

## "Der Fall Sparbier" or: the woman, who defied Hitler

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# “DER FALL SPARBIER” OR: THE WOMAN, WHO DEFIED HITLER

BY FRANK BROEZE †

## *In Memoriam: Frank(lin) Jan Aart Broeze (1945–2001)*

*Am 4. April 2001 verstarb in Perth, Australien, der in den Niederlanden geborene Frank Broeze im Alter von nur 55 Jahren. Mit ihm verlor die internationale Schifffahrtsgeschichte viel zu früh einen ihrer profiliertesten Historiker des letzten Jahrzehnts. Er unterlag in dem langen Kampf mit einer tückischen Krebserkrankung, obwohl es zeitweise den Anschein hatte, als würde er die Oberhand behalten. Alle, die ihn kannten und mit ihm zusammenarbeiteten, hatten sich nichts sehnlicher erhofft, war er doch stets optimistisch mit wissenschaftlichen Projekten beschäftigt oder engagiert mit der Förderung unserer historischen Subdisziplin im internationalen Kontext befaßt.<sup>1</sup>*

*Nach seinem Geschichtsstudium an der Universität Leiden war Frank 1970 mit seiner deutschen Frau Ulrike, geb. Hörnemann, an Bord der ACHILLE LAURO nach Australien gefahren, um an der University of Western Australia als Historiker zu lehren. Seine mit Auszeichnung abgeschlossene, von Jaap Bruijn betreute Dissertation mit dem Titel “De Stad Schiedam. De Schiedamsche Scheepsrederij en de Nederlandse Vaart op Oost-Indië omstreeks 1840” erschien in der prestigeträchtigen Reihe der Linschoten Vereinigung.<sup>2</sup> Sehr schnell richtete Frank seine Aufmerksamkeit nicht nur auf die niederländische Handelschifffahrt, sondern auch auf die maritime Geschichte Australiens, des Indischen Ozeans und des Pazifiks. Seine beiden Monographien “Mr Brooks and the Australian Trade” und “Island Nation” wurden von den Kritikern hoch gelobt.<sup>3</sup>*

*Die beiden Aufsatzsammlungen “Bride of the Sea” und “Gateways of Asia: Port Cities of Asia in the 13<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> Centuries”, für die er Beiträge zahlreicher Gelehrter einwerben konnte, trugen zu seiner Ausnahmestellung im indisch-pazifischen Raum bei.<sup>4</sup> Das letzte Buch, das er noch vollenden konnte, behandelt die Containerschifffahrt. Es wird hoffentlich demnächst erscheinen können.*

*Seine eigene Universität würdigte vor Jahren seine wissenschaftliche Leistung mit der Ernennung zum ordentlichen Universitätsprofessor. Franks internationale Reputation führte aber auch dazu, daß ihm die Alexander-von-Humboldt-Stiftung mit einem Stipendium zweimal ermöglichte, in Deutschland Forschungen zu betreiben. Wir hatten uns 1987 in Hamburg kennen gelernt, als er mir seine Arbeit über Albert Ballin zeigte, die dann später im Deutschen Schifffahrtsarchiv erschien.<sup>5</sup> Zusammengebracht hatte uns der gemeinsame Freund Walter Kresse, dem wir beide viel verdanken. Aus dieser Begegnung erwuchs unsere Freundschaft, die sich bei verschiedenen Gelegenheiten bewährte. 1989 bat er mich, mit ihm für die Leitung der International Commission for Maritime History zu kandidieren. Er wurde 1990 für fünf Jahre in Madrid zum Präsidenten und ich zum Vizepräsidenten dieser Organisation gewählt. 1993 lud er mich nach Australien ein, um bei einer großen Konferenz in Fremantle eine Übersicht über die schifffahrtsgeschichtliche Forschung der letzten Jahr-*



Abb. 1 Frank (lin) Jan Aart Broeze (1945–2001)

zehnte in Deutschland vorzutragen.<sup>6</sup> 1999 forschte er erneut in Hamburg, unterstützt von der Alexander-von-Humboldt-Stiftung. Er nahm an einer Sitzung der Deutschen Seefahrtsgeschichtlichen Kommission teil, leitete eine Sitzung meines Seminars am Institut für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte und weihte mich in seine Forschungen über Annaliese Sparbier ein. Mit dem Leben dieser ungewöhnlichen Frau war ich bereits durch einen Aufsatz von Christine Keitsch im Deutschen Schifffahrtsarchiv vertraut.<sup>7</sup> Doch was Frank an neuem Material ausfindig gemacht hatte, war so faszinierend, dass wir uns mehrfach begeistert in die Unterlagen vertieften. An verschiedenen Stellen bat er mich um Hilfe. Zu einigen Problemen konnte ich ihm nützliche Hinweise geben. Deshalb freue ich mich ganz besonders, dass mir

Franks Frau und ihr Sohn Carsten diesen Aufsatz anvertraut und ihn mir zur Veröffentlichung im DSA überlassen haben. Er ergänzt den Aufsatz von Christine Keitsch, bettet das Leben von Annaliese Sparbier/Teetz in den größeren nationalen Rahmen ein und fügt sich ideal in den Forschungsschwerpunkt des Deutschen Schifffahrtsmuseums über "Frauen in der Schifffahrt" ein.

Als wir uns im November 1999 voneinander verabschiedeten, gingen wir davon aus, daß wir uns im Dezember 2001 in Fremantle bei der Konferenz "Maritime History Beyond 2000: Visions of Sea and Shore" treffen würden. Dazu ist es dann leider nicht mehr gekommen. Ihm zu Ehren wurde im Dezember 2001 der Frank Broeze Memorial Fund ins Leben gerufen, aus dessen Mitteln die Frank Broeze Memorial Lecture finanziert werden soll. Die International Maritime Economic History Association, deren Vizepräsident er seit 1995 war, steuerte einen namhaften Beitrag bei. Wir, die wir ihn gekannt und von seiner Freundschaft und seinem Wissen profitiert haben, vermissen ihn sehr. Denjenigen, die sich von seinen Arbeiten inspirieren ließen, wird er fehlen.

Eine Stimme, der die internationale Schifffahrtsgeschichte – und ich im besonderen – so viel verdanken, ist viel zu früh verstummt. Als Trost wird uns sein großes wissenschaftliches Werk bleiben sowie eine Fülle von herzlichen und dauerhaften Erinnerungen.

Lars U. Scholl

### *In Memoriam: Frank (lin) Jan Aart Broeze (1945–2001)*

On 4 April 2001 Frank Broeze, born in Rijswijk in the Netherlands, passed away at the age of 55. With his death maritime history lost far too soon one of its most eminent and prolific scholars of the last decade. He finally lost his lengthy struggle against a hideous and rare form of cancer, although for some time it looked as if his indomitable spirit would carry the day. Yet even when the battle was fiercest, he always optimistically pursued his scholarly projects and continued his unswerving promotion of maritime history on an international level.<sup>8</sup>

After completing his historical studies at the University of Leiden he and his German born wife Ulrike sailed in 1970 aboard the *ACHILLE LAURO* to the Pacific, where Frank started his teaching career at the University of Western Australia. He had been selected by the history department to introduce a course in maritime history. His Ph D thesis on shipping from Schiedam to East Indies, which was awarded a distinction, was supervised by Jaap R. Bruijn and appeared in the prestigious series published by the Linschoten Association in 1978.<sup>9</sup> But Frank's scholarly interest focussed not only on the Dutch merchant marine, but also on Australian maritime history as well as to the maritime past of the Indian and Pacific oceans. His two monographs, "Mr Brooks and the Australian Trade" and "Island Nation", were highly praised by the critics.<sup>10</sup> As well, his two edited collections, "Bride of the Sea" and "Gateways of Asia", to which many distinguished scholars contributed articles, raised his reputation immensely.<sup>11</sup> His last book, on the container revolution in shipping, which he completed in 2000, will I hope soon be published.

The University of Western Australia acknowledged Frank's impressive achievements by appointing him to full professor in the 1990s. His international reputation resulted in a scholarship from the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation, which brought Frank to Hamburg for research, where I met him for the first time in 1987. He was deeply involved in research on the shipping magnate Albert Ballin, and some of the results were later published in this journal.<sup>12</sup>

Our mutual friend, the late Dr. Walter Kresse, to whom we both owe so much, brought us together. From that day our friendship grew, a friendship that proved its worth on many occasions. In 1989 he asked me to join him on the slate for the executive of the International Commission for Maritime History (ICMH). The next year we were voted into office, Frank as president and myself as one of three vice-presidents. When he organised a large international congress in Fremantle in 1993 he asked me to contribute a paper on recent trends in German maritime history.<sup>13</sup> The conference, as one would have expected from anything that Frank organised, was a huge success.

In the 1999 Frank returned to Hamburg, once again sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation. I invited the ex-president of the ICMH to a meeting of the German commission. In addition, he took over one of my classes at the Institute of Social and Economic History and introduced me to his recent findings on Annaliese Sparbier. I was familiar with the outlines of the life of this remarkable woman who wanted to be a captain in the German merchant marine.<sup>14</sup> But the new material Frank had discovered in Berlin fascinated both of us and let us to go through the documents he had unearthed enthusiastically. At various points I was able to help with useful information and with references to publications he needed to consult. For this reason, I am particularly happy and proud that Ulli and Frank's son Carsten entrusted his finale article to me for publication in the *Deutsches Schifffahrtsarchiv*. It is an ideal supplement to Christine Keitsch's paper and fits in perfectly with the research on "Women in Shipping" at the German Maritime Museum.

When Frank and I parted in November 1999, we expected to meet again in December 2001 in Fremantle, where he was the leading promoter of a major international conference on "Maritime History Beyond 2000: Visions of Sea and Shore". But Frank was not to live that long.

In December his university announced the launched of a Frank Broeze Memorial Fund, which will among other things finance the Frank Broeze Memorial Lecture. The International Maritime Economic History Association, which Frank had served as vice-president since 1995, had already committed itself to a substantial contribution to this fund.

All of us who have had the privilege to know Frank and to profit from his friendship and his impressive body of knowledge miss him very much. Those who have been inspired by his

*work will feel his absence acutely. Although a voice to which international maritime history – and myself in particular – owe so much has been silenced far too early, we can all take comfort in the knowledge that he has left behind not only an impressive body of scholarship but also a plethora of warm and lasting memories.*

*Lars U. Scholl*

The literature on German women during the Third Reich is rich and dynamic. In recent years established opinions have been subjected to considerable revisionism and enlightened by testimonies from many women, both adolescent and adult at the time, of an ever wider and more representative range of social, regional and religious backgrounds.<sup>15</sup> The first phase of the historiography was characterized by ideological and political approaches, which were informed mainly by the twin notions that the Germans had somehow been bewitched by the wicked Hitler and that the Nazi society he created was fundamentally reactionary, especially in its relation to women.<sup>16</sup> The emphasis was squarely put on the elaboration and implementation of the quasi-religious Nazi trilogy Kirche-Küche-Kinder within the fundamentally conservative parameters of German society. Latterly, however, feminist and other historians have re-assessed old propositions and raised many new issues. In the wake of the blossoming of social history and “Alltagsgeschichte” the social conditions and experiences of women have been explored both for their intrinsic meaning,<sup>17</sup> and as platforms to challenge the view of women as solely victims of the Nazi régime. Although the fundamental position of women as second-rate citizens in Nazi ideology and their exclusion from many positions and professions in Nazi society is uncontested, it has become evident that many women supported the system or at least acquiesced in the new order for a great variety of reasons. While some of these had ideological-political and economic bases relating to Hitler’s re-asserting Germany’s equality, pride and determination to right the wrongs caused by foreigners, Jews and domestic traitors during the Weimar Republic and the Great Depression, others related more directly to their private lives.

Among the most important of these motives was the social and psychological satisfaction to see husbands and male relatives gaining or regaining employment and, with that, steady income and self-respect. But, contrary to the ideology of the party, also female employment has been found to have risen significantly and reached into more fields than orthodox views held. The pursuit of a career within the NSDAP itself and the party’s almost endless number of organisations – through, for example, typist and secretarial jobs, leadership positions in women’s organisations, or even in SS concentration camps – and the public service, especially in education, became a prominent strategy for women to empower themselves within their male-dominated society. Many of these jobs resulted directly from Nazi policies or were by-products of the general employment boom generated by economic mobilization, militarisation and conscription. With regards to the role and historical significance of these women, as they benefited from, supported and even pushed along the Nazi régime, very much the same questions can be raised as those thrown up already much earlier about the role in its development, successes and crimes by what, using Goldhagen’s unfortunate expression, so often and utterly misleadingly are called “ordinary” (male) Germans.<sup>18</sup> Von Saldern’s suggestion that women who provided psychological comfort and a warm family life to their Nazi husbands and partners in their evil careers should be considered among the “willing executioners” rather than victims of the régime, contains serious elements of historical and moral questioning.<sup>19</sup>

For a balanced view, however, Von Saldern’s views must also be pitted against the still powerful arguments at the other end of the historical-ideological spectrum that many

women, as most male citizens in Nazi Germany, could often do little else but continue their working and family lives while attempting to hold their personal integrity intact. Moreover, many Germans, male and female, were, and not without reason, intimidated by the real and perceived terror actions of a ruthless and overall chillingly effective régime into a psychological paralysis, acquiescence and submission which in many cases led to a paradoxically active mode of indifference – that is, not just a state of not knowing, but not wanting to know and not wanting to question what the régime was doing and planning for the future. And yet, although the true extent of opposition, resistance and, equally importantly, “Zivil-courage” (the personal courage to stand up in public for one’s convictions irrespective of the consequences)<sup>20</sup> will never be known – not in the least because of problems of definition and historical evidence – it is evident that many German women approached the régime critically and were actively involved in smaller and larger acts of oppositions and defiance. The most salient act of this kind was the demonstration of the German women who mounted a public protest in Berlin against the deportation of their Jewish husbands.<sup>21</sup> In short, the pattern of German women’s attitudes and behaviour during the Nazi era was a more complex mixture of ideological, political, social and psychological factors and contained greater ambiguities and contradictions than was previously thought and any individual historian will probably ever be able and/or willing to capture and construct.

It is within this uniquely variegated ideological and social context that this article will attempt to assess the meaning of the extraordinary career of Annaliese Sparbier (after her marriage in 1944, Teetz) and the equally extraordinary way in which she both fought and used the Nazi bureaucracy to be able to follow her personal and professional ambitions. Although a woman, she sailed as a fisher and merchant seaman, and she became Nazi Germany’s only ship’s officer and sea captain. She became a member of the NSDAP in 1937 (most probably because of her teaching position) and, through her subsequent career in the merchant marine and the transporting of military supplies, ammunition and soldiers from Germany to Norway and on the Norwegian coast, she made material contributions to Germany’s war effort. Yet, as a woman, she met widespread opposition to her pursuing her seafaring career which, ultimately, culminated in a personal order from Adolf Hitler expelling her from her profession. But, rather than accepting the dictate from the Führer, she protested against the expulsion and, despite great difficulties, succeeded in having it rescinded.

Sparbier would have been an extraordinary personality in any contemporary western society – American, British, Norwegian or Australian – totally committed, as early as 1929, to pursuing a career in the merchant navy and aspiring to become an officer and a captain, thus challenging the strongest of bastions of male prejudice and power. But what makes her even more special is that she not only resisted her fate as a woman in a profession embedded within a double layer of patriarchy but also challenged the entire complex Nazi power structure, including the Führer himself, in order to continue her seafaring career. Her extraordinary determination – and ultimate success – in her seemingly Kafkaesque conflict of the individual against a Byzantine bureaucracy raises many questions. Is it possible to separate Sparbier’s very individual form of feminism from its national-socialist context and her own membership of the NSDAP? Was she loyal to the regime, when she argued, as she did, that the “Volksgemeinschaft”, in order to be true to NSDAP’s fundamental tenets and to mobilise all its strength, should not exclude women from male professions although they were both capable and determined? When she stood up against Hitler, did that constitute a form of “real” opposition, even if that might, in view of Sparbier’s party membership and material contribution to the German war effort, be regarded as a form of “loyal” opposition? And, as she fought for being regarded as the equal of men, where did she stand in the long and twisted struggle for women’s emancipation and equal rights?

## *Annaliese Sparbier and “the case Sparbier”*

Sparbier was born on 5 June 1910, the eldest daughter of the Lutheran minister, Julius Sparbier, of the inner-city Hamburg district of Eimsbüttel, and his wife Anna, née Bulcke.<sup>22</sup> Rektor Sparbier was a respected leader of his mostly working-class and significantly maritime parish. For many years he was president of the prominent “Eimsbütteler Turnverband”. Already before his death in 1937 a small square in front of the Turnhalle, built under his presidency between July 1909 and early 1911, was named after him.<sup>23</sup> It was no more than a coincidence that the building of the sports hall was taking place when Annaliese was born, but from a very young age she took great interest in both gymnastics and the water. Her mother, afraid she might accidentally drown, made her take swimming lessons before she was four years old. At primary school she started horsing around with ropes and boats, and sailing on fishing-boats. As early as 1929, Sparbier claimed later,<sup>24</sup> she wanted to seek a career at sea, but even in the relatively progressive Weimar Republik no one was willing to engage a 18-year old girl who had just finished her “Abitur”. She tried at shipping offices and seamen exchanges, but to no avail. Any chance of taking a job under a foreign flag were stymied by the veto of her father – whose support for his daughter had its bourgeois anti-feminist limits – and in desperation, in 1931, she dressed as a boy and worked as a deckhand on two North Sea fishing vessels.<sup>25</sup>

Acknowledging that the sea, for the time being, could not provide her with a living, she decided to become a teacher. By 1935 she had gained both the primary and higher school teacher’s certificates but neither the demands of her new career nor her interests in gymnastics, the Red Cross and anti-aircraft training satisfied her: *the sea was stronger than anything else*.<sup>26</sup> During the Easter vacation of 1935 she was able to make a trip to Iceland on a fishing trawler and, as a result, she regained her determination to go to sea. In the summer she travelled to Marienhamn on the Åland Islands to seek employment on one of the big deep-sea windjammers of the legendary owner, Gustaf Erikson, who had engaged a number of girls in previous years.<sup>27</sup> But Erikson demanded the formidable sum of RM 850 from her for a voyage to South Australia as apprentice, far above her means. After the autumn term at school, she wanted to use her Christmas holiday for a trip to the icy Barents Sea – surely a sign of total commitment, but again no owner was prepared to engage her. Taking her fate in her own hands, she hid on a fishing trawler bound for Norwegian waters and, after she had revealed herself to the astonished crew, she pulled her weight during the entire ten days voyage. During the summer vacation of 1936 she made another trip to Iceland and learned much from the Danish and Norwegian sailors she met. Christmas 1936, her ailing father’s last, she did not spend at home but on the cold North Sea, fishing for herring. After her father’s death, in the summer of 1937, she again sailed during the holidays, both times setting out as a blind passenger. In the meantime she also passed her deep-sea sport navigation diploma, showing that she possessed brain as well as brawn and bravery.

According to her own account, and in view of the highly favourable references she received, there is no reason to doubt her claims, she was not only highly motivated but also coolly competent: *Fräulein Sparbier is fully experienced in all seamen’s jobs and there is no task that she could not successfully undertake*.<sup>28</sup> She worked as hard as the men under often horrendous conditions, and one captain went so far as to acknowledge that she could well take command of a small vessel. She made do with whatever sanitary arrangements did or did not exist, and had always *the best of relations with the comrades aboard*.<sup>29</sup> She had been neither the cause of trouble nor the subject but expressing herself with her usual directness, she declared that problems had always been solved to perfect satisfaction. And so, at the start of the 1938 school holidays she made her decision. *I cannot any more put my heart into*

*my teacher's job and see that my talents lie in a totally different direction.* Twenty-eight years of age, she resigned her position and prepared herself to join a Hamburg trawler as apprentice deckhand. She would have to serve three years at sea and could then enrol at the "Seeschiffahrtsschule", the Higher Navigation School, at Hamburg. If she passed the examination for the A5 Diploma, she would be qualified to serve as an officer on all merchant vessels and to assume command of fishing vessels and merchant ships in the short-sea trades.<sup>30</sup>

In principle, Sparbier needed no one's permission to work as an ordinary sailor, but being admitted to the navigation school and obtaining an officer's position and eventually a command in a men's world might well prove to be quite a different matter. It is remarkable how thoroughly and shrewdly she planned her professional career and armed herself with political affidavits – almost as if she could foresee the obstacles that were to be thrown into her way. In the first instance, she wrote to Reich transport minister, Julius Dorpmüller, informing him of her desire to go to sea and, in due course, enrol in the navigation school and asking him to confirm that he, as the minister with departmental responsibility for the school, had no objections to her plans. In her letter, she candidly revealed both the extent and the circumstances of her previous career at sea and her professional ambitions. She included copies of brief but excellent references given by four masters under whose command she had sailed. One of them, Captain J. Fock, attested to her excellent performance in setting and hauling in the nets, all other work that ordinary seamen performed on deck, including steering the boat. *There is no seaman's task that Miss Sparbier cannot perform. In addition, she has great stamina and is very tough; even veteran fishermen gave her the highest respect.*

But there were much broader dimensions to Sparbier's strategy than a mere appeal to her determination and her professional record. In her letter she also, quite pointedly, referred to a recent statement of Hermann Goering, one of Hitler's closest paladins and since 1936 the Führer's representative in charge of the Four Years Plan. Goering, whom no one could or would accuse of being a feminist or promoting women's interests in the labour market, had made it clear that the massive mobilisation of Germany's labour resources could well make it highly desirable that women stood at the ready to take over men's jobs in professions that, in the case of such a labour mobilisation, could well be struck with paralysis – a point that, although he probably had never considered it specifically, in view of the rapid expansion of the "Kriegsmarine" carried considerable force as far as commercial seafaring was concerned. Hence, Sparbier argued, the Nazi state should in fact encourage capable women like her to position themselves for such eventualities.

The employment of women was all the more desirable as already by 1938, shortages of manpower had caused exceptions to be made to the manning standards on German trawlers and Dutch seamen to be engaged in order to complete crews. In fact, by now all maritime sectors began to be affected by the full employment on the labour market and the need for crews with the rapidly growing navy. In 1938, wages in the merchant marine were increased for the first time since 1932, and deep-sea companies like the Hamburg-America Line from 1937 had started replacing German engine crews with Chinese seamen engaged at Shanghai.<sup>31</sup> Also many German ports, which recruited strongly among former seafarers, had difficulties to find a sufficient supply of longshoremen; for a brief moment Hamburg's "Hafenrat" (Port Authority) even contemplated to employ women to overcome an acute Labour shortage.<sup>32</sup>

Sparbier had built her case well. Although she had to spend six anxious months waiting for an answer from the Transport Ministry to her request, when it came, it was very much to the point: *If you fulfil the required conditions with regards to the practical and theoretical training of masters and officers, nothing stands in the way of your admission to the exa-*



mination.<sup>33</sup> Only a few days later she received confirmation of her being allowed to sail aboard trawlers from the central organisation carrying the political responsibility for German sailors (who, because of their frequent absence from the land, could not belong to any land-based Gau organisation), the Section Seafaring of the Organisation for Overseas NSDAP members, the Amt Seefahrt of the Auslands-Organisation.<sup>34</sup> But reality proved quite different from the legal theory: during the next six months Sparbier was able to make only a few voyages. The problem, as she explained to the Reich transport minister, was not so much maritime authorities, shipowners or masters – they had only been too keen to employ her, successively as “Junge” (boy), “Leichtmatrose” (ordinary seaman) and “Matrose” (able-bodied seaman).<sup>35</sup> But, as she bitterly explained, it was party officials who sabotaged her career. In particular, the German Labour Front (Deutsche Arbeits-Front, DAF), which supposedly looked after the interests of all German workers and employees, showed extraordinary intransigence. By using the local police and intimidating the national fishermen’s organisation, the DAF effectively sabotaged her career.

On 10 January 1939, the Hamburg office of the DAF went one step further when it insisted that, although the seamen’s code contained no clause to that effect, Sparbier must not be re-engaged again and that it would soon have legislation adopted to exclude women altogether from work aboard deep-sea fishermen and freighters. Sparbier had no idea of knowing whether this represented a real possibility or was merely bluff, but she immediately appealed to the Reich transport minister, Dorpmüller, requesting that, if indeed women seamen were to be outlawed, at least for her an exception be made.<sup>36</sup> She, once again, stressed her extraordinary determination and commitment to a career at sea and claimed that she had built up such a high reputation that she could get a job any day she wished. She went even so far as to suggest that she might, if she could not achieve her ambition otherwise, leave Germany and sail on a foreign ship.<sup>37</sup>

She clearly realised she put herself into deep water with such a veiled threat and beat a tactical retreat by pointing out that a number of other women sailed on fishing vessels, but acknowledged that all of these were either widows, wives or daughters of masters and mates. But why should her bad luck, viz. that she had no such family connection, prevent her from following her calling – for which she had abandoned her tenured teaching position? *I am committed with body and soul to seafaring and cannot imagine feeling more fulfilled in any other profession, except that of wife.* But if the minister reckoned that Sparbier was capitulating to the triple-K ideology, he was terribly wrong. In an argument which constituted an amalgam of traditional and remarkably modern convictions and demonstrated considerable tactical finesse, Sparbier acknowledged: *Certainly, to be a mother is the highest aim of every woman; but just as to be a father does not totally fulfil a man, so also special qualities exist among women. These existed in all centuries and will always exist.* Developing an historical argument not unlike Muslim feminists,<sup>38</sup> Sparbier quoted many professions in which women had been prominent and stressed that manifold achievements had in no way diminished their femininity. Germany, she claimed, not only possessed female blacksmiths, architects and the famous aviatrix, Emmy Beinhorn, but also honoured heroines from the independence wars against Napoleon, like Johanna Stegen and Eleonore Prohaska.<sup>39</sup> She would not stop fighting for her right to accomplish what the Nazi state promised, viz. to give every rising tendency the possibility to fully realise its potential.

Sparbier also approached other prominent authorities in order to blast the local DAF officials with much heavier artillery. She displayed considerable tactical acumen and lobbying qualities in the choice of her supporters and the construction of her arguments; at the same time she demonstrated the political multipolarity of the Nazi state with its maze of overlapping and competing authorities and pretenders to power. First she went right to the

top, Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess. Hess did not want to get involved in day-to-day problems and washed his hands of the affair. His view was simply that in view of the permission previously given by the Reich transport minister to Sparbier to take her nautical examinations, as long as she fulfilled the requirements, the case was closed.<sup>40</sup> But implicit in his Pontius Pilate attitude was the confirmation that women, and hence Sparbier, could pursue a seafaring career. Sparbier also appealed to the for her relevant second-highest level of power within the DAF, the section "Energie-Verkehr-Verwaltung" (Energy-Transport-Government), and this resulted in a much more immediate and effective push for the reactivation of her career. Significantly, in view of the debate over her importance within the Nazi order, it was Mrs. Scholtz-Klink as leader of the Women's Section of the DAF, to whom Sparbier's case was assigned for a decision; Sparbier, to be sure, had also written directly to Scholtz-Klink. The latter found, in reading Sparbier's own account of affairs that she had been misled by earlier DAF reports, and committed herself to intervene directly with the Hamburg branch and overthrow its decision.<sup>41</sup> In this view she was joined, albeit after a considerable delay, by the Trustee of Labour for the Nordmark region, who also acted as representative for Hermann Goering, the leader of the Four Year Plan, to whose supportive attitudes Sparbier had already earlier drawn attention. The Trustee, the powerful former mayor of Lübeck, Dr. Völtzer, reviewed all earlier political correspondence Sparbier had been able to gather in her favour and concluded that he could see no objections against her employment on German merchant vessels.<sup>42</sup> As Sparbier later put it, *my ridiculously small affair had developed into an affair of state.*<sup>43</sup>

At the same time as she pursued her cause through bureaucratic channels, Sparbier also engaged public opinion. In March 1939 the "Hamburger Fremdenblatt", not the official NSDAP newspaper, carried a long article under the heading "Eine Lehrerin will Kapitän werden" – "A Female Teacher wants to Become a Captain".<sup>44</sup> Although it is clear that the male journalist did not quite know how to handle his subject, the overall thrust was supportive and positive. The account was sympathetic and stressed that no laws existed to exclude Sparbier from her chosen career. Evidently in response, the party organ for seamen, "Der Deutsche Seemann", in its next issue carries a scathing attack on Sparbier and all who supported her.<sup>45</sup> Under the heading "Das hat uns gerade noch gefehlt" ("If you think you've seen everything ...") she was castigated for having cut her hair short in her aspiration to join the *most masculine of all professions*. This could never be reconciled with the customary sense of female beauty amongst *us men*. The exhausting and unhealthy work of fishermen which she performed could not but affect her ability to fulfil her obligations in bearing children and being a full partner in marriage. The author finished his tirade with the threat that *we*, i.e. the seamen's sections of the NSDAP and DAF, would do everything to save the German merchant fleet from such annoying ridiculous experiments. *And we are sure ... that we shall have the voluntary cooperation of German shipowners and the Reichsverkehrsgruppe Seeschifffahrt.*<sup>46</sup>

In the summer of 1939, on the eve of war, Sparbier finally found an employer, Capt. G. Bartelt, who would not yield to threats and intimidation. Until late 1943 (and, after the war, also from 1946 to 1948) she sailed on his small freighter OLIVA, first as ordinary seaman, later with special permission from the Reich Transport Ministry as officer. By March 1941 she had completed the required thirty-six months of sea service and applied for admission to the theoretical part of the navigation course leading to the all-important A5 Diploma, the "Großsteuermannsprüfung", which would qualify her to sail as officer on all vessels and as master in the short-sea trades. On 22 April 1941 the Reich minister of transport ruled, when the navigation school's director Professor Otto Steppes through Hamburg's Reichsstatthalter, Karl Kaufmann, asked for guidance on the legality of Sparbier's enrolment,<sup>47</sup> that no

laws or rules existed to exclude women from examination and that, if she passed successfully, Sparbier should be awarded the diploma. But, in response to a strong challenge from the DAF and the seafarers' section of the Auslands-Organisation, who had monitored Sparbier's progress closely, the minister also acknowledged that, *as seafaring could not be regarded as a profession for women*, care would be taken to ensure that Sparbier's case would remain unique (*daß der Fall Sparbier ein Einzelfall bleibt*). The intervention had come from a prominent DAF official, Wilhelm, who, Sparbier later claimed, had from the beginning been her bitter enemy,<sup>48</sup> and Nahrath, the Gauinspektor for seafaring within the Auslands-Organisation of the NSDAP.<sup>49</sup> Wilhelm, formerly DAF Kreisleiter in Hamburg but now leader of the central DAF Section "Energie-Verkehr-Verwaltung" in Berlin, and Nahrath had used purely ideological arguments. While Nahrath, for the seafarers' section, had simply stated that *aus grundsätzlichen Erwägungen heraus* ("for fundamental reasons") no diploma should be given to Sparbier and she herself be removed from the shipping industry,<sup>50</sup> Wilhelm had elaborated: *It does not conform to the ideology of the Movement to allow a woman to carry out the burdensome function of a ship's officer, also because this would endanger the reputation of the German merchant marine.*<sup>51</sup> While transport minister Dormmüller's right-hand, Münst, rejected their arguments out of hand as they did not specifically refer to Sparbier's case,<sup>52</sup> in his response to Gauleiter Kaufmann and navigation school director Steppes he fully agreed that seafaring was no profession for women. He believed that Sparbier's case was most deserving (she had the required education and *must possess a very strong willpower*) and that she would most likely pass her examination, but exactly because that might encourage others, administrative measures should be taken to ensure that no further women should be accepted as candidates for the school or as officer's apprentices.<sup>53</sup>

But when Sparbier was closest to her goal, intervention from the highest authority, Adolf Hitler himself, threatened to thwart her at the last hurdle. Hitler – by contrast to the Transport Ministry, the Amt Seefahrt of the Auslands-Organisation, and the DAF – had, of course, not followed the "Fall Sparbier" over the years. Equally evidently, he did not discover the case himself but was alerted at the last moment by the desperate intervention by Nahrath's superior, Wilhelm Bohle, the Gauleiter of the Auslands-Organisation. Slating the permission given to Sparbier by the transport minister to allow her to follow her calling in the *widernatürlich wirkenden Betätigung in der Seeschifffahrt* ("unnatural employment in sea shipping"),<sup>54</sup> Bohle insisted that a woman occupying a commanding position on shipboard was not just morally intolerable, but set out the German merchant marine to ridicule, particularly as it was already increasingly crewed by foreigners. Misleadingly puffing himself up to the status of "Hoheitsträger für die deutsche Seeschifffahrt" ("highest authority for the German shipping industry"), Bohle expressed his unyielding ideological opposition to the employment of women at sea, but, acknowledging the transport minister's previous ruling, he was prepared to tolerate Sparbier's admission to the navigation school and even the possible awarding of the A5 Diploma. But he was adamant that she should be removed from the shipping industry as soon as possible.<sup>55</sup> The way in which this controversy between Bohle and Wülfing von Ditten, the responsible official of the transport ministry, was now carried to the Reich Chancellery for resolution fitted neatly into the well-established pattern of Hitler standing aloof from petty squabbles but deciding issues as soon as they were brought to him. But, in this case, things were not to run quite as usual.

In the first instance, Bohle found Hitler more than willing to agree to his view. As decreed to all involved on 6 June 1941 by Martin Bormann, the head of the Parteikanzlei of the NSDAP, Hitler dismissed Sparbier's admission to the navigation school and expelled her forthwith from the merchant fleet.<sup>56</sup> He forced the transport ministry to reverse its earlier

stance and implement his order. As might be expected, it was Sparbier herself who refused to accept the Führer's order and immediately took up the fight to have it rescinded. Ironically, she prepared her appeal to Hitler while continuing to be employed as First Officer on the motor ship *OLIVA* under an emergency permit of the Transport Ministry she had obtained by travelling in person to Berlin. Evidently she was supported by the Kriegsmarine which for the last two years already had commandeered her ship for service in the Baltic and to carry military supplies to Norway. Also after she sent in her appeal, on 28 August 1941, she remained in active service, thus physically defying the Führer's order. Sparbier may have counted herself lucky that her letter was not destroyed on reception, but such destruction of paper work was, after all, not (or rather: not yet) the nature of the Nazi bureaucracy.<sup>57</sup> But bureaucratic mills ground slowly – after all, there was a war in the Soviet Union going on! – and by February 1942 Sparbier was so frustrated she, both in writing and personally, called on the support of Scholtz-Klink, whom she firmly, and correctly, believed to be on her side.<sup>58</sup> The Reichsfrauenführerin's strongly worded intervention came when the process of reviewing Sparbier's case had entered its final stages. In October her appeal had been referred back to the Reich Transport Ministry, who naturally were keen to defend their earlier decision, and suggested that Bormann might actually not have been in possession of all the facts when he presented the “Fall Sparbier” to the Führer with his negative advice.

In her appeal to Hitler, Sparbier was helped very much by the fact that the Transport Ministry, bureaucratically and tactically correctly, appealed to the highest authority of the German state bureaucracy, Dr. Hans Lammers, the Head of Hitler's Reichskanzlei. Institutionally, but also personally, Lammers was Bormann's greatest rival in Hitler's most intimate political sphere; in other words, the “Fall Sparbier” had now become the subject of conflict between the highest levels of party and state in Berlin. Lammers decided to back up his subordinates against Bormann, arguing that, although women in general were to be strictly kept out of shipping, Sparbier's case was indeed so exceptional that she should be allowed both to pursue her career and to take the theoretical examination. In order to make the Führer accept his conclusion Lammers re-interpreted Hitler's seemingly uncompromising order creatively by twisting its few words in such fashion that they appeared to apply more to the exclusion of women in the future rather than to the revision of current practice. And, where they referred to Sparbier's “not to be admitted” to the theoretical part of the navigation course and examination, Lammers suggested that this specifically did not mean that the admission granted by the transport minister should be revoked.<sup>59</sup> “En passant”, he suggested that Hitler might be impressed by Sparbier's sheer determination, but he did not press the point; more important, however, was that she in future should be employed under such circumstances that the fundamental reasons for excluding women at sea *could, as much as possible, be avoided* – a probably unintended, and perhaps subconscious, admission that it might well be argued that Nazi objections were based on purely ideological rather than any specific practical reasons.

With her appeal to the Führer successfully concluded,<sup>60</sup> it could have been expected that Sparbier's further career, though subject to the vagaries of war, would have been plain sailing. Her position as first mate on the *OLIVA*, at least for the foreseeable future, was secure. But, as it happened, the greatest danger she encountered did not come from Allied submarine or air attack but from the persistent, vicious and aggressive prejudice of NSDAP and DAF officials. Within a month of Lammers' decision in her favour, she became involved, as witness, in a disciplinary case before the Stettin Maritime Court, in which a 16-year old ship's boy of the *OLIVA* proceeded against Captain Bartelt. Very soon, it turned out, the real issue at stake was not so much Bartelt's exceeding his authority by slapping the boy, which

infringement of the seaman's code hardly warranted a fully-fledged court case, but his having employed Sparbier. That, it was claimed, had driven him directly to his act; alternatively, having a woman around him had clouded his professional judgement. The presiding judge occasionally had to remind the NSDAP representative, Wegener, who was allowed to participate in the proceedings and interrogated Sparbier in a particularly aggressive manner, that she was not the accused party but merely an expert witness.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, Wegener insisted, a poisonous substance had come aboard the OLIVA that made the proper functioning of captain and crew impossible. And he repeatedly boasted that he would find ways to have her expelled from her profession.

In desperation, Sparbier, once again, contacted the Reichskanzlei in order to have the matter settled once and for always. She was becoming stressed by the unceasing and petty hostility of the party and DAF officials. She asked Lammers to put an end to their harassment campaign, have her admitted to the navigation school for the A5 examination, and to ensure that she, as fully qualified graduate (*vollwertige Patentinhaberin*) would be allowed to find employment in the merchant marine.<sup>62</sup> Should her case be so important as to necessitate Hitler's intervention, which could hardly be expected in view of his preoccupation with the war direction, she begged Lammers to accede at least temporarily to her request, until Hitler would be ready to take a final decision. Lammers did not fail her politically, as he himself wrote to Kaufmann, Dormmüller and Scholtz-Klink. The latter, especially, was keen to have Sparbier travel to Berlin and pay a personal visit to Lammers – didn't the Reichsfrauenführerin in Sparbier have an example of a German woman who was obviously feminine, loyal and uniquely determined and accomplished in the pursuit of her career, an example of the woman she tried to promote through her own position in the Nazi system? Scholtz-Klink even offered to arrange the visit which, because of Sparbier's continuous employment, was not easy to achieve.

What Lammers and Scholtz-Klink, however, could not influence, was slow grinding mill of what passed for Nazi justice, with which, apparently, also the Stettin Maritime Court, in principle a purely professional institution, was infected. When the court, finally, on 8 July 1943, came to its decision, it cleared, not surprisingly, Captain Bartelt of all charges.<sup>63</sup> But in the verdict the court specifically adopted the view that all problems aboard the OLIVA had only arisen because Bartelt had been so unwise as to have employed Sparbier since 1939 and successively as ordinary seaman and the mate until she went ashore to attend the Reich navigation school at Hamburg. During and after the case went through the court, Sparbier had several confrontations with her old enemy, the Kreisleiter of the DAF Auslands-Organisation in Hamburg, Wilhelm, who boasted that he had been the driving force behind all opposition against her. He persisted in attempting to destroy her career and made abundantly clear that he was perfectly prepared to make life intolerably difficult for any owner who chose to employ her and vowed to continue his campaign against her until he was specifically ordered to leave her alone.<sup>64</sup>

Sparbier waited until the Stettin court passed its verdict before she protested bitterly to Bormann about Wilhelm's thwarting his decision, but she had already beforehand directed an equally sharp protest to Karl Kaufmann – who, by this stage, was not only Reichsstattthalter and Gauleiter of Hamburg but also Reichskommissar for the German merchant marine – asking him to use his powers to stop Wilhelm. But Kaufmann was hardly relevant now the last round was being fought in Berlin. Lammers made it point to prod Bormann's office into action,<sup>65</sup> and, finally, on 30 November 1943, more than five years after Sparbier had started her campaign to be allowed to follow her professional calling, her war was won. One of Bormann's underlings, Oberbereichsleiter Blankenburg, informed Lammers and Sparbier herself that *the Auslands-Organisation was requested to ensure that Sparbier*

would encounter no difficulties in the practising of her profession.<sup>66</sup> With this, Bormann's lackey added, *I regard the case as closed.*<sup>67</sup> As soon as she received the green light, Sparbier left the OLIVA to attend the navigation school. Altogether, she had spent more than ten years at sea. Within a month, on 18 December 1943, she was awarded the A5 Diploma.

As the "Fall Sparbier", finally, became part of the historical record, Sparbier's career could finally gain momentum – but at what a time in history! Early in 1944 she was appointed 2nd officer on the Lübeck steamer ESCHENBURG, on which ship, in another twist to her fate, Sparbier met her future husband, Ernst Teetz, who was its second engineer. On 26 August 1944 they married,<sup>68</sup> and immediately afterwards Sparbier was engaged by the Nordreederei to command the motorship NORD 128. With this little coaster she carried munition, supplies and soldiers on the highly dangerous run to Norway and along the Norwegian coast. As the Third Reich collapsed around her, Sparbier, now Captain Teetz, had achieved both her ambitions. She was master of a vessel – and laid the foundations for the family life she, during her long fight for recognition, had acknowledged to be the highest ideal of womanhood. But, true to her earlier convictions, she never thought about giving up her career. In February 1945 she informed Lammers about her marriage and expressed her regret that her responsibilities and the conditions of the time would not allow to visit him in Berlin. Lammers congratulated her warmly but agreed – it was 24 February 1945, "Götterdämmerung" – that the time was not ripe for their long contemplated meeting. But, and one can only guess as to what exactly was in his mind when he responded, he added he would not forget her and that *as soon as the situation has changed for the better*, he would return to the matter.<sup>69</sup> Teetz remained at sea and on 20 March 1945 she was awarded the Iron Cross, 2nd class, with swords.<sup>70</sup> One month later the Red Army took Berlin and the Third Reich collapsed. Hitler and Bormann were dead but Sparbier had her A5 Diploma – for life.

## Conclusion

Annaliese Sparbier won a tremendous victory for herself, but she did not in any way change the general position of women in Germany, either generally or in the merchant marine. In 1938, a number of prominent state and party authorities like Hess, Dormmüller, Völtzer, Scholtz-Klink and, indirectly, also Goering, acknowledged that, in law or otherwise, no objections existed against women taking the A5 navigation examination, with the clear implication that they might become officers and, eventually, captains in the short-sea trades. But when it came to the point, in 1941, that Sparbier – against the expectations of her opponents (one wonders how these bureaucrats would have fared in winter off Iceland on the deck of a small trawler!) – had actually persevered and now was ready to take the final hurdle on her way to becoming a ship's officer and captain, opinion shifted significantly. Dormmüller, Scholtz-Klink and later also Lammers, who doggedly defended Sparbier's case against the absolute exclusion ordered by Hitler (and Bormann) and pursued through quasi-terrorist means by a number of Hamburg party and DAF officials, could only do so by accepting and arguing that Sparbier's case was totally exceptional and should never be construed as constituting a precedent for other women.

As no other female candidate officers existed at the time, it is impossible to argue that Sparbier fought her individual cause at the expense of others, but it is evident from her actions and writings that her motives in taking on the formal and informal patriarchal structures of the Nazi system were entirely personal. There is no evidence from either the Nazi era or later she was influenced by either socialist feminism or, a more likely possibility, the bourgeois feminism of someone like Helene Lange who was particularly influential in Hamburg. It would be an anachronism to consider Sparbier a forerunner of the profes-

nal “conservative feminists” of the 1970s, who attacked male prejudice and hegemony but, believing that no more needed to be done than the creation of a “level playing field”, relied on their own qualities to attain their aims and did not fight for anyone but themselves. But, even if Sparbier did not attempt to break a lance for women in general, her arguments clearly implied that any qualified and determined woman should be fully entitled to, and entirely free in, choosing her professional career. Taking into account the historical, psychological and ideological conditions of life in state-terrorist Nazi Germany, Sparbier thus did strike a major blow for the advancement of women, even though the outer world remained totally ignorant of her feats. And, in a significant pointer to the feminism of the 1960s, she was adamant that she would continue to work also after her marriage.

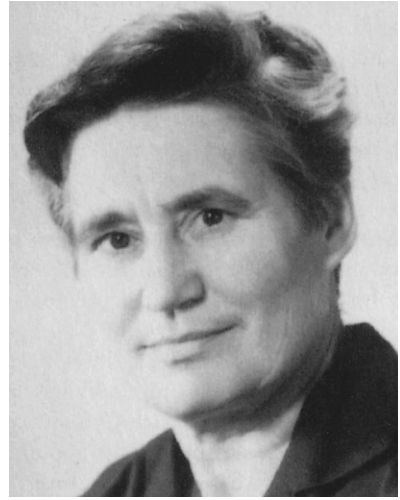


Abb. 2 *Annaliese Teetz, geb. Sparbier*

In addition to raising fundamental questions about the nature of female opposition in general and her own ambitions and position within Germany in particular, Sparbier’s struggle for recognition also confirmed the chaotic nature of the political structure of Nazi Germany. It demonstrated the sheer number and diversity of the overlapping authorities, legally established as well as self-asserted, which under Hitler’s ultimate and arbitrary powers made the Nazi political landscape into a maze that could either baffle and defeat citizens or be used to advantage by playing off rival authorities against each other. If many Nazi leaders were anything, they were pen-pushing and empire-building, often well-educated, bureaucrats who, in a striking illustration of the social-darwinist ideology that so strongly motivated their movement, used the competition between rival authorities and successive levels of authority through the semantics of clever and hairsplitting arguments to further their own careers. Sparbier showed herself amazingly adept at playing the Nazi game, but she would not have lasted without her extraordinary determination and commitment to what she termed her “calling”.

Her case thus confirmed what has become orthodoxy in the recent historiography,<sup>71</sup> viz. the existence of an extraordinary complex and twisted structure of power in the Nazi state, in which state and party were intertwined as if in a viper’s nest. It was possible to appeal many different authorities in both state and party, but it should, of course, be emphasized that, while the party increased had the upperhand over the state, virtually all state functionaries had also acquired positions in either the party and/or Nazi organisations such as the SA or SS. Personal connections and empires over time assumed ever greater importance. Individual functionaries, such as Hamburg’s Gauleiter and Reichsstathalter, Karl Kaufmann, collected ever more functions in both spheres. At the same time, strong conflicts could and did exist between party and state, as was evidenced by the situation respecting the German merchant fleet. In the first instance, it was the responsibility of the Reich transport minister (from 1937 Julius Dormmüller), who also included training and education in his portfolio, but Hermann Goering, through his leadership of the Four Year Plan, in 1938 could also be drawn into the affair; from 1942 Kaufmann became its Reich commissioner. But seamen, as party members, were subordinated to the section Seafaring of the Auslands-Organisation of the NSDAP, and, corporatively, they belonged to the section Shipping of the DAF, which organisation was also directly subordinate to the Führer. For good mea-

sure, the Leader of the DAF, Dr. Robert Ley, was also the highest organisational leader of the NSDAP, while the Reich Labour Ministry by now was little more than a name. As a woman, moreover, Sparbier had also direct access to the Reichsfrauenführerin, Scholtz-Klink, whose general influence, at the best, was modest but who occasionally could help sway matters her way. Sparbier, finally, could and did by-pass all functionaries by appealing directly to Hitler and, until 1941, his deputy, Hess. Sparbier's case, ultimately, became a subject of dispute between Bormann and Lammers, Hitler's top executives for party and state, respectively, from which struggle, uncommonly at that historical stage of the Reich, Lammers emerged as winner.

Equally characteristic for bureaucratic maze, through which Sparbier shrewdly found her way, was the fact that subordinates could and did enjoy a considerable freedom of action. This applied, in general as well as in Sparbier's case, to both leaders and followers. Sparbier herself refused to accept the Führer's verdict and found both Dormmüller and Lammers, for their own reasons, willing to support her against Bormann, the party and the DAF. Alternatively, until November 1943, certain Hamburg officials of the DAF and the party systematically refused to accept ministerial and party rulings. Demonstrating on their level that the Nazi state, as Gellately has argued,<sup>72</sup> largely depended on denunciation for maintaining its internal stability, they went straight to Hitler to denounce her "unnatural" employment, continuously tried to intimidate Sparbier and sabotage her career, and pressurize the manning agencies and shipowners willing to engage her. But for Sparbier's determination and professional competence they would have succeeded.

Finally, it must be asked whether women in other specifically non-female professions could have followed Sparbier's example and made individual breeches in the Nazi stonewall of occupational anti-feminism. Outside her own narrow circle (and a small number of bureaucrats), however, no one knew of her and her struggle. The maritime world was an isolated one, physically and socially. Sparbier's case could never become a source of inspiration, then or at any later stage, for feminists in other sectors. It is, moreover, almost impossible to conceive of any comparable occupation or profession as the crux of her case revolved around the fact that she, after her three years sea time as an ordinary sailor, qualified for the officer's examination which opened the way for her to stand, aboard ship, in absolute command of men. Certainly no industrial comparison can readily be found and the military was altogether too different in nature. Nor did Sparbier or Scholtz-Klink ever mention the agricultural sector, in which numerous women carried the responsibility for the family farm and which showed some sociological similarities with small craft in the short-sea trades, as a possible reference for her case. But, ultimately, it was exactly the ideological legitimacy conferred by that family structure which Sparbier lacked, that made the difference. Ironically, the maritime environment, which so much obsessed Sparbier and at the same time was the fundamental source of her professional problems, also created the bureaucratic and political certainty that her case could be supported as it stood in total isolation and could never be used as a precedent. But even under these conditions, her perseverance, which enabled her to win her war despite losing many battles, was utterly remarkable. Above all, the "Fall Sparbier" was the case of a woman who never took "No!" for an answer from anyone. As her sister-in-law much later wrote, she was *sehr mutig*, very courageous.<sup>73</sup>

## Epilogue

Those who had expected Captain Teetz to experience no hurdles in pursuing her career after the collapse of the Third Reich in the more democratic atmosphere of the Federal Republic of Germany would have been bitterly disappointed, as no doubt she herself was.<sup>74</sup> Soon.



after she had returned from Norway, as the leader of a convoy of small freighters, she returned to the *OLIVA* and for two years sailed on it as 1st officer. An attempt, with her husband, to buy their own coaster, however, failed and, as she was not allowed to return to the fishing industry, she resumed her teaching career.<sup>75</sup> From the early 1950s, however, the strong growth of the German fleet, and the lack of properly qualified officers, gave her seafaring career another lease of life. Teetz now also aimed at obtaining the highest qualification, the “Grosse Kapitänspatent” (A6 Diploma), to qualify as master on the largest ships. As during the Nazi years, however, she had to fight the trade union that included transport in its cast portfolio (“Öffentliche Dienste, Transport und Verkehr” – public service, transport and road traffic)<sup>76</sup> and the bureaucracy in order to be allowed to sit the examination, which she passed in 1955. The discrimination which she had suffered in the process induced her to write a first manifesto on the question of equal rights for women at sea.<sup>77</sup> Until 1968 she sailed for a variety of companies as 1st or 2nd mate, her largest vessels measuring as much as 10,000 dwt. But, although she possessed the highest certification of seafaring competence and had the best references, she was never appointed to a master’s position. The time for female captains in the German merchant fleet did not come until about four decades after she passed her final examination.<sup>78</sup>

Only when her husband fell seriously ill, in 1968, Annaliese Teetz reluctantly retired and settled ashore.<sup>79</sup> Once again, she went back to teaching until her retirement in 1975; her husband Ernst had died four years earlier. Now she took up the struggle for equal rights for women in the shipping industry – against prejudice and resistance on the part of bureaucrats in both government and the shipowners’ association which was hardly less dogmatic than that which she had had to fight during the Nazi era.

As many studies have confirmed,<sup>80</sup> democratic west German society after 1949 still was strongly conservative in women’s issues. The 1958 equal rights legislation specifically excluded the seafaring profession. In 1954 women were allowed to become radio-telegraphists, and in the sixties and seventies many women took this chance for seafaring, but when they married, they usually gave up their profession and went ashore to become a seaman’s wife.<sup>81</sup> The German Democratic Republic, partly inspired by the emancipatory ideals of August Bebel and Clara Zetkin,<sup>82</sup> had in 1960 proclaimed the full equality of men and women in seafaring – at least officially.<sup>83</sup> Disappointed also by the lack of progress under the reformist SPD-FDP coalition government which had come to power in 1969, Teetz and a number of colleagues of the section seafaring of the white-collar “Deutsche Angestellten Gewerkschaft” (German Employees Union) in 1979 began the struggle for full equality through official channels. Indicative of the strength of the male establishment, it took fifteen years until, in 1994, the campaign was finally won. Teetz, however, was not to know that her life’s work had been crowned with victory. Tragically, two years previously, in 1992, she had met her death, drowning in the waters of the river Elbe – the very source of her love for the sea, her career and her determined fight against the Nazi system. She had lived a hard, fighting, and generous life. Those who knew her privately, admired her determination and energy, and described her as normal, friendly and broad-minded.<sup>84</sup> She had been a warmfeeling person, who only regretted two things: never to have been appointed master of a ship by the owners who acknowledged her first-rate qualities, and never to have had any children.<sup>85</sup>

#### Anmerkungen:

- 1 Jaap R. Bruijn: In memoriam: Jan Aart Broeze (1945–2001). In *Tijdschrift voor Zeegechiedenis* 20, Heft 2, 2001, S. 177. – Malcolm Tull: Franklin (Frank) Jan Aart Broeze. In: *Newsletter of the International Commission of Maritime History* No 17, July 2001, S. 7f. – Anthony J. Barker: Driven by a Love of History. *Obituary*. In: *The Australian*, 2.5.2001.

- 2 Frank J. A. Broeze: *De Stad Schiedam. De Schiedamsche Scheepsrederij en de Nederlandse Vaart op Oost-Indië omstreeks 1840*. 'S-Gravenhage 1978.
- 3 Frank Broeze: *Mr Brooks and the Australian Trade. Imperial Business in the Nineteenth Century*. Melbourne 1993; ders.: *Island Nation. A History of Australians and the Sea*. St. Leonards 1998.
- 4 Frank Broeze (Hrsg.): *Brides of the Sea. Port Cities of Asia from the 16th – 20th Centuries*. Kensington 1989; ders. (Hrsg.): *Gateways of Asia: Port Cities of Asia in the 13th-20th Centuries*. London 1997.
- 5 Frank Broeze: Albert Ballin, the Hamburg-America Line and Hamburg. Structure and Strategy in the German Shipping Industry (1886–1914). In: *Deutsches Schifffahrtsarchiv* 15, 1992, S. 135–158. – Siehe auch ders.: Albert Ballin. The Hamburg-Bremen Rivalry and the Dynamics of the Conference System. In: *International Journal of Maritime History* 3, 1991, S. 1–32; ders.: Shipping Policy and Social-Darwinism: Albert Ballin and the Weltpolitik of the Hamburg-America Line 1886–1914. In: *The Mariner's Mirror* 79, 1993, S. 419–436.
- 6 Frank Broeze (Hrsg.): *Maritime History at the Crossroads: A Critical Review of Recent Historiography*. (= Research in Maritime History No 9). St. John's 1995.
- 7 Christine Keitsch: "Die christliche Seefahrt ist ein Männerberuf, daran wird sich nichts ändern!" Der ungewöhnliche Lebenslauf der Annaliese Teetz. In: *Deutsches Schifffahrtsarchiv* 21, 1998, pp. 123–135.
- 8 See note 1.
- 9 See note 2.
- 10 See note 3.
- 11 See note 4.
- 12 See note 5.
- 13 See note 6.
- 14 See note 7.
- 15 See, e.g., Tim Mason: *Women in Germany 1925-1940. Family, Welfare and Work*. In: *History Workshop*, vol. 1, 1976, pp. 74-113, and vol. 2, 1976, pp. 5-32; Jill Stephenson: *The Nazi Organization of Women*. New York, 1980; Dorothee Klinksiek: *Die Frau im NS-Staat*. Stuttgart, 1982; Jill Stephenson: *Women in Nazi Society*. New York, 1985; Claudia Koontz: *Mothers in the Fatherland. Women, the Family and Nazi Politics*. 1986; Ute Frevert: *Women in German History. From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*. Oxford, 1989; Alison Owings: *Frauen. German Women Recall the Third Reich*. New Brunswick, NJ, 1993; Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann: *The Racial State. Germany 1933-1945*. Cambridge, 1994, ch. 17; and Lisa Pine: *Nazi Family Policy, 1933-1945*. Oxford, 1997. For the more traditional views, see, e.g., Richard Grunberger: *The 12-Year Reich. A Social History of the Third Reich*. New York, 1971, chs. 16-17.
- 16 An excellent overview was given in Leila J. Rupp: *Mother of the "Volk"*. The Image of Women in Nazi ideology. In: *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1977, pp. 362-379.
- 17 See, e.g., Roan Ringelheim: *Women and the Holocaust. A Reconsideration of Research: Viewpoint*. In: *Signs.*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1985, pp. 741-761.
- 18 Daniel Goldhagen: *Hitler's Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. New York, 1996.
- 19 Adelheid von Saldern: *Victims or Perpetrators? Controversies about the Role of Women in the Nazi State*. In: David F. Crew (ed.): *Nazism and German Society 1933-1945*. London, 1994, pp. 141-165.
- 20 See, e.g., Koontz: *Mothers in the Fatherland*, ch. 9 (*Courage and Choice: Woman Who Said No*); and *The Ambivalence of Avoidance: Frau Martha Brixius*. In: Owings: *Frauen*, pp. 197-213.
- 21 Nathan Stoltzfus: *Resistance of the heart. Inter-marriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany*. New York, 1996; and Nina Schröder: *Hitlers unbeugsame Gegnerinnen. Der Frauenaufstand auf der Rosenstraße*. Munich, 1997.
- 22 The following account of Sparbier's early life and career at sea is largely based on her letter to the Reichsverkehrsminister, Harksheide near Hamburg, 6 July 1938. In: Bundesarchiv [BA] Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 43 II/253a, fols 108-110v; and her own "Lebenslauf" (written when she was Mrs. Annaliese Teetz), dated Hamburg-Rissen, 14 February 1963. In: Private Collection Mrs. Ilse Sparbier (wife of Annaliese's brother Karlheinrich), Hamburg-Rissen. I gratefully acknowledge Mrs. Sparbier's assistance and her permission to use the papers in her possession. See also Christine Keitsch: "Die Christliche Seefahrt ist ein Männerberuf, daran wird sich nichts ändern!" Der ungewöhnliche Lebenslauf der Annaliese Teetz. In: *Deutsches Schifffahrtsarchiv* 21, 1998, pp. 123-135.
- 23 Die Gemeinden und Straßen des hamburgischen Staatsgebiets ... nach dem Stande von 1936. Hamburg, 1936, p. 63; "Julius Sparbier-Platz, Eimsbüttel, Zustellpostamt 19, Polizeiwache 37, Standesamt 20"; Julius Sparbier: *Die neue Turnhalle des Hamburg-Eimsbütteler Turnverbandes*. In: *Körper und Geist*, 19th year, no. 23, 1 March 1911. See also *Die Welt*, 1 March 1952. The club still is a prominent presence in the Hamburg sporting scene. After the death of Julius, his widow Anna moved to Hamburg-Rissen, Am Leuchtturm 23, which is still the residence of her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Ilse Sparbier.

- 24 In addition to Sparbier's already mentioned letter to the Reichsverkehrsminister, 6 July 1938 (see note 22), her later recorded reminiscences, "Wie ich zur Seefahrt kam und Schiffsoffizier wurde" ["How I Went to Sea and Became a Ship's Officer"], transcribed by Dr. Christine Keitsch, Private Collection, Mrs. Ilse Sparbier; and also "Eine Lehrerin will Kapitän werden". In: *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, 20 March 1939. I owe the latter reference to Ms. Jutta Wernicke, of the *Hamburger Abendblatt*, whose assistance I gratefully acknowledge.
- 25 A realistic impression of the working conditions and economic dependency of the Elbe fisherman during the period 1908-1928 is given in Albert Hotopp's novel "Fischkutter H.F. 13" (re-published with critical and historical essay by Ulrike Jarnach & Ulf-Thomas Lesle. Hamburg, 1986). Interestingly, the main character of the book is Lee, the wife of the fisher, Hinrichsen; but, as was the case in with works in this genre in and outside Germany, women never took to the sea themselves; in fact, it was their waiting for their husbands to return that was often used as a powerful psychological theme. By contrast, the popular author Gorch Fock (who was killed at the Battle of Jutland) in his "Seefahrt tut not" (Hamburg, 1912), a hugely popular work before 1914 and during the Nazi era, painted a purely heroic picture of Hamburg's Finkenwerder fishermen and their community; ironically, it was exactly Gorch Fock's false heroism that helped to inspire Sparbier ("Wie ich zur Seefahrt kam").
- 26 BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 43 II/253a, fol. 108v. All translations from the German have been made by the author.
- 27 On Erikson and his fleet see Georg Kähre: *Under Gustaf Eriksons flagga. Mariehamn*, 1948. These women were a Finnish mate and a Canadian sailor ("Eine Frau will Kapitän werden". In: *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, 20 March 1939).
- 28 The text of four such references is in BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 43 II/253a, fols 110-110v. The quotation is taken from that given by Captain J. Fock, of the Hamburg trawler Hinrich Hey, 12 February 1932.
- 29 Sparbier to Reichsverkehrsminister, Harksheide near Hamburg, 6 July 1938. In: *Ibid.*, fol. 108v.
- 30 For a command in the high-seas (intercontinental) trades the A6 Diploma was (and still is) required.
- 31 See, for example, Staatsarchiv Hamburg, Reederei Hapag, 4710, s.s. Preussen, Hamburg, 22 August 1937 and 5 July 1939; 4465, s.s. Hindenburg, 11 January 1938; or 4418, s.s. Gera, 12 October 1937, 31 March and 22 September 1938; also Modern Record Office, University of Warwick, International Transport Workers' Federation, 159/3/C/a/46, Report of the German ITF group, Antwerp, 16 Juni 1937: Typical for the Aryan employment policy [of Nazi Germany], this steamer [viz. the Hindenburg] now employs Chinese stokers and trimmers.
- 32 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, Deputation für Handel, Schifffahrt & Gewerbe, S XXI, A 16, 57, vol. 1, minutes of meeting, Hafenrat, 10 August 1939.
- 33 Langguth, for the Reichsverkehrsminister, to Sparbier, BA Berlin, 15 August 1938. In: BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 43 II/253a, fol. 111.
- 34 Keller, Gauhauptstellenleiter of the Amt Seefahrt, to Sparbier, Berlin 18 August 1938. In: *Ibid.*, fol. 120v. For the long and tortuous history of the representation of seafarers within the NSDAP, which even included a short-lived autonomous Gau Seefahrt see BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, Sammlung Schumacher, Nr. 291; and NS 22, Nrs. 426 and 746.
- 35 Sparbier to Reichsverkehrsminister, Harksheide, 15 January 1939. In: BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 43 II/ 253a, fol. 114; specific details about the ships on which she served are given in her "Wie ich zur Seefahrt kam".
- 36 BA Berlin, 15 August 1938. In: BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 43 II/253a, fols 114v-115.
- 37 According to her "Wie ich zur Seefahrt kam", Sparbier actually tried to enlist on a foreign vessel.
- 38 See, e.g., Fatima Mernisse: *Women and Islam. An Historical and Theological Inquiry*. Oxford, 1991.
- 39 Biographical sketches of Prohaska (1785-1813) and Stegen (1793-1842) can be found in: *Grosse Frauen der Weltgeschichte*. Murnau, München, Innsbruck, Basel, [c. 1961], pp. 380 and 447.
- 40 Staff of the Führer's Deputy to Sparbier, Munich, 2 May 1939. In: BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 43 II/ 253a, fol. 120v.
- 41 Rilke, Abteilungsleiterin, Frauenamt, DAF Zentralbüro, Berlin, 23 Januar 1939, to Sparbier. In: *Ibid.*, fol. 121.
- 42 Völtzer to Sparbier, Hamburg, 3 July 1939. In: *Ibid.*
- 43 Sparbier: "Wie ich zur Seefahrt kam".
- 44 *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, 20 March 1939 (archive, *Hamburger Abendblatt*).
- 45 *Der Deutsche Seemann*, April 1939 (archive, *Hamburger Abendblatt*).
- 46 The Reichsverkehrsgruppe Seeschifffahrt was the Nazi professional organisation for shipowners; its leader was the Hamburg entrepreneur, John T. Essberger.
- 47 Steppes to Kaufmann, Hamburg, 7 March 1941. In: BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 43 II/253a, fol. 118.
- 48 Sparbier to Kanzlei des Führers, Hamburg, 11 July 1943. In: *Ibid.*, fol. 146.
- 49 From Steppes' reminiscences it becomes evident that also he was frequently attacked by party officials, most likely the same Wilhelm and Nahrath, as he refused to allow any party interference in the curriculum and teaching practices of his school (In: Institut für Schiffsbetrieb, Seeverkehr und Simulation [ISSUS]: 250 Jahre Seefahrtsausbildung. Hamburg, 1999, pp. 67-69).

- 50 Nahrath to Ministerialrat Müntz, Reichsreferent, Abteilung Berufsgestaltung Seeschiffahrt, Reichsverkehrsministerium, Berlin, 9 April 1941. In: BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 43 II/253a, fol. 112.
- 51 Wilhelm to Müntz, Berlin, 9 April 1941. In: *Ibid.*, fol. 113.
- 52 Müntz to Wilhelm, Berlin, 16 May 1941, and Müntz to Nahrath, 16 May 1941. In: *Ibid.*, fols 116-116v.
- 53 Müntz to Reichsverkehrsgruppe Seeschiffahrt, Berlin, 22 April 1941. In: *Ibid.*, fol. 117v. Interestingly, Müntz also declared that women would be allowed to continue to sail, as usual [my underlining, F.B.] as deckhands on short-sea trades. Evidently, the ever greater shortage of seamen had drawn more women to the sea.
- 54 Literally, “widernatürlich” means against nature.
- 55 Quoted in memorandum Müntz, 8 January 1942. In: *Ibid.*, fols 122-122v.
- 56 The order itself has not survived, but is referred to in the Memorandum by the Reichsverkehrsminister, Berlin, 8 Januar 1942. In: *Ibid.*, fol. 120.
- 57 In advance of the arrival of Allied occupation forces many bonfires were lit to consume the evidence of twelve years Nazi rule.
- 58 Sparbier to Scholtz-Klink, Gotenhafen, 13 February 1942. In: BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 43 II/253a, fols 134-136. Scholtz-Klink to Chef der Reichskanzlei, Dr. Lammers, Berlin, 2 April 1942. In: *Ibid.*, fols 129-129v.
- 59 Lammers to Reichsverkehrsminister, Berlin, 8 April 1942. In: *Ibid.*, fols 127-127v.
- 60 See also Reichsverkehrsminister Dorpmüller to Lammers, Berlin, 1 June 1942. In: *Ibid.*, fol. 138; and Wülfing von Ditten to Kaufmann, Reichsstatthalter of Hamburg, and to Reichsverkehrsgruppe Seefahrt, both Berlin, 1 Juni 1942 (in: *Ibid.*, fol. 138v), in which it was made clear that Sparbier was to be allowed the “unlimited” (ohne jede Beschränkung) practice of her profession.
- 61 Sparbier to Lammers, Gotenhafen, 1 May 1942. In: *Ibid.*, fol. 131.
- 62 *Ibid.*, fol. 132.
- 63 The following account is based on Sparbier’s letter to Bormann, Hamburg, 11 July 1943, with copies to Lammers, Dorpmüller, and Scholtz-Klink. In: *Ibid.*, fols 146-149.
- 64 Sparbier to Kaufmann, Hamburg-Blankenese, 3 June 1943. In: *Ibid.*, fol. 150.
- 65 See, e.g., the responses of the Kanzlei des Führers to Lammers, Berlin, 13 August and 21 October 1943, and the ms. note of one of his own officials, dated 7 October 1943. In: *Ibid.*, fols 152-153.
- 66 Blankenburg to Lammers, Berlin, 30 November 1943. In: *Ibid.*, fols 154-154v.
- 67 ISSUS: 250 Jahre Seefahrtsausbildung, p. 88; the diploma is held by Mrs. Ilse Sparbier.
- 68 Captain A. Teetz to Lammers, Drontheim, 9 February 1945; Adreßbuch Hamburg 1943. Hamburg, 1943, p. 1675: Ernst Teetz, Schiffsingenieur, Eimsbütteler Straße 50.
- 69 SS-Obersturmbannführer Rauch, for Lammers, to Captain A. Teetz, Berlin, 24 February 1945. In: BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 43 II/253a, fol. 158.
- 70 Christine Keitsch: Frauen zur See. Weibliche Arbeitskräfte an Bord deutscher Handelsschiffe seit 1945. (Exhibition catalogue). Flensburg, 1997, p. 41.
- 71 The nature of the “Hitler State” is also the subject of a rich historiography. For a judicious discussion see Ian Kershaw: *The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*. 3rd ed., London, 1993, ch. 4; see also the earlier Gerhard Hirschfeld and Lothar Kettenacker (eds): *The Führer State. Myth and Reality*. Stuttgart, 1981.
- 72 Robert Gellately: *The Gestapo and German Society. Political Denunciation in the Gestapo Case Files*. In: *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 60, 1988, pp. 654-694; see also his *Denunciations in Twentieth-Century Germany. Aspects of Self-Policing in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic*. In: *Ibid.*, vol. 68, 1996, pp. 931-967.
- 73 Letter to the author, Hamburg-Rissen, 9 November 1999.
- 74 This paragraph is based on Teetz: *Lebenslauf; Die Welt*, 1 March 1952; *Welt am Sonntag*, 29 August 1954; *Bild Zeitung*, 28 June 1990 (archive, *Hamburger Abendblatt*), and Keitsch: *Christliche Seefahrt*, pp. 130-134.
- 75 From the reminiscences of her students during that time it becomes evident that she was an inspiring teacher with unorthodox and innovative programs (newspaper clipping, “Nachruf, Ehemalige Blankeneser Schüler nehmen Abschied”, undated [early April 1992], collection Mrs. Ilse Sparbier); see also Keitsch: *Christliche Seefahrt*, p. 134.
- 76 *Bild Zeitung*, 28 August 1952 (archive, *Hamburger Abendblatt*).
- 77 Keitsch: *Christliche Seefahrt*, pp. 132-133.
- 78 *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- 79 *Welt am Sonntag*, 18 May 1969 (collection Mrs. Ilse Sparbier).
- 80 See, e.g., Eva Kolinsky: *Women in West Germany. Life, Work and Politics*. Oxford, 1989; John Ardagh: *Germany and the Germany*. Harmondsworth, 1991, pp. 189-203; Eva Rosenhaft: *Women in Modern Germany*. In: Gordon Martel (ed.): *Modern Germany Reconsidered*. London, 1992, pp. 140-158; and Gisela Kaplan: *Contemporary Western European Feminism*. London, 1992, ch. 4. On the

“Remasculinization” of Germany in the 1950s see the Forum section of *Signs*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1998, esp. Robert G. Meller’s “Introduction”, pp. 101-106.

81 Keitsch: *Frauen zur See*, pp. 75; and Engelken, Hannelore: *Zwischen Hamburg und Yokohama*. Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schiffsfunkerin. Hamburg, 1998.

82 An overview of the situation in the GDR is offered in M. Allendorf (et al.): *Women in the German Democratic Republic. On the 100th Anniversary of August Bebel’s Book “Women and Socialism”*. Dresden, 1978.

83 Keitsch: *Frauen zur See*, pp. 42-43.

84 Keitsch: *Christliche Seefahrt*, p. 134.

85 Letter from Mrs. Ilse Sparbier to author, 9 November 1999.

## »Der Fall Sparbier« oder: Die Frau, die Hitler die Stirn bot

### Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit der Bedeutung des außergewöhnlichen Falls der Annaliese Teetz (geborene Sparbier, 1910–1992), Nazi-Deutschlands einziger Kapitänin, und der gleichfalls außergewöhnlichen Art, mit der sie kämpfte und die nationalsozialistische Bürokratie benutzte, um ihre professionelle Karriere voranzutreiben. Fest von ihrer seemännischen Berufung überzeugt, ließ sich Annaliese Sparbier durch die Vorurteile und Gegnerschaft seitens der Schifffahrtsindustrie und vieler NSDAP-Funktionäre nicht einschüchtern. Nachdem Hitler besonderen Befehl gegeben hatte, sie aus der Seefahrt zu entfernen, bot sie dem Führer die Stirn und machte sich mit Erfolg die systemimmanenten Eigenheiten des nationalsozialistischen Staatsapparates zunutze. Sie setzte sich schließlich gegen höchste Nazikreise durch, machte ihr Steuermannsexamen und wurde Kapitän eines kleinen Frachters im norwegischen Kriegsgebiet. Annaliese Sparbiers einzigartiger Fall trägt bei zur Vielfalt der Reaktionen von Frauen auf das Naziregime, zur Entstehung einer feministischen Bewegung in Deutschland sowie zur Mitwirkung von Frauen an der Seefahrt.

## «Le cas Sparbier» ou la femme qui défia Hitler

### Résumé

L'article traite de la signification d'un cas extraordinaire, celui d'Anneliese Teetz (née Sparbier, 1910–1992), la seule femme-capitaine de l'Allemagne nazie, et de la manière également extraordinaire avec laquelle elle se battit et se servit de la bureaucratie national-socialiste afin de mener sa carrière. Persuadée de sa vocation maritime, Anneliese Sparbier ne se laissa intimider ni par les préjugés ni par les adversaires de l'industrie maritime, pas plus que par de nombreux fonctionnaires NSDAP. Après qu'Hitler ait donné l'ordre spécial de l'éloigner de la marine, elle défia le Führer et utilisa avec succès les particularités inhérentes au système de l'appareil d'état national-socialiste. Elle finit par s'imposer contre la volonté des hauts cercles nazis, passa son examen de timonier et devint capitaine d'un petit cargo, dans la région de Norvège en guerre. Le cas unique d'Anneliese Sparbier révèle la variété de réactions dont firent preuve les femmes envers le régime nazi, le début du mouvement féministe en Allemagne ainsi que la contribution des femmes dans la marine.