

The Folly of Youth: The Continuing Influence of the Hitler Youth in Postwar Germany

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B.A., University of Victoria, 1998

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of History

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University of Victoria

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the situation of the Hitler Youth and its generation in the postwar period. Many historians and writers, influenced by the postwar division of Germany and quick recovery of the western part of the country, often did not focus upon the lives of youth following the collapse of the Nazi regime. Even while revisionist history has examined the role of the military, or of average Germans in participating in the Nazi regime and the Holocaust, youth is often still missing from the analysis. Yet the role of the Hitler Youth in the Nazi regime and the difficulties that they experienced in the postwar era need to be focused upon. In order to gain an understanding of the youth of Germany in the postwar period, it is necessary to examine the extensive indoctrination which they faced, alongside the effects of the war in strengthening or weakening that indoctrination. In the postwar period many youth were unable to break free of a mindset formed during the Third Reich, while others were aided by Allied and German efforts to move past the regime. Postwar youth were faced with a large number of organizations they could choose to join, in the form of Allied youth groups, political party auxiliaries, and right-wing radical youth groups. Many children who had lost family members and who had seen the horrors of the war first hand were able to realize the regime's failings and better understood the fallacious nature of Nazi teachings, aided often in this realization by the process of re-education. However, not all German youth were able to free themselves from the influence of indoctrination, while many Allied efforts were incomplete in removing the influence of Nazism, especially in the school system. The West German government often simply ignored continuities with youth, thus leaving denazification incomplete, while in the German Democratic Republic many youth were also subjected to the influence of a youth group, the Freie Deutsche Jugend, which shared certain characteristics with the Hitler Youth, though within a different ideological framework. This essay will focus on these continuities in Hitler Youth beliefs into the postwar period and will argue that in total, perhaps as many as 15 percent of German children could not break free from their indoctrination, most of them coming from two groups. The first were Hitler Youth leaders who were young adults at the regime's outset, while the second were young children at the time of Hitler's accession to power who spent their formative years at the height of the Third Reich. It is these two groups which this essay will argue were the most fervent supporters of the regime in the 1930's, the most devoted fighters in the war, and those who attempted to carry on Nazi ideals in the postwar era.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Perry Biddiscombe. My greatest thanks for patiently working with me on my thesis, providing suggestions on corrections, sources, and other ideas. His help was invaluable.

Gunter Kaufmann. For agreeing to be interviewed at his home and for aiding in identifying source locations.

Klaus Schmidt. A special thanks to my father for aid with checking my translations.

Alisson Webber. For taking the time from her holiday to aid with library research.

Introduction

The majority of German children during the 1930's and the Second World War were indoctrinated by the Nazi regime through participation in the Hitler Youth. Many joined the organization willingly, attracted by the ideals of the party, by community spirit, or by the variety of activities that the organization provided. Others were coerced to join by their parents. The Nazi state had a major presence in the lives of Germans, yet for children, especially those in the Hitler Youth, the connection was much more direct and apparent than for other generations. The taking over of the German school system by the Nazis and the subsequent process of stressing nationalist and racist ideologies comprised a systematic indoctrination process. Within this system, the figure of Hitler was paramount. The war only served to strengthen Nazi ideals for many Hitler Youth as they were called upon to perform an even greater array of tasks, which provided many with a heightened sense of importance. Yet the war is cited by many historians, such as Ian Kershaw in his work Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich, as having been a breaking point from the Nazi regime for Germans as a whole. This is true to an extent, because of the effect of the devastation, the loss of loved ones, and the collapse of the society in which the Hitler Youth generation had been raised. However, in the vacuum that existed immediately after the war, it is not correct to say that the members of the Hitler Youth were quickly able to put behind them the years of indoctrination and the beliefs that they had developed. The continuation of Hitler Youth activities, the operations of right-wing youth groups, and the lasting influence of Nazi ideals have been largely neglected by historians in their examination and recollection of the postwar era. Instead of fixing upon the continuing impact of Nazi youth training and the consequent need to re-educate Hitler Youth in the postwar period, journalists and historians have often treated postwar youth as a separate issue, isolated from their Nazi pasts, though some writers such as Karl Heinz Jahnke identify a gap in postwar historiography following the war's conclusion.

This essay will examine the fate of millions of German children who were members of the Hitler Youth under the Nazi regime and were forced to readjust their attitudes in the postwar period. First, the essay will focus upon the Hitler Youth in the pre-war period in order to see what brought so many children to the organization willingly, before compulsory measures were put in place by the Nazis, while also examining the effect of the indoctrination that both shaped the membership and tied them to the regime. Secondly, the essay will examine how the war served to strengthen many of the ideals of the Hitler Youth and worked to further connect the children of the organization with the regime, although for others the country's eventual collapse heralded a waking to other beliefs. The story of former Hitler Youth in the postwar era comprises the final section of the essay, as well as its main focus. This essay will also involve a look at the continuing influence of Hitler Youth indoctrination, asking whether it manifested itself in military organizations, youth groups, or simply as a militant spirit, as well as evaluating the efforts of the Allied powers and German anti-Nazis to re-educate ex-Hitler Youth and introduce democratic and liberal ideals, albeit ones that were shaped for German children by their country's delicate position in the Cold War and the nation's resulting division. Through this look at former Hitler Youth in the postwar period, it becomes evident that approximately fifteen percent of the population continued to play a role in various postwar radical right-wing activities, and that these were made up largely of two groups of Hitler Youth members. The first of these comprised individuals who had become Hitler Youth leaders early on in the Nazi period, and the second was made up of those young children who were involved as members in the organization from its beginning and remained in it throughout their formative years. Hitler Youth training had an impact on these people throughout their lives.

In getting a sense of the Hitler Youth experience, it must be remembered that individuals were shaped by their own personalities and social differences, and that one can never speak of the Hitler Youth, or the generation of the 1930's and 1940's as one

encompassing whole. It helps to examine the writings of various Hitler Youth members to get a sense of their experiences and perhaps thereby also get an impression, from the ground up, of the larger group. Unfortunately, this is difficult because few of the Hitler Youth generation actually told their story, at least in published form.¹ As well, many historians ignored the situation of the Hitler Youth following the war, instead seeing the regime's collapse as a breaking point for youth. Though some revisionist work, such as that by Omer Bartov on the military's complicity in killings on the eastern front, looks at broader segments of the German population and the extensiveness of indoctrination, most falls short of including an analysis of the Hitler Youth as well. Yet through an analysis of rare accounts by Hitler Youth members, as well as statistical data and Allied reports, the postwar opinions and attitudes of former Hitler Youth members and their generation becomes clearer.

¹Gerhard Rempel, Hitler's Children. The Hitler Youth and the SS (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 2.

Chapter I

The Role of the Hitler Youth in the Third Reich

In order to understand the experiences and the mentality of the Hitler Youth and its members following the war, it is first necessary to examine certain aspects of the organization in the years before the war, when the Hitler Youth was taking shape. Why did so many children join the group? Did they join of their own free will or because they were coerced? The Hitler Youth organization had major importance to Nazi Germany because it was the institution which channeled children into the *Volksgemeinschaft* and was supposedly a continuous source of the youthful dynamism so important to the Nazi regime.² An initial look at the growth of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), shows that the Hitler Youth played an important role for the organization from its outset. As early as 1922, Adolf Hitler had conceived the idea of a youth organization that would be attached to the new party and would be directed to attracting youth from many areas including the working classes, peasant farmers and the middle classes.³ At its outset the Hitler Youth focused its efforts only on boys aged fourteen to eighteen, but this changed by the late 1920's, as appeals were made to girls and younger boys as well. In 1928 youth groups for girls were initiated and younger boys, those aged ten to fourteen, were encouraged to join the newly formed *Jungvolk*. Originally, the Hitler Youth struggled with low membership numbers, while the organization itself remained tied to the SA and lacked independence within the Nazi Party apparatus. However, though Hitler Youth membership remained low until 1931, with only 5.1 percent of youth eligible joining the organization, following Nazi political successes membership began to steadily

²Ibid, 256.

³H. W. Koch, The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945 (London: Macdonald and James, 1975), 48.

rise.⁴ By 1931, Baldur von Schirach, who had been appointed as the head of the Hitler Youth, was able to make many changes to the organization. He separated the Hitler Youth from the SA, with this separation becoming complete in 1932. At the same time he was able to gain further autonomy and power for himself and the group, while also strengthening the Hitler Youth through the absorption of related youth groups. These initiatives included the formation of close ties with the National Socialist Association of German Students, and the 1931 merger with the *Deutsches Jungvolk*, which catered to boys as young as ten years old, while attempts to reach younger girls were also begun.⁵

The Hitler Youth enabled the new regime both to control children and to form a connection between them and the state, a connection which often reached beyond the influence of more traditional institutions, including the family. The Hitler Youth was a particularly pervasive youth movement, much more so than past German youth movements had been, as it extended into most areas of a child's life and influenced children both inside and outside of the school system.⁶ The ideological training and indoctrination to which children were exposed in the Hitler Youth and in the schools were crucial in shaping them during their formative years. Many children embraced the organization freely, saw membership in the Hitler Youth as the most important aspect of their lives, followed its guidelines devoutly, and underwent extensive indoctrination.

The importance that the Nazi state placed on children cannot be understated. In September 1933, Hitler speaking to a meeting of the Hitler Youth, said:

You are the Germany of the future ... on you are now set all our hopes, our people's confidence, and our faith ... My youths, you are the living guarantors of

⁴Dietrich Orlow, History of the Nazi Party (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg, 1969), 197-198, 237.

⁵Ibid, 149, 255.

⁶Stephen H. Roberts, The House That Hitler Built (Sydney: Harper and Brothers, 1937), 201.

Germany, you are the living Germany of the future ... upon you depends the continued existence of our people...⁷

The key function which the Nazis attributed to the Hitler Youth stemmed in part from the role which the organization played in popularizing the regime. One spokesman noted:

The aim of the Hitler Youth is a new youth, which, being proud, upright, healthy... and glowing with the idea of National Socialism, knows that it is the bearer of Germany's destiny.⁸

The Hitler Youth was thus stressed by the regime as a means through which to further the indoctrination of children while also providing healthy youth who could later play important roles for the country.

The Hitler Youth was also important because of the role it played in providing recruits for the party and its apparatus.⁹ This was especially true for the SS, which had an increasing measure of influence over Hitler Youth functions, and which drew many of its future members from one-time Hitler Youth. The emphasis that the Nazis placed on youth led to the implementation of an extensive program of indoctrination. Ideology was a key dimension both in Nazi governance and in the attempts of the regime to take control of German society.¹⁰ This was particularly paramount in dealing with the nation's children. As Peter Stachura notes:

⁷John Farquharson and John Hiden, Explaining Hitler's Germany (Worcester: Billings and Son Ltd., 1983), 122.

⁸Ibid, 122.

⁹Roberts, The House That Hitler Built, 202.

¹⁰Lawrence D. Walker, Hitler Youth and Catholic Youth 1933-1936 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1970), 147.

Its most vital responsibility was to erect a system which would indoctrinate German youth in National Socialist philosophy and prepare them physically, ideologically, and mentally for the task of upholding and perpetuating the 'Thousand Year Reich'.¹¹

The Nazis thus quickly realized that in order to have further control of society, it was necessary to influence children as soon as possible, tying their loyalties to the German nation above all else.

The complex ideology created by the Nazi Germany was not simply a mix of ideas, but rather a comprehensive program which had as its goal the radical aim of transforming the German people to the Nazi way of thinking. The focus of the Hitler Youth in connection with this program was to shape youth, particularly their loyalties, their ideas and even their personalities. The basis of the ideology mirrored that of the party and state as a whole.¹² Race consciousness, German supremacy, the inferiority of democracy, obedience, loyalty to the *Führer* and to the fatherland, self-sacrifice, and the values of the *Volkgemeinschaft* were all stressed.¹³ "Tradition" meant stressing cultural uniqueness and racial purity, matters which were in turn linked to a variety of physical activities, such as hiking, sports and overall maintenance of fitness.

The Hitler Youth and the Waffen-SS shared a close bond. The Hitler Youth's military function was obviously revealed through the organization's eagerness to push members through pre-military army drills and marching exercises.¹⁴ Younger children also played games which involved the use of weapons and toy soldiers, again stressing the importance of all things military.¹⁵ As the central figure in the ideology of the party and

¹¹Peter D. Stachura, The German Youth Movement 1900-1945 (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1981), 138.

¹²Farquharson and Hiden, Explaining Hitler's Germany, 42.

¹³Ibid, 139.

¹⁴Kiryl Sosnowski, The Tragedy of Children Under Nazi Rule (Warsaw: Zachondia Agencja Prasowa, 1962), 13.

¹⁵Willy Schumann, Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), 67.

the Nazi state, Hitler played an even more important role in the Hitler Youth, with the *Führer* cult serving as an integral feature of the organization. Speeches by Hitler were enjoyed by children almost as popular entertainment. The fascination which he generated amongst the children of the Hitler Youth was enhanced through the orchestration of mass demonstrations, in which Hitler's ability to use the spoken word so effectively was employed for maximum benefit.¹⁶

The notion of the nation and everything in it being connected by a common heritage and destiny, the idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, was a particularly strong and important aspect of the ideology presented to the Hitler Youth. Baldur von Schirach, the leader of the Hitler Youth, said in an address to the organization in April 1938:

You stand in this youth next to one another with the same rights and the same duties. There is no special Hitler Youth for the poor or the rich, no Hitler Youth for secondary schoolboys and girls, or for young workers. There is no special Catholic or Protestant Hitler Youth. In our group belongs everyone who is of German blood. Before the flag of youth everyone is the same.¹⁷

This idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, which posited Germany as a nation undivided by social or sectarian distinctions, was a key notion in bringing people behind the regime regardless of background, and it helped solidify the position of the Hitler Youth within the greater community. Baldur von Schirach also stated that:

The Hitler Youth is an ideological community. Whoever marches in the Hitler Youth is not merely a number among millions, but a soldier of an idea... The best Hitler Youth is he who, regardless of rank or office, identifies completely with the National Socialist philosophy.¹⁸

¹⁶Farquharson and Hiden, *Explaining Hitler's Germany*, 50.

¹⁷Stachura, *The German Youth Movement 1900-1945*, 139.

¹⁸Stachura, *The German Youth Movement 1900-1945*, 138.

Thus the regime hoped to provide a society which at least appeared classless, even if class boundaries were not truly eradicated and children could not be completely removed from some of their more traditional milieu. The massive efforts at indoctrination did, however, have the result of providing the Hitler Youth with common sense of purpose. As Gerhard Rempel notes:

The Hitler Youth generation experienced a peculiar form of socialization. It was characterized by intense regimentation and forceful indoctrination, designed to inculcate an artificially designed social heritage.¹⁹

Hence the Hitler Youth and its members were given a definitive identity and clear ideological structure, while the organization itself played a decisive role in the larger Nazi state and community.

One of the most important means of indoctrination was the school system, a medium which transcended the Hitler Youth. In the sphere of education, various nationalist and *völkisch* ideas were taught to children, complementing the messages stressed by the Hitler Youth. Special areas of concentration included history, the natural sciences, and German language and literature, all handled in a more extensive and ideological fashion than had previously been the case in Imperial Germany. The Nazi leadership became directly involved in transforming the curriculum through changing content in classes, including altering texts, with the aim of integrating children into the worldview of the party and making them willing to sacrifice themselves for the Nazi cause. The sciences were particularly stressed, including pseudo-scientific theories of race, while the study of English was encouraged as a result of the emphasis placed on "racial" connections between the Germans and the English.²⁰ Heroes in history were also focused upon, along with current Nazi leaders. The example of Herbert Norkus, a twelve year old

¹⁹Rempel, *Hitler's Children. The Hitler Youth and the SS*, 262.

²⁰*Ibid*, 55.

Youth member who was killed while putting up posters for the NSDAP, became folklore for the Hitler Youth and was represented in the book and later movie, *Hitler Youth Quex*.²¹ As well, theories of race connected to the sciences were promoted in order to laud a mythical Germanic norm and identify the Jewish 'other'. The goal of the altered education system was not to educate but rather to produce future Germans fit for national service and for battle. With this in mind, physical fitness was also stressed.²² As Hitler had stated in *Mein Kampf*, "the entire education has to be directed towards employing the free time of the boy for the useful training of his body."²³

The control of children through education was further advanced through the efforts of the *Reichsjugendführung* to provide a vast assortment of new books which related stock Nazi "truths" and nationalistic values.²⁴ By 1939, the Nazi regime had gained total control over the production of textbooks, which now portrayed the German military machine as being invincible.²⁵ "National Socialist educational principles", note Hiden and Farquharson, "were obviously aimed at arousing the feeling in children of being above all a member of a group, which shared history, beliefs, goals and faith in common."²⁶ Nazi ruthlessness was reflected in textbooks that described euthanasia as an acceptable policy; math examples prompting students to compare the costs of caring for crippled patients with the money that could be used instead for housing.²⁷ As well, the Nazis centralized the control of German schools, which made schools a key institution in the Nazi state and rendered them more effective channels of indoctrination, although some

²¹Manfred Jenke, *Verschwörung von Rechts?* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1961), 47-49.

²²Farquharson and Hiden, *Explaining Hitler's Germany*, 55.

²³Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, edited by John Chamberlain et als. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939), 346.

²⁴Koch, *The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development*, 140.

²⁵Gilmer W. Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich. Race and History in Nazi Textbooks* (Albany: University of New York Press, 1985), 37, 135.

²⁶Farquharson and Hiden, *Explaining Hitler's Germany*, 54.

²⁷Koch, *The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 174.

teachers opposed these efforts. As a result of this opposition, many teachers were removed from work and replaced by NSDAP-approved teachers.²⁸

Participation in the Hitler Youth had a direct impact on education since it resulted in a reduction of time for school attendance, with senior level schooling decreasing from nine to eight years, and middle school reduced from six to four years. As well, final examinations, necessary in order to carry on for further studies, such as abitur programs, were waived as a requirement if a child participated in the Hitler Youth.²⁹

The fact that education was compulsory meant that children, whether in the Hitler Youth organizations or not, were nonetheless indoctrinated and lacked the escape valve that work provided for many adults. As H.W. Koch states in his examination of the Hitler Youth:

...if the ideological training was not all-coercive, the consciousness of continuous activity was, with a deliberate attempt to eliminate as far as possible the notion of the existence of a private life. Young people, deliberately as well as by force of circumstance, were conditioned to be continuously on duty.³⁰

Schirach, said one contemporary observer, "takes no heed of the future, and the psychological problems of childhood and adolescence mean nothing to him."³¹ Thus children were often overwhelmed by Nazi propaganda, which for many became almost their only source of information, and even if the Nazi doctrines did not influence them completely, shifts in society such as the co-opting of the education system, more compulsory Hitler Youth attendance, and the increasing number of parents joining the Nazi Party, all prompted widespread support for the Hitler Youth and helped to make participation in the organization appear the norm.

²⁸Farquharson and Hiden, Explaining Hitler's Germany, 147.

²⁹Ibid, 153.

³⁰Koch, The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945, 128.

³¹Roberts, The House That Hitler Built, 205.

Acknowledging the impact which Nazi indoctrination had upon children is necessary in order to understand how deeply they were influenced by the Nazi regime, yet it is also important to see how many children were involved in the organization and to see how pervasive it was in German society. Demographics played a major role in the situation of youth during the formative years of the Nazi regime and pre-war period. The large boom in childbirth in Germany before 1915 followed by a lag during the First World War, and then a drastic decline in the next several years, caused, of course, by the absence of so many men and by a contemporary fall in living standards, led to a sizeable population of youth by the 1930's.³² This large pre-1915 cohort faced massive unemployment and countless hardships by the 1930's as they entered the job market. As a result, many were drawn to the paramilitary activities supported by the National Socialist Party. Many of these individuals became the leaders of the Hitler Youth, with 90 percent of the organization's leaders being in the age group just over eighteen by 1929.³³ It was these older children and young adults who took a leading role in the Hitler Youth and who became one of the two groups most closely tied to it as a result of their long-term association. In December 1933, 8.5 percent of the German population were aged six to ten years old, 9.2 percent of the population were eleven to fifteen years old and 6.5 percent of the population were sixteen to twenty years old.³⁴ This made nearly a quarter of the population eligible for participation in the Hitler Youth. Along with the young adults and older children who were quickly placed into positions of power within the Hitler Youth as leaders, it was the 8.5 percent of the population aged six to ten years old in 1933 who also became extremely tied to the regime and who had difficulty breaking

³²Peter H. Merkl, The Making of a Stormtrooper (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 284.

³³Ibid, 215.

³⁴Merkl, The Making of a Stormtrooper, 185-186.

free of indoctrination at the war's end, due in part, to their lengthy experience in the ranks of the Hitler Youth and its influence during their formative years.

How many of these children voluntarily joined the Hitler Youth? Was it a large enough number to justify Nazi descriptions of the entire National Socialist movement as one fired by the enthusiasm of youth? The Hitler Youth naturally experienced huge increases in its numbers once Hitler became Chancellor. In 1932, Baldur von Schirach had been put in charge of all of the Nazi Youth organizations, and in the hopes of expanding the organization he made huge changes to the nature of the Hitler Youth.³⁵ These included increased benefits for joining the Hitler Youth, the implementation of laws to coerce children into the Hitler Youth, and the combining of other youth groups with the organization. In 1933, the Hitler Youth consisted of one million members, yet by 1934, the number had already grown to three million children.³⁶ At universities, support also rose for Nazi organizations. For instance, the numbers of students at the University of Hamburg involved in the facility's Nazi organization increased from .7 percent in the winter session of 1930 to 1931, to an all time high of 44.9 percent by 1943, with figures above 24.9 percent from 1936 onwards.³⁷ The causes behind this growth have been studied by many writers and are not the primary focus of this study, yet some of the reasons for this increase need to be examined in order to obtain an understanding of the mentality of Hitler Youth members themselves.

The various laws imposed by Schirach were key to the organization's growth, despite his desire to have Hitler Youth free from coercion. Gunter Kaufmann is adamant that Schirach had a strong desire to have all German children join the Hitler Youth of their own free will, but also stresses that he realized this was not possible and as a result

³⁵Walker, Hitler Youth and Catholic Youth, 16.

³⁶Ibid, 17.

³⁷Geoffrey J. Giles, Students and National Socialism in Germany (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 329.

resorted to more direct methods to force children into the organization.³⁸ In 1933, the majority of non-Nazi German youth groups were integrated into the Hitler Youth in the hopes of bolstering the organization, preventing dissension, and providing a uniform policy for children that included indoctrination.³⁹ The 1936 Hitler Youth Law made attendance in the organization mandatory for all children aged ten to eighteen.⁴⁰ Yet despite the growth of the Hitler Youth to 5,437,601 children in 1936, making it the largest youth group in the world at that time, four million German youth still remained absent from the organization.⁴¹

The reasons behind this lack of readiness to participate, even despite strong coercive measures, are complicated. The Catholic youth groups were the largest source of organized resistance to the Hitler Youth movement. Many church leaders and parents saw the Hitler Youth as a negative organization, one devoted to the secularization of children and the separation of them by gender, supposedly promoting homosexuality. Moreover, they contended that participation in the Hitler Youth would disrupt the moral teachings of the church.⁴² Catholic leaders also demanded the right for children involved in the Hitler Youth to be allowed to participate in Catholic youth groups as well.⁴³ Some Hitler Youth members did remain in Catholic youth groups and the organizations continued their activities to a certain extent, celebrating a variety of festivals, including one in 1934 in which 50,000 to 60,000 youth gathered.⁴⁴ Schirach recognized rival Catholic youth movements as the main obstacle to his complete control of the nation's children and he worked to curb their power, along with that of other youth groups as well.

³⁸Gunter Kaufmann, personal interview, 2 September 1999.

³⁹Walker, *Hitler Youth and Catholic Youth 1933-1936*, 17.

⁴⁰Ibid, 146.

⁴¹Hiden and Farquharson, *Explaining Hitler's Germany*, 131.

⁴²Ibid, 132.

⁴³Walker, *Hitler Youth and Catholic Youth 1933-1936*, 97.

⁴⁴Ibid, 114.

In 1937 the last surviving Catholic youth groups were incorporated into the Hitler Youth organization.⁴⁵ However, despite the passage of the Hitler Youth Law in 1936, not all children were punished for failing to join, since the law was not fully or effectively enforced until 1939.⁴⁶ For others, the regime lost a great deal of its appeal.

National Socialist Morale Reports compiled by the SS Security Service yield a great deal of information on popular opinion, but they must be viewed cautiously, acknowledging bias and the possibility of untruthful answers prompted by fear of punishment.⁴⁷ In 1937 and 1938 there are enough negative reports to suggest widespread antipathy towards the regime. As an example, the diplomatic tension of 1938 helped fuel worker discontent and a renewed sense of identification with the proletariat's socialist and communist roots.⁴⁸ The middle class was itself upset at corruption and scandals involving the Party bosses.⁴⁹ However, for many children the regime remained popular. With the beginning of the war, coercion was strengthened as the party made participation in the Hitler Youth necessary in order for youth to find later employment, thus making it more important for children to enroll.⁵⁰ By 1939, the number of children not encompassed in the Hitler Youth had been reduced to one million.⁵¹

Meanwhile, despite the efforts of Catholic groups and of parents from various walks of life in preventing their children from joining the organization, many of Germany's youth were still drawn to the Hitler Youth. As an example, children in the Catholic youth groups often felt guilty for failing to take part in the singular German mission stressed by

⁴⁵Kurt P. Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika. German Nationalism Since 1945 Volume 1 (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), 159.

⁴⁶Hiden and Farquharson, Explaining Hitler's Germany, 134.

⁴⁷Ian Kershaw, Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 8.

⁴⁸Ibid, 105-106.

⁴⁹Ibid, 148.

⁵⁰Hiden and Farquharson, Explaining Hitler's Germany, 134.

⁵¹Hiden and Farquharson, Explaining Hitler's Germany, 135.

the Hitler Youth.⁵² Saul Padover, an intelligence officer in the Psychological Warfare Division, traveled with Allied troops at the war's end and stated:

Occasionally a rare parent did manage to keep a son or daughter out of the Goebbels' net, but not many did so...The Communists, those who survived the purges of 1933-1937, did a little better than the Socialists, but not much better.⁵³

For a variety of reasons the Hitler Youth appealed to German children and it was often the spontaneous eagerness and willingness to participate of the latter that caused the organization to grow. We must examine then, what drove so many children, of their own accord, towards the party and the Hitler Youth.

When examining other issues concerning Germany and its wartime society, historians have also realized the need to focus on the structure and make-up of the Nazi regime. Many historians who focused on the Wehrmacht and its role in the war and the Holocaust realized that they also had to include an examination of the period before the war. Christian Streit's groundbreaking research on the complicity of the Wehrmacht in the war and the Holocaust had implications beyond suggesting a need to reexamine the role of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front. Omer Bartov states that it is important to recognize the role which younger soldiers, many of whom had been indoctrinated for years in increasingly Nazified schools and society, played in changing the character of the military. As Bartov notes:

Many of these youngsters were attracted both to the regime's rhetoric of rebellion against old norms and traditions, on the one hand, and to the heroic image of a conquering, invincible Germany, charged with the mission of cleansing the whole world from the plague of communism and plutocracy, increasingly identified with 'world Jewry', on the other.⁵⁴

⁵²Walker, *Hitler Youth and Catholic Youth 1933-1936*, 133.

⁵³Saul K. Padover, "What About German Youth?" *Prevent World War III* No.13, 26.

⁵⁴Omer Bartov, "The Conduct of War: Soldiers and the Barbarization of Warfare." *Journal of Modern History*. Volume 64, (December 1992) Supplement. p.S41.

The Hitler Youth recruits, he stresses, made drastic changes to the make-up of the Wehrmacht and he holds that as a result of their impact, the old argument for a tradition of professionalism in the military can no longer be applied. These young Nazis were more fervent supporters of Nazi beliefs than older officers, a claim he proves through his focus on the role of indoctrination.⁵⁵ Bartov identifies the junior officer corps as being especially loyal to Hitler, and suggests that it was many of these men who were key in implementing the Holocaust after having made quick rises through the military structure.⁵⁶ Bartov identifies propaganda as key to seeing the fear which the German soldier had towards his Russian counterpart. For him, the role of effective indoctrination and propaganda was to connect the idea of the soldier, the family, and the *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁵⁷ Thus propaganda and indoctrination of Germany's young, many of whom later served on the Eastern Front, needs to be recognized in order to see how soldiers were able to kill so many innocents.

Various components of the Hitler Youth seem to have attracted children to the organization, which helps to explain how they became so attached to the ideals of the Nazi regime. The organization appealed to many children because the positions of authority within it offered them a sense of a separate identity independent from that of their parents.⁵⁸ As Omer Bartov explains:

The Hitler Youth gained much of its appeal by openly opposing the traditional foci of authority, the family and the school, and by presenting itself both as a rebel youth movement set upon destroying a staid and anachronistic present so as to create a bright future full of adventure and promise...⁵⁹

⁵⁵Ibid, S42.

⁵⁶Ibid, S32.

⁵⁷Ibid, S37.

⁵⁸Merkl, *The Making of a Stormtrooper*, 196.

⁵⁹Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army. Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.109.

Prerogatives that seemed impressive and important, such as patrolling hostels and streets and keeping watch on other children, were part of the routine of Hitler Youth members. Hitler Youth cadres were also used by the state in order to promote the organization and to entice non-members.⁶⁰ Some were drawn to the organization as a result of home problems, such as parental unemployment and troubled marriages, or because of the chance for adventure, while others simply enjoyed the physical aspects, such as the games and hiking.⁶¹ Kaufmann stresses that the Hitler Youth gave children a place where they often felt more comfortable and secure, with more of a feeling of belonging than they did in their own homes. Homelife, of course, had been adversely effected by the poverty of depression-era Germany.⁶² Children were thus eventually attracted to the party because they enjoyed the Hitler Youth and were encouraged to see the party as an extension of it.

Hitler Youth members who wrote about their lives in the postwar period help us understand something about what motivated them. W.S Allen quotes a former Hitler Youth who explained:

There were no social classes or distinctions, which I approved of very much. There was no direct or obvious political indoctrination until later - after Hitler came to power ... We weren't fully conscious of what we were doing, but we enjoyed ourselves and also felt important.⁶³

For some, the Nazi credo of classlessness and equality helped attract children to the Hitler Youth, and began to suggest a potential appeal to the "workers" mentioned in the party's official name. This sentiment was expressed by a former member of the Bund Deutscher Mädchen who later told of her experiences:

⁶⁰Walker, Hitler Youth and Catholic Youth 1933-1936, 131.

⁶¹Koch, The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945, 48. Rempel, Hitler's Children. The Hitler Youth and the SS, 1.

⁶²Gunter Kaufmann, personal interview, 2 Septmeber 1999.

⁶³Koch, The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945, 94.

Our camp community was a reduced model of that which I imagined our national community to be. It was a completely successful model. Never before or since have I had the experience of such a good community, even in cases in which its composition was more homogeneous. Among us were peasant girls, students, workers, shop assistants, hairdressers, pupils, clerks, and so forth ... The fact that I had experienced this model of a national community intensely created in me an optimism to which I held on stubbornly until 1945. Supported by this experience I believed in the face of all evidence pointing to the contrary that this model could be extended infinitely. If not in the next, then in future generations.⁶⁴

As well, many children felt that participation in the Hitler Youth was a means through which they could be a part of something larger than their own lives and that their joining would allow them to take part in a supposed phenomena of national rebirth. As Koch notes, the Hitler Youth “engendered the feeling among youths that what they were doing was not just playing games but, to use the vocabulary of the period, actively participating in the struggle to restore to Germany its honor and its former position in the world.”⁶⁵ Another former member of the Bund Deutscher Mädchen agreed:

When I search myself for the motives which tempted me to enter the Hitler Youth then I find also this one: I wanted to break out from my childish, narrow life and attach it to something that was great and essential. This desire was shared by countless contemporaries. It is more difficult to explain that I managed to keep up this initiative over twelve years until 1945. That I remained attached to the cause of National Socialism for so long is connected with my early childhood experiences. It is remarkable, it was the ‘socialist’ tendency, which was expressed in the name of this ‘movement’, which attracted me, because it strengthened my opposition against my parental home. On the other hand, the nationalist component was significant for me, because it corresponded with the spirit which permeated me from earliest childhood onwards ... my childhood experiences correspond with the experience of a whole generation, which grew up among a bourgeoisie fundamentally inclined towards the Right and from which later so many young leaders of the National socialist ‘movement’ and the Wehrmacht of the ‘Third Reich’ were to emerge.⁶⁶

⁶⁴Ibid, 125.

⁶⁵Ibid, 95.

⁶⁶Ibid

This young woman's feelings were similar to those of many others, as they reflected the belief that theirs was a generation in which individuals were strongly connected with each other as a result of shared ideals and experiences. In a 1980's interview one individual who had been a Hitler Youth member and had later joined the Waffen SS and served in the war stated simply that, "I was raised then, in the National Socialist time, and had seen the world just as they had shown it to us."⁶⁷ One BDM girl, Elfriede Schuster, agreed and said that it was totally natural at the time for people to join the organization because it provided activities in which one could not have participated otherwise. She added that if one did not feel welcome at home, the Hitler Youth was an organization that gave one recognition and belonging.⁶⁸ Another BDM girl also enjoyed the prestige which the organization offered, while also providing a source of fun with outdoor activities, theaters, entertainment events and sports. She also enjoyed being told that they were the best and most superior youth in the world.⁶⁹ "Rudolph", who spoke to researcher Dan Bar-On, described his attraction to the organization stating that, "it was something quite normal. When I'd see the soldiers marching outside, the Hitler Youth marching past, for me that was something: I wanted to march too."⁷⁰ Born in 1930, Rudolph joined the Hitler Youth in 1940 at the age of ten and progressed quickly through the organization's ranks, first attending the leadership school, then becoming a squad leader, and subsequently a platoon leader, with thirty boys under his command. The influence upon Rudolph was similar to that upon other youth:

⁶⁷Omer Bartov, "The Myths of the Wehrmacht," in History Today, volume 42. (April 1992). p.33.

⁶⁸Gabriele Rosenthal, Die Hitlerjugend-Generation. Biographische Thematisierung als Vergangenheitsbewältigung (Essen: Verlag Die Blaue Eule, 1986), 173.

⁶⁹Ibid, 18-19.

⁷⁰Dan Bar-On, Legacy of Silence. Encounters with Children of the Third Reich (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 201.

Marching out on the street, marching like soldiers...we youngsters already felt like grown-up soldiers. The music that accompanied us, played by the Hitler Youth, with flags and drums through the streets-everyone had to salute our flags, and we were proud to be full members!⁷¹

Rudolph also pointed to the influence of Hitler Youth leaders in strengthening the “ideals” of children:

The Hitler Youth leaders were good at animating young people, motivating and preparing them psychologically for tasks they would carry out later on. It went without question in my eyes that what the Führer said and did, that was truth. He was almost more of a god for me than the real God...⁷²

In his autobiography Being Present, Willy Schumann provides a personal look at how he became a Hitler Youth member and the effects that indoctrination had upon him. He stresses, like many others, how the entire Nazi period was captivating. From the Olympics to Autobahns, Germany to him had seemingly been restored as a successful nation. Ideological instruction, physical education, pre-military training, uniforms, a strict curriculum and discipline -- all played a major role in attracting Schumann to the Hitler Youth. All of this, he says, came together to strengthen his belief in the *Volksgemeinschaft* ideal, making him feel a part of a greater community and providing him with a special place in it.⁷³

The Hitler Youth thus provided a place for many children who did not feel secure, either as a result of difficult times at home or because of economic problems in Depression-era Germany. It offered some children an egalitarian refuge from distinctions of class, while children as a whole were given not only a sense of community and belonging, but also a chance to play a role in society. The fact that the indoctrination was

⁷¹Ibid, 200-203.

⁷²Ibid, 202.

⁷³Schumann, Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany, 12, 17.

so powerful and that so many children were attracted to the organization of their own free will suggests the mutual importance of the Hitler Youth to the regime and vice versa. This was a connection that for some Hitler Youth members was only further strengthened with the advent of the war.

Chapter II

The Hitler Youth at War

In order to understand the state of German youth in the postwar era, it is necessary to review the effects that the war had upon the Hitler Youth and its members. The military nature of the Hitler Youth became increasingly important as the war progressed, and from early on in the military struggle, the youth of the organization were prepared as future soldiers. The war had two main effects upon the Hitler Youth. The first was to increase the communal aspect and feeling of importance held by Hitler Youth members as a result of the increasingly crucial positions they came to play in the war effort, while the indoctrination policies to which children had been subjected were further intensified. The second effect involved the negative impact which the war had on German youth, as the horrors and realities of modern conflict were brought home in the form of death and destruction, a factor which, for some children, eroded the effectiveness of earlier indoctrination.

The war saw the Hitler Youth put into action in various ways. At the outbreak of the conflict, 8,870,000 boys and girls aged ten to eighteen were members of the Hitler Youth.⁷⁴ Compulsory military training was the first major change, with paramilitary training of the Hitler Youth being intensified as early as October 1939.⁷⁵ For those over fifteen years of age, the Nazis created new youth camps, the *Wehrtüchtigungslager*, that specialized in the training of the body and mind with the idea of preparing boys for future military service. The instructors in these camps were often soldiers themselves.⁷⁶ This trend toward military training for the Hitler Youth increased as the military situation worsened. As Schumann states, “our positive attitude toward everything military was

⁷⁴Koch, *The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 233.

⁷⁵Ibid, 236.

⁷⁶Schumann, *Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany*, 104.

absolute.”⁷⁷ From 1941 and the beginning of the campaign against the Soviets, the Nazi regime realized the function that the Hitler Youth could play in wartime society. With this in mind the roles of the Hitler Youth expanded as members served as watchmen, roadworkers, ration card distributors, crop gatherers, couriers, guides for refugees, air raid wardens, mailmen, firefighters, red cross volunteers and, beginning in January 1943, flak gunners. Some Hitler Youth were even formed into their own SS Panzer Division.⁷⁸ As the need for greater production arose, the government also called for Hitler Youth members to aid in the collection of brass, copper, scrap metal, and paper bottles. Girls of the Bund Deutscher Mädchen were dispatched to field hospitals, kindergartens, and train stations where they aided returning soldiers, while others worked as typists and clerks.⁷⁹ And of course, many of those who served as soldiers during World War Two were themselves former Hitler Youth members who had been teenagers in the 1930’s.

Much of the militarization of the Hitler Youth came with the change in leadership from Baldur von Schirach to Arthur Axmann in 1940.⁸⁰ Gunter Kaufmann corroborates other sources which hold that although Schirach was instrumental in expanding the Hitler Youth, militarism--though always having played a role in Hitler Youth training--was further stressed as the war progressed, especially once Axmann himself was appointed as *Reichsjugendführer*. Gunter Kaufmann claims Schirach was interested more in providing youth with a single organization than on making it a group that was military in nature. Perhaps this was part of the reason for Schirach’s transfer to the position of Gauleiter of

⁷⁷Ibid

⁷⁸Perry Biddiscombe, Werewolf: The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 58. Stachura, The German Youth Movement 1900-1945, 11.

⁷⁹Koch, The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945, 233-234.

⁸⁰Stachura, The German Youth Movement 1900-1945, 41.

Vienna.⁸¹ The views of Axmann became clear when, following his accession to the leadership of the Hitler Youth in 1940, he stated:

Every job must be directed towards the necessities of war. Each duty that we fulfill serves victory! This struggle encompasses all aspects of German life. The struggle is not only conducted with front line soldiers, but also with moral and economic strength of the homeland. Youth can also help bring victory.⁸²

The war and the roles Hitler Youth members played helped to intensify their attitudes towards the party and the state. One Hitler Youth reflected that:

During the war we dreamt of the foundation of a German Empire. By and by, without noticing it, we slipped into an attitude according to which the ends justify the means... We thought of ourselves as soldiers on the home front.⁸³

Older generations found little enthusiasm in the war, painfully aware of the horrors of the Great War, but for youth it was an arena in which they were only too eager to participate. As Walter Laqueur states: "some of the younger ones feared that the war would be over before they saw fighting and a few even tried to reach the front line without having enlisted."⁸⁴ An even more extensive propaganda campaign came into effect during the 1943 to 1944 period as the war worsened for the Germans, and the severity of the situation was in fact stressed in order to encourage greater efforts at home and at the front. For many youth the effects of war weariness were often less severe than for their elders; as a result, parents became increasingly critical of Hitler as the war progressed, while youth still viewed him as an idol. The "generation gap" thus widened. A 1943 SD report found that with revelations about increasing losses, the faith of many Hitler Youth

⁸¹Gunter Kaufmann, personal interview, 2 September 1999.

⁸²Stachura, The German Youth Movement 1900-1945, 159.

⁸³Koch, The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945, 236.

⁸⁴Walter Z. Laqueur, Young Germany. A History of the German Youth Movement (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 88.

in the party was diminishing, although the positive image of Hitler for the youth remained strong.⁸⁵ Effective propaganda shielded many from the realities of the war, at least to some degree.

Yet there was only so much influence that propaganda could have upon Hitler Youth and upon Germans overall. As the situation on the home front worsened and news of the deplorable reality of war losses was revealed even through Nazi propaganda, many Hitler Youth came to question their beliefs and the regime itself. The fact that the collection of winter clothes for the front became a major task of the Hitler Youth illustrated the severity of the situation, yet for many there was no real conception of the true weakness of the German military situation. As Schumann said, "poor planning and lack of preparation were, of course, never mentioned."⁸⁶ Heavy bombing damage and casualties touched the lives of most Hitler Youth members and helped to illustrate the deteriorating military situation in the Reich. By 1942, Germans suffered from severe war weariness. The catastrophe at Stalingrad and the increasing devastation caused by Allied bombing brought the horrors of war home to the German populace. The war brought deteriorating work discipline, falling morale, and a growing bitterness amongst workers as well.⁸⁷ At the same time, the SD morale reports were more and more held in disdain by the Nazi elite as a result of their increasingly negative nature and defeatist tone. Martin Bormann shielded Hitler from the negativity of public opinion assessments which continued to slide as the war worsened and more Germans turned against the regime.⁸⁸ An American postwar survey found that the Allied bombing campaign affected the morale of nine out of ten Germans and discovered it was the worst hardship suffered by German

⁸⁵Ian Kershaw, The 'Hitler Myth'. Image and Reality in the Third Reich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 208.

⁸⁶Schumann, Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany, 90.

⁸⁷Ian Kershaw, Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 305-309.

⁸⁸Ibid, 382.

civilians during the war, with 40 percent of respondents saying that they had lost all hope of victory when the air raids did not halt.⁸⁹ For Willy Schumann, having witnessed the massive destruction in Hamburg, the reality and possibility of defeat were brought home. "It was a litany of pure hell, and it was the first time in my life I experienced the real feeling of *Grauen*, 'horror'."⁹⁰

As well as getting a taste of war on the home front, some Hitler Youth experienced hard conditions at the front as well. The Stalingrad defeat of 1943 provided a major shock to Germany and to the Hitler Youth. The Hitler Jugend division, put into service in 1944 lost 20 percent of its men, while 40 percent were missing or wounded after only one month of service in Normandy.⁹¹ In September 1944, Hitler drafted all males sixteen to sixty, thus calling into service teachers and older Hitler Youth and students, furthering their training in the *Volkssturm* and detracting from education. Teaching thus ground to a halt by early 1945 since so many teachers and students were occupied in the *Volkssturm* and so many buildings had been destroyed in bombings.⁹² By 1944, 30,000 Hitler Youth leaders had been killed at the front.⁹³ Many Hitler Youth also lost their lives while serving in *Panzerjagd* units into which they were thrust by 1945 as they replaced regular soldiers. Despite a massive propaganda campaign, by 1944 Goebbels' propaganda was losing credibility for many of the German people.⁹⁴ In a postwar survey, flak gunners said that as early as 1944 they realized that they had been fighting a losing battle and that Hitler had not truly been a military genius.⁹⁵ Through serving in various military roles the

⁸⁹Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'. Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, 207.

⁹⁰Schumann, *Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany*, 117.

⁹¹Koch, *The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 247.

⁹²Dennis L. Bark, & David R. Gress, *A History of West Germany. Volume 1. From Shadow to Substance. 1945-1963* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989), 165.

⁹³Stachura, *The German Youth Movement 1900-1945*, 4.

⁹⁴Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'. Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, 214.

⁹⁵*Ibid*, 209.

Hitler Youth were thus exposed to the horrors and reality of the war, allowing some to see the futility of their situation.

While many Hitler Youth members remained tied to the worldview of the regime and continued to follow it blindly, others began to doubt the efficacy of the system. Some slid into juvenile delinquency and disobedience as a consequence of the greater independence they received in wartime society and through their opposition to a form of authority that appeared to be increasingly unreliable and illegitimate. Perry Biddiscombe points out that with many students having been sent to work and taken out of the school system and away from the oversight of parents, children gained a greater sense of their own power:

Some children basked in the glow of this premature responsibility, but many were set adrift without the guiding hand of parental and school direction. The natural result was a dramatic rise in juvenile delinquency, a severe loss of respect for all forms of authority, and the growth of dissident youth cliques.⁹⁶

The rate of juvenile criminality rose radically during the war, with increases in 1940 of 22.9 percent, followed by a subsequent increase in 1941 of another 77.7 percent, in 1942 of 38.5 percent and in 1943 of 12.1 percent.⁹⁷ Many youth also grew increasingly non-conformist as the war progressed. Some were drawn to forbidden elements of western culture, which included listening to jazz. The Edelweiss Piraten group was one organization that was key to mobilizing non-conformism.⁹⁸ For many of the youth drawn to the group, the "Führer myth" rapidly faded. Saul Padover notes:

⁹⁶Perry Biddiscombe, "The Enemy of Our Enemy": A View of the *Edelweiss Piraten* from the British and American Archives", *Journal of Contemporary History* Volume 30 (1995), 47.

⁹⁷Sosnowski, *The Tragedy of Children Under Nazi Rule*, 35.

⁹⁸Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'. Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, 208.

The war interfered before Hitlerism had achieved final success over the minds of the youth. The privations of the war were such that many youngsters had actually begun to turn against the Nazi leaders, although not against Hitlerite ideology.⁹⁹

In response to the wavering beliefs of the populace, the *Sicherheitsdienst* and Gestapo tightened their control of society in order to curb verbal dissent, a process which had the result of further quieting the population, while also increasingly discrediting the regime and revealing it as more tyrannical. For many children, silent bitterness replaced adulation for the Führer.¹⁰⁰ Others, however, remained with Hitler to the final hour. The words of one boy, Dieter Borkowski, who was sixteen years old at the time of the war's end, illustrate his difficulty in coming to terms with the collapse of the war effort and the impact of his misplaced faith in the Führer. When told of Hitler's death and the loss of the war, he felt physically ill, as he later recalled:

These words make me feel sick, as if I would have to vomit, I think that my life has no sense any more. What was this battle for, what were the deaths of so many people for? Life has apparently become worthless, for if Hitler has shot himself, the Russians will have finally won... Has the Führer not betrayed his Volk then after all.¹⁰¹

In the final analysis, the greater responsibilities placed upon children because of the war combined with the difficulties caused by the conflict to make children feel more independent, more powerful and often more opposed to the authority that they were supposed to obey.

However, despite these losses and hardships and the continued loss of stability in Nazi society, many Hitler Youth did not question the regime, but instead kept faith until the bitter end. While many in the German Army were skeptical of continuing the war effort, new recruits coming straight to the front from training camps were more ready to

⁹⁹Padover, "What About German Youth?", 26.

¹⁰⁰Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'. Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, 224.

¹⁰¹Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 110.

fight. German Army psychologists suggested that the army officers most willing to follow the regime were not the officers of the old *Wehrmacht*, but rather those who had been Hitler Youth leaders. The military doctor and poet, Gottfried Benn, said that only two groups in the military were willing to clearly follow orders, the Field Marshals who took their orders directly from Hitler, and the young lieutenants who came from the Hitler Youth leadership schools and had Hitler Youth education.¹⁰² It was often these Hitler Youth leaders who were the most fanatical followers of the Nazi ideology and the Führer cult, and it was many of them who would continue to promote the ideals of the Nazi regime in the postwar period.

One wonders how these children and young adults, despite an all-too-obviously impending defeat, remained fooled by the Nazi regime and why they were willing to fight so fiercely. Some Hitler Youth members, in reflecting on their roles in the war, stressed that Goebbels and his propaganda had continued to play their part in strengthening the morale of the people and preventing them from seeing the truth of the situation. Willy Schumann stated:

We believed in the existence of secret weapons ... it was simply not possible for us to believe that the war was lost. We were psychologically not capable of accepting the reality that the nearly five-year-long gigantic effort of the German people, the millions of victims, the devastated cities should have been in vain, that all of this should result in a second and probably even harsher Treaty of Versailles. Such a vision of the future was simply beyond our imagination. We could not yet take that psychological step.¹⁰³

The indoctrination was so effective that by the end of the war it was impossible for many boys in the Hitler Youth to come to grips with reality. Defeats in battle were always explained to people with convincing caveats, as the media, directed from Berlin, was extremely successful in controlling children's minds. This can be seen through the many

¹⁰²Werner Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt: die Hitler Jugend, ein Dokumentarbericht. (Oldenburg: G. Stalling, 1982), 251.

¹⁰³Schumann, Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany, 151.

effective poster and radio campaigns aimed at bolstering morale. Special terminology for military and civilian losses and massive deception, which included altering casualty figures and losses, helped keep some of the German population, including much of the Hitler Youth, from seeing defeat as a possibility.¹⁰⁴ As Schumann also reflected:

Despite these serious reverses on all fronts - on land, at sea, and in the air - one idea that never entered the minds of us young people was that the war was lost. In my innumerable discussions, conversations, and lectures abroad after the war, it is *the* subject where I encountered the least understanding and the strongest reaction of incredulity.¹⁰⁵

At other times, however, the regime readily admitted defeats with the belief that the German people would work harder and fight more ferociously in order to save themselves and Germany. Yet despite these admissions, the Hitler Youth still believed in an eventual victory. It is difficult to understand how members of the Hitler Youth could not have seen that the war was about to be lost, but their indoctrination had clearly led them to a state where they were unable and largely unwilling to see reality. Even as the Allies advanced into Germany children fought on to the bitter end. The New York Times found upon interviewing a returning soldier that some of the opponents the Allies had fought in the final days of the war were not trained soldiers, but were instead children. As he said, "some of these kids were boys and girls 8 to 14...and they were everywhere, throwing grenades out of windows and shooting with rifles."¹⁰⁶ The war brought to Hitler and the Nazi leadership the militant struggle which they had sought, and many of their nationalist and expansionist aspirations were shared by the Hitler Youth whom they had trained, and who were excited at the prospect of war and conquest. The appealing side of life in Nazi society, combined with indoctrination that made children blind to the truth of the war,

¹⁰⁴Ibid, 90, 116.

¹⁰⁵Schumann, Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany, 18.

¹⁰⁶The New York Times, June 3, 1945, 13.

yielded a cohort often so loyal to the regime that its lies were all that they were able to see. Despite the horrors of the war for many youths, their increasingly important roles in the war effort and the maintenance of order gave them a greater sense of independence and power, and tied them to a system in which they had grown up and which had provided them with such adult responsibilities. These factors were further supported by effective wartime propaganda, especially for many of the senior Hitler Youth leaders, who became the most devoted soldiers at the front, just as they had been the most devoted trainees in Hitler Youth camps. It must now be asked if the end of the war, the liquidation of the Nazi regime, and the resulting collapse of the Hitler Youth, truly brought about the disappearance of the organization's ideals, freed the children who had been so influenced by them, and how thoroughly the ideals were discredited.

Chapter III

Whither the Hitler Youth?

This brings us to the main focus of the thesis, namely the experiences and roles of the Hitler Youth following the Second World War. Considering that many young Germans were willing to join the Hitler Youth freely and that the Nazis employed a strong and effective propaganda that was hardly made less pervasive by the impact of the war effort, could the war's end have truly caused a sharp collapse of the belief system encouraged by the Hitler Youth? As unlikely as it seems, this is the basic assumption which has been held by historians and by the broader public alike. The war's end and the collapse of Nazi society is identified by many as having been not only the catalyst necessary to bring the Hitler Youth to an end, but also the key source of an intellectual liberation for the individuals within the organization.

In truth, such broad generalizations are faulty and the reality of the situation for Hitler Youth members bears some investigation from original sources. Postwar work by writers such as Christian Streit, Omer Bartov and Daniel Goldhagen has shown that once-prevalent theories, focused mainly on the role of Hitler and the Nazis in the Third Reich, have missed the impact which institutions such as the army had in supporting the regime, the war, and the Holocaust. The role of "average" Germans has also attracted increasing attention. Perhaps these new research approaches, as well as the insights of social history, should be applied to the particular problem of German youth. Not all Hitler Youth, of course, faced the postwar period in the same way. Some remained ideologically connected to the former regime, unable to break free, and as a result participated in resistance efforts or joined new right-wing youth groups, while others opened up to Western influences and gravitated to youth groups and programs provided by the new authorities. Most youth in the Soviet-occupied eastern zone were simply co-opted into the new pro-Communist youth group, the Freie Deutsche Jugend, which had a different

ideology than the Nazis had promoted, yet contained many of the same functional elements as the old Hitler Youth. For all Hitler Youth, the war's end brought the eventual realization that the Hitler regime had often deceived them, but that fact alone could not wholly effect the spiritual liberation of children subjected to so many years of biased and politicized education. Only through the overall reform and recovery of society, combined with the influence of new reorientation programs (including the implementation of Allied youth groups and denazification efforts), and through re-education sponsored by the Allies, could the youth of Germany break in a definite way from its Nazi past. Yet still, some who had been in the Hitler Youth, often those who had served as leaders in the organization and those who had been young at the time of the Nazi accession to power, continued to follow Nazi ideals and were able to pass on many pernicious ideas to the next generation. An examination of Hitler Youth remnants in the postwar period requires a look, therefore, at the many youth groups which sprang up, the continuing effect of Hitler Youth activities and Nazi ideals, and the efforts of the Allies to re-educate and denazify the Hitler Youth.

The immediate postwar period provides a problem for researchers because of a lack of sources caused by the war and the collapse of the state bureaucracy in Germany. The historian and writer Karl Heinz Jahnke states that "the situation of the German youth at the end of the Second World War has not been researched properly."¹⁰⁷ He notes that quite a great deal of information was recorded about youth until the end of the war, followed by nothing during the succeeding period. Jahnke admits that research was subsequently undertaken by historians seeking to fill this void, such as the project at the University of Rostock, where a research group was formed. When speaking of the wartime period Perry Biddiscombe notes: "Allied observers were never as constrained as

¹⁰⁷Karl Heinz Jahnke, "Deutsche Jugend am Ende des Krieges 1945," in *Jugend. 1900-1970*, 82.

their German counterparts in the pursuit of rational inquiry, and even despite the immense weight of wartime prejudices and incompetencies, there were a few specialists who developed some surprisingly perceptive insights about the condition of German youth.”¹⁰⁸ This was often true in the postwar period as well. The records of the Allied powers provide a great deal of information on youth in the postwar period, most of whom had been Hitler Youth members. In the postwar period youth were an important focus for the Allied occupying authorities. A 1950 census in the American zone showed that 2,761,000 people, or 15 percent of the total population of the U.S. zone, were Germans aged fourteen to twenty-five years of age.¹⁰⁹ Thus a large portion of those Germans who fell under American jurisdiction were young people who had spent time in the Hitler Youth.

It must be asked how these children, who had been indoctrinated for years and many of whom held to their beliefs until the end of the war, actually fared in the postwar period, at least in a political and spiritual sense. Many writers, historians, and Allied observers chose to believe that the war had provided Germany with a radical break from the Nazi past. As Ralph Willett notes, “the phrase *die Stunde Null* (Zero Hour) implies a spiritual and cultural vacuum waiting to be filled.”¹¹⁰ Though many hoped the Nazi regime and its servants were historical relics, this was clearly not the case. Elements of continuity into the postwar period cannot be overlooked. Shortly after the end of the war, Saul Padover identified two groups of Hitler Youth: those who were redeemable and those who were not. For him, the dividing line between the two groups was age: he judged those under the age of seventeen capable of redemption, while those over the age

¹⁰⁸Biddiscombe, “‘The Enemy of Our Enemy’: A View of the *Edelweiss Piraten* from the British and American Archives”, 39.

¹⁰⁹Henry P. Pilgert, “Community and Group Life in West Germany,” Koblenz, Bundesarchiv, Historical Division Office of the Executive Secretary (Office of the U.S. High Commission of Germany, 1952), 14.

¹¹⁰Ralph Willett, *The Americanization of Germany, 1945-1949* (London: Routledge, 1989), 4.

of seventeen had spent too much time being indoctrinated.¹¹¹ Padover identified the latter group as:

The young people who believe that the German race is superior to all others, that Frenchmen are degenerate, Russians barbarians, and that Germany is the defender of the true Kultur against an uncivilized world ... Above all, it should be kept in mind that they are not a defeated group. In their minds the Wehrmacht is still heroic, victor of a thousand battlefields.¹¹²

Padover also suggested that these children in particular, along with some even younger, were susceptible to militaristic ideas. 'Karl' a fifteen year old boy examined by Padover, was found to be a hopeless cause and thoroughly engrossed in Nazi ideology. As Padover noted, "in a few years Karl is bound to join an underground militaristic movement. He will unite with grown and full fledged Nazis..."¹¹³ While Padover allowed for exceptions, his analysis did not identify which children had become successfully democratized. Yet he did provide suggestions on how the Allies could begin the process of reform.

I consider the organization of a German underground within a few years inevitable. But the success or failure of the movement will depend upon what we do with youths, especially those under seventeen who are redeemable. If we can keep most of these youngsters out of the hands of neo-Nazi and ultra-nationalistic hands, then we can defeat the coming underground and, within two generations, make it possible for a new Germany to join the family of nations.¹¹⁴

For Padover then, it was those Hitler Youth who had been youngest at the time of the Nazi seizure of power who remained closely tied to the movement because of their long term exposure to indoctrination.

¹¹¹Padover, "What About German Youth?", 27.

¹¹²Ibid

¹¹³Ibid

¹¹⁴Ibid

Writers such as Kurt Tauber recognized the possibility of a Nazi underground and the continuing impact of Nazi ideas for youth.¹¹⁵ Raymond Daniel, writing for The New York Times, recognized this problem in an examination of German youth immediately following the war's end:

Worship of force and of militarism is drilled into the children in folklore, in history, music and by example from the time they are old enough to go to kindergarten. It has been so for a long time and it is going to be quite a job to change the whole country's attitude.¹¹⁶

However, despite such views by contemporaries, most work by western historians focused upon continuities and similarities shared between the Communist Youth and Hitler Youth, with children of the wartime era in the western zone often not garnering much attention. Seemingly the youth in the west had adapted to the new order, as becomes clear from many of the postwar accounts rendered. In The Shaping of Postwar Germany, Edgar McInnis, Richard Hiscocks and Robert Spencer speak about the issues of the reintegration of German youth and education reforms, but the focus in their work is on similarities between Communist teaching and Nazi indoctrination, not in identifying continuities in the western section of the country.¹¹⁷ This neglect seems to reflect prejudices arising from the political system which existed in the postwar period, when the country was divided between East and West. West Germany's quick economic recovery and its reintegration into the Western political order seem to have encouraged historical oversights involving former Hitler Youth, while many former Hitler Youth members also came to play important roles in the Federal Republic's reintegration and recovery.

¹¹⁵Howard Becker, German Youth: Bond or Free (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 217.

¹¹⁶The New York Times Magazine, Sunday, May 27, 1945, 35.

¹¹⁷McInnis Edgar & Richard Hiscocks & Robert Spencer, Shaping of Postwar Germany (New York: Praeger, 1960), 76.

Of course, the children of immediate postwar Germany were not ordinary youth by any means. They faced many hardships in postwar Germany ranging from homelessness and poverty to psychological trauma. Economic misery helped contribute to an increase in youth crime. Many children were literally forced to live in the rubble of their homes following the end of the war.¹¹⁸ At the war's end it was estimated that the number of youth living without a home was between eighteen and twenty thousand. The number of homeless girls was smaller than that of boys, yet many of the girls lived from prostitution.¹¹⁹ In 1946, 80 percent of prostitutes in Berlin were aged sixteen to eighteen. Some youth played a part in postwar reconstruction, whether through rebuilding their own homes or through other projects tied to organized youth activities. Statistics that come to light in the early Federal Republic were staggering, suggesting that 1,220,000 children had lost their fathers, and 250,000 had lost their mothers as well. The demographic statistics for Bavaria state that in 1949, 244,462 children and young people were living without fathers, while 3,445 had also lost their mothers.¹²⁰ Young people after the war were affected psychologically and physically by the consequences of fascism and war, while they were also forced to face a multitude of social problems. An estimated one in three children suffered from some sort of neuroses in 1945, and 70 percent of the youth population was undernourished.¹²¹ Along with the hardships they had endured, many children also had a sense of guilt for the roles they had played during the Nazi regime. This was brought on by the introduction of Allied influence in postwar Germany, revelations surrounding Nazi atrocities, and the restored authority of moderate German

¹¹⁸Hermann Glaser, The Rubble Years. The Cultural Roots of Postwar Germany, 1945-1948 (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1986), 151.

¹¹⁹Klaus Mehnert & Heinrich Schulte, Deutschland-Jahrbuch, 1949 (Essen: West-Verlag, 1949), 344.

¹²⁰Glaser, The Rubble Years. The Cultural Roots of Postwar Germany, 1945-1948, 153.

¹²¹G.E. Edwards, GDR Society and Social Institutions (Hong Kong: MacMillan, 1985), 117.

political figures. Following the war there was an increase in delinquency as well, with youth crimes accounting for a higher proportion of crimes overall.¹²²

Many children thus came into the postwar period insecure and skeptical.¹²³ Some writers said that the Hitler Youth were an “odd generation”, one that was too late to become leading Nazis themselves, yet was still educated by them and tainted by the Nazi legacy. The traumatic effect on youth, as Ian Buruma stated, “has rendered many people of that age mute about the past.”¹²⁴ Many of Germany’s returning soldiers were also former Hitler Youth members, such as those who had been twelve at the time of Hitler’s accession to power and were twenty-four at the war’s end. Many of these former soldiers were confused and upset, as they often experienced difficulty in finding work. Some former soldiers were unsure of what to do or where to go in the postwar period, and returned to soldiering in organizations such as the French Legion.¹²⁵ Hitler Youth members thus entered the postwar era troubled and disoriented.

Accounts from various Hitler Youth illustrate the difficulty in facing the postwar situation and realities of the Nazi regime. One young soldier stated:

We were still unreconstructed soldiers in civilian clothes. For us eighteen and nineteen year olds especially, it took years to change our attitude concerning the military and arrive at a more normal, reasonable, civilian and civil position.¹²⁶

It was again children like this, who had spent their entire lives under the regime, who were so heavily indoctrinated. As Padover and Schumann noted, the youth who were around

¹²²Kiryl Sosnowski, The Tragedy of Children Under Nazi Rule (Warsaw: Zachondia Agencja Prasowa, 1962), 36.

¹²³Edwards, GDR Society and Social Institutions, 117.

¹²⁴Ian Buruma, The Wages of Guilt. Memories of War in Germany and Japan (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1994), 245.

¹²⁵James M. Diehl, The Thanks of the Fatherland. German Veterans after the Second World War (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 69.

¹²⁶Schumann, Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler’s Germany, 170.

seventeen to nineteen years of age at the end of the regime were the most heavily Nazified. The New York Times extended this point to cover even younger children, stating in a June 17th 1945 article that “it must be pointed out that German children, now 12 years of age and under, have never known anything but worship of Der Fuehrer.”¹²⁷ Gabriele Rosenthal, who interviewed twenty-two former Hitler Youth boys and BDM girls, was “interested to know how members of your generation got through ‘umbruch’(or changeover).” One of those she interviewed, Frau Gisela Otmar, said that she and other girls were asked in May 1944 to support Werewolf activities, though she declined. She admitted that at the time of capitulation, when she was twenty-two years old, she was disappointed by the loss of the war. Though she was glad for peace, she initially viewed the occupying troops as enemies. Slowly, however, she began to realize that much of what had been told to the youth of Germany was crazy, especially the idea that the war could have been won, “and it took me many years to get over this disappointment.”¹²⁸

Many children who were former Hitler Youth members had difficulty getting past the indoctrination to which they had been exposed, and they had difficulties dealing with the revelations surrounding the Holocaust. Some were responsive to Allied attempts to illustrate the horrors of the Holocaust through the use of newsreels showing the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen camp. In response to these efforts, Willy Schumann stated:

We sat there silently, hardly shocked at all, and observed the horror scenes in a detached manner. We did not believe them. We were of the unanimous opinion that all of these were simulated scenes. After the film was over we talked about what we had seen. Then, and also in similar later discussions, everybody declared with absolute conviction that for twelve years we had been fed one-sided NS propaganda; now the allies came and used similar methods.¹²⁹

¹²⁷The New York Times, June, 17, 1945, 40.

¹²⁸Rosenthal, Die Hitlerjugend-Generation, 114-117.

¹²⁹Schumann, Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany, 170.

Schumann further described how he had more general difficulties in coming to terms with the Holocaust:

The awareness of that (the Holocaust) spread only very slowly, perhaps because the crimes were so monstrous that it was quite beyond our comprehension at the same time and surpassed all dimension of human understanding.¹³⁰

It is clear from these statements that it was asking a great deal to expect those who had spent so much time being indoctrinated by propaganda and who had served in the Hitler Youth to change simply because of the loss of the war and the changes in society that it entailed.

The studies done by the Allied Powers yield a great deal of information on the ideas of the German population as a whole following the war. Officials working for the Office of the Military Government, United States, found an abundance of anti-Semitic and anti-democratic sentiment in postwar Germany.¹³¹ As the Nuremberg Trials began, people were polled on the statement, "National Socialism was in principle a good idea which was badly carried out." Of those asked, 53 percent agreed.¹³² Following the trials, the Surveys Branch of the U.S. Military Government polled Germans and discovered that 71 percent of those questioned felt that not only those at the trial were to blame for Nazism and the war, with 43 percent believing that other Nazis needed punishing as well. Presumably, this was evidence of some progress. Yet the same poll found that 92 percent of those questioned totally rejected the idea of collective guilt. Only 51 percent of those

¹³⁰Ibid, 170.

¹³¹Jeffrey Herf, Divided Memory. The Nazi Past and the Two Germanies (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 204.

¹³²Jutta B. Lange-Quassowski, "Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past: Schools, Media, and the Formation of Opinion", in From Dictatorship to Democracy. Coping with the Legacies of Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism, edited by John Herz (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 97.

questioned in an OMGUS survey would admit that they themselves had a reason to feel guilty for their participation in Nazi wrongdoing.¹³³ While many were able to accept that more Nazis needed to be punished, the notion of collective guilt was too great a step for most people to take. By 1947 half of those polled still saw the Nazi regime positively, although as more crimes became public knowledge, the percentage that thought it was a good idea carried out poorly was lowered to 40 percent.¹³⁴ Anti-Semitism was noted as a serious problem amongst youth in the postwar period. One OMGUS report identified youth as having greater anti-Semitic traits than the rest of the population: “there is a slight tendency for anti-Semitism to decrease with age ... until the 60 year old group is reached, when it begins to increase.” Broader statements simply stated that “the elimination of anti-Semitism in Germany is a very long range problem, likely to take generations.”¹³⁵

These figures indicate that although many Germans admitted some sort of moral failing, a continuity of ideas and beliefs bound many Germans to their former regime. It is especially difficult in these figures to gauge the reaction of former Hitler Youth members, let alone the youth of Germany in general. Willy Schumann, however, states that young people followed the Nuremberg Trials with interest. “It was very difficult for us to identify these very ordinary looking men as the same people who had for years dazzled us with their celebrity...”¹³⁶ Many former Hitler Youth boys had great difficulty in acknowledging that leaders whom they had seen as heroes were actually mortal men guilty of horrid crimes. On the other hand, many veterans of the Hitler Youth believed that the

¹³³Munich Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, OMGUS ICD Report # 30-60, Records of the United States Headquarters, World War II, Record Group 260, Opinion Surveys. (Washington D.C.: Washington National Records Centre 20409, October 1970), Report 33, 2.

¹³⁴Lange-Quassowski, “Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past: Schools, Media, and the Formation of Opinion”, 97.

¹³⁵Munich Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, OMGUS ICD Report # 30-60, Report 49, 8.

¹³⁶Schumann, Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany, 170-171.

trials were simply put on for show by the victors, and many were unable to comprehend how the West was able to reconcile its association with the Soviet Russians, particularly as partners on the bench at Nuremberg.¹³⁷ As a result, the effect for many was continuing disorientation and confusion. Schumann notes: "I remember vividly a very strong and comprehensive feeling of fear and uncertainty with all people in my family and in my circle of friends and acquaintances concerning the future."¹³⁸ Saul Padover questioned whether the condition and mentality of Nazi children was the same as that of their parents. As Padover noted: "I discussed the question of German youth in particular and I found none of them very hopeful."¹³⁹ He suggested that young Germans knew very little about the outside world, stating that "there is in the minds of young Germans an intellectual void that passes understanding."¹⁴⁰ In questioning youth on specific knowledge about foreign conditions, Padover found that the failings of the German school system had left children bereft of a great deal of common knowledge:

Not a single young German was ever able to tell us, even vaguely, how or by whom America and England were governed. Their minds were stocked with Pan-German-manufactured clichés and slogans.¹⁴¹

However, Padover also stressed that many youth were bitter towards the regime and were not completely beyond the possibility of redemption. Instead they lacked the ability to understand their situation:

I do not hereby mean to imply that all German youths are Nazis or even conscious Nazi sympathizers. In many instances the contrary is the case. On a verbal level many young Germans earnestly curse Hitler and all his works. They curse him for the misery he brought upon them, for their destroyed homes, for their lost fathers, for their blighted lives; but the main point is that the devil they castigate is a personal one. They do not

¹³⁷Ibid, 172.

¹³⁸Ibid, 174.

¹³⁹Padover, "What About German Youth?", 26.

¹⁴⁰Ibid

¹⁴¹Ibid, 27.

comprehend that it was a whole system, a whole Kultur, that brought forth and shaped the devil.¹⁴²

It is clear that in the immediate postwar years, the Hitler myth did not disappear for all youth simply because of the death of Hitler in 1945. In October 1945, a U.S. survey in Darmstadt found that 42 percent of youth thought a strong single figure, such as Hitler, would be the best choice for organizing the rebuilding of Germany, compared with only 22 percent of adults who felt the same way.¹⁴³ As Ian Kershaw observes: “a considerable difference appeared in the attitude towards Hitler, the majority of youth offering an opinion being ready to excuse Hitler as a good man with bad advisers, while the majority of the older people condemned Hitler as an evil individual.”¹⁴⁴

It is necessary, however, to be cautious when examining opinion polls. Kurt Tauber has pointed to the danger of polls being manipulated in the postwar period to make children seem successfully adapted to the new reality on the one hand, while on the other making some children appear more fanatical than they actually were.¹⁴⁵ Tauber cites the sociologist Helmut Schelsky as having noted the need to cross-reference polls and statistics and to realize that when a mix of questions was put to former Hitler Youth members, numbers which seemed to indicate the high number of youth continuing to support the broader Nazi doctrine were considerably lowered.¹⁴⁶ The true opinions of youth are particularly difficult to see because some youth who favored the new democracy still saw some positive aspects in the past regime. If anything, the high numbers of ‘no opinion’ responses to many polls illustrates the disappointment and disinterest with politics which many youth experienced in the postwar period, often being disillusioned by the

¹⁴²Ibid

¹⁴³Kershaw, *The ‘Hitler Myth’. Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, 264.

¹⁴⁴Ibid, 264-265.

¹⁴⁵Tauber, *Beyond Eagle and Swastika.*, 365.

¹⁴⁶Ibid, 374.

politics of the Nazi era. Ambivalence and confusion surrounding abstract questions in particular made it clear that youth had a general apathy toward politics. The Allied investigators insinuated in their own conclusions that most postwar German youth were democratic, yet these beliefs stemmed not from empirical study but from their hopes.¹⁴⁷ More often than not, the basic realities were that the former members of the Hitler Youth had to change their ideology after war, and many were able to accomplish this quickly. They were curious about a new and different world shown to them by Allied soldiers, in particular the Americans. Need and necessity led them to search for food and clothing, and gradually the Hitler Youth ideology faded through their willingness to accept Allied aid.¹⁴⁸

However, some of the Nazi beliefs were carried into the 1950's by the youth of the wartime period and were taken up by others who had been infants during the Nazi era, and were in fact youth of the following generation. In 1950, 10 percent of the people questioned in a nation-wide poll said that Hitler was the second best statesman in German history after Otto von Bismarck.¹⁴⁹ In his work, Tetens examined statistics which point to many children still believing in the Hitler myth in the mid-1950's. In 1958, 42 percent of youth said that Hitler was "the greatest statesman of all time." He deduces from these statistics that only 25 percent of German youth in the postwar period were truly democratic and suggests that up to 70 percent of German youth remained indoctrinated with Nazi ideals in the postwar period.¹⁵⁰ Tetens pointed to many polls which suggested that children were not being efficiently re-educated by the Allied powers, or that they were simply lying when questioned about anti-Semitic atrocities and responded that they knew nothing about them.¹⁵¹ It must be remembered that by the time many of these studies

¹⁴⁷Ibid, 376, 379.

¹⁴⁸Hermann Glaser, *1945: Ein Lesebuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), 155

¹⁴⁹Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'. Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, 265-266.

¹⁵⁰Tetens, *The New Germany and the Old Nazis*, 84.

¹⁵¹Ibid, 224-5, 228.

were done, such as the work by Tetens, people who had been Hitler Youth members were now adults. They had moved into the wage-earning workforce, were coming into their own and were gradually taking the reins of economic and political power. Children of the next generation, however, those who had not been influenced by the Hitler Youth, were also beginning to show signs of radical Nazi notions, apparently passed on by the previous generation. The children who remained influenced by Nazism carried such influence into their professional lives and into postwar society, disseminating it to their own children.

As the years passed, it is clear that more and more people recognized the guilt of the country, and by the 1950's it seemed as though for the majority of the German population, Nazi ideologies were largely relegated to the past, although this was not the case for all former Hitler Youth. The Hitler Youth thus came out of the Nazi period and the war disoriented and divided, unsure of their beliefs and with many differing attitudes, some opposed to the regime they had supported, and others still believing in its most fundamental ideals. Only the passage of a great deal of time illustrates a clear break from Nazi ideals for most people brought up during the *NS-Zeit*.

Chapter IV

Allied Reform Efforts and the Hitler Youth

While many former Hitler Youth came out of the war confused and displaced, the Allies expected to encounter a continuity of Nazi ideals and beliefs, as well as continued Hitler Youth and terrorist activities. Many of these Allied expectations were generated by their own propaganda-fueled misconceptions concerning vicious young Nazis. After the war, there was a feeling that the so-called 'Hitler Youth generation' was not capable of exercising political responsibility, with many believing that young people needed a longer period to mature.¹⁵² The new authorities thought that this generation had lost its human values forever, and banned many former Hitler Youth and BDM leaders from attending schools and universities, while imprisoning thousands of others in camps. Field Marshal Montgomery said at the war's conclusion that the re-education of those youth between the ages of five and twelve in 1933, i.e., the older Hitler Youth and young adults who had been thoroughly indoctrinated, would be most difficult.¹⁵³ It was once again this group which was recognized to be the hardest to free of indoctrination.

Upon their entry into Germany, Allied forces expected extensive problems due to continued Hitler Youth activities and resistance efforts.

When the United States Army entered Bavaria, it was anticipated that Bavarian youth would cling to its Nazi faith and form the nucleus of underground resistance. Actually Bavarian youth seems to be searching for new ideals to replace a faith which they realize betrayed them, and acts of resistance thus far have been sporadic and unorganized.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵²Arno Klönne, "Jugendgeschichte in Trümmerzeiten - Streiflichter," in Jugend. 1900-1970, 98.

¹⁵³Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, 268.

¹⁵⁴Munich, Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Military Government for Land Bavaria. Cumulative Historical Report, 188-3 93. Bd 2. VI Information Control. Annual Report ICD, 30 June 1946 S., point 9, 250.

Kurt Tauber points to Allied fears of resistance from underground youth groups and admits that this fear was often legitimate, given the extensive planning done by the Nazis before the war's conclusion in the hope of continuing their efforts through clandestine guerrilla methods. These plans included the use of Hitler Youth members in Werewolf activities. Though H.A. Prützmann, Heinrich Himmler's Werewolf chief, refused to contemplate prospective post-defeat operations, Hans Dotzler, Bormann's main authority on resistance activity, had a series of plans developed with the hope that the rigors of occupation would be too much for the German population and that Werewolf harassment and terrorist activities would help to provide a rallying point for Nazis in the postwar era. The Werewolf strategy included the belief that cells of NSDAP members would continue activity despite the control of the nation by the Allies, and that these units could effectively maintain Nazi ideals through word of mouth contacts. They particularly planned to utilize young and unknown Hitler Youth, with the hope of avoiding detection of their efforts, and they also expected that returning prisoners of war would remain devoted to the Nazi cause and would hence be a ready source of recruits for continuing activity.¹⁵⁵ While the Allied powers thought they would have thousands of fanatical Werewolf youth on their hands, they actually found that this generation was often faced with more urgent issues, including hunger, illness, lack of proper education, unemployment, and lack of direction.¹⁵⁶ As early as June 18, 1945 The New York Times, examining a US military report, stated:

Allied authorities express surprise over the virtually complete absence of any serious Nazi underground resistance movement. There has been some sniping in wooded areas, some wire-cutting, but that is about all that the Allies have encountered in the way of resistance from any 'werewolves', which Nazi propagandists claimed would rise to haunt the occupation forces.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika. German Nationalism Since 1945, 23-24.

¹⁵⁶Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt: die Hitler Jugend, ein Dokumentarbericht, 268.

¹⁵⁷The New York Times, June 18, 1945, 8

By July 28th, 1945, The New York Times reported that:

British Intelligence officers said today that the Nazi werewolf movement had been destroyed...One officer said some thirty lairs were located in the Ruhr during the first three weeks of occupation and many were arrested. Others meekly abandoned their underground hideouts and gave themselves up.¹⁵⁸

However, this does not discount the fact that many held on to Nazi beliefs, despite the difficult conditions of the postwar period.

Out of the realization that many youth still bore Nazi ideals and might pose a threat, the Allied powers began extensive programs of denazification which included the removal of many teachers, bureaucrats and other authority figures from positions of power, while also focusing on changing children directly through reeducation campaigns and new democratically-associated youth groups. Many of the agencies established by the Allies following the war worked to control postwar German society, and focused on reeducating and reforming Germany's children. The complex Allied control system included the Youth and Community Activities Branch established in the Education and Cultural Relations Division, which in its outline broadly stated: "this branch is concerned with the democratic development of Germans through the community and groups to which they belong."¹⁵⁹ Allied reports illustrate that there was considerable concern about youth in the postwar period, which reflected worries about continued anti-democratic activities and the continued role of Nazi indoctrination.

It is clear from the Allied studies and reports that in the postwar period many Germans were demoralized, confused and divided. A 1946 analysis discovered that many Nazi ideas continued to have some influence, with point 17 of the American Military Government's Report on 'Public Welfare and Child Welfare' stating:

¹⁵⁸The New York Times, July 28, 1945, 4.

¹⁵⁹Henry P. Pilgert, "Community and Group Life in West Germany", 8.

After twelve years of Nazi rule and six years of war a general breakdown in family life and parental control has become evident. Youth who had looked to parents, teachers, and often the Nazi party for leadership became confused following the downfall of the State and questioned all guidance and direction.¹⁶⁰

Other reports also suggested that children were lost in the postwar wasteland. They focused on how many youths held negative feelings towards the Allied authorities as a result of the harshness of the war and the regime's failure. An American Military Government Report on 'Public Welfare and Child Welfare' examined the problem of disobedience and noted:

Indicative of what has happened to many youth is the statement made by the director of a home for vagrant boys who have not been charged with serious offenses: 'They are completely cold and blasé, entirely calculating in what they do. They haven't the least ethics. They have lost every feeling of relationship with their homeland and home, with parents and relatives, and even with their mothers. Memories mean nothing to them. Their only interests are food, sleep, money and girls'.¹⁶¹

The return of many homeless and orphaned youth only further contributed to the problems occurring because of the large numbers of indoctrinated children, now displaced from their families and home, and bereft of the organization and political society that had previously provided a sense of identity. The report on 'Public Welfare and Child Welfare' also stated that "the delinquency of homeless children increased during the fall and winter of 1945 when they began to converge on larger cities."¹⁶² Many youth returned from fighting and labour service only to find their homes and loved ones gone. The society in

¹⁶⁰Munich, Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Military Government for Land Bavaria. Cumulative Historical Report, 188-3 93, Bd 1 S. 1-18 30, IV-Internal Affairs and Communications Annual Report ICD, 30 June 1946 S, point 17, 103.

¹⁶¹Munich, Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Military Government for Land Bavaria. Cumulative Historical Report, 188-3 93, Bd 1, 1-18, IV-Internal Affairs and Communications Annual Report ICD 30 June 1946 S), point 19, 104.

¹⁶²Ibid, point 15, 103.

which they had grown up and which had moulded them was suddenly gone. The London Times, examining problems surrounding housing and food supply in the British zone, stated that the condition was made worse as a result of

...an unofficial influx of Germans from other zones. Germans arriving from Polish occupied territories are officially described as 'practically destitute'. Only about a quarter are males, and of these only about half have been found fit for work.¹⁶³

Thus there was an added strain on the administrations of German cities, especially in the west of the country as masses of youth congregated, lacking direction and guidance.

In the postwar vacuum that existed for the youth of Germany many were, however, once again able to restore some sort of normalcy and become civilians. Some former Hitler Youth came to realize the extent of the atrocities committed by the Nazis early on in the postwar period, as they were taken to concentration and extermination camps and shown the true horror of their complicity. This particular effort by the Allies was extremely effective at illustrating that there was truth to many of the rumors which had circulated through Germany concerning atrocities committed against the Jews and others whom the Nazis had designated as enemies. Other children remembered the camaraderie that the Hitler Youth had provided, but their nostalgia was often hindered by memories of the family and friends lost in the war, the immediate food shortage crisis, and the massive destruction which comprised the chief aftermath of the war.¹⁶⁴ For many German youth these postwar realities resulted in a new pragmatism. Once the war was over, many former Hitler Youth members did in fact feel that the shock of defeat had not only brought about the end of the Nazi regime but had also broken the indoctrination of German youth. Schumann, in examining the impact of Hitler's death and the end of the war, noted:

¹⁶³The London Times, September 20, 1946, 3

¹⁶⁴Koch, The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945, 250-252.

Neither in our squad, nor in the streets, nor with our acquaintances did I observe any emotional outbursts of despair, any tears, any nervous collapses. There prevailed a general numbness among the population which now affected us young soldiers also.... We were no longer part of the Volksgemeinschaft, the national community; we no longer felt that we were members of an organization like the army or any other group, as we had been indoctrinated so effectively to believe for ten or more years.¹⁶⁵

The collapse of ideals and the lack of a place in a clearly defined society left the children of Germany vulnerable. The New York Times reporter Herbert Matthews commented soon after the occupation of Germany that:

The young have been deeply imbued with a love of soldiery and its attendant uniforms, medals and pomp and glory, and defeat will not eliminate that feeling. Least of all will the emphasis on physical prowess and physical courage yield to admiration for brains and the sedentary virtues of civic life. Fascism has taught a whole generation to believe in violence, force and the right of might... Youngsters literally have to be taught the simplest principles of social morality and ethics which are just about taken for granted in other countries.¹⁶⁶

This situation was quickly realized by the Allies as well, who recognized that for many children formerly involved in the Hitler Youth, the collapse of Nazism, the failure of the war effort, and the impact of massive horror and destruction had left them confused, disillusioned, and perhaps even open to the introduction of new ideals. As an American Military Government report on the 'Reorientation of Youth' stated:

Military defeat, preceded and followed by the rapid disintegration of the Nazi system that had over and over again exhorted the population never to capitulate, left the young generation with shattered ideals and deprived of the accustomed controls by paramilitary organizations and political police. In the vacuum thereby created, there was room for new ideals, but even when groping for them the majority of German youth was still a totalitarian youth in search of new leadership.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵Schumann, Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany, 154.

¹⁶⁶The New York Times, May 27, 1945, 29.

¹⁶⁷Germany 1947-1949. The Story in Documents, Publication 3556, European and British Commonwealth Series 9. (Department of State: March, 1950), 580.

Hence the Allied authorities realized that they needed strong efforts to reorient youth away from Nazism and to instead introduce them to more democratic ideals in order to prevent them from relapsing into Nazi habits and modes of thinking.

With this in mind, the Allies began an extensive process of denazification and democratization throughout German society, a process that included the former Hitler Youth. The Nuremberg Tribunal only focused on senior Nazis, but subsequent trials successfully establishing the complicity of many doctors, judges, diplomats, civil servants, industrialists and *Wehrmacht* leaders.¹⁶⁸ Outside of some of the high-level Nazis, the Allies had to determine how to identify Nazis; would Nazis be defined as all card-carrying members of the NSDAP, or did a sense of Nazism extend beyond these Germans and into broader society?¹⁶⁹ One of the major efforts made by the Allies was in determining which individuals were to be held accountable for bringing about and playing a major role in the Nazi state; these people obviously deserved to be separated from society and punished for their participation in the regime. In the American zone, the use of the *Fragebogen* was supposed to help the authorities assign guilt, with individuals being placed, upon the basis of their responses, into various categories that included major offender, offender, lesser offender, follower, and exonerated.¹⁷⁰ In the American zone, 13 million people answered the questionnaires, with 75 percent of those being deemed not responsible for the Nazi regime or its atrocities.¹⁷¹ Yet for an occupier with limited manpower, the *Fragebogen* were too complex a system to institute, with more than fifty thousand cases a month being processed. While many lower level Nazis were screened, higher officials often were not

¹⁶⁸Herf, *Divided Memory*, 206.

¹⁶⁹Tauber, *Beyond Eagle and Swastika. German Nationalism Since 1945*. Volume 1, 27.

¹⁷⁰John H. Herz, "Denazification and Related Policies", in *From Dictatorship to Democracy. Coping with the Legacies of Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism*, edited by John Herz (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 26-27.

¹⁷¹Rand C. Lewis, *A Nazi Legacy. Right-Wing Extremism in Postwar Germany* (New York: Greenwood, 1991), 35.

so treated, with only 21.7 percent of the entire population in the American zone being evaluated by 1949.¹⁷² By the end of 1945, the denazification procedures had also seen over 100,000 men classified as security risks, being put into detention camps.¹⁷³ The British also instituted a series of purges, with municipal, regional and state administrations being cleansed. In Hamburg, 8,700 of 48,000 municipal employees were arrested or dismissed because of Nazi ties, with 60 percent of senior police officers, 16 percent of school teachers, and 30 percent of university faculty being removed.¹⁷⁴ The French government decided not to follow the strict type of denazification undertaken by the American control authorities in their zone. Yet like the Americans and the British, the French control authorities faced the same problems with youth. A postwar French survey concerning the attitudes of German adults towards youth found that 47 percent of men and 35 percent of women had an unfavorable impression, indicating that there was clearly some tension between the generations.¹⁷⁵ The extent of the thoroughness of denazification in any of the occupation zones often depended on the commitment of local administration, and for many of the people involved in the denazification process it was difficult to see the difference between who was a dangerous Nazi and who was an average German.

Yet the denazification process was not focused mainly upon former members of the Hitler Youth. Despite the fact that writers such as Kurt Tauber later realized that the success or failure of the new democracy lay in the actions and beliefs of the young people who had been Hitler Youth members during the Nazi regime, efforts at denazifying youth

¹⁷²John D. Montgomery, Forced to be Free. The Artificial Revolution in Germany and Japan (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 23-26.

¹⁷³Wellington Long, The New Nazis of Germany (New York: Chilton Book Company, 1968), 38-39.

¹⁷⁴Ibid, 38-39.

¹⁷⁵F. Roy Willis, The French in Germany, 1945-1949 (Stanford: University Press, 1962), 166.

were the most incomplete part of the denazification process. When evaluating the Nazi agencies held most responsible for wartime atrocities at Nuremberg, The London Times reports that Allied agencies found:

The S.A., or brown-shirted mass militia of the Nazi Party, escapes collective condemnation. This association, though active in the early days of the movement, had been reduced to comparative impotence since 1934, and its members cannot be held, without other evidence, to have been cognizant of the crimes that were being perpetrated in the Nazi name. *A fortiori* the Hitler Jugend may be regarded as dupes of their elders, and were not included in the indictment.¹⁷⁶

The emergence of the Cold War so soon after the conclusion of the Second World War created worries about expansionist communism and shifted the emphasis of the occupying powers in western Germany away from denazification efforts toward reintegration of Germany into the Western sphere. Denazification efforts were also hampered by a lack of manpower in administration. First, there was a lack of Allied soldiers and administrators to run the denazification effort, while second there was a shortage of reliable Germans who remained employable following the denazification procedures.

However, even though denazification efforts were not focused on youth directly, the Allied authorities realized the importance of bringing Hitler Youth members and German youth as a whole into the new system and freeing them from the effects of Nazi indoctrination. In hopes of reconciliation, an amnesty was proclaimed on 8 July 1946 for most young people born between January 1st, 1919, and March 5th, 1928, a move intended to promote the reintegration of German youth into a democratic new order. Henry Pilgert stated that "this 'youth amnesty' was a measure designed to win the confidence of German youth by removing a potential source of hostility and opposition to

¹⁷⁶The London Times, October 1, 1946, 7.

the efforts of Military Government offices and the Germans co-operating with them.”¹⁷⁷ A review by the American Military Government which examined the amnesty stated that the measure provided “a further conciliatory move intended to give the great majority of German youths a chance for a fresh start...”¹⁷⁸ However, the measure was also instituted as a means of reducing the huge numbers of people already involved in the unwieldy process of denazification. As well, the amnesty had the unintended effect of freeing the Hitler Youth from guilt and canceling a punishment that many deserved, allowing the Allies to largely ignore youth in the denazification process. When speaking of the effects of the youth amnesty, Manfred Jenke notes that for almost all Hitler Youth leaders and members of the *Reichsjugendführung*:

There was not the slightest reason to fear prosecution. Indeed they could participate in creating the Federal Republic of Germany, and not only in trade and commerce, but also in social teaching and public service functions.¹⁷⁹

While many high-ranking Nazis and other Germans were tried for offenses at the Nuremberg trials and then in subsequent postwar civil courts, trials which sometimes involved Hitler Youth themselves, the vast majority of Hitler Youth were simply exonerated of any crimes and were freed of the burden of collective guilt as a result of the youth amnesty.

Gradually the Allies abandoned the denazification program in its entirety as both the public and the political parties became increasingly opposed to the program. The denazification process was viewed as a huge drain on Allied resources which, it was felt, could be more appropriately directed towards reconstruction efforts. Although some of the people implicated by the *Fragebogen* were blocked from public employment or from

¹⁷⁷Pilgert, “Community and Group Life in West Germany”, 18.

¹⁷⁸Germany 1947-1949. *The Story in Documents*, 582.

¹⁷⁹Manfred Jenke, *Verschwörung von Rechts?* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1961), 157.

holding public office, more often than not the effects of implementing denazification policies were temporary.¹⁸⁰ Some polls stressed that up to 60 percent of the German population were in favor of the denazification program, yet only 32 percent were actually satisfied with its results, with this number dropping by 1949 to 17 percent.¹⁸¹ On March 5th, 1946, the Americans turned the denazification program over to the Germans.¹⁸² In Bavaria, 11,000 of the 12,000 teachers who had been dismissed because of Nazi affiliations were reinstated by 1949. By 1948, there were more Nazi Party members in the postal service than there had been during the war as a result of the large number of returning soldiers and the influx of people removed from other positions.¹⁸³ The youth amnesty was also followed by a Christian amnesty designed to release those connected to churches from guilt; both measures were intended to reduce the backlog in the denazification process rather than truly being concerned with exonerating people innocent of Nazi crimes. By 1949, the Allies, in the hope of beginning a more permanent restructuring of society, allowed ex-Nazis to play a role in society once again. Former Nazi party members were allowed to vote, Wehrmacht officers were allowed back into public service, and the Allies stated publicly that Germany was denazified.¹⁸⁴ This latter claim, of course, was not true, since efforts by the Allies and the new government were now being motivated by a desire to relocate the new West German state firmly in the Western Allied sphere and to put the debacle of denazification behind everybody. John Montgomery suggests that “the Christian Democrats were willing to support denazification as a legal process, but they felt obliged to defend Nazis against any form of

¹⁸⁰Herz, “Denazification and Related Policies”, 29.

¹⁸¹Montgomery, Forced to be Free. The Artificial Revolution in Germany and Japan, 33-34.

¹⁸²Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika. German Nationalism Since 1945, 29.

¹⁸³Montgomery, Forced to be Free. The Artificial Revolution in Germany and Japan, 79.

¹⁸⁴Lewis, A Nazi Legacy, 35.

involuntary atonement for their political actions.”¹⁸⁵ Thus the efforts to remove and punish Nazis largely fell short, although the Federal Republic of Germany and the Allies made other attempts to change the nature of society and reorient youth.

The German Democratic Republic dealt more thoroughly with actual Nazis than the Federal Republic. The East German Communists and the Soviet occupiers began a series of purges in 1945 which included removing Nazis from the judiciary, bureaucracy, and industry. In the first postwar year alone, the Soviets fired 390,478 former members of the Nazi Party from government and business positions.¹⁸⁶ Though many “small fry” Nazis were removed in the West, the number was far greater in the East. As an example, 80 percent of judges and prosecutors in East Germany were removed from their positions.¹⁸⁷ In dealing with postwar textbooks the East German government went farther than that of the Federal Republic, attacking the idea of dealing with the Nazi regime as a closed past and attempting to illustrate the dangers of continuities from the Nazi era. By February 1948, however, the Soviets themselves claimed that denazification had been successful,¹⁸⁸ and along with denazification efforts in the Soviet zone came a reduction of rights for East Germans, who eventually found themselves less free than they had been under National Socialism.¹⁸⁹ The implementation of a new ideology was also key in East Germany, with the ideal of the *Volksgenosse* being replaced with that of the fraternal comrade.¹⁹⁰ Some of those who fled the East German regime eventually had difficulties in the West, where they saw no clear ideology at all and felt somewhat lost.¹⁹¹ Thus, for Germans who fell under Soviet control, denazification was often more thorough

¹⁸⁵Montgomery, Forced to be Free. The Artificial Revolution in Germany and Japan, 62.

¹⁸⁶Herf, Divided Memory, 72.

¹⁸⁷Buruma, The Wages of Guilt, 155.

¹⁸⁸Herf, Divided Memory, 72.

¹⁸⁹Ralph Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany (Garden City: Doubleday and Co. inc., 1967), 421.

¹⁹⁰Ibid, 422.

¹⁹¹Ibid, 429.

than in the West, though the new government replaced one totalitarian ideology with another.

It is true, however, that before the formation of the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic, the occupying powers undertook various reforms directed specifically towards the reorientation of German youth. In the hopes of reforming former Hitler Youth members, the Allies recognized that the education system required a massive renewal in order to aid in reorienting youth and denazifying and democratizing Germany. Point 18 of the American Military Government Report on 'Public Welfare and Child Welfare', admitted that children were confused and disoriented:

This feeling coupled with the fact that a large percentage of German adolescents have been imbued with Nazi ideologies means that the reconstruction of youth welfare services is more of an educational problem than an ordinary welfare function.¹⁹²

The Allied authorities recognized that even the Weimar education system reflected nineteenth century traditions and emphasized militaristic, nationalistic and even racist ideas. These negative aspects, they realized, had only been enhanced by the Nazi regime. They deemed the German three-track school system, which separated children based upon talent and ability, to be class-based and too rigid. The Allies, as well as many critics on the German left, saw the traditional educational system as a threat to reform. Some were opposed to the process of 'streaming' at age ten, when students were divided according to performance for practical training at the *Hauptschule* or intellectual preparation in the *Mittelschule*, *Oberschule*, or *Gymnasium*. This 'streaming' process, the Allies believed, denied all students access to higher education. Only *Mittelschule* graduates could go on to professional schools and only those who went to the *Gymnasium* could continue on to

¹⁹²Munich, Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Military Government for Land Bavaria. Cumulative Historical Report, 188-3 93, Bd 1, 1-18 , IV-Internal Affairs and Communications Annual Report ICD, 30 June 1946, S, point 18, 103.

university. Many critics were also opposed to religion playing a large role in shaping educational principles.¹⁹³

In late 1946, OMGUS appointed George F. Zook, the chairman of the American Council on Education, to evaluate the reforms undertaken in Germany. His proposal stressed the need for an American-style educational system, with six years of primary school before admission to high schools in which children were not separated from each other based on prior ability.¹⁹⁴ For Zook and the Americans, there was a belief that the German system was too class-based and that it prevented children from having broader opportunities, instead streamlining them into various fields of study and work as a result of early performance at school and sometimes as a result of familial background. The New York Times noted that the Allied Committee on reeducation pointed not just to the need for new texts and better teaching, but that it also illustrated that children needed to shed false beliefs. Quoting the study:

The entire educational system should be organized so that in every local community there will be equality of educational opportunities...There should be no discrimination against any class, race, religion or gender.¹⁹⁵

Thus, the Allied authorities sought by such means to reform the school structure in order to provide for more equal opportunity, to make the administration more democratic, and to make the curriculum more based in the humanities, while at the same time tying it to more democratic ideals.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³Bark, & Gress, A History of West Germany. Volume 1.,166.

¹⁹⁴Ibid, 170.

¹⁹⁵The New York Times, June 21, 1945,10.

¹⁹⁶Lange-Quassowski, "Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past: Schools, Media, and the Formation of Opinion", 90.

The Allied powers put forth many educational goals and promulgated several Military Government regulations to be executed by various Allied control agencies. They noted:

It is the policy of the military government to eradicate Nazism and German militarism in all their aspects from the German educational system and cultural life. Educational institutions will not be permitted to include military training in any form or courses in military subjects in their curricula.¹⁹⁷

The Allies held as their first priority the denazification of teachers and they claimed that by the fall of 1945, 60 to 70 percent of elementary and secondary school teachers had been dismissed from their duties. In an attempt to recruit replacements, students and young adults with some minor training and a good education were put into teaching positions.¹⁹⁸ The U.S. Military Government further attempted to deal with the problem of lingering Nazi influence by changing the school curriculum, noting that "the German authorities will also eliminate anything which promotes the study of military geography and geopolitics; seeks to propagate, revive or justify the doctrines of Nazism or exalt the achievements of Nazi leaders..."¹⁹⁹ Allied Control Directive #54, sent to the German Educational Ministers in 1947, stressed the need to eliminate Nazi ideals from the German school system.²⁰⁰ The efforts at reeducation were aided by Germans who realized that education and the school environment surrounding children were keys to reclaiming them from their Nazi past. An attempt was also made to change the textbooks used in classes, with a

¹⁹⁷Germany 1947-1949. *The Story in Documents*, 541.

¹⁹⁸Munich, Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Military Government for Land Bavaria. Cumulative Historical Report, 188-3 93, Bd 1, 1-18, IV-Internal Affairs and Communications Annual Report ICD, 30 June 1946, S, 121.

¹⁹⁹Germany 1947-1949. *The Story in Documents*, 548.

²⁰⁰Theresa Scanlon, "Student Aid in Western Germany 1945-1971: A Study with Particular Reference to the Honnet Scheme" Volume 1 (PH.D. thesis, University of Manchester, Institute of Science and Technology, 1988), 37.

specific emphasis on providing history textbooks that did not glorify the war or the nationalistic tendencies that the Nazis had stressed. By the end of 1945, the Allies had provided five million textbooks to replace Nazi school books.²⁰¹ By 1949, an American committee agreed that great improvements had been made in the realm of textbooks.²⁰²

Yet problems plagued efforts to overhaul the education system that had shaped the children of the Hitler Youth. Attempts at reeducation were often lukewarm at best. During the war, plotting out a reform strategy was not a priority for the Allies and as a result they often lacked extensive planning when they started running their individual zones in 1945.²⁰³ Though the Americans and British were more prepared than the French and Soviets with various reform strategies, there is evidence that the Allies had realized changes to education would be a long term problem. An American Military Government report on 'Schools and Youth Activities', stated that "schools will for a long time to come be unable to offer to German youth all the incentives it needs; nor can the schools be expected to take a hand in the organization of leisure time."²⁰⁴ Emil Ludwig, writing at the close of the war, did not believe changes in education could redeem many Hitler Youth and stated as much: "no one can save the Hitler Youth of today, the boys of fourteen. But starting with the five-year-old an education period of fifteen years should be sufficient."²⁰⁵ Thus some writers identified a new generation that the Allies might be able to salvage, but viewed the Hitler Youth generation itself as a lost cause. It was again this youth group, which had spent so much time being indoctrinated, that many writers and observers thought it would be impossible to change. While Padover, Klose and Schumann identify

²⁰¹Dennis L. Bark, & David R. Gress, *A History of West Germany*, 169.

²⁰²Lange-Quassowski, "Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past: Schools, Media, and the Formation of Opinion", 93-94.

²⁰³A.J. Nicholls, "The Post-war Problems of the Germans" in *European History Quarterly* (Vol 17, Ja. 1987. pp.101-107), 103.

²⁰⁴*Germany 1947-1949. The Story in Documents*, 581.

²⁰⁵Emil Ludwig, *The Moral Conquest of Germany* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Co., inc., 1945), 172.

children who were seventeen in 1945 as having been the key section of the population that had the most difficulty in freeing itself of Nazi doctrine, Ludwig lowers that threshold slightly to fourteen.

It proved exceedingly difficult for the Allied authorities to harmonize education in the four separate zones of postwar Germany. The British, and later the Americans, were eager to take a position mainly as advisors, while the French were prepared to interfere more readily in educational matters with the Soviets also willing to make attempts at direct control. The British were especially concerned with stressing more equality and promoting access for working class children.²⁰⁶ The Americans and French thought that the churches could take greater control, yet they missed the point that the instruction provided by churches was often not very progressive.²⁰⁷ One problem which remained for the Allies was that the *Länder* traditionally decided on education matters, and hence it was difficult to enforce a uniform educational policy for the whole country. The OMGUS Education Section was able to provide guidelines and approve curriculum, yet it was a vast and complex area to control. Many writers pointed to certain continuities in the school system, despite the removal of Nazi elements. Ten years after the war, swastika graffiti could still be found at schools.²⁰⁸ Fifty percent of the teachers remained Nazi trained and often imparted to children what they perceived as the positive aspects of the Hitler regime, glorifying the past, while others ignored it all together.²⁰⁹

Other factors also posed major problems for rebuilding the education system. The extensive destruction in Germany left a severe shortage in school buildings and support programs, while the average youth had to come to terms with the fact that many former

²⁰⁶Scanlon, "Student Aid in Western Germany 1945-1971: A Study with Particular Reference to the Honnet Scheme", 37, 42.

²⁰⁷Lange-Quassowski, "Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past: Schools, Media, and the Formation of Opinion", 91.

²⁰⁸Ibid, 93.

²⁰⁹Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika. German Nationalism Since 1945, 432.

classmates and family members had been killed. As well, the influx of refugees from the East, which totaled 1,555,000 youth aged fourteen to twenty-four, added further strain to the educational system.²¹⁰ The need for basic reeducation, the problems of handling expellees, and the extensive destruction were further complicated to some degree by the denazification efforts. Though schools in the American zone reopened in the fall of 1945, 1,200,174 elementary school students were being taught by 14,176 teachers; 1:85. This number is more striking when it is realized that it excluded 510,000 students who were not at school because of the lack of buildings.²¹¹ On 12 November 1945, the *Hamburger Nachrichtenblatt* reported that 30,000 teachers had been forced out of teaching due to their political pasts. In the British zone, 35,000 teachers were allowed to continue teaching, but 10,000 had already been arrested. In the American zone, approximately 60 percent of all elementary teachers were not allowed to teach because of their National Socialist records. Professor Hans von Eckardt, employed in the Bavarian State Ministry for Education, stated in December 1945 that Bavaria desperately needed teachers to reeducate the children of the state.²¹²

In examining the students themselves, Frederic Lilge recognized that:

Among these students are temporizing, aimless veterans of many wars, and young uprooted and displaced people who still fight for the lost illusion of a middle-class life and career. Among them also are able serious young men and women who after years of propaganda are starved for knowledge.²¹³

The task of changing such children was so daunting and complex that it was often not enough to reach children with the requisite messages. Richard Alexander, the Chief of the Education and Religious Affairs Branch of Military Government, stated in 1948:

²¹⁰Glaser, *The Rubble Years*, 49.

²¹¹Bark, & Gress, *A History of West Germany*, 168.

²¹²Hermann Glaser, *1945: Ein Lesebuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), 167.

²¹³Frederic Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948), 167.

The great mass of Germans has learned nothing from the war as yet, and the more readily they acquire economic security, the more certain they are to take the same pattern as before. It is ridiculous to think that in three years' time we can make over the thinking of a nation that is so badly infected with arrogant nationalism as Germany was.²¹⁴

Efforts in the French zone were hampered, as elsewhere, by the sheer destruction in Germany. Of 5,961 schools in the French zone, two thousand were damaged and many others were being used by French troops for billeting.²¹⁵ The French too engaged in an incomplete removal of teachers. In universities in the French zone where 30 percent of professors were removed from teaching and French curators were put in positions to supervise changes, the purge remained incomplete because there were only three curators for the entire zone, leaving too much work for them to supervise.²¹⁶ Yet despite evidence to the contrary, the French, like the Americans, stated publicly that denazification had been carried out as far as possible, even though this was far from the case.²¹⁷

As well, not all observers felt that there were improvements in the texts approved by the Allies. It is clear from all sources that at the end of the war there was a severe shortage of books not tainted by Nazi doctrine, and that this did not change for some time. Despite some improvements prompted by Allied reform measures, critics stress that these changes were often not permanent, as many works quickly neglected the Nazi past once Allied oversight was removed. T.H. Tetens provides the example of the popular text Man in Changing Times, in which the 1949 edition had an eight page focus on the concentration camp terror, while the 1958 edition had none.²¹⁸ Walter Renn points to early problems in textbooks, saying that they dealt with the Holocaust as a closed event,

²¹⁴Willett, The Americanization of Germany, 16.

²¹⁵Willis, The French in Germany, 168.

²¹⁶Ibid, 173.

²¹⁷Ibid, 162.

²¹⁸Tetens, The New Germany and the Old Nazis, 222.

not seeing any possible legacy; nor did they admit any possible sense of continuity from the Nazi regime to neo-Nazi activities.²¹⁹ He points to studies by the government-supported Institut für Zeitgeschichte, which recognized that many in Germany still wrestled with the Nazi past. As he states, “a characteristic weakness of most German texts is that they do not even treat anti-Semitism as a prejudice, nor very often designate it by that term. It is described, instead, as racial illusion, or mania-*Rassenwahn*.”²²⁰ The implication of this approach was that anti-Semitism and the Holocaust were explainable due to a time of confusion and craziness. Walter Renn also points out that Chancellor Adenauer had believed that better texts were needed and that he was pressured by various groups to make improvements.²²¹ Others in the postwar period realized that despite efforts aimed at dismissing Nazi teachers and replacing them with younger successors, the average age for teachers remained high. This was due in part to the fact that so many younger and middle aged professionals had been removed from pedagogy as a result of the war or denazification, forcing authorities to allow many older teachers to remain in positions. This allowed traditional ideas to prevail.²²²

Education in the Soviet zone of occupation, though initially tied to broader Allied efforts, eventually became a means of control. In July 1945, the Soviets set up the German Educational Administration, and initially they made no mention of the Soviet Union or its ideology, as they were willing to work, at least provisionally, within the democratic framework that the Allied powers were attempting to establish.²²³ However, as early as 1947 the Soviet control authorities began efforts to sovietize education,

²¹⁹Walter F. Renn, “Federal Republic of Germany: Germans, Jews and Genocide”, in The Treatment of the Holocaust in Textbooks, edited by Randolph Braham (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 12.

²²⁰Ibid, 5, 41.

²²¹Ibid, 8.

²²²Germany 1947-1949. The Story in Documents, 581.

²²³Norman M. Naimark, The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 453.

introducing Russian as the second language in schools, followed by English.²²⁴ The Soviets to a large extent had their hands tied, as they were forced to work with the Christian Democratic Union, the Social Democratic Party, and the other parties as well.²²⁵ Despite the desires of the Ministry of Higher Education and the Soviet Academy of Sciences to have greater control over German education, they were initially restrained by the other Allies and were later held back by the reluctance of their own people to participate in sovietizing the school system. Soviet professors, as an example, were especially unwilling to go to Germany if they could avoid it.²²⁶

The Soviet zone administration was also hindered by the same problems that the Allies faced in reforming education. Reforms in the Soviet zone were also slowed by the lack of school buildings and a lack of coal to heat those buildings that were available. Even by 1949 the situation remained deplorable. Not only were there health concerns and a lack of new texts, there was also a shortage of teachers in the Soviet zone, with most of those available having been former Nazis. In an effort to provide suitable non-Nazi teachers, the Soviets began to train both workers and farmers for the task. Yet despite the new training, many Germans were not transformed into willing Communists as readily as the Soviets had hoped.²²⁷ As well, the Soviet zone had the unique problem of having to cope with a mass of teachers leaving for the West in hopes of finding a better life, teachers being amongst the nearly eight million Germans who fled to the western zones from the Soviet zone or elsewhere in the East.²²⁸

There was much less reform at the university level following the war, with childhood schooling being the main focus of Allied reforms. The primary Allied efforts at

²²⁴Ibid, 458.

²²⁵Ibid, 453.

²²⁶Ibid, 449.

²²⁷Ibid, 455-456.

²²⁸A.J. Nicholls, "The Post-war Problems of the Germans" in *European History Quarterly* Volume 17 (January 1987), 107.

the university level involved the removal of former Nazi professors and the monitoring of anti-democratic and extreme nationalist activities and sentiments. However, there were many problems in these efforts. A lack of Allied officers and enlisted men led to a serious lack of manpower to aid in denazification efforts, which included reviewing university professors.²²⁹ Still an even larger problem was that under the Nazis, few university professors had actually been removed. Instead, many traditionalists already in place had simply embraced racism and nationalism to a large extent. For denazification of professors, and the process as a whole, to be successful, these serious problems in society had to be addressed by the Allies, although such an effort proved too costly and complicated to undertake.²³⁰

Some students at the university level had also been heavily indoctrinated before the end of the war. For a prominent Nazi student in Hamburg, Hans Ochsenius, fears of Allied vengeance were too much to bear and he chose suicide rather than capture. His last writings before his death continued to show strong evidence of Nazi indoctrination and reflected Nazi propaganda themes.²³¹ An American official, Walter Dorn, expressed concern over universities being reluctant to remove university chairs:

I know that anti-Nazi professors from Breslau, Berlin, Koningsberg, and Vienna have applied at Munich. The invariable reply was that it was necessary to see whether certain professors would be 'cleared', a reply that is contrary to the spirit of Article 58 of the Law for Liberation, which speaks of 'removal and exclusion', not suspension of ousted officials...²³²

²²⁹Gordon Steven Argyle, "Banishing the Past: An American Perspective of Renazification in Occupied Germany, 1945-1949" Masters thesis (University of Victoria, 1996), 63-64.

²³⁰Ibid, 51.

²³¹Geoffrey J. Giles, Students and National Socialism in Germany (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 312.

²³²Bark, & Gress, A History of West Germany, 171.

Some historians said that the lack of change at universities allowed German scholars, and by extension Germans at large, to refuse to come to terms with the Nazi past and learn the right lessons from it. The Free University of Berlin was established, however, to provide an education influenced by Western trends in the humanities and social sciences, and yet independent of the University of Berlin, which was in the Soviet zone and became increasingly Soviet in outlook. While some universities thus strove for greater changes, others were less effective at recognizing the need for change and dealing with the past. Yet for the most part, Nazi agitation in German universities was absent after 1945, though the initial postwar years were tumultuous times for students, as they began to embrace free thinking and developed relatively democratic attitudes. Many German university students became overwhelmingly democratic in their attitudes and behavior, while “German scholars and students contributed honorably to building a more decent society in the years after 1945.”²³³

Outside the field of education, the Allied powers began to use a variety of techniques in order to weaken the indoctrination of the Nazis. One of these was the use of mass media to democratize public attitudes, opinions, and behavior. The Allies realized that youths were especially susceptible to the effects of mass media and western culture after they had been isolated throughout the Nazi period.²³⁴ An American Military Government report on “Film, Theater, and Music” stated that the authorities would attempt to “acquaint the Germans with music forbidden under Hitler” and as a result “some of the many works which had been banned by the Nazis were presented.”²³⁵

²³³Ibid, 172-174.

²³⁴Munich, Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, OMGUS ICD Report # 30-60. Records of the United States Headquarters, World War II, Record Group 260, Opinion Surveys (Washington D.C.: Washington National Records Centre 20409, October 1970), Report 39, 6.

²³⁵Munich, Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Military Government for Land Bavaria. Cumulative Historical Report, 188-3 93, Bd 2, VI Information Control, Annual Report ICD, 30 June 1946, S, point 6, 244.

Radio programs reintroduced jazz, which was becoming increasingly popular amongst youth, while authors who had been banned under the Nazi regime were once again reintroduced and translated, and expellees such as Thomas Mann were welcomed back.²³⁶ Much of this culture was unknown to the German children and provided a useful tool in bringing them closer to the western world.

Between efforts at reforming education and exposing German children to outside culture--and to the last of their own tradition--the Allies undertook many measures to diminish the impact of previous Hitler Youth training and Nazi indoctrination. However, by the time of the formation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, the school system had largely reverted back to the older three-tier system, at least in most Länder, although many Nazi elements were successfully removed. Hence, despite the recognition given by the Allies to reforming education, the efforts fell short of their goal, and in most places the education system reverted to a pre-Nazi form of traditionalism. In the Soviet zone, various problems plagued the changes in education, which included some of the same difficulties faced by the Western Allies, although the process was further complicated by the troubles which arose from impressing communist ideology upon postwar youth. In addition, the large cohort of children who had come of age during the *NS-Zeit*--a group that has repeatedly merited emphasis in this study--remained a troublesome morsel that the new order could not completely digest.

²³⁶Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., The Two Germanys Since 1945 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 64.

Chapter V

Postwar Youth Movements

One major way in which the Allies attempted to destroy the Nazi legacy was through encouraging the formation of new youth groups and activities. The Allied powers established a variety of youth groups, organizations, and activities which they hoped would fill the void left by the collapse of the regime and the Hitler Youth, while at the same time attempting to provide children with security and reorientation. As well, after the war a dozen or more independent German youth groups emerged, most of which sought to become national organizations, and all of which stressed non-political affiliations and focused on a variety of activities that included sports and music. Some of the prewar youth groups organized again, but these free youth movements often changed greatly from the pre-Nazi nationalist groups which they had been, becoming essentially democratic in nature and following the guidelines for youth organizations and activities established by the Allies. Churches often played a large role in organizing new youth groups as well, with the Allies feeling their moral authority to be appropriate in organizing youth, even though the Americans and British felt their place in education had to be minimized and controlled. One would assume, at first glance, that after having been forced to be in the Hitler Youth, children in the postwar period would be opposed to being organized into youth groups. However, the opposite was often true, with many children choosing to join youth organizations,²³⁷ although as one postwar youth leader stated, “the German youth rejects, after the bitter years of no freedom, every totalitarian system...They deliberately reject a rigid, uniform youth organization.”²³⁸ Both the autonomous youth movements

²³⁷Arno Klönne, “Jugendgeschichte in Trümmerzeiten - Streiflichter,” in Jugend. 1900-1970, 94.

²³⁸Henry P. Pilgert, “Community and Group Life in West Germany” Historical Division Office of the Executive Secretary (Office of the U.S. High Commission of Germany, 1952), 48.

and the Allied-sponsored organizations realized the need to be more free-thinking and independent in outlook. With this in mind they stressed the individual first and became more regional in outlook. They typically provided a chance to engage in many outdoor and community activities. Sometimes they encouraged an interest in jazz and other previously forbidden elements, and thus became more modern in outlook, quite in contrast to the vaguely *völkisch* aura of the interwar independent youth groups.²³⁹ Moreover, authoritarianism had been discredited by the behavior of the Nazis while in power. With a new focus on things which attracted children, such as food rewards and sporting activities, many youth were successfully drawn to the new organizations.

At first, membership figures for the new youth groups established by the Allied authorities were low, yet there was a gradual rise in membership as the postwar period progressed. By July 15th, 1946, there were 477, 734 children in the U.S. zone who were members of youth groups, and by October 1st, 1948, the number had increased to 1,391,632 members, with a rise in all regions.²⁴⁰ By 1952, 34 percent of the German youth population, 5,900,000 children, were involved in youth groups, mostly democratic organizations.²⁴¹ The Allied authorities kept many records concerning the development of youth organizations and on the progress of German youth in general. One report of the 'Opinion Surveys Unit' revealed that 55 percent of the population was aware of the new programs for children.²⁴² Only four percent of parents polled said that they would stop their children from attending the new programs and when they were asked what they

²³⁹Laqueur, *Young Germany*, 220-221.

²⁴⁰*Germany 1947-1949. The Story in Documents*, 587.

²⁴¹Henry P. Pilgert, "Community and Group Life in West Germany" Historical Division Office of the Executive Secretary (Office of the U.S. High Commission of Germany, 1952), 25.

²⁴²Munich, Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, OMGUS ICD Report # 30-60, Records of the United States Headquarters, World War II, Record Group 260, Opinion Surveys (Washington D.C.: Washington National Records Centre 20409, October 1970), Report 46, 1.

believed the programs would achieve, 37 percent said the democratization of youth, and 11 percent the liberation of youth from the Nazi spirit and political education.²⁴³ While parents appeared eager to have their children join new youth groups, many children themselves were equally ready to participate. For children and parents alike, the coming of the Allies was often beneficial, since it meant restoration of food supplies and the reintroduction of public services, combined with a revival of democratic youth activities.²⁴⁴ However, despite the Allied arrival, it took time for the food and housing situation to reach an ultimate low before improvements occurred. By the time of the establishment of the German Youth Activities branch in 1950, the American Control Agency had invested sixty million Deutsche Marks in the new youth programs.²⁴⁵

However, despite the popularity of the youth programs and the Allied hope for their effect in bringing about change, they were not all rooted in an earnest desire for democratic enlightenment. A report which evaluated why German youths themselves had joined youth groups found that between 30 and 45 percent of children, depending on region, were involved in the programs in order to “get candy and food”, while 21 to 31 percent were involved in order to “have sports and games”, and 19 to 29 percent were involved to “show former enemies what Germans are like.”²⁴⁶ When the youth were questioned if they learned more about democracy as a result of their involvement in youth groups, most answered that they had no opinion or no answer, indicating that they either did not know or that they were not willing to express their true opinions of the occupation authorities.²⁴⁷ The American Control Agency itself realized that its efforts were often

²⁴³Ibid, 3-4.

²⁴⁴Willett, *The Americanization of Germany, 1945-1949*, 2.

²⁴⁵Glaser, *The Rubble Years. The Cultural Roots of Postwar Germany, 1945-1948*, 158.

²⁴⁶Munich, Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, OMGUS ICD Report # 30-60. Records of the United States Headquarters, World War II, Record Group 260, Opinion Surveys (Washington D.C.: Washington National Records Centre 20409, October 1970), Report 56, 6.

²⁴⁷Ibid, 12.

equivalent to bribing German children through offering candy and the chance to participate in sports.²⁴⁸ Yet when asked if they liked Americans, 75 percent of those questioned said 'yes', which was either a true reflection of their feelings or a response conditioned by the fear that the benefits they received from the program could be taken away.²⁴⁹ Thus, the desire to learn more about democratic ideals was not the true intention of most participants in the youth programs, although such things may have happened as a by-product of involvement.

Youth groups organized by the newly re-established political parties, rather than the Allies, offered further places for German youth to congregate. The Christian Democratic Union's youth group, the Junge Union, had sixty thousand members by 1957 and was adamant on stressing the need to break from the Nazi past, expressing disappointment in the lack of removal of former key Nazis from positions of power. The rival Free Democratic Party, however, accused the Junge Union membership of participating in "SS terror" by holding meetings in the streets, while many pointed to the presence of former Nazis in the CDU. Yet the accusations against the children and young adults of the Junge Union were simply political wrangling, since the organization was safely democratic in outlook.²⁵⁰ For the most part, the political youth groups remained amiable and were able to provide former Hitler Youth with environments free of a Nazi taint.

Many institutions in Germany were also able to resume their traditional activities in the postwar era, which helped to provide normalcy despite the impact of the recent Nazi

²⁴⁸Glaser, *The Rubble Years. The Cultural Roots of Postwar Germany. 1945-1948*, 158.

²⁴⁹Munich, Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, OMGUS ICD Report # 30-60. Records of the United States Headquarters, World War II, Record Group 260, Opinion Surveys (Washington D.C.: Washington National Records Centre 20409, October 1970), Report 56, 15.

²⁵⁰U. W. Kitzinger, *German Electoral Politics. A Study of the 1957 Campaign* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 124-125.

interval. The devastation and oppression suffered by the churches during the *NS-Zeit* had the result of bringing Catholic and Protestant churches closer together.²⁵¹ Churches recognized that in the postwar period, youths who had been indoctrinated by the Nazis suddenly had a large void in their lives. The various Christian churches thus wanted to fill the gap in young people's minds by encouraging new thinking in place of Nazi or other totalitarian notions. As a result of their efforts, religious youth organizations came to play a key role in postwar society. Soon after the war, the Catholic Youth already boasted a membership of 120,000, while the Protestant Youth had 35,000 members. Both of these organizations helped in liberating the youth of the nation from the impact of the Hitler Youth movement.²⁵² Despite the fact that the Allies had wanted to diminish the impact of traditional values, Germans and Allies alike were also eager for the church to once again become a major force in society, as they could not help but see the church as a more positive force rather than a negative one. For some people, such as Chancellor Adenauer, it was hoped that the church would play a key function in teaching morality to children.²⁵³ The Allies were willing to work with church groups in their efforts to reform society, and were eager to have religious leaders aid them in reconstruction and denazification efforts.²⁵⁴

It must be remembered that in examining these postwar youth groups, the situation for young Germans in what became the German Democratic Republic was very different from the experience of children under Allied control in the West. For those in the East, former Hitler Youth members were recruited into a new organization which mirrored their past experience in many ways. In the Russian zone, the Hitler Youth became almost

²⁵¹Friederich Meinecke, The German Catastrophe (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1964), 114.

²⁵²Willis, The French in Germany. 1945-1949, 177.

²⁵³Jeffrey Herf, "Multiple Restorations: German Political Traditions and the Interpretation of Nazism. 1945-1946." in Central European History Volume 26, no.1. (1993),45.

²⁵⁴Meinecke, The German Catastrophe, 112-113.

completely taken over by a Communist Party as they were transformed into the de facto communist youth movement, known as the Freie Deutsche Jugend. Beginning on July 1st, 1945, the Soviet authorities began allowing the formation of anti-fascist democratic youth committees and organizations in their zone. The Communist and Socialist parties had their own separate youth organizations in the Soviet zone since the FDJ was formally supposed to be non-political, yet they decided jointly with the churches to work together in order to aid children in overcoming the multitude of problems which they faced. The Free German Youth experienced a major increase in membership from 190,000 in April 1946 to 405,586 in December 1946. By May 1947, 25 percent of youth belonged to the organization, which initially stressed as its program demilitarization, democratization and internationalism.²⁵⁵ Many of those who joined the organization were involved in building projects, which included the construction of railways and reservoirs.²⁵⁶

However, by 1948 the organization was gradually becoming more closely tied to the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED), which had been formed in 1946 and was the main instrument for communist designs in the Soviet Zone. With the creation of the German Democratic Republic, a more intense emphasis was placed on ideology in the FDJ and the number of members in the organization rose rapidly.²⁵⁷ Many children involved were directly recruited in the 1950's for voluntary military service training.²⁵⁸ Thus the FDJ followed the Hitler Youth model, with the same focus on militarism and athleticism as key areas of emphasis, and like the Hitler Youth it too became an agency of the new totalitarian state. War games, banners, songs, and sports competitions were integral aspects of the FDJ. Uniforms of brown were transformed into uniforms of blue, and the FDJ was fused with the SED just as the Hitler Youth had been with the Nazi

²⁵⁵G.E. Edwards, GDR Society and Social Institutions (Hong Kong: MacMillan, 1985), 117.

²⁵⁶Ibid, 118.

²⁵⁷Ibid, 119-120.

²⁵⁸Ibid, 125.

Party.²⁵⁹ Yet unlike the Hitler Youth, not all children were coerced into the FDJ, though participation did help members in getting later employment, a policy which had also worked to boost Hitler Youth numbers.²⁶⁰ Gustav Feit, who had been in the Hitler Youth, lived in the eastern zone in the postwar period. He found it quite easy to make the transition from being a Nazi to becoming a communist:

You have to imagine the war had come to an end. Society had turned by a hundred and eighty degrees and the only possibility I saw was to join the Communist Party to survive and be where the center of power is. Well this wasn't because I believed in Communism, it was just being opportunistic...²⁶¹

In the first years after the war, the FDJ had branches in West Germany too, with 10,000 members by 1948, yet it was subsequently banned by the western authorities for being undemocratic in outlook.²⁶² The Soviets made further attempts to infiltrate western youth groups, but were largely unsuccessfully. But in the occupation zone that later became the German Democratic Republic, former Hitler Youth members were often co-opted into the new communist youth organization, with an average of 75 percent of East German youth belonging to the organization at any given time.²⁶³ Though these children were forced to make an ideological transition, much of their experience as youth in a totalitarian regime remained the same. Willy Schumann, visiting an FDJ meeting in Berlin, was reminded of the Hitler Youth and was upset by the similarity:

I was deeply disturbed by it from the very beginning - it lasted about four hours - because I was immediately reminded of the many NS rallies I knew so well: the same mass choreography; similar uniforms for the young (only the color was different, blue instead of brown); the same enthusiasm on the faces of these children and teenagers; the same

²⁵⁹Koch, The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945, 225-226. Laqueur, Young Germany. A History of the German Youth Movement, 223.

²⁶⁰Edwards, GDR Society and Social Institutions, 121.

²⁶¹Rosenthal, Die Hitlerjugend-Generation, 221.

²⁶²Laqueur, Young Germany. A History of the German Youth Movement, 223-224.

²⁶³Edwards, GDR Society and Social Institutions, 121.

continuous accompaniment of stirring marches and songs, some of which were identical to the ones we had sung hundreds of times... It was a masterfully arranged rally to affect the minds and emotions of the uncritical young.²⁶⁴

Thus postwar youth groups, whether revivals of pre-Nazi organizations, new politically-affiliated movements, or Allied organizations, all helped to ground children in the reality of the new Germany and provided them with more democratic ideals. In the Soviet zone meanwhile, the communist youth group became the legatees of the Hitler Youth, tying children to communist ideals in place of Nazi ones.

²⁶⁴Schumann, Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany, 25.

Chapter VI

Breaches and Continuities

The efforts of the Allies and of Germans alike to reeducate and reorient German youths away from Nazism and to distance them from their pasts were to a large extent successful, as many Hitler Youth themselves admitted. Willy Schumann remembered:

When the Third Reich collapsed and we young people slowly and very gradually began to reorient ourselves, create new values for ourselves, and look for new role models, I made a noteworthy discovery about myself: I was physically unable to ever again listen to a political speech in which the speaker shouts down from his platform at his audience. This aversion to all noisy speech making has stayed with me to this day.²⁶⁵

He holds that his acceptance of what happened changed due to the passing of time and he also cites various changes in German society as having aided him in putting the Nazi experience in the past. For Schumann, the new Federal Republic marked a real difference from the previous Nazi regime:

The distance in time from the Hitler years was slowly becoming greater. It was then over four years since May 1945, the time of the collapse of the Third Reich. We had studied and learned a great deal since then. We had been exposed to objective presentations and evaluations of the events that led to the founding of the Third Reich, and we were beginning to believe in the revelations of the crimes of the regime.²⁶⁶

The passage of time and impact of reeducation had even more influence on Schumann once he participated in a valuable exchange program with America, which was made available for German students with the hope that it would better integrate German youth into the Western World. The French also implemented a variety of exchanges with youth from their zone to various parts of France. Students in German trade schools were

²⁶⁵Schumann, *Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler's Germany*, 43.

²⁶⁶*Ibid*, 192.

involved in exchanges between French and German youths, and by 1948 German children were allowed to travel outside the zone and go to France themselves.²⁶⁷ Ralph Willett, in examining the benefits of exchange programs, noted that “inevitably, exchanges encouraged a stronger commitment to democratic principles but a more general commitment - to internationalism - was often the result.”²⁶⁸

Attitudes towards postwar freedom of speech were also reflected by Allied reports. In response to the 1947 question, “should the German people have complete freedom of speech”, 77 percent in the American zone responded with a ‘yes’, with only 14 percent saying ‘no’. Those questioned under the age of 29 responded slightly higher than the average, with 78 percent saying ‘yes’ and 15 percent saying ‘no’.²⁶⁹ Meanwhile, many postwar German youths questioned their previous indoctrination by becoming politically active on the Left of the political spectrum. The experience of having been raised under a totalitarian regime pushed them to the opposite pole, which they found in socialism, environmentalism, and humanitarian causes.²⁷⁰ In 1951, many students who had once been Hitler Youth members opposed the use of the island of Helgoland for western military testing which would have rendered the island uninhabitable. The protest was successful and was the beginning of many future efforts by German youth against environmentally questionable decisions made by German or Allied governments.²⁷¹ On the whole, youth often came to reject militarism, associating it with the negativism of the past regime. If anything, the postwar generations following the Hitler Youth cohort either abandoned political activism, a tendency many historians have cited as one which had

²⁶⁷Willis, *The French in Germany, 1945-1949*, 177-178.

²⁶⁸Willett, *The Americanization of Germany, 1945-1949*, 19.

²⁶⁹Munich, Germany, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, OMGUS ICD Report # 30-60. Records of the United States Headquarters, World War II, Record Group 260, Opinion Surveys (Washington D.C.: Washington National Records Centre 20409, October 1970), Report 48, 6.

²⁷⁰Koch, *The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 264.

²⁷¹Ibid, 255.

originally allowed Hitler to come to power, or they instead moved more towards the Left of the spectrum, objecting to military service and focusing more on issues such as the environment.

The Allies realized that at the end of the war the shutdown of schools and the breakdown of industry created mass unemployment, and thus an abundance of free time for many confused and displaced youths. This helped push the Allies to implement changes in education and to create youth groups and organize activities for children in the hopes of redirecting them, or at least occupying their time. But could it truly be that with the best efforts of the Allies, the loss of the war, and the passage of time, children had really put behind them the indoctrination and the effects of Nazi propaganda? It is apparent that many children were able to adapt to new postwar realities and shed the effects of their Nazi pasts, but this was not true for all children, particularly in the period immediately following the end of the war.

Despite the many efforts made by the Allied control authorities, continuities were apparent in German society as some youth were unable to put their pasts behind them. The new youth groups and programs did appeal to many children and did help to attach them to the new order, but for others the ideals of the Nazi regime could not be forgotten. In a country with millions of orphans and displaced youth, including former *Wehrmacht* soldiers, many of whom were “disillusioned with the National Socialist regime but still inspired by many of its teachings and its tawdry glories”, an atmosphere existed in which Nazi ideals were still able to flourish.²⁷² Although the war revealed a harsh reality about the collapsed regime, the defeat was not enough to destroy the illusions of all Hitler Youth. Despite the new opportunities offered by the Allies, many children still fondly remembered Nazi ideals and continued to see the Allied authorities as a threat. For many

²⁷²Perry Biddiscombe, “‘The Enemy of Our Enemy’: A View of the *Edelweiss Piraten* from the British and American Archives”, 48.

children who found their lives lacking a purpose, they either discovered or created spheres in which they could continue Hitler Youth activities and could act out in anti-democratic ways.

Many people in the postwar era believed, however, that the loss of the war and the collapse of Nazi society would be enough to provide a break from the past for Nazi children. The Christian Democrats believed that Nazi ideology had been proven faulty by the sheer defeat of the Germans in the war and the devastation that remained, while they felt Nazism itself had vanished. These events, they stressed, induced enough of a shock to free the German people from the indoctrination to which they had been subjected under the Nazi regime.²⁷³ Much postwar historiography took up the same line that the Allies had followed, assuming that the youth of Germany were largely free from any guilt and neglecting to focus on continued Hitler Youth activities or the role that Nazi indoctrination continued to play in shaping the attitudes of German children.

Revisionist history has, however, pointed to continuities in German society from the Nazi period onwards by identifying the artificial nature of many changes which had supposedly occurred as a result of denazification and more correctly analyzing the roles that segments of the German population had actually played in supporting the Nazi regime. Such was the case, for instance, with regard to work done by historians on the role which the military and ordinary Germans played in the Holocaust.

The involvement of the *Wehrmacht* in the Holocaust and in the killings of millions of civilians has been the source of major debate in German historiography since the late 1960's, and the issue has continued to evolve. What is clear is that following the Second World War, the idea of German Army innocence was held not only by the majority of Germans, but by historians as well. This notion has, however, changed greatly as historians have recently suggested that the German Army was complicit in killings in the

²⁷³Montgomery, Forced to be Free. The Artificial Revolution in Germany and Japan, 62.

East.²⁷⁴ Work by various historians such as Christian Streit and Omer Bartov has helped to illustrate exactly how the military was complicit. While many works focus on the Hitler Youth and its role in the Nazi regime, there is no historical debate about the extent of their indoctrination and whether or not they participated in crimes. The *Historikerstreit* of the mid 1980's involved a further analysis of Germany's Nazi legacy, but was also a broader debate about German history and the work of historians since the period. Yet during this debate as well, while there was mention of the role of the *Wehrmacht* in killings or talk about the continuities in German society, there was no focus on the role of Hitler Youth members in the Third Reich or on the continuing impact of Hitler Youth training. Daniel Goldhagen's, Hitler's Willing Executioners was an attempt to identify the role which ordinary Germans had played in the Holocaust. The book was involved in a great deal of controversy, yet though it was an attempt to analyze the complicity of average Germans, it lacked a look at children and their development in Nazi Germany or their willingness to act as killers. As well, while many historians accused Goldhagen of harbouring anti-German sentiments, when speaking of Germany after 1945 he admitted that "German society underwent a gradual change."²⁷⁵ That is no doubt true, but the statement also contains an element of hyperbole. Though he admits that anti-Semitism did not vanish, but rather changed or diminished, his examination of ordinary Germans falls short because it does not include a look at the Hitler Youth or at continuities rooted in Hitler Youth training.²⁷⁶

While it is recognized that the Hitler Youth played a major role in Nazi Germany, the effect that extensive propaganda had upon the Hitler Youth and the reality that many of these ideas continued to exercise influence into the postwar period has not been

²⁷⁴Omer Bartov, The Eastern Front, 1941-45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare (London: Macmillan Press, 1985), 1-6.

²⁷⁵Robert R. Shandley, "Introduction," in Unwilling Germans. The Goldhagen Debate, edited by Robert R. Shandley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 17.

²⁷⁶Ibid, 18.

acknowledged. Often, historians instead allege that the collapse of the regime at the end of the war destroyed the Hitler Youth. Gerhard Rempel allows that youth had been loyal to the regime up until its very collapse, recognizing just how strong the effect of indoctrination had been:

How can the commitment on the part of youth until the bitter end be explained, when most adults had surrendered to despair and accepted defeat, except by the notion that their experience in the self-contained Hitler Youth had created a common faith in the rightness of their cause and engendered a loyalty and conformity which brooked relatively little deviation.²⁷⁷

Yet this recognition that many Hitler Youth children had held to the faith until the end of the war has usually not been extended to examining the continuing impact of Nazi ideals into the postwar period. Alexander Mitscherlich points out that the absence of many children's fathers during the war and after, combined with other losses, griefs, hardships and the Nazi failure itself, had the result of leaving children feeling as though they had no position in society; they lacked focus and were unable to understand themselves.²⁷⁸ Mitscherlich suggests that at the collapse of the Nazi regime, children who had suffered from 'fatherlessness', yet who had been accustomed to drill and regimentation, suddenly found discipline and forced indoctrination removed as the ruling factors from their lives. He notes that this had the effect of leaving them unable to understand themselves, since ideological browbeating by their superiors was a big part of what had shaped them as individuals. As Mitscherlich puts it:

When the pressure to obey was suddenly removed the individual no longer understood himself. He was as alien to himself as was the power that imposed the adaptation on him.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷Rempel, *Hitler's Children. The Hitler Youth and the SS*, 105.

²⁷⁸Biddiscombe, *Werewolf: The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement*, 73-74.

²⁷⁹Alexander Mitscherlich, *Society Without the Father* (London: Tavistock Publications,

As a result, the loss of the regime meant a loss of the Hitler Youth's own identity.

Although democracy was pushed upon the youth of Germany through many Allied programs and parallel German efforts, denazification was awkward and remained incomplete. As well, the Nazis were not completely dispersed or removed from positions of authority, with many former Nazi Party members and Hitler Youth members taking up key positions in the postwar era. These included leadership roles not only in radical parties and organizations, but also in mainstream ones such as the SPD and the CDU. Because of the difficulties in removing Nazi placeholders immediately after the war, which in turn owed partly to the fact that so many displaced persons and returning soldiers were reentering Germany, it was easy for Allied reporters to find many Nazis still active in politics. The New York Times found in an examination of Bavaria that:

Fifty-three of the fifty-six Nazi buergermeisters remained in office. Ultimately they probably will be kicked out but in the meantime, many persons who thought the advent of American troops would end the Nazi regime at one swoop, are beginning to become disillusioned, disheartened and afraid to cooperate with the occupying authorities.²⁸⁰

General Patton's slow efforts at denazification in Bavaria ensured that it was the state that saw the least amount of change, yet other areas also suffered from having former Nazis in government positions. The leader of the Freie Demokratische Partei Deutschlands in the North Rhine-Westphalia diet was one such figure; he had been a former Hitler Youth leader who had re-entered political service.²⁸¹ Former Nazis eventually regained positions in all levels of government from Adenauer's Chancellery through to the Cabinet office, and through the parties, the parliaments of the *Länder*, the police, the school system and the press. In the Chancellery, the Secretary of State, Dr. Hans Globke, and in the Foreign

1969), 281.

²⁸⁰The New York Times, May 26, 1945, 4.

²⁸¹Koch, The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945, 257.

Office senior diplomat Dr. Herbert Blankenhorn, had both been faithful servants of the Nazi regime. Though these individuals were no longer involved in Nazi activities, they did represent a willingness to allow former individuals who had been involved in the Nazi state to enter into positions of power in the postwar period. During the "Grand Coalition" from 1966 to 1969, Kurt Georg Kiesinger, a "March convert" from 1933, became the first and only former member of the Nazi Party to become West German Chancellor.²⁸² In 1956, of thirty-eight generals in the *Bundeswehr*, thirty-one had belonged to the old General Staff.²⁸³ T.H. Tetens identifies many other examples of Nazis in high-level positions. Occasionally former Nazis resumed activities in radical politics while operating under the cover of legal right-wing parties. Many such people attended clandestine meetings that often included former SS officers. A U.S. study showed that between 15 and 18 percent of Germans were unrepentant Nazis, and this figure was believed by the U.S. authorities to have held solid from 1945 through 1968. This significant group was truly a base for radical right-wing activities, with the core of this group being many former Hitler Youth members who were unable to free themselves from Nazi indoctrination, but instead worked to pass their beliefs on to the next generation.²⁸⁴

Of course, the fact that former Hitler Youth took over so many important positions was difficult to avoid in the Federal Republic of Germany, since so many of the country's postwar youth had been Hitler Youth members who were coming into their own in the 1950's. Even in the absence of a state mechanism stressing irrational nationalism or promoting anti-Jewish propaganda, plus the near-total absence of any actual Jews in postwar Germany, former Hitler Youth were often "unable to shed the anti-Semitic poison injected by the government and their elders during the Nazi era."²⁸⁵ Richard and Anna

²⁸²Ibid, 343.

²⁸³Tetens, *The New Germany and the Old Nazis*, 37.

²⁸⁴Lewis, *A Nazi Legacy. Right-Wing Extremism in Postwar Germany*, 36-39.

²⁸⁵Alfred D. Low, *The Third Reich and The Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 73.

Merritt, in their analysis of the OMGUS reports, also contend that 15 percent of the adult population remained unreconstructed Nazis, and in 1947 they wrote: "it is not difficult to demonstrate the persistence in postwar Germany of perspectives closely associated with National Socialist ideology."²⁸⁶ Both these studies support a figure of around 15 percent of the population holding to Nazi beliefs. The US study cited above identifies former Hitler Youth members as being a substantial segment of this figure. If we combine this finding with insights from the work of Padover, Klose and other writers, and with the admissions of former Hitler Youth themselves, it suggests that former Hitler Youth members were a significant portion of the German population who remained closely tied to National Socialist beliefs in the post war era.

One of the main areas in which the Hitler Youth continued to be active in the immediate postwar period was Werewolf operations. As noted above, the Nazis had, following the Allied invasion of Normandy, increased the use of the Hitler Youth in various military and covert operations. Some were recruited by the Nazis to do undercover work against advancing American divisions in the West, while others worked behind Russian lines in the East until the end of April 1945, and in some cases even beyond capitulation.²⁸⁷ Led by adult men, the Hitler Youth members in the Werewolf participated in various terrorist efforts.²⁸⁸ Fanatical Hitler Youth were encountered by the Allies following the war, as the boys feared annihilation and attempted to defend themselves. Before the war's conclusion and as the situation worsened for Germany, the Nazi authorities stressed to the Hitler Youth that they would have to further sacrifice themselves for the good of the country. In Austria, children at a Defense Training Camp were told lies, which included the claim that they would be sterilized by the Allies.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶Herf, *Divided Memory*, 205.

²⁸⁷Biddiscombe, *Werewolf: The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement*, 62.

²⁸⁸*Ibid*, 64-65.

²⁸⁹*Ibid*, 69.

Many Hitler Youth energetically engaged in Werewolf activities and seemed to even enjoy playing a larger part in a system in which they believed so strongly. Activities included killing enemy soldiers and Russian prisoners of war.²⁹⁰ Gottfried Griesmayr, the man in charge of the Hitler Youth indoctrination program, wanted to encourage a postwar, neo-Nazi movement in the event of the Reich's collapse.²⁹¹ Hitler Youth Werewolf members indeed made detailed plans for their continued survival following the Allied occupation of Germany, which included a scheme to move into the southern mountains in an effort to continue resistance activities against the Allied powers.²⁹² On May 26th 1945, The New York Times reported that "the first Werewolf attack on French troops near the Austrian border occurred at Lindau, Germany, early this morning when a French Lieutenant was shot and killed by a 14-year-old boy."²⁹³ In June 1945, three explosions destroyed the police headquarters in Bremen, and five Americans and thirty-nine Germans were killed. The work had been that of Werewolf members.²⁹⁴ Upper-level Hitler Youth members were often willing to continue operating as guerrillas even after the capitulation, yet it seems like this was less true for many Hitler Youth of lower ranks.²⁹⁵ Many Hitler Youth and Werewolf members thus made an effort to survive, yet it was often not the younger children and the last generation of Hitler Youth who carried on the struggle in the spring of 1945, but rather the adults who had served as Hitler Youth leaders. It was these higher level Hitler Youth leaders, along with older Hitler Youth children and young adults, who comprised a large group of resistance fighters and who kept the faith (as worthless as it was).

²⁹⁰Ibid, 72.

²⁹¹Ibid, 68.

²⁹²Ibid, 77.

²⁹³The New York Times, May 26, 1945, 7

²⁹⁴Long, The New Nazis of Germany, 39.

²⁹⁵Biddiscombe, Werewolf: The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement, 86.

Our examination of youth groups needs to be expanded to include those which were not formed by the Allies or the democratic parties, but which were instead connected to right-wing movements and were tainted by the leadership of former Hitler Youth members. The Hitler Youth themselves made various attempts at surviving in different ways, mainly through the formation of new nationalist parties and organizations, or simply through promoting the ideas of the Hitler Youth. Many of the postwar youth groups were either attempts to continue the Hitler Youth in lightly camouflaged fashion, or they promoted similar, right-wing *völkisch* ideologies. No fewer than seventy to one hundred nationalist youth groups existed in postwar Germany from the late 1940's into the 1950's. Some journalists and historians state that there were as many as 140 different youth leagues in the postwar period, most to the moderate right or just short of radical.²⁹⁶ The exact number of children who held Nazi ideals or were members of radical right-wing youth organizations is uncertain. Much of the disparity in numbers stems, as many historians state, from a lack of a clear definition about what indeed constituted a radical right-wing youth group or in identifying what a sense of continued Nazi ideals really meant. Many writers stress that it is safe to say that there were approximately 40,000 involved in these 1950's postwar organizations, though this number is likely too high, with fewer children actually involved and remaining in groups for an extended period, while many of those classified by writers and historians as radical and right-wing were in fact uncertain in their outlook. Manfred Jenke argues that the numbers of radical right-wing youth were actually smaller than many observers stressed. He states that there were really only 6,000 or 7,000 individuals involved, which was not much when one considers all youth groups together. However, even though he states that the number was not large, he does not discount the fact that their influence was potentially strong. Jenke groups youth into four groups: soldier youth groups, political youth groups, *völkisch* youth groups, and

²⁹⁶Lewis, A Nazi Legacy. Right-Wing Extremism in Postwar Germany, 54.

political-national youth groups, the latter of which were the true successors of the Hitler Youth.²⁹⁷ Tauber is equally cautious, and suggests that many writers, historians, and politicians have manipulated figures and distorted evidence in order to promote their own works. He states that:

At any rate, few, if any, areas of post-war German affairs have occasioned more balderdash than the political attitudes of the new generations. The temptation to abandon cautious analysis for shocking exposes and imaginative flights of fancy has been all the more irresistible, since much of the raw material for analysis is in the form of numerical figures, either as percentages in public-opinion polls or as membership figures in nationalist, patriotic-military, or folkish youth organizations.²⁹⁸

The number of right-wing groups and political parties certainly did increase exponentially once Allied control was relaxed and most of them were built at least partly on an appeal to former Hitler Youth members. In 1945 there were only two extreme right-wing parties, but by 1951 this number had increased to twelve. During the first elections under Allied occupation, the British quickly identified parties which were radical in nature. The Reichspartei, The London Times stated,

...has not escaped the notice of the British authorities who allow it to exist so that reaction may be concentrated in a known order rather than be forced to percolate into parties where it might do harm.²⁹⁹

In 1952, after a split in the *Sozialistische Reichspartei*, there were seventy-four organizations, with this number shrinking by 1953 to fourteen, with the number again diminishing by 1957.³⁰⁰ The *Deutsche Reichspartei* was one party which had a particularly strong youth focus, with all of its political candidates being under the age of

²⁹⁷Manfred Jenke, Verschwörung von Rechts? (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1961), 326.

²⁹⁸Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika. German Nationalism Since 1945, 330.

²⁹⁹The London Times, September 14, 1946, 3.

³⁰⁰Lewis, A Nazi Legacy. Right-Wing Extremism in Postwar Germany, 40-41.

forty. Its support came largely from young expellees and from Nazis returning to work who found it difficult to build stable lives.³⁰¹ Herbert Münchow, a former Hitler Youth *Gebietsführer*, founded the *Reichsjugend*, which followed the Hitler Youth example and had children wearing brown shirts in uniformed style. It worked closely with the *Deutsche Reichspartei*. Yet although the *Reichsjugend* was a youth group associated with a national party, it never amounted to more than a few thousand members.³⁰² The *Freie Deutsche Partei* was a group that was determined to work within the democratic system, but was readily willing to accept former Hitler Youth and Nazi leaders in the organization so long as they acknowledged their errors in the past. To some extent the Freie Deutsche Partei was really courting these former Nazis, appealing to them by allowing participation while other parties remained more reluctant.³⁰³ Some Hitler Youth leaders in the SPD were able to succeed in attaining positions and to build a platform around Carlo Schmidt, but only at the middle rank, and few were able to mobilize in the CDU. It was the Freie Deutsche Partei which provided the most opportunity for former Nazis, such as Heinz Wilke, who joined the organization in 1947.³⁰⁴ Wilke belonged to a circle of former *Reichsjugendführung* members who tried to play a part in the new political order and who helped control the party apparatus.³⁰⁵ The *Sozialistische Reichspartei*, perhaps the most radical of the postwar parties, denounced the postwar political order and was itself a close successor to the NSDAP, a link that led to its being banned in 1952.³⁰⁶ Wolf Graf von Westarp, who had been a member of the Hitler Youth from 1930 to 1933, and then served as a member of the SS from 1933 to 1935, was a founding father of the *Sozialistische*

³⁰¹Tauber, *Beyond Eagle and Swastika. German Nationalism Since 1945*, 70.

³⁰²Koch, *The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 259.

³⁰³Jenke, *Verschwörung von Rechts?*, 157.

³⁰⁴Tauber, *Beyond Eagle and Swastika. German Nationalism Since 1945*, 141.

³⁰⁵Jenke, *Verschwörung von Rechts?*, 158-159.

³⁰⁶Lewis, *A Nazi Legacy. Right-Wing Extremism in Postwar Germany*, 42.

Reichspartei in 1949.³⁰⁷ Yet some former Hitler Youth were not attracted to organizations such as the SRP because they felt that the parties could not achieve a revival of the Nazi Reich by working within the existing political system at all, even if it was only with the hope of dismantling it.

Along with the right-wing political parties, there were many radical right-wing youth groups which hoped to attract former Hitler Youth members. Several such groups were particularly strong, including the *Deutsche Wandervögel*, *Wikingjugend*, *Nationale Jugend*, and the *Deutsche Jungsturm*, which all followed the Hitler Youth model. Many of those involved read *Mein Kampf* and were led by former National Socialists who had been Hitler Youth or were young former soldiers. Other groups were not strictly Nazi successors but were still *völkisch* and paramilitary in nature, such as the Young Eagles.³⁰⁸ With so many varied groups it is difficult to distinguish what groups were involved in precisely what activities and what generalizations can be made about them as a whole. Yet it is clear that it was former SS extremists and young ex-lieutenants who sought to establish these new groups, and that they were filled with youth who had spent many of their formative years in the Nazi youth movement.³⁰⁹

Many former Hitler Youth members also became active in propaganda campaigns in order to continue the spread of their ideas. Though the press was not completely free and the authorities were wary of anything too closely connected to communism, the relative freedom of the expression provided an opportunity for the dissemination of Nazi ideals, with a dozen or so right-wing monthlies and weeklies operated in postwar Germany, including the *Nation Europa* and *Der Ring*.³¹⁰

³⁰⁷Jenke, *Verschwörung von Rechts?*, 78-79.

³⁰⁸Laqueur, *Young Germany. A History of the German Youth Movement*, 225-227.

³⁰⁹*Ibid*, 225.

³¹⁰Tetens, *The New Germany and the Old Nazis*, 83.

Aside from Werewolf and postwar youth organizations, other groups also showed signs of the continuing impact of Hitler Youth activities and ideals into the postwar period. Perry Biddiscombe states that such was the case with Edelweiss groups, which during the war had comprised something of a resistance movement working in opposition to the Nazi government. Children had been drawn to the organization during the war through the romantic aura of the Edelweiss groups. Saul Padover studied such children at the war's conclusion and noted:

Many of the youths under 17, particularly in the Catholic Rhineland, were members of the "Edelweiss," an organization that used to make physical assaults on the Hitler Youths and ridicule the Nazis. The "Edelweiss" youngsters revolted against the compulsions of Hitlerism and resented the privations they had to undergo during the war. There was no ideological content in their revolt and they had no political agenda.³¹¹

Although these children and students had worked against the Nazis, they were not particularly opposed to the Nazi ideology and doctrine, but rather to the disciplinarianism and compulsory nature of the Hitler Youth.³¹² In order to make their point clear, they did, however, make some attempts during the war to disrupt the war effort through chalking up anti-Nazi slogans, engaging in fights with Hitler Youth members, and distributing subversive leaflets.³¹³ Many of these Edelweiss groups tried to survive into the postwar period, but instead they gravitated into opposition to the Allied powers, just as they had with the Nazis before. Padover notes that "these 'anti-Nazi' kids were, of course, products of Hitlerism, even though they had good impulses."³¹⁴ Yet Biddiscombe suggests that many children who were in the wartime Edelweiss Piraten actually became

³¹¹Padover, "What About German Youth?", 27.

³¹²Howard Becker, *German Youth: Bond or Free* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 213.

³¹³Ibid, 216.

³¹⁴Padover, "What About German Youth?", 27.

members of new youth movements sponsored by churches, the Allied authorities, and political parties. The Edelweiss groups that continued to survive into the postwar period were overrun with hooligans and displaced youth, including former Hitler Youth, losing many of the actual members who had worked in opposition to the Nazis.³¹⁵ These altered groups, not resembling the wartime Edelweiss, followed *völkish* principles, attacked people involved with the Allies, and participated in terrorist activities.³¹⁶ Edelweiss Piraten often fought against displaced persons, viewing themselves as a group with a mandate to bring order to the black market and stop Polish dealers from charging excessive prices. Peter Scholtz, a Hitler Youth member who became an Edelweiss Pirate at the end of the war, stated in his biography that they were the last Hitler Youth who still believed in the *Führer* and that at the time they did not realize they were using Nazi ideology to justify their crimes.³¹⁷ Perhaps some wartime Edelweiss personalities continued to play a role in the bands into the postwar era, but the majority of postwar Edelweiss came to focus their efforts against the Western Powers in place of the Nazis.

There were thus, in the postwar period, a wide array of organizations which young people could join. The task of understanding and identifying many of these postwar youth organizations is difficult because of their instability, with many of them constantly splitting and splintering, changing their names and generally making it difficult to trace their lineages. In attempting to identify how many youth belonged to radical right-wing groups and to distinguish between these groups, some historians have attempted to establish a system of classification. Tauber provides the best classification system after analyzing many groups and describing how they were different or similar to the Hitler Youth. His

³¹⁵Biddiscombe, “‘The Enemy of Our Enemy’: A View of the *Edelweiss Piraten* from the British and American Archives”, 48.

³¹⁶*Ibid*, 52-53.

³¹⁷Alfons Kenkmann, *Wilde Junge: Lebenswelt grosstädtischer Jugendlicher zwischen Weltwirtschaftskrise, Nationalsozialismus und Währungsreform* (Essen: Klartext-Verlag, 1996), 362.

classification identifies right-wing youth groups as being either *bündisch* or non-*bündisch* in orientation, with further subdivisions being made within the *bündisch* category, including both those that were radical in focus or nationalistic in focus, while non-*bündisch* groups were classified as being either militaristic or nationalistic.³¹⁸

While these categories are helpful as a basis for research, some groups traversed the boundary lines or blurred them entirely. In 1947, for instance, Alfons Holler, the product of an Adolf Hitler school, founded the Youth League Young Eagles, which closely followed Nazi lines.³¹⁹ In 1949, the Youth League Young Eagles reached a peak membership of 5,000, at a time when the group was run by a former Hitler Youth leader from Munich, Richard Etzel.³²⁰ As Etzel said, “our work endeavors to burn the consciousness into every heart that the failure of the young generation of our Volk does not only mean its own downfall, but it means also death of one of the most valuable members of the community of peoples.”³²¹ But in 1949 the Young Eagles was suppressed by the British military government. The organization resumed activity once again in 1950 but with a more *bündisch* focus.³²² Yet the Young Eagles, like other organizations, was constantly mixing with other groups. Its banning resulted in the creation of many splinter groups, all of which had nationalistic and *völkisch* tendencies.³²³ One of these, the Deutsche Wandervögel, was under the direction of Alfred Zitzmann, who had built an extensive career in Nazi Germany as a functionary of the Hitler Youth, a member of the combat SS, and finally a leader of the Werewolf unit that bombed a denazification tribunal in Nuremberg, which in turn resulted in his spending a year in jail.

³¹⁸Tauber, *Beyond Eagle and Swastika. German Nationalism Since 1945*, 395.

³¹⁹Ibid, 400.

³²⁰Ibid, 411.

³²¹Koch, *The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 259.

³²²Tauber, *Beyond Eagle and Swastika. German Nationalism Since 1945*, 400.

³²³Ibid, 404.

Following the completion of his prison sentence, he joined the *Sozialistische Reichspartei* with the desire of unifying German youth once again.³²⁴

The Ring was another one of these groups which was a mix of many organizations, but it too lacked a clear direction or ideology.³²⁵ Radical right-wing youth groups were not limited to attracting youth of school age alone, but extended recruitment activities to students in universities as well. The League of National Students was an organization that operated in the universities and aspired to become an intellectual elite which could impart racist ideologies. Yet despite their efforts, the majority of university students were outspoken in their opposition to the organization.³²⁶ Other groups did not stress *völkisch* or *bündisch* tendencies as their main focus but were instead military in nature. The Kyffhäuser League, organized in 1954, was the major youth organization which belonged to this category. Like other youth groups, it was far from stable and involved many groups which continuously joined and then split from the organization. It finally became the German Youth League Kyffhäuser.³²⁷ Still others had more specific platforms. Displaced Germans from the Sudetenland had their own *Bund*, and it too had many SS, NSDAP, and Hitler Youth members in it, all of whom agreed upon the specific platform of retaking the Sudetenland.³²⁸ Through such organizational means, many of these groups began to spread their ideas to a new generation of children during the 1950's, and they were led, as Walter Laqueur shows, by former Hitler Youth leaders and by people who were young children at the outset of the Hitler regime.

The new West Germany saw a proliferation of right-wing youth groups and successors to the Hitler Youth, and yet they largely failed in their efforts to sell Nazi ideals and doctrine to the majority of the population. Thus, the Hitler Youth made various

³²⁴Ibid, 404-405.

³²⁵Ibid, 400-401.

³²⁶Ibid, 457, 462.

³²⁷Ibid, 432.

³²⁸Jenke, *Verschwörung von Rechts?*, 214.

attempts at survival, while the beliefs which had been instilled in people as youths prompted them to continue right-wing activities following the war and even into the period of the Federal Republic. Yet though such continuities cannot be ignored, there were also radical departures from the Hitler Youth tradition. Many children who had participated in Werewolf activities following the end of the war quickly crumbled once they were captured and questioned. As Alexander Mitscherlich notes: "they were psychologically capable of quickly jettisoning any commitment to Hitler or to the precepts of National Socialism, although this process was accompanied by a considerable degree of disorientation."³²⁹ The effect of returning to their families often helped to ground the children of the Hitler Youth and helped to reacquaint them with some sort of reality. As Biddiscombe states: "seemingly, the influence of parents, priests, and unindoctrinated teachers never broke down as completely as had been anticipated."³³⁰ As well, despite efforts by die-hard Nazis and continued willingness by Hitler Youth members, most of these resistance groups remained small, lacked clear support, and were checked by the growth of a new democracy. New ultranationalist groups associated with radical right-wing parties were also hindered by the Federal Republic's banning of the parties with which they were connected, the Socialist Reich Party being the outstanding example. Nonetheless, the efforts of those who could not break free from the influence of Nazi indoctrination, namely some of the Hitler Youth leaders and those who had spent the majority of their young lives under Hitler, threatened to bring the Hitler Youth organization back to life through various means. Their goal was to pass on the Hitler Youth code to the next generation of children, and to some extent they were successful.

³²⁹Perry Biddiscombe, Werewolf: The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement, 74.

³³⁰Ibid, 68.

Conclusion

In the years following the Second World War, the children of Germany, most of whom had been Hitler Youth members during the years of the Nazi regime, were forced to make major adjustments in order to integrate into the postwar order. However, this reorientation of Germans, in particular those who had been raised in the Hitler Youth, was difficult because of their years of exposure to the Nazi regime and its ideals, and the massive amount of propaganda which had sunk into impressionable minds. Children of the Third Reich had been influenced by such propaganda whether through direct participation in the Hitler Youth, through the school system, or through a more general process of osmosis. Many children had been eager to participate in the Hitler Youth in order to be a part of German society and to contribute to the supposed rise to national greatness, in which they believed so deeply, along with supporting the various ideals stressed by National Socialism, including the notions of classlessness and the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Though not all children were drawn to the Hitler Youth, the majority of German children embraced the organization and its ideals, and thereby indirectly supported the regime. Of these children, the most noticeable were those who entered into the Hitler Youth and its related organizations early in the Nazi regime, when they were themselves young, and who spent their entire early lives and formative years being influenced by the regime.

The advent of the Second World War only further encouraged the gung-ho militarism of Hitler Youth members as they were called upon to play larger roles in wartime German society. Their increased participation in the war effort allowed the Hitler Youth to use their training, aiding the German cause both at home and at the front. Yet by 1943, as the fortunes of war turned against Germany, the youth of the country began to suffer losses in morale and demonstrated a reduced willingness to blindly follow the authoritarian rulers who had become so prevalent in their lives. Instead, many turned to juvenile crime, as they were afforded greater independence, while others began to realize

the true horrors of the war and the possibility of defeat. By the time of the regime's collapse, millions of Germans were dead and much of the country lay devastated while the Nazi movement which had taught and indoctrinated German youth, and eventually led them into war, had been destroyed. However, many children still held to the belief that Nazi Germany would somehow prevail, especially those youth who had served in higher ranking positions, such as the Hitler Youth leaders, many of whom had become junior officers in the *Wehrmacht*. For these individuals, along with the children who by the end of the war had spent over ten years in Nazi indoctrination, the war served to intensify their belief in the new order. Thus the war tested the Hitler Youth and served to strengthen the ideals of the regime for some, while for others it prompted them to see the true horrors to which they had been led because of the regime's ultimate nihilism.

The end of the Second World War was to some extent a turning point for the children who had grown up in the Hitler Youth. It saw the collapse of the Nazi bureaucracy and the Hitler Youth organization itself, while for many children it opened their eyes to the illusory and destructive nature of the regime. Yet despite these shocking realities which the youth of Germany were forced to face, it is not fair to say that the shock alone was able to liberate them from the impact of years of indoctrination. Instead, children were left both confused and disoriented, the society they had known now gone, and lying in its wake only massive destruction, death, and enemy occupation. In the years following the collapse of Nazi Germany, the children of the Hitler Youth were introduced to a new era of control under Allied authorities who attempted to influence them with liberal democratic--Americanized--modes of thought and consumerist behaviour, while in the East the Russians hoped to orient the German children under their care towards communism. With these goals in mind, the occupation authorities utilized various tools in order to direct children away from Nazism, instruments which included reforming the education system of Germany, removing Nazis from positions of influence, and introducing new youth groups and programs. Though reeducation efforts were not

completely effective in altering the country's sociopolitical system, they were often successful in eroding the faith in Nazi ideals which had earlier become a major part of the experience of childhood in the Third Reich. The impact of new youth groups, meanwhile, helped West German children identify with western ideals, while those in the German Democratic Republic were influenced by yet another kind of totalitarian youth program, the *Freie Deutsche Jugend*. Reform efforts by the Allied authorities and the passage of time were key in changing youth ideals and breaking the indoctrination of the Hitler Youth. These factors reinforced a recognition of the realities which the end of the war had made apparent. However, not all children were instantly able to forget their Nazi pasts and some right-wing youth groups, often led by former Hitler Youth leaders and former SS officers, were still operating well into the postwar era. Sometimes these were connected to right-wing parties, sometimes they were independent, while the immediate postwar period saw the diehard fighting of Werewolf members, who were also often the higher ranking Hitler Youth children or those who had been young children at the regime's outset and were unable to immediately see the truth about the Nazi era.

When we consider the depth of indoctrination, the pervasiveness of Nazi ideals, and the persistent pro-Nazi beliefs of many Hitler Youth members, it becomes clear that despite the disaster of the war, many Hitler Youth were not able to forget the ideas with which they had been raised. Instead, many were left rattled and unsure of the Allied authorities, while they attempted to come to grips with how defeat had been possible. Suspicious and uncertain of their new leaders, the youth of Germany remained cautious and confused in the years following the war, some still holding to Nazi ideals, others realizing the benefits of democracy as a result of reeducation or of the youth programs and exchanges in which they participated, while some of those in the East became swayed by Communist ideals. For those in the Federal Republic, the passage of time allowed for reintegration into the western sphere and was aided by the recovery of the German economy and by cultural redevelopment, while those in the East were coerced into

accepting, sometimes reluctantly, the worldview of the new regime. Yet as a result of the continued activity and behaviour patterns of a small percentage of the population, possibly 15 percent, some of whom had formerly been mid-echelon and senior Hitler Youth leaders, others who were in their late teens in 1945 and had been most subjected to indoctrination, Hitler Youth ideals were passed on to some children of the following generations in Germany, with youth as late as the 1960's showing evidence of Nazi notions.

It is clear from the work of many historians and observers that many of the Hitler Youth who remained heavily indoctrinated after the war were made up of the percentage of the population who were between the ages of six and ten at the advent of the regime and the 90 percent of Hitler Youth leaders, who as Peter Merkl notes, were just over the age of eighteen in 1929. It is these two groups who were most consistently connected to the Hitler Youth throughout the duration of the regime, who were most heavily indoctrinated, who had their indoctrination strengthened as a result of the war, and who could not free themselves of the regime's hold even after its collapse, instead continuing to promote Nazism and spread it to the subsequent generation of German youth. Merkl, Klose, Padover, Ludwig and Schumann, himself a former Hitler Youth, all concur. Finally, when examining postwar right-wing radical parties and youth groups, it was our two key groups who again made most of the major efforts at keeping the Hitler Youth movement alive, unable to free themselves of its effects and unwilling to allow it to die. Thus, a large majority who continued to believe in the Nazi Weltanschauung and propagated Nazi ideals into the postwar period were the Hitler Youth from the two constituencies that we have identified.

While the Hitler Youth collapsed as an organization at the end of the Second World War, its ideals were not eradicated completely, and a modest revival-of-sorts even occurred in the 1950's and '60's, aided by efforts of former Hitler Youth. Certainly, even the collapse in 1945 failed to shake the faith of a core of stalwarts, and it was only because

of Allied efforts at reeducation and reintegration, combined with the impact of German recovery, that most Hitler Youth were freed of indoctrination. Unfortunately, even some of these misguided waifs remained unable to put their pasts behind them.

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