

Plan for the Public Campaign „Women Help Achieve Victory“ (March 19, 1941)

Abstract

By 1941, Nazi Germany faced a growing labour shortage as every able-bodied man was pressed into military service, placing the Reich's industrial production capacity in jeopardy. One potential solution involved employing women to fill the employment gaps, a strategy pursued in other countries to great effect. In Great Britain for instance, the number of women employed grew from 19.75 per cent to 27 per cent from 1938-1945. In the Soviet Union, roughly 800,000 women served in the armed forces in a variety of roles. In contrast to these countries, Nazi Germany had been initially quite reluctant to engage women in such work. Public perception remained important and so the regime had sought to avoid the appearance of forcing single and childless women into what the Nazis considered masculine roles. Eventually, calls to women such as the one in this excerpt attempted to appeal to the sense of honour and duty that German women were supposed to feel towards the Volksgemeinschaft. Women were also encouraged with promises of assistance such as child daycare programs, neighbourhood assistance programs, and so on, in an attempt to make employment as attractive to German women as possible, without making the nation look desperate for their service.

Source

1. Tasks and principles of the action

On March 22, a speech by the Deputy of the Führer will initiate a comprehensive campaign called "Women Help Achieve Victory," the purpose of which is to bring about the voluntary registration of all women and girls eligible for war work. The Deputy of the Führer will address these women and girls in an appeal and ask them to register voluntarily on lists which will be kept by the local groups of the NSDAP and will be open for registration during the period from Sunday, March 23, to Saturday, March 29. Since the action is based on the principle of voluntariness, the press has a special part in its implementation. In particular, it is necessary to make a strong appeal to honor and to constantly and increasingly emphasize it during the whole week of registration. The historical struggle in which we find ourselves today demands the commitment of all compatriots. While the German man does his duty at the front, the German woman must fill the man's place with her labor, especially in the war economy. Every woman suitable for work, whose health and family obligations permit, is expected to enlist. Special effort in this campaign is expected above all from the metropolitan press and also from the papers with a readership of high intelligence. The following aspects, which will be continuously supplemented, apply to press participation in the campaign.

2. Announcement of the action

The action will probably be publicly announced only by the speech of the Deputy of the Führer. News concerning the overall execution of the action valid throughout the Reich will be issued only by the Reich Press Office of the NSDAP.

3. Psychological preparation of the action

Independently of the official announcement, which is not expected until the weekend, the interest of newspaper readers is to be directed immediately in an appropriate manner, in words and pictures, to the

importance of women's work in the war, with special emphasis on the emotional moments resulting from the feeling of joyfully fulfilled duty that fills working women. Friendly aspects and humorous experiences of working women should also be featured within the framework of the preparatory phase as well as during the entire campaign. Particular attention should be paid to the entertainment and local sections, which should be given special attention during the entire campaign.

4. Start of the action

The speech of the Führer's deputy will be published in the Sunday edition as the start of the big campaign in a particularly careful layout. The text of the poster, which will be posted on all bulletin boards starting on Sunday, will be sent to the newspapers in such a way that it can be effectively placed in a manually typeset text block. Special care is to be taken in the design of this Sunday edition, the influence of which will be a very great one in the personal decision. Special emphasis is to be placed on the reproduction of appealing pictures of women's work, which are likely to stimulate joy in this effort.

Special attention should also be paid to advertising headlines and advertising blocks, which run through the entire Sunday edition and are particularly effective for newspapers that have not yet made much use of such graphic means. In larger editorial departments, it is advisable to entrust the handling of this purely propagandistic part of the press campaign to the same editor for the entire duration of the campaign, who is responsible for the editing and placement of the headlines and text blocks in all editions.

5. Technical execution of the campaign

The district [Gau] press office will be responsible for announcing any district events and special district regulations.

6. Editorial treatment of the topic during the enlistment week

After the Sunday edition was devoted entirely to the idealistic moment, coverage in the culture sections and headline advertising are to continue, and the following editions will deal with the practical questions that arise for individual women with regard to their household duties when they take on this new obligation. In particular, reminders of the support offered by nursery help, shopping services for working women, sewing room help, neighborhood help, etc. should be given here. Women who are too old to take on a job are to be encouraged to make themselves available for these support services. The district party offices [NS-Gaudienste] will provide advice from the National Socialist Women's League [NS-Frauenschaft], which will communicate to women in the simplest terms how they can still fulfill their desire to enlist despite all apparent obstacles, etc., etc.

Young girls, who will be able to enroll when they reach the age of 16, are to be appealed to in a psychologically appropriate manner, including the use of appealing pictures and drawings. An important part of the editorial effort during the week of action is local reporting on the progress of the action. Pictures and reports from the enlistment sites are to be emphasized; no counts of any kind are not to be made, of course.

Source of original German text: Pressepolitischer Arbeitsplan für die Aktion „Frauen helfen siegen“ (19. März 1941), BArch, ZSg 109/19; reprinted in Bernd Sösemann (with Marius Lange), *Propaganda: Medien und Öffentlichkeit in der NS-Diktatur: eine Dokumentation und Edition von Gesetzen, Führerbefehlen und sonstigen Anordnungen sowie propagandistischen Bild- und Textüberlieferungen im kommunikationshistorischen Kontext und in der Wahrnehmung des Publikums*, Band 1. Stuttgart:

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