

*The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin.* By Annette F. Timm. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2010. xix + 352 pp. £60 (hardback). ISBN 978-0-521-19539-3.

Annette Timm's well-researched and theoretically robust monograph explores the politics of fertility through a study of marriage counselling and measures to control venereal disease (VD) in twentieth-century Berlin, topics chosen because they touch on all the areas in which the state tried to influence the sexual behaviour of its citizens. Her aim is to write a history of the ideological concept of *Bevölkerungspolitik*, understood as depicting a consensus on beliefs and assumptions about an individual's sexual behaviour and its importance for the nation's survival. Timm traces the notion of 'sexual duty' through four different regimes, whereby individuals were exhorted to make sexual and reproductive decisions with their duty to the nation's survival in mind. This emphasis on 'sexual duty' led to individuals demanding health and welfare services in order to meet the demands of remaining healthy for the good of the nation. As others such as Cornelia Osborne have demonstrated, the fall in the birth rate was seen as a national disaster by *Bevölkerungspolitiker*, a situation made more acute by the loss of life in the First World War. The democratic Weimar Republic was to witness increasing publicity about the consequences of VD for fertility through educational campaigns and public discourse and those suffering from VD were encouraged to seek treatment not just out of a moral duty but also out of a sense of duty to the nation. This approach seems to have been successful as the numbers found to have VD had fallen significantly by 1934. In the Third Reich, however, propaganda emphasised sexual respectability, and Nazi policies tended to see VD sufferers as threats to the race, marginalising them as outsiders. As she has elsewhere, Timm explores Nazi attitudes to prostitution, noting the return to regulation and arguing that 'female sexuality was functionalised to serve the needs of the nation' (p. 186) as sexuality was divorced from reproduction and access to sex was seen as a reward for male citizens. At the war's end, controlling the spread of VD, much of it initially caused by the rapes of Berlin's women by Russian troops, once again gained public prominence, as Western Allies sought to prevent German women infecting their troops,

through surveillance, registration and welfare-oriented approaches. These methods foregrounded the importance of the nation's health over individual rights, and had to be amended once an individual's rights were enshrined in the Basic Law. The use of penicillin to treat VD was, however, to change attitudes towards both the disease and notions of 'sexual duty' to the nation, as VD became no longer an impediment to fertility.

The Weimar Republic was to see an expansion of reproductive health care services with a range of public and private clinics offering a variety of services. With proposals to introduce marriage health certificates stalling, marriage counselling sought to advise couples of the importance of their 'sexual duty' to the nation, a duty which in the Third Reich was imbued with eugenic thought and racist ideology. The Nazis centralised health care, creating genetic and racial health counselling clinics and promoting policies of what Timm terms 'inclusionary racism', such as marriage loans and mothers' medals, but the numbers willing to participate in these policies dwindled when people became aware that the state was gathering genetic information about them. At the war's end, marriage counselling clinics were set up on an ad hoc basis, due to lack of funding, and their emphasis changed towards relationship counselling, reflecting the needs of their client base. In some areas of West Berlin, continuity in personnel ensured that eugenic thinking continued to have an influence on reproductive health care at senior administrative levels, but Timm notes throughout the century the dichotomy between state policy and local practice. In East Berlin health, rather than the birth rate, was seen as an indicator of national strength, with an emphasis on an individual's productive rather than reproductive duty. The Russians' insistence on silencing any public discussion of the rape of German women at the war's end led to general unease about sexuality in the 1950s. With concerns about the birth rate, which the East Germans used to legitimate their state in a competitive measure with the West, the 1965 Family Code introduced a nationwide system of sex-and-marriage counselling clinics and the regime promoted incentives for its citizens to have more children, while also decriminalising abortion, to give citizens reproductive choice.

Given the special status of Berlin in the West, Timm also explores aspects of population policy in West Germany, noting the demise of the notion of 'sexual duty', the impact of the sexual revolution and German writers' engagement with the Nazi past. She concludes that while debates about sex were becoming increasingly public, individual's sexual choices had become privatised, with individuals rejecting any attempt by the state to interfere in their sexual or reproductive choices.

Timm's ambitious and far-reaching study uses Berlin's marriage counselling and attempts to control VD as a backdrop for an exploration of the population policies of four different political regimes throughout twentieth-century Germany. There is little about Berlin in Timm's exposition of Nazi policies on prostitution, for example, and her chapter on West Germany adds little to her study of population policies in Berlin but does enable her to draw conclusions about the notion of 'sexual duty' in the Federal Republic, while her concentration on Berlin omits possible contradictions between state policy and its implementation in Catholic or rural areas. The study might also have benefitted from the inclusion of a bibliography and more assiduous proof-reading. However, Timm's study does offer useful insights into a range of population policies, such as Nazi attempts to match-make sterilised individuals. Its chronological scope and the wealth of population policies it covers will ensure that it is prescribed reading for anyone interested in population policy or its implementation in twentieth-century Germany.

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