EDWARD ROSS DICKINSON

The Politics of German Child Welfare from the Empire to the Federal Republic

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England
1996
CHAPTER EIGHT

The Great Depression and National Socialism, 1930–1945

The Great Depression

The Great Depression struck a staggering blow to child welfare programs. Despite demands from experts for an increase in spending on preventive child welfare as a means of blunting the long-term effects and costs of the economic disaster, the Youth Bureaus were gutted by fiscal cuts. In 1928–29 public expenditures for child welfare were 45.2 million marks; by 1930–31 they had sunk to 22 million, and by 1932–33 to 14.4 million. In the midst of the fight against sheer hunger, programs specifically for children took second priority. Whereas in 1928–29 fully 3.2 percent of the expenditures of the public relief system went to child welfare programs, by 1932–33 less than 1 percent did. Moreover, the specific nature of the cuts was particularly disturbing. Staffing cuts affected the younger, less senior staff members, who were more likely to have social work training (and of course to be women). The first programs to be cut were the “preventive” programs listed under paragraph 4 of the RJWG, which were not mandatory; day care centers, youth centers, and counseling centers were being closed throughout Germany by 1932. Subsidies to private organizations were similarly vulnerable. These developments vastly exacerbated the problems of routinization and bureaucratization examined in Chapter 7. By 1932 any possibility that the Youth Bureaus might become true “socialization agencies” seemed to have been destroyed. Some in the charities in fact saw the depression as potentially a golden opportunity to regain ground lost in the 1920s; one representative of the Red Cross announced in September 1930 that “the private charities’ day has come once again.”

Correctional education suffered as badly as the Youth Bureaus. By 1930 it had become clear that correctional education would be reformed; and government decrees limiting corporal punishment and the election of Hedwig Wachenheim and Rudolf Schlosser (both of Workers’ Welfare) to the central committee of the AFET in 1930 and of Walter Friedländer as chairman of the DZJ in 1931 had seemed to bode well for a relatively progressive approach. The financial crisis decisively shifted the terms of the discussion. Funding for correctional education plummeted—falling in Prussia, for example, from 41 million marks in 1928–29 to 15 million in 1932–33 (with annual expenditure per pupil dropping from 683 marks in 1929–30 to 570 marks in 1932–33). By 1932 it had become plainly imperative that the number of children in correctional education be reduced, and those who argued that the institution’s problems could be resolved simply by expelling “difficult” children—what they called the “cleaning out” of the reformatories—gained ground rapidly. At the same time, the political crisis of the reformatories only deepened, partly owing to the creation, in June 1931, of a “Committee for Struggle against Correctional Education” by communist and radical socialist organizations, which demanded the abolition of private reformatories, a system of financial support for poor families, self-government in new public institutions for wayward youth, better training for staff, vocational training and the payment of wages to inmates, and improved labor legislation as an alternative to the existing system.

On November 4, 1932, responding to pressure from state governments and private organizations, the government published an emergency decree which prohibited the commitment of children in whose case there was “clearly no prospect of success” for correctional education, decreed the termination of correctional education at age nineteen for all children, and allowed the release of children who showed “considerable intellectual or mental abnormalities.” At the end of fiscal 1931 there were still 44,666 children in correctional education in Prussia; by the end of fiscal 1932 there were only 30,084.

And yet in response to a number of adverse court decisions in 1929 and 1930, the decree also stipulated that children should be committed to correctional education if their removal from their own families was required but “placement elsewhere cannot be accomplished without expenditure of public funds”—precisely the wording of Adolf Schmedding’s petition of 1913, which the RJWG had abandoned. While the decree temporarily reduced the number of children in correctional education, then, it also clearly aimed to bring younger children into the reformatories—and laid the foundation for an expansion, at some future date, of correctional education. It was thus a clear defeat for those who advocated a transition from correctional education to other forms of intervention such as FEH or educational counseling.

All these developments were particularly demoralizing in the context of the impact of the depression on young workers. Already in October 1930
about 13 percent of all young people of working age (fourteen to twenty-five) were officially unemployed, a total of 450,000 youths; by July 1932 there were 1,457 million young people unemployed. Given the fact that meaningful work—a Beauf, or calling—was regarded as critical for the moral development of a young person, this situation was perceived as disastrous for the socialization of the young. In fact, there was a close relationship between unemployment and juvenile delinquency and gang activity. Moreover, the unemployment insurance system was overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of people involved. By an emergency decree of June 5, 1931, the legal age at which a worker could qualify for unemployment benefits was raised from nineteen to twenty-one for those living at home—potentially disqualifying about 50 percent of working youth. The local relief agencies, on which the remainder had to rely, proved to be financially incapable of taking up the slack. Local agencies, subsidized by the national government, attempted to keep young people off the streets and out of trouble by offering vocational training courses, in which 330,000 young people took part in 1931-32 and 527,000 in 1932-33. Such courses lasted only six to twelve weeks, however, and only ten to twelve hours weekly. A "voluntary work service" (Freiwillige Arbeitsdienst, or FAD) scheme for young workers, largely organized by private agencies but consolidated by an emergency decree in July 1932, occupied young people in make-work projects, mostly in camps, for twenty weeks at a time: in August 1932 there were some 96,000 young people involved; by December 285,000. A few cities opened day centers, and many private organizations attempted to occupy unemployed youths' time with games, outings, dances, and the like. In the face of mass unemployment, all these programs amounted essentially to well-meaning gestures.

In the face of this failure, a sense of helplessness spread among child welfare advocates. In June 1932 a member of the DCV's Committee on Child Welfare concluded simply, "Our pedagogical arts are not equal to this immense emergency." Social conditions among the young seemed to confirm this judgment: there was a massive increase in vagrancy as young people migrated in search of work; prostitution and juvenile delinquency rose precipitously; there was a revival of youth gangs; and young people were increasingly involved in political violence and radical organizations of both the left and the right.

In fact, by mid-1932 the disaster of the depression and the collapse of most of the institutions of the Weimar state from parliament down to the Youth Bureaus was inducing a kind of general paralysis on the noncommunist left, even as it galvanized the right and drove cultural conservatives to call for a return to the simple fundamentals of traditional authoritarian culture—or for the adoption of radical, racist solutions.

One important instance of this development was the growing appeal of eugenics within social welfare circles, and particularly of the idea that resources should not be "wasted" on cases in which there was little hope of full reintegration into society—a pattern which was of course also apparent in the correctional education decree of 1932. In the context of the fiscal emergency and of seemingly unmanageable social problems, the promise of eugenics not merely to manage but actually to eliminate social problems—or rather to eliminate biologically those groups of people whom it was economically inefficient and irrational to support—was increasingly attractive. This trend was also influential within the Christian charities. In the Inner Mission Hans Harmsen, a doctor, economist, student of the Social Democratic eugenicist Alfred Grotjahn, and head of the Task Force for National Regeneration (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksgesundung, a central organization of moral purity associations established in 1924), rapidly gained influence as a kind of missionary for eugenics. In fact, this medicalization of thinking within the Inner Mission proceeded in parallel with the reprofessionalization process described in Chapter 7, from the mid-1920s on. Harmsen became head of the newly formed Protestant Hospital Association (Deutsche Evangelische Krankenhausverband) and at the same time director of the Inner Mission's new Health Care Section in 1926, and used his growing intellectual and organizational influence to lead the effort to "modernize" the Inner Mission's conception of welfare policy on the basis of a "eugenic reorientation." 11 With the onset of the depression, Harmsen's ideas began to make rapid headway and became more radical. His Special Conference for Eugenics, established by the Inner Mission in January 1931 and made up almost exclusively of medical men, adopted a resolution at its first meeting that May in favor of voluntary eugenic sterilization and "differentiated welfare": those who could not be restored to "full productive capacity [Leistungsfähigkeit]" and reintegrated into society, it suggested, should be given the minimum of institutional care and maintenance "consistent with human dignity" and prevented from reproducing while efforts and resources were focused on those who could be rehabilitated. 12 By 1932 Harmsen was denouncing "exaggerated welfare" and "a Christianity which consciously turnts its back on the healthy, strong, and natural, destroys the national spirit and will to self-preservation (pacificism, conscientious objection), and essentially has as its content only care for those who are sick, miserable, and unworthy of life." 13 In Catholic circles Joseph Mayer, editor of the DCV's journal Caritas, had organized a conference on Eugenics and Welfare in 1929, and Hermann Muckermann worked closely with Harmsen in the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksgesundung. After the promulagation of the papal encyclical Casti connubii (December 31, 1930), which explicitly condemned the idea of eugenic sterilization, Muckermann and Mayer were
The Great Depression and National Socialism

forced to adopt a lower profile; but they continued, more circumspectly, to support eugenic ideas. 14

State and national governments, too, took a rapidly growing interest in eugenic solutions to social and fiscal problems. A National Commission for Population Questions, in which leading eugenicists were influential, was established by the Ministry of the Interior in 1930. Within the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, work on a sterilization law went ahead within a special commission of the health administration: a draft law was in fact prepared by July 1932 which would have allowed for voluntary sterilization (including, for example, at the request of the director of a mental asylum on behalf of mentally incompetent inmates) on eugenic grounds.

In a not unrelated development, discussions of the possibility of Bewahrung für "ineducable" youths became more urgent as well. In November 1931 the Prussian provincial administrations proposed placing such youths in workhouses, a provision included in the first draft of the emergency decree of November 1932. Outraged child welfare advocates were able to secure the deletion of this clause from the final draft; but even among reformers, conceptions of what an eventual Bewahrung law would look like were increasingly draconian. One Catholic administrator suggested that for those placed permanently in institutions, conditions would have to be "very simple; in particular, food and clothing must not exceed the necessary minimum." 15

While nothing came of these legislative projects, under the von Papen and von Schleicher governments in late 1932 there was an intensification of an already extant trend toward a more repressive administration of welfare programs. The juvenile courts began to adopt a harsher approach: they imposed no punishment in 20.7 percent of all cases in 1931, but in only 18 percent in 1932 and 16.5 percent in 1933; and the percentage of convictions which resulted in imprisonment fell from 56.8 in 1925 to 48.6 in 1929, then rose to 57.4 in 1932 and 62 in 1933. At the same time, progressive administrators and institutions became targets of an incipient purge: the progressive Berlin juvenile court judge Herbert Francke was transferred in November; Curt Bondy was relieved of his position as director of youth prison in December; the Prussian Ministry of Welfare had already been abolished in July 1932, after the deposition of the Prussian government. 16 In response to political radicalization, by October 1932 the von Papen government proposed raising the voting age to twenty-five, an Schleicher and Wilhelm Groener developed schemes for creating a state-controlled paramilitary organizations for young men as a means of discipline and preparing them for "service" to the state. There were proposals, too, for the use of FAD work camps as sites for the rehabilitatio of "ineducable" youths. 17 And the further rapid decline of the birthrate brought about a revival of conservative pronatalism in government circle.

The growing crisis within the pedagogical left was equally revealing. As we have seen, even before the onset of the depression some Christian pedagogues, particularly within the Protestant Inner Mission, had been deepening their commitment to the fundamentals of conservative Christian thought. But by the early 1930s conservative Protestants were being joined by a growing secular conservative critique of pedagogical modernism, one that sprang from the same "conservative revolution" among intellectuals which (often unintentionally) helped to pave the way for the National Socialists. An article by Martin Havenstein, published in the journal Die Erziehung in 1930, was typical of both the content and the tone of this critique. Havenstein argued that aversion to the death penalty and the demand that young offenders should be resocialized rather than punished was a sign that German society was "in a state of dissolution," since it lacked the moral commitment and social integrity "which are required for judgment and punishment." Modern parents, he complained, let their children "grow up almost as does the bitch her litter, and of this renunciation of all socialization they make the ideal of a "natural" and truly "humane" socialization." Reform pedagogy merely spoiled children, failing to develop firm moral commitments in them; the final result was that they were prey to every form of immorality and could never apply themselves seriously. Modern democratic values, in short, were not really values at all but only spinelessness; they could be the basis neither for socialization nor for social order. As a corrective Havenstein suggested that "we" should "be honest, and admit that one cannot get by without punishments, including corporal, in the socialization of children.... Children have this in common with our favorite house pets, that they only really love those by whom they have been punished and whom they therefore fear a little bit." 18 Nor was Havenstein alone. Already in 1928 Werner Villinger warned a conference on therapeutic pedagogy that the prevailing "sentimental education" based on "pity," the lack of a "unified goal for socialization," an "exaggerated ideal of freedom," and the "ecstatic emancipation of youth" were generating a widespread "loss of willingness to be socialized" among young people. 19

Social Democrats, for whom class provided (at least in theory) a binding set of values and an ideal of community, were generally unimpressed by such rhetoric. But it is a measure of the demoralizing impact of the depression—reinforcing doubts already present, as we have seen, in the second half of the 1920s—that arguments like these gained an ever greater audience among bourgeois pedagogues, and particularly among pedagogues from the left wing of the youth movement, who by 1932 were beginning to seek an accommodation with their conservative peers. 20 In the context of what appeared to be the final crisis of economic and political liberalism, the optimistic and democratizing thrust of the pedagogical reform movement was broken; what supplanted it was disorientation and drift to the right.
The Great Depression and National Socialism

A meeting of the Task Force for the Reform of Correctional Education in October 1932 illustrates this process. Here Hermann Nohl announced that modern pedagogy had unfolded in three stages: that of "liberal individual pedagogy"; that of the "democratic-social turn" and of "community" (that is, Social Democratic and youth movement pedagogy); and the third, just beginning, that of "the idea of service" and of the "commitment (Bindung, or binding) of the liberated energies." It was time to balance love with authority, play with performance, and individuality with the great "objective forces." Similarly, Curt Bondy denounced authoritarian methods, but conceded that the sentimental spirit and extravagant individualism of the youth movement—its tendency toward "pampering"—was not suited to a new, harder era. Confronted by heckling from an audience that included many Social Democrats, Bondy became embarrassed and "so confused that he broke into a helpless, stumbling speech." 21

While men such as Bondy and Nohl stumbled about in search of a new formulation of their idealistic theories, others were much more realistic about what was ultimately at issue. In 1931 Hermann Herrigel, commenting in Die Erziehung on Friedrich Gogarten's conservative theological tirade "Against Disrespect for Authority," had contrasted realistic liberalism with the metaphysical, "mechanistic, atomizing collectivism" of communism and fascism. Rejecting Gogarten's demand for obedience to God's authority as the only root of good, Herrigel spoke for the good which is produced by man's acting in history, by man's own constructive will. It was true, he conceded, that "anarchy reigns." The question was, however, "whether anarchy can only be overcome by a dictatorship." 22

Such pleas for a policy of reasonable reform had little appeal in the midst of social and political chaos, however. Disgusted by political paralysis and internecine strife, overwhelmed by the economic and political collapse, most middle-class Germans were convinced by the winter of 1932 that a drastic revision of existing arrangements was inevitable, but they remained fundamentally at a loss to construct a solution that could command a minimal consensus. In this situation of many different persuasions could see in the energy, self-assurance, and apparent competence of the National Socialist movement at least the best available chance of bringing about necessary changes. This hope—or better, despair—shaped initial responses to the Nazi seizure of power at the beginning of 1933.

The Response to National Socialism

The enthusiasm and lack of critical distance with which many people in the child welfare establishment greeted the Nazi seizure of power cannot be explained merely in terms of the demoralization wrought by the depression. In fact, the Nazis played very skillfully on the political, ideological, cultural, and organizational tensions and frustrations that had been so evident since the mid-1920s, before the onset of the economic crisis, which I described in Chapter 7. An astonishing number of people within the Christian charities and the secular progressive welfare establishment were able to convince themselves that the creation of a Nazi regime would give them the opportunity to solve long-standing problems.

In the field of child welfare—as in many other areas—this self-delusion was encouraged by the relative vagueness of the Nazi program. The Nazi welfare organization, the National Socialist People's Welfare (Nationalsozialistische Volkswirtschaft, or NSV) under the leadership of Erich Hilgenfeldt, had been established in 1931–32 as a self-help organization for SA men and their families; at the end of 1932, despite the patronage of Josef Goebbels, it was still very much in its infancy, and it was not even officially recognized by the party until May 3, 1933. Programmatic statements by Hitler and the party, which stressed the biological evils and economic irrationality of supporting the "sickly," weak elements in the "national community" (Volksgemeinschaft), made it clear that welfare policy would be strongly influenced by eugenic considerations. But by 1932 this stance did not clearly distinguish the Nazis from many other conservative or progressive reformers, or, for that matter, from social reformers in other countries. Similarly, Nazi denunciations of the Weimar system for raising up armies of welfare slackers, and stressing the need to inculcate discipline and an ethos of self-help, did not sound eccentric in the context of the depression, of the nineteenth-century traditions of poor relief, or of traditions and debates and legislation in other European nations. The Nazis made it clear that they regarded the German population as a measure and tool of national power; but again, while Christians might have regarded their rhetoric as somewhat too "hard-headed," such ideas were very much a part of the vocabulary of modern child welfare, and specifically echoed the pronatalism of the imperial state. These ideas, then, did not appear to amount to a coherent or distinctive program at all; and a large number of people seem to have believed that the Nazis were in agreement with them, or even that they could guide Nazi policy themselves.

In general, the Catholic leadership regarded the Nazi movement with considerable skepticism before 1933. In the early 1930s the Catholic hierarchy had explicitly rejected the National Socialists' racial ideology, as had leaders of the Catholic women's organizations; some bishops had even threatened to excommunicate anyone who joined the National Socialist German Workers' party (NSDAP). The troubled relationship between the Catholic Church and the Fascist regime in Italy made Catholics deeply suspicious of German fascism as well. The Catholic political movement, moreover, had helped to establish the Republic, and had thrived and achieved an unprecedented degree of integration and influence in it, while both the
church itself and popular Catholicism had experienced something of a renaissance in the 1920s. In 1933, however, many Catholics were attracted to the social and cultural conservatism of the National Socialist movement, and particularly to its antisocialism. Equally important, after the signing of the Concordat between Hitler and the church on July 20, 1933, the Catholic hierarchy ceased criticizing Nazism and even encouraged Catholics to support the efforts of the new regime. In late 1933 and 1934, therefore, Catholic organizations—including the charities—sought to negotiate and cooperate with Nazi organizations in the hope that a reasonable division of labor could be achieved. Throughout the 1930s the Catholic leadership would seek above all to avoid open confrontation with the NSDAP and the regime.23

Protestants were from the beginning much more susceptible to the charms of National Socialism, and far less equipped by their intellectual traditions—their long-standing connection to the state, the strength of conservative nationalism among Protestants, the theological tradition of obedience to the secular authorities and of political passivity, the prevalence of anti-Semitism within the churches, and more recently their greater acceptance of eugenic proposals—to oppose it. The receptivity of the Inner Mission to Nazism was also reinforced by a serious financial scandal within the organization in 1931–32, which forced the resignation or firing of a large number of employees and officials of the organization, some of whom then transferred to the Nazi welfare organization.24 Most of the leadership and members of the Protestant churches and the Protestant charities (and indeed most Protestant officials) detested the Republic and the socialist and Catholic political movements that had helped to create it, and believed that National Socialism was a conservative Christian and specifically Protestant movement. They welcomed Hitler's accession to power, open with immense enthusiasm, as the beginning of the spiritual, cultural, and political rebirth of the nation. Just under 10 percent of German Protestant pastors became members of the Nazi party, and in 1933 up to a third were members of or sympathized with the Nazi “German Christian” movement, which aimed to nazify both the church and its doctrine.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the Red Cross, whose leadership was drawn largely from medical circles and from the old conservative Patriotic Women's Leagues, was thoroughly nazified, and was virtually absorbed by the NSV in December 1937. But within the Inner Mission, too, the majority had been hostile to the Republic and oriented politically toward the conservative, nationalist German National People's party, the coalition partner of the NSDAP; and a large minority became active and committed Nazis. Hermann Althaus, for example, became a sort of chief ideologist for the NSV (and Hilgenfeldt's proxy [Stellvertreter]) after transferring from the Inner Mission.25 Several members of the Inner Mission's governing central committee were NSDAP members, and most members of the organization as a whole—including the Protestant religious orders (the deaconesses) and women's organizations which did the bulk of the Inner Mission's work—were at least sympathetic toward the party and movement, and often glowingly enthusiastic.26

The Christian charities had several specific reasons to believe that they might profit from the National Socialist dictatorship. While some Nazi intellectuals professed anti-Christian völkisch ideas, Hitler himself carefully concealed his own radical and racist anti-Christian convictions, repeatedly emphasizing that the Third Reich would be a Christian state. In his speech to the Reichstag on February 1, 1933, Hitler declared that the new regime would “take Christianity, the basis of our morality, and the family, the fundamental cell of the state, under its firm protection.”27

The most important concrete evidence of this Christian character of the new regime was its hostility to socialism. The party and the SA demonstratively stressed that they saw themselves as fighting in alliance with the churches against “Bolshevism,” and this was perhaps the most important element of the Nazi appeal to Christians. Even the Catholic bishops enthusiastically welcomed the dismantling of the Social Democratic and Communist parties—and their welfare organizations. In a pastoral letter of June 3, 1933, the episcopate, while clearly rejecting (albeit in cautious language) racist persecution, welcomed the fact that “no longer will unbelief and the immorality that it unleashes poison the... German people, no longer shall murderous Bolshevism threaten... the German national soul with its satanic hatred of God.”28

For the Christian charities, not only did the destruction of Workers' Welfare and communist welfare groups remove a threatening competitor, but also it seemed to resolve at a blow the political crisis of correctional education by silencing the critics of the system. The new director of the Inner Mission, Horst Schirmacher, recalled with glee “how the whole of Marxist Germany raised a hue and cry when some brat got his ears boxed,” while at the EREV conference of 1934 the director of the Ruhrhause Haus greeted the “overthrow of Bolshevism” by the “fists of the SA” as a great contribution to the work of the reformatories.29 The silencing of German communism also removed what many reformatory administrators saw as one of the main causes of the rebelliousness of their charges. And the emphasis in Nazi rhetoric and ideology on authority, obedience, duty, conformity, and discipline seemed not only to vindicate the methods and ideas of conservative practitioners but also to bode well for the future of the institution itself. In any event, the authoritarian state did indeed undertake a rapid expansion of the number of children committed to correctional education. In fiscal 1933 only 6,000 children were committed; by 1937 that number had surged to 10,000; and by 1941 there were some 100,000 children in refor-
matories and foster care, including those committed "voluntarily" under FEH (in 1928 the total number in correctional education had been 97,000). What is more, children were being committed at a younger age in the 1930s than in the 1920s; in fiscal 1939 just under half the children committed in Prussia were aged fourteen and over (as opposed to nearly three quarters in 1930).31

More generally, many Christians of both confessions welcomed the Nazis' rhetorical allegiance to traditional values such as discipline, morality, and responsibility; and they were delighted by the flurry of early Nazi decrees aimed at the suppression of public indecency, pornography, contraceptives, and the sex reform movement—decrees which extended measures already taken under the von Papen and Schleicher governments. For Christians these steps seemed to promise salvation from the moral corruption of the mass culture of the 1920s. In 1933 one Catholic reformatory celebrated the fact that "the dark forces which plagued our youth with the poison of godlessness, of moral corruption . . . have, thank God, been defeated, to the good of the whole people."32 And Elisabeth Zillken of the KFV proclaimed in May 1933 that if "the state combats godlessness . . ., if it wants to use its power to end the impudent immorality of the past few years, then we have reason to be thankful to it."33 At the FREV, Alfred Friiz (director since 1932) welcomed the "earnest and determined will of the new regime to stop up the wellsprings of waywardness," while for Ina Hundinger the seizure of power was "liberating."34 Equally important was the Nazis' anti-feminism and their promise to revitalize the family. Their vehemence in proclaiming the virtues of family life and their commitment to the twin domestic virtues of maternal love and paternal authority seemed to cultural conservatives eager for allies to place them among the opponents of moral decline and of the collapse of the patriarchal family—and of the further "social-pedagogical" expansion of public child welfare. The Nazis' enthusiasm for discipline and order also appealed to the authoritarian, punitive, and moralistic prejudices of many conservative Christians, as did their rejection of individualism. Pastor Johannes Wolff, head of the AFET, observed approvingly in early 1934 that in the new state "the community is not there for the individual . . ., rather . . . the individual is there for the community."35

Furthermore, the Nazis' denunciation of the Weimar welfare state for breeding irresponsibility, and their rhetorical allegiance to the ideal of self-reliance and self-help, not only represented a rolling back of the concept of social rights in favor of older notions about the "moralization" of the poor by social workers, but also seemed to promise a systematic paring back of public welfare programs—which, as we have seen, by the end of the 1920s some in the charities were beginning to view as their only salvation. In 1933 the Nazis seemed to be in the process of making good on this implicit promise. A decree of the national minister of the interior in June 1933 indicated that the new regime might respond to many of the concerns of the charities—indeed, that it might even reduce public welfare agencies to the role of supporting, encouraging, and coordinating private organizations and distributing cases to them. "The striving of the past to fulfill the tasks of national welfare principally through public agencies and institutions," it stated, "has proved itself to be a fateful error," since it had encouraged public agencies to build new institutions "even where sufficient institutions of private welfare were present," thereby making "the entire welfare system considerably and needlessly more expensive. At the same time, welfare has been politicized and bureaucratized and so estranged from the hearts of the people; and private and especially confessional welfare has been pushed back." In contrast, the new regime, "inspired by patriotic and Christian spirit," would "correct the mistakes of past years through extensive involvement of private charities."36 Needless to say, the private charities welcomed such pronouncements warmly.

Early discussions of a reform of the RJWG were equally promising. A revision of its liberal-individualist definition of the goal of state child welfare measures (the securing of the child's "right to education") was clearly unavoidable. Moreover, the "leadership principle" (Führerprinzip) seemed to demand the abandonment of the "parliamentary," corporatist form of the Youth Bureau; indeed, in many cases it was already being ignored. By the summer of 1933, therefore, plans for a reform of the law were being discussed within the national association of private welfare organizations—now rebuilt as the Reichsgemeinschaft der freien Wohlfahrtspflege (formed in July 1933) and administered by the NSV. Since the NSW was itself formally a "private" organization, throughout 1933 it seemed possible that the charities might achieve a radical "privatization" of child welfare programs. The DCV, while conceding that the Youth Bureaus must perform all acts requiring the exercise of state authority (Hobetsakten), suggested that in future the Youth Bureaus should delegate all "tasks of socialization" to the private charities. And though concluding that the adoption of the Führerprinzip in the Youth Bureaus was inevitable, it argued that there must still be an advisory Leaders' Council, which would meet four times yearly by law, and which would have the right to appeal the Youth Bureau director's decisions to the State Youth Bureau. The Inner Mission's spokesman, Pastor Adolf Stahl, even maintained that the Youth Bureau should in future simply delegate all cases to the private charities. Even the National Municipal League (Gemeindetag), now "coordinated" and under the influence of the decree of June, made very similar recommendations in August 1933. The Youth Bureaus, in other words, were to be more or less reduced to distribution stations for cases, according to the program developing among the charities in the late 1920s. At the same time, the DCV and
the Inner Mission hoped to be able to include Christianity explicitly in the new definition of the goal of socialization (the RJWG spoke only of education for “spiritual competence”) and to secure further guarantees of the rights of parents.40

In a number of instances, more generally, the Nazi regime seemed in the mid-1930s to be acting concretely and successfully on the promises implicit in its rhetoric about the family. After 1936 working-class families were paid a small amount monthly for each child. New legislation punished abortion more harshly, and public family planning clinics were closed. A censorship law of 1933 continued the assault on “indecent” literature. A marriage loan scheme helped to raise the marriage rate by almost 50 percent by 1939, helping to cut the illegitimacy rate in half (12.2 percent in 1926–1930, 7.7 percent in 1936–1939); and the fertility rate had by then recovered its level of 1924. The National Socialist Women’s Organization (National Sozialistische Frauenfront, or NSF) and the NSV also established a training program for mothers in 1934; by 1939, 1.7 million women had taken part.41

Finally, although Harmens’s Conference on Eugenics had rejected forcible sterilization in 1931, and some participants were clearly shocked that the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Progeny (Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses) of July 1933 mandated compulsory sterilization, Harmens himself and many others in the Protestant charities actually welcomed the law with “gratitude and joy.”42

The secular experts of the DVOgF and the ADB, however, were just as hopeful that National Socialism would realize their vision of a rational, ubiquitous system of public social management. Many committed socialist liberals soon recognized the evil of the new regime: Christian Jasper Klumker, for example, was forced into retirement after calling a boycott in protest of the firing of Jewish faculty members at his university (Frankfurt). But there was much in Nazi rhetoric that seemed to justify the hopes of less perceptive and less principled people. Above all, Hitler and other major Nazi figures again and again made it clear that the “national community” (Volksgemeinschaft) was responsible for and dependent on the well-being of each of its members, and that children were the greatest “resource” of the nation. These postulates seemed to bode well for the extension of the structure and powers of the public child welfare system.

Some secular experts rushed to build on this apparent theoretical common ground in the first years of the regime. The DVOgF—who, director, Wilhelm Polligkeiten, welcomed Nazism with some enthusiasm—published a position paper in June 1933 which attempted to establish general guidelines for the extension of public programs on the basis of “national and social principles.” The Nazi state, it argued, “demands a unitary youth policy in the sense of National Socialist education” and would therefore impose a “unitary goal” on child welfare policy. This ideological re-foundation of child welfare programs would end the crippling conflicts that had resulted from the regrettable fact that “the different socializing agencies and communities oriented their work with youth according to completely differing values.” Under National Socialism there would be no struggles over individual children and programs because all would recognize that their role in child welfare derived not from their own particular agendas and “rights” to particular children but from their capacity in each case “to serve the socialization goal of the state.” The “parliamentary” form of the Youth Bureau would be abandoned, and the “board” would become an advisory body. Finally, National Socialist principles demanded that the Youth Bureaus’ work be concentrated on the task of preserving the moral and physical health of all children on the preventive programs listed in paragraph 4 of the RJWG. With a clear goal for the socialization of youth and a unitary structure, and working in cooperation with the Hitler Youth, the Youth Bureau would at last “become a real socialization agency, assisting, encouraging, and supervising the family in fulfilling its socialization duties.”43

An article published in early 1935 by Heinrich Weber—who ousted Klumker to take control of the ADB in late 1933—reveals even more clearly the appeal of Nazism to enthusiasts of social management. The “dissolution of the closed domestic economy by the liberal-private-capitalist economy,” Weber argued, had destroyed the patriarchal family and with it the justification for the absolute right of parents over their children. Unfortunately, however, the “liberal-individualist selfishness of the holder of parental authority . . . fails to recognize how to protect itself even until the present day.” But National Socialism would do away with the outdated legal system which protected this selfishness, for “National Socialist legal policy derives . . . the new law of socialization solely from the needs of the Volk” rather than of the parent or the child. In the new state there would be no contradiction between public law and private law:

Child, parents, and state no longer stand more or less singly . . . as bearers of rights. . . . There will be in future only one unitary legal order, from which all rights flow. . . . The right of the parents to educate their children thus becomes . . . a duty in the service of the Volk and under the supervision of the state. The völkisch state does not recognize an independent, original, and fundamentally indivisible right of the parents. . . . Rather it entrusts the national posterity to the family out of insight into the capacity of the blood-related community of the family as the essential cell of the national community.44

This argumentation was transparently intended to undermine parents’ capacity to resist the intervention of public child welfare agencies. Gustav von Mann, director of the DCV’s child welfare section, even suggested that it derived from “the same point of view that underlies also the Bolshevik
system." At the same time, however, its derivation from the progressive tradition is obvious; in particular, Weber's article followed rather closely the original programmatic statement of the progressive position, Polligkeit's 1908 essay "The Right of the Child to Education," in its conception of the "organic" state and of the proper relationship between the state and the family.

In fact, there were some striking similarities between the agenda of secular progressive child welfare advocates in the 1920s and the program of the NSV as it emerged in the first years of the National Socialist regime. The organization's agenda emphasized preventive programs and focused on the task of helping to stabilize families—for example, through assistance in finding work or adequate housing, advice on child rearing, vacations or household help for exhausted mothers and vacation camps for children, and day care facilities. This was in large part simply a continuation of the trend toward Familienfürsorge which had begun in the mid-1920s. Nazi child welfare advocates also insisted that child welfare programs, or at least youth policy more broadly defined, should target not just troubled or abused children but all children, and particularly "healthy" children—much as, for example, Nohl and Bäumer had suggested in the 1920s. In the Nazi period the distinction between Jugendfürsorge, or child welfare, and Jugendpflege, or youth cultivation, which had started to erode in the late 1920s as Youth Bureaus became more involved in creating recreational programs, was reinforced by the organizational imperialism of the Hitler Youth. Nevertheless, the drive to get all young people involved in some sort of organization was very similar, and was clearly rooted in the tradition of youth cultivation and citizenship education, in the desire to create citizens positively committed to the state and to the values that underpinned the regime.

Given these commitments, it is not surprising that the NSV was extremely active in providing vacation camps and health camps for urban children, gradually pushing the religious charities out of this field. The NSV's activities in the field of day care in particular were also extraordinarily impressive. It maintained 1,061 day care centers (Kindertagesstätten) in 1935 and 14,328 in 1941, as well as 600 seasonal "harvest day care centers" for rural children in 1934 and 8,700 in 1941. And much of the NSV's work was done through local "advice stations." While these appear to have been largely merely the local offices of the NSV, in theory at least they were intended to provide services and advice to all comers, and to perform many of the functions of the old infant welfare stations, maternal advice clinics, and educational counseling centers (although, unlike the educational counseling centers of the Weimar period, the NSV determinedly rejected psychoanalysis). There were 25,552 such stations in 1935 and 33,325 in 1940, most of them staffed by women of the NSF. After 1940, moreover, as the war created growing problems among young people, the NSV appears to have attempted to establish genuine educational counseling centers, rather like those established in some major cities in the late 1920s. In light of all these "preventive" programs, Andreas Mehringer, active in the NSV in Berlin, was even moved in 1938 to boast that "our child welfare work is no longer care for defectives [Minderwertigenfürsorge]."

The NSV's program with respect to correctional education also continued to some extent trends established in the second half of the 1920s. It favored, for example, limiting disruption of families in cases of "waywardness," recommending membership in the Hitler Youth or voluntary (not court-ordered) protective supervision for "mild" cases. Where institutionalization was necessary, it favored brief stays in reformatories or, better yet, voluntary correctional education (FEH) in semi-open institutions. Increasingly in the 1930s, correctional education was used "preventively" for neglected or poor children; and as we have seen, the average age of children in correctional education fell. The NSV also established a few smaller and more open "youth homes" (Jugendheimsstätten) for "normal" children, and FEH was given a formal legal foundation by a law of 1943. And Nazi spokesmen advocated (in theory at least) a pedagogical style for the reformatories that was in some respects quite "modern," arguing that socialization was best and most naturally accomplished through common life in peer groups, through appeals to the individual and collective sense of honor and responsibility, and through reliance on "natural leaders" among inmates, on pride in work well done, and on the development of the sense of self-worth and belonging. In some cases Nazi experts even recommended a more relaxed attitude toward runaways. All of this was to be made possible, of course, by the exclusion of "inferior" or "defective" children; but that, too, was an idea that had been gaining support in the late 1920s.

The National Socialist ambition of achieving the mobilization of the populace in and for the regime—for example, through mass organizations such as the NSV, which by 1939 claimed to have 12.5 million members and a million volunteers—also echoed, in a new and authoritarian key, the progressive ideal of participation. The organization's use of propaganda campaigns and collection drives, too, echoed the hygiene propaganda of the 1920s.

This relationship between progressive and Nazi programs, moreover, was by no means characteristic only of child welfare policy narrowly defined. Nazi legislation on divorce, for example, "liberalized" existing law appreciably, and Nazi population policy realized some of the demands set forth in the previous two decades regarding, among other things, public child support payments and tax policy.
Finally, the Nazis' fixation with the rational use of national resources—including the NSV's insistence that it would help only those "normal" people who could be rehabilitated and made useful and productive members of society, a point to which we shall return—clearly reflected not merely the radicalizing impact of the disastrous consequences of the Great War and the depression but also the economic arguments of, for example, Seiffert in 1906 or even Pagel in the 1890s. And, more fundamentally, it is derived in part from the progressive ideal not only of efficiency but also of economic and social participation and integration, of a society of skilled, productive workers and active contributors to the general good. Indeed, ironically enough, in some respects—for instance in the belief in the central importance of productive work, or of public supervision over the family—Nazi rhetoric was reminiscent of nothing so much as the language of some Social Democrats in the early 1920s.4

The organismic social and political theory and the ideal of a mobilized, powerful, efficient, harmonious society which progressives shared with the Nazis, then, made it easy for men such as Weber to believe that they could reach an accommodation with the new regime, that they could continue to pursue their own agendas within it. The Nazi ideal of the Volksgemeinschaft broke with the dominant traditions of progressive thought, of course, in that it was authoritarian and antiliberal; it projected the establishment of harmony not on the basis of individual rights, self-interest, and creative endeavor, but of self-sacrifice, obedience, and conformity. But as we have seen, the social-managerial program of progressive reform also fostered a technocratic authoritarianism of the welfare "experts" and administrators; and by 1933 many appear to have been more interested in seizing the opportunities created by the new dictatorship for clearing away legal, organizational, and individual resistance than in assessing the possible meanings of this shift. As we saw in Chapter 3, moreover, the relationship between the rights of the individual and the needs of "society" in progressive thought meant that the shift, as Gottlieb Storck put it, from "the individualistic right of every child" to the "right of the state to educate the youth" was not a particularly difficult one for many progressives to make. Indeed, at times Nazi rhetoric quite precisely replicated that of more conservative early secular child welfare advocates. For example, Erich Hilgenfeldt, head of the NSV, wrote in early 1933 that "the right of the individual is less than that of the community, and ... must yield if the needs of the community require it," an eerie echo of Apelius's formulation forty years earlier (see Chapter 2).5

As the demoralization of people such as Nohl and Bondy suggests, the apparent failure of liberal and democratic models of a participatory, mobilized, powerful national society in the 1920s made at least some progressives more accepting of authoritarian ones. In 1933 it was not yet clear that this shift would create an entirely new political dynamic completely beyond the control of established "experts"; and a remarkable number of them bitterly attempted, in 1933-34 and even later, to present long-standing agendas as logical outgrowths of Nazi ideology—including, for example, Nohl and Bondy, who both urged their students to join the Nazi movement in order, as one of them put it later, "that the movement amount to something [good]."6

The Character of the Regime Revealed, 1933–34

Despite the high hopes harbored by some child welfare advocates, it rapidly became clear that the Nazi program and regime were in fact compatible neither with a Christian conservative agenda nor with that of secular social managers. There were several related reasons for this.

In the first place, it became apparent that the totalitarian characteristic of the movement—its ambition to direct every aspect of national life and to infuse every sphere with National Socialist ideology—made it impossible for NSDAP party organs to cooperate with any other agencies, public or private. At the same time, even sympathizers soon could not overlook the fact that while certain elements of Nazi rhetoric echoed the concerns and ambitions of either the Christian charities or secular experts, in fact they were integrated into a comprehensive racist ideology that was independent of either tradition, and ultimately compatible with neither.

Certain structural characteristics of the new regime, moreover, had far-reaching consequences for welfare policy. Although Nazi rhetoric stressed unity and efficiency, in practice the different Nazi agencies and governmental departments—each under its own "leader"—operated largely independently of one another, and in competition for resources and for control of policy areas. This system frequently created paralyzing conflicts between different ministries and agencies. The reform of the R(J)WG, for example, bogged down in jurisdictional disputes in 1934, and limited changes were in fact introduced—by decree—only in 1939. Similar debates defeated the reform of illegitimacy law. And bureaucratic infighting and the objections of the Ministry of Justice delayed even the attempt to introduce permanent institutionalization (Bewährung) until the spring of 1944 (although local authorities created their own Bewährung programs—the Rhineprovinz as early as 1934).57 What is more, the struggle between rival leaders and organizations precluded rational formulation of policy by the cabinet. It was often unclear what organization or ministry was in control of a particular area of policy; and this made it even more difficult to gain any kind of influence over policy formulation. Most often, in fact, policy was made on a more or less ad hoc basis, through administrative decrees, interagency agreements, or even informal administrative initiatives, and largely without
consultation with or input from nonparty and nongovernmental agencies. More important, the struggle between these bureaucratist empires encouraged them to become steadily more aggressive and ideologically radicalized as each strove to gain political advantage by appearing more orthodox, and more essential to the struggle against enemies and weaklings, than its rivals. The dictatorial powers of the regime, the isolation of the party leadership and the government from public opinion (and from unwelcome “expert” advice), and the bureaucratic chaos it created finally permitted the Nazi leadership to pursue its own particular obsessions to their “logical” extremes, and to translate them secretly into policy through the creation of new bureaucracies and agencies. Within just seven years the Nazis were pursuing a program of secret mass murder which would have seemed almost unimaginable to both secular progressives and conservative Christians in 1933.

The relationship of both the Christian charities and secular reformers to the new regime first began to sour as a consequence of organizational offensives launched by Nazi party organizations. A whole phalanx of Nazi agencies was set up under the cover of welfare policy, and child welfare policy in particular, especially the Hitler Youth under Baldur von Schirach, the National Socialist Women’s Organization (Nationalsozialistische Frauenkraft, or NSF) under Gertrud von Scholtz-Klink, and the Labor Front under Robert Ley. The most important Nazi organization in the field of welfare, however, was the NSF, under Erich Hagenfeldt. The NSF grew rapidly following its official recognition by Hitler in May 1933, supported by the vast annual “voluntary” collection drives—the Wirtschaftshilfswerk collections, which netted some 900 million marks in 1940-41, two thirds of which went to the NSF. Despite continued competition from other Nazi groups, by the mid-1930s it clearly dominated Nazi welfare work; and by 1943 it was one of the largest and perhaps the most visible of Nazi organizations, with 17 million members.58 In July 1933 the NSF became one of four recognized national “peak organizations,” and the association of these groups (the old Liga, renamed Reichsgemeinschaft der freien Wohlfahrtsstreit, in March 1934) was placed under the “leadership” and administration of the NSF, which also absorbed the resources and institutions of Workers’ Welfare, the Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband (the old Fifth Welfare Association), and the Christian trade unions’ welfare organization.59 In November the NSDAP erected a Central Office for National Welfare (Hauptrichter für Volkswohlfahrt, or HAV) within the party headquarters; its director was Erich Hagenfeldt. The practical welfare work of the NSF was done in large part by members of the National Socialist Women’s Organization; there were some 6 million women working in the NSF and the associated Frauenwerk by 1939.60

The imperialist and racialist concerns central to Nazi thought made it inevitable that the NSF would regard the efficient management of the quality and quantity of the population as its particular goal in welfare policy; in fact, it regarded itself as an instrument for the creation of a numerous, healthy, and pure “Aryan race.” In the words of its own “Guidelines,” the NSF’s aim was to devote itself to the care only of the “healthy,” of those who could be or were willing to become productive members of society, “to help wherever healing is possible. The improper relationship between expenditures for the healthy and the sick members of the Volk which existed up to now must be ended.”61 It was fundamentally unwilling to support “unhealthy” or “inferior” (minderwertige) institutional populations such as the mentally ill, the handicapped, or the asocial (who were all, presumably, to be dealt with by the medical authorities). The organization’s charter, therefore, heavily emphasized preventive programs. In practice this meant that child welfare—the Hilfsfussbutter und Kind directed by Hermann Althaus of the HAV’s Office of Welfare and Child Welfare—was the central focus of its activities. Already by 1937 the organization claimed to be handling over 200,000 individual child welfare cases annually, making it the largest “private” child welfare organization in the country.62

The fundamental incompatibility of the Nazi agenda in child welfare with that of the Christian charities was revealed in discussions over the reform of the RJWJ in 1933 and early 1934. Initially these consultations, held within a special commission of the Reichsgemeinschaft der freien Wohlfahrtspflege, proceeded amicably enough. The NSF endorsed the right of parents to raise their own children for as long as they did not neglect their duty to do so properly; it recognized the participation of the churches and other social organizations in child welfare work; it conceived of the Youth Bureau as a coordinating body which would for the most part delegate actual implementation of policy to the private welfare organizations; and it recognized the need for a council of experts to advise the director of the Youth Bureau.63 Above all, it gave assurances that the imposition of a single, unifying National Socialist goal for the socialization of children—to be enshrined in the first paragraph of the RJWJ in place of the original liberal formulation—would preserve Christian values even in the context of a corporatist institutional structure.

It soon became clear, however, that the NSF’s conception of guarantees of religious education was very different from that of the religious charities. The latter saw themselves as being the only forces capable of guaranteeing a sound religious education. In September 1933, however, the NSF claimed “that the National Socialist ideology stands on the foundation of Christianity and includes and bears within itself both the Christian confessions. Religious education is therefore not an addition to but rather an ingredient of National Socialist education.”64 This position, of course, implicitly denied the justification for the autonomous existence of the Christian charities; as the DCV’s commission on reform of the RJWJ remarked as early as August, “The claim to totality of the church and the claim to totality of the
The aggressive efforts of "German Christians" to gain control of the church sparked a bitter struggle which helped to alienate much of the Protestant church leadership—and was defeated at the end of 1933. Similar struggles within the Inner Mission and even the Protestant Women's Auxiliary, which had chosen a German Christian pastor as its director in 1932, had similar outcomes. The Hitler Youth, while it was more or less welcomed in Protestant reformatories, angered Catholic institutions by claiming access to their charges. More generally, it soon appeared to some that the Hitler Youth and related recreational and work service programs posed a threat to the family by laying claim to an ever-increasing proportion of children's time and loyalties—and thus realizing precisely the threat which the Christian Jugendpflege groups had seen in compulsory pre-military training during the First World War.

Within the Catholic charitable establishment, difficulties like these soon ended the brief honeymoon that had followed in the wake of the Concordat. By January 1934 Gustav von Mann, now director of the DCV, reported that "a shooting war has already begun on all fronts," and that the Nazis "are trying with all their power to drive the church . . . out of the field of . . . child welfare." In fact, church officials and representatives of the Catholic educational and charitable establishment were beginning to speak out against the principles of National Socialism as early as the autumn of 1933. Otto Hippi, for example, writing in jugendwohlf, welcomed the Nazis' stress on the family, and particularly on paternal authority; but he denounced as a "complete reversal of natural law" what he provocatively called "the notion, first formulated by Danton, that children belong first to the state and then to their parents."

Anna Zillken similarly welcomed the Nazis' assault on the "exaggerated individualism of past times" but warned that "there is now a clear danger that the state is attempting to absorb the personal sphere." Elizabeth Zillken, drawing on the papal encyclical on Christian education of 1929, attempted to establish strict theoretical limitations on the state's intervention in family life. And Hans Wollasch, director of the DCV's school of social work in Freiburg, published a blistering review of the ideas of the Nazi pedagogue Ernst Krieck in jugendwohlf in the fall of 1933 in which he denounced virtually every major postulate of Nazi ideology—its worship of the nation as the highest ethical value ("Even the state . . . must recognize an objective order of values"), the idea of the historical and racial contingency of truth, territorial conquest, imperialism, chauvinism, the concept of racial purity, and the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Progeny, and the one-sided emphasis on martial virtues.

Responding to pressure from the new regime much as they had to the challenge of the Weimar state in the late 1920s, the Catholic charities embarked on a massive recruitment campaign after 1934. The St. Elisabeth
Associations (Elisabethenvereine), in which much of this recruitment drive was focused, had 120,000 members in 1934 and 333,000 in 1939; the Catholic women's sodalities grew from 900,000 in 1933 to 1.3 million in 1939; the KPV's personnel grew from 26,163 in 1932 to 33,033 in 1935 (though the number of full-time and paid staff and the number of local chapters fell slightly, and the number of cases—without the collapse of referrals from public agencies—fell from 122,151 to 81,347); and the DCV itself grew from 500,000 in 1941 to 1 million by the end of the war.  

Protestants, again, generally embraced the nationalism, authoritarianism, and cultural conservatism of the Nazis, and responded more positively also to their eugenic program. But by 1935 it was already becoming clear to a growing number that the Nazi movement was not in fact a conservative Christian one, and even more were simply determined to defend the autonomy and traditions of their own organizations against the apparently mindless and pointless expansionism of the Nazi ones. By March 1934 Ina Hundinger warned that despite early hopes for a blossoming of Protestant charity work in the new state, “unbridgeable spiritual clefs and fronts” seemed to be forming; three months later Fritz Trost complained that “sometimes it appears that the struggle of liberalism and materialism [against Christianity] has merely taken on a new and much more dangerous form.”  

By late 1934 and early 1935 the Inner Mission was centralizing the operation of the Protestant charities and steering a cautious course of defensive acquiescence while itself coming under growing pressure, particularly in child and maternal welfare programs. Most Protestants continued to believe in and support the political, economic, and broader cultural policies of the regime; but they stubbornly and fairly successfully resisted its interference in their religious and organizational affairs. By 1936 the NSV had alienated even many of its most enthusiastic allies within confessional Protestant circles by its unrelenting drive to gain control of all welfare organizations and personnel.  

As the Catholic critiques cited earlier suggest, however, the conflict between the Christian charities and Nazi groups was not just a product of the intention of the latter to establish a monopoly. Increasingly it became clear to Christians that Nazi organizations were guided fundamentally by racist principles incompatible with Christian faith. Most strikingly, in November 1933 certain members of the leadership of the Nazi German Christian movement publicly advocated abandoning the (“Jewish”) Old Testament; and within six months the Protestant churches were bitterly divided between German Christians and the “Confessing Church,” led by Pastors Niemöller and Barth, which issued its own statement of principles in May 1934. While the Catholic hierarchy rejected eugenic sterilization and equivocated, maneuvered, and in some cases even attempted to protect their “hereditarily diseased” charges by promising to prevent them from breeding through permanent institutionalization in locked-down institutions, much of the Protestant leadership, as already noted, appears to have welcomed the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Progeny (which was passed in July 1933 and came into force on January 1, 1934); and Protestant institutions generally cooperated, sometimes enthusiastically, in carrying out the sterilization of their charges.  

In the course of 1934, however, the law was extended by the courts to include eugenic abortion, a step that horrified Protestants as well as Catholics, and drew clear protests, though not actual calls to resistance, even from enthusiasts of sterilization such as Hans Harmse.  

While both churches were extraordinarily tardy in condemning the persecution of Jews, particularly after the passage of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 and the issue of the validity of marriages between Christians and converted Jews, the application of legal disabilities to converts, and the status of converted Jews who had become pastors and priests confronted Christians with the religious implications of Nazi anti-Semitism. What is more, it eventually became clear that the regime’s commitment to the patriarchal family and its return to the kind of moralistic and punitive pronatalism that had characterized government policy before 1918, which was gratifying to conservative Christians, did not rule out discussions, for example, of the possibility of polygamy as a means of boosting the birthrate, or of the possibility of simply eliminating the legal distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children—recognizing “biological marriage,” and thus undermining the sacrament of marriage—as a means of reducing infant mortality and recognizing the bonds and responsibilities of “blood.”  

More generally, the hostility of the Nazi regime to the charities grew in part out of the racist principles at the heart of National Socialism. For as Nazi “experts” consistently stressed, Christian charity, insofar as it supported the weak and “unhealthy,” was a “waste” of valuable national resources and actually compromised the health of the “race” as a whole. As one critic put it in 1934, the charities sustained “worthless elements” of society by “flooding” them with “exaggerated Christian mercy.”  

In fact, after 1935 the racist and organizational offensive of the Nazis clearly began to converge, as financial constraints were eliminated and as the regime began to pursue its racist program and the organizational assault on the charities more openly. As early as the end of 1935, the HAV suggested that the Youth Bureaus should simply delegate all cases to its own local branches, which could then distribute them to other organizations as necessary. This measure—which would clearly mean, as one Catholic commentator put it, “the death of all private charity”—was defeated at the national level by the united opposition of the DCV and the Inner Mission.  

Nevertheless, in June 1936 the NSV, DCV, Red Cross, and Inner Mission did reach an agreement to form local branches of the DZJ under the leader-
ship of the NSV (Althaus was now director of the DZJ's national offices) which would distribute those cases that were delegated by the Youth Bureau to private organizations. At the same time, the NSV also demanded that it retain responsibility for all "genetically healthy" children, while the Christian charities would care for the hereditarily inferior and asocial. Again, this principle was already being adopted by a number of local and regional NSV branches; and after 1936 Nazi officials in some localities even began removing "genetically healthy" children from private institutions. In the face of such measures, even Protstants began to insist, by early 1935, on their right to care for all children who were baptized Protstants; Ina Hundinger spoke of a "decisive struggle for the Christian basis of German national life."

In 1936 and 1937 the rhetorical assault on the Christian and particularly Catholic charities in the NSV's journal Nationa soszialistischer Volksdienst and in the Zentralblatt (edited after mid-1936 by Althaus, succeeding Heinrich Webler) heated up. By June of the latter year H. Edwards assured the former journal's readers that it was clear "that the Catholic-oriented welfare and child welfare organizations of the DCV have decided not to conform to the fundamental reorientation of German welfare," while Heinz Vagt accused the Christian reformatories of exploiting their charges, and of having thereby sparked the revolts of the early 1930s. From 1937–38 on, the NSV's national leadership, which had publicly disavowed the aggressive actions of zealous local chapters even as it secretly encouraged them, progressively abandoned its cooperative stance in favor of the confrontational approach long adopted by local leadership. After 1937 charitable collections for organizations other than the NSV were not permitted; and national subsidies to the private charities were steadily reduced. Increasingly the police were called in to assist with wholesale seizures of private institutions, so that by 1939, for example, some 1,200 Catholic kindergartens (out of 4,000 total) had been seized, while the Protestant charities lost 500 by 1940. By 1938 the DCV reported that only the NSV's severe shortage of competent personnel prevented the complete "socialization" of correctional education. Already by January 1937 Alfred Fritz, while still believing that "committed Protestantism not only does not rule out loyalty to the National Socialist state, it demands it," nevertheless wrote of a "battle of ideologies" and indeed a "struggle between good and demonic forces."

After the annexation of Austria in 1938, the NSV simply absorbed all private and religious day care institutions there. Moreover, after 1937 deteriorating relations between the churches—especially the Catholic church—and the regime led to more open persecution. In that year the pope was at last moved to issue an explicit condemnation of the political totalitarianism and racist ideology of National Socialism, and thereafter Catholic denouncements of Nazi racial policy became more frequent. From 1937 on, mem-
bers of both the Inner Mission and the DCV were subjected to growing political persecution, including the arrest of large numbers of members of the "Confessing Church" and trumped-up morals charges against the Catholic religious orders. In 1939 the Catholic women's sodality, which recruited large numbers of volunteers for the Catholic charities, was banned. The NSV's shortage of personnel—and the lack of training and the incompetence of many of its volunteers—allowed the Christian charities, for the time being, to maintain more or less the level of activity they had reached by 1933, by expanding their membership and increasing reliance on the institutions of the Christian churches; but it was clear that time was on the Nazis' side.

While opening a piecemeal assault on the charities, the Nazi authorities, through a decree revising the RJW in February 1939, finally excluded them formally from the public child welfare administration. The decree clearly amounted to a complete break with the Christian rhetoric still present in the drafts of 1933–34 in favor of racial principles, establishing the creation of the "physically and spiritually healthy, morally firm, mentally developed, professionally competent German person, conscious of his race, rooted in blood and soil, and committed and bound to the Volk and the Reich" as the goal of socialization. It also expelled the charities and the clergy from the executive boards of the Youth Bureaus; consistent with the establishment of the "leadership principle" in local government in 1935, these now became merely advisory bodies, and included only two teachers, a judge, and representatives of the Hitler Youth and the NSV. By 1939, of course, these organizational changes had already been introduced informally in most localities.

Finally, by 1939 it was becoming increasingly obvious that the logic of all these developments was ultimately homicidal. On the one hand, Nazi theorists argued that the cost of supporting those who could never become "fully valuable [vollerwerte]" and productive members of the Volksgemeinschaft was a burden the nation could not afford, and the NSV declined to care for the "hereditarily inferior." On the other hand, the "long-term goal" of the NSV and the Nazi regime—already in the early stages of implementation by 1938—was the elimination of the private charities, to which care of the "inferior" was assigned. In the end, the logical consequence was that there would be no place at all within welfare policy for the "inferior."

In fact, the mass murder of "defective" and Jewish children (and adults) in public and private institutions for the mentally ill or handicapped began as early as August 1939, under the T4 "euthanasia" program, which was carried out by a special medical bureaucracy created specifically for that purpose. Needless to say, "eugenic" mass murder was an abomination in the eyes of the vast majority of Christians, and was rejected even by those
who had been most convinced of the necessity of eugenic sterilization. While horrified and shocked by the mounting evidence of a secret murder program, both church hierarchies and both the Christian charitable establishments moved with agonizing deliberation to try to stop it. Their caution reflected partly fear that their protests would be used by foreign propagandists and thus compromise the war effort; partly fear that too energetic and public a protest would compromise their other responsibilities; but perhaps also partly of the widespread stigmatization of the handicapped even within Christian charitable circles—just as their even more shameful failure to defend the Jews reflected the widespread anti-Semitism within both churches, which derived in large part from the common association between the Jews and communism, commercial entertainment, and modern "immorality" generally. Even when it became widely known that handicapped people were being killed, most—not all— institutions could not bring themselves openly to resist the classification (the relevant forms had to be filled out by the institutions themselves) and transfer of their charges. Nevertheless, the Christian churches did exert gradual pressure on the regime, and in the summer of 1941 some of the Catholic hierarchy at last launched a blistering public attack on the program itself and on the racist principles underlying it. In response, Hitler ordered the partial suspension of the program in August 1941—though by that time the program had in any case achieved its initial goal of murdering 70,000 people, and tens of thousands more would be killed in smaller groups and less obviously (for example, by starvation or injection rather than mass gassings) until the fall of the regime. In the meantime, a very few institutions had discovered ways to resist the murder of their charges: on the Catholic side, for example, twenty-one institutions managed to save 5,500 inmates, while something over 11,000 were murdered; and the director of the Protestant institutions at Bethel was able to protect most of his wards.97

As we have seen, there were striking continuities between the progressive agenda of the 1910s and 1920s and that of the Nazi welfare leadership. And yet in the end Nazi policy proved as inimical to the aims of secular child welfare experts as to those of the Christian charities.

In part, again, this was due to the expansionism of the NSV and other Nazi organizations, which did not spare public agencies dear to the hearts of progressives. Most generally, the Nazis' demand for complete ideological conformity and the consequent wave of purges of both paid staff and volunteers created serious personnel problems for child welfare agencies, particularly in cities where Workers' Welfare had been very active. In Hamburg, for example, the Nazi official responsible for welfare policy had to admit by the summer of 1935 that "the quality of personnel in the field of social welfare, it is universally agreed, has deteriorated alarmingly."98 And in some cases the Youth Bureaus found that the volunteers provided by the NSF and the NSV were not sufficiently competent to replace those of the Christian charities, or that local branches of those organizations could not implement programs delegated to them.99

The Youth Bureaus in particular found themselves assaulted by Nazi organizations eager to expand their jurisdiction. The Hitler Youth made a concerted effort in the late 1930s to gain control over the personnel policy of the Youth Bureaus, and argued in 1937 that the Youth Bureaus should in future have "the character of Hitler Youth centers"100. Needless to say, this would have had a devastating impact on their efficiency as child welfare (as opposed to indoctrination) agencies. But the NSV posed an even greater threat. Already in 1935–36 some in the NSV were arguing that the development of their organization made the Youth Bureaus superfluous, while others were suggesting that the officials of public agencies might not be entirely politically reliable, or might pursue policies not compatible with the goal of raising good Nazis.101 In January 1936 the NSV and the association of local governments—the Gemeinderat—were brought together in a National Union of Private and Public Welfare, within which the NSV usually had the upper hand. By 1937 many local and regional NSV leaders, particularly Althaus in the NSV/HAV, were claiming jurisdiction not only over all private welfare work but also over all public welfare programs. By 1938 the national NSV leadership was going over to an aggressive and confrontational approach against public welfare as well as the private charities (though here again the NSV wanted to leave the care of "inferior" people and "defectors" to the public authorities); and rumors circulated throughout 1939 that public programs would soon be transferred to the NSV in order to eliminate what Martin Bormann called the "more than irrational" concurrent operation of public and private welfare programs.102

In fact, the local chapters of the NSV had for the previous two years been engaged in mounting efforts to absorb, through agreements with Youth Bureaus, certain public child welfare institutions, such as kindergartens or vacation camps, as well as to monopolize foster care supervision, the selection of individual legal guardians and of volunteers for supervision, juvenile court assistance, and so on.103 Despite a shortage of trained personnel and resistance from municipal administrations and the Hitler Youth (which was increasingly successful in placing members in the Youth Bureaus), in some areas the NSV had considerable success in absorbing public functions. In 1939 an NSV official from Munich pointed out that his organization "has difficulties inssofar as locally people sometimes do not know whether it is a public or a private agency of child welfare."104 A similar assault was made on the provincial and state correctional education authorities, and the NSV virtually gained control of correctional education by late 1941.105

Beneath these organizational struggles, however, lay a deeper ideological incongruity between Nazism and progressive thought. For one thing, de-
 spite all autocratic and technocratic tendencies among welfare experts (and particularly medical men), the Nazis’ vehement condemnation of the principles of liberalism marked a very real departure from mainstream progressive thought. The “progressive” elements of Nazi child welfare policy were coupled with a deeply reactionary emphasis on authority, conformity, and order that drew in part on themes first sounded in the pedagogical reaction of the late 1920s or even in the cultural backlash of the 1910s, and was radicalized by the Nazis’ commitment to complete ideological unanimity. Participation in the life of the Volksgemeinschaft was for the Nazis an obligation rather than an opportunity; and individuals’ energies were to be directed exclusively toward accomplishing the ends of the party.

The case of reformatory education is particularly revealing. Despite the theoretical commitment of the NSV to “preventive” use of correctional education, the reformatories were increasingly being used for blatantly political purposes—as a tool not just for social reintegration but for the brute enforcement of ideological conformity. Children of socialists and communists had of course been targets from the early 1930s. By 1937 a number of courts were ruling that parents who were members of the International Society for Bible Study (Bibelforscher) or the Jehovah’s Witnesses “endangered” their children morally and socially by inculcating values incompatible with those of the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft, and that their children could therefore be committed to reformatories or Nazi foster families. In addition, in some cases their commitment to an ideal of enforced active participation in the life of the Volksgemeinschaft clearly led Nazi administrators and courts to expand the definition of “waywardness” in an extraordinary manner. In one celebrated case a boy was removed from the care of his mother because she had allegedly turned him into a lazy, “pimply” loner without discipline, strength of will, or “sense of comradeship.”

What is more, despite the “progressive” elements of Nazi theory, the Nazis in fact instituted a return to the ideal of complete obedience and—and all theory aside—to the practice of corporal punishment and coercion. The “Guidelines for [Our] Work” put out by the NSV in July 1933 held that “the position of the reform pedagogues in the last few years led to negation, to disintegration and dissolution. National Socialist child welfare must be built up against waywardness and rebelliousness, on the basis of the will of youth to discipline, to community, to honor.” And Lothar Koeppchen, director of the Provincial Youth Bureau of Hannover, argued that “no new pedagogical truths can or should be discovered,” and that Nazi principles demanded a return to “education for inner discipline, that is, obedience, conformity, reliability, love of work.” Needless to say, bans on corporal punishment were ignored from 1933 on; the Prussian ban was officially lifted by decree in July 1935. Thus, while Nazi thinking, like reform pedagogy, emphasized the need for education through and for “community” and self-government, Nazi pedagogues dropped the other central demand of reform pedagogy—that socialization proceed “from the child,” allowing it to develop in freedom. Again, like the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft itself, the “community” of inmates established in the reformatory was to be authoritarian and strictly regimented, based on duty, discipline, and conformity and on ideological indoctrination and uniformity rather than on rights and on the autonomous, creative social and cultural capacities of children. There would be no experimentation with democratic self-government or the encouragement of creativity and spiritual exploration.

Even more important, however, was the fact that the Nazi regime was motivated by a consistent obsession with biology and race that went far beyond the concerns of mainstream progressive thought and was fundamentally incompatible with the progressives’ appreciation of the social origins of “waywardness,” delinquency, and other forms of “deviance” among young people. While the final consequences of this obsession with biology only became clear in the course of the steady radicalization of the regime in the late 1930s, the potential for that radicalization was clearly present at the outset. It is typical of Nazi thinking that in 1933 Erich Hilgenfeldt drew conclusions from the argument that the individual’s rights must give way before community needs which Hugo Appelius could not yet have imagined when he made the same suggestion in 1892: that “the unfit must be ruthlessly exterminated.” Again, there was a clear continuity between the Nazis’ biologicist approach to social problems and the growing influence of doctors within the social reform community since the 1890s—and particularly the widespread acceptance before 1933 of the idea that “deviance” was the product of inherited biological defects (Anlage or erbliche Belastung). But the Nazis, and particularly Nazi medical experts, carried this medicalization of social problems to extremes that would not have appeared legitimate in mainstream child welfare discussions before 1933. In fact, it is precisely the obsession with health that explains in good part the Nazis’ condemnation of liberalism and the growing emphasis on coercion: whereas progressives before 1933 had seen the release of individual energies through guaranteeing individual social rights and assistance—in short, inclusion—as the source of social harmony and efficiency, for the Nazis harmony and efficiency were to be achieved through the manipulation of the physical substance of the nation by experts, and specifically the exclusion of the “inferior.”

In the case of correctional education, this division led to considerable debate between Nazi doctors, who were happy to brand virtually all children in reformatories “inferior” and “defective” (despite explicitly admitting their incapacity to make a scientifically viable case for this belief), and the established child welfare organizations, which were unwilling to see their
charges dismissed as irredeemable enemies of the Volksgemeinschaft. At the same time, while the language of doctors involved in welfare programs had long been characterized by a particularly autocratic and moralistic tone, the explicitly punitive quality of Nazi language and policy was also new. Its potential significance was by no means lost on contemporaries: as early as 1934, for example, the DCV's journal Caritas was warning against conflating Bewahrung (permanent institutionalization) with the "preventive" permanent institutionalization (Verwahrung) of criminals. And even in the final years of the regime, while the Nazis proceeded with the internment of "social" youths in labor camps and the murder of "defective," the DVöD leadership continued to speak of the possibility of rehabilitation in the context of Bewahrung right up until 1945.

The destructive potential of the Nazis' obsession with biology was in any case not entirely hidden from contemporaries even in the first years of the regime. In 1935 Gertrud Bäumer, while defending pre-Nazi welfare policy against the Nazi charge that it had been dominated by liberal individualism and ignored biology, also warned that a nation that refused to care for those who were "not a part [of] but rather a burden on" its creative energies would "lose one of its noblest qualities," and that the application of an "ethic of biological uselessness [biologische Nutzloskeitsmoral]" would give rise to a "brutalization [Verrohung] that would have consequences far beyond the field of welfare policy."

In its single-minded focus on biological determinism, Nazi policy owed less to the traditions of "welfare" than to those of population policy, psychiatry, and eugenics—and specifically not the more liberal "social hygiene" wing of the eugenics movement, which had been dominant in the Weimar years, but rather its more conservative, authoritarian, and antifascist "race hygiene" wing. Although the NSV was highly visible and vocal, as the regime became increasingly radicalized, medical and racial concerns and organizations came increasingly to dominate Nazi "social" policy. Indeed, the Nazi medical establishment under "National Health Leader" (Reichsgesundheitsführer) Leonardo Conti was one of the few organizations that was able to defend itself effectively against the expansionism of the NSV. This development was not without organizational consequences for child welfare policy: during the Nazi years the Youth Bureaus were starved of resources and personnel, even as the state-controlled Health Bureaus—created by the Law on the Unification of the Health System of 1934—expanded rapidly. At the same time, the Health Bureaus also absorbed jurisdiction over many "preventive" child welfare programs: after 1935 infant welfare, counseling for mothers, school health programs, and other programs focused on children's hygiene and health were all placed under their authority. Since the Health Bureaus' mission was precisely to act as the focus for the eugenic and racial policies of the regime, these changes entailed an important shift in emphasis within social policy as a whole. Finally, the role of the Youth Bureaus themselves was reconceived by Nazi "welfare" experts largely in terms of their racial policy: they were to assist in the elimination of human "rubbish" (Hermann Hübner) so that Nazi organizations could concentrate on caring for the "healthy." Again, this was precisely the opposite of the ambitions of progressive reformers in the 1920s, who had hoped to make the Youth Bureaus real "socialization agencies" for all children. In 1939, not surprisingly, authority over welfare programs was transferred within the Ministry of the Interior from the Local Government Section to the Public Health Section (under Reichsgesundheitsführer Leo Conti).

The progressive program was transformed in a similar manner in other areas of policy. In NSV kindergartens racial and military preoccupations ensured that the emphasis was as much on "physical fitness, the formation of character, and steeling the will" as on Froebelian learning theory. In educational counseling, the network of centers established by the NSV was increasingly seen as merely a useful system for sorting children according to their ostensible "racial" or "biological" qualities. In population policy, the liberalization of divorce law and the introduction of "eugenic" abortion were accompanied by a return to moralistic and punitive pronatalism, including prohibitions on contraception and more severe punishment of (noneugenic) abortion which was fundamentally alien to the concepts of family planning that had become prevalent in the 1920s. Abandoning the more progressive, "social hygiene" strand of eugenic thought dominant in the 1920s, the Nazis favored instead the "race hygiene" tradition and the theorists of "Aryan" superiority, who had been regarded by most eugenic experts in the 1920s as unscientific cranks. And while the NSV pursued the goal of a "preventive" child welfare system through day care and counseling facilities, the establishing of innumerable "educational" camps for young people—Hitler Youth camps, summer camps, work service camps (the FAD had been "nationalized" with the creation of a compulsory National Labor Service for boys in 1935, and in 1939 for girls), health camps, "preparation camps" for beginning university students, work camps for unemployed youth—was more important to the Nazi ambition of creating a system of extrafamilial socialization for all young people. Again, this system in fact represented a massive politicization of "welfare" policy, since the camps' central aim was the political indoctrination of those who passed through them.

Finally, the Nazis very early took up the question of a reform of illegitimacy law, which had bogged down in the Reichstag between 1925 and 1930; but their commitment to paternal power, to the idea of individual responsibility, and above all to biologicist thinking led a number of jurists in the NSDAP's legal department to issue proposals for the granting of full
parental authority to the fathers of illegitimate children, and of all the legal rights of legitimate children to their children.\textsuperscript{121} The churches, of course, feared that this step would undermine the sacrament of marriage and with it the Christian family (the journal of the SA even spoke of "biological marriage").\textsuperscript{122} But since few fathers took any interest in their illegitimate offspring, and granting them parental authority would have meant the end of public legal guardianship, secular reformers were horrified, too. In the end, nothing came of these proposals; but they indicate how unhinged from rational considerations Nazi policy could become under the impact of ideological imperatives.

\textbf{War and Radicalization}

In some important respects the outbreak of the war checked the expansion of Nazi agencies and created a breathing space particularly for the charities. In January 1939 Hilgenfeldt, writing in the \textit{Nationalsozialistischer Volksdienst}, had baldly stated that "the Nation . . . recognizes no welfare work by classes or confessions"; but plans within the NSV for a new welfare law which would bring about the final destruction of the charities were defeated by Hitler's own concern over the political costs of continued confrontation with the churches—a concern which may have played a role in the halting of the eugenic murder campaign—and by the need for cooperation in caring for victims of the war.\textsuperscript{123} By 1943–44, in fact, the NSV was forced to abandon tacitly entire fields of its activity, as members were called up for war effort and as it had to concentrate on responding to the bombing campaign.

But the state of emergency and the growing role of the police, the intensification of ideological radicalism, and the need to economize and reduce inefficiencies on the home front also gave Nazi agencies new opportunities for expansion. The NSV in particular was able to pursue its ends increasingly through simple administrative coups and reliance on the police and on threats and coercion. In February 1940, for example, in the wake of steps taken by the Inner Mission and the Protestant church to close ranks against the NSV, the Inner Mission's headquarters were searched and its employees questioned by the secret police. During 1940 the NSV began to take over numbers of reformatory and other institutions, especially in northern Germany, again with police assistance. Between the spring of 1940 and the summer of 1942, eight hundred Protestant kindergartens came under NSV control.\textsuperscript{124} And by the summer of 1941 the NSV was able to bring about outright mass seizures of private day care institutions. By 1942 there was even talk within the NSV of requiring all children to attend Nazi kindergartens.\textsuperscript{125} In 1940, moreover, a decree forbade healthy persons to enter cloisters—a measure aimed at solving, in the long term, the central problem of the NSV: its inferior numbers.

At the same time, in the summer of 1941 a series of administrative "agreements" brought about greater "cooperation" between the NSV and other agencies. In particular, in September the NSV reached an agreement with the municipalities according to which the Youth Bureaus could delegate cases or programs only to the NSV, which endeavored in particular to secure the delegation of preventive programs, a step which many social pedagogues must have deplored as the equivalent of reducing the Youth Bureau to a police agency. The NSV also established its exclusive right to found new day care institutions.\textsuperscript{126} Despite a decree of the national Ministry of the interior in October 1941 which attempted to establish a clear division of labor between the NSV and local Youth Bureaus, in mid-1942 Althaus explicitly stated that the NSV wished to gain control over legal guardianship, protective supervision (Schutzschaft), and the supervision of foster care.\textsuperscript{127} In fact, it was above all the NSV's inability to recruit sufficient personnel, as well as the increasing demands of care for wounded soldiers and civilian victims of bombing, that prevented the organization from absorbing all private and municipal welfare programs.

But while the NSDAP's influence in child welfare was growing rapidly, the Second World War, like the first, unmistakably demonstrated the self-contradictory character of a radical right-wing agenda which sought to combine authoritarian moralism with imperialist expansionism. Even before the war many observers had reported that the Nazi regime was having a negative impact on youth: delinquency was rising, gang crime was more common, "life is completely dominated by the profane," and in "the area of sexuality a destructive precociousness is apparent."\textsuperscript{128} The war immensely exacerbated this development. By 1941 child welfare authorities were complaining of a rise in juvenile delinquency, adolescent sexuality and illegitimacy, gang-related crime, escapes from reformatories, public disorderliness, and other symptoms of a decline of moral order. Toward the end of the war, as public order and the economy in urban areas completed disintegration, youth gangs increasingly engaged in acts of brigandage and even outright opposition—attacking Hitler Youth patrols; spreading critical graffiti; carrying out armed thefts of money, food, and weapons; and even, in the fall of 1944, killing the head of the Gestapo in Cologne.\textsuperscript{129}

As during the First World War, the perceived moral crisis of youth was believed to be the product above all of a crisis of patriarchy: the excessive freedom created by the absence of fathers, teachers, policemen, Hitler Youth leaders, clergy, and social workers, as well as the employment of large numbers of young people at relatively high wages in munitions factories, permitted the resurfacing of the anarchic and asocial urges of the
young. There is no need to recount the discussion of this problem here; the arguments presented were quite the same as those we have seen deployed in World War I.

Under certain circumstances, however, the fundamentally amoral character of Nazi imperialism was unmistakably exposed. For example, since 1937 SA and SS organs campaigning against existing illegitimacy laws on population policy grounds had praised "biological marriage" and the "courage to have children," and denounced the "Jesuitical moral theology" of "fat and hypocritical burghears." This agitation culminated in Himmler's decree of November 28, 1939, encouraging German women to become the mothers of children sired by men departing for the front. Similar contradictions between the Nazis' "traditionalist" social values and their imperialist policy developed in other fields at the same time: in employment policy, for example, the Nazis eventually found themselves forced to encourage women to take up factory work, while complaints about brawling among young people contradicted the systematic celebration of violence and physical prowess in Nazi pedagogy.

In any case, the steady deterioration of discipline and order on the home front brought about an accelerating shift in Nazi policy as a whole from ideological and social integration toward repression and punishment, a shift that complemented the growing importance of "negative" measures in race policy. By the end of the First World War, the growing resistance of young people to coercive measures and the evident failure to bring about noticeable changes in public and private behavior had led most child welfare advocates to accept the idea of abandoning such programs in favor of more positive and preventive ones. The Nazis, in contrast, were willing to accept any cost and any measures necessary to make such a coercive approach work—up to and including mass murder.

Predictably enough, then, the National Socialist regime responded to growing "waywardness" among youth primarily with a proliferation of police measures and with an increasingly punitive, harsh, and racist approach to social problems. A National Center for Combating Juvenile Delinquency was established in May 1939, while a law of October 1940 introduced special procedures and more severe penalties for young offenders who committed serious crimes. Administrative "youth arrest" (Jugendarrest) of up to three months in solitary confinement was introduced (as an "educational" measure) in 1940. A police decree for the "protection" of young people in March 1940 attempted to prevent young people from attending dances, cabarets, and amusement parks after 9:00 P.M., and to forbid "loitering" after dark, smoking, and drinking; and an even more restrictive new law for the "protection" of youth was put in place in June 1943. Indeterminate sentences for young offenders were introduced in 1941, and a new National Law on Juvenile Courts came into force in 1944 which allowed judges greater latitude in sentencing, lowered the age of criminal responsibility from fourteen to twelve, and introduced the death penalty for juveniles. After 1943 the police could place young people who showed unwillingness to work in "work education camps." In 1944 a series of decrees finally introduced permanent institutionalization for "asocial" people. It had in any case already been introduced by the police, under a law for "preventive" detention, and by local authorities. After 1940 the police were empowered to place young offenders in "youth protection camps" (Jugendschutzlager). While only two concentration camps exclusively for young people were established, the expanding role of Himmler's police and the SS in child "welfare" reveals the gradual drift of National Socialist policy toward wholesale incarceration and extermination. The murder of "ineducable" reformatory inmates had in any case begun as early as 1941.

The response of the child welfare establishment to the Nazi regime, at least through about 1934, makes it clear that the appeal of fascism within the child welfare establishment derived from the political crisis of the late 1920s and the economic crisis of the depression, not primarily from the micro-political logic of ever-intensifying state intervention in social life, or from monolithic consensus at the top in favor of authoritarian social manipulation. It is best explained as a response to a crisis induced by the incapacity to achieve consensus within the organs of the formal and informal government of society, from conflicts over the purposes, forms, and content of state intervention in society. The National Socialist regime, in its pronouncements regarding welfare policy, played very deliberately on the antagonisms and frustrations that these conflicts created. In this sense, Nazism seemed to many of those active in the field of child welfare merely to offer new solutions to already existing political problems.

As we have seen, the ambitions of NSV theorists corresponded quite closely in many ways with those of secular progressives, and of some conservative Christians, in the 1910s and 1920s. Both the ideal of integration through productive participation and the habit of calculating the costs of failing to ensure such integration in individual cases were central to the progressive tradition. In its emphasis on prevention and on the family, Nazi policy merely intensified trends already long present in child welfare policy and theory. And eugenic theories, the medicalization of social problems, and the idea of expelling disruptive "psychopaths" from the reformatories had all been gaining influence well before 1933, and a kind of technocratic authoritarianism was common, especially among doctors, even at the turn of the century. Nor was the politicization of child welfare policy entirely without precedent: as we have seen, the possibility of pursuing the systematic political indoctrination of young people had been discussed as early as
the imperial period. And the punitive and moralistic tone of Nazi thinking in this field appears to owe something, too, to the style of the conservative cultural backlash in the 1910s and 1920s.

In fact, the dual nature of Nazi policy—prevention and services for the "healthy," repression for the "unhealthy"—reflected a tendency inherent in progressive child welfare policy from its inception (see Chapter 3). In some cases, moreover, there was a clear personal continuity, particularly among doctors and psychiatrists, between child welfare activism and the most radical policies of the Nazi regime. Werner Villingen, for example, was director of the medical section of Hamburg's Youth Bureau in the 1920s and a member of Harmsen's conference on eugenics within the Inner Mission in 1931 and 1932; he went on to become chief doctor of the Protestant institutions at Bethel, where he recommended that 1,700 of his 3,000 wards be sterilized; and by 1939 he was one of those who selected "defectives" for murder under the T4 program—although he appears to have recommended against killing the victims in almost all cases. Finally, as the ideas put forward by Otto Ohl and Karl Neinhaus in 1925 (see Chapter 7) suggest, even the utopian racism of National Socialism may have been in part an outgrowth of the cultural and political crisis of the 1920s, a form of compensation for insurmountable social and ideological divisions. The only element of Nazi thinking and practice that had not been clearly present in mainstream discussions of child welfare before 1933, apart from the idea of actually murdering "defective" children, was its radical and genocidal anti-Semitism. And even there it is clear that the line between psychiatric or eugenic theories of "inferiority" and ethnic racism was always quite thin, a good example from the field of child welfare being the treatment of Gypsy children, mentioned in Chapter 3.136

And yet, despite these continuities, in many respects the Nazi regime brought about a clear discontinuity in child welfare policy. That discontinuity is perhaps clearest in institutional terms. On the one hand, the corporatist relationship between public and private agencies that had been fifty years in the making, the symbiotic relationship between public policy and the private charities, was decisively abandoned. On the other hand, the development of public child welfare agencies was substantially disrupted, both by the expansion of the Nazi party's own welfare organization and by the shift in emphasis within welfare policy from social to biological and political concerns, or in organizational terms from the Youth Bureaus to the Health Bureaus, the police, and the SS.

This organizational discontinuity reflected important ideological and intellectual shifts as well. Again, there is no very clear break here: the Nazi obsession with biology was built on trends that appear to have been gathering momentum in the second half of the 1920s, if not since the turn of the century. Nevertheless, the intensification of these trends, and particularly the way in which Nazi theorists pursued them to their logical (and insane) consequences, clearly brought about a crucial qualitative change, just as it created important institutional changes. While eugenics and the hereditary theories of psychiatrists, penologists, academics, and doctors had been important in the 1920s, they had not yet led to the complete "biologization" of conceptions of the ideal society or of the function of social policy. That transition took place only during the depression and under National Socialism. Similarly, the radical authoritarianism of the Nazis, which attempted to impose obligatory activism, clearly differed profoundly in its implications and dynamic both from the liberal tradition on which Weimar child welfare programs were founded and from the authoritarianism of Christian pedagogy and Christian social conservatism.

In the field of child welfare, then, National Socialism presents us with the paradox of a set of unmistakable continuities which nevertheless amount to a discontinuity, a "mere" reorientation so profound that it amounts to a revolution. In fact, what made Nazi policy different—again, with the crucial exception of ethnic racism—was above all the extraordinary and uncompromising radicalism of the Nazi regime, the open-ended, unhinged, hyperlogical dynamic that it created. That dynamic allowed for a new and fatal development which was nevertheless rooted in extant traditions.

In the broader terms, Nazi policy seems to have been based on a new and immensely radicalized combination of particular elements of the very same traditions which had been built into the Weimar compromise. Specifically, certain aspects of the Nazis' racist and totalitarian program echoed both progressivism's biological imperialist conception of the nation and its ideal of mobilization and participation, while others echoed (in a new, "naturalized" language) the conservative Christian concept of the relationship between authority and morality (and between morality and national strength). Indeed, National Socialism may have seemed to hold out the promise of a reconciliation—and not merely an elaborate and fragile institutional balancing, as was achieved by the Weimar state—of the ideal of mobilization with that of authority, of dynamism with stability, modernity with order, science with Christian values, and perhaps even of a new racial variant of the liberal conception of popular sovereignty with the conservative tradition of hierarchy and transcendental metaphysical imperatives.

This capacity to combine elements of opposing agendas helps to explain the appeal Nazism had for representatives of very different and divergent ideological traditions, and thus to explain the conditions under which the Nazi dictatorship could emerge. But it may also help to explain why Nazi policy veered so tragically toward mass murder. For it seems possible that, at least in the field of child welfare, it was precisely the combination of the "scientific" ambition of secular social reform with the punitive strain of Christian moralism and cultural criticism—a combination readily apparent
in the writings of some psychiatrists interested in reformatory inmates—that explains the uniquely destructive character of Nazism.

In the field of child welfare as in every sphere, this attempt to resolve the tensions which had crippled the Weimar system by abandoning corporatism and democracy in favor of an authoritarian “organic” state failed, by any rational standard, in the most spectacular manner. It created a policy-making system that was even more paralyzed by internal conflicts than democracy had been. It paved the way for an intense politicization of administrative bodies and practice, and succeeded in bringing political hacks to the fore to a degree unknown in the Weimar Republic. It brought about an immense expansion of the welfare bureaucracy, a proliferation of paperwork, and a renewed “fragmentation” of welfare work and competition and conflict between agencies. It gave birth to a regime that was inevitably driven by the logic both of its political economy and of its racist, biological-nationalist ideology into an imperialist war that undermined the social order and the very system of social and personal morality which Nazism had promised to preserve. Rather than achieving a new synthesis of state and society—and thus fulfilling the hopes of reformers since the turn of the century—it gave birth to a system in which the party-state increasingly absorbed all independent social organizations. It thereby realized precisely the danger that the advocates of corporatism and participation had sought to avoid: the stifling of autonomous social energies by bureaucracy, the limitless assault of the state upon society. Rather than reconciling Christian conservative and social-managerial reform programs, increasingly it combined the worst elements of both, each in a hysterical and compulsive form. National Socialist policies were shaped by authoritarian moralism without commitment to an objective and autonomous ethical system, by scientific brutality without therapeutic ambition, and by social-managerial ambition without commitment to voluntary participation. With all institutional and intellectual restraints removed by the creation of a totalitarian regime, Nazi policy carried each of these principles toward its “logical” extreme, developing relentlessly and by rapid stages toward mass murder. Rather than creating a system of efficient social management and moral order, in the end the new regime resorted to ever-expanding criminalization of both children and adults, and the creation of an ever more irrational machinery of punishment and death.

Ultimately this monstrous regime brought about the destruction of the German state and discredited the German political tradition. The National Socialist regime pursued the strategies of coercive social and political integration and mobilization, punitive denial of cultural divisions, and aggressive, murderous “final solutions” to social problems to their self-destructive end.