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Autobiography & Memoir

Women of the Third Reich
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They weren't models of the "National Socialist ideal of femininity-the tall, hard-working, Nordic blonde of cheerful disposition, keeper of the hearth and home, surrounded by many children." The elite women who stood at the forefront of the Third Reich were actresses and political activists, artists, and adoring adolescents, bound only by their faith in Hitler's ideology.

This book contains the select biographies of eight women who figured prominently in the Nazi regime-Carin and Emmy Goering, Magda Goebbels, Leni Riefenstahl, Gertrud Scholz-Klink, Geli Raubal, Eva Braun, and Henriette Von Shirach-paradoxes in a tortuous time.

Gertrud Scholz-Klink appeared to be "the epitome of ideal womanhood as defined by the NSDAP" (National Socialist German Workers' Party). She wrote volumes of printed material espousing the woman's role of "fulfilling one's duty quietly in the background and without demanding recognition," Scholz-Klink, however, "never served quietly, but traveled constantly from one congress to the next. In 1938, when her husband started complaining about her numerous party duties, she divorced him."

Magda Goebbels, first recipient of the Honor Cross of the German Mother, made the ultimate sacrifice for the Fuehrer in taking not only her own life, but that of her six children. Hitler's mistress of thirteen years, Eva Braun, attempted suicide twice in the years before finally ending her life as a married woman in a bunker below the city of Berlin. Suicide was also the final act of Geli Raubel, a gregarious, youthful, black-haired beauty whom her uncle, Adolf Hitler, referred to as "my most valuable possession."

Breaking through secrecy and censorship, Sigmund attempts to unearth the truth about these women, debunking a few rumors and verifying others. While the book is liberally laced with quotes from diaries and letters, it falls short in providing insight into the emotional side of these women's tumultuous lives. What it does provide is a portal into a dark tunnel, with faint glimmers of comprehension at the other end.

Megan Kopp