

Biesold, Horst. Crying Hands: Eugenics and Deaf People in Nazi Germany. Washington, DC: Gallaudet UP, 1999, p. 45, 46, 50, 52, 56-58, 142, 143, 147, 151, and 159.

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## Sterilization Documents

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**The Director**  
State Institution for the Deaf  
and  
Training Institute  
for Teachers of the Deaf  
Log No. 544

Berlin-Neukolln April 14, 1936  
Mariendorfer Weg 47/60

To Frau NN

The health authority of Berlin-Neukolln has informed me by a letter of April 6, 1936, that a judgment concerning the sterilization of your daughter has been delivered in accordance with the law and that NN is to be conducted within two weeks to the Neukolln Municipal Hospital for the performance of the operation. I would ask you to sign the enclosed declaration and to return it to me. We will then convey NN to the hospital. I would point out that thus far fourteen sterilizations have been completed on our children and that in no case have negative effects occurred.

Heil Hitler!

*Letter from Gotthold Lehmann Requesting a Parent's Authorization on a Sterilization Order.*

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**The Director**  
State Institution for the Deaf  
and  
Training Institute  
for Teachers of the Deaf  
Log No. 930

Berlin-Neukolln August 25, 1936  
Mariendorfer Weg 47/60

Dear Frau NN,

NN was released from the clinic in good health on August 16. The operation proceeded normally. NN has already written you about this.

The law stipulates that in the case of persons above fourteen years of age, the operation may be performed without the consent of parents and guardians. You could not then have changed anything in this regard. I believe that it will be quite a good thing for NN that she has no children. Her life will likely be hard enough as it is.

With best regards, Heil Hitler!

*Letter from Gotthold Lehmann Informing a Mother of Her Daughter's Sterilization*

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The Director  
of the Provincial Institution for the Deaf

Soest, April 26, 1935

Your letter of April 12, 1935 File 32/K-II

To the State Public Health Authority:

For the sterilization of NN, the Municipal Hospital in Hamm will be used. I would ask you, if possible, to arrange that the operation be performed there during the summer holidays, which last from July 25 to September 2.

By carrying out the operation in her hometown during the holidays, the sterilization can be kept, from the other students more readily than if the girl were sent from here to Hamm.

State Health Authority of the Minden District

The Public Health Officer

Minden, Westphalia, May 29, 1935

To Fraulein NN of XX

c/o the Director of the Provincial Institution for the Deaf Soest

In accordance with the application of the director of the Provincial Institution for the Deaf in Soest of May 28, 1935, the procedures for your sterilization operation pursuant to article 7 of the third decree of the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases of February 25, 1935 (*Reich Law Gazette*, I, p. 289) will be postponed until the beginning of the summer holidays (July 24, 1935).

In accordance with this letter and with the order to undergo the operation that was sent to you by the public health officer on May 25, 1935, you will present yourself at the Municipal Hospital (Dr. Kopischke) or at the private clinic of Dr. Stempel in Bad-Oeynhausen, promptly after July 24 so that the entire process can be completed in timely fashion by the end of the holidays (September 3).

Public Health Officer

*Correspondence from Director Wegge and a Public Health Officer Regarding a Student's Sterilization.*

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Provincial Institution for the Deaf, Soest, Westphalia

February 19, 1935

To Frau NN

Your letter of February 15, 1935

Dear Frau NN,

Since I was on leave, I am only today able to respond to your letter. The Hereditary Health Court will point out that in your husband's family there is a consanguineous marriage. His great-grandparents were first cousins. Such a consanguineous marriage, even so far in the past, justifies the suspicion of hereditary disease. Proof that NN incurred deafness as a consequence of an illness in her early youth would then be difficult for you to advance since you previously indicated that the deafness was innate. Your husband may withdraw his application. The process will, however, proceed. In the event that the Hereditary Health Court decides in favor of sterilization, you may file an appeal. The matter will then be dealt with by the Superior Hereditary Health Court. If it confirms the decision for sterilization, this will be carried out, with force if required. In the case of children, recourse to such coercion will not be made until they are 14 years of age.

The sterilization of girls is not performed in Soest but in a hospital in Hamm. As far as I have heard, the subjects all recover quite promptly.

If you cannot prove that NN became deaf as a result of illness, your appeal will scarcely have a chance of success. If hereditary disease is indeed present, it would be appropriate that NN not have children. There are no other negative effects from the procedure.

*Wegge Used Intimidation and Coercion to Fulfill the Sterilization Laws.*

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Dear Director Edwin Singer, I must first ask you to pardon me for writing to you so openly and for requesting your response. The time is long since past when on September 16, 1926, I was admitted to the school at the Institution for the Deaf in Heidelberg. At the school I was taught by Herr Kaspar Derr, and was promoted and discharged on April 10, 1936. I was afterwards astounded by your earlier letter, which my mother had kept. My class teacher, Hen Den, and my mother knew about it. What did my mother and the Lord God do to me, a poor child, that they didn't let me know about this when I left my home town for the last time on March 8, 1935, in the direction of the institution for the deaf in Heidelberg? On March 31, 1935, I was confirmed in the Castle Church in XX. It was a beautiful confirmation ceremony. It was wonderful to celebrate God's holy victory. At once, my father received a registered letter from the District Court in XX (Nazi Party). When I came to the city

hospital on Wednesday, April 10, 1935, I did not know what I was doing there. Then I lay in bed for only two days, until Friday, when the National Socialist doctor, Herr Karl Gamstader, said that I would be operated on at 10 A.M. that same day. This assistant doctor sterilized my abdomen in the cruelest fashion and made me infertile. On April 20, 1935, I was released from the city hospital. On the way home I was faint with weakness. I felt so tormented and cruelly treated because I hadn't been told anything. Why did you keep silent and not tell me that sterilization would mean killing my body and that it is a wrong and a crime that I cannot have any children? You also abused my brother NN and Frau NN and NN. You didn't warn us. We are not content with you professionally because of your offenses and disregard. Sterilization makes a body worthless. I no longer feel like a real person. It was not right and it was a tragedy. A very great and serious crime has been committed. God sees everything with a stern eye. He said, "Thou shalt not kill." Since that time I have suffered great misery. I am innocent. I can't have any children. Why did I have to be sterilized? For a long time I have been very dissatisfied with your actions, because I am unhappy that in 1933 (the formation of the Reich] you were already the Ffhrer of the Hitler Party in the Heidelberg deaf school. You would rather kill my belly and have me sterilized and keep silent, than let me know openly that I could not have a child. Fortunately God can save me. He punishes the grave sins that were done to me with the killing and sterilization.... A great deal has been lost from my life, because there can never be any happy love. I can no longer trust you or accept the idea of how unjustly you treated people. For you, the word human is no longer applicable, because you gave me no help. You are guilty of a crime toward me. You abused me. You had me sterilized, killed, and destroyed me so that I can't have a child. You did not really understand what a human being is. I know from my own experience what Hitler was up to. He was a cheater, a liar and a serious criminal. I was not born defective and I am not feeble-minded. It was all deceit and lies and tricks of the Hitler party. Hitler was clearly feeble-minded himself. Otherwise he wouldn't have behaved like such a monkey, wouldn't have had such a big mouth and been so dishonorable. He was godless....

*Letter from a Sterilization Victim to Edwin Singer, August 15, 1960.*

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Edwin Singer, Director (ret.), Heidelberg, August 18, 1961

Herr NN,

Dear NN, To deaf adults I usually speak formally, but in this letter I will be more informal, as in the past, so that you understand me better. You wrote me that you were sterilized 26 years ago. I did not know that. But I am hardly surprised. At that time, all the hereditarily diseased were to be made infertile. You ask: Who is guilty? Who is responsible that you were sterilized? Many hundreds of thousands of people can ask the same question, all of whom were sterilized. My answer is: the government of the day. It was the National Socialist German Reich. At the head of the ruling party stood Hitler, Himmler, Gobbels, Frick, and others. They are all dead now. Do you want to carry your complaint down into Hell? Then they will answer in turn: Parliament, the duly elected representatives for the people, passed the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases. The doctors had to obey and carry out the law. Dear NN, such complaints are useless. You are not badly off, but you are not content. But compare yourself to others. Several million fell in the war or were killed. You are still alive. You can work and earn a satisfactory living. The fact that you have no children should not be seen as a misfortune. Better to have no children than one who is blind or deaf or epileptic. Even as a youngster you were often unhappy. But when I talked to you and you thought things over, you were happy again. That's the way it should be now too. So, NN, keep your chin up. And good luck!

With best regards,  
Edwin Singer

*Edwin Singer's Reply to His Former Student.*

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#### An Informative Circular on Sterilization

(pursuant to article 2, paragraph 3, of the ordinance for the implementation of the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases of December 5, 1933, Reich Law Gazette 1: p. 1021

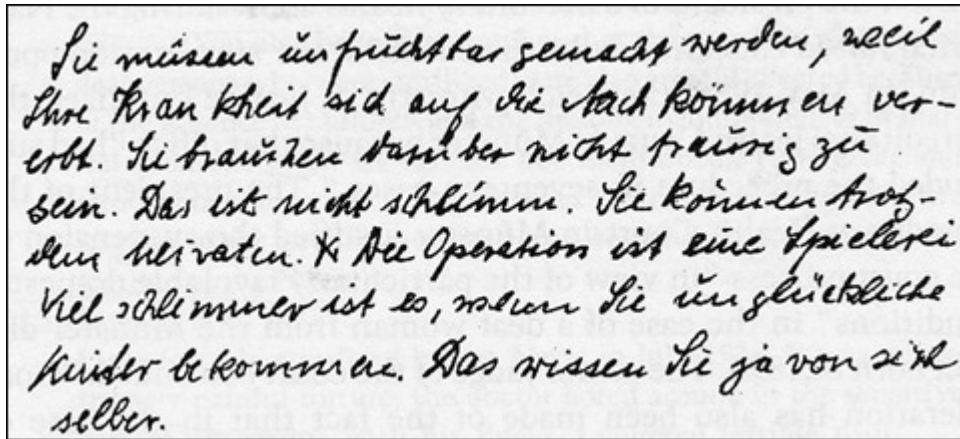
The objective of sterilization, that is, the termination of the reproductive capacity of men and women, is to prevent the further transmission of hereditary disease. Such diseases are congenital feeble-mindedness, schizophrenia, manic-depressive insanity, hereditary epilepsy, hereditary St. Vitus' Dance (Huntington's chorea), hereditary blindness, hereditary deafness, severe hereditary bodily malformation, as well as severe alcoholism.

Sterilization is performed as follows: without the removal of the testicles or ovaries, the spermatic cords or Fallopian tubes are tied off, made impassable, or are severed.

The operation is performed by professional physicians in medical facilities designated for this purpose.

No negative consequences for the health of either men or women are to be feared from sterilization. Sexual sensation and the capacity for sexual intercourse are not affected by the operation.

*Example of Nazi Propaganda Concerning Sterilization*



Contents of the note:

You must be sterilized because your disease would be inherited by your offspring. But you do not need to be sad about it. It's not so bad. You can still marry. The operation is a trifle. It would be much worse to have miserable children. You know that yourself.

*Letter from a Berlin Doctor Regarding the Sterilization Operation*

*Responses to Questions 21, 22, and 23 from Victims Sterilized as Teenagers*

Answer	Men		Women		
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
Question 20: Do you still suffer from psychological pain? Are you often sad? Do you feel lonely without children?					
Yes	172	85.15	Yes	195	84.42
No	3	1.49	No	3	1.30
No response	27	13.37	No response	33	14.29
Question 21: Do you still suffer from physical pain?					
Yes	131	64.85	Yes	155	67.10
No	24	11.88	No	30	12.99
No response	47	23.27	No response	46	19.91
Question 22: Where is the physical pain located?					
Groin/surgical	38	30.65	Groin/surgical	15	9.93

scars			scars		
Abdomen	30	24.19	Abdomen	97	64.24
Scrotum	27	21.77	Scrotum	-	-
Lower back	13	10.48	Lower back	28	18.54
General	21	16.94	General	17	11.26
discomfort			discomfort		
Psychological distress	8	6.45	Psychological distress	17	11.26
caused by pain			caused by pain		

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Transcript

The Reich Minister for Public Education and Propaganda

Berlin, June 12, 1935

To: The Reich and Prussian State Minister of the Interior

at Berlin NW 4G, Königsplatz 6

Re: Publicity concerning the implementation of the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases

In response to your communication of June 5, 1935 (Ref. No. IV f 4.05 of May 27, 1935), I would inform you that distribution of the press release which you sent concerning the present status of the implementation of the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases must be deferred for reasons of both internal and external politics. Even though various foreign newspapers have released figures on sterilizations that have been completed to date, the attention paid to these numbers in other countries has thus far been relatively slight. Attention would, however, increase if this communication were now to appear in the German daily press.

I have the express assignment from the Führer to suppress all publicity in the press concerning the effects of the sterilization law. The sterilizations performed under this law deal with procedures that were and still are vital to the well-being of the German people, but the dissemination of general information about them to a wider public is not desirable for sociopsychological reasons. On the other hand, there are no reservations concerning the treatment of these questions in professional scientific publications.

Heil Hitler!

(signed) Dr. Goebbels

*Letter from Dr. Josef Goebbels Regarding Publicity of Sterilization Procedures*

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