

CHAPTER 10

Social Aid and Gender in Post-War Denmark: Women and the Practices of the Compensation Law, 1945–1948

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The occupation from 1940–45 left a profound impact on large segments of the Danish population. Several thousand Danes had participated in the resistance movement, and consequently many were forced to go into hiding, flee to Sweden, or endure internment in German concentration camps. Ordinary citizens also experienced the occupation through economic hardship and personal loss resulting from the presence of the occupying forces in the country. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the state was left with an immense socio-economic responsibility requiring Herculean effort to amend: the reconstruction of Danish society. As early as four days after liberation, it was announced that special offices would be established across Denmark. These offices operated under the newly established Ministry for Special Affairs and were tasked with providing immediate aid to the many victims

of the occupation. The objective was to enable citizens to return to the labour market or resume their respective educations as swiftly as possible while also ensuring legal compensation for personal injury, pain and suffering, or damage to property.

Although Denmark was not engaged in direct conventional warfare, approximately 6,000 Danish citizens lost their lives as a result of participation in the resistance movement, from imprisonment in concentration camps, serving as soldiers, police officers, or seamen, or as victims of aerial bombardment.¹ This meant that thousands of Danish women became widows or sole providers due to their husbands dying or being maimed to such an extent that they were unable to work. In addition, a considerable number of Danish women suffered debilitating financial losses or were forced to interrupt their employment or education as a consequence of the war.

The legal basis for social aid and compensation after the war was established in *Act No. 475 of 1 October 1945 on Compensation to Victims of the Occupation*. The legislation enabled numerous categories of victims, both men and women, to apply for compensation mitigating losses or injuries sustained during the war. At the same time, it excluded certain individuals from receiving aid including those who were deemed “pro-German” and “asocial.” The provisions of the Act were strongly influenced by the resistance movement’s position on the political scene in the post-war period, as well as by the prevailing conceptions of gender roles and breadwinner responsibilities of the 1940s.

Most applicants were men, but women also applied for compensation and social aid through the new provisions. This study examines how female applicants were treated in compensation proceedings and whether they experienced discrimination because of their gender. It also explores whether the political negotiations underlying the Act on Compensation to Victims of the Occupation had an impact on the processing of these women’s cases. This study is based on 143 cases involving women, processed between 1945 and 1948. Although women constituted a clear minority of approximately five per cent of the total number of individuals who applied for compensation after the Second World War, it remains important to shed light on how they were treated by the state at a point in time when the societal role of women was still largely defined as that of a homemaker rather than the primary breadwinner. Because of the 1940s traditional family roles, the female applicants have been divided into different categories based on their marital status in this study.²

THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK BEHIND SOCIAL AID FOR VICTIMS OF THE OCCUPATION

During the final months of the Second World War, the Danish Freedom Council had been working to establish a committee tasked primarily with devising how social aid should be administered and coordinated once the many imprisoned members of the resistance movement and other victims of the occupation had returned to everyday life after the war.³ When the liberation Government was formed, the Freedom Council proposed the creation of a special ministry to assume responsibility for the extensive social tasks anticipated to reveal themselves in the aftermath of the war.

The Prime Minister of the Liberation Government, Vilhelm Buhl, addressed this directly at the opening of Rigsdagen on 9 May 1945. In his speech to the nation, he declared: “In this time of reconstruction that now lies before us, major economic and social problems will demand resolution. Although our country has fortunately been spared the ravages of war, the occupation has left deep marks on every aspect of our social life.”⁴

The announcement was subsequently broadcast by radio, where it was stated in addition that the so-called Offices for Special Affairs (*Kontorer for Særlige Anliggender*) would be established throughout the whole country. These offices were intended to provide immediate assistance to the victims of the occupation. In addition to the required extensive social work, the Central Office for Special Affairs (*Centralkontoret*) was also responsible for compiling a report of missing and deceased resistance members, assisting in helping the returning Danish refugees from Sweden, procuring clothing and household goods for affected families, and organising convalescent care for citizens suffering from nerve damage.⁵

Case processing at the Offices was conducted in the following manner: an applicant, or a representative acting on the applicant’s behalf, would visit one of the offices. They were then asked to fill out a form where they were to provide relevant details such as the applicant’s name, age, marital status, family situation, housing conditions, annual income, nature of alleged injuries, affiliation with the resistance movement, and so forth. In many respects, the application form resembled the same forms used at the social welfare offices at the time. However, the key difference was that assistance at the Offices for Special Affairs was not universally accessible but rather it was extraordinary and discretionary. This also meant that applicants could be rejected outright if they were not deemed “worthy” of receiving aid. Such judgments often affected individuals with questionable national loyalties. This practice also indicates that case processing

during the first months following the end of the war was carried out in a rather improvised manner.⁶

Decisions regarding disbursements made by the Offices for Special Affairs during the period from 1 June 1945 to February 1946 were only temporary. Determinations pertaining to the payment of longer-term social aid would be finalised once legislation governing this area was drafted, adopted and enacted.

THE FEMALE APPLICANTS IN 1945

As the section above explains, the first victims of the occupation had to apply for social aid through the Offices for Special Affairs in the quick order following the end of the war. In the study presented in this chapter a total of 1,308 compensation cases have been reviewed all of which originated from the Offices for Special Affairs. In fifty-five of these cases, the applicant was a woman. The female applicants comprised thirty war widows, fourteen single female breadwinners, and eleven married women. The processing of their cases was generally conducted in an objective manner, and the female applicants' personal circumstances and financial information were presented and assessed in accordance with the statutory provisions governing eligibility for compensation, in the same manner as applications submitted by men. However, gendered arguments in support of the granting of social aid are notably present in certain cases. This initial phase may also be described as the "ad hoc phase," as was the case in the previous chapter and the evidence provided here illuminates the tendency of the time to award women larger compensation sums than they would, for example, have received through a municipal social welfare office.⁷

The war widows

The war widows constituted the largest group of female applicants, and this is most likely causally linked to the circumstance they found themselves in, having suddenly lost their family breadwinner which put them in acute need of social aid. A considerable proportion of the war widows were also relatively young at the time of submitting their application, and many had children, whom they were required to provide for. The widows' need for social aid was thus marked by sudden financial hardship because of the death of their husbands. Most widows applied for death compensation; however, such compensation could only be disbursed once the Compensation Act was fully enacted. Consequently, they typically received temporary weekly or monthly maintenance payments through the Offices. These payments were intended to cover rent, fuel, food, and clothing.

As in the parliamentary debate regarding the Compensation Act (see below), particular consideration was also shown towards war widows in the administrative processing of claims. This is evident in several case files, for example, in the case of the widow Tinne Svendsen. Her husband was shot and killed during a confrontation with German soldiers on the day of liberation in Denmark. The report makes it clear that the caseworkers felt a responsibility to provide for the surviving dependants. It is stated explicitly in the report that the: "... application is hereby made for us to assume responsibility for the maintenance of the above-mentioned Svendsen's surviving dependants."⁸ A similar consensus appears in the case of a 21-year-old widow whose husband died at the hospital after having been subjected to severe mistreatment while being interrogated by the Gestapo. The widow had found employment as a telephone operator, earning 250 kroner per month (6,400 kroner or € 860 in 2026 values).⁹

The case officers considered it inappropriate that she should hold what they described as "a scarcely enviable position," while at the same time caring for her young child at home. The case report includes the following comments: "Considering that her husband gave his life for the liberation of our country and suffered greatly (...), and that the widow has naturally been subjected to severe nervous strain, it is found reasonable that a better and more secure financial arrangement for her and her child be established as soon as possible."¹⁰ The administrative records also directly suggest that some of these widows were not regarded as capable of supporting themselves in their husbands' absence.

In other cases, the reports emphasise the destitute conditions under which widows were forced to live without their breadwinner. A widow from Tønder applied for aid after losing her husband, who had been a German citizen conscripted into German military service in 1943 and had fallen at the front a few months later. The widow was solely responsible for supporting three children. The report states that she had: "... sustained life through casual labour, in the autumn by potato lifting and similar work..."¹¹ and that her elderly foster parents had been obliged to support her and the children for an extended period. Although neither the widow nor her deceased husband were Danish citizens, she was nevertheless granted compensation, as the caseworkers assessed that she would be unable to provide for her family on her own. This example also indicates that the administrative practices within the Offices for Special Affairs was comparatively lenient, since non-Danish citizens would scarcely have been approved by the Compensation Council, where the guidelines were more strictly defined. It is also noteworthy that, rather than encouraging war widows to enter

the labour market, the prevailing view was that it was preferable for them to subsist on social aid. This attitude on the part of the state was likely related to the relatively small number of Danish men who died during the Second World War, meaning that the male casualty rate did not constitute a significant shortage of labour in Denmark. Consequently, demand for female labour in the Danish post-war period was simply not there, which is the opposite of the trends that were observed in countries such as the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, or France.¹² As a result and to a considerable extent, many Danish war widows maintained their traditional roles as homemakers, while being supported financially by the state.

The Single Female Breadwinners

Fourteen of the female applicants consisted of unwed, divorced, and other sole providers. The most frequent grounds for compensation were claims for non-pecuniary injury and monthly or weekly maintenance payments. The need for social aid expressed by these women typically arose as a result of reduced earning capacity, unemployment, or illness. Women in this category were self-supporting and thus dependent upon being in good health to generate an income. Several of the reports indicate that the authorities demonstrated considerable understanding and empathy for this group of women.

One such example concerns a 51-year-old single woman who applied for compensation for personal injury after losing her right eye in connection with a street bombing. The injuries she sustained were grave enough for medical personnel to declare her disabled. She had already received 5,000 kroner (129,750 kroner or €17,360).¹³ from her accident insurance but she subsequently encountered financial difficulties due to her reduced capacity for work. The woman was a trained dental technician but had been compelled to close her practice because of her impaired vision. The report notes that the Offices had inquired “whether some form of maintenance might be granted, as her earning capacity has been reduced by 100 per cent.”¹⁴ This request illustrates a clear willingness on the part of the authorities to help. A similar readiness to intervene is evident in a case concerning a 20-year-old unmarried woman who sought compensation for personal injury. She had been struck in the face by a bullet during a shootout in the town of Vejle and was no longer able to continue her employment as a trainee in a sandwich shop. She was promptly awarded maintenance of 250 kroner (6,400 kroner or € 860)¹⁵ per month, accompanied by the remark that: “... the applicant is entirely unfit for work and should receive assistance as soon

as possible.”¹⁶ These statements indicate that the state authorities recognised that single women were expected to support themselves through employment and that the loss of earning capacity therefore warranted immediate financial support.

The Married Women

Eleven married women applied for aid from the Offices for Special Affairs. The low number of applicants is likely attributable to the fact that married women still had a living breadwinner and therefore did not face acute need for help. Their needs also differed from those of the other female applicants insofar as they primarily applied for compensation for personal injury and property damage. Two cases concerned women who had been shot in the leg and struck by shrapnel respectively on 4 May 1945 during disturbances involving German soldiers in Kalundborg.¹⁷ Another female applicant sought compensation for personal injury after her son had been seriously wounded during an air raid.¹⁸ These cases concerned innocent victims of the occupation period, and there were no gender-related considerations in their files.

When the Offices for Special Affairs were finally dissolved in May 1946, they had disbursed social assistance amounting to approximately 8,8 million kroner¹⁹ (229 million kroner or €30,5 million).²⁰

Law No. 475 of 1 October 1945, on Compensation for Victims of the Occupation

The Minister for Special Affairs, Mogens Fog, introduced the bill on compensation for victims of the occupation period in the Danish Parliament (Folketinget) on 19 September 1945. For the first time, the extent of the social aid was concretely defined and specified within a fixed legal framework. The content of the bill outlined the rules and procedures that were to be followed when citizens submitted their claims for compensation. The Act comprised five sections, which further specified who was eligible to apply for compensation and which application forms claimants were required to complete.

The five sections addressed the following categories of compensation:

Section 1: *Compensation in Connection with Disability and Death.*

Section 2: *Honorary Payments.*

Section 3: *Compensation for Suffering and Injury in Connection with Deprivation of Liberty, etc.*

Section 4: *Compensation for Damage to Property.*

*Section 5: Assistance for the Commencement or Continuation of Business or Education, as well as for the Restoration of Particular Losses.*²¹

These sections were specifically designed to address the wide range of needs that had arisen in the aftermath of the occupation. The Danish Compensation Act ultimately became one of the most comprehensive schemes of its kind in Europe. Danish historian Sofie Lene Bak argues that this was because the Danish state felt a strong sense of responsibility towards its population, whom it had been unable to protect from German mistreatment and abuse during the occupation.²²

WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE COMPENSATION ACT

There were several ways that women could obtain social aid under the newly adopted Act. Certain provisions were even specifically directed towards women. This is evident in Section 1, which concerns compensation in connection with disability and death. Section 1, subsection B, stipulated that those entitled to death benefits include:

“Survivors of Danish citizens who have lost their lives (...). ‘Survivors’ shall be understood as widows (widowers) and children; if none such exist, other close relatives whom the deceased supported or to whose maintenance he had provided, or under normal circumstances would have provided, substantial and more permanent contributions.”²³

This provision thus entitled widows, mothers, and other family members of individuals who lost their lives during the war to apply for compensation. The final lines of subsection B further opened the possibility for other persons who had been previously supported by the deceased to seek compensation. This included girlfriends, fiancées, former wives, or children born out of wedlock. Women who applied for compensation under Section 1 were often not directly involved in the resistance movement during the war. Rather, they were women whose lives and daily circumstances had been profoundly affected by the loss of a breadwinner, at a time when women had not yet fully become an integrated part of the labour market.

Another way that women could receive aid was through the granting of honorary payments. These were granted either as an annual payment or as a lump sum. In 1945, the fixed amount for the annual, lifelong honorary gift was 800 kroner (20,760 kroner or € 2,800)²⁴ per year, with an additional supplement of 200 kroner (5,200 kroner or € 700)²⁵ per child under the age of eighteen.²⁶ The

scheme of honorary payments illustrates how women who had not themselves participated in the resistance movement were nevertheless awarded recognition and financial support on the basis of their husbands' contributions. These provisions of the Compensation Act also reflect the then-current and prevailing societal perceptions of gender roles, in which women were more readily regarded as dependants rather than being seen as active participants in the resistance struggle.

The wording of the Act also conveys the extent of the influence that was exercised by former resistance members on the Danish political scene after liberation. This influence is particularly evident in the pronounced pathos arguments and language-use directed towards the widows and relatives of deceased resistance fighters. A clear consensus emerged that war widows were entitled to financial aid because their husbands had died while carrying out an honourable duty. This perception of war widows may also help explain why other categories of female victims of the occupation were not met with the same degree of understanding and compassion by the state in the processing of their compensation claims.

THE POLITICAL DISCOURSES ABOUT WOMEN AND THEIR IMPACT ON RELEVANT COMPENSATION CASES

Within the social constructivist approach, the linguistic dimension is accorded particular significance in relation to the political decision-making processes. Discursive power may prove decisive in determining which political issues are highlighted as important and which are excluded from the public or political debate altogether.²⁷ The significance of discursive power was clearly manifested in the parliamentary debate on the Compensation Act. The bill underwent its first reading in the Danish Parliament on 25 September 1945. Eleven spokespersons from various political parties were present. None of them were women. This is odd given that female politicians usually employed a relatively substantial amount of speaking time in debates concerning social policies during the 1940s. However, the relative absence of women from the political and public sphere was striking in the immediate post-war years.²⁸

In the first reading of the bill, two overarching themes can be identified in the debate among the political spokespersons: the state's sense of guilt and "debt of honour" towards members of the resistance movement, and the state's sense of responsibility towards the resistance fighters' surviving relatives, with special focus on those who had lost a breadwinner during the war. These themes relate to masculine and feminine roles respectively, whereby the stereotypical mascu-

line role as breadwinner along with protector, and the stereotypical feminine role as housewife, were maintained and reproduced in the political debate. The discourses concerning women were, overall, tied to the loss of a breadwinner. In particular, war widows were referred to as victims in connection with their husbands' deaths or disabilities. These discourses contributed to elevating the resistance struggle to such an extent that both resistance fighters and their widows were granted special status in the post-war discussions regarding social aid.²⁹ Consequently, resistance fighters were foregrounded at the expense of other categories of victims of the occupation.

These discourses confined women to a traditional role as housewives without employment and framed them as a "problem" for the state insofar as they were no longer able to provide for themselves without a husband. In the debate, women were thus discussed exclusively in relation to their husbands. The core concern of the political negotiations was the male compatriots who deserved honour and compensation for their wartime efforts. Honour associated with participation in the resistance struggle therefore assumed greater prominence than gender in the political debate. As a result, women were effectively treated as a homogeneous group, whereas the various categories of male compensation recipients were differentiated in greater detail, reflecting an awareness of the many types of male victims. Female resistance fighters were entirely absent from the debate. Women active in gender politics were likewise not given a platform or voice in the parliamentary deliberations surrounding the bill, which was directly caused by women lacking political representatives capable of articulating and nuancing women's experiences during the occupation.

SOCIAL AID AFTER 1945: THE COMPENSATION COUNCIL AND THE DIRECTORATE FOR ACCIDENT INSURANCE

With the enactment of the Compensation Act, the Compensation Council (*Erstatningsrådet*) was established as the new supreme administrative authority responsible for the compensation scheme. The Compensation Council administered claims for non-pecuniary damages and property damage, which involved the payment of lump-sum compensations, whereas the Directorate of Accident Insurance (*Direktoratet for Ulykkesforsikring*) was responsible for compensations awarded meant to cover extended periods.³⁰ Both authorities were state institutions operating under the Ministry of Social Affairs. Within the Compensation Council, the application procedure and case processing practices were organised in such a way that cases were reviewed on a weekly basis.³¹ Typically, up to thirty

cases were placed on the agenda for each meeting. At the council meetings, the claims were presented and assessed based on the information provided in the application forms, in light of previous decisions, the applicant's financial circumstances, and supporting witness statements.³²

Female applicants through The Compensation Council 1946-1948

A total of 1,471 cases from the archives of The Compensation Council were reviewed in connection with this study, of which eighty-eight involved a female applicant. Among the female applicants, forty-four were war widows, thirty-six were single female breadwinners, and eight were married women.

The War Widows

The war widows constituted the largest group of female applicants. Their need for social aid appears to have been broadly comparable to that observed in the Offices for Special Affairs. The war widows most frequently applied through Form 1A (death compensation) and Form 5C (substantial financial loss). An emerging tendency in the cases processed by the Compensation Council was that a number of applications submitted by women were recommended for rejection. Conversely, women who were granted financial compensation were often awarded sums under several different claim forms. This practice is illustrated, for example, by the case of a 24-year-old widow with a young child, who was awarded death compensation, an honorary payment, educational assistance, and a monthly maintenance allowance. The Compensation Council held that it was incumbent upon them to assume responsibility for alleviating the widow's "economic and existential difficulties."³³

The Single Female Breadwinners

The thirty-six female breadwinners were widely distributed in terms of age, ranging from eighteen to sixty-five years and beyond. Given the composition of this applicant group, there was also considerable variation in the reasoning for their claims. Most frequently, the women applied through Form 5C, likely because this category was less specific than the others and open for interpretation. Several Jewish women, for example, applied for grants to cover debts accumulated during their exile as refugees in Sweden. Others used Form 5C to claim compensation for stolen valuables or reimbursement for loans they had been compelled to extend during the occupation.

One divorced woman with four children needed aid to re-establish her personal financial situation. In 1944, she had been wanted by the Gestapo for assisting Jews in escaping to Sweden. She subsequently fled to Sweden herself in order to avoid arrest. Upon returning to Denmark, she discovered that her home had been burglarised. The conclusion of her case stated that “the applicant must presumably, insofar as her children are concerned, be obliged to re-establish the capital.”³⁴

In this instance, the woman was regarded as the primary family provider, and this assessment was used as grounds for granting her aid. A similar willingness to recognise and support women in the provider role is evident in another case concerning a 51-year-old woman. She applied for a grant of 10,000 kroner (259,500 kroner or € 34,700)³⁵ to cover her loss of earnings and the purchase of a new car. She worked as a doctor and had played an active role in the resistance movement. Since liberation, she had suffered from illness and reported severe financial hardship, including being unable to afford new clothing for her children. Several members of the Compensation Council maintained that the requested amount should be granted: “... in order to provide the applicant with both the moral and financial support that would help stabilise her future.”³⁶

While some women in this category were self-supporting, others were financially dependent on fathers, sons, former husbands, or cohabitants. Such male familial relationships were consistently factored into the assessment of claims. In several cases, the financial circumstances of fathers or sons were documented, and decisions were made based on the male relative’s economic situation rather than that of the woman herself. One such case concerned a single mother whose son had been killed in a street riot.

The deceased son had supported both his mother and siblings. The report noted that: “... the household had to a considerable extent been maintained by the deceased, who was ‘like a father to the home.’”³⁷ In another case, a single woman applied for 5,908 kroner (153,300 kroner or €20,500)³⁸ to cover expenses incurred during her flight to Sweden as a Jewish refugee. Because she was near retirement age, she was supported by her sons. In processing her claim, the Council dismissed her own account and instead referred to the case file of one of her sons, noting that: “... the applicant has had difficulty accounting for her circumstances.”³⁹

This apparent mistrust of female applicants’ financial competence is discernible in several cases. For example, a 35-year-old unmarried woman applied for aid to repay loans. The Council considered that her finances might be intermin-

gled with those of her father and conducted a thorough investigation to ensure that she was financially independent. The case concluded that: "... the applicant is entirely without means and does not share finances with her father."⁴⁰ In another case involving an unmarried woman, her father's financial records and tax certificate were submitted to determine whether she should be awarded the 3,000 kroner (78,000 kroner or €10,450)⁴¹ she applied for. The sum represented money that was confiscated at the time of her arrest in April 1945 for illegal transport by sea to Sweden. On the basis of her father's financial prosperity, the application was rejected on the grounds that the loss did not constitute a substantial financial hardship. This practice indicates that, even when female applicants were educated, employed, and self-supporting, the financial circumstances of male relatives could, in certain instances, prove decisive for the outcome of their cases.

The Married Women

The smallest category was married women. These applications almost exclusively concerned compensation intended to cover various loans incurred during their husbands' absence. In one case, a married woman applied for 2,000 kroner (52,000 kroner or € 7,000)⁴² to repay loans she had contracted while her husband had resided in Sweden to avoid arrest. During his absence, she had received a monthly allowance of 450–500 kroner (11,500 –13,000 kroner or around € 1,600)⁴³ from the municipal social office; however, as noted in the case file, these funds proved insufficient. The report commented: "In the opinion of the appointed authority, the wife fell into panic following her husband's flight, and the money slipped through her fingers."⁴⁴ Although the woman was granted compensation, she ultimately received only 500 kroner. The justification stated: "The incurred debt is undoubtedly highly substantial, but as it is solely the wife's panic and lack of financial understanding that caused the indebtedness, we presumably cannot provide full coverage."⁴⁵ The Compensation Council assessed the woman's financial difficulties as self-inflicted and determined that she did not face an urgent need for full debt relief, given that a male breadwinner had returned to the household and could once again assume responsibility for managing the family's finances.

Gender Bias and rejected Female Applicants

Out of 143 cases involving female applicants, no fewer than forty-five were recommended for rejection. The most frequent ground for refusal was "§65" (pro-German sympathies). In these cases, many women were stigmatised based

on allegations that they had associated with German soldiers during the war. Such stigmatisation, often accompanied by insinuations of moral impropriety, is not observed in the same manner in cases involving male applicants. Historian Anette Warring has pointed out that women's sexuality shifted from being a private matter to becoming a public and political issue, as many (former) members of the resistance movement perceived relationships with Germans as an affront to national honour and allegiance. Consequently, this form of gendered discrimination was experienced exclusively by women.

A comparison of male and female cases also reveals more subtle examples of gender bias. One such example can be found in two cases concerning a man and a woman, both of whom suffered from psychological difficulties in the post-war period.

The male applicant sought financial support from the Compensation Council to establish an independent business. The Council was informed that he had prior convictions for filing a false report of burglary and that he had set fire to the residence in which his family lived as tenants, destroying a considerable amount of household property and clothing. The assessment by the Council stated: "Prone to entering states of mental tension. His act of arson must presumably be understood as a tension-release reaction."⁴⁶ A female applicant likewise applied for a grant to start her own business. During the occupation, she had been affiliated with the resistance movement and had lived underground for an extended period of time. As a result, she suffered from what was described as "poor nerves" and had been unable to work in any significant capacity. She experienced fainting spells and dizziness. The medical evaluation of the woman stated: "She was found to be self-important, theatrical, highly reactive, not depressive."⁴⁷

This constitutes a clear example of how some women's behaviour was pathologized and morally framed in ways that differed markedly from the interpretation of similar or more severe conduct in male applicants. The actions conducted by the male were interpreted through a clinical lens, his violence explained as the product of psychological strain, while the symptoms of the woman were reframed as indications of her temperament and personality. In this way, diagnosis functioned not simply as a medical judgment, but as a gendered framework, one that contextualised men's behaviour while implicitly passing judgment on women's.⁴⁸

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Female applicants were, to some extent, assessed based on their gender. The presence of gendered reasoning across all categories of female applicants sup-

ports the argument that gender played a relatively significant role in determining access to social aid. Gendered forms of discrimination were observable among the various categories of applicants, depending on personal background and the role they had played during the occupation. In addition to gender, the context of the Second World War and the occupation itself had a decisive influence on case processing practices. The honour accorded to resistance fighters during the political negotiations surrounding the Compensation Act, as well as the resistance movement's influence on the post-war political landscape, added further layers of complexity to both the public debate and administrative practice.

It is difficult to determine conclusively whether women were subjected to differential treatment as a direct consequence of the then-current political conceptions of gender and breadwinner roles, or whether such practices reflected the then deeply rooted societal understandings of gender in 1940s Denmark. In the political debates, it was largely assumed that the primary beneficiaries of compensation would be men. Simultaneously, the term "breadwinner" was implicitly understood to refer to a man. Within this framework, one dominant discourse framed women as needing social aid because they had lost a provider. However, these attitudes towards gender and breadwinner roles were likely products of the contemporary social context in which politicians found themselves in the 1940s.