

CENSORSHIP: CRITICAL VOICES NOT WELCOME IN THE GERMAN MEDICAL JOURNAL, *DEUTSCHES AERZTEBLATT*

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The editor of the German medical journal, *Deutsches Aerzteblatt*, rejected an offer by Professor Dr. Heidrun Kaupen-Haas, Hamburg, to publish an issue entitled, "Women, Gene and Reproductive Technologies." The issue was conceptualised to cover the complex issue of gene and reproductive technologies internationally and included the following articles:

1. A Historical analysis:

Scientific origins and social consequences of gene and reproductive technology during National Socialism (Heidrun Kaupen-Haas and Sabine Schleiermacher, Hamburg, Federal Republic of Germany).

2. Involuntary childlessness:

Four reports by infertile German women.

3. Prenatal diagnosis as a means for selection:

"I can feel it. My child is healthy" (Monika Leuzinger and Bigna Rambert, Zurich, Switzerland).

4. Wanted and unwanted infertility: Contraceptive technology in Bangladesh (Farida Akhter, Dhaka, Bangladesh).

5. Bioethics:

Embryo experimentation (Regine Kollek, Hamburg, Federal Republic of Germany); Safety aspects of research with retro viruses (Regine Kollek, Hamburg, Federal Republic of Germany); Women as test-sites for fertility drugs: Clomiphene citrate and

hormonal cocktails (Renate D. Klein and Robyn Rowland, Melbourne, Australia); Options for involuntarily childless women (Ute Winkler and Traute Schoen-enberg, Frankfurt, Federal Republic of Germany); In the supermarket of body parts (Maria Mies, Cologne, Federal Republic of Germany); Report of a survey of US IVF Clinics (Gena Corea and Susan Ince, Winchester USA); Report on international congresses on bioethics (Patricia Spallone, U.K.).

The need to suggest this issue had arisen after publication of an article by Elisabeth Rieping (February 9th, 1989) in *Deutsches Aerzteblatt*. In this article Rieping attacked the organisers of the 2nd National Congress on Women Against Gene and Reproductive Technology (Frankfurt, October 1988), the Gene Archive in Essen, and women in general who critically analyse the debates in Germany on gene and reproductive technology. Elisabeth Rieping did not shy away from outright defamation and criminalisation. As she put it, "instead of factual information, various actions including terrorist attacks against institutes in the region of Cologne, are justified" and "many small newspapers even published unedited jibbering from the Gene Archive" (p. 235).

At the 92nd Meeting of the German Medical Assembly (Deutscher Arztag) in Berlin (May 2–6, 1989), the delegate of the Berlin Medical Association called Rieping's report in *Deutsches Aerzteblatt*

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“unsuitable to guarantee factual information for medical doctors.” She suggested that the meeting endorse the following resolution:

The German Medical Assembly asks the Board of the German Medical Association to suggest to *Deutsches Aerzteblatt* that space be given to a wider range of views on this topic on their publication. Critics too should be given the chance to elaborate their positions.

The proposal was rejected.

These events must be seen in the context of a constant flow of protechnology articles in the publications of the German Medical Association (*Deutsches Aerzteblatt*) and the German medical publishers (*Deutsche Aerzteverlag*) in Cologne. Topics recently covered include: “Embryo protection,” “Prevention of multiple pregnancies and hyper-stimulation following ovulation-induction,” “Guidelines for in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) and embryo transfer (ET) as treatment for human sterility,” “Multiple reduction by means of feticide,” “Artificial insemination,” “Organ removal

in anencephali.” Various commissions of the German Medical Association act as a monolithic bloc for protechnology supporters of population policy (i.e., Drug Evaluation Commission, Central Commission of the German Medical Association to Safeguard Ethical Principles in Reproductive Technology, Embryo Experimentation and Gene Therapy). Opposition in the Regional Medical Associations as far have had no influence on the opinions promoted by the German Medical Association.

The legitimization of the practitioners’ ethic continues a tradition – known as population control in Nazi Germany – to promote those “worthy of reproduction” and to eliminate those “unworthy of reproduction.” This tradition needs to be stopped. Concerned women internationally are urged to write to the Bundesärztekammer (German Medical Association), and the editorial staff of *Deutsches Aerzteblatt* (Herbert Lewinstrasse 5, D-5000 Cologne 41, FRG) to demand the inclusion of positions critical of gene and reproductive technology.