

Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, “To Be German is to be Strong” (1936)

Abstract

Gertrud Scholtz-Klink (1902–1999) was the head of the National Socialist Women’s League [*NS-Frauenschaft*] from 1933 to 1945. Under her leadership, the Women’s Bureau, as it was also called, became the largest woman-led organization in the Third Reich. It organized events, classes, and various social services to support women in their roles as mothers and wives. Four million women participated in the Women’s Bureau’s vast network. The Women’s Bureau supposedly created a separate sphere in which German women could exercise their autonomy and work for the advancement of the *Volk*. The separate sphere Scholtz-Klink claimed to create was always subordinate to the inherently chauvinistic society established by the Nazi party and regime. In this excerpt from a speech delivered at the start of 1936, Scholtz-Klink discusses the role of women in the implementation of the National Socialist project. Her speech notes the failures of Weimar era feminism to properly understand the “natural” role and duty of women in society.

Source

“To Be German Is to Be Strong. Speech by Reich Women’s Leader Gertrud Scholtz-Klink at the Beginning of a New Year”

German women of all classes and organizations stand before the Führer at the beginning of the new year and thank him for preserving the life of our people, and for helping it to find itself again. We have done our best to do our part in helping our people to “find itself again,” and in making that real to all our women and girls. What we did not accomplish in past years will be done in the future. This we believe more than ever before, since despite all the difficulties we faced in the past year, it was a year that uniquely tested our strength, which therefore grew.

The men and women of this people, in their hundreds and thousands out there in local groups and counties, know that these strengths that were so desperately needed could grow within them because the Führer believed in the goodness and strength within them. Therefore, as his followers it is our greatest task to awaken and strengthen this faith in those we are responsible for, and to transform it into action.

This inner command is equally binding for man and woman, for the blue collar and white collar workers of our people.

The National Socialist movement sees the man and the woman as equal bearers of Germany’s future. It asks, however, for more than in the past: that each should first completely accomplish the tasks that are appropriate to his or her nature.

The woman, besides caring for her own children, should first care for those who need her help as **mothers of the nation.**

This primarily involves thinking about family law and supporting families, youth legislation, and protecting the youth. It also requires thinking about the occupational paths that female youth will follow in the coming years, since some men and women are still unemployed, and some changes in women’s work will therefore be needed. Given our relations with each other, we affirm these temporary measures

because we have firm faith that we have the strength to overcome the many present difficulties that face our people. Our love for our people, however, will never allow these temporary difficulties to cause conflicts only for the sake of conflict, or that they be interpreted by sensation-hungry individuals as a failure of the National Socialist worldview.

We are always being asked if we see everything that has to be done in the area of women's work. We can only say that each has the right and the opportunity to work with us and to follow the path leading to the resurrection of our people. However, we must sense love and concern, we must see that he comes to us because of a love for his people. Empty intellectual thinking or a superiority complex have never saved a people.

This love should teach us all in the new year to listen even better to life around us, and to do our duties in the place we stand in a way that will make clear its deepest meaning: **to become true to our calling as Germans!**

Women, I wish to try briefly to make clear what the deepest calling we women have is: motherhood. In the bad fourteen years between 1918 and 1933, motherhood was often robbed of its deepest meaning and reduced to something superficial, something that was even held in contempt. **Instead of a child being seen as the deepest affirmation of the woman and of life,** it was seen as a burden, as a sacrifice on the part of the woman. A child was often seen not as a great link to God as the creator of all life, before whom we must bow with folded hands and trembling hearts, but rather very often as the result of a weak mind and as an escape from the great events of life.

Many women were superficially mothers, but they had forgotten to subordinate themselves to the law of life, which sees the affirmation of a child as the answer of the woman to her people, and also her contribution to the right of her people to survive.

Transforming the calling of motherhood to the job of motherhood left children joyless, unhappy, without strength or soul. Devilish forces under the leadership of Marxism attempted to lead German women along this path.

It is therefore our task to awaken once again the sense of the divine, to make the calling to motherhood the way through which the German woman will see her calling to be mother of the nation. She will then not live her life selfishly, but rather in service to her people.

We know and believe that all German women will accept this calling over time if we clear the rubble left by a mistaken age. More and more faithful helpers will join our ranks, working cheerfully and strongly as we have done in the past. Not only those women with children will become mothers of the nation, but rather each German woman and each girl will become one of the Führer's little helpers wherever she is, be it in the labor service, in a factory, at a university or in a hospital, at home or on the high seas.

We have established a chain of helping hands that will grow ever stronger, because that is what our love for our people requires!

We have women who served their people during the Great War and proved that they placed their people above themselves. Often, they were the first who continued their service in the N.S. movement. They are joined by younger women who came to this movement because they affirmed the life of the nation. They did not ask what would happen. Instead, they were there where they were needed.

For us women, to be German meant, and still means, always to be strong.

Only she can be strong who knows sorrow and deprivation. Overcoming oneself, and life, leads to strength. And that also leads to clarity. Since many Germans must still learn to understand this, all of our

efforts will also involve struggle, struggle with each other. In all this, however, we must be strong and cheerful people.

We enter the new year as Germans. That means we want to be alert and untiring, because we want to support each other in everything our nation faces. We do not want to compromise from weakness; rather we want to be comrades to one to another who can demand the utmost of each other, because we are willing to give it ourselves. Then the work of German men and women will together form the self-aware and proud

Germans that we need, since our people must live!

With this will, we all return to work!

Source of English translation: "To Be German Is to Be Strong," by Gertrud Scholtz-Klink. German Propaganda Archive. © 2007 by Randall Bytwerk. Available online at:
<https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/scholtz-klink2.htm>

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