religiously at least for the purpose of further inquiry. So, a practice that was earlier confined to an oral tradition acquired the status of written word and was institutionalised by the state and its agencies. Oral exchange of

information, which was at once recorded by the Gestapo worked to the advantage of working class and lower middle class women denouncers, who were more likely than men to be locked up in a largely oral world, shy about writing and keeping records for lack of literacy. The Gestapo's willingness to record their denunciations telephonically and orally encouraged even less articulate women to present themselves and feel important about having their versions recorded by state agencies. Just how this exchange of slanderous gossip with the Gestapo increased through the preceding three chapters will be discussed below.

In the chapter "The Private became Public", we saw that most of the malicious gossip by women originated from the family and landed up at the Gestapo office. The family was the niche of these women, from where the malicious gossip spread out to the political arena. In the next chapter, "Fishing in Troubled Waters", the niche widened to encompass the neighbourhoods, shopping centres, air raid shelters, public transport and other public spaces, where women assumed the responsibility of ridding the *Volksgemeinschaft* of unwanted elements. In the next chapter "Faces of Gender Oppression", the niche shifted to the workplace, which was conventionally a site of men's gossip among others like pubs, restaurants and so on. Virtually, all female denouncers reported from their workplace. This can be explained by the fact that while their men left for the front, more and more women joined industry and participated in other economic activities in the war years and consequently spent their day in the offices, community kitchens, small enterprises, locales and restaurants. These places now naturally became centres of malicious gossip. This is not to say that men did not continue to denounce from workplace - they definitely did so as *Abwehrbeauftragte* and colleagues, but to state that women cut into their niche as they came to occupy more and more workplaces. They were now visibly present in greater numbers and 'active' in workplaces rather than at home during the day. This was a trend that can be seen throughout the early 1940s. The context and subject of the malicious gossip however remained the same throughout. It was still targeted at racial, sexual and moral deviants. It was only the space that shifted.

It is important here to distinguish between the rural and urban settings. In the rural milieu, foreign workers normally stayed in the same house even though they slept in a separate part of it. Their work place and housing were not physically separated, so denunciations continued to pour out from the same settings as before. In a big industrial town like Düsseldorf, it was very different. Foreign workers were engaged in large factories, mostly in heavy industry, and lived in camps or barracks set up for them. The interaction with the *Volksgemeinschaft* therefore took place either in the workplace, in factories, community kitchens or on the streets. Correspondingly, denunciations took place mostly in work situations, on the streets and so on. So even the niche of women denouncers in urban areas now shifted from the homes and neighbourhoods to the workplace.

However, there was a trend reversal in the niche of male denouncers as well. Apart from holding on to their traditional niche i.e. offices, pubs and restaurants, they now increasingly focused their attention on 'Aryan' households where young girls and *Kriegerfrauen* were allegedly going 'astray' and indulging in 'immoral' behaviour with foreign workers. As women started denouncing from public spaces, men denounced increasingly more from private spaces like the house and hearth.

As one realises the nature of motives behind denunciations and analyses the profile of the denouncers, it becomes increasingly clear that the motives were private. Most denunciations were not routed through the party but were reported to the Gestapo, the criminal police, ordinary police, Gendarmarie, Schwarzes Korps, and even the newspapers, highlighting the role of the media in creating public opinion and consensus. The denouncers were overwhelmingly non-party members. This compels us to think that the consensual spaces that Nazis were able to create went far beyond the party members, whose numbers, in any case, ran into millions. The policy of the regime not to let any denunciation go unheeded and the dependence of the regime on this source of information to sniff out deviant behaviour created consensual pockets, niches and circles. These went beyond the core circle of

party members, fanatics and active followers and cast a wider net to include people who had otherwise nothing to do with the day-to-day functioning of the party and the system but now furthered the interests of the regime and their own through denunciations. As the interests and motives were so varied, they cannot be equated for example to the official informer who did it for monetary gains. Apart from material gains, there could have been social gains, psychological gains, sadistic pleasure, ego boost and all other kind of satisfactions drawn from these acts. These kinds of inter-personal power struggles that denunciation activated among ordinary people went a long way in making Nazis popular. All kinds of spaces that did not belong to political/public realm traditionally - families, neighbourhoods, air raid shelters, shopping centres, pubs etc., turned into places where malicious gossip was exchanged, often with terrible consequences.

The question of female consent and dissent in Nazi Germany

The nature of motives behind denunciations also had broader implications regarding issues of consent and dissent in Nazi Germany. Whether the vast masses of non-persecuted people willingly collaborated to the workings of the state or not can be measured by this yardstick. The possibility of denunciation that allowed them to alleviate their personal, civil, moral, gender and racial conflicts to the level of state politics cannot be underestimated. They could coat these so-called private motives with their loyalty to the regime. This in effect implied that they were practising pseudo-politics to activate an extra-judicial agency of the state. Through this they managed sometimes to send their targets to prisons, protective custody and concentration camps. Playing pseudo-politics to violently resolve a conflict that could have been otherwise resolved by a civil court also explains how the regime won over many enthusiastic collaborators. Even when motives like jealousy, hatred, revenge, envy, sadism and the like became transparent during the course of investigation, the denouncers never had to sign a letter of apology or face a reprimand suggests that pseudo-politics worked to their advantage. The fact that hardly anybody was penalised for playing pseudo-politics proves that such

tendencies were not effectively curbed. In effect the regime made room for not just the Nazi zealots in the system but activated many non-party members so long as they had a clean past record.

This had deeper implication for the womanpower in the system. The pseudo-politics activated many apolitical, apathetic-to-the-goings-on and politically shy women. Their testimonies and denunciation reports indicate how much the politicisation and criminalisation of interpersonal relations and everyday life opened them to things that they would keep away from in normal times. Their denunciation reports constantly harped on the fact that they had nothing to do with party politics, that they were apolitical, that they did not belong to any party and so on. Nonetheless, they presented themselves before the ‘dreaded’ Gestapo functionaries almost fearlessly. They took liberty with them in reporting outlawed behaviour of the denounced just as much as in narrating their woes. Obviously, if they had feared draconian sanctions, they would not have behaved as they did. Whether or not the Gestapo eventually did anything about them, the point is that it provided them with a captive audience that was no less powerful than their *Führer* in their own small context of life. This worked to their own and to the state’s advantage. They showed trust in the state and the government and the latter lent them a receptive ear. This helped to expand the consensual spaces. The Gestapo functionaries did not dismiss them off-hand but instead listened to them and laboriously and earnestly typed out the versions of the parties involved. Such female population therefore was effectively co-opted by the regime.

As a result, denouncers in general and female denouncers in particular became vital links between the normative state and the Prerogative state. The concept of Normative and Prerogative state were first used by Fraenkel in his book “The Dual State”²⁵⁴ According to Fraenkel, these two spheres were by no means insulated from one another; rather they were arranged in a hierarchy, which always allowed the Prerogative state to infiltrate the Normative state. Fraenkel’s insights can help us a great deal to understand women’s behaviour as denouncers in the structural entanglement of women in the dictatorship.

Unlike their male counterparts - who directly worked for coercive state and party agencies like the Gestapo, Kripo, ordinary police, SA and SS - women denouncers came from the ranks of the non-persecuted, and apparently non-coercive lot. They were themselves mostly governed by the Normative state, unless counted among the targeted group by the state itself. These women denouncers collaborated in the workings of the Prerogative state by providing it with vital clues about the opponents of the regime, who came under the purview of the Prerogative state.

Finally, even though the number of women denouncers was lesser than their male counterparts, denunciatory behaviour among women remained the most pronounced behaviour in the entire behaviour pattern ranging from complicity and collaboration to dissent, deviance and resistance in the Third Reich. In the Gestapo files, they were most visible and active as denouncers followed by witnesses and least visible as accused and executed. This has also been sufficiently demonstrated by Eric Johnson. This is hardly surprising given the fact that they, as denouncers, employed the mechanism of state control and self-policing largely for their own conflicts. Further, in some areas of policing, which lay in the realm of morality, sexuality, racial mixing and male violence, they were even more visible, especially in the family and neighbourhoods. While the state activated women in the politics of the day, women also activated the state and appropriated some of its power for their own agendas.

Notes

Introduction

¹ This kind of approach is betrayed from the title of the book, for example of Margret Lück, *Die Frau im Männerstaat: Die gesellschaftliche Stellung der Frau im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979).

² Margret Lück, *ibid.*, p. 122.

³ See Jill Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women* (London, 1981). Gerda Szepansky similarly connects this issue to a different gender socialisation of women, which makes her reject the inhumanity of Nazi regime. Source: Gerda Szepansky, *Blitzmädel, Heldenmütter, Kriegerwitwe: Frauenleben im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt a. Main, 1986), p. 15.

⁴ Representative works describing these discriminatory measures are: Annette Kuhn and Valentina Rothe, *Frauen im deutschen Faschismus*, Vol. 1 and 2 (Düesseldorf, 1982), pp. 49-66; Rita Thalmann, *Frausein im Dritten Reich* (München, 1984), pp. 94-104; Renate Wiggerhaus, *Frauen unterm Nationalsozialismus* (Wuppertal, 1984) p. 5; Tim Mason, 'Women in Nazi Germany' in *History Workshop Journal* (1976), p. 100.

⁵ A. Kuhn and V. Rothe, *Frauen*, p. 138.

⁶ Ute Frevert, *Women in German History*, (Berg, 1988), p. 251.

⁷ A. Kuhn and V. Rothe, *Frauen*, p. 18.

⁸ Gudrun Brockhaus, 'Opfer, Täterinnen, Mitbeteiligte' in Lerke Gravenhorst und Karmen Tatschmurat (ed.), *Töchter Fragen NS Frauengeschichte* (Freiburg, 1991), p. 113.

⁹ See Gudrun Brockhaus, *ibid.*; Dorothea Schmidt, 'Die peinliche Verwandtschaften - Frauenforschung zum Nationalsozialismus' in Heide Gerstenberger and Dorothea Schmidt (hrsg.), *Normalität und Normalisierung* (Münster, 1987), pp. 50-65.

¹⁰ Frigga Haug, 'Opfer oder Täter? Über das Verhalten von Frauen' in Frigga Haug (ed.), *Opfer oder Täter?* Discussion, Argument SH 46 (Berlin, 1982), p. 4-12.

¹¹ Ute Frevert, *Women*, p. 252.

¹² Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Friedfertige Frau* (Frankfurt, 1985).

¹³ M. Mitscherlich, *ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

¹⁴ M. Mitscherlich, *ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁵ Karin Windaus-Walser, 'Gnade der Weiblichen Geburt' in *Feministische Studien*, Jg. 6 (1988), p. 108.

¹⁶ Windaus-Walser, *ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁷ Christina Thürmer-Rohr, *Vagabundinnen, Feministische Essays* (Berlin, 1987), p. 42.

¹⁸ Windaus-Walser, 'Gnade', p. 112.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Giesela Bock, 'Die Frauen und der Nationalsozialismus, Bemerkungen zu einem Buch von Claudia Koonz' in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (1989), p. 563.

²¹ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi politics* (New York, 1987), p. 7.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 419

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 419-20.

²⁴ See Claudia Koonz, 'Erwiderung auf Gisela Bocks Rezension von *Mothers in the Fatherland*' in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (1992), pp. 395-96. Windaus-Walser, 'Gnade', p. 106.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

²⁶ See Adelheid von Saldern, 'Victims or Perperators? Controversies about the Role of Women in the Nazi State' in David F. Crew (ed.), *Nazism and German Society 1933-45* (London, 1994), p. 155; Similar ideas are expressed by Birgit Rommelspacher, 'Das Selbstverständnis des weißen Feminismus und Antisemitismus bei Frauen' in Margrit Brückner, Birgit Meyer (ed.) *Die sichtbare Frau - Die Aneignung der Gesellschaftlichen Räume* (Freiburg, 1994), p. 179; Lerke Gravenhorst, 'Nehmen wir Nationalsozialismus und Auschwitz ausreichend als unser negatives Eigentum in Anspruch', in Lerke Gravenhorst and Carmen Tatschmurat, *Töchter Fragen NS Frauengeschichte* (Freiburg, 1990), p. 29.

²⁷ Claudia Koonz, 'Mothers in the Fatherland' in Renate Bridenthal and C.Koonz (ed.), *Becoming Visible. Women in European History* (Boston, 1977), p. 470.

²⁸ Windaus-Walser, 'Gnade', pp. 113-14.

²⁹ Angelika Ebbinghaus (ed.), *Opfer und Täterinnen. Frauenbiographien des Nationalsozialismus* (Noerdlingen, 1987).

³⁰ Lerke Gravenhorst, 'Nehmen wir Nationalsozialismus und Auschwitz ausreichend als unser negatives Eigentum in Anspruch?' in Lerke Gravenhorst and Carmen Tatschmurat, *Töchter Fragen*, pp. 17-37.

³¹ For example, Gudrun Schwarz 'SS Ehefrauen - Schuld und Verantwortung' in Annette Bertrams (Hrsg.), *Dichotomie, Dominanz, Differenz* (Weinheim, 1995) pp. 57-70; Gudrun Schwarz, 'Verdrängte Täterinnen: Frauen im Apparat der SS, pp.175-196; and Brigitte Scheige, 'Ich bitte um baldige Arisierung der Wohnung' Zur Funktion von Frauen im bürokratischen System der Verfolgung' in Theresa Wobbe (ed.), *Nach Osten. Verdeckte Spuren nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen* (Frankfurt a.M, 1992), pp. 197-227.

³² Robert Gellately and Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History' in *Journal of Modern History* No. 68 (December, 1996), pp. 747-767, here p. 747. This has been accepted as a standard definition by Alf Lüdtke and Gerhard Fürmetz, 'Denunziation und Denunzianten: Politische Teilnahme oder Selbstüberwachung?' in *SOWI*, No 27, (1998), pp. 80-87, here p. 80 and also by Gerhard Sälters, 'Denunziation: Neue Forschungen zu staatlicher Verfolgungspraxis und Anzeigeverhalten der Bevölkerung 1000-1989' in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* No. 47 (1999), pp. 153-165, here pp. 153-4.

³³See Dieter W. Rockenmeier, *Denunzianten: 47 Fallgeschichten aus der Akten der Gestapo im NS-Gau Mainfranken* (Würzburg, 1998), p. 7; Gisela Diewald Kerkmann, *Politische Denunziation oder die kleine Macht der "Volksgenossen"* (Bonn, 1995), p. 19.

³⁴ See Horst Luther, 'Denunziation als soziales und strafrechliches Problem in Deutschland in den Jahren 1945-1990' in Günter Jerouschek, Inge Marßolek and Hedwig Röcklein (Hrsg.), *Denunziation: historische, juristische und psychologische Aspekte* (Tübingen, 1997), pp. 258-278.

³⁵ As cited by Diewald-Kerkmann, *Politische*, p. 19; D.W. Rockenmeier, *Denunzianten*, p. 7.

³⁶ Horst Luther, *Denunziation*, pp. 258-9.

³⁷ *Der Große Brockhaus*, Vierter Band (Leipzig, 1929), p. 512.

³⁸ *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, Veirter Band (Wiesbaden, 1968), p. 426.

³⁹ *Bertelsmann Volkslexikon*, (Güterloh, 1956), p. 350.

⁴⁰ *Das Bertelsmann Lexikon* in sieben Bänden, Bd. 2 (Gütersloh 1966), p. 376.

⁴¹ Robert Gellately, 'Introduction', p. 763.

⁴² Cited in Gellately, 'Introduction', p. 763.

⁴³ Horst Luther, *Denunziation*, pp. 259-60.

⁴⁴ Robert Gellately, 'Introduction', p. 749.

⁴⁵ Notable examples of these are: Conference on Practices of Denunciation at the University of Chicago in 1994 focused particularly on the Soviet Union under Stalin and on Nazi Germany. This resulted in a special issue of *Journal of Modern History* on Denunciations in 1996; 8th Colloquium on Police History at the Max-Planck Institute for History, Göttingen in July 1997 covered the modern European history from the French Revolution to 1989. Papers of this conference were published in a special issue of *SOWI* No. 27, (1998); Symposium on Denunziation: Zur Psychologie justizformiger Anschuldigungen im historischen Vergleich at Halle in February/March 1996. Papers of this conference are available in an edited volume, Günter Jerouschek, Inge Marßolek and Hedwig Röcklein, *Denunziation-ein interdisziplinäres Forschungsfeld*; and more recently a conference in October 2000 at Kriminal Museum, Rothenburg o.d. Tauber on Denunziation: Zwischen Komparatistik und Interdisziplinarität organised by Forschungsgruppe Denunziation in Deutschland 1933-1955, University of Bremen.

⁴⁶ See Lothar Kolmer, 'Die *denunciatio canonica* als Instrument im Kampf um den rechten Glauben' in Günter Jerouschek *et.al.*, *Denunziation*, pp. 26-47; Amalie Föbel, 'Denunziation im Verfahren gegen Ketzer im 13. und beginnenden 14. Jahrhundert' in Günter Jerouschek *et. al.*, *Denunziation*, pp. 48-63; Boesbeck, 'Privatrechtliche Haftung des Denunzianten', in *Neue Juristische Wochenschrift (NJW)* (1947/48), pp.13-19; Henry Kamen, *Inquisition and Society in Spain in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Bloomington, Ind., 1985); William E. Monter, *Enforcing Morality in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1987).

⁴⁷ See Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, 'Accusatio und denunciatio im Rahmen der spätmittelalterlichen Homosexuellenverfolgung in Venedig und Florenz' in Günter Jerouschek *et.al.*, *Denunziation*, pp.64-79.

⁴⁸ Rainer Walz, 'Dörfliche Hexereiverdächtigung und Obrigkeit' in Günter Jerouschek *et.al.*, *Denunziation*, pp. 80-98.

⁴⁹ Gudrun Gersmann, Schattenmänner. Schriftsteller im Dienst der Pariser Polizei des Ancien Régime, in Günter Jerouschek *et.al.*, *Denunziation*, pp. 99-126.

⁵⁰ Dietlind Hüchtker, 'Da hier zu vernehmen gekommen...gerüchte und Anzeigen am badischen Oberrhein im Ancien Régime' in *SOWI* No. 27 (1998), pp. 93-9.

⁵¹ Arlette Farge and Michel Foucault, *Le désordre des familles: Lettres de cachet des Archives de la Bastille* (Paris, 1982); also cited by Gellately, *Introduction*, p. 760.

⁵² See Olivier Blanc, *Der letzte Brief. Die Schreckenerrschaft der Französischen Revolution in Augenzeugenberichten*, (Wien/Darmstadt, 1988); Christiane Kohser-Spohn, 'Überwacht ihn: Politische Denunziationen in Straßburg in der Frühphase der Fanzösischen Revolution' in *SOWI* 27 (1988), pp. 87-92.

⁵³ On the First World War see Maureen Heally, 'Denunziationen und Patriotismus: Briefe an die Wiener Polizei im Ersten Weltkrieg' in *SOWI* (1988), pp.106-112; In the Second World War, people from the occupied territories of France and Netherlands soon indulged in mass scale denunciations to both the local authorities and the Gestapo. See Andre Halimi, *La délation sous l'Occupation* (Paris, 1983); Marc Ferro, *Pétain* (Paris, 1987); G. Hirschfeld and P. Marsh (eds.), *Kollaboration in Frankreich. Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur während der nationalsozialistischen Besatzung 1940-1944* (Frankfurt/Main, 1991); G. Hirschfeld, *Fremdherrschaft und Kollaboration. Die Niederlande unter deutscher Besatzung 1940-1945* (Stuttgart, 1984).

⁵⁴ See Victor S. Navasky, *Naming Names*, (Harmondsworth, 1981); Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore, 1991); David Cauter, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York, 1978); Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes. McCarthyism in America* (Princeton, 1998); Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore, 1996); Richard M. Fried, *The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming! Pageantry and Patriotism in Cold War America* (New York/Oxford, 1998).

⁵⁵ See Gerd Krüger, 'Straffreie Selbstjustiz: Öffentliche Denunzierungen im Ruhrgebiet 1923-1926'; *SOWI* No. 27 (1988), pp. 119-25, Kerstin Kohtz, 'Väter und Mütter im Dialog mit der Berliner Jugendfürsorge in den 1920er Jahren' *SOWI* No. 27 (1988), pp. 113-18; Pamela Swett, 'Denunziation und Selbstdisziplinierung: Straßenzellen der Berliner KPD 1929-1932' all in *SOWI* No. 27 (1988), pp. 126-31; Gerd Krüger, 'Politicshe Denunziationen in der Weimarer Republic' Paper presented in the conference on Denunziation: Zwischen Komparatistik und Interdisziplinarität, 2000.

- ⁵⁶ Olaf Stieglitz, 'Sprachen der Wachsamkeit: Loyalitätskontrolle und Denunziation in der DDR und in den USA bis Mitte der 1950er Jahre'. Paper presented at the conference on Denunziation: Zwischen Komparatistik und Interdisziplinarität, 2000.
- ⁵⁷ Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich* (New York, 1974), pp. 145-54.
- ⁵⁸ Martin Broszat, 'Politische Denunziationen in der NS Zeit. Aus Forschungserfahrungen im Staatsarchiv München' in *Archivalische Zeitschrift* 73 (1977), pp. 221-38.
- ⁵⁹ Reinhardt Mann, *Protest und Kontrolle im Dritten Reich. NS Herrschaft im Alltag in einer rheinischen Großstadt* (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), pp. 287 – 301.
- ⁶⁰ Robert Gellately, 'The Gestapo and the German Society : Political Denunciations in the Gestapo Case Files' in *Journal of Modern History* 60 (1988), pp.654-694; Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and the German Society: Enforcing racial Policy 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1990); Robert Gellately, 'Situating the SS State, the Police, and the Courts in the Third Reich' in *Journal of Modern History*, 64 (1992), pp. 338-65.
- ⁶¹ Notable among these are: K. M. Mallmann and Gerhard Paul, *Herrschaft und Alltag: Ein Industrieviertel im Dritten Reich* (Bonn, 1991); K. M. Mallmann and Gerhard Paul, (hrsg.), *Die Gestapo: Mythos und Realität* (Darmstadt, 1995); Gisela Diewald-Kerkmann, *Politische Denunziationen im Dritten Reich oder die kleine Macht der Volksgenossen* (Bonn, 1995).
- ⁶² K. M. Mallmann, 'Social Penetration and Police Action' in *International Review of Social History*, 42, (1997), pp. 25-43, here p. 42. See also Diewald-Kerkmann on the reactive role of the Gestapo, *Denunziation*, p. 9.
- ⁶³ Eric Johnson, *Nazi Terror. The Gestapo, Jews And Ordinary Germans* (Basic Books, 1999). p. 373.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 354.
- ⁶⁵ See also Gellately, *The Gestapo*, for extensive treatment of this category of crime.
- ⁶⁶ Helga Schubert, *Judasfrauen: Zehn Fallgeschichten von weiblicher Denunziationen im Dritten Reich* (Berlin/ Weimar, 1990).
- ⁶⁷ For example: Gellately, 'Situating the "SS-State" in *Journal of Modern History*, 64 (1992), pp.338-365, here p. 354; 'Giesela Diewald-Kerkmann, Politische Denunziationen- eine "Weibliche Domäne"? Der Anteil von Männern und Frauen unter Denunzianten und ihren Opfern' in 1999 Heft 2/ 96, p. 16.
- ⁶⁸ Inge Marßolek, *Die Denunziantin. Die Geschichte der Helene Schwaerzel* (Bremen, 1993).
- ⁶⁹ Peter Wyden, *Stella* (New York, 1991).
- ⁷⁰ Giesela Diewald–Kerkmann, *Politische Denunziationen im NS Regime oder die kleine Macht der Volksgenossen* (Bonn, 1995), pp.131-35 and G. Diewald-Kerkmann, 'Politische Denunziation-eine "weibliche Domäne"? Der Anteil von Männern und Frauen unter Denunzianten und ihren Opfern' in *1999 Heft 2/96*, pp.11-35.
- ⁷¹ Sarah Gordon, *Hitler, Germans and the Jewish Question*. (Princeton, 1984), p. 220.
- ⁷² Eric A. Johnson, 'German Women and Nazi Justice: Their Role in the Process from Denunciation to Death' in *Historical Social Research*, 73 (1995), pp. 33-69.

⁷³ Eric Johnson, *ibid.*, p. 43.

⁷⁴ Katrin Dördelmann, 'Aus einer gewissen Empörung herüber habe ich Anzeige erstattet' in Kerstin Heinsohn, Birgit Vogel, Ulrike Weckel, *Zwischen Karriere und Verfolgung. Handlungsräume von Frauen in nationalsozialistischen Deutschland* (Frankfurt, 1997), p.90.

Chapter I

⁷⁵ Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1935), p. 509.

⁷⁶ Hitler: Die Rede des Führers auf dem Frauenkongreß in Nürnberg am 8 September 1934 in *NS-Frauen-Warte*, 3 Jg., 1934/35 H. 7 S. 210 off. Also cited in Ute Benz (ed.), *Frauen im Nationalsozialismus, Dokumente und Zeugnisse* (München, 1993), pp. 41-5.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Statistik des deutschen Reichs, Vol. 451, pt.1.

⁷⁹ R. Mann, *Protest Und Kontrolle*, p.111.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ RGBl. I p.1269. The supplementary decrees of 15.2.1935 (RGBl. I p.204), 22.2.35 (RGBl. I p. 276) and 6.3.1935 (RGBl. I p. 387) further extended the ambit of the law.

⁸² Reinhard Mann, *Protest und Kontrolle*, p. 81.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁸⁴ Gellately, *The Gestapo*, p. 162.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.136-37.

⁸⁶ HStAD RW/ 58 –53590.

⁸⁷ HStD RW/58-53590

Chapter II

⁸⁸ A version of this chapter has been accepted by the Journal of Contemporary History for publication.

⁸⁹ This phenomenon is pointed out by some historians in their studies of denunciation. For example, R. Gellately, *The Gestapo*, pp.147-149; R. Gellately, Denunciations in Twentieth-Century Germany, In *Journal Of Modern History* 68 (1996), pp. 931-67; R.Grüneberg, *Das zwölfjährige Reich* (Munich, 1977), pp.119-21; Dieter W. Rockenmaier, *Denunzianten*, pp. 67-76; K. Dördelmann, *Die Macht der Wörter* (Cologne, 1997), pp.107-120; K. Dördelmann, "Aus einer gewissen Empörung habe ich nun Anzeige erstattet". Verhalten und Motive von Denunziantinnen' in K. Heinsohn, Barbara Vogel, Ulrike Weckel (Hg.), *Zwischen Karriere Und Verfolgung* (Frankfurt, 1997), pp.195-6; R. Wolters, *Verrat für die Volksgemeinschaft: Denunziantinnen im Dritten Reich* (Pfaffenweiler, 1996), p. 59; K.M.Mallmann, 'Zwischen Denunziation und Roter Hilfe' in C. Wickert (ed.) *Frauen gegen die Diktatur-Widerstand und Verfolgung im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland* (Berlin, 1995), pp. 90-2; G. Paul and

K.M.Mallmann, 'Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent? Gestapo, Society and Resistance' in David F. Crew (ed.), *Nazism and German Society 1933-1945* (London, 1994), p.180.

⁹⁰ The Nazi regime had evolved a wide network to track dissent and opposition. While it relied heavily on informers to track down the Communists, minor political offences like verbal utterances against the leaders and the party were mostly voluntarily reported by ordinary citizens. There were many places where a denunciation report could be filed. Apart from the Gestapo, other police offices like the ordinary police, the criminal police, the order police and gendarmerie in villages were stations where one could go and denounce. However, the Nazi Party also played a major role in it. It was supposed to keep a tab on citizens and report deviants and opponents to the Gestapo. The party functionaries responsible for this ranged from the district leader down to the block warden. The block warden was in-charge of twenty households. He kept a close watch on his neighbours and furnished reports on political attitudes and actions of each household from time to time. Above him were the *Zellenleiter*, *Ortsgruppenleiter*, then *Kreisleiter*, and so on. Besides, sister organisations of the party like the *DAF* reported on the workers in the factories. Welfare organisations like the *NSV* also acted as control organisations especially on people who were receiving financial support from them, like soldiers' wives. All these control organisations encouraged people to report on others, but not all reports were directed to the Gestapo straight away. The party on its own discretion sifted them and only the 'serious cases' were forwarded to the Gestapo. Besides, people felt free to go and report to any government organisation like the finance office, the press, notably the *Stürmer*, a rabid anti-semitic newspaper and even to *Schwarzes Korp*. It was the duty of these bodies to direct all matters with denuncery content to the Gestapo.

⁹¹ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers*, p. 5.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹³ Düsseldorf Hauptstaatsarchiv (hereafter HStAD), RW/58 - 13944.

⁹⁴ I have corrected grammatical and others errors in the translated version for smooth reading.

⁹⁵ Dördelmann cites a similar case from Cologne in which a violent husband's wife was compelled to denounce him for anti-regime activities after she found that he had infected her with venereal disease. Source: Dördelmann, *Die Macht der Wörter*, (Köln, 1997), pp.110-11.

⁹⁶ HStAD RW/58- 6475.

⁹⁷ On rape and impregnation of French women by German soldiers see Ruth Harris, 'The "Child of the Barbarian": Rape, Race and Nationalism in France during the First World War' in *Past and Present*, 141 (November, 1993), pp. 170-206.

⁹⁸ While promulgating the Law Against Malicious Gossip, the state emphasised on 'public expression' of anti-state or anti-party views for the offence to be taken seriously. Even the circumstance and the place where such views were expressed were taken into consideration to determine if they could later threaten to become public. The case files often gave this as a

reason for dismissal or further investigation of a case. See also Bernward Dörner, *'Heimtücke'* *Das Gesetz als Waffe* (Paderborn, 1998) pp. 19-22.

⁹⁹ HStAD RW/ 58- 25380.

¹⁰⁰ HStAD RW/58- 65726.

¹⁰¹ Gellately referred to this phenomenon in passing. To quote him "denunciations might also be made when a divorce was already under way, or when it recently had been granted. The personal aims in such cases ran from seeking material advantage to gaining emotional revenge." See Gellately, *'Denunciations'*, pp. 945-6. He cited many such cases from Gestapo files but did not get into the details. One can very well suspect that such denunciations must have come mostly female spouses who sought material advantages and emotional revenge. Our cases in this section explore this phenomenon in depth and prove the suspicion to be correct.

¹⁰² I wanted to study the divorce case proceedings of the couples involved to understand this phenomenon more closely and applied to the concerned civil court (*Landgericht Düsseldorf*) archives for the permission to look at these documents. Unfortunately, the archives had destroyed all the records including the year 1943 and the cases that were being studied by me did not go beyond this year.

¹⁰³ To see if some resemblance can be found between our stories and nation wide gender pattern of divorce, it is useful to cite divorce statistics. From 1938/39 to 1943, 94,882 divorces were granted in which the husband was the guilty party as compared to 62,740 women, on the grounds of serious negligent matrimonial offences. For adultery 20,960 men and 19,715 women were divorced. For irretrievable breakdown as a ground for divorce 14,278 men and only 850 women were declared the guilty party. Source: Gabriele Czarnowski, 'The Value of Marriage for the *Volksgemeinschaft*': policies towards women and marriage under National Socialism' in Richard Bessel (ed.), *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: Comparisons and Contrasts* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 94-112, here p. 107. These figures correspond to ours, where wives appear as aggrieved and innocent parties much more frequently.

¹⁰⁴ The guilt principle was introduced in the divorce law in 1900, and continued in the Third Reich. The court investigated who bore the major part of the guilt in the break-up of marriage. It was crucial, especially for housewives, to be declared the innocent party in their divorce judgements for any claims to alimony depended upon that. For more details see Cosima Königs, *Die Frau im Recht des Nationalsozialismus. Eine Analyse ihrer familien-, erb- und arbeitsrechtlichen Stellung* (Frankfurt/M., 1988), p. 55ff.; G. Czarnowski, 'The Value', pp. 104-10.

¹⁰⁵ HStAD RW/58 – 53915. Illegal contact with foreigners and prisoners of war became a new mass crime since 1940. In the summer of 1942 around 80% of all arrests made by the Gestapo comprised of this offence. See Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter. Politik und Praxis des 'Ausländereinsatzes' in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches* (Berlin, 1985), pp.122-29 - especially the section "Verbotener Umgang" als Massendilekt'.

¹⁰⁶ HStAD RW/58 24739. For the same individual, I found a file in Schloß Kalkum containing the judgement of the Special Court. Schloß Kalkum Reference: Ger. Rep.114/Nr.1737.

¹⁰⁷ HStAD RW/ 58 – 29439.

¹⁰⁸ HStAD RW/58 – 50182.

¹⁰⁹ Rita Wolters, *Verrat für die Volksgemeinschaft: Denunziantinnen im Dritten Reich*. Forum Frauengeschichte Band-19 (Pfaffenweiler, 1996), p. 59.

¹¹⁰ R. Gellately, *The Gestapo*, p. 149.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 147. Quoted from L. Gross, *The last Jews in Berlin*. (Toronto, 1983), p. 60.

¹¹² HStAD RW/58-25088; Schloß Kalkum Reference: Ger Rep.114/Nr.1460.

¹¹³ Joseph Goebbels's 'exceptional radio measures', issued on 1 September 1939, forbade listening to all foreign radio broadcasts; appeals were then made to the public to report anyone who defied the ban. Source: Gellately, *The Gestapo*, p. 140.

¹¹⁴ HStAD RW/58-26802.

¹¹⁵ Rita Wolters, *Verrat*, pp. 56-7.

¹¹⁶ HStAD RW/58- 66223.

¹¹⁷ HStAD RW/58- 17282.

¹¹⁸ HStAD RW/58 –16697.

¹¹⁹ HStAD RW/58- 64395.

¹²⁰ Rita Wolters, *Verrat*, pp. 61-3.

¹²¹ R. Gellately, *The Gestapo*, pp. 147-49.

¹²² Heinz Boberach (ed.), *Richterbriefe: Dokumente zur Beeinflussung der deutschen Rechtssprechung 1942-1944* (Boppard, 1975), pp. 363 ff.

¹²³ I looked through some files of the countryside to find out if the peasant families were affected by this phenomenon, but there were hardly any such cases to be found there. There was only one case from Wesel, a small village but this turned out to be a working class family as well.

¹²⁴ Out of a total of about 6832 Gestapo files of victims in Düsseldorf , KPD (Communist Party) is numerically the most preponderant category of crime representing 1440 cases followed by the Jews at 1289. The other 50 categories are well below 1000 files, of which 42 categories do not even cross the mark of 100. This pattern repeats itself in the case files of Krefeld, Cologne and surrounding areas. See Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, pp.161-94, here p.174-175; Bernhard Schmidt and Fritz Burger, *Tatort Moers: Widerstand und Nationalsozialismus im Südlichen Altkreis Moers* (Moers, 1995), p.14. On the persecution of Communist Party members in Ruhr see Detlev Peukert, *Die KPD im Widerstand: Verfolgung und Untergrundarbeit an Rhein und Ruhr 1933-1945* (Wuppertal, 1980).

¹²⁵ A fact pointed out by K. M. Mallmann in his article, 'Zwischen Denunziation und Roter Hilfe. Geschlechterbeziehung und kommunistischer Widerstand 1933-1945, in C. Wickert ed.,

Frauen gegen die Diktatur - Widerstand und Verfolgung im NS Deutschland (Gedenkstätte deutscher Widerstand, Berlin, 1995), p. 84.

¹²⁶ Also see K.M. Mallmann for corroborating evidence. He also points to the special appeal Hitler had on Communists' wives. 'Hitlerhure' and 'Hitlersau' were common terms of abuse the Communists used for their wives. Source: Mallmann, 'Zwischen Denunziation', p. 89.

¹²⁷ On Hitler's ideas on motherhood see Ute Benz (ed.) *Frauen im Nationalsozialismus* (München, 1997), pp.43-45; Irmgard Weyrather, *Muttertag und Mutterkreuz* (Frankfurt/M., 1993), pp. 9-17.

¹²⁸ Giesela Diewald-Kerkmann, *Politische*, p. 126.

¹²⁹ See for example, R. Gellately, *The Gestapo*, p. 147-49; R.Grüneberg, *Das zwölfjährige Reich* (Munich, 1977), pp.119-21.

Mallmann, 'Zwischen Denunziation', p. 90-2.

¹³⁰ Eric Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, p. 26.

¹³¹ On Nazi ideals of the "'Aryan'" family and marriage see Annette Kuhn and Valentina Rothe, *Frauen*, pp. 114-27; Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy, 1933-1945* (Berg Books, 1998), 15ff.; Ute Benz (ed.) *Frauen*, pp. 41-5, 54-7,105-09.

¹³² Karin Windaus-Walser, 'Gnade der weiblichen Geburt?' in *Feministische Studien*, (November, 1988), pp. 113-14.

Chapter III

¹³³ The *Historikerstreit* or the historians dispute took place in the wake of Ronald Reagan's Star Wars programme to overpower the Soviet Union. He branded the Soviet Union as an 'evil empire'. In order to find supporters for his programme, he attempted to lessen Germany's burden of the Nazi past. West German historians grabbed this opportunity to 'master their past'. Led by Ernst Nolte, these historians sought to compare the crimes of Nazism and Stalinism. This relativisation of Nazi crimes was meant to make the past useable for the present generation. This position was contested by the philosopher Jürgen Habermas and others who emphasised on the uniqueness of the Nazi mass murder of the Jews.

¹³⁴ Particularly disconcerting for Germans and German historians was Goldhagen's position that the perpetrators of the Third Reich have hitherto been 'inappropriately' and 'obfuscatingly' called the Nazis or the SS. He asserts that they were first and foremost 'Germans', ordinary Germans. This by implication seems to put the 'collective guilt' thesis back on the agenda. Secondly, he disputes the traditional explanations for the murder of millions of Jews. He argues that the perpetrators killed not for the fear of death, not out of obedience - an entrenched German virtue, not under the peer group pressure, not for the promotion of their carriers, and not because of their failure to comprehend the crime in totality, of which they were but a fraction, a cog in a machine, so to say. He is convinced that they killed because of their centuries old hatred for the Jews, hatred that blinded them and numbed their senses. The Germans represented a particular brand of antisemitism -

'eliminationist antisemitism' - , which was the basic driving force behind the mass murder of the Jews. D. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, (London, 1996), pp.13-14. Goldhagen's arguments about the uniqueness of the German antisemitism border on dogmatism rather than reasoning backed by empirical evidence. However, his work attracted media attention and applause from the specialists and laymen alike for his graphic details of the brutality and atrocity with which the SS Einstazgruppen and police units treated their Jewish victims.

¹³⁵ For more information see Sarah Gordon, *Hitler, Germans and the Jewish Question* (Princeton, 1984), pp. 8 ff.; Karl A. Schleunes, *The twisted road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews*, (Illinois,1970) p. 38-39.

¹³⁶ At the time of *Machtergreifung*, the Jewish population in Düsseldorf was about 5053 in a total population of 498,600 i.e., about 1.01% of the total population. Source: Jahresbericht des Statistischen Amtes der Stadt Düsseldorf, 1933, p. 20.

In 1939 this reduced to a mere 1831 in a total population of 535,753 i.e., 0.34%; in 1941 there were about 1400 Jews left in the city and only a handful survived to see the end of the Third Reich. For the Year 1945, only the total number of the population is given. Source; Peter Hüttenberger, *Düsseldorf – Geschichte von den Ursprüngen bis ins 20. Jahrhundert. Band III* (Düsseldorf, 1995) p. 627.

¹³⁷ For a detailed chronology of discriminatory laws see Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Die Juden in Deutschland*, (München,1988) p.738-45; Hans Buchheim et. al., *Anatomie des SS-Staats*, p. 547-678.

¹³⁸ RGBI I, p. 887.

¹³⁹ Some 80,000 had served in the army. 12.000 Jews had died for the Fatherland and 35,000 had been decorated for valour. See Karl Schleunes, *Twisted Road*, p. 38.

¹⁴⁰ Any person who descended from two Jewish grand parents (half Jewish), but who did not adhere to the Jewish religion on September 15, 1935, and who did not join it at any subsequent time and was not married or no longer married to a Jewish person on September 15, 1935 or thereafter was called *Mischling* of the first degree. Any person descending from one Jewish grand parent was called *Mischlinge* of the second degree. The *Mischlinge* were no longer subjected to the destruction process. Source: Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews*, (New York, 1985) Vol. I, p. 73.

¹⁴¹ However, in the Star Decree of September 1, 1941, the concept of privileged mixed marriage was broadened so as to include Jews married to *Mischlinge* of the second degree. Furthermore, the privilege was also extended to Jews whose marriages had been terminated by divorce and death, provided that they were parents of a *Mischlinge* child, and that privilege was upheld even in those cases in which the only *Mischling* child had been killed in action. Source: Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction*, Vol. II. pp. 426-27.

¹⁴² Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction*, Vol. II, pp. 426-27.

- ¹⁴³ Adrienne Thomas quoted in Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Die Juden in Deutschland*. (Munich, 1988), p. 413.
- ¹⁴⁴ Schleunes, *Twisted Road*, p. 118
- ¹⁴⁵ RGBI, I, 1935, p. 1146.
- ¹⁴⁶ HStAD RW/ 58 – 58403.
- ¹⁴⁷ HStAD RW/ 58- 63078.
- ¹⁴⁸ HStAD RW/58 - 26079
- ¹⁴⁹ Gisela Diewald-Kerkmann, *Politische Denunziationen im NS- Regime oder die kleine Macht der Volksgenossen* (Bonn, 1995), pp. 131-32.
- ¹⁵⁰ Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler; Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford 2001) p. 134.
- ¹⁵¹ HStAD RW /58 - 66074.
- ¹⁵² HStAD RW /58 - 22416
- ¹⁵³ HStAD RW /58 – 66498
- ¹⁵⁴ HStAD RW/58 - 30876
- ¹⁵⁵ HStAD RW/58 - 25852
- ¹⁵⁶ HStAD RW/ 58 - 45964
- ¹⁵⁷ HStAD RW/ 58 - 46589
- ¹⁵⁸ HStAD RW/ 58 - 2908.
- ¹⁵⁹ Arno Hamburger, ‘The night of the Pogrom of November 9-10’ in Jörg Wollenberg (ed.), *Nuremberg, in the German Public and the persecution of the Jews 1933-45* (New Jersey, 1996), pp. 13.
- ¹⁶⁰ Peter Hüttenberger, *Geschichte*, p. 618.
- ¹⁶¹ HStAD RW/58 - 40929
- ¹⁶² HStAD RW/ 58 - 4635
- ¹⁶³ HStAD RW/58 - 7376.
- ¹⁶⁴ David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion Under Nazism* (Oxford, 1992), p. 128.
- ¹⁶⁵ HStAD RW/58 - 58649.
- ¹⁶⁶ HStAD RW/58 - 37325.
- ¹⁶⁷ Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Intermarriage and the Rosenstraße Protest in Nazi Germany* (New York, London, 1996), pp. 21-2.
- ¹⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁶⁹ Inge Deutschkron, *Ich trug den Gelben Stern* (Munich, 1978), pp. 154-55.
- ¹⁷⁰ HStAD RW/58 – 57203.
- ¹⁷¹ Gisela Bock, ‘Ein Historikerrinnenstreit?’ in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 18 (1992), pp. 400-404, here p. 400-401; Gisela Bock, ‘Die Fauern und der Nationalsozialismus: Bemerkungen zu einem Buch von Claudia Koonz’ in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 15 (1989) pp. 563-579, here p. 576-578.

¹⁷² Gisela Bock, *Ein Historikerinnenstreit*, p. 401.

¹⁷³ Melanie Tebbutt, *Women's talk? A Social History of Gossip in Working Class Neighbourhoods, 1880-1960*, (Vermont, 1995), p. 2, and p. 74-97.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2

¹⁷⁵ Mark Roseman, *The Past in Hiding*, (Penguin, 2000), p. 309.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 329-331

¹⁷⁷ cf. Alf Lüdtke, "Formierung der Massen" oder: Mitmachen und Hinnehmen.

"Alltagsgeschichte" und Faschismusanalyse, in Heide Gerstenberger und Dorothea Schmidt (Hrsg.) *Normalität und Normalisierung* (Münster, 1987), p. 26

¹⁷⁸ HStAD RW/58 –11214,

¹⁷⁹ In some areas, the Jewish men in mixed marriages were simply seized during a sudden round up in Berlin factories at the end of February 1943. Such Jews were caught along side other Jews while at work. The intermarried men were segregated after their arrest and placed in a separate building on the Rosenstraße, where their future fate was in doubt. For the next seven days, the German wives demonstrated in the open streets for the release of their husbands, who were then freed. Quoted from Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders* (Great Britain, 1992), p. 132. For a detailed account of this and biographies of some such couples see Nathan Stoltzfus, *The Resistance*.

¹⁸⁰ HStAD RW/ 58 – 61433.

¹⁸¹ For those who could not take the step by step expropriation, persecution and destruction, suicide was one way of saying no. Konrad Kwiet, who did a study of suicides, suggests a conservative estimate of 5000 self inflicted deaths over the twelve years of the Nazi rule- this in a population of little more than half a million, that was steadily declining during that period. The standard measure of suicide is an annual number per 100,000. Thirty or so would be high, 68 - a number for Berlin Jewry in 1925 - an epidemic. Kwiet believes, that this high point was repeated or exceeded in 1933, and that in the course of the two deportations from 1941 to 1943, there must have been at least 3000 suicides in the remaining community. Source: Konrad Kwiet, *The Ultimate Refuge- Suicide in the Jewish Community under the Nazis*, (Leo Beck Institute Yearbook, 1984), pp. 136-67. One comes across many such cases in autobiographical accounts of survivors, where their acquaintances preferred to take their lives rather than get deported, they chose a serene death rather than a long wait for painful death in alien surroundings. *Reichskristallnacht* was also followed by suicides. Such people probably found death more inviting than a wretched, ostracised life. Our case in point, however, deals with a man living in a privileged marriage, who could have survived the Nazi period, had he not been hounded by his neighbour, it was a case of individual interference driven by greed.

¹⁸² HStAD. RW/ 58 – 7147.

¹⁸³ HStAD RW / 58 – 14542.

¹⁸⁴ HStAD RW/ 58- 31665.

¹⁸⁵ Mark Roseman, *The Past*, p.148-149.

¹⁸⁶ David Bankier, *The Germans*, p. 81.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Victor Klemperer, *To the Bitter End. The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1942-1945* (London, 1999) p. 34-42; Mark Roseman, *The Past*, p. 165, 199.

¹⁸⁸ Charlotte Beradt, *The Third Reich of Dreams. The Nightmares of a Nation 1933-1939* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1985)

¹⁸⁹ Sarah Gordon, *Hitler*, pp. 220-22.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ HStAD RW/58 – 3623.

¹⁹² HStAD RW / 58 - 26079.

¹⁹³ Available Yearly Reports of the Statistical Office of Düsseldorf. From the Year 1925 to 1935. Thereafter there are no statistics available till 1941.

¹⁹⁴ S. Lekebusch, *Not und Verfolgung der Christen jüdischer Herkunft im Rheinland*. Schriftenreihe des Vereins für Rheinische Kirchengeschichte (Köln, 1995), p. 39.

¹⁹⁵ For more corroborating evidence see Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance*, p. 56.

¹⁹⁶ HStAD RW/ 58 - 7376

¹⁹⁷ HStAD RW/ 58 - 74189

¹⁹⁸ HStAD RW/ 58 - 15906

¹⁹⁹ HStAD RW/58 - 13585

²⁰⁰ Alison Owings, *Frauen: German Women Recall the Third Reich* (Penguin, 1993), pp.111-112 .

²⁰¹ Felicja Karay, Women in the Forced-Labour Camps, in Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (eds.), *Women in the Holocaust* (Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 285-309

²⁰² Ibid., p. 289

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 290

²⁰⁴ Frau Charlotte Müller's account as told to Alison Owings, *Frauen*, p. 162

Chapter IV

²⁰⁵ HStAD RW/58- 47813. The report gives graphic details of the rape which I chose not to reproduce verbatim here.

²⁰⁶ Himmler set up the RSHA or the Reich Security Head Office in Berlin on 27 September 1939. He appointed Reinhard Heydrich the head of the RSHA. It controlled the concentration camp system and 'processed' the meagre belongings of murdered camp inmates. The deployment of foreigner labour was planned and executed by the RSHA, which contracted out foreign forced labour to both SS and private industries. In fact, in 1942 Himmler managed to get a free hand from the Reich's Justice Minister Thierack in matters relating to the persecution of Jews, Gypsies, Russians, Ukrainians and Poles. Henceforth, all cases involving these ethnic minorities were normally referred to the RSHA by the Gestapo for further action, and not to the judiciary. This was considered to be a more effective and speedy means of handling these 'aliens' to the community. See Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann,

The Racial State Germany 1933-1945 (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 272-73. Reinhard Rürup (ed.), *Topography of Terror. Gestapo, SS and Reichssicherheitshauptamt on the "Prinz-Albrecht-Terrain"* A Documentation (Berlin, 1989), p. 70. On the ensuing rivalry between the RSHA and the Judiciary regarding the persecution of racially foreign people, see Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter. Politik Und Praxis Des "Ausländer-Einsatzes" In Der Kriegeswirtschaft Des Dritten Reiches* (Berlin, 1985), pp. 244-245.

²⁰⁷ Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, pp. 122-29, Birthe Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen: Familienpolitik und Geschlechterverhältnisse im Ersten und Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg, 1995), p. 382, Tamara Frankenberger, *Wir waren wie Vieh: Lebensgeschichtliche Erinnerungen ehemaliger sowjetischer Zwangsarbeiterinnen* (Münster, 1997), p. 39, 46 ff.

²⁰⁸ Tamara Frankenberger, *Wir waren wie Vieh*, p. 49.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

²¹¹ Authorities in Nuremberg believed that the decline in the numbers of Poles being brought to court for various misdemeanours could be traced to the Gestapo and the police, who wanted to deal with the matters themselves and on the spot. Source: Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo*, p. 247.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 251.

²¹³ HStAD RW/ 58 - 43622

²¹⁴ Birthe Kundrus, 'Verbotener Umgang: Liebesbeziehungen zwischen Ausländer und Deutschen 1939-1945' in Katharina Hoffmann und Andreas Lembeck (ed.) *Nationalsozialismus und Zwangsarbeit in der Region Oldenburg* (Oldenburg, 1999). pp.149-170, here p.155.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.165.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162-63.

²¹⁷ Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, p. 157-58.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Accounts of such everyday deviance and con-conformism are available in oral history writings on forced women workers. See for example, Wladimir Lipski and Bogdan Tschaly, *Mädchen Wo Seid Ihr?* (Zeuthen, 1995). Hunger strike by camp inmates p. 81-82, p. 125; attempt to flee p. 93 and p. 103; refusal to work p. 107; seeking illegal contact with sympathetic Germans p. 25, p. 64-65 and p. 119. Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labour in Germany 1880-1980* (Michigan, 1990) p.179; Alison Owings, *Frauen* pp. 165-67.

²²¹ In the first phase of birth policies regarding women workers, pregnant workers from Poland, Russia and the Ukraine were dispatched to collection camps, and then returned to their homeland to avoid the cost of having to care for them. This practice resulted in some women deliberately incapacitating themselves in order to be reunited with their families. To counter this abortions were encouraged for Polish and Russian women from 1942 onwards. Those who were expected to bear racially 'undesirable' babies were forcibly aborted. If it was too late to perform abortions, the babies were deposited in 'child collection centres' where they were

either starved or murdered with lethal medication. The children of racially 'valuable' female foreign workers were separated from their mothers and farmed out to German foster parents by the Nazi welfare services. See M. Burleigh and W. Wippermann, *The Racial State*, p. 263; Johanna Seebacher, 'Vor Maschinen stelle ich keine deutschen Frauen: Ausländische Zwangsarbeiterinnen in Bonn 1939-1945' in Annette Kuhn (ed.) *Frauenleben Im-NS Alltag* (Pfaffenweiler, 1994) p. 97-131, here p. 114-15, Ulrich Herbert, *Foreign Labour*, p.170.

²²² Reinhard Rürup, *Topography of Terror*, p. 132.

²²³ Johan Meijer und Diète Oudesluijs, 'Sag, wann haben diese Leiden endlich mal ein Ende? Schicksale polnischer Zwangsarbeiterinnen und Zwangaarbeiter' in Rimco Spanjer, Diète Oudesluijs and Johan Meijer (ed.) *Zur Arbeit gezwungen* (Bremen, 1999), p. 123.

²²⁴ There were, however, examples of Polish girls who rejected this offer and preferred to wear the Polish identification mark "P", a sign inviting open humiliation by the German people and held on to their Polish nationality. Source: *Ibid.*

²²⁵ These guidelines are mentioned in files RW/ 58- 29304, RW/58- 3476.

²²⁶ HStAD RW /58- 29304.

²²⁷ HStAD RW/ 58- 3476.

²²⁸ B. Kundrus, 'Verbotener Umgang: Liebesbeziehungen zwischen Ausländer und Deutschen 1939-1945' in Katharina Hoffmann und Andreas Lembeck (ed.) *Nationalsozialismus*, p. 162.

²²⁹ Birthe Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen*, p. 202.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 375.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 374.

²³³ Inge Marszolek, 'Ich möchte Dich zu gern mal in Uniform sehen: Geschlechterkonstruktionen in Feldpostbriefen' in *Werkstatt Geschichte* (Issue 22, 1999) *Feldpostbriefe*, pp. 41-57, here p. 49.

²³⁴ HStAD RW/58 - 61365.

²³⁵ HStAD RW/58 - 53086.

²³⁶ HStAD RW/58 - 4187.

²³⁷ HStAD RW/ 58 - 37286.

²³⁸ Right from the introduction of the family allowance, the communal administration had objected to the indiscriminate protection of the *Kriegerfrauen*. They specially protested against the grant of family allowance to *Kriegerfrauen* with 'loose moral character' and suggested that they be forced to take up a job and that their allowance either be reduced or stopped altogether. As no action was yet taken at the ministerial level, the communes found another way: to couple the 'degeneration' of the *Kriegerfrau* with registration in labour exchange. Since 1941 there had been a possibility of cutting or terminating the family allowance in case of refusal to work. It was thought that getting the *Kriegerfrauen* into regular jobs would resolve the problem of loitring about and unwanted sexual activities on their part. Source: B. Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen*, p. 389.

²³⁹ As per the decree of 5 May 1942 the family allowance could be reduced or stopped altogether in case of undignified and immoral behaviour or if the grantee neglected her children. B. Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen*, p. 391

²⁴⁰ The office dealing with the family allowance, Amt F noted on 11. February 1941 that during the checking for the family allowance section the social workers noticed that a considerable section of women did not have a proper sense of life and consequently spent their time and money in a frivolous manner. They were found lying in bed till 11 a.m. and the reason was that they returned late at night. They were arrogant and treated the social workers shabbily... Source: B. Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen*, p.380.

²⁴¹ B. Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen*, p. 376.

²⁴² Franz Siedler, *Prostitution, Homosexualität Selbstverstümmelung. Probleme der deutschen Sanitätsführung 1939-1945* (Neckargemünd, 1977), pp. 135-92.

²⁴³ Erich Kasberger, *Heldinnen Waren Wir Keine. Frauenalltag in der NS-Zeit* (Munich, 1995), p. 98.

²⁴⁴ In its judgement on two German women who were charged of *GV Verbrechen* (sexual relations with foreign workers) the *Amtsgericht* Bonn punished them for one and a half years of jail and two years of penal servitude respectively. They were found guilty of “having no respect for the national pride” and of “surrendering their honour”. The reason for the punishment was: “whoever sins against the honour and dignity of the German people and the German blood would be punished severely without any consideration”. Source: Johanna Seebacher, ‘Vor Maschinen stelle ich keine deutschen Frauen. Ausländische Zwangsarbeiterinnen in Bonn 1939-1945’ in Annette Kuhn (ed.) *Frauenleben Im-NS Alltag* (Pfaffenweiler, 1994), pp. 120-21.

²⁴⁵ BAK: R58/1030. 88 ff. As quoted by Gellately, *The Gestapo*, p. 233.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ HStAD RW/58 –2817.

²⁴⁸ Himmler’s Directive of January 31, 1940 pertaining to contacts between German women and prisoners of war stated:

I. German women and girls whose contacts with prisoners of war are of a nature which grossly offend healthy racial feeling are to be taken into protective custody until further notice, and are to be sent to a concentration camp for at least one year. Any social contact and specially all sexual intercourse is understood as a gross offence against the healthy racial feeling.

II. Should women and girls of a locality want to pillory the woman in question publicly, or want to shave off her hair prior to her transportation to a concentration camp, the police is not to intervene.

Source: Reinhard Rürup (ed.), *Topography of Terror*, p.103.

However, in most of the cases where women were put in a pillory, it was done on the initiative of the state and party functionaries. For example, Ulrich Herbert tells that in Gifhorn the NSDAP *Kreisleiter* himself cut the hair of Frau W. for sullyng the honour of German women.

Source: Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, p.80; Benjamin Eckstein / Elmar Welter cite a case from Bornheim where a 17 years old B. whose head was shaved. She was placed on the pillory in front of the Rathaus of Bonn. A sign hanging around her neck said 'I have a love affair with a Pole' and her love letter were read aloud by the circle propaganda leader of the Nazi party. Source: Benjamin Eckstein and Elmar Welter, 'Denunziationen: ein Element der NS- Frauen Öffentlichkeit' in Annette Kuhn (ed.) *Frauenleben im NS Alltag*, pp.132-45, here p. 144-145; R. Gellately cites cases of such 'popular justice' carried out on the initiative of party functionaries from Unterfranken whereby German women were placed in caged pillories with shaven heads. They were carrying signs saying 'I have sullied the honour of the German woman', 'I have been a dishonourable German woman in that I sought and had relations with Poles. By doing that I exclude myself from the community of the people.' Source: R. Gellately, *The Gestapo*, p.236-39; In a case cited by Erich Kasberger even BDM girls took part in shaving the heads of two German women who had affairs with French POWs. See Erich Kasberger, *Heldinnen Waren Wir Keine. Frauenalltag in der NS-Zeit* (Munich, 1995), pp. 93-8. This pattern of popular justice was repeated across the Reich for creating a terrifying impact on German women in order to keep them away from foreign men. It created a fear psychosis in the womenfolk. An SD report of August 1942 mentions that some German women committed suicide upon learning that their involvement with foreigner workers had been reported. Source: R. Gellately, *The Gestapo*, p. 243.

²⁴⁹ Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, p.122-29; Bernd Schlimmer, *Recht ohne Gerechtigkeit. Zur Tätigkeit der Berliner Sondergerichte im Nationalsozialismus*, (Berlin, 1984), pp. 85-91.

²⁵⁰ Eric Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, p.60.

Conclusion

²⁵¹ Gisela Diewald- Kerkmann, *Politische Denunziation*, pp. 20-22.

²⁵² This is supported by the findings of Eric Johnson, who in his 1,132 randomly selected samples from Krefeld Gestapo and Cologne Special Court files, could not find a single case of denunciation by a Jewish person. See E. Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, p. 368

²⁵³ cf. Melanie Tebbutt, *Women's Talk*, p. 19-43.

²⁵⁴ Ernst Fraenkel, *The Dual State: A Contribution to the Theory of Dictatorship* (New York/London, 1941), pp. xiii-xiv. To quote him: "By the Prerogative state, we mean that government system which exercises unlimited arbitrariness and violence unchecked by any legal guarantee, and by the Normative state, an administrative body endowed with elaborate powers for safe guarding the legal order as expressed in statutes, decisions of the courts and activities of the administrative agencies."

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