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THE ROLE OF LEIBESÜBUNG UND SPORT IN
THE THIRD REICH

By

Carl William Westhoff

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF LEIBESÜBUNG UND SPORT IN
THE THIRD REICH

By

Carl William Westhoff

This study analyzes the role played by physical training (Leibesübung) and sport in revitalizing German life during the Third Reich. Under Hitler physical training was actively promoted by the government and forced on the people in order to help increase national strength and health. The purpose of this domestic rejuvenation was to prepare the nation for a war of conquest which would establish German hegemony in Europe. In order to demonstrate the importance of physical training, its relationship to Nazi ideology has been examined.

The study shows that Hitler's basic Darwinian outlook entailed the belief that struggle results in higher development, thereby serving as the basis for evolution. Nazi ideology thus taught that since nature bestows her favors according to strength and health, the stronger must dominate. Physical strength was therefore linked to a belief in German racial superiority and used to justify the right of the German people to acquire living-space (Lebensraum) at the expense of the "inferior" peoples surrounding them.

The main burden of increased physical training fell on the young who were to be the instruments for carrying out Hitler's expansionist aims. PT thus played an especially important role in the education of youth. By making admission to the various elite schools and the successful completion of their programs heavily dependent on a high level of all-around athletic ability, the emphasis on physical fitness was also used to support the leader principle (Führerprinzip) by which Nazi Germany was governed.

The Hitler Youth helped carry out the goal of an all-embracing, unified education by supplementing the regular school system. Life in the official state youth organization was, generally speaking, composed of ideological instruction and physical training. By linking the aggressive, patriotic, ideological tenets of Nazism with the need for physical conditioning and military training, it was impressed upon the boys, as it was in the schools, that their athletic and para-military activities were meant to toughen them for future military service and the battles to come.

Physical training under National Socialism was not confined solely to youth. A sports office was established by the "Strength Through Joy" (Kraft durch Freude or KdF) leisure organization that was created within the German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront): it had the dual objective of convincing workers that exercise had great intrinsic value and to make sports available on an inexpensive

basis to everyone. It was believed that athletics could be used profitably to form favorable attitudes toward the state and to improve the working capacity of the nation. A further aspect of the KdF sporting program was the stress on those activities which were considered militarily useful and most analogous to the para-military sporting activities of youth.

In addition to helping raise the national level of physical fitness, PT and sport were also integrating activities capable of manifesting the ideological preoccupations of government. Hitler's desire to create a genuine people's community (Volksgemeinschaft) based on common adherence to the Nazi world view thus found in physical training an ideal means of mass socialization. As a result, he succeeded to a very large extent in producing a physically fit younger generation willing to die for its beliefs.

Because physical training was a logical corollary of Hitler's entire value system, it serves as a good reflection of the evil values and consequences of National Socialism. By being made to support a chauvinistic, militaristic ideology, it was effectively harnessed to the unworthy ends of Nazism.

The sources of the study, apart from the speeches, writings, and recorded conversations of Hitler, include document collections, memoirs, newspapers, pamphlets, and official Nazi literature. The main method of analysis is historical, with emphasis on the relationship of events to ideas in their particular time setting.

To Nancy

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of Adolf Hitler after successfully establishing totalitarian one party rule in Germany was to effect a national revitalization in all areas of German life. Germany, defeated in World War I, bitter over the terms of the Versailles Treaty, ravaged by inflation and depression, and politically divided under the weak Weimar Republic, was to be made strong again. The main objective of this domestic rejuvenation was to prepare the nation for war. The ultimate aim of war was to secure additional living-space (Lebensraum) which, in its turn, would form the basis for establishing German hegemony in Europe.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the role played by physical training (Leibesübung) and sport in helping to implement this policy of internal revival for external aggression. During the Third Reich physical training was actively promoted by the government and forced on the people as one means of increasing national strength and health. Because part of Hitler's strategy to increase German strength was to raise the general level of physical fitness, physical training took on an importance in national life that it had never enjoyed before. This is not

surprising since physical training was a logical corollary of Hitler's entire value system. The emphasis he placed upon it makes it a valuable subject for study because it reflects the ideals, goals, and philosophy of Nazism in a way few other subjects can.

Political control of sport has not been confined just to Nazi Germany, of course. Fascist Italy and Communist Russia are two other obvious examples of states which have recognized the value of sport for channeling the excess energy of their peoples into socially approved directions. Indeed, the regulation of athletic activity can be seen as a common characteristic of any government aspiring to totalitarian control.

Because of sport's undeniable attraction for the masses, especially youth, it is perhaps inevitable that in the modern, industrialized world it has become an aspect of relief and fulfillment for the psychic needs of the individual. It has also unfortunately come to be utilized as an efficient vehicle for governments to exert sociopolitical control over their citizens. It certainly cannot be denied that the exploitation of athletics for purposes of state is an ever increasing phenomenon in today's world. Hence sport, which partially originated as a reaction against technology, has become part of the general regimentation of life in the machine age. The Third Reich remains the most diabolical example of such regimentation, however,

because it closely identified physical training with the extreme militaristic and aggressive principles of Nazi ideology.

Five general terms will be used throughout this thesis; Leibesübung, Sport, Athletics, Physical Education, and Physical Fitness. Their usage is as follows:

Leibesübung. This word is normally translated as physical exercise. According to Bruno Malitz, the official theoretician of physical training and sport in the Third Reich, in order to attain proper development of the body physical exercises must be done according to plan. Leibesübung will therefore be translated as physical training because training implies a more planned, systematic pursuit of exercise and is also more goal oriented.¹ The Nazis were very systematic, with the goal being the attainment of bodily strength, endurance, and agility. The ultimate aim of this training was preparation for battle. Activities comprising Leibesübung are the same as those listed under sport, except that they are non-competitive. When competition occurs they are defined according to Nazi usage as "sport."

Sport. Any type of physical activity or exercise that requires a reasonable amount of bodily exertion. It can be of a competitive or non-competitive nature and

¹Bruno Malitz, Die Leibesübungen in der Nationalsozialistischen Idee (München: Franz Eher Verlag, 1934), pp. 12-13.

carried on in or out of doors. Boxing, foot-racing, walking, hiking, marching, calisthenics, various ball-games, gymnastics, swimming, fencing, riding, sailing, etc., fit this description, card games, chess, and other sedentary pursuits do not. Beginning with the early 1870s when English sports and games were introduced into Germany, sport will usually mean an athletic activity requiring skill and frequently involving competition. Football (soccer), rugby, cricket, tennis, and olympic field sports are examples.

The Nazi definition of sport is somewhat different. Malitz states that sport is any physical activity in which people fight for victory. Because of this competitive aspect sport is viewed as direct preparation for combat. Both physical training and sport are necessary if young men are to be thoroughly prepared for battle; physical training means the attainment of top physical condition while sport, in addition to developing the body, instils character by cultivating the all-important will-to-win. Rowing, paddling, and wandering are thus physical exercises, while rowing in a race, canoe races, and running races are sports. In the same vein playing tennis is physical exercise, tournament tennis is a sport. Boxing learned for defense belongs to physical exercise, boxing in the ring is a sport.² For the period of the Third Reich sport will therefore signify only physical activity of a competitive nature.

²Ibid., pp. 13-14.

Athletics. For the purposes of this study athletics is considered synonymous with sport. The term also represents the practice or principles of athletic or sporting activities in addition to the activities themselves.

Physical Education. Systematic instruction in exercise, general health care, and hygiene carried out in a school, university, or youth program. For the Nazi era all activities associated with Leibesübung and sport apply as well.

Physical Fitness. The demonstration of good health by the ability to utilize one's muscles, strength, agility, and endurance at a determined level of proficiency.

For the Third Reich the term "physical training" will be used to designate aspects of physical activity and instruction designed to increase the general level of physical fitness of the German nation. When "sport" or "physical education" is being specifically referred to it will be so designated.

The various ends served by a nationally sponsored program of physical training can best be determined by answering the following questions. What was the relationship of physical training to Nazi ideology? Was this training really preparation for war? How was it used as a means of mass integration into a national community based upon National Socialist ideas? And how did emphasis on physical fitness support the leader principle (Führerprinzip) by which Germany was governed?

The ideological (Weltanschaulich) element in Nazism is important because of the great stress Hitler himself placed upon it. To him "The victory of a party is a change of government. The victory of a Weltanschauung is a revolution . . ."³

Throughout his writings and speeches he constantly refers to this ideology as the primary feature of his movement and of the Nazi revolution. Because his view of National-Socialism enjoyed an authority second to none, Hitler will therefore be the primary source when referring to various tenets of this Weltanschauung.⁴

The three main principles of Hitler's ideology were: the necessity of struggle; the need for racial preservation; and the inequality of people and nations.⁵ His basic Darwinian outlook entailed the belief that struggle results in higher development, thereby serving as the basis for

³Norman H. Baynes (ed.), The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922-August 1939, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 211.

⁴In addition to Mein Kampf (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1943); Hitlers Zweites Buch (Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1961); and various collections of his speeches, Hermann Rauschning's Gespräche mit Hitler (New York: Europa Verlag, 1940); and H. R. Trevor-Roper's Hitler's Secret Conversations: 1941-1944 (New York Octagon Books, 1976), will also be used as major sources of Hitler's views. The latter two works, besides providing further insights into his ideas also confirm the extent to which these ideas remained unaltered.

⁵Gordon W. Prange (ed.), Hitler's Words (Washington: American Council on Public Affairs, 1944), pp. 8-9.

evolution. Since only force counted in a nation's struggle for existence, the great domestic task of the Nazi revolution was to regain the people's strength so that they would be able to acquire the living-space (Lebensraum) necessary for Germany's continued development. To Hitler, this meant the need to return to the basic, simple values of an imagined healthy past. He therefore declared that the highest purpose of the pure German völkisch state was concern for the preservation and advancement of the original Aryan racial elements.⁶ The sine qua non for the development of this sound racial core was increased emphasis on physical training.

The main burden of this training fell on the youth who were to be the instruments for carrying out Hitler's expansionist aims. Modeling himself on the ideals of ancient Greece (as he understood them), Hitler desired the fanfares of the new Germanic age to be strength and beauty. The end product was to be the creation of a new human type based on strength, hardness, and endurance. It was on these precepts that the education and training of youth was based. But whereas the Greeks were concerned with uniting the "man of action" with the "man of wisdom" in order to achieve a harmonized balance of mind and body, the Nazis devalued the stress on intellectualism and overvalued the importance of physical development.

⁶Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 391, 393, 394, 398.

The desire to create an organic society, in which every aspect of life was to be integrated with the basic purpose of inculcating the Nazi world view, meant that physical training must also serve this purpose. It was therefore amalgamated with an aggressive, patriotic ideology which taught that since nature bestows her favors according to strength and health, the stronger must dominate. Physical strength was thus wedded to the belief in German racial superiority and used to justify the right of the German people to acquire Lebensraum at the expense of the inferior peoples surrounding them.

Physical training played an especially important role in the education of youth in the Third Reich. Because the young represented the wave of the future their education received careful attention from Hitler. His broad, fundamental conceptions of education were thoroughly summarized in Mein Kampf and they differed in no significant point in their ultimate realization.

He believed the general malady of the age was an over-valuation of knowledge. To him the highest ideal was a human type whose spirit had for its home a glorious body.⁷ He firmly believed that this over-estimation of knowledge had led to a disregard of physical strength, which was a major cause of national degeneration. It was therefore necessary to put general instruction in the schools into

⁷Ibid., p. 407.

an abbreviated form, embracing only the essentials. The time gained could then be used for additional physical education.

The expected benefits, apart from increased strength and endurance, would be improvement in character, will-power, and determination.⁸ Fellowship and team spirit would be developed by those games which required players to sink their individuality into that of the team if victory was to be gained.

In accordance with the Führer's will, the regular academic subjects were permeated with the principles of racial enlightenment and Nazi Weltanschauung. This ideologically oriented curriculum was then supplemented by increased physical training, thereby ending the previous underemphasis (to Hitler's way of thinking) on physical education. The number of weekly PE classes was raised to three, then five. Boxing and field sports were added to enrich the program, and school reports now attached more importance to athletic ability. Those who failed to achieve required levels of competency in physical fitness found opportunities for higher education, especially entrance to the elite schools, closed to them. Physical education thus

⁸Ibid., p. 422.

had an ideological and selective function: "its purpose was to instil corporate spirit and corporal vigour."⁹

The selective function applied particularly to the Nazi elite schools. Selection for and completion of their programs depended heavily on a high level of all-around physical prowess. The purpose of these schools was to train the future leadership cadre of Party and State. Had Hitler not eventually been defeated, physical training and sport would have been instrumental in helping to perpetuate his regime because of the emphasis placed on them in these institutions.

In a speech made in 1937 Hitler reiterated his government's exclusive claim to the mental, physical and spiritual education of youth.¹⁰ The Hitler Youth helped carry out this goal of an all-embracing, unified education by supplementing the regular school system. Life in the Hitler Youth was, generally speaking, composed of ideological instruction and physical training. The dominant "educational" themes were the assertion of German racial superiority, the need for living space, and the glorification of war. These ideas were linked to the need for physical conditioning and military training. The need to achieve a high level of physical fitness was presented

⁹Hans Peter Bleuel, Das saubere Reich: Theorie und Praxis des sittlichen Lebens im Dritten Reich (Bern und München: Scherz Verlag, 1972), p. 129.

¹⁰Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 549.

to Germany's boys and girls as part of the national program for fostering the sound part of the nation.¹¹ An unhealthy youth was equated with racial decline. A healthy and athletically trained youth was extolled as a valuable contribution to the continued racial existence of a people.

The transferral value of the spirit of comradeship and team-work derived from the sports and games of the Hitler Youth was meant to heighten the attitude of "them vrs. us" regarding the outside world. Because sport is essentially struggle, it helped by its very nature to focus feelings of aggression upon the list of "enemies" conjured up by Nazi propaganda. The party made youth feel that they were not just playing games but actively participating in the struggle to restore Germany to her former honored position in the world.

Physical training under National Socialism was not confined solely to youth. The German working man was the Nazis' biggest worry. The workers had always been the least enthusiastic supporters of Hitler and his party at the polls. Once in power Hitler rightly feared that they constituted a potential oppositional threat. In order to curry favor with this labor force while simultaneously exerting some means of control over it, a huge leisure organization was created.

¹¹Fritz Brennecke (ed.), The Nazi Primer: Official Handbook for Schooling the Hitler Youth (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938), pp. 74-75.

The "Strength Through Joy" (Kraft durch Freude) organization was set up within the German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront) to control the leisure activity of the German worker in a manner harmonious with the aims of the state. Some form of control was necessary if anti-Nazi activities were to be kept to a minimum. It was believed that leisure time could be used profitably to form favorable attitudes toward the state and to improve the working capacity of the nation. The concern over increased productivity was an important factor in the thinking of Dr. Robert Ley, leader of the German Labor Front and creator of "Strength Through Joy." He explained the need for a leisure organization as follows:

Now what do we want with the creation of a leisure organization? Before all else are the words coined by the Führer. "How do we maintain the nerves of the people, in the knowledge that one can pursue policies only with a people whose nerves are strong?" We cannot and do not wish to reduce the eight hour day. On the contrary, we shall perhaps be forced, in certain areas, in order to become capable of exporting again, to increase the work tempo. Therefore we want and must give to the working German people in their leisure time a complete relaxation of their body and spirit.¹²

To help the workers relax they were provided with a varied programme of recreational activities, theatre, film, and musical performances, vacation journeys, and other entertainments, all at greatly reduced prices. A sports office was also set up. It had the dual objective of convincing

¹²Robert Ley, Durchbruch der Sozialen Ehre: Reden und Gedanken für das Schaffende Deutschland (Berlin: Mehden Verlag, 1937), pp. 30-31.

workers that exercise had great intrinsic value and to make sports available on an inexpensive basis to everyone. The equal opportunity for worker and employer alike to use all recreational and sporting facilities was meant to buttress the Nazi claim that the Labor Front and its affiliated organizations were the basis of a true people's community (Volksgemeinschaft).

Sports were also used to break down traditional German particularism through inter-factory competition involving all regions of Germany. The "Strength Through Joy" sporting program thus performed a number of functions. It helped to keep the workers occupied and their attention diverted from the increasingly dictatorial tendencies of the regime. The inexpensive accessibility of facilities, instruction, and equipment also convinced many doubting workers that the government was concerned about them.

It was on the young, however, that Hitler placed his confidence in the future. If they were to carry out his policy of conquest they would have to be thoroughly educated and trained for their task. To understand how they were prepared for a future in a totalitarian society bent on war is to largely understand the role of physical training and sport in the Third Reich. The intention of this thesis in interpreting this role is to illustrate its spirit and general impact rather than to present the whole system in detail.

Because of this emphasis on youth, their education will therefore form the heart of this analysis. The thoroughness with which physical training was linked to a chauvinistic, militaristic ideology by the Nazis effectively demonstrates the values of the society they created. Their manipulation of this training to help implement government policy is a prime example of how a state focuses its power to attain its ends. Hitler's regime, however, was certainly no sudden break in the continuity of German sporting history.

Modern sporting activity in Germany received its first real impetus from the activities of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn early in the nineteenth century. Jahn's gymnastics were from the start deliberately turned to serve the nation, and it was this tradition which formed the firm foundation on which Hitler linked physical training to nationalism and military training in the Third Reich.

I.

SPORT IN GERMANY: 1806-1933

1806-1871

Sporting activity in Germany from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the advent of Hitler was largely shaped by the forces of war and nationalism. It was at various times an instrument for stimulating nationalism in preparation for or recovery from war. Sporting activity also tended to develop as a direct result of the government in power or in reaction to it.

Under Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852), a strong, unrestrained nationalism which advocated German unity was joined to gymnastic training (Turnen) and used to help overthrow Napoleon's armies. The Prussian government, dominated by the desire to rid itself of foreign oppression, helped foster this development. Later, when it became reactionary and repressive the gymnastic movement opposed it and used physical training as a means of agitating for national unification under a liberal form of government.

During the Empire the gymnasts (Turners) strove to maintain a sense of nationalistic fervor in a Germany increasingly occupied with the more material aspects of life. As a result of industrialization a sports movement

established itself in the 1870s mainly because of the growing desire for bodily exertion in the fresh air. For most of the population, sporting activities and clubs provided both a substitute for and limited participation in political activity in a society where any real participation in the political process was denied to all save the favored few of the upper classes.

The adverse effect of World War I on the general health of the German nation, especially its youth, resulted in a tremendous increase in sporting activity in the Weimar Republic. This activity offered a convenient means for physical rehabilitation and also served as a form of escape from depressing post-war problems. During the later years of the Republic a gradual politicization and militarization of youthful sporting activity took place as part of the increasing opposition to the government's policies. Thus the way was paved for Hitler, who, acting in accordance with the long history of sporting nationalism in Germany, merely gave this tradition a more deadly twist.

Germany was relatively untouched by nationalism or political activity prior to 1806, and the concept of German honor or power was virtually non-existent. German writers did not cry out for patriotic resistance in the face of the Napoleonic advance. They desired only peace and "the undisturbed flow of tranquil and unheroic days."¹ Concern

¹Hans Kohn, The Mind of Germany: The Education of a Nation (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 70.

for a German Reich or a German nation was barely thought of or desired. The political horizon of the German population was what it had been for centuries, strictly parochial.

It was Napoleon who changed all this. The defeat of Prussia at Jena in 1806 came as a shock. The once powerful state of Frederick the Great now lay beaten and helpless, occupied by the French. It was growing resistance to this occupation which awakened militant German nationalism. It was suddenly realized that it was the lack of a strong, united state that had caused Germany's downfall. The new nationalists therefore focused their attention on the creation of a self-willed national group. Above all, they believed in the necessity of a national war to defeat the French and to forge a new united Germany. One of the earliest, most influential spokesmen of this point of view was the poet Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769-1860).

Arndt insisted that if the German people were to realize their destiny of building a fatherland out of all the lands where German was spoken, France would have to be beaten in battle. This could only be done by "men of action." Such men would have to be mentally and physically prepared for this task. It was especially important that youth be physically hardened, for the burden of war would fall mainly on them.

Arndt's philosophic observations on the value of physical education led him to declare that gymnastics were "the vital flame of a people," (der Lebensflamme eines

Volkes.² Like many others, he was affected by the igniting spark of Rousseau's Emile.³ To Arndt the most invaluable of all earthly things was possession of a strong and healthy body.⁴ He was, along with Jahn, one of the most important heralds of gymnastics in Germany. When he stated that every school should have a gymnastic square and a gymnastic instructor during the course of a series of lectures on human education in Greifswald, Jahn was in the audience.⁵

Organized mass sport in Germany began with Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. Jahn's gymnastics (Turnen) were from the beginning a form of nationalistic education designed primarily to train young men for the overthrow of Napoleonic rule in Germany. He was influenced by Guts Muths' linking of gymnastics with military training,⁶ and by Arndt's fervid nationalism and advocacy of physical education.

²Carl Diem, Weltgeschichte des Sports und der Leibes-
erziehung (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1960),
p. 932.

³Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) emphasized the necessity of some sort of physical training in education. His Emile which appeared in 1762, has had greater influence than any other educational treatise ever written. No one before him had considered education of mind and body as being so nearly identical.

⁴Ernst Moritz Arndt, Fragmente über Menschenbildung (Langensalza: Hermann Beyer & Söhne, 1904), p. 125.

⁵Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 932.

⁶Johann Friedrich Guts Muths (1759-1839) was an influential instructor of physical education at the Schnepfenthal Educational Institute near Gotha.

In the winter of 1807-08, Jahn listened to Johann Gottlieb Fichte's (1762-1814) Speeches to the German Nation (Reden an die deutsche Nation) which called for a revival of the fatherland through a system of compulsory national education. Stressing the superiority of German culture and awakening ideals of freedom and independence, Fichte, echoing Pestalozzi,⁷ emphasized the importance of physical education, declaring it indispensable to a nation seeking to recover and maintain its independence.⁸ By 1810 Jahn felt that the time had come to implement the education outlined in the addresses.

In June, 1811, Jahn, who was an instructor in the classical high school the Grey Cloister (Grauer Kloster) in Berlin-Kölln at the time, set up the first gymnastic ground (Turnplatz) on the Hasenheide outside Berlin. He began instructing his students there in games, gymnastic exercises, and various athletics. Jahn called this activity Turnen because it stemmed from the medieval tournaments and symbolized the ancient Teutonic spirit. The activities engaged in were designed to impart strength, endurance, quickness, and suppleness. They included various floor acrobatics, weight lifting, games, wrestling, fencing, and

⁷ Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) was a Swiss reformer who brought physical education into his curriculum to help cultivate the innate capacity of each individual.

⁸ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Fichtes Reden an die deutsche Nation (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1912), pp. 36, 169, 187.

runs of various distances. Climbing, throwing, jumping, and other activities of an athletic nature completed the program.

Jahn also tried to instil a sense of moral worth and love of things German in his charges. Above all, he stressed that the highest and holiest duty of the gymnast was to become a "German" man in order to better serve his people.⁹ The nationalism of the gymnasts had a definite purpose. It was meant to help establish a true national state (Volksstaat) in which all class barriers were abolished and everyone united in complete equality.

During the early years of its existence Jahn's gymnastic system flourished and he was considered a national hero by both the people and the Prussian government. Gymnastic clubs (Turnvereine) began to spread throughout Prussia and to some of the other German states. Because Jahn emphasized personal freedom, his gymnastics were more than just participation in bodily exercises. They were also character training and education for citizenship in a future united Germany which would be created by the determination and vigilant preparedness of the gymnasts.

Following the victorious War of Liberation which saw most of the young gymnasts volunteer as members of the Lützow Free Corps, Jahn was again hailed as a national hero. Many other German cities now followed Berlin's example

⁹Friedrich Ludwig Jahn und Ernst Eiselen, Die Deutsche Turnkunst (Berlin, 1816), p. 123.

and laid out gymnastic squares and hired pupils of his to teach gymnastics in them.¹⁰ Jahn, feeling that his work was only half completed, returned to his gymnastic instruction determined to create good German citizens who would strive for future unification. As before the war it was mainly middle- and upper-class students who availed themselves of his training.¹¹

In 1819 the gymnast Sand assassinated the dramatist Kotzebue in Mannheim. The Prussian King, Frederick William III, thereupon declared a prohibition of all gymnastics in Prussia, the so-called Turnsperre. The Karlsbad Decrees (1819) sponsored by Metternich, dissolved all of the gymnastic clubs, of which there were over a thousand, throughout the Germanic Confederation.¹² This action of Metternich's was supported by the ruling sovereigns of Germany who considered any organization devoted to liberal doctrines a threat to their thrones. Thus, between the years 1820 and 1842, when the prohibition was officially lifted by Frederick William IV of Prussia, the gymnastic movement was hampered in its development.

¹⁰Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 928.

¹¹Heinrich von Treitschke, Deutsche Geschichte im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Verlag S. Hirzel, 1927), II, p. 385.

¹²Gail Steacy, "War and Physical Education: An Historical Study of German Physical Education from 1806 to 1957" (Masters Thesis, The Women's College of the University of North Carolina, 1958), p. 18.

With the lifting of the ban in 1842 gymnastic clubs sprang up everywhere and they soon began forming themselves into associations. Workers and artisans increasingly, though in small numbers, joined the movement. It was never to lose entirely its middle- and upper-class student composition, however.¹³

The Revolution of 1848-49 deeply affected the Turners. The gymnastic movement had from the beginning made individual freedom, the acceptance of all classes, and nationalism the main tenets of its program. "Nevertheless, for the first generation of gymnasts, the move toward nationalism not only entailed transcending regionalism (as gymnastic festivals from 1841 onwards did), but also a variety of political viewpoints within the organization."¹⁴ The diverse political aspirations split the movement in July, 1848.

The democratic wing strove for spiritual and physical development which joined all Germans in a free, united fatherland that would find in the national, popular free state of the Democratic Republic its suitable form.¹⁵ About two-thirds of the approximately three hundred gymnastic

¹³George L. Mosse, The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975), p. 129.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁵Heinz Timmerman, Geschichte und Struktur der Arbeiterbewegung 1893-1933 (Marburg, 1969), pp. 9-10.

clubs existing at that time climbed the barricades and participated in the struggle for civic rights.¹⁶

The more conservative liberal heart of the movement, however, which included most of the middle class leaders, desiring to restrict popular participation in government and fearful of the attacks on private property which had taken place, followed the trend of the times and joined the reaction against the revolution. The German Gymnastic League (Deutsche Turnerbund) which emerged from the revolution consequently adopted a moderate political course more in harmony with the hard facts of the existing relationships of power.

The decade of the 1840s witnessed one solid gain in the public acceptance of gymnastics. For years the gymnastic clubs helped to supplement the work of the schools without becoming formally attached to them. Public opinion, which was partially aroused by the medical profession, led to a Prussian cabinet order of 1842 which required gymnastic instruction to be provided in all public educational establishments as a necessary and indispensable component of manly education.

Despite setbacks suffered in the Revolution of 1848-49 gymnastic membership experienced a steady growth beginning in the mid-1850s. Having decided to remain aloof from all political affiliations, the path was now clear for

¹⁶Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 934.

expansion. From approximately twelve thousand gymnasts in all of Germany in 1818, membership rose to 134,507 by 1862; in 1880 it stood at 170,315.¹⁷ This growth occurred partially because the Turner movement was one of the few which offered a chance for patriotic expression to its bourgeois ideologues and lower bourgeois participants.

The gymnasts' need to express their desire for unification led to the establishment of National Gymnastic and Youth Festivals (Deutsche Turn-und Jugendfeste) which provided a rich leavening of patriotic fervor along with their athletic activities. These festivals were held every few years, the first occurring in Coburg in 1860.¹⁸

Along with members of the sharpshooting clubs (Schützenvereine),¹⁹ many gymnasts also supported the National Union (Nationalverein), a nationwide liberal organization founded in September, 1859, and devoted to

¹⁷Mosse, Nationalization of the Masses, p. 129.

¹⁸Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 934.

¹⁹Bismarck said of the predominantly middle-class sharpshooting societies (Schützengesellschaften), whose national membership totaled only 11,000 as late as 1862, that their efforts to restore national unity by rifle-festivals (Schützenfeste) helped exercise a liberal pressure on the various German princes which made them more inclined to make concessions for the sake of the Reich. Otto von Bismarck, Gedanken und Erinnerungen, 2 vols. (Stuttgart and Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1922), II, p. 11. While this may be partially true, it seems likely that the numerically far larger gymnastic movement was more responsible for bringing liberal pressure to bear on the princes than the sharpshooters. In light of this fact Bismarck's singling out of the shooting societies is curious.

national unity. During the period of unification (1864-1871) these sportsmen, believing in the moral strength of the national movement and opposed to Bismarck's course of iron and blood, hoped to help achieve national unification purely through gymnastics and sharpshooting.²⁰

In 1868 the Turners united all elements of their movement to form the German Gymnastic Association (Deutsche Turnerschaft). The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 focused attention on the need and value of physical fitness, and after the formation of the new empire gymnastics continued to grow with the official sanction of the state.

The Empire: 1871-1918

Bismarck's success in creating the longed-for German National state by a conservative revolution from above was greeted with great joy by the gymnasts. Their nationalistic euphoria over having achieved unification caused them to abandon the idea of freedom in favor of a monarchical, semi-feudal state. While many gymnasts thought that true unity had not yet been attained because of this sacrifice of human rights, the majority of clubs and associations comprising the Deutsche Turnerschaft increasingly supported the conservative policies of the Empire after 1871.²¹

²⁰Wilhelm Mommsen, "Zur Beurteilung der Deutschen Einheitsbewegung," Historische Zeitschrift, Vol. 138, No. 3 (1928), p. 535.

²¹Timmerman, Arbeitersportsbewegung, pp. 10-11.

As Germany strengthened her political position by becoming one of the world's great industrial powers in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the gymnasts were no longer perceived as a potential disruptive force. Disciplined physical exercise programs had been adopted by the various German systems of compulsory education. The gymnastic clubs, like those of the sharpshooters, had become centers of middle-class participation in a society where meaningful political and social activities were primarily reserved for the upper classes.²² Moreover, the ever larger national gymnastic festivals became occasions for demonstrating mass loyalty to the united and prosperous Bismarckian Reich.

These national festivals, besides offering many forms of athletic competition, were additionally meant to express a sense of national regeneration in an era of political conservatism. Furthermore, many patriots recognized that gymnastics led to good soldiers as well as hardened bodies.²³ Accepted by the new Germany, the turners continued a pattern of growth which by 1913 resulted in a movement embracing approximately a quarter million members.

²²Christian Graf von Krockow, Sport und Industriegesellschaft (München: R. Piper & Co., Verlag, 1972), p. 46.

²³Mosse, Nationalization of the Masses, pp. 99, 132.

General sporting activity in Germany up to the 1870s was restricted for the most part to the activities associated with gymnastics. The word "sport" itself was seldom employed as late as 1861.²⁴ This changed with the introduction of English sports and games in the early 1870s. The German sports movement took root and grew because of dissatisfaction with the formal, indoor character of physical education and the growing desire for bodily exertion in the fresh air as a result of industrialization and urbanization.

A stimulus for this development was the formation of a "Committee for the participation of Germany in the Olympic Games" (Deutschen Reichsausschusses für Olympische Spiele) in 1895. This committee, which was part of the renaissance of an international spirit of sports which arose with the establishing of the modern Olympic Games in 1896 by Pierre de Coubertin of France, was charged with preparing Germany for participation in the international Olympic Games. It promoted interest in the track and field events that are an integral part of the modern Games.²⁵ In response to this, a number of private clubs now began to sponsor the sports associated with these events. In the Olympics Germans appeared and won medals in the Games of 1896, 1904, and 1908.

²⁴Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 931.

²⁵Ibid., p. 966.

Throughout the period of the Empire sport continued a slow but steady growth. It remained stratified by class because certain activities like sailing, fencing, and tennis were primarily an aristocratic preserve due to the expensiveness of equipment and tradition. Middle and lower class sports also became more sharply separated from each other with the rise of an independent labor sporting movement in the 1890s.

It was not until after World War I that sporting activities of all kinds became firmly established in German life, however. One possible reason for this was a social standard of rigorous decorum which militated against the freedom in clothing that was part of any vigorous sport. Also, the three ideals of masculine behaviour; the army officer, the professor, and the government official all had nothing in common with the image of a sportsman as typified by the "English gentleman" who combines zest for sport with the concept of fair play.²⁶

The Empire also witnessed the rise of worker sporting organizations. The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) was the first political party of modern times to organize sporting activities as a means of promoting social

²⁶Thomas Alexander and Beryl Parker, The New Education in the German Republic (New York: The John Day Company, 1929), p. 85.

and political cohesion among its followers.²⁷ The original impetus for the establishment of workers' sports clubs was the desire to spread the party's doctrine in a relaxed, attractive manner and to offer a healthy means of combating the destructive conditions of everyday life and labor for the urban worker. The ordered competition of sports also served as a mitigating factor and psychological outlet for a class which found the competition rigged against it in terms of economic, political, and social advancement.²⁸

A Workers' Sport Movement (Arbeitersportbewegung) independent of the SPD came into being in the 1890s. In 1893 a Workers' Gymnastic League (Arbeiter Turnerbund) was founded with a total of 3,557 members.²⁹ This was followed by the establishment of a Workers' Cyclist League (Arbeiter-radfahrerbund) in 1896.³⁰ Other leagues subsequently made their appearance and in 1912 they were all united under the Central Commission for Workers' Sport and Physical Education (Zentralkommission für Arbeitersport und Körperpflege).

²⁷David Kanin, "The Role of Sport in International Relations" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, 1976), p. 6.

²⁸Eugen Weber, "Pierre de Coubertin and the Introduction of Organized Sport in France," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1970), 20.

²⁹Timmerman, Arbeitersportsbewegung, p. 14.

³⁰Mosse, Nationalization of the Masses, p. 172.

Throughout the period of the Empire the emphasis in German education was on serious intellectual studies. As a result, physical education was somewhat neglected and hampered in its development. The physical training that took place was a gloomy matter of drill and discipline. Gym suits and showers were practically unknown and the exercise was almost always conducted indoors. Because the curriculum was so crowded with academic subjects there was little time for spontaneous games and sports. The mass exercises of gymnastics, which lend themselves better to a crowded program, were the main form of physical education. P.E. practice thus lagged behind theory because of tradition and the rigidity of established institutions.

The seriousness of this problem began to be recognized around the turn of the century. As a consequence, a few forms of sport began making their way into the German schools for boys, while rhythmic gymnastics were introduced for girls. During the war very little progress was made in physical education.

Youthful physical exercise also took place in the many youth organizations that sprang up after 1900. Common to all of them, regardless of class or denomination, was the desire to flee from an increasingly industrialized society that was perceived as unhealthy and decadent, and to return to a healthy, natural way of life. In pursuit of this, gymnastics, sports, mountain climbing, and

wandering were vigorously engaged in by most of these organizations.³¹

One of them, the Wandervögel (Migratory Birds), a free youth movement unattached to any confessional group or political party, made wandering its major activity. Jahn was one of its heroes and it shared with the gymnasts the concept of the nation as the embodiment of "inward spirit rather than of mere outward power."³² This manifested itself by their appreciation for the beauty found in nature and in the human body. Their frequent hikes therefore linked the eternal German countryside to the essential spirit of the nation.³³

The Weimar Republic: 1918-1933

During the Weimar Republic the gymnasts continued to grow in popularity and numbers. By 1932 there existed

³¹Willibald Karl, Jugend, Gesellschaft und Politik im Zeitraum des Ersten Weltkriegs: Zur Geschichte der Jugendproblematik der deutschen Jugendbewegung im Ersten Viertel des 20. Jhs. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer gesellschaftlichen und politischen Relationen und Entwicklungen in Bayern - #48 (München: Neue Schriften, Reihe des Stadtarchivs, 1973), pp. 57-60.

³²Mosse, Nationalization of the Masses, p. 133.

³³In an attempt to formulate the reasons and goals of their movement the Wandervögel merely stated that their aim was "to further the wandering among students of higher learning, to awaken a sensibility for nature's beauty, and to give young people the opportunity to get to know the country and its people first hand." Hermann Mau, "Die Deutsche Jugendbewegung: Rückblick und Ausblick," Zeitschrift für Religions und Geistes Geschichte, Vol. 1, 1948, p. 140.

12,963 societies in 10,902 cities. The total membership was 1,617,849.³⁴ Many of the clubs added athletics to their program and the large national festivals (Turnfests), now held every five years, were continued. Thousands participated in the various activities which included mass demonstrations, parades, and contests. True to the Greek ideal, the turners aimed less for specialization in single events than for all around development. The festivals themselves continued to be patriotic expressions of loyalty and love for the fatherland.

After 1918 the German Gymnastic Association re-emphasized its militaristic tradition by various anti-Republican activities which included the collecting of signatures opposing the Treaty of Versailles, and participation in the nationalist demonstrations against the Remarque film All Quiet on the Western Front. Politically it was now identified with the conservative German National Party, although by 1930 a number of gymnasts had joined the Nazi Party.

A rapid increase in sporting activity took place following the war. Sports participation provided a welcome relief from the bitter memory of defeat and the fear of an uncertain future. It also helped restore the physical health of a nation suffering from the deprivations of war and blockade. Its importance was recognized and acknowledged

³⁴Steacy, "War and Physical Education," p. 46.

by various German leaders,³⁵ and the impulse toward mass athletic participation was not only encouraged but directly supported by governmental legislation.³⁶ When Hitler came to power on January 30, 1933, Germany's sports movement had grown to include 68,725 clubs and 6,279,424 members.³⁷

This movement was generally of a private nature. It formed its own clubs and associations and was administered by five different national commissions, the most important of which was the German National Commission for Physical Education (Deutscher Reichsausschuss für Leibesübungen or DRA) which embraced all sports. The DRA, which received money from the Reich Ministry of the Interior,³⁸ had a number of major accomplishments to its credit during the Weimar era. These included; the introduction of compulsory athletic instruction in the public schools; the successful campaigns for increasing the number of sporting facilities in Germany; the institution of National Youth Contests

³⁵Reichs President von Hindenburg stated that "physical exercise must be a lifelong habit of the people." Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 987. Lord Mayor Konrad Adenauer inaugurated the large municipal sporting ground plan in Cologne after the war with the words "Sport must become the medical doctor at the sick bed of the German nation." Theodor Lewald, "How Does Germany Justify Its Large Expenditures For Sport Facilities?" Mind and Body, Vol. 41, No. 422, Sept.-Oct., 1934, pp. 107, 110. And Reichs President Friedrich Ebert indicated his approval by attending the founding of the German College of Physical Education in 1920.

³⁶Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 989.

³⁷Ibid., p. 995.

³⁸Ibid., p. 982.

(Reichsjugendwettkämpfe); the founding of the German College of Physical Education (Deutsche Hochschule für Leibesübungen); the creation of German Olympic Games (Deutschen Kampfspiele); and the establishment of a national sports badge system (Sportabzeichen).

In 1928 Germany again participated in the Olympic Games after being kept away for sixteen years. She did surprisingly well, winning 37 medals and having the second best overall total among the 45 competing nations. The team competing in the 1932 Games was not nearly as successful because this was the generation of the 1920s which had suffered through the years of hunger during the war.

The great expansion of sport in Germany during the 1920s was not without its critics. Many criticized what they called the "soulless activities" of athletics, the pursuit of meaningless records, and the unfortunate rise of "spectator sport" as a national pastime. This lack of content and spiritual purpose weighed heavily on those accustomed to the inner ideals of the gymnasts. Furthermore, the political, social, denominational, and geographical cleavages of the sport and physical training movement in Germany troubled many who viewed these divisions as a senseless waste of energy and who would have liked to see a single, centralized management of all sporting activity.

Germany's new sporting enthusiasm also extended to the schools. There was a reaction against the overemphasis on intellectualism which had existed throughout the Empire

and the formal, militaristic movements which comprised physical education. During the Republic the weekly hours devoted to physical education were increased and there was wide acceptance of sports, games, and out-of-door activities. In recognition of the new philosophy of democracy informality was stressed and team games were particularly singled out to foster a cooperative as well as competitive spirit.

The main goal of this new athleticism was to regain the health of the German children which had been seriously impaired by the war. A greater stress on physical fitness in the schools was also meant to circumvent the lack of military training of German youth which the Versailles Treaty had abolished.³⁹ When democratic principles began to be questioned in the later years of the Republic owing to the complete polarization and increasing violence of German political life, P.E. in the schools began to swing back toward formalism. This reflected the widespread desire of people for the return of discipline and strong leadership to German life.

The various youth associations of the Weimar era, to which 40 percent of Germany's young people belonged,⁴⁰ encouraged physical health, beauty, and the sport movement.

³⁹ Susanne Charlotte Engelmann, German Education and Re-Education (New York: International Universities Press, 1945), pp. 59-60.

⁴⁰ Alexander, The New Education, p. 22.

The effect of World War I however, was to give a military coloring to many of youth's activities. Thus the scouting games (Geländespiele) played by most groups gradually evolved into war games with "orders" and military organization.⁴¹

Already by 1927, the formerly independent organizations were mostly directed by political or denominational groups. Many of these used sport as a vehicle for indoctrinating the young with their particular (frequently non-democratic) philosophy. Athletic and sport clubs were consequently established to meet the need for organization. These in turn formed national associations. The last years of the Republic saw these organizational bonds become stronger, thereby setting the stage for them to serve as a convenient means for bringing all youthful physical activity outside of the schools under totalitarian control.

On the eve of the Third Reich, then, German sport and physical education were largely identified with and shaped by the forces of nationalism and governmental policy, as they had been since the time of Jahn. The long history of sporting nationalism in Germany therefore lent a touch of historical authenticity to Hitler's claim that physical training must serve the ends of state.

⁴¹Werner Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt: Ein Dokumentarbericht (Oldenburg und Hamburg: Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1964), p. 119.

II.

PHYSICAL TRAINING, SPORT, AND IDEOLOGY IN THE THIRD REICH

Ideology in the Third Reich was not regarded as merely one component of life. It was the basis for the official attitude adopted toward all aspects of existence and therefore directly influenced governmental policy.¹ It was not only the expression of the Nazi world view but was also considered to be the very essence of what it meant to be a German.

The objective of Hitler's Weltanschauung was to obtain external freedom for Germany by developing her internal strength.² Only a successfully revitalized Germany would be capable of fighting for and winning the Lebensraum necessary to secure this freedom. A program of domestic reform aimed at achieving this rejuvenation was launched when Hitler came to power. During the early years of the

¹Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945 (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), p. 33.

²Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 609.

Third Reich internal policy was of primary importance and was acknowledged as such.³

Among the means employed to strengthen Germany was an officially sponsored program of physical fitness. The government's call for greater strength and better health for purposes of national regeneration consciously continued Jahn's tradition of enlisting athletics in the service of the nation. Because Hitler was determined to raise the general level of physical fitness, physical training became one of the most important concerns of the new government.

The difference between the Weimar Republic's view of sport and that of the Nazis' was one of approach and substance. The rationale for governmental funding of sport in the Republic was that it could substitute for the military training largely prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles. The Nazis did away with this subterfuge. Their glorification of teamwork, comradeship, strength, and hardness was openly united with their aggressive patriotism. Youth, members of the sporting clubs, and factory workers were all told their activities were para-military in nature and that they were training for the armies of revenge.⁴

Under the term "physical training" the body was viewed as "the starting point in the development of the

³Hermann Göring, Aufbau einer Nation (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1934), p. 104.

⁴Richard D. Mandell, The Nazi Olympics (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971), p. 59.

individual for service in the community of the nation."⁵ Because it was combined with intensive political indoctrination, the government's promotion of this training represented a well-thought out means of fostering military preparedness and national unity within the context of a vigorous regenerating movement of the German people. The Nazi philosophy of sport therefore disagreed with the Republic's premise that "politics has no place in sport."

Athletic theory in the Third Reich was also thoroughly racist. In contrast to the Weimar era which thought of physical education and sport as beneficial to the "nation," the Nazis were intent on forming a "people's community" based on racially exclusive Aryan principles. This meant that physical activity, like other sectors of national life, had to be cleansed of contaminating "foreign" influences.

The community spirit the Nazis wished to develop was nurtured in part by mass physical training. The psychological path for their successful combining of athletics with ideology was prepared in large measure by the chaotic conditions of national life during the Weimar era. The last years of the Republic were marked by a shift from an athleticism which emphasized all around development of the individual to one characterized by more formal, group

⁵George F. Kneller, The Educational Philosophy of National Socialism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 175.

oriented activities. This occurred in physical education where Spiess' drill method of gymnastics was again increasingly resorted to. Team sports, initially meant to foster a democratically cooperative spirit, now stressed the subordination of the group to the leader. This same trend toward rigidity and anti-individualism was evident in the many youth sporting associations as well.

It would appear that this development was to some extent due to a societal need for order and a sense of belonging. People, buffeted by inflation and a prolonged depression, were in addition subjected to political disunity by a multiplicity of parties representing every shade of the ideological spectrum. Their desire for stability and strong leadership found an outlet in more highly organized sporting activity. The need for escape and group identity was also manifested by the rise of spectator sports which experienced an unprecedented growth. This sport-as-spectacle illustrated the passivity of a society reacting to a general feeling of helplessness.

The Nazi promotion of physical fitness and its fusion with an aggressive, patriotic ideology satisfied the people's need for discipline and guidance. The vehement nationalism and völkisch principles of this Weltanschauung also injected purpose and a spiritual content into German sport that was lacking in the democratic republic.

The likely contributions of physical training toward increasing national unity and strength were perceived

by Hitler from the start. He recognized that only with a homogeneous, well-trained, physically prepared nation could he pursue the expansionist foreign policy aims dictated by his ideology.⁶ It is consequently the relationship to Nazi ideology which provides the key to an understanding of the role of physical training in the Third Reich.

Throughout his career Hitler remained sincerely committed to a few fundamental ideas. It was upon them that his Third Reich was essentially constructed. The three principles basic to Hitler's thinking and from which flowed all his other ideas were: The concept of struggle, racial purity, and the inequality of men and nationalities. A brutal Darwinism formed the heart of his political creed. In a speech made at Kulmbach in 1928 Hitler clearly stated his belief in the importance of struggle:

The idea of struggle is as old as life itself, for life is only preserved because other living things perish through struggle. . . . Struggle is the father of all things. Only through struggle has man raised himself above the animal world. . . . As it is with the individual, so it is in the destiny of nations. Only by struggle are the strong able to raise themselves above the weak. And every people that loses out in this eternally shifting struggle has, according to the laws of nature, received its just desert. A Weltanschauung that denies the idea of struggle is contrary to nature and will breed a people that is guided by it to destruction. . . . For if you do not fight for life, then life will never be won.⁷

⁶Paul Kluke, "Nationalsozialistische Europaideologie," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 3, No. 3 (July, 1955), pp. 242-243.

⁷Prange, Hitler's Words, p. 8.

Hitler emphasized that struggle not only preserved man's existence, but also was responsible for all his achievements. The personal virtues of loyalty, faith, and endurance, as well as the great artistic, scientific, and political accomplishments were all produced by the spur of incessant competition. The need to overcome difficulties in order to survive was also "a means of improving a species' health and power of resistance and, therefore, a cause of its higher development."⁸

For nations "the compulsion to engage in the struggle for existence lay in the limitation of living space, and the fight for this Lebensraum was the basis for a nation's evolution."⁹ Because this was so, the concepts of pacifism and humanitarianism were merely disguises for weakness and lack of will. Adherence to these ideas would lead only to decline and destruction.

It was logical then, that only force and power mattered in a nation's struggle for existence. To Hitler, force was the first law.¹⁰ Not only was it decisive in any situation, it also created right. This right to victory of

⁸Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 285.

⁹Adolf Hitler, Hitlers Zweites Buch: Ein Dokument aus dem Jahr 1928 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1961), p. 47.

¹⁰Prange, Hitler's Words, p. 4.

the best and strongest¹¹ had an obvious practical application:

There is no historical injustice where soil is concerned, just as there is no historical injustice in possession. Possession must be gained by work and then it exists by right. Space must be fought for and maintained. People who are lazy have no right to the soil. Soil is for him who tills it and protects it. . . . There is no higher justice that decrees that a people must starve. There is only power, which creates justice . . .¹²

Hitler asserted that this power could only be found in self-reliance:

Justice (Recht) lies not without us but within us. It can lie in our own strength alone. Only strength is at any time justified in raising claims, never weakness. Only strength can wake justice into life. . . .¹³

The claims envisioned by Hitler represented the living space necessary to transform Germany into a great new power capable of supplanting the decaying civilization of the West. He decided that this new empire could only be a land-power, for the age of the great maritime empires was past. It was now roads, railways, and the air, rather than the sea that provided ease of communication.¹⁴

The basis of this new empire would be the immense land mass of Central Europe and Asia. Hitler believed only

¹¹Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 289.

¹²Prange, Hitler's Words, pp. 28-29.

¹³Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 178.

¹⁴H. R. Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's Secret Conversations: 1941-1944 (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), pp. XV-XVI.

Soviet Russia stood in the way of Germany's conquering and holding this vital area. It was therefore necessary to create massive, well-trained armies to oppose this numerically superior foe.¹⁵

To help forge the armies that were to carry out Germany's struggle for existence it was first necessary to strengthen the nation internally. This was the great domestic task of National Socialism when Hitler came to power.¹⁶ Throughout the nation, in the schools, Hitler Youth, and in the factories, physical training was utilized as an important means for both restoring Germany's strength and health, and for preparing her for the battles to come. The political propaganda that always accompanied this training openly acknowledged its para-military content. Hitler's statement that he would use every means to prepare the people for war thus found practical implementation in the use of physical training for this purpose.¹⁷

When Hitler referred to the people it was always in terms of race. His emphasis on race was perhaps the most characteristic feature of the Nazi Weltanschauung. Race, to Hitler, did not mean something biologically provable. While he frequently claimed scientific authority

¹⁵Ibid., pp. XVI-XVII.

¹⁶Hitler, Zweites Buch, pp. 106-107.

¹⁷Hermann Rauschning, Gespräche mit Hitler (New York: Europa Verlag, 1940), p. 81.

for his pronouncements on this subject, race was really meant to play the role of a myth.¹⁸ The superiority attributed to the Aryans by Hitler should therefore be understood with this in mind. It was the power of this idea to make men act as if it were true that is important, and not the pseudo-scientific basis of its conception. Hitler lauded the Aryans in Mein Kampf as being responsible for

All . . . human culture, all the results of art, science, and technology that we see before us today, are almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan. This very fact admits of the not unfounded inference that he alone was the founder of all higher humanity, therefore representing the prototype of all that we understand by the word "man." He is the Prometheus of mankind from whose bright forehead the divine spark of genius has sprung at all times. . . .¹⁹

He goes on to explain how the original Aryans subjugated the other inferior races. With the passage of time the pure Aryan racial elements became mixed with those of the conquered peoples'. The result was a racial mixture and gradual loss of cultural creativeness. It was this unfortunate degeneration and loss of vigor which had brought Germany down in the world.²⁰ It was not war, though, that had hurt Germany, "for men do not perish as a result of lost wars, but by the loss of that force of resistance which is contained only in pure blood. All who are not of good race in this world are chaff."²¹

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 218-220.

¹⁹Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 290.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 295-296.

²¹Ibid., p. 296.

Even the German nation was therefore not considered by Hitler to be "pure Aryan."²² He felt that only a portion of the human material in any nation could be termed Aryan. This group would be marked by its vitality and its ability to assume positions of power within the state. It would constitute an elite and, by ruthlessly enforcing its views upon the entire nation, give to the various racial elements an Aryan stamp. This elite in Germany was represented by the Nazi Party, and Hitler based its right to rule and dominate others on the

right of the stronger, a right which, as we see it in Nature, can be regarded as the sole conceivable right because founded on reason. . . . And thus it is that a great and significant Aryan civilization did not arise when Aryans alone were living in racial purity, but always when they formed a vital association with races otherwise constituted, an association founded not on mixture of blood but on the basis of an organic community of purpose.²³

In this manner, Hitler's concept of race was used to rationalize the right of the Nazis to rule over the German people, and the right of the Germans to oppress those inferior peoples standing in the way of their needed territorial expansion.

This belief in race led to a glorification of the Volk.²⁴ The state represented for Hitler only a means of

²²Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, pp. 989-990.

²³Ibid., pp. 465-466. This concept of an Aryan elite shaping the development of the masses is further explained in Alan Bullock, "The Political Ideas of Adolf Hitler," in Maurice Baumont (ed.), The Third Reich (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1955), pp. 356-358.

²⁴Volk is normally translated as people or nation. In focusing on those qualities that are innately German,

organizing this Volk. The highest purpose of a state based on völkisch principles was concern for the preservation of the original Aryan racial elements that resided within it. The development of the spiritual and ideal abilities of these best characteristics would then lead to ultimate freedom.²⁵ This preservation of race was Hitler's most important commandment.²⁶

The role of the Party was to express the people's "vital will" by organizing and dominating the state. It did this by thoroughly permeating Germany with the new ideology in the hope that it would serve as the means for unifying the German people behind the goals of National Socialism. The liberal Weltanschauung of the Weimar Republic, with its advocacy of internationalism and emphasis on individual development--which Hitler said would lead to the destruction of the people--was opposed by the deification of the völkisch state which stressed the good of all before that of the individual (Gemeinnutz vor Eigennutz). Hitler even stated that the individual life should not be so highly valued, that men were called upon to die so that a

Hitler repeatedly stressed the supreme importance of racial composition. His use of this word consequently implies a primordial, tribal community of blood and soil.

²⁵Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 394.

²⁶Henry Picker, Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941-1942 (Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1963), p. 153.

nation could live.²⁷ By subordinating his own will to that of the community the individual was supposed to experience the fulfillment of his desire for a sense of purpose.

The need for individual sacrifice and the need to develop the best racial elements found its antithesis for Hitler in the Jew. He believed with every fiber of his being that the Jew was evil incarnate and devoted to everything he hated and feared. He was convinced the Jew was only for himself and devoted to keeping his own race pure while poisoning that of others.²⁸ Democracy, Bolshevism, capitalism, a free press, liberalism, internationalism, pacifism, and modernism were all Jewish devices designed to subject the Aryan peoples to his control. The central idea of Hitler's thinking was that the Jew was incapable of creativity. He could only copy and appropriate--or, worse, destroy the work of others:

He has never founded any civilization, though he has destroyed civilizations by the hundred. He possesses nothing of his own creation to which he can point. Everything that he has is stolen. . . . In the last resort it was the Aryan and the Aryan alone who could form states and could set them on their path to future greatness. All that the Jew cannot do. And because he cannot do it, therefore all his revolutions must be "international."²⁹

The Jew was to be feared because he sought to weaken Germany. He therefore would have to be systematically

²⁷Ibid. See also Hitler, Zweites Buch, p. 52.

²⁸Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 300, 302, 312, 316.

²⁹Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, pp. 30-31.

removed from all positions of importance in the life of the nation.

The task of strengthening the racial organism that was the state was the primary duty of the government. Protection and care of the race was uppermost in Hitler's mind because he always saw the state as an instrument of power. Only with a strong race was political, economic, and military strength possible. Because the people were the eternal source of this power, Hitler's avowed aim was "to arouse and to reinforce this strength."³⁰ Whatever contributed to discipline, unity, strength, and action was consequently vigorously promoted.

An ideologically saturated governmental program of physical training was thus a logical means of attaining Hitler's goal of preserving and advancing a community of "physically and psychically homogeneous creatures."³¹ Such a program proved attractive to the heroic and idealistic inclinations of youth. It was also an appropriate means of manipulating the young to implement Hitler's dictum that

This preservation is bound up with the rigid law of necessity and the right to victory of the best and stronger in this world. Those who want to live, let them fight, and those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to live.³²

³⁰Ibid., p. 1140.

³¹Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 393.

³²Ibid., p. 289.

Physical training under the Nazis was therefore meant to restore the force of resistance to the great unmixed Aryan stocks still existing in the nation and to help form an organic community of purpose.

Hitler's desire to portray the culture of the new Germany as the successor to the golden age of Greece and Rome was enhanced by this emphasis on physical exercise and strength. He insisted that the Germans should always point to the athletically minded Greeks as their ancestors, who, he said, were Germanic in origin.³³ He proudly proclaimed that

The new age of to-day is at work on a new human type. Men and women are to be more healthy, stronger: there is a new feeling of life, a new joy in life. Never was humanity in its external appearance and in its frame of mind nearer to the ancient world than it is today.³⁴

Hitler extolled the value of the Olympic Games and of sport in general. He was especially enthusiastic over the "proud bodily vigour of youth." If the race was to be properly developed the joy of movement must lead to more beautiful, well-formed bodies. Hitler's aesthetic taste for the physically pleasing and his desire that the best racial specimens should reproduce themselves led him to

³³Trevor-Roper, Hitler's Secret Conversations, pp. 185, 203.

³⁴Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 590.

declare that "the most beautiful bodies should find one another, and so help to give the nation new beauty."³⁵

Physical training was thus used as a convenient and readily adaptable means of developing the Aryan racial elements in the nation. It served to physically and ideologically prepare the people for war and epitomized the cultural ideals of strength and beauty on which the new German-dominated European order would have been based.

When Hitler spoke of "race" it was always in terms of inequality:

The differences between the individual races, both in part externally and, of course, also in their inner natures, can be quite enormous and in fact are so. The gulf between the lowest creature which can still be styled man and our highest races is greater than that between the lowest type of man and the highest ape.³⁶

In Hitler's mind the justification for all colonization and imperialism was the inequality between races and individuals. The existence of this inequality constituted for him one of the iron laws of nature:

England did not conquer India by the way of Justice and of law: she conquered India without regard to the wishes, to the views of the natives, or to their formulations of justice, and when necessary, she has upheld this supremacy with the most brutal ruthlessness. . . . By what right do nations possess colonies? By the right of taking them.³⁷

³⁵Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 412.

³⁶Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 464. A valuable analysis of Hitler's belief in racial and individual inequality is provided in Bullock, "The Political Ideas of Adolf Hitler, pp. 358-359, 368-374.

³⁷Ibid., p. 1258.

Because democracy and internationalism expounded the opposite view, that men and nations were equal, Hitler felt they were useless concepts capable only of leading nations to decay and ruin. This was so because the egalitarian idea of majority rule-democracy-ignored the value of the superior individual; while internationalism denied that any differences existed in the inherent ability and achievement levels of individual peoples. In order to formally institutionalize his conviction that men were not equal, Hitler organized the National-Socialist state upon the leader principle (Führerprinzip). It was upon this concept that he re-established the Nazi Party in 1924 after his release from prison.

In a speech to the Hitler-Jugend in 1933 Hitler explained what the leadership principle meant in practice. Referring to the indecisiveness and dissension which characterized national life in the Wiemar Republic he stated "we have to learn our lesson: one will must dominate us, we must form a single unity; our discipline must weld us together; one obedience, one subordination must fill us all, for above us stand\$the nation."³⁸

In the Third Reich the will of the Führer, not any constitution, was the final word. No logical explanation of this was ever given either by Hitler or by any Nazi jurist. It was invariably declared that the Führer simply

³⁸Ibid., p. 538.

embodied the unity of the Volk, and that he was accountable for his actions only to the German people. It was never explained, however, how this responsibility was to be put to the test.

The National-Socialist theory that the people were united with the Führer was a spiritual idea. The racial affinity of the people, which was based on common blood, formed a community which had a spirit (Volksgeist) of its own. This spirit was rooted in the national past and in the collective character of the people. It was only given formal expression when a Leader arose who understood this spirit and who was capable of summoning it from the depths of the national subconsciousness. By his ability to call forth and give shape to this Volksgeist he proved his claim to supreme Leadership. Only through his interpretation were the people able to realize their full potential.³⁹

The leader principle was also in accord with Hitler's theory of history. He was convinced that all events of world historical importance stemmed from the actions of individuals, and not from "majority decisions":⁴⁰

I see two diametrically opposed principles: the principle of democracy which, wherever it is allowed practical effect, is the principle of destruction: and the principle of the authority of personality which I would call the principle of achievement, because whatever man in the past has achieved--all human civilizations--is conceivable only if the supremacy of this principle is admitted.⁴¹

³⁹Ibid., p. 414.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 196.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 790.

Hitler on occasion enlarged this concept of individual importance. He also believed that world history was made by minorities and elites. The apparent contradiction between the themes of the creative role of individuals and that of minorities was resolved by the fact that both were examples of the same law of inequality. Nor was the exaltation of the Volk, which proclaimed the superiority of the collective over that of the individual, in opposition to this law. For the Volk was based upon racial, and not democratic principles. This meant that not only peoples, but individuals and groups within each Volk were unequal, because this was the fundamental law of race.⁴²

This law of inequality also applied to Germany. Hitler made it clear that if the importance of blood was recognized on a national basis, then the transference of this estimation must be applied to the individual person. Thus he not only evaluated the worth of nations differently on the basis of the race they belonged to, he also was aware of the qualitative differences that existed among men of the same race. Because the Nazi philosophy of life repudiated democratic mass rule and strove to give the world to the best people, it was natural that Hitler should declare that leadership within the Volk-community should

⁴²Bullock, "The Political Ideas of Adolf Hitler," p. 370.

only be given to those elements which exhibit the best racial qualities.⁴³

It was the duty of the Nazi Party to implement the Führerprinzip by enlisting an elite that would supply this needed leadership:

. . . it must secure in the political leadership of the nation that selection which takes place in nearly all spheres of life . . . with the German army as its model the Party must see as its task the collection and the advancement in its organization of those elements in the nation which are most capable of political leadership.⁴⁴

The desire to seek out the best men available irrespective of class distinction offered a career open to talent in the Nazi state. It was important to Hitler not to draw the new leadership from the traditional source of the middle classes. In his opinion, their capacity for effective leadership was weakened by an outlook distinctly materialistic and a lifestyle which emphasized the comfortable and unheroic. By making achievement and demonstrated leadership ability the basis for a political career, Hitler supported his contention that the aim of National-Socialist policy was the creation of a classless society. Rather than a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or a dictatorship of the proletariat, he hoped to establish a dictatorship of the nation based on the common concerns of the

⁴³Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 442-443.

⁴⁴Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 442.

volk-community. By constantly stressing equality of opportunity Hitler hoped to convince the German people that his government did not represent any single group or class, but the interests of all the people.⁴⁵

This single-minded concept of the national interest was served by a leadership principle based on the exacting process of natural selection. The new leaders would be chosen solely on the basis of their personal abilities and character. It was not the function of the state to create these abilities, but only, as Hitler said, "to open the road for those forces which are present."⁴⁶

One manner in which this road was opened was through physical training. The ability to excel in the struggle of sporting competition was judged by the Party to be an important indicator of leadership ability. The attributes of strength, endurance, and the will-to-win demonstrated by the possessors of athletic prowess, marked them out as representatives of the best racial elements in the nation. That physical proficiency went hand in hand with the ability to lead others was largely taken for granted.

The playing field, then, not only offered equality of opportunity for all men to attain social advancement through achievement in sport; it also supported the

⁴⁵Bullock, "The Political Ideas of Adolf Hitler," pp. 371, 374-376.

⁴⁶Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 394.

Führerprinzip by invoking Hitler's fundamental law of individual inequality. Nature, too, was an aristocrat by inclination, because she made men unequal in physical ability.

Physical training was also used to implement Hitler's contention that the racial inequality of nations justified the right of the stronger to acquire living space at the expense of the weaker. Since this was a basic point in the Nazi Weltanschauung, he was determined to educate people, especially youth, in the spirit of the Party's own military conception of its mission.⁴⁷

Heavy emphasis on physical training was therefore meant to reinforce belief in German racial superiority by instilling the conviction that Germany was indeed superior to other nations in strength and health. Sports especially were used to teach the competitive nature of life and to persuade youth that men were unequal. The visible proof of this inequality was then transferred onto other peoples through the medium of ideology.

The connection between physical training and national enterprise was therefore educational as well as physical. One of the most important duties of the National-Socialist party was to educate the people in the Nazi Weltanschauung. In 1933 Hitler stated that past revolutions had "with very few exceptions failed because their

⁴⁷Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 443.

leaders had not realized that the essential thing was not the assumption of power, but the education of men."⁴⁸ He was consequently well aware of the opportunities opened for social control by physical training. He recognized that exercise in general and sports in particular were integrating activities capable of reflecting the social and ideological preoccupations of government. Hitler's desire to create a genuine Volksgemeinschaft based on common adherence to the Nazi world view thus found in physical training an ideal means of mass socialization.

The end toward which all athletic activity was ultimately directed was the acquisition of more living space. In addition to the "right of the stronger" which Hitler constantly cited as justification for aggression, military-political and economic needs also entered into his thinking. He was convinced that only nations occupying sufficient vital space and capable of militarily defending it could be world powers. Russia, the United States, and England (the latter by artificial means through possession of a great empire) were such states. Germany, restricted and hemmed in in the middle of Europe was thus consigned to the status of a second-rate power.⁴⁹

This inferiority was not unavoidable however. Germany could and would do everything in her power to

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 483.

⁴⁹Rauschnig, Gespräche mit Hitler, p. 115.

rectify this situation. As Hitler explained, more Lebensraum was needed for Germany to be able to defend herself against any possible military coalition. In peace-time her territory was sufficient. But during war-time freedom of action was needed, for then a country was very dependent on foreign trade. If Germany were compelled to rely on this trade without an ocean coastline of her own, she would forever remain a politically subordinate nation.⁵⁰

Additional territory was also needed because of Germany's growing population. This growth was encouraged during the Third Reich because "only such an increase guarantees a people's future."⁵¹ Hitler emphasized that population size would always rise in a healthy people. It was therefore very important for a nation's existence to maintain a proper relation between population and territorial extent. To Hitler, the entire life struggle of a people revolved around the acquisition and defense of such living-space as was needed to sustain a growing population.⁵²

If the principle that a vigorous nation would always find a way of adapting its territory to its population size was to be realized,⁵³ it was first necessary to invigorate the people. Only the care and maintenance of

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 116.

⁵¹Hitler, Zweites Buch, p. 53.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 53-54.

⁵³Ibid., p. 55.

this "living substance" created the conditions for its existence and made possible the effectiveness of ideas.⁵⁴ Lebensraum could only be obtained by force, and the strength for acquiring it could only come from the people. As Hitler readily admitted, ". . . no leader can bring to his task more force than is given him by his followers. . . ." ⁵⁵

The need to strengthen the people and to keep them constantly ready for the final and vital struggle was symptomatic of the dynamic nature of Nazism. Because Hitler's movement was unable to tolerate stability, it required incessant mobilization against its foreign enemies, real or imagined. The result was an atmosphere of permanent crisis which justified the invocation of energetic measures. Physical training was consequently a direct reflection of this National Socialist activism.

In the gymnasiums and on the playing fields the need for muscular proficiency was equated with preparation for the day of reckoning with those who would deny Germany her rightful place in the world. The Nazi philosophy that history does not make men, but men history, was thus continually invoked. That sport helped to strengthen men for this task was presented as a foregone conclusion.

Regimented exercise as a didactic method of social integration used to inculcate a particular set of socially

⁵⁴Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 441.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 1657.

approved attitudes fit in well with Hitler's view of the world as a battlefield. Words like force, attack, seize, victory, and conquer, with which Nazi ideology was permeated, found natural employment in the para-military physical activities of Germany's male population. The combative feelings aroused by such words represented a calculated exploitation of sport as an emotional theme.⁵⁶ In addition, they were meant to dispel any notion that sporting life was nothing more than "a heroic life in a vacuum."⁵⁷ As a result, the idea that war was "sport for real" and the end toward which all athletic activity was directed became firmly ingrained.

Because of the importance attached to physical training, the internal emigration that today is described as non-participation was greatly reduced in the Third Reich. Compulsory education and the more or less obligatory nature of Hitler Youth membership ensured youthful athletic participation. The "Strength Through Joy" organization within the German Labor Front did the same for the working masses by enlisting thousands of previous non-participants into its various physical fitness and sporting programs. The Germans, then, unlike the ancient Greeks who trained to adapt themselves to their civilization, trained because they were compelled to.

⁵⁶Werner Betz, "The National-Socialist Vocabulary," in Baumont, The Third Reich, p. 785.

⁵⁷Weber, "Pierre de Coubertin," p. 23.

Adolf Hitler, the man responsible for this pre-occupation with physical training, was himself no sportsman. He was generally quite sedentary and very mistrustful of his own body. He was a vegetarian and hypochondriac whose only exercise consisted of solitary walks. Hitler claimed that he could not allow himself to participate in any kind of sporting activity unless he could be superior to all competition.⁵⁸ Sports were accordingly quite alien to his nature.

Albert Speer, his personal architect and later minister of munitions and armaments, has observed that Hitler never mentioned having participated in any sports as a young man.⁵⁹ It is known, however, that his only mark of "excellent" (vorzüglich) during his school days was earned in gymnastics (Turnen).⁶⁰ It would seem likely that his generally uninspired performances at school had some relation to his views on education, which criticized excessive intellectual instruction while lauding the value of physical training.

Hitler's general attitude toward exercise and sports was, of course, racially and nationalistically

⁵⁸Otto Dietrich, 12 Jahre mit Hitler (München: Isar Verlag, 1955), p. 176.

⁵⁹Albert Speer, Erinnerungen (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1969), p. 110.

⁶⁰Bleuel, Das saubere Reich, p. 49.

oriented. If the first duty of the state was to preserve, care, and develop the best racial elements,

it is natural that this care must not only extend to the birth of every little national and racial comrade, but that it must educate the young offspring to become a valuable link in the chain of future reproduction. And as in general the precondition for spiritual achievement lies in the racial quality of the human material at hand, education in particular must first of all consider and promote physical health; for taken in the mass, a healthy, forceful spirit will be found only in a healthy and forceful body.⁶¹

The nationalism of Nazi sport is apparent in Hitler's view of the 1936 Olympics which took place in Berlin. Everyone except Hitler had applauded the international spirit of the Games. He instead disparaged the "trembling old men" of the Olympic Committee whom he had expected to be robust, well-maintained former athletes. A few months later he stated that Germany would no longer participate in the international olympic program. His plans called for the establishment of racially exclusive national olympic games (Nationalsozialistischen Kampfspiele) based on the model of the ancient games, in which only Greeks were allowed to participate. Germany would host the competition which would be the biggest athletic event in history. The Storm Trooper Stadium in Nuremberg, which was then under construction and where everything would take place, was intended to be the largest stadium in the world.⁶²

⁶¹Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 407.

⁶²Dietrich, 12 Jahre mit Hitler, p. 175.

At the Olympic Games Hitler displayed a pretentious enthusiasm over the victors, but in reality he was only concerned about German triumphs and the prestige they brought. When the German team lost a soccer game he had been persuaded to attend upon assurance of victory, he severely rebuked the advisors responsible for this disgrace. In Hitler's mind only victory counted. His narrow, nationalistic outlook was simply impervious to the concepts of "fair play" or the "good loser."⁶³

Except for the olympics, great athletic feats in themselves meant little to the Nazi Führer. He only cared about sports insofar as they helped produce national physical fitness. The man who denied his closest associates the right to earn sports badges--allegedly for fear of accidents,⁶⁴ and who vigorously condemned hunting, stating he could never harm so beautiful an animal as a deer,⁶⁵ thought nothing of sending two or three million young Germans to their deaths if the situation called for it.⁶⁶

For it was war and the need to withstand its rigors that caused Hitler to place such importance on physical training. He never wavered in his belief that it was not weapons that determined the outcome of battles, but the men

⁶³Ibid., pp. 176-177.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 176.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 220.

⁶⁶Rauschning, Gespräche mit Hitler, p. 42.

behind them.⁶⁷ Germany would emerge victorious from future struggles only if the nation was fully prepared. For this reason the people had to be physically toughened:

For this people must remain sound; with its soundness stands or falls our own existence. It is for the generation now growing up that we live; they are our care and them we will guard and protect in the face of everyone. . . . This Reich stands and it will build itself up in the future upon its youth. And this new Reich will give its Youth to no one, but will itself take that youth and will give it its own education and training.⁶⁸

Hitler was determined to avoid a generation of "mother's boys."⁶⁹ He thus adhered to the maxim that "'Only the strength which can withstand the storm is really strong.' What can be broken is no good!"⁷⁰

Hitler was greatly influenced by the classical Greeks whose culture, he believed, had reached the peak of perfection in every field.⁷¹ He was especially impressed with the Greek ideal of physical beauty and by their vigorous pursuit of sporting activities.⁷² Speer mentions that one day Hitler, upon seeing a photograph of a beautiful woman swimmer, was moved to say:

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 11.

⁶⁸Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler., pp. 390-391.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 547.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 183.

⁷¹Speer, Erinnerungen, p. 110.

⁷²Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 408.

What splendid bodies can be seen today. It is only in our century that the young have again drawn near to Hellenistic ideals through sports. How the body was ignored in earlier centuries. In this respect our age differs from all previous cultural epochs since antiquity.⁷³

By the Greeks Hitler meant the Dorians. His insistence that the Greeks were Germanic stemmed from his belief that the Dorian tribe which migrated into Greece from the north was Germanic in origin. Its culture, therefore, had never belonged to the Mediterranean world.⁷⁴

It is obvious that Hitler, while fully aware of the Greek insistence on a "sound mind in a sound body," or, as he put it in Mein Kampf "the wonderful combination of the most magnificent physical beauty with brilliant mind and noblest soul,"⁷⁵ stressed the physical over the mental by a large margin. His emphasis on the necessity and decisiveness of force was the reason for this. He nevertheless felt compelled to justify this blatant prejudice by stating that a healthy mind would generally be found only in a healthy body.⁷⁶

Roman history also provided the Führer with a model on which to pattern his Reich. He admired the early Roman tradition of war and conquest with its attendant emphasis

⁷³Speer, Erinnerungen, p. 110.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 408.

⁷⁶Ibid. See also Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 539.

on the soldierly virtues of strength, hardness, endurance, and skill in the use of military weapons. The ancient state's success in forging an empire through aggressive militarism was for Hitler a signal lesson in the application of power. The later blooming of Latin culture under Augustus confirmed his view that all human achievement sprang from such a struggle for national existence.⁷⁷

It is therefore not surprising that he should state that "Roman history correctly conceived in extremely broad outlines is and remains the best mentor, not only for today, but probably for all time."⁷⁸

In addition to the ancient world there is evidence that Hitler quite possibly drew some of his ideas on physical education from the father of German gymnastics (Turnvater) Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. Like the patriotic educational programs of his predecessor, Hitler stressed the militantly physical over the passively intellectual. As early as 1921 the fledgling National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei or NSDAP) issued an appeal "to our German Youth" which led in 1922 to the formation of a Youth League (Jugendbund) sponsored by the party for fourteen to eighteen year olds. The training of this new organization stressed healthy physical activity which was carried out by the newly formed (1921) Gymnastics and Sports Division (Turn-und Sportabteilung) of the party.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 612.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 423.

This was the official name of Hitler's "Order Troops" (Ordnertruppen) who soon afterwards were designated the Storm Division (Sturmabteilung or SA).

Not only was this Youth League the first attempt to capture the younger generation by the Nazis, but both the appeal itself and the title given to the Order Troops were probably influenced by the nationalist activity of "Vater" Jahn in the Napoleonic period.⁷⁹ Also, in a speech at a gymnastic display at Stuttgart in 1933, Hitler, in the course of blaming modern liberalism for Germany's lack of physical fitness declared:

The over-valuation of knowledge led not merely to a disregard of the bodily form and of bodily strength, but in the end to a lack of respect for bodily work. . . . Life, however, is not mastered by weak folk, but by strong men. If to-day we recognize once again an ideal of beauty which opens our eyes to an understanding of the picture presented by the ancient world, that is only because a great German (Ludwig Jahn) showed to us through gymnastics the way to restore the balance between mind and body. . . .⁸⁰

If Jahn's muscular, anti-intellectual nationalism was not one of Hitler's sources on physical education, then the German dictator restated various patriotic themes which the Turnvater had been the first to forcefully proclaim. Jahn's educational ideas, especially his advocacy of a strong nationalist education,⁸¹ and his promotion of bodily

⁷⁹Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 534.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 539.

⁸¹Carl Euler (ed.), Friedrich Ludwig Jahns Werke 2 Vols. (Hof: Rudolf Lion Verlag, 1884-1887), I, p. 256.

prowess influenced generations of German educators and thus became part of the common property of everyone who attended school.⁸² For this reason, the emphasis on physical fitness in National Socialist educational and social policy at least partially reflects his legacy.

The importance of physical fitness in war was also emphasized by Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), Germany's foremost military strategist. Given Hitler's extreme militarism it was perhaps inevitable that he became an admirer of Clausewitz. He frequently referred to him in his speeches and writings,⁸³ and was known to possess a copy of his most important work, On War (Vom Kriege).⁸⁴ The general was highly regarded in the Nazi pantheon because he was seen, incorrectly, as an early German nationalist and as the greatest of all writers on war.

Clausewitz recommended a high level of physical strength and endurance as necessary virtues of every successful army.⁸⁵ He even went so far as to state that "among the many factors in war that cannot be measured, physical effort

⁸² Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939), p. 19. See editor's footnote on Jahn's educational influence.

⁸³ Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 151.

⁸⁴ Werner Maser, Adolf Hitler: Legende, Mythos, Wirklichkeit (München: Bechtle Verlag, 1971), pp. 198-199.

⁸⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, Vom Kriege (Bonn: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlag, 1973), pp. 262, 363.

is the most important."⁸⁶ His clear implication is that an army is only as strong as its weakest link, and that it is therefore necessary to raise its general level of physical preparedness as much as possible. This can be done by exercises (übungen) carried out in the open air.⁸⁷ The physical power of an army "like the muscles of an athlete," can also be steeled by training in privation and effort.⁸⁸

Clausewitzian phrases on the preeminence of moral forces in war, on the need for will-power, resolution, and self-confidence, are also scattered throughout his works and were adopted by later German military theorists. Any reading of Hitler will confirm that he too stressed the need for developing these admirable traits. He, however, unlike Clausewitz, felt these qualities should be ingrained into every soldier, and not just commanders. Of the methods employed for accomplishing this, mass physical training was one of the most important.

Because of Clausewitz' enduring popularity, and because of Hitler's favorable references to him, it is difficult not to feel that he must be counted among the

⁸⁶Ibid., pp. 256-257.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 562. By exercises Clausewitz meant not only traditional close-order drill (square bashing as the British called it), marching, running, and calisthenics, but also battle exercises (war games). Prussia after 1815 was the first state to employ mass military exercises for the purposes of physical conditioning and familiarization with equipment and tactics.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 362.

Führer's mentors in the field of physical fitness. As with Jahn the exact credit due him is difficult to determine. That he exerted some influence is beyond question however.

Hitler's view on the value of physical fitness gathered from his education and reading were given a practical foundation during the Weimar Republic. It was in the Weimar era that the ideological and political uses of exercise and sports were first fully appreciated and effectively applied by all elements of society. Every social stratum and political party, from the communist to the conservative, devoted time and effort to the athletic and sport sections of its organization. Both proletarian and monarchist leaders recognized that the playing field was an effective lure for recruiting and training their young members.

The communists particularly resorted to mass sports to develop a collective spirit. Because of the competition for youth even the various religious denominations made games and sports a large part of their programs. Like the non-sectarian organizations, they gave a warlike touch to many of their activities. Team games especially were organized along military lines and included "commands" and mock battles with phony "dead" and clearly defined winners.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Dr. Ph. Killinger und anderen, Ruf und Rüstung: Handbuch für Leiter von Bibelkreisen (B.K.) unter Schülern Höherer Lehranstalten sowie für Seelsorger, Lehrer und Erzieher (Barmen: Emil Müller Verlag, 1925), pp. 177-178.

It was understood by everyone that the path to future growth depended upon control of youth's free time. Athletic activities were therefore used by partisan groups both as a means of initial attraction and as a vehicle for imbuing the young with their particular beliefs.

Physical training was also an important concern of the many rightist patriotic federations that sprang up all over Germany after 1919. The German army (Reichswehr), restricted to 100,000 men by the Versailles Treaty, favored these organizations because they cultivated a martial spirit and looked to them for assistance in overcoming this limitation. When heavy fighting broke out in the spring of 1921 between Germany and Poland in a dispute over the plebiscite area of Upper Silesia, it was irregular German troops drawn in part from these patriotic leagues who entered the war zone.

Not only were these soldiers supplied by the army, but the Reichswehr also established a permanent frontier guard which was stationed along the German-Polish border. In addition to the active members of this guard, lists were kept of potential reserves who would be available in an emergency. These men were almost exclusively members of the conservative patriotic organizations.⁹⁰

⁹⁰Hajo Holborn, A History of Modern Germany: 1840-1945 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 588.

The strongest of these associations was the Steel Helmet (Stahlhelm) which was founded in 1918. It was an organization of nationally minded war veterans which sought to preserve the old soldierly values and to maintain the comradeship of the trenches. It was opposed to the terms of the peace settlement and advocated the replacement of the democratic republic by a strong authoritarian government. Politically it was primarily identified with the German Nationalist party.

The Stahlhelm maintained ties with some of its well known competitors on the right. These included; the League for Patriotic Soldiers (Verband Nationalgesinnter Soldaten), the Order of the German Youth (Jungdeutschen Orden), the Kyffhauser League (Kyffhäuser Bund), the National League of German Officers (Nationalverband Deutscher Offiziere), and the United Patriotic Leagues of Germany (Vereinigten Vaterländischen Verbänden Deutschlands). One of these connecting links were athletic meetings where everyone gathered together for competition and fun, and to discuss their diverse opinions and loyalties. All were united by a dislike for the Weimar Republic however.⁹¹

Common to all these organizations were activities meant to keep their members fit for military service. These included heavy emphasis on para-military physical training

⁹¹Volker R. Berghahn, Der Stahlhelm: Bund der Frontsoldaten 1918-1935 (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1966), p. 32.

(Wehrsport). Such training consisted for the most part of mastering military movements which included marching in close ranks as well as in open order. Various group formations in approaching the enemy were also practiced. Grenade-throwing, rifle-shooting, and numerous types of scouting games (Geländesport) added to the military flavor of these "sporting" activities. Some gymnastics and calisthenics (freiübungen) rounded out the program.

The Stahlhelm, especially in the last years of the Republic, when the political situation worsened and civil war seemed a distinct possibility, devoted great effort to developing its physical fitness programs. The Reichswehr, in order to exercise some sort of control over the league and to help train reserves for military service, granted sporadic financial support to the para-military physical training camps (Wehrsportlagern) run by the Stahlhelm.⁹² This support grew from 1931 on when the appearance of huge private armies increased the possibility of civil disorder.

In 1924 the parties of the Weimar coalition, i.e., the Social Democratic party, the Center, and the Democratic party, established their own para-military organisation, the "Reichsbanner Black, Red, and Gold." It was formed as a counterpoise to the patriotic federations on the right and featured "Defense Formations" (Schutzformationen) which consisted of militant elite troops dedicated to protecting

⁹²Ibid., p. 193.

the new democratic way of life. The Reichsbanner units and especially the "Defense Formations," like their conservative opponents, also received a more or less thorough training in "military sports."⁹³

Hitler's response to this utilization of physical training and sport for ideological, political, and military purposes in the Weimar Republic was to employ the same methods in building up the Hitler Youth, the SA, and the SS. The importance of bodily exercise was clearly stated in Mein Kampf and, like most of the ideas expressed in this work, found subsequent application in the Third Reich. There is little doubt that Hitler's ideological devotion to exercise, and the manner in which he later made it a national concern, was influenced by the partisan use of sport in the Republic. Theory had now been supplemented by practical experience.

The sporting practices of other countries were also instrumental in shaping Hitler's views on the utility of physical activity. England, Italy, and Russia seem to have served as models for some of the ideas and innovations that later became official policy in the Nazi state. England's influence on Hitler was based on its public school system with its traditional emphasis on games and sports. The Führer equated the public schools with England's successful

⁹³ Erich Matthias, "The Downfall of the Old Social Democratic Party in 1933," In Hajo Holborn (ed.) Republic to Reich: The Making of the Nazi Revolution (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 58.

governance of her empire and was determined to establish his own system of elite education.

England was also a logical focus for Hitler because he admired her political, economic, and colonizing success,⁹⁴ and because he believed that the English formed part of the German race. "The rise of the British world empire was therefore rooted in the germanic-german substance of the people."⁹⁵ Hitler, who once stated that "brutality is respected" (grausamkeit imponiert),⁹⁶ was himself impressed by what he perceived to be England's brutal acquisition and ruthless defense of this empire.⁹⁷

He was equally impressed by her ability to govern it. During Germany's seemingly effortless advance into Russia in 1941 he stated that the Russian space was to be Germany's India, and "like the English, we shall rule this empire with a handful of men."⁹⁸ This meant:

It should be possible for us to control this region to the East with two hundred and fifty thousand men plus a cadre of good administrators. Let's learn from the English, who with two hundred and fifty thousand men in all, including fifty thousand soldiers,

⁹⁴Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 144.

⁹⁵Max Domarus (ed.), Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen 1932-1945 (München: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1965), p. 635.

⁹⁶Rauschning, Gespräche mit Hitler, p. 81.

⁹⁷Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 144-145.

⁹⁸Trevor-Roper, Hitler's Secret Conversations, p. 28.

govern four hundred million Indians. This space in Russia must always be dominated by Germans.⁹⁹

Hitler's conviction as early as July, 1941, that the war with Russia would soon be won¹⁰⁰ encouraged visions of Germany ruling its recently won Lebensraum "on what was taken to be the British model of governing India."¹⁰¹

The administrators needed for this task would be provided by the National Political Education Institutes (Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalten or NAPOLAS) which consciously combined the traditions of the Prussian cadet schools with the educational system of the English public schools. The goal of these institutions was to produce a strata capable of providing leadership in all spheres of German life, an elite "who were to far surpass the elite at the English colleges."¹⁰² The National Socialist educators who were responsible for implementing the broad outlines of Hitler's educational ideas, especially his insistence on the inculcation of physical toughness at the

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁰⁰Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, pp. 641-642. An additional view of Hitler's confidence in a quick victory over Russia is provided in William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), p. 853.

¹⁰¹H. W. Koch, The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-45 (London: MacDonald and Jane's, 1975), p. 191.

¹⁰²Picker, Tischgespräche, p. 275.

Napolas,¹⁰³ did so by imitating the English public school practice of placing competitive sports at the center of community education.¹⁰⁴

Both in England and Germany the development of character was identified with athletic ideals of manliness. In both countries the institutional wars on the playing fields were meant to instil the virtues of teamwork, courage, endurance, and close identification with the community. But in England the games and sports of the public schools also served to foster self-restraint and a sense of proportion, as well as the gentlemanly concepts of "fair play" and the "good loser." In the Nazi elite schools however, the sporting idea represented fanaticism and excessive nationalism which opposed the concepts of fairness and magnanimity with those of brute force and vengefulness.

England's more humanitarian and well-balanced approach produced colonial officers whose taste for hard work was leavened by moderation and a light touch which invariably employed only a faint suggestion of force.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Horst Überhorst (ed.), Elite für die Diktatur: Die Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalten 1933-1945: Ein Dokumentarbericht (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1969), pp. 45-46, 54. The central place of games in the English public school community and the relationship between competitive sport and the promotion of nationalism is explored by Rupert Wilkinson in Gentlemanly Power: British Leadership and the Public School Tradition (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 101, 39.

¹⁰⁵Wilkinson, Gentlemanly Power, p. 103.

This sense of restraint enabled her imperial administrators to govern without the cruelty of the crusader, a fact which greatly contributed to a generally unoppressive colonial rule.

By comparison, the brief reign of Nazi occupied Europe was marked by extreme cruelty and the use of overwhelming force to gain desired ends. The harshness of Nazi rule cannot even be justified by the wartime conditions under which it occurred, because Hitler made it plain that the future Greater German Reich (Grossdeutschen Reich) would eliminate the weaker peoples in favor of those judged to be stronger.¹⁰⁶ The New Order, in short, would be based on the principles of strength and force (Stärke und Kraft).

Italy also influenced the development and regulation of physical exercise in the Third Reich. Hitler's admitted admiration for the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and his fascist state made Italy's system of government control of all athletic activity an attractive model to follow.¹⁰⁷ Mussolini's recognition that sport could be used to help militarize the country and especially to prepare youth for military service, and his habit of using international sporting triumphs as propaganda for his political system, were ideas readily adopted by Hitler.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶Picker, Tischgespräche, p. 494.

¹⁰⁷Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 681, 637.

¹⁰⁸John R. Tunis, Democracy and Sport (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1941), pp. 17, 19.

The major sporting influence of Italian Fascism on Nazi Germany, however, was in the area of leisure time activities for the working masses. The vast leisure organization "Strength Through Joy" (Kraft durch Freude) that was established within the German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront) in 1933, apparently drew its inspiration from the similar Italian organization, the Dopolavoro which was founded in 1925. Dr. Robert Ley, the head of the Labor Front and creator of "Strength Through Joy" referred to this Italian example in a speech given in 1933.¹⁰⁹

Noting the Dopolavoro's program of recreational activities for workers--a program which heavily emphasized physical education--Ley commented on the lessons he had learned from this organization. In his opinion the Italians had erred by forming separate Dopolavoros based on profession, class, and region, and by excluding employers from them.¹¹⁰ Germany, he declared, would not follow this precedent, but would "create a leisure organization in which all men are at home," and which above all would include the employer. Only in this manner could a true people's community be formed.¹¹¹ Ley was also struck by the Dopolavoro's small membership and by its multifarious

¹⁰⁹Robert Ley, Durchbruch der Sozialen Ehre, pp. 29-32.

¹¹⁰Ibid., pp. 29-30. ¹¹¹Ibid., p. 32.

activities which he felt reduced its general effectiveness.¹¹²

Profiting by these "mistakes" he made "Strength Through Joy" one large organization which embraced all workers and employers. Through incessant promotional activity millions of Germans were able to take advantage of the athletic, travel, and cultural opportunities which formed the heart of its program. The example of the Dopolavoro was thus used by Ley to construct one of the major organizations of institutionalized social control in the Third Reich.

The contribution of Soviet Russia to Nazi thinking on sport appears to be the concept of mass athletic participation for purposes of pre-military training and indoctrination. Far more than Fascist Italy, the principle of mass-ness (Massovost) was held to be of primary importance if sport was to adequately serve the state.

From the very beginning the Soviet leaders thought of sport and physical exercise almost exclusively as a means of pre-military training. A Department of Pre-military Training (Vseobshchee Voennoe Obuchenie) was set up in 1918 and whatever organized sport was practiced occurred under its auspices. In 1919 this department instituted a pre-military training program which included some physical exercises intended for purely military purposes.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 30.

This program was expanded in 1919 by the First All-Russian Congress of Physical Culture, Sport, and Pre-Military Training. It "included those sports which would aid the military effort: fencing, swimming, skiing, marksmanship, gymnastics, and some team sports."¹¹³

In 1923 the Twelfth Party Congress urged that all sporting activity be erected on a production principle.¹¹⁴ The result was the organization of sport groups at the factory, office, farm, and school levels. It was this grassroots approach which formed the basis for mass athletic participation in the Soviet Union. The motive behind this promotion of sport was not "sport for sport's sake" but military preparedness. Athletics for the masses were important because the soldiery of the country came from the people, and a physically fit nation would ensure a fit army.

The socio-political aspects of sport were defined in 1925 by a decree of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party. It stated that physical culture (fizkultura) must be considered

. . . as one of the methods of educating the masses (in as much as physical culture develops will power and builds up endurance, teamwork, resourcefulness and other valuable qualities), and in addition, as a means of rallying the broad masses of workers and peasants around the various Party, soviet, and trade union organizations, through which the masses of

¹¹³Henry W. Morton, Soviet Sport: Mirror of Soviet Society (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 161.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 166.

workers and peasants are to be drawn into social and political activity.¹¹⁵

Sports therefore served also as a major means of educating the nation in the Communist ideology.

This definition of physical culture is strikingly similar to many of the Nazi pronouncements on physical training. Nor is this surprising. While National Socialism and Communist Russia differed in their political systems and ideological outlook, they both recognized the utilitarian possibilities of organized athletics. Sport could be exploited by both countries for nationalistic ends since it is by nature apolitical. This tabula rasa quality consequently made it an ideal tool for inculcating whatever values were deemed appropriate.

Soviet sport was from the beginning integrally tied to Raison de Partie and assigned definite tasks. It trained the citizen in military techniques, improved his health and strengthened him to raise labor productivity, implanted Marxist-Leninist ideas through collective play activity, and generally served as an effective means of controlling his free time. This subservient role of Soviet sport was duplicated by both Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

In all three totalitarian countries mass athletic activity was the rule. If sports were to contribute to consolidation and perpetuation in power of the ruling

¹¹⁵ John N. Washburn, "Sport as a Soviet Tool," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 34, No. 3 (April, 1956), p. 490.

elites, then as many as possible had to participate. In addition, individual sports were de-emphasized. These sports invited thought and made for initiative and questioning. For regimes bent on ideological conformity this was abhorrent. The emphasis consequently was on large groups and mass participation.

Because Russia was the first to tap the military and socio-political potential of sport on a widespread basis, she served as a model for Germany and Italy. We have Hitler's own testimony that he was aware of what was going on in the Soviet Union, and that he studied the lessons of Bolshevik rule.¹¹⁶ With the respect one ruthless man has for another, he even called his fellow dictator Stalin a genius.¹¹⁷ It seems reasonable to assume that he was also aware of the mass use of sport in the U.S.S.R. for purposes of state.

Given the nature of Hitler's ideology and his passion for dominance and control, it appears equally likely that even without the Soviet precedent he would have made use of physical training on a mass basis. Certainly any reading of Mein Kampf would tend to support this view.¹¹⁸ Hitler also had the model of mass athletic organization by the German gymnasts and sharpshooters to guide

¹¹⁶Rauschning, Gespräche mit Hitler, p. 15.

¹¹⁷Picker, Tischgespräche, p. 468.

¹¹⁸Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 407-433.

him. The exact influence of the extensive use of sport by the Young Communist League (Komsomol) on the Hitler Youth can consequently only be guessed at. It is likewise difficult to determine if the Russian trade unions, by their ability to bring sport to the adult masses under the production principle,¹¹⁹ were in any way responsible for the Nazi decision to introduce physical training into the factories.¹²⁰ Whatever the answers, the Soviet example was there.

The need for mass physical training was one of the earliest concerns of the Nazi party. On February 24, 1920, the German Workers' Party changed its name to National Socialist German Workers' Party and announced a new "25-point" party program. Point twenty-one of this program declared that if the nation's health was to be improved the state would have to make gymnastics and sports obligatory for everyone.¹²¹

This program, because it was drawn up without Hitler's direct help,¹²² and because he later consistently

¹¹⁹ Andrzej Wohl, "Fifty Years of Physical Culture in the U.S.S.R.: Reflections and Conclusions," International Review of Sport Sociology, Vol. 3 (1968), p. 181.

¹²⁰ Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, p. 439.

¹²¹ Werner Maser, Die Frühgeschichte der NSDAP: Hitlers Weg bis 1924 (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Verlag, 1965), p. 471.

¹²² Werner Maser, Hitlers Briefe und Notizen: Sein Weltbild in handschriftlichen Dokumenten (Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1973), pp. 313-315.

violated most of its principles, has been characterized by many historians as superfluous to his real aims. While this is essentially true, point twenty-one is a definite exception. Hitler's goal from the start was to prepare the nation for war, and universal physical training was an integral part of this preparation.

Hitler viewed physical education as an ideal means for training future soldiers because it not only made the individual strong, agile, and bold, it also toughened him and taught him to bear hardships.¹²³ Because a healthy, forceful spirit could only be found in a healthy body, it likewise assisted in the development of character by promoting will-power and determination.¹²⁴ The conviction of physical ability also fostered a sense of courage and aroused a spirit of attack.¹²⁵ Arduous physical training was consequently responsible for producing

. . . that suggestive force that lies in self-confidence. This self-confidence must be inculcated in the young national comrade from childhood on. His whole education and training must be so ordered as to give him the conviction that he is absolutely superior to others. Through his physical strength and dexterity, he must recover his faith in the invincibility of his whole people.¹²⁶

It was Hitler's goal to instil this faith through mandatory physical training for everyone.

¹²³Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 410.

¹²⁴Ibid., pp. 407-410.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 411.

¹²⁶Ibid.

Because of the government's promotion of national physical fitness it was openly acknowledged that "politics" must be in sports.¹²⁷ The "unpolitical" sport of the liberal Weimar Republic was ridiculed because it had led to a senseless striving for records and profits by an athletic elite, to individualism, to masses of spectators, and to internationally-minded competition. The aim of National Socialism was to combat these unwholesome manifestations by bringing its ideology into sport.

Record-seeking, individualism, and non-participation were accordingly discouraged and replaced by a return to physical training (Leibesübung) which served as the means to physical fitness (Volksertüchtigung) for all the people. The Nazis also restored what they termed "the original idea" of sports, the idea of competition, by linking it to their doctrine of struggle. The race was thus strengthened by general physical exercise which strove to achieve a harmonious development of all bodily parts, and by sport which sought through competition to prepare men physically and mentally for life's battles.

The Weimar era's support of international sporting competition was also denounced as part of a Jewish plot designed to weaken Germany. Such competition, it was

¹²⁷Malitz, Leibesübungen, p. 5.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 6.

maintained, promoted international pacifism since it declared that "peaceful fights must replace the warlike ones because sports unite peoples and make them able to do great peaceful deeds."¹²⁹ To agree with this was treason because it sanctioned an international order that kept Germany in bondage.

The Nazis opposed this liberal internationalism by focusing on sports from the point of view of the community. Sport would thus serve nationalism, not internationalism. Jahn's heroic example of völkisch exercises in the service of the nation was praised and contrasted to the unheroic Jewish-liberal concept of competition for money.¹³⁰ The military oriented athletics of Jahn were an appropriate model, since the aim of all exercise in the Third Reich was to prepare the nation for war.

Basically Hitler wanted war all the time. His representation of himself as an advocate of peace after he had become Führer and Reich Chancellor bore little relation to his actual views. His statements on the subject were in reality made for propaganda purposes and to buy time for rearmament. In private all this was readily admitted.¹³¹

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 45.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 42.

¹³¹Wilhelm Treue, "Rede Hitlers vor der Deutschen Presse," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 6, No. 2 (April, 1958), p. 182. For additional statements on Hitler's desire for war see Rauschning, Gespräche mit Hitler, pp. 79, 113, and Domarus, Reden und Proklamationen, p. 1294.

Given Hitler's belief that history was essentially a constant battle for living space fought according to the rules of racial determinism, it could hardly have been otherwise.

Physical training in the Third Reich was therefore from the start intimately tied to Raison d'etat. Its fusion with ideology and propaganda was designed to instill and implement the crude Nazi world-view of Darwinian racism and geopolitical pursuit of Lebensraum. It consequently served as direct preparation for war and helped to produce good National Socialists. The emphasis on physical fitness moreover supported the Führerprinzip by making athletic proficiency an important criterion of leadership selection. The ideological importance attached to physical training also imbued it with a spiritual purpose that was lacking in the Weimar Republic, but which was in accord with the long nationalistic tradition of German sporting history.

III.

COORDINATION OF SPORTING LIFE

"Coordination" (Gleichschaltung) is the word used to describe the various methods employed by the Nazi party to make every facet of life in the Third Reich conform to the policies of National Socialism. The Nazis coordinated most sporting activities through a Reich Sport Leader (Reichssportführer). This director of all German athletics was Hans von Tschammer und Osten, a retired army captain and SA group leader who was appointed Reich Sport Commissioner (Reichssportkommissar) in April, 1933, and Reich Sport Leader three months later.

Tschammer und Osten's title of Reichssportführer carried with it the position of a Minister Director in the Ministry of the Interior, which exercised jurisdiction over his sports office.¹ In addition to his bureaucratic duties he was made President of the German Olympic Committee and assigned the task of producing a victorious olympic team in 1936. In his administrative capacity and as "ideological cheer leader" Tschammer und Osten had the job of forcing

⁹⁰Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 1003.

the small universe of German athletics to purify itself of all Jewish membership and influence, and to toe the line ideologically.²

Other duties assigned the Reichssportführer included control of the Playground Advisory Board (Spielplatzberatungsstelle), the granting of the national sports badge, and authority over all professional sports. His official competence was reduced, however, by a decree of the Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick (1872-1946) in 1937. Those areas expressly excluded from the jurisdiction of the Reich Sport Leader included: physical education in the schools, physical training conducted by the party (meaning for the most part in the various organizations comprising the Hitler Youth), and all physical training and sporting activities of the armed forces, the police, the Reich Labor Service (Reichsarbeitsdienst), the Flying Corps (Fliegerkorps), the Reich Air Defence League (Reichsluftschutzbund), the Fire Brigade (Feuerwehr), and the Technical Emergency Service (Technischen Nothilfe).³

The imposition of Gleichschaltung on German sport was the most important duty of the Reich Sport Leader. Tschammer und Osten decided to simplify and unify non-school sport agencies by selecting sixteen unions to carry out the work. Every amateur club was forced to join one of the

²Mandell, Nazi Olympics, pp. 62, 238.

³Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 1001.

following unions: German Turners, Football, light athletics (track and field), heavy athletics, Swimming, Winter Sports, Riflery, Water Sports, Wandering, Cycling, Motor Sports, Tennis, Bowling, Sports Physicians, Teachers, and Youth clubs.

To complete this organization of individual sports, the Reichssportführer established a National Leader Syndicate (Reichsführerring) which was composed of the presidents of each of these unions. Similar organizations were also set up on the provincial, district, and local levels, thereby erecting a hierarchical chain of command in accordance with the führer principle. The head of this syndicate was the National Sport Leader.⁴

The need for one central organization directing the sporting activities of the country in their entirety was met with the establishment by the Reichssportführer of the National Federation for Physical Training (Deutscher Reichsbund für Leibesübungen) in 1936. The first practical step toward the formation of this federation was the dissolution of the Marxist and Socialist associations for physical exercise. The disbandment of the Socialist Workers Sport Movement, which comprised 17,000 clubs and over a million members,⁵ was mitigated somewhat by allowing its members

⁴Ibid., pp. 999, 1003.

⁵Carl Diem, "Development and Aims of Physical Education in Germany," The Journal of Health and Physical Education, Vol. 19, No. 6 (June, 1948), 391-392.

to join other gymnastic and sport clubs. All told, approximately 165 unions were dissolved by various forms of pressure and voluntary effacement, and their memberships incorporated into the newly created central organization.

The National Federation for Physical Training was a union of all German clubs and associations which indulged in or sponsored athletics. It was concerned only with amateur sport and specifically excluded anything of a professional nature. Its purpose, as expressed by its official charter, was "the physical and character development of the Germans (of German blood) . . . and the fostering of a national consciousness in the spirit of the national-socialistic state."⁶ Its duties were to develop and extend athletics as much as possible and to provide "physical training and instruction in the newly conceived philosophy of living for all members of the affiliated organizations."⁷

The desire for ideological conformity provided the necessary pretext for the absorption of the flourishing (25,000 clubs and six and a half million members) German National Commission for Physical Education.⁸ As the Reichsportführer explained:

⁶L. H. Weir, Europe at Play: A Study of Recreation and Leisure Time Activities (A. S. Barnes & Co., 1937), p. 541.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Diem, "Development and Aims of Physical Education in Germany," pp. 391-392.

What we desired was a peak organisation rigid enough to ensure uniform direction and yet elastic enough to adapt itself to progressive development in the domain of national sports. This was an ideal which the (Commission) failed to realise. Gymnastics, athletics and so on, were not merely treated as special types of sporting exercise, but the associations cultivating them were at the same time endeavouring to promote their own ethical standards and their own educational aims. . . . Moreover, the unfortunate division of our people along denominational lines proved a serious handicap to the progress of sports.⁹

The centralized organization of all German sports was therefore meant not only to assure party control over all athletic activity and to raise the standard of physical fitness of the whole nation, but also to strengthen the bonds of union through adherence to a common Weltanschauung.

Although the National Federation for Physical Training absorbed the athletic associations, it left intact without modification the individual character of the approximately 49,000 sporting and gymnastic clubs. Since it was not feasible to administer this many clubs centrally from Berlin, the Federation was divided into sixteen regional groups. Each of these was further divided into a certain number of sub-regional groups which maintained contact between the national office and the individual clubs. There were thus four distinct levels of organization (Reich, regional groups, sub-regional groups, clubs) carrying out

⁹Hans von Tschammer und Osten, "German Sport," in Germany Speaks, by 21 leading members of Party and State (London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1938), p. 221.

the sporting, educational, and economic decisions of the Federation.¹⁰

Further to ensure conformity of aims and methods throughout the country the Reichssportführer concluded a number of agreements between his federation and the Nazi party and its organizations. Relationships were established in particular with the Hitler Youth and Labor Service, with the object of assuring permanent cooperation. Additional forms of athletic collaboration were also worked out with the army and the educational authorities.¹¹

During the Third Reich there was a general attempt to make sport truly "German." In order to attain an organic Volksgemeinschaft the Nazis decided that every form of physical training had to be cleansed of "foreign" influences. As a result, all non-German trainers, coaches, and instructors were gradually eliminated and replaced by native Germans. There was furthermore a revision of the coach's status in the new Germany. Where formerly he only worked with sports clubs, he was now expected to help everyone by emphasizing general health and participation rather than just victory.¹²

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 223-224.

¹¹Cesare Santoro, Vier Jahre Hitler-Deutschland (Berlin: Internationaler Verlag, 1937), p. 318.

¹²Malitz, Leibesübungen, pp. 47, 51.

There was also an effort made to produce a new type of gymnastic instructor. He was trained in the Reich Academy for Physical Training (Reichsakademie für Leibesübungen) which was founded in 1937 with Tschammer und Osten as President, where he received a thorough ideological grounding along with his physical education. Once graduated he was to be the representative of the great aims of the State within the athletic sphere allotted to him. From the elementary schools to the universities he would thus act as the guarantor of the manly strength needed to carry out those aims.¹³ In reality, the Academy failed to live up to expectations. Troubled by planning problems and excessive rigidity, it was eventually forced to reduce its program by half.¹⁴ With the outbreak of war its development was further hindered.

The primary means of ridding German sport of "foreign" influences, however, was the systematic removal of all Jews from the athletic life of the nation. Hitler's major innovative contribution was to use sport "as another method of breaking down opposition by ostracizing certain classes of citizens so that they could take no part in organized athletics whatsoever."¹⁵ The most prominent victims of this policy were Germany's Jewish sportsmen.

¹³Tschammer und Osten, "German Sport," p. 225.

¹⁴Diem, Weltgeschichte, pp. 1012-1014.

¹⁵Tunis, Democracy and Sport, p. 19.

Anti-Jewish legislation appeared soon after Hitler became Reich Chancellor and was an integral part of the Gleichschaltung. As early as April, 1933, a national boycott of Jewish business was proclaimed. Shortly afterward, "non-Aryans" began to be purged from all responsible positions in public life, including the civil service, the universities, and such professions as law and medicine. Germans were forbidden to be seen with Jews and a campaign was launched to expropriate non-Aryan property.

The legislative enactments against Germany's Jewish population culminated in the racial laws--the so-called Nuremberg Laws of September 15, 1935--which formally legalized biological-racist anti-Semitism. These laws, in addition to prohibiting intermarriage, also deprived the Jews of German citizenship and civil rights, and confined them to the status of "subjects."

Because the Nazi racial policy permeated all aspects of German life, sport too, was affected. The goal of establishing a national community based on racially exclusive Aryan principles meant that all sporting activity had to be "völkisch deutsch." The practical result of this was that Jews were to have "absolutely no place in German Sport."¹⁶

The Aryanization of athletics began in earnest in April, 1933, when the German boxing federation declared

¹⁶Malitz, Leibesübungen, p. 45.

that from then on Jewish fighters and referees were no longer welcome. In June, 1933, Bernhard Rust, the Minister of Education, announced that Jews could no longer be members of youth, welfare, and gymnastic organizations nor use the facilities of any club. All swimming areas were eventually denied to non-Aryans and numerous Jewish sporting associations were dissolved. Jewish teams were also prohibited from competing with Aryan teams and forbidden to engage in international competition. By 1935 all playing fields were off-limits to Jews.

Before the onset of anti-Jewish legislation there had been approximately 40,000 Jewish members of some 250 sporting clubs in Germany. This number does not account for those Jews or Mischlinge (persons of mixed parentage) who were members of Gentile clubs. Within two years all of these sportsmen had been excluded from every form of athletic activity.¹⁷

The desire to increase the athletic participation of the racially sound majority led the Nazi regime to de-emphasize the importance of professional sports. This was primarily done by granting less newspaper coverage to professional events, and by constant propaganda which stressed the benefits of personal exercise. Numerous actions were also taken to cleanse professional sports of cheating and profiteering, and the athlete who made his living through

¹⁷Mandell, Nazi Olympics, p. 60.

competition was now taxed as a "sport artist." The government consequently did not emphasize records and individualism, but mass participation for the physical and spiritual benefit of the nation.

Despite the preoccupation with physical fitness and the claim that "the playing field belongs to the people,"¹⁸ sporting contests witnessed by huge crowds continued to take place during the Third Reich. A number of well-attended athletic festivals that were considered mainly to serve financial interests were indeed discontinued. But the government's desire to use sport as a means of promoting national enthusiasm on the domestic scene necessitated the retention of sport-as-spectacle to a considerable extent. Moreover, athletic events played before millions of spectators also functioned to divert people's attention from the more repressive aspects of Nazi rule, thus serving as a subtle means of social control.

Another practice which deviated from theory was the regime's support of German participation in international sporting competition. Although such competition was theoretically held to be a Jewish-inspired promotion of pacifism, it was recognized that international sporting triumphs were a prestigious form of self-advertisement. The best representatives of athletic excellence were consequently trained

¹⁸Malitz, Leibesübungen, p. 51.

to win to demonstrate to the world the physical superiority of the German-Aryan.

The extraordinary emphasis on physical fitness and victory under National Socialism did not go unrewarded. German athletes were successful all over the world in a wide variety of sports.¹⁹ Such was the mania for international competition that it continued with the neutral powers even after the outbreak of war.²⁰ German athletic triumphs were exploited to the fullest extent of their propaganda value, thereby contributing to the worldwide impression of Nazi efficiency at getting the most out of Germany's human resources. In general, the sports policy of Dr. Joseph Goebbels, the Reich Minister of Propaganda, was to display the winners and hide the losers.²¹

It was in the sport clubs that people over twenty-five years of age were to maintain their physical fitness. It was the government's assumption that the long years of physical training experienced by youth in the schools, Hitler Youth, Labor Service, various party organizations, and in the military, would make the mature products of this

¹⁹Gerd Rühle, Das Dritte Reich: Dokumentarische Darstellung des Aufbaues der Nation: Das dritte Jahr 1935 (Berlin: Hummelverlag, 1936), pp. 334, 335, 338.

²⁰Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 1010.

²¹Helmut Heiber, Joseph Goebbels (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1962), pp. 222-223.

system lifelong devotees of sport.²² To facilitate such participation the Nazis built and maintained at state expense hundreds of playing fields which were put at the disposal of the clubs. The use of schools and their playgrounds, as well as athletic equipment, were also made available.

The sport clubs, through their numerous athletic festivals, team contests, and national competitions, served as the primary suppliers of the athletes who represented Germany in international competition. Unlike the Weimar era, when the best teams or leagues sometimes represented the country, it was now the best athletes from among all the teams who were chosen by the state.

Apart from individual instances, the clubs were notable examples of those corners of society that were never reached by the process of co-ordination. For the most part they were left undisturbed and sporting activity continued fundamentally unchanged. The half-hearted attempt of the Nazis to exercise control and to introduce a stronger military emphasis into sporting life failed for a variety of reasons.

Because the individual sports were adequately handled by the amateur clubs, the regime avoided direct competition with their efforts.²³ For the most part the

²²Malitz, Leibesübungen, pp. 63-64.

²³Diem, "Development and Aims of Physical Education in Germany," p. 392.

party only wanted to exercise general supervision over the private sporting sector. The reason for this was the supreme importance placed on the physical training of youth by the state. Because the youth sections of all the sports clubs were dissolved and made to join the Hitler Youth, there was no need for strict control. The party simply decided to concentrate its resources and manpower on those areas, such as the schools, the Hitler Youth, and the army, where the greater part of this training took place.

This stress on youth was in accord with Hitler's view that the young were the key to the future. As for the older generation:

We older ones are used up. Yes, we are already old. We are rotten to the core. We have no spontaneous instincts left. We are cowardly and sentimental. We are the bearers of a humiliating past, and have in our blood the dim remembrance of serfdom and servility.²⁴

The older members of the sports clubs were therefore not very important. They were to be indoctrinated in the new Weltanschauung and to continue their exercises, but that was all. General control of their activities was apparently sufficient.

Another reason for the relative freedom of the clubs was the Reichssportführer's determination to maintain the independence of sport. In a speech given in 1935 on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the German Gymnastic Association he declared:

²⁴Rauschning, Gespräche mit Hitler, pp. 236-237.

We know very well that physical exercises can only be done, organized, and controlled in self-government, according to the principles of complete freedom. Each one must do them alone with a mental attitude and character that corresponds to the National Socialist state. . . . National Socialism . . . knows that the future of physical exercises can only be assured in an autonomy that is dependable, responsible, and free.²⁵

A number of organizations, among them the Labor Front, the SA, Himmler's SS, and the army attempted to take over the administration of the sports movement. But because these agencies were not in agreement among themselves, Tschammer und Osten was able to preserve his authority. The dispute over who should control amateur sport was finally decided when Hitler ruled in favor of sporting independence.²⁶

The Reich Sport Leader's defense of athletic autonomy was partly due to his belief in the necessity of freedom in sport.²⁷ Mainly, however, it reflected his desire to maintain his own authority in the face of powerful adversaries. Hitler's decision to preserve the independence of sport was undoubtedly partly determined by his concern for the physical education of youth, which made rigid control of the adult clubs something less than a pressing necessity. It was also based on his time-tested policy of Divide et impera. When confronted by a difficult decision involving

²⁵Rühle, Das Dritte Reich, p. 335.

²⁶Diem, Weltgeschichte, pp. 1006-1007.

²⁷Ibid., p. 1010.

the balance of power among rival subordinates or organizations, he frequently opted against an increase in authority by any of the contending forces. This retention of the status-quo--essentially a non-decision--was typical of Hitler.

The sport clubs were further assisted in maintaining an independent existence by the inadequacy of the sports leaders appointed by the government. All too often leadership positions were given solely on the basis of party membership. This resulted in amateur sport being led by men who frequently were ill-prepared for their tasks and devoid of any knowledge of athletic administration. Many of these leaders were content to cling to their positions of authority and to get by as best they could--a not uncommon phenomenon in the Third Reich.

The process of Gleichschaltung also failed to reach the clubs because of the passive resistance of the sports movement. Compliance with the demands of the regime at the local level, especially in rural areas, "depended so exclusively upon free will, that all compulsion was in vain."²⁸ People for the most part, as people everywhere in the world, were intent on leading their lives as they had always done.

They consequently disagreed in small ways, and, since this disagreement could not be publicly voiced, it found expression in the daily private actions of millions

²⁸Diem, "Development and Aims of Physical Education in Germany," pp. 392-430.

of German sportsmen which deviated from the government's desire for a total commitment to its wishes. As one historian has observed, "This is the only resistance that is feasible in terms of self-survival in a totalitarian state."²⁹

Despite the increased emphasis on physical training and sport in the Third Reich, sport club membership suffered a steady decline. The major reason for this was the dissolution of the youth sections of all the clubs which has been already noted. This not only had an immediate effect on membership, it also effectively cut off the natural influx of the rising generation. This was, of course, intentional. Youth had to be controlled by the state if it was to be correctly indoctrinated in the Nazi Weltanschauung.

Membership was also affected by party pressure. Because so much energy was forced into its service, many adults found themselves unable to maintain their club activities. Nor did the loss of forty thousand Jewish members help. Included in this number were some notable sports emigrés, among them Alex Natan, Rudi Ball, and Dr. Daniel Prenn. These men were respectively: one of the world's top sprinters, Germany's foremost hockey player, and her best tennis player.³⁰ The loss of these distinguished sportsmen

²⁹Edward N. Peterson, The Limits of Hitler's Power (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 449.

³⁰Mandell, The Nazi Olympics, p. 62.

served to further rub some of the luster off German amateur sport. The coming of war with its manpower requirements accentuated the decline of club activity until finally, even before the Reich sport field (Reichssportfeld) in Berlin fell into the hands of the Russian army, it died altogether.³¹

The general drop in club membership which characterized German sport during the Third Reich was partially offset in the early stages of coordination by the reception of workers from the dissolved Worker Gymnastic and Sport Union (Arbeiter-Turn-und-Sportbund). With the Reich Sport Leaders' approval these men were accepted as members into other gymnastic and sport clubs. They had only to produce an affirmation upon oath that they maintained no connections with any Marxist organizations. Another condition was that the number of new members should not exceed twenty per club.³² The clubs, in accepting the socialist comrades, helped to maintain socialist cohesion, so that individual groups were able to maintain themselves throughout the period of Nazi rule.

An additional mitigating factor for the clubs was that even though they had to relinquish their youth divisions to the Hitler Youth, membership was often secretly preserved among the young.³³ While perhaps not of any immediate

³¹Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 1011.

³²Ibid., p. 1002.

³³Ibid., p. 1006.

benefit, this maintenance of former ties played an important role in the restructuring of club life after the war.

The sporting highlight of the Third Reich was the 1936 Olympic Games which were held in Berlin. It was decided shortly after the Nazis seized power that the Games offered an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate to the world what the new Germany was capable of. Recognizing the "splendid chance of enhancing our prestige abroad,"³⁴ Hitler ordered that everything be done to give the impression of a peaceful and prosperous Germany to the many important foreign visitors.³⁵ In compliance with this the Reichssportführer undertook numerous propaganda trips abroad during which he repeatedly emphasized how much a revitalized Germany was looking forward to greeting her guests at the great festival of peace.³⁶

The efficient organization of the games was largely due to the extraordinary efforts of Dr. Carl Diem, Secretary-General of the German Olympic Committee and for twenty years (1913-1933) secretary of the German government's National Commission for Physical Education. Diem saw to it that everything possible was done to make the international festival the most lavish and biggest ever. He personally

³⁴Trevor-Roper, Hitler's Secret Conversations, p. 345.

³⁵Speer, Erinnerungen, p. 86.

³⁶Rühle, Das Dritte Reich, pp. 339, 340.

issued the invitations, organized the official program, and acquired the necessary land for the German Olympic Village. The village, a product of his meticulous planning, established a new standard for athletic housing because of its sumptuous facilities. Designed to impress the foreign visitors, it was located in a beautiful, idyllic, birch forest near some small lakes not far from Berlin.

Dr. Diem also inaugurated the symbolic torch run which was meant to link the modern games with their ancient predecessors. In addition, he was responsible for arranging a world youth festival. This gathering, which, it was announced, was intended to promote the Olympic ideal of peaceful athletic competition among nations, drew 11,148 participants from all over the world.³⁷ Their hosts were ardent cadres of the Hitler Youth, who, along with their guests, lived in simple tent villages for the duration of the Games.

Everything was done to intoxicate Germany's visitors. Hospitality was everywhere and numerous conveniences were provided to lead them into a state of heedless optimism regarding the new Germany. Reporters, photographers, and radio announcers were provided with the best and most spacious seats from which to view the athletic competition. For the many foreign dignitaries and other notables, there were gala receptions and parties to attend, at which the

³⁷Mandell, p. 87.

gracious amiability of their hosts were matched only by the excellence of the food and the profusion of fine beverages.

Low prices and a favorable exchange rate provided everyone with the opportunity for tourists' bargains. There were many clean and inexpensive accommodations available, and the meals in the crowded restaurants were ample, nourishing, and inexpensive. Along with the sporting events there were also numerous congresses, rallies, art and music exhibitions offered to suit every taste.

Permeating everything was the contrived festivity which was an inherent part of Nazism. Germans and foreigners alike were dazzled by the thousands of flags and banners displayed, and by the many colorful parades. The solemn ceremonies celebrating Olympic ritual were balanced by the joyful mass pageantry of gymnastic demonstrations, and by the perfectly executed movements of Germany's best dancers. Many of these and other events took place at night on the brilliantly illuminated field of Berlin's huge Olympic stadium, which lent an air of nocturnal enchantment to the proceedings.

The capital itself had been cleaned and made ready for the apparently endless festivals which were meant to introduce Nazi culture to the whole world. Unlike the winter Games held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in February, where some unfortunate heavy-handedness had been evident, almost everyone in August, 1936, received the impression

"that the new Germans were working hard, were playing hard, were at peace, and would stay that way."³⁸

To strengthen this impression, even the persecution of the Jews was temporarily halted. In an effort to placate international opinion and to prove their good intentions, the Nazis placed one Jew on the winter team and one on the summer team. Hitler behaved with exceptional decorum throughout the Games and was content to appear only as the cheerful patron of the sporting festival. Indeed, his compliant acquiescence to the requests of Olympic officials probably helped calm the political climate.

The astonishingly successful performance of the German athletes in the summer Games, which saw them win a total of eighty-nine medals (including thirty-three gold) to lead all other nations, was also a great propaganda triumph for the Nazis. Long before the competition had even begun, their propaganda machine had declared that Germany would emerge victorious in the approaching sporting struggles involving national strength and determination. The Nazi victory thereby demonstrated to the world the validity of their claim to be the cultural successors of the classical Greeks, especially since physical training was considered to be an integral part of their national renaissance.

The surprising number of medals garnered was all the more impressive because German athletic teams had never

³⁸ Ibid., p. 139.

before been outstanding at previous Olympiads. The sporting triumphs, occurring in Germany's own massive and imposing stadium³⁹ at a time of national economic and spiritual recovery, thus helped to reinforce the average citizens' growing belief that the oracular statements of Nazism's leaders were likely to come true.⁴⁰ The Olympic Games of 1936, then, by seeming to confirm the claims of racial superiority and national strength, played a decisive role in the stabilization of an evil political regime.

A likely explanation for the rich harvest of medals is that the German athletes were more emotionally and politically motivated than were the youths from other lands. This implies that the totalitarian Nazi system was a more effective mobilizer of the human resources at its disposal, and this appears to have been the case. The German competitors were steeled by an ideology that glorified struggle, race, and nation, and were made to feel that they enjoyed the mass support of their community. The result was a

³⁹The stadium itself was meant to symbolize the Nazi ideological emphasis on strength, Domarus, Reden und Proklamationen, p. 778. A valuable discussion on the role of architecture in proclaiming the National Socialist ideology is provided by Robert R. Taylor, The Word in Stone: The Role of Architecture in the National Socialist Ideology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974). For the specific importance of stadiums see especially pp. 12, 272. Albert Speer has commented on Hitler's love of architectural monumentality in his Erinnerungen, devoting the whole of chapter five "Architectural Megalomania" to this subject.

⁴⁰Mandell, The Nazi Olympics, pp. 199-200.

collective firing of the will which, in turn, elicited the physical performances necessary for victory.

Many Germans felt great satisfaction over their success in the games, because they now had more evidence to stifle domestic and foreign criticism and to demonstrate that the national upheaval of the previous three and a half years had been justified. One of the party newspapers, Der Angriff (the attack), expressed this feeling when it said:

If one may be permitted to speak of intoxication from joy, then every German may be said to have reeled from happiness. It is an odd but familiar experience and once again we have discovered after sturdy struggles what reserves are contained within us.⁴¹

The main internal result of the summer games was therefore a notable increase in national self-confidence.

The Games also benefitted the Nazis internationally. The winter Olympics held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen proved to the previously ostracized Germans that they were no longer considered outcasts by the rest of the world, and that other nations would participate in an international festival hosted by National Socialists.

The smooth organization of the summer Olympics increased the international acceptability of the Nazi state by demonstrating the administrative efficiency of the new leaders. As a consequence of the effectiveness of their festive arrangements and of their strong athletic showing, the Germans were generally now seen as friendly, stable,

⁴¹Quoted in The New York Times, August 4, 1936.

and powerful. They also now appeared more reasonable because of the lavish hospitality and political moderation which characterized the Berlin Games.⁴² This appearance of sweet reasonableness had the unfortunate effect of helping to lull the world into a false sense of security regarding Nazi intentions. In reality, the festivities which marked the 1936 Olympics were nothing more than a superbly contrived example of Nazi Realpolitik that was meant to obscure the danger of a threat to Western Civilization.

The Nazi Olympics were made available to all the German people through the medium of Leni Riefenstahl's film Olympia. Whereas previous athletic film-making had merely recorded, her brilliant cinematic record of the Games attempted to convey the beauty, artistry, and pageantry of this modern sporting festival. The film, which was financed by Hitler's government for propaganda purposes,⁴³ was intended to demonstrate how the Third Reich's concept of beauty derived from antiquity, and how the para-military physical training in Nazi Germany was analogous to the ideals of classical Greece.⁴⁴

⁴²Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 233.

⁴³Glenn B. Infield, Leni Riefenstahl: The Fallen Film Goddess (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1976), pp. 115-116, 118-119.

⁴⁴Erwin Leiser, Nazi Cinema (New York: Collier Books, 1974), pp. 27-28.

The German competitors were shown to enjoy a closer comradeship than their fellow athletes from other nations. "They are less happy and less privately individuals than they are battlers for their nation's fame. They are inspired."⁴⁵ Olympia generally treats sport as an heroic manifestation of the human will-to-win, a view that is sharpened by the narration which repetitively employs words such as "fight" and "conquest." Some of the footage also illustrates the Nazi love for festivities in which thousands participate, such as the huge gymnastic exhibitions. These scenes suggest the disciplined regimentation and the controlled actions of a massed humanity subject to a single will. It is difficult not to believe that this sense of overwhelming power is exactly the impression the Nazis wished to convey to their fellow Germans and to the world.

As an exercise in propaganda Olympia thus effectively fused Nazi ideology and sport. It was educationally suitable because it combined idea and reality into a format that was both artistically pleasing and not overly didactic. While perhaps more even-handed on the question of race than the Nazis would have wished, its total effect contributed to the myth of the Aryan race. There were enough scenes of northern, fair-skinned, slender bodies with blond hair to establish the identification of Germany with this ideal. Lending credence to the film's ideological message was the

⁴⁵Mandell, The Nazi Olympics, p. 270.

fact that the Germans had done better in the competition than had anyone else.

The athletic successes in the 1936 Olympics offered further proof to Hitler that his program of national regeneration was succeeding. His athletes' triumphs clearly pointed the way toward a future that would see German cultural accomplishments equal, and perhaps surpass those of the classical Greeks. The new Germans, racially inspired and physically fit, would rival their ancient models in aesthetic attainment and enjoyment of life.

The athletic heroes, like other superior Germans, were to set an example worthy of emulation. Following the Nazi Olympics Hitler described Germany's athletes as "the precursors of new types of Germans: hard, steeled men and graceful women."⁴⁶ Competitors in athletic contests were, however, to be regarded "not as sportsmen, but rather as political fighters who consider the sporting contests only as one particular branch of the general struggle."⁴⁷

Because her athletes were to symbolically represent German physical supremacy, the cult of physical fitness was given its own festival. Hitler, on November 27, 1936, announced the creation of National Socialist Games (Nationalsozialistischen Kampfspiele) which were to be held at the

⁴⁶Hajo Bernett, Nationalsozialistische Leibeserziehung: Eine Dokumentation ihrer Theorie und Organisation (Stuttgart: Karl Hofmann, 1966), p. 212.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 213-214.

annual Nuremberg party rallies,⁴⁸ and which, like the ancient contests of the Greeks at Olympia, were to be racially exclusive. Since National Socialism saw in the conservation of the race the purpose of the existence of the state, these new "German Olympic Games" were meant to give formal expression to the Nazi racial conception.

The Games, organized and run by the S.A., were also intended to balance the heretofore politically oriented party congresses with events of an athletic nature. This meant that while the political elite of the nation celebrated its Olympia in the vast Congress halls of the city of Nuremberg and testified to the achievements of the past year, the athletic forces of the nation would gather in a gigantic stadium and there participate in contests which would demonstrate the high level of national physical fitness. In this manner Nuremberg was to be made the Olympia of the German nation.⁴⁹

In September, 1937, the National Socialist Games were held for the first time, with Hitler celebrating the occasion by dedicating the foundation stone of the great stadium at Nuremberg. Viewed as a major contribution to Germany's national and cultural revival, the Kampfspiele consisted of military, riding, and sporting contests whose competitors were drawn from the various party organizations

⁴⁸Santoro, Vier Jahre Hitler-Deutschland, p. 320.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 320-321.

and from the armed forces, police, and Labor Service. Team work was heavily emphasized, particularly in the military exercises which featured competition in shooting, grenade throwing, obstacle races, map reading, and a militarized version of the decathlon contests.

The Games were meant to embody the aggressive, militaristic outlook of National Socialism and were consequently regarded as a true expression of German national character. In addition, they were to help in the selection of the future ruling elite and to serve in building up an ideologically homogeneous community thoroughly devoted to the conservation of the German race. The festival thus represented the idea that sport was to be taken up not for its own sake but in order better to serve the nation through improved physical fitness. Record-seeking was accordingly rejected in favor of all around development.

Hitler had stipulated that the projected stadium at Nuremberg in which the National Socialist Games were to be held, was to hold four hundred thousand spectators.⁵⁰ The classically designed edifice would accommodate four times as many spectators as the Berlin stadium and more than twice the amount of history's largest precedent, the Circus Maximus in Rome.

Albert Speer, the architect of this colossal tribute to German strength and glory, has described Hitler's

⁵⁰Speer, Erinnerungen, p. 81.

inspired plans for German and world sport. Viewing the model of the stadium in the spring of 1937, Hitler talked about the international Olympic Games. Upon being informed by Speer that the new athletic field did not meet Olympic specifications, the Führer declared:

It does not matter. In 1940 the Olympic Games will take place in Tokyo. But from then on they will take place in Germany for all time to come, in this stadium. And then we will determine the measurements of the athletic field.⁵¹

The outbreak of hostilities in 1939 cut short these grandiose visions. Because the party rallies were not held during the war, the 1938 National Socialist Games were the last ones to take place. Nor was the stadium ever completed. According to Speer's carefully worked out schedule, it was to be finished in time for the party rally of 1945.⁵²

Although war prevented the full realization of Nazi athletic planning, sporting life in the Third Reich nevertheless reflected the influence of National Socialist rule. It was administratively coordinated and subjected to hierarchical control according to the Führerprinzip. Though club life continued fundamentally unchanged, athletic activity underwent a general germanization to rid itself of foreign influences. The strong performance in the 1936 Olympics was largely attributable to an ideology that exalted struggle, race, and nation. Finally, the creation of National Socialist Games was meant to glorify the

⁵¹Ibid., p. 84.

⁵²Ibid.

importance of physical training in national life and to publicize the athlete as the visible symbol of German racial superiority.

IV.

NAZI PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS

Because the Nazis desired to impose their ideology on German culture, their main efforts from the very beginning were directed toward the goal of "gathering in" the nation's youth through education. Since they were always a minority party, the Nazis recognized that the young had to be thoroughly indoctrinated with their Weltanschauung if they were to build up a mass following and consolidate their hold on the state.

National Socialism attempted to adapt education to totalitarian rule by emphasizing those subjects which pertained to political, racial, and national ideas. These subjects (history, German literature, geography, biology, and physical education) were then aligned with communal "race lore" and military values. This völkisch, national-political education, in the words of one leading Nazi educator, was concerned with "the entire problem of the existence of the race in all of its phases."¹

¹Ernst Krieck, Nationalpolitische Erziehung (Leipzig: Armanen Verlag, 1938), pp. 48-49.

Wilhelm Frick, Hitler's Minister of the Interior, declared in 1934 that "the principal task of the school is the education of youth in the service of nationhood and State in the National Socialist spirit."² The introduction of ideological training into the school curricula was accordingly designed to mould the younger generation at the impressionable stage of their development into good National Socialists. History, with its strong ideological element, was particularly singled out by Frick to accomplish this task.³

History was exclusively presented on a Political-military basis. Greek culture was Aryanized and Sparta glorified. German history, emphasizing the superiority and heroic nature of the German race, was portrayed as a continuous struggle by the German people for power and existence. A line of continuity from Charlemagne through Frederick the Great to Hitler was established which represented National Socialism as the culmination of all German history, thereby legitimizing the Third Reich "as the fulfillment of the medieval longing for the Thousand Year Reich."⁴

²Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, pp. 351-352.

³Ibid., p. 352.

⁴Karl Dietrich Bracher, The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure, and Effects of National Socialism (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p. 261.

German literature in the Third Reich tried to ignore the classics in favor of studying those works which stressed the German cultural heritage and the united völkisch community. Contemporary literature which illustrated the ties unifying the community in its present struggle for existence was especially used. The need to answer Alfred Rosenberg's call for "writers who knowingly inspire hearts,"⁵ was met by books glorifying war written by National Socialists or approved by them. Those works judged "educationally valuable" (erzieherisch wertvoll) by the Nazis made war appear honorable and heroic, and praised it as a sign of national vitality and unbroken manly spirit.⁶

The teaching of geography was concerned primarily with explaining and justifying Germany's need for Lebensraum. The subject was therefore presented in geopolitical terms which emphasized demographic movements, racial expansion, and the acquisition of colonial territory based on the right of the stronger.

Biology was the subject most perverted by Nazi ideology. To inculcate a "racial sense" and "racial

⁵Alfred Rosenberg, Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der Seelisch-Geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit (München: Hoheneichen Verlag, 1934), pp. 521-522. Rosenberg, as the chief theorist of National Socialism, was concerned with the ideological relevance of education.

⁶Franz Schonauer (ed.), Deutsche Literatur im Dritten Reich: Versuch einer Darstellung in polemisch-didaktischer Absicht (Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter-Verlag, 1961), pp. 61-77.

instinct" in Germany's youth, totally unverified and ridiculous theories were advanced under the guise of scientific fact. The young were taught that among the races the Nordic or Aryan was the best and that Germany, more than any other nation, had retained the highest degree of original Aryan racial elements. Thus enlightened, they were then told that if Germany was to obtain the living-space needed for her future growth, this sound racial core would have to be fully developed.

An increased emphasis on physical education was one way of accomplishing this. Physical training was considered as much a part of the school curriculum as mental training⁷ because both were needed if youth was to carry out Hitler's expansionist aims. A healthy, physically strong younger generation would not only make better soldiers, it would also enhance the future breeding of the superior racial stock.

The importance placed on physical education in the Third Reich was a direct result of Hitler's ideas on the subject. He believed the general illness of the age was an over-valuation of knowledge: it "was not only knowledge but strength that counted."⁸ Physical well-being and not erudition was more important to the country because "if the body has not health and large capacities of resistance, in

⁷Krieck, Nationalpolitische Erziehung, p. 59.

⁸Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 567.

the long run even a healthy mind cannot control the destinies of the nation."⁹ The highest ideal was consequently a human type "whose radiant spirit has for its home a glorious body."¹⁰

Hitler was firmly convinced that the over-estimation of learning had led to a disregard of physical strength, which was a major cause of national degeneration. It was therefore necessary to recapture the commendable qualities of an imagined healthy past. He held a faulty educational system partly responsible for the loss of the early teutonic virtues of strength, endurance, and fighting ability recorded by the writers of ancient Rome.¹¹ Because only force mattered in a nation's struggle for existence, it was the duty of the völkisch state to ". . . adjust its entire educational work primarily to . . . the breeding of absolutely healthy bodies. The training of mental abilities is only secondary."¹²

Physical training was therefore

⁹Ibid., p. 550.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 540.

¹¹Ibid., p. 782. The distinguished Roman historian Tacitus was one of these writers. His praise of early Germanic vigor and military prowess in his book Germania, made him a favorite source of reference for völkisch thinkers who desired to solidify their ideological base by applying his favorable descriptions of the Germans to their culture. For some of these comments see Cornelius Tacitus, Dialogus Agricola, Germania (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1946), pp. 256, 285, 315.

¹²Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 408.

not an affair of the individual, and not even a matter which primarily regards the parents and only secondly or thirdly interests the community; it is a requirement for the self-preservation of the nationality, represented and protected by the state . . . the state . . . must so organize its educational work that the young bodies are treated expediently in their earliest childhood and obtain the necessary steeling for later life.¹³

The school in the völkisch state would thus have to create

. . . infinitely more free time for physical training. It is not permissible to burden young brains with a ballast only a fraction of which they retain. . . . If today, even in the curriculum of the secondary schools, gymnastics gets barely two hours a week and participation in it is not even obligatory . . . that is a gross incongruity compared to the purely mental training. Not a day should go by in which the young man does not receive one hour's physical training in the morning and one in the afternoon, covering every type of sport and gymnastics.¹⁴

The activity most highly recommended by Hitler was boxing. He believed no other sport was as capable of promoting the spirit of attack, or demanded the ability to make quick decisions, as did this manly art. Boxing was particularly valuable because of its ability to toughen men by teaching them to learn to suffer blows.¹⁵ Speaking of the German collapse in 1918 that was the result of an "inner decay which was revealed at that time,"¹⁶ Hitler

¹³Ibid., pp. 408-409.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 409.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 410.

¹⁶Hitler, Zweites Buch, p. 106.

even stated that if Germany's intellectuals had learned boxing thoroughly

. . . a German revolution of pimps, deserters, and such-like rabble would never have been possible; for what gave this revolution success was not the bold, courageous energy of the revolutionaries, but the cowardly, wretched indecision of those who led the state. . . . The fact is that our whole intellectual leadership had received only "intellectual" education and hence could not help but be defenseless the moment not intellectual weapons but the crowbar went into action on the opposing side.¹⁷

Hitler's prescription for avoiding such weakness in the future was to put general instruction in the schools into an abbreviated form, embracing only the essentials. The time allotted for the study of foreign languages in particular could be reduced. The hours saved by shortening the curriculum would then be available for increased physical education.¹⁸ The expected benefits, apart from improved strength and endurance, included the development of character.

By "character" the Nazis meant more than just the inculcation of will-power and determination. Character in the Third Reich, rather than standing for self-reliance and independence, signified a "steeling of oneself for service and obedience in the name of the Volk and the Führer."¹⁹

¹⁷Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 410.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 420, 422.

¹⁹George L. Mosse, Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1966), p. 265.

Physical training both in and out of school thus went hand in hand with a passive mass acceptance of the Nazi Weltanschauung.

The intended result of increased physical education, then, was to produce a future generation that would be "the defiant embodiment of manly strength"²⁰ capable of emerging victorious in "the last and greatest decisions on this earth."²¹

When Hitler spoke of the duty to "educate the human material . . . to the highest manhood"²² in preparation for war, he meant, of course, education for men. Women's education in the Third Reich, however, was not meant to prepare them for battle, but for motherhood. The Nazi attitude toward their schooling was an amalgam of strong anti-intellectualism complemented by ultra-conservative ideas on the place of women in society. National Socialism believed that the Weimar Republic's emphasis on formal academic study for girls had led to a devaluing of the "natural calling" of woman, that of wife and mother.

Because Hitler's feminine ideal was represented by women who were able to "bring men into the world,"²³ the Nazis aimed to relate education more to the needs of

²⁰Hitler, Mein Kampf., p. 410.

²¹Ibid., p. 427.

²²Hitler, Zweites Buch., p. 50.

²³Hitler, Mein Kampf., p. 410.

practical living. Every future German housewife and mother consequently received instruction in domestic science and child care as part of her education. Increased attention was also given to physical education.

The stress on exercise was in accordance with Hitler's educational views. The Führer, who once termed the emancipation of women a symptom of depravity on a par with parliamentary democracy,²⁴ summed up his philosophy of feminine schooling in the following terms:

Analogous to the education of the boy, the folkish state can conduct the education of the girl from the same viewpoint. There, too, the chief emphasis must be laid on physical training, and only subsequently on the promotion of spiritual and finally intellectual values. The goal of female education must invariably be the future mother.²⁵

This totally anachronistic approach to women's education was corroborated by Goebbels, among others, when he wrote: "Woman has the task of being beautiful and bringing children into the world, and this is by no means as coarse and old-fashioned as one might think."²⁶

Hitler justified this outlook by granting to women the esteem they deserved in the area nature allotted to them. In the struggle for the race's existence "Woman has her battlefield too; with each child that she brings into

²⁴Hitler, Zweites Buch, pp. 198-200.

²⁵Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 414.

²⁶Joseph Goebbels, Michael: Ein Deutsches Schicksal in Tagebuchblättern (München: Franz Eher, 1934), p. 41.

the world for the nation she is fighting her fight on behalf of the nation."²⁷ Thus, where physical training for men was meant to strengthen and toughen them for war; for women it was meant to strengthen them for childbirth because, "Only strong women can bear strong children."²⁸ For this reason both Hitler and Rosenberg felt "the same attention should be paid to their physical training as for a man."²⁹

In order for women to retain their femininity, however, sports were opposed in favor of less competitive forms of exertion such as rhythmic exercises and gymnastics. Nazi theory maintained that hard competitive sport requiring physical fighting and willpower, made women less feminine and robbed them of spiritual benefits.³⁰ This could not be tolerated because woman must never be allowed to forget her natural role of mother and wife. To fulfill this destiny she needed a rich inner life. This was only found

in nature, on walks on foot or ski, in a rowboat or canoe. With these comes healthy, relaxed effort in the fresh air which strengthens the organs and muscles. That is the preparation for her destiny. Therefore woman and physical exercise are in harmony.³¹

²⁷Domarus, Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen, p. 531.

²⁸Malitz, Leibesübungen, p. 41.

²⁹Rosenberg, Mythus, p. 512.

³⁰Malitz, Leibesübungen, p. 40.

³¹Ibid., pp. 40-41.

Increased exercise for both boys and girls was thus meant to help prepare them for their future roles of soldiers and mothers. Physical education in the schools was consequently one of the weapons Hitler said politics must always choose if it was to be successful in its struggle to serve the life of the nation.³²

Coordination of the existing school system was rapid because national--völkisch ideas of education had long been part of German pedagogy. Teachers in the Weimar Republic, as under the Empire which preceded it, had largely continued to inculcate an ethos of Prusso-German patriotism into their students. Because the schools had generally acted as incubators of nationalism under the Republic, there was considerably less opposition to Gleichschaltung than in other sectors of German life.

Given this overall educational atmosphere, the Nazis chose not to opt for radical innovation after coming to power; apparent maintenance of the status quo both reassured conservative opinion and conserved resources. A policy of manipulation, penetration, and reorganization was adopted instead. Existing courses were manipulated by saturating their traditional content with the new Weltanschauung; administrative penetration was achieved with the appointment of school führers who alone possessed the power

³²Hitler, Zweites Buch, p. 52.

of decision;³³ finally, the systematic reorganization of Germany's educational system was completed with the establishment on May 1, 1934, of the National Ministry of Education headed by the former high school teacher Bernhard Rust. A division of physical education under the direction of Dr. Carl Krümmel was also erected within the Ministry. This division was directly responsible for all physical education in all the schools, colleges, and universities of Germany.

Coordination was marked by the dismissal of relatively few teachers, although all Jews were forced out of the profession. To aid in the nazification of the schools a number of new, ideologically correct textbooks were gradually introduced. Uniformity of education was also facilitated by the abolition of all parochial schools in 1936. According to Rust, the denominational aspect was ". . . looked upon as a matter of secondary importance that must no longer be allowed to divide all Germans in their early youth and ever afterwards into two different camps" ³⁴

The teaching profession was further controlled by the National Socialist Teachers Association (Nationalsozialistische Deutscher Lehrerbund or NSLB) which replaced all teacher organizations. Every instructor was compelled

³³Bernhard Rust, "Education in the Third Reich," in Germany Speaks, p. 106.

³⁴Ibid., p. 107.

to join this association after 1933. The primary aim of the NSLB was to make the teachers capable of disseminating the new philosophy of National Socialism to their pupils.³⁵ To achieve this, numerous courses and camps were set up which specialized in conveying to the instructors the importance of the new racial theories and the need for more physical education. By 1939 its forty-one training camps had indoctrinated some 215,000 members for their educational tasks through ideological instruction, para-military physical training, and field sports.³⁶

The compulsory one-month training courses tended towards the depersonalization of teachers because of the formality of the drill and lectures. An attitude of enforced youthfulness was cultivated at these camps to make the participants feel closer to their young charges upon returning to the classroom. Since everyone below the age of fifty was required to take physical training courses, mental efforts were well supplemented by physical ones. Upon leaving the camps, it was the duty of the now enlightened instructors to disperse their newly-acquired knowledge among their colleagues.³⁷

Physical training also achieved unprecedented importance in school curricula. Echoing Hitler's views on

³⁵Ibid., p. 101.

³⁶Bleuel, Das saubere Reich, p. 126.

³⁷Rust, "Education in the Third Reich," p. 101.

physical fitness, Reich Minister of Education Rust declared the foremost goal of German education to be the attainment of strength and health.³⁸ The previous over-estimation of the importance of knowledge, with its corresponding neglect of physical education and the training of the character and the will, would therefore be ended. In order to create an harmonious co-existence of all these elements, it was imperative,

In conformity with the teaching of history and the laws of biological and racial science, . . . to train the faculties of the body, the character and the will just as much as the intellectual ones.³⁹

To realize this aim, the weekly allocation of two physical education classes in the schools was increased to three in 1933 and--at the expense of religious instruction--to five in 1938. Only the four lowest classes of the elementary schools were excluded from the latter provision.⁴⁰ In addition, the PE classes were expanded both in extent and academic standing: field sports and boxing (which was made mandatory in secondary schools)⁴¹ were added to help vary the program, and school reports began to attach more and more weight to athletic ability. Physical education became an examination subject for acceptance at

³⁸Ibid., p. 100.

³⁹Ibid., p. 99.

⁴⁰Diem, Weltgeschichte, pp. 1014-1015.

⁴¹Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 113.

grammar-school and for attainment of the Abitur (school-leaving certificate).

Consistent failure to reach required levels of proficiency in PE constituted grounds for expulsion from school, and for being denied admission to centers of higher learning. Because of the overemphasis on physical attainment and its close identification with the development of the racial community, the schools had, in effect, become proving grounds for the party. Physical education thus had an ideological and selective function; it served to instil both "corporate spirit and corporal vigor." The importance attached to bodily training also helped physical educators advance from the periphery of the teaching profession almost to the very center. It was their evaluation on school reports that notified parents of their child's character development, and the suggestion was seriously advanced that sports masters should automatically be appointed assistant principals.⁴²

Because physical education was considered a fundamental and inseparable part of National Socialist education, it was not conceived as mere bodily training. It was instead intended to be a training on the basis of the body, or through the body, and was thus meant to embrace the young where they were most easily educable: in movement, in

⁴²Rudolf Benze, Rasse und Schule; Grundzüge einer Lebensgesetzlichen Schulreform (Braunschweig: Verlag E. Appelhans & Co., 1934). p. 17.

gymnastics, in games, and in sports. In order to form the youthful character along the desired ideological lines, physical education in the schools was designed to keep pace with the physical and spiritual development of youth, and with their capacity for accomplishment. It therefore started from the unconscious and was gradually developed to include more rigorous training, ultimately culminating in competitive sports and activities of a distinctly military nature.⁴³

In the elementary schools the physical education program consisted largely of exercises patterned after the child's natural movements, and some gymnastics. The exercises included: walking, running, throwing, jumping, lifting, stretching, swimming, skating, and folkdancing. Games such as rounders (an English game played with ball and bat somewhat resembling baseball) and field hockey were also allowed since they were the easiest to learn and excel in, and because it was desired to instruct the children at an early age in the spirit of team play (Mannschaftsgeist).⁴⁴ Apparatus exercises were later added to gymnastics to teach greater body control. In general, emphasis was placed on developmental movements to encourage strength, endurance, and agility; little attention was given to corrective exercises, however.

⁴³Malitz, Leibesübungen, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 60.

In the secondary schools physical education was more advanced and intensive. In addition to more strenuous forms of gymnastics, all kinds of track and field athletics (Leichtathletic) were practiced, as well as weight-lifting, rowing, tennis, and skiing. Special attention was also paid to the so-called defense exercises (Wehrübungen): boxing, wrestling, jiu-jitsu, small calibre shooting, and fencing. An event of special importance was the annual sports day at each school when everyone was given the opportunity to demonstrate his physical prowess. Those young candidates for athletic honors who were able to attain a standard level of proficiency were awarded the Reich sports medal.

Along with the above activities, at least one full day a month was devoted to endurance hiking. For the lower secondary students this meant a march of twelve to eighteen kilometers, while the higher classes covered a distance of twenty to thirty kilometers. During the course of these extended walks, the students were instructed in scouting games (Geländesport), a para-military type of training that included endurance marching, tracking and spying, raids on designated "enemies," and military movements in the open country.

The scouting games, which took place at other times as well, were supported by instruction in military sports (Wehrsport) which consisted of obstacle races, hand grenade throwing, wall-scaling, and various types of other martial

activities involving jumping, crawling, and creeping.⁴⁵ It was never hidden from the students that physical education was in reality pre-military training. On the contrary, everything was done to impress upon Germany's youth that "The highest profession in the world was to be a soldier for Adolf Hitler."⁴⁶ Because all lessons and exercises were permeated with ideological overtones, all instruction was directed to one idea, and one idea only: "to make the boy think, feel, and act as a true Nazi,"⁴⁷ and a true Nazi was a soldier.

In the girls' schools (National Socialism was strongly against co-education) physical education was not a form of pre-military training (Wehrertüchtigung), and thus lacked the intensity and rigorousness associated with boys' physical education. It was devoted exclusively to making every girl fit to bear children--preferably soldiers. Suppleness and general physical fitness were therefore the goals of all exercise. In both elementary and secondary schools rhythmic gymnastics, swimming, and calisthenics were stressed, as was dancing and all sorts of running and

⁴⁵Deobold B. Van Dalen and Bruce L. Bennett, A World History of Physical Education: Cultural, Philosophical, Comparative (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1971), pp. 228-229.

⁴⁶Gregor Ziemer, Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 66. Mr. Ziemer was the president of The American Colony School in Berlin from 1933-1939.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 63.

jumping activities. In addition, many afternoons and weekends were devoted to hiking, marching, and essentially non-competitive organized sport.⁴⁸

Like the schools, the universities were deeply affected by the Nazis' determination to use education as a major vehicle for imposing their ideology on German culture. Higher education was also coordinated in order to effect compliance with National Socialist principles. To assure formal control over the universities the regime appointed the rectors, who were given full power over administration. Nazis or Nazi sympathizers were installed in many other important positions as well, and all formerly autonomous academic bodies lost their authority.

Teaching and scholarship were likewise influenced by the process of Gleichschaltung. Pressure from party officials made ideological adaptation a necessity in many courses and areas of research. The desire to politicize education and to make it conform to Nazi interests also led to the establishment of new chairs for military and racial science.

Though a professorial swing to the far right took place just prior to and during the seizure of power, a total of some 1,200 dons (mostly Jews, Social Democrats, and liberals) were nevertheless suspended, dismissed, or

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 86-87, 130-131.

prematurely retired.⁴⁹ Despite voluntary self-coordination in many faculties, by 1935 over 300 university teachers had resigned their positions in protest over forced compliance with National Socialist policy.⁵⁰ Although everything was done to fill these vacancies with Nazi lecturers, a full nazification of the universities proved impossible, because wholesale dismissals would have resulted in academic posts being taken over by those lacking adequate qualifications for the work.

The powerful Nazi Lecturer's Association (NS-Dozentenbund) was established for the purpose of maintaining some form of direct control over the teaching body. Membership was obligatory and implementation of ideological guidelines was helped by the considerable powers of denunciation and patronage wielded by the association's leading officials. In a speech at Berlin University in May, 1933, Rust indicated the regime's general anti-intellectual outlook when he told a group of assembled professors:

The university is not only the place of research, but also the place of education. . . . Gentlemen, during those years when this un-German State and its un-German leadership barred the way to German youth, you, in your . . . devotion to your great work of research, overlooked the fact that youth looked to you to lead the

⁴⁹Richard Grunberger, The 12-Year Reich: A Social History of Nazi Germany 1933-1945 (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1971). p. 339.

⁵⁰Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, p. 349.

future of the German nation. Youth was marching while you, gentlemen, were not out in front. . . .⁵¹

To help the future generation of professors fulfill their task of "educating for action," all candidates for a university teaching career were required to pass a six week training course at the Lecturer's Association camp before being allowed to take up an academic post. At the camp, political indoctrination courses were interspersed with military drill, physical training, and various endurance tests. Having been imbued with the fighting spirit of Nazi ideology and physically hardened, the new lecturers were then deemed qualified to lead youth in conformity with "the will of the nation."

Good physical condition was also a requirement for admission to university in the Third Reich. Among the qualifications needed to earn the certificate of eligibility (Hochschulreife) for advanced study was skill in sport. Physical capability was proved by a student's secondary school record and by possession of athletic badges and insignia attained either in national or Hitler Youth competition.⁵²

The quality of academic work in the universities suffered under the Nazis because of the many duties demanded

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²I. L. Kandel, The Making of Nazis (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1935), pp. 104-105.

of students. In addition to extra-curricular activities involving all kinds of work for the party, there was also an increased physical education requirement to fulfill. Using the heroism and physical toughness of Spartan youth as an example, the regime made all students take PE classes for three semesters (compared to the Republic's 1-2 semester requirement). This meant two exercise periods of one and a half hours each every week.⁵³

During the first semester gymnastics, boxing, and cross-country running were emphasized; the second concentrated on light athletics (track and field) and small-calibre shooting; and the third featured swimming and team games such as rugby. A student required 150 points to attain the university's sports-achievement badge; failure to reach this figure debarred him from further studies unless a medical certificate could be produced.⁵⁴

In addition to the required work, voluntary participation in a variety of other athletic activities was encouraged. Schools also kept careful records of a student's physical progress. This included the recording of medical histories, systematic physical measurements, and achievements in specific sports. To stimulate participation and accomplishment, awards were frequently given to the most successful competitors.

⁵³Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 1014.

⁵⁴Sunday Times (London), 27 March 1938.

Like the men, women also were obliged to enroll in physical education classes during their first three terms of university study. In keeping with their assigned role of future mothers and with the government's desire to maintain feminine decorum, their activities were primarily restricted to gymnastics, dancing, and hiking.

Because physical training was such an important part of education in the Third Reich, those students desiring to become teachers were required to take a daily PE lesson throughout the entire course of their studies. Students working toward a degree in physical education had to study an additional year at one of the Physical Training Institutes which were attached to every university in Germany. A number of these institutions, in conjunction with the Nazi desire for "youth to lead youth," also offered heavily indoctrinated short courses designed to train youth leaders in physical education.

Despite the National Socialist emphasis on soldierly character building, the time-honored student institution of dueling was nevertheless officially prohibited. The ban on the Bestimmungsmensuren (pre-arranged duels in which combatants represented their individual fraternities) occurred partly because the corporate cohesiveness of the student associations was viewed by the Nazis as an obstacle to coordination and as an insult to the spirit of the united racial community. In a similar vein, the ban was also prompted by a desire to eliminate the aristocratic

pretensions commonly associated with dueling. The prohibition was directly precipitated, however, by a widely publicized fatal affaire d' honneur. The result was an official declaration to the effect that the Reich could ill afford the unnecessary exposure of potential leaders to the dangers of dueling; in the new Germany, moreover, honor was now an affair of the nation and not of the individual.⁵⁵

Duels nevertheless continued to take place both within and without the universities.⁵⁶ Although they were far less prevalent than before, this disregard of the government's wishes was, like the independent existence of the sports clubs, a manifestation of society's desire to preserve certain areas of private and group activity against the encroachment of the state.

The demands of the regime were not always complied with in the classrooms and lecture halls either. The uniformity of the Third Reich's educational policy was not only disrupted by conflicts between the various authorities concerned with education,⁵⁷ it was also undermined by teachers and parents as well. The influential Nazi professor Ernst Krieck declared as late as 1938 that most instructors and scholars were incapable of leading youth because they failed to understand the principles of

⁵⁵ Grunberger, The 12-Year Reich, p. 352.

⁵⁶ Ziemer, Education for Death, pp. 188-189.

⁵⁷ Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, p. 353.

National Socialism. It was therefore necessary for youth itself to forge ahead and provide the new teachers and leaders capable of guiding the next generation.⁵⁸

While waiting for this future "political teacher" to be produced, however, it was necessary to leave education in the hands of those who had carried out the job for years. The older teachers, whose predominantly conservative outlook was formed prior to 1933, demonstrated an ingrained reluctance to assimilate many of the Nazi ideological tenets. They consequently contented themselves whenever possible with mere lip service to the new theories before moving on to the staple fare on which they themselves had been taught. The teachers were supported in this outlook by many parents, who, being of the same generation, were strongly in favor of the more traditional forms of education.⁵⁹

This discrepancy between theory and practice in the teaching profession applied to the universities as well. Krieck's acknowledgment of the difficulty of university reform confirmed the existence of more ideological independence among the academic fraternity than the Nazis desired.⁶⁰ It was therefore as difficult to create a new

⁵⁸Krieck, Nationalpolitische Erziehung, pp. 111-115, 174-175.

⁵⁹Kneller, The Educational Philosophy of National Socialism, p. 7.

⁶⁰Krieck, Nationalpolitische Erziehung, p. 168.

type of instructor in the higher sectors of education as in the lower.

Physical education also did not receive quite the attention Hitler felt it merited. Regardless of the emphasis put on it by Hitler and by some of the more rabid Nazi educators (Ernst Krieck and Rudolf Benze among others), it is not to be concluded that this subject was in everyday practice the most important. Although far greater attention was paid to the body in the schools and universities of the Third Reich than under the Republic, intellectual education retained its dominant position in the curriculum.

Minister of Education Rust, despite his platitudes on the necessity for equality between physical and mental training, admitted that in reality "The schools have to devote the major part of their time to intellectual education."⁶¹ Even such an ardent adherent of militant National Socialism as Wilhelm Frick, was more concerned with the ability of education to induce a spirit of conformity than with the creation of strong bodies.⁶² It would have been difficult in any case to find many leading German educators willing to devote more time to physical education than to the regular academic subjects. Such a radical reversion of the normal educational process would also have

⁶¹Rust, "Education in the Third Reich," p. 116.

⁶²Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, p. 352.

met with the certain opposition of most teachers and parents.

The desire to restrict the influence of the traditional schools and fully to inculcate the revolutionary ideological doctrine of National Socialism, led to the establishment of a separate elite school system. This system, which was set up from the very beginning, was intended to train a new leadership corps based not on social class but on equality of opportunity, with the main standard for selection being the degree of devotion to Nazi ideals. These new schools represented the goal of Hitler's Germany to create both a classless society and a new elite to lead that society. The future leaders were to be educated and trained in four different institutions; the National Political Education Institutes (Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten (NAPOLAS), Adolf Hitler Schools (Adolf Hitler Schulen (AHS), Order Castles (Ordensburgen), and Rosenberg's so-called Supreme School (Hohe Schule), which never really advanced beyond the committee stage.

The NAPOLAS were boarding schools for boys between the ages of ten and eighteen. Established in 1933 and conceived as successors to the Prussian cadet academies, their purpose was the training of future top-ranking government and army personnel. Although the institutes (there were ultimately forty-two) were under the administrative control of the Reich Ministry of Education, they eventually came under the aegis of the SS.

The syllabus of the NAPOLAS was essentially that of a grammar school and everyone was expected to maintain a high level of academic performance. The students were molded into "uniform national types" by a common community education heavily laced with Nazi ideology, with Hitler's Mein Kampf, his speeches, and Rosenberg's "Mythus" constituting the core of all political instruction.⁶³ The instructors were specifically picked for their ideological reliability and were usually young and unmarried. All had to possess some ability in sports.⁶⁴ Their academic qualifications were initially quite high and remained so, until the necessities of war forced the drafting into the armed forces of a great number of experienced NAPOLA teachers. Had the war not been lost, future instructors would have come from within the NAPOLAS' own ranks.⁶⁵

The program concentrated on the development of a military spirit and thus emphasized comradeship, order, and discipline.⁶⁶ Classes were called " platoons" (Scharen) and the routine of school life was patterned after that of a military camp, complete with uniforms, reveille, a communal style of living, and calisthenics before breakfast.⁶⁷ Everyone was made aware of the coming war and of the future

⁶³Überhorst, Elite für die Diktatur, p. 183.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 53. ⁶⁵Ibid., p. 52. ⁶⁶Ibid., p. 53.

⁶⁷Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 204.

need for officers. This awareness found concrete expression in the prominence given to physical training in the curriculum, and helps explain the growth of these institutions even after war began.

The NAPOLAS were officially open to all qualified youngsters regardless of their social origin. The basis of admission was Hitler Youth membership, a high standard of athletic proficiency, intelligence, and Aryan descent.⁶⁸ All candidates had to submit to a series of entrance examinations which lasted a week, the mornings being taken up with examinations in general academic subjects, while afternoons were devoted to physical fitness tests which included swimming, athletics, obstacle races, various para-military exercises, and "courage tests." Bodily skill and bravery therefore weighed as heavily as academic knowledge in the selection process. Only one-third of those examined succeeded in gaining admission.

The high priority assigned to athletic ability was a direct result of Hitler's insistence on the inculcation of physical toughness at the NAPOLAS. "Education from and through the body" (Erziehung vom Leibe her und durch den Leib) was consequently a major goal of the new elite schools and the chief attraction for many of the boys who competed for admission. It was believed that character would also be promoted by increased attention to physical education,

⁶⁸Rust, "Education in the Third Reich," p. 115.

meaning especially the development of the will and the ability to make decisions. "Character building through physical training and community living,"⁶⁹ were, according to Rust, the new educational principles.

The importance of athletics in the life of the NAPOLAS was also a conscious imitation of the English public school practice of placing competitive sports at the center of community education. Explaining the value of physical training in the curriculum, a Nazi educator stated that the National Political Education Institutes,

Like the public schools in England . . . are meant to train an elite. . . . The principle of a common education in a boarding school is essentially executed here too by mandatory participation of all in sports, and in general by physical and intellectual training within a small community. Team contests have today higher value than individual achievements in sports. By stressing a healthy way of life, damages created earlier by over-emphasizing knowledge will be erased. . . .⁷⁰

Although learning was now de-emphasized, Minister of Education Rust stated that a complete physical education raised rather than lowered intellectual capacity through its promotion of energy and good health.⁷¹

A varied physical training program was accordingly provided to help the NAPOLAS' carefully chosen young men become effective future leaders. The schools officially set aside five hours a week for this training, but it was understood that this was the minimum permissible, and in

⁶⁹Überhorst, Elite fuß die Diktatur, p. 46.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 54.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 244.

fact this number was almost always exceeded. In contrast to the daily routine of traditional German grammar schools which only allowed time for athletics in the afternoon, the NAPOLAS supplemented morning classes with gymnastics, athletics, swimming, ballgames, and open field exercises.

Afternoons began with academic subjects and ended with art, music, or such specialized sports as rowing, riding, driving, fencing, or boxing. The object of interspersing academic, athletic, and artistic activities was to impress upon the students that education was more than the accumulation of dry knowledge--that it was the harmonious development of intellectual, physical, and aesthetic faculties.⁷²

In addition to the above sports the boys were instructed in sailing and gliding, activities considered important by the navy and air force respectively. Other forms of para-military physical training were also engaged in. Scouting games, maneuvers, forced marches and small-calibre shooting were arranged to accommodate Army and SS interest in recruiting officer material from the NAPOLAS.

The aim of all athletic activity was to attain a high standard of collective physical fitness in preparation for eventual military service. There was consequently no attempt to produce record breakers, but boys who were reasonably proficient in a large number of sports. Two

⁷²Koch, The Hitler Youth, p. 187.

things were demanded of an activity: first, it had to develop the muscles efficiently in order to produce strength, agility, and endurance: secondly, it had to be a form of Kampf sport--one that involved competition and that preferably promoted a spirit of attack.

Competition was especially valued because it fostered toughness and tenacity, and, when groups were involved, team spirit. Weakness in sporting competition and failure generally to measure up in overall physical fitness were grounds for expulsion from a NAPOLA. As Rust explained, "One who is weak in competition and games will also be weak in life's battles."⁷³

To maintain a keen competitive edge among the boys, numerous athletic contests were held during the school year. Since it was not the individual but the community that represented the competitive spirit, everyone had to participate in these events. There were institutional sporting competitions, competitions with other NAPOLAS, with English schools, and with Hitler Youth regiments, and various district and national contests to compete in. The results of athletic performances were carefully tabulated and provided school officials with the information needed to evaluate a student's yearly physical progress.

Because para-military training was an important part of physical education, the highlight of the NAPOLA

⁷³Überhorst, Elite für die Diktatur, p. 242.

year was the autumn exercises. These outdoor events involving orientation races, camouflage and scouting exercises, cross-country marches and simulated enemy situations, were characteristically called "maneuvers." These war games, which placed great demands on the physical endurance of the participants, took place over a two day period in an area measuring 140 kilometers in diameter. The object of the competition was to tear off an opponent's "lifeband" (Lebensfäden) which was worn around the wrist.⁷⁴

To prepare the boys for these battles, some schools resorted to ingenious toughening-up exercises which included students grappling with infuriated Alsatian dogs. Because of Hitler's requirement that NAPOLA instructors take part in even the most rigorous training periods with their pupils,⁷⁵ teachers also participated in these exercises. They consequently were compelled to maintain a very high standard of physical fitness in order to back up their moral authority.

After the war began, the principle of physical education--previously viewed as a means of instilling character--came to represent with increasing clarity a form of pre-military training. Para-military activities were now more heavily emphasized than sporting functions to prepare the young men for service at the various fronts.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 251.

⁷⁵Picker, Tischgespräche, p. 275.

Seventy-five percent of former NAPOLA students reported for duty as officer cadets. Although they initially preferred the army, most eventually joined the WAFFEN SS (Armed SS), a choice which suited their inbred sense of elitism. The rest favored the air force over the army or navy.⁷⁶

Even though the NAPOLAS had a higher middle-class student enrollment than desired, and a lower intellectual level than expected, the goal of producing physically fit young men imbued with the militant ideals of Nazism was reached. While not everyone was able to attain the hoped-for levels of athletic proficiency,⁷⁷ the overall standard of physical fitness was generally quite high. The success of the NAPOLAS' particular form of educational perversion is reflected in the war-time letters and diaries of ex-pupils, many of whom expressed an heroic willingness to face death in the cause of German victory.⁷⁸ Many of them did die, and they went to their deaths as full of faith in National Socialism and free from physical weakness as their beloved Führer could have wished.

The Adolf Hitler Schools (AHS), the first of which opened in 1937, were established outside the existing national framework of education. Under the joint control

⁷⁶Bleuel, Das saubere Reich, p. 134.

⁷⁷Überhorst, Elite für die Diktatur, p. 247.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 415 et seq.

of Dr. Robert Ley, the Nazi Party's Director of Organization (Reichsorganisationsleiter) and head of the Labor Front, and Baldur von Schirach, the Hitler Youth Leader, these "training schools of the party" were above all meant to produce future Nazi functionaries. The institutions were described by Hitler as part of the plan to build a state "in which in the future every position will be occupied by the ablest sons of our people, irrespective of their origin, a state in which birth means nothing and achievement and ability everything. . . ." ⁷⁹

In accordance with this aim, a student entered the first of six forms at the age of twelve after having demonstrated "leadership ability" at school and in the service of the Jungvolk section (for boys ten to fourteen) of the Hitler Youth. Having been pre-selected by local party leaders, the boys were then sent to a youth camp for two weeks where the final selection of candidates was made. Even before this last sifting everyone was subjected to a thorough medical examination, a stage which invariably disqualified a considerable proportion of the candidates for failing to meet the rigid standards of physical fitness and appearance.

At the youth camp the boys were separated into groups of six to eight each. In most cases these units

⁷⁹ Ph. Bouhler (ed.), Der Grossdeutsche Freiheitskampf: Reden Adolf Hitlers (München: Franz Eher Nachf., 1942), pp. 350-351.

were led by a regiment leader (Bannführer) of the Hitler Youth, whose job it was to observe each individual with regard to physical toughness and character. The great importance placed on superior athletic ability and endurance in determining a candidate's acceptance, is illustrated by a typical day's schedule at one of these camps in 1938; a total of five hours a day were devoted to all types of athletic activity, while only one and a half hours were allotted for intellectual testing.⁸⁰

This same lack of concern for academic standards was also manifested in the schools. The twelve AHS eliminated many traditions of normal German school routine, such as individual examinations with grades, all subject reports, and relegation to lower forms in case of failure. In place of these methods the new approach employed guided discussions that everyone passed, "instinctive" evaluation of students instead of grades, and, during the war, practical work in the conquered regions as apprentices for various positions within the party. Because there was a shortage of teaching staff, the junior forms were frequently supervised by pupils from the upper forms.

Although the traditional academic subjects were taught at the AHS, they were, far more than was the case with the NAPOLAS, so thoroughly permeated with political

⁸⁰Dietrich Orlow, "Die Adolf-Hitler-Schulen," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 13 (1966), p. 276.

content that any successful career within the schools was dependent upon unconditional acceptance of the postulates of National Socialist ideology. Almost all courses and text-books stressed the superiority of the Germanic Aryan race. Along with history, literature especially disregarded any semblance of critical examination and concentrated on such themes as the glorification of soldierly virtues, the fight for one's country, and the hero's death. Even modern poetry was afflicted, consisting largely of battle songs and tales of sacrifice.⁸¹

This extreme anti-intellectual bias was supplemented by an exaggerated emphasis on physical performance. Initially, the AHS devoted half their time to PE in contrast to the NAPOLAS' minimum of five hours per week. Although the gradual raising of academic standards reduced the stress on bodily training, a typical weekly plan of 1941 still called for fifteen hours of physical lessons and twenty-two hours of academic instruction.⁸² As in the NAPOLAS, the greatest importance was placed on the para-military exercises and the combat sports like boxing, wrestling, swimming, fencing, and skiing.

Because the Adolf Hitler Schools were meant to institutionalize the Darwinian principle of continuous

⁸¹Schonauer, Deutsche Literatur im Dritten Reich, pp. 105-125.

⁸²Orlow, "Die Adolf-Hitler-Schulen," p. 282.

selection, competition was heavily emphasized. Failure to achieve some modicum of success in athletic combat led to a student's expulsion from school. Conversely, success in sporting contests was considered a significant indicator of leadership qualities in an individual. To promote team spirit and to reinforce the communal atmosphere cultivated at these boarding schools, numerous athletic competitions were also held between the various forms, which were called "platoons."

Despite Ley and Schirach's aim of making AHS graduates the ultimate example of the future Nazi elite, the schools never attained anything like the importance of the NAPOLAS because of their general disdain for learning and over-emphasis on physical activity. Owing to this relative lack of prestige they found it difficult to muster even 600 suitable candidates in their first few years of operation. Although social background supposedly played no part in the selection of students, the few available statistics show that nearly 80 percent of those accepted came from the middle class.⁸³

As indicated, contrary to the initial lack of concern over mental qualifications, intelligence and learning began to take on added importance after the first few years of radical educational innovation. This was largely prompted by the realization that if all party positions were

⁸³Ibid., p. 277.

to be filled by a true elite, the quality of education would have to be improved. This trend was further encouraged by Dr. August Heissmeyer's criticism (he was the SS administrator of the NAPOLAS) of the ridiculously low early intellectual standards of the schools.⁸⁴

These discrepancies between theory and practice notwithstanding, those who attended these party leadership schools received a thorough National Socialist education. Everyone was subjected to a very heavy program of political indoctrination and physical training to help actualize Schirach's desire for Adolf Hitler students to "acquire faith in the impossible."⁸⁵ Ideological self-confidence was thus reinforced by pride in physical accomplishment. Had Germany won the war, the products of these schools would have constituted a corps of enthusiastic and fanatical leaders utterly dedicated to the perpetuation of Nazi rule.

The ultimate destination for selected graduates of the Adolf Hitler Schools were the Order Castles (Ordensburgen). Opened in 1937 under the direction of their founder, Robert Ley, these institutions were the finishing schools for the future party leadership. Situated in the German countryside, the massive, Teutonic-looking Nazi castles of Sonthofen, Crössinsee, Vogelsang, and Marienburg

⁸⁴Völkischer Beobachter, 5 November 1939.

⁸⁵Baldur von Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung: Reden aus den Jahren des Aufbaus (München: Franz Eher Verlag, 1943), p. 101.

were each meant to accommodate a thousand students called "Junkers." The qualifications required of applicants were quite modest and not dependent on any intellectual criteria.

Each candidate had to be in his mid-twenties and sponsored by his district party organization. He must have spent six years--from twelve to eighteen--at the AHS, plus two and a half years in the Labor Service and the armed forces. Four years of professional qualifications were also a requirement, as was some experience in party work. Ley also recommended that candidates should preferably be married when they came to the Order Castles.⁸⁶ Final selection was based primarily on an applicant's overall demonstration of devotion to National Socialism and a good physical training record, and was made by Ley in company with regional and district party chiefs. As in the NAPOLAS and the Adolf Hitler Schools, admission was open to everyone who qualified, regardless of social origins. Ley expressed this equality of opportunity when he said "The Ordensburg opens the door to political leadership to the man in the street."⁸⁷

Because Hitler wanted his future Junkers to be "impervious to the temptations of the mind and free from

⁸⁶Robert Ley, Wir alle helfen dem Führer: Deutschland braucht jeden Deutschen (München: Franz Eher Nachf., 1937), p. 133. Ley felt it was a sign of diffidence and irresolution if a man of twenty-five was still unmarried.

⁸⁷"Der Marschallstab im Tornister," Völkischer Beobachter, 25 April 1936.

scientific knowledge,"⁸⁸ the intellectual standards at the Ordensburgen were quite low. Following his Führer's anti-intellectual lead, Ley declared the goal of education in the schools to be "a new form of character building" which would make "fine fellows" (Ganze Kerle [meaning all-around men]) out of those who had been chosen for admission. This would be done primarily by a thorough ideological education that would stress the "great National Socialist experience" (how this differed from other forms of political indoctrination is not clear).⁸⁹ After completing their four year course, the new Junkers would not only be fit to govern, but would "take pleasure in doing so."⁹⁰

The difficulty of constructing a systematic curriculum around the undefinable National Socialist philosophy was one that proved insurmountable for Ordensburg administrators. In an effort to provide some degree of instructional uniformity, Ley proposed six main subjects: racial studies, history, with special consideration for ancient and contemporary history, art and cultural history, ideology and philosophy, economic and social studies, and military science.⁹¹ The teaching staff was also of uneven quality;

⁸⁸Rauschning, Gespräche mit Hitler, p. 47.

⁸⁹Ley, Wir alle helfen dem Führer, p. 159.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 132.

⁹¹Harald Scholtz, "Die NS-Ordensburgen," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 15 (1967), p. 283.

in order to have enough instructors to open his schools, Ley was forced to train a number of them in a hastily conceived course offered at Vogelsang in 1936.⁹²

Ideological indoctrination through course work was only one phase of a student's "character" development, however. To enable the future "Gentlemen of the Party" to conduct themselves with the ease and self-assurance expected of them, the finer points of etiquette were also assiduously cultivated at the schools. Further to refine their sense of social superiority and to accustom the young men to being waited on, each Ordensburg was meant to house a staff of no less than 500, comprising instructors, administrators, and grooms to look after the needs of a thousand Junkers.

A rigorous program of physical training completed this varied education and provided a necessary touch of spartan severity to balance the niceties of gentlemanly behaviour. Ley's belief in the need for a Darwinistic strengthening of the race through exercise was a faithful reiteration of Hitler's views on the subject. The importance of athletics in the Order Castles was harshly emphasized by the Führer:

In my Ordensburgen a youth will mature before which the world will shrink back. A violently active, dominant, intrepid, brutal youth--that is what I want. . . . It must possess no weakness or tenderness. I want to again see in its eyes the gleam of pride and independence of the beast of prey. My young men must be strong and handsome. I will have them fully

⁹²Der Angriff, 5 May 1936.

trained in all physical exercises. My goal is an athletic youth--that is the most important thing. In this manner I will erase thousands of years of human domestication. This will give me the pure and noble raw material. With that I can create the new order.⁹³

To produce an athletic youth approximately one-third of a Junker's time was taken up by physical activities of one kind or another. The Ordensburgen were impressively equipped and boasted a wide range of sporting facilities which included swimming pools, riding stables, and ski cabins. The war prevented the carrying out of many of the more ambitious plans, including the construction of a gymnasium at Vogelsang which would have been the largest in the world. Because the students were required to study at all four schools, each Castle offered different phases of the total physical training program.

At Crössinsee the accent was on sailing, track and field, flying, and riding; at Vogelsang the same routine was followed but the performance requirements were higher; at Sonthofen the emphasis was on skiing and mountain climbing; and in the final year at Marienburg everyone concentrated on a final maturation of his physical abilities. Competition was promoted by the holding of yearly athletic festivals at each school. At these events the best individuals and teams were determined in such sports as swimming, gymnastics, boxing, and fencing.⁹⁴

⁹³Rauschning, Gespräche mit Hitler, p. 237.

⁹⁴Scholtz, "Die NS-Ordensburgen," p. 285.

Other physical activities were designed to instill fortitude. These included endurance marches, having to wash in an icy stream some distance from quarters, and being roused in the middle of a winter's night to do outdoor calisthenics. To accommodate Hitler's wish that his young men "learn to overcome the fear of death, under the severest tests,"⁹⁵ Junkers were made to dive from a thirty foot springboard and to participate in numerous parachute jumps. The presence or absence of courage was also revealed by war games which involved the use of live ammunition and the digging of trenches in the path of advancing tanks, two exercises that were sure to claim fatal casualties.⁹⁶

Although the "courage tests" (Mutproben) and paramilitary activities represented the rougher aspects of physical training, many of the more sporting pursuits were considered essential to a truly aristocratic education. Fencing, for example, along with its suggestion of social exclusiveness, was felt to encourage self-control, presence of mind, and the power of decision--all attributes required of a future ruler. Riding, on the other hand, according to Ley gave the young noblemen the feeling of "completely dominating a living creature"⁹⁷ (ein lebendes Wesen absolut

⁹⁵Rauschning, Gespräche mit Hitler, p. 237.

⁹⁶Peter Neumann, Other Men's Graves (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1958), pp. 64-65.

⁹⁷Robert Ley (ed.), Organisationsbuch der NSDAP (München: F. Eher Nachf., 1938), p. 182.

zu beherrschen), in this case a horse, if not a human being; while sailing not only complemented riding by fostering a sense of command over an inanimate object, but in addition provided valuable navigational skills.

Physical training in the Ordensburgen thus played a vital role in the education of Nazi Germany's future party elite. It produced a vigorous, active youth in accordance with Hitler's wishes, and helped determine whether a Junker was indeed a real man (Kerl), capable of displaying leadership even under the most difficult of circumstances. Discipline and obedience were also promoted by rigorous exercises and tests of courage, and these qualities were essential for leaders who were meant to execute the Führer's will without any reservations.

Because the Ordensburgen closed at the beginning of the war, no Junkers ever completed their education. Although very few statistics are available, it appears that even during their two years of existence the schools operated at no more than two-thirds capacity. Despite the easy entrance requirements, obviously something more than an unalloyed party education was needed to attract a sufficient number of candidates.

Owing to the lack of applicants, good health rather than any proficiency in physical training soon became an acceptable standard for admission. This might help explain why, despite the courage tests and the strong emphasis on sporting and para-military activities, there still were a

fair number of non-sportsmen among the students.⁹⁸ Failure to measure up competitively seems not to have been a cause for expulsion, however--apparently a physically mediocre Junker was better than none at all.

Although the Ordensburgen bore the hallmarks of improvization and never produced the party leadership expected of them, they clearly reflected the educational design for the National Socialist empire of the future. Had the anticipated new order ever materialized, physical prowess would have become firmly established as a major criterion for acceptance to and graduation from the Nazi elite schools.

The importance attached to athletic ability in these institutions was a result of the Third Reich's increased emphasis on physical education. Because Hitler declared strength and health essential for the preservation of the race, it was only natural that PE became a fundamental and inseparable part of Nazi education. In coordination with ideological instruction, it not only assured continuity of purpose in converting youth to National Socialism, but also helped prepare young men for their future roles as soldiers and leaders.

⁹⁸Scholtz, "Die NS-Ordensburgen," p. 285.

V.

PHYSICAL TRAINING IN THE HITLER YOUTH

Any examination of the physical training program of the Hitler Youth must be preceded by a general discussion of the origins, structure, and educational goals of the organization. The Hitler Youth grew out of the Nazi Party's need to publicize its movement among the younger generation, and to compete with other right-wing organizations for the allegiance of nationalist-minded youth. A Youth League of the NSDAP (Jugendbund der Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei) was accordingly established in 1922 and, after a convoluted evolutionary process, emerged as the Hitler Youth (Hitler-Jugend or HJ) in 1926.¹

Dominated by the S.A. in the period prior to the seizure of power, the organization's leaders stressed the importance of obedience to the Führerprinzip while simultaneously providing military training which, it was hoped, would make the boys effective Storm Troopers. Throughout

¹The term 'Hitler Youth' is employed here when referring to all youth organizations within the Nazi Party. 'HJ' will be used only to designate the senior branch of the Hitler Youth which included boys aged fourteen to eighteen.

the years of struggle the Nazi Youth remained relatively insignificant, appealing for the most part to the mass organizations on the fringe of the youth movement, such as the young gymnasts and the Protestant youth associations.² Under the impact of the world economic depression, however, membership figures rose. At the end of 1932, some 108,000 claimed affiliation in the various organizations. Despite this growth the Hitler Youth still accounted for less than 2 percent of the youth movement as a whole.³

Shortly after Hitler's appointment to the Chancellorship on January 30, 1933, the Hitler Youth, no longer under SA control and now led by Baldur von Schirach, was given the task of coordinating rival youth groups. Coordination in this instance meant absorption. Through forced dissolution and voluntary mergers by those who correctly interpreted the reality of the situation, Gleichschaltung was largely completed by the end of 1934. Politically neutral youth organizations, especially those serving young athletes (including the youth sections of all the private sports clubs), were among those assimilated without too much difficulty.⁴

²Laqueur, Walter Z., Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement (New York: Basic Books Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 195-196.

³Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, p. 355.

⁴Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 112.

As Schirach admitted in his memoirs, many youths resisted the pressure to join the Hitler Youth and tenaciously defended the independence of their organizations.⁵ Catholic Youth groups were especially hard to incorporate; some even managed to maintain an independent existence until 1939 despite the heavy persecution they were subjected to. In order to gain control of those who had not 'voluntarily' enlisted, a law was finally passed on December 1, 1936, which made membership in the Hitler Youth--now declared to be the official State youth organization--compulsory from the age of ten onwards.⁶ Depending on the party source consulted, the result was a total membership of five to seven million youngsters in the Hitler Youth between 1936 and 1939.⁷

To control the activities of this many youths general and special organizations were set up. Indoctrination and physical training were primarily carried out within the framework of the major membership groups. These were the 'Wolf Cubs' or Pimpfs (boys six to ten years old), Junior Boys or Deutsches Jungvolk (ages ten to fourteen), and the

⁵Baldur von Schirach, Ich Glaubte an Hitler (Hamburg: Mosaik Verlag, 1967), p. 193.

⁶Dokumente der Deutschen Politik: Deutschlands Aufstieg zur Grossmacht 1936 (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1939), Vol. IV, p. 328.

⁷Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1946), Vol. V, p. 113.

HJ (fourteen to eighteen year olds). After leaving the HJ young men could either go on to military or labor service, join the elite SS, or become Hitler Youth staff members.

The general membership groups for girls were analogous to those for boys. Junior Girls or Jungmädel consisted of members aged ten to fourteen, while the League of German Girls or Bund Deutscher Mädel (BdM) enrolled everyone from fourteen to twenty-one. After completing their membership in the BdM young women were expected to participate in any number of Nazi service organizations or to assume roles as good wives and mothers.

Within this general structure existed the special organizations, through which the Hitler Youth programs were implemented. The Comradeship Group (Kameradschaft) was the basic unit in this substructure and was comprised of approximately ten youngsters. Four groups formed a platoon (Schar). A Following (Gefolgschaft) was composed of four platoons, and three to five Followings made up a Branch-group (Stamm). At the summit of this administrative organization were the Regiments (Banne) which embraced 3,000 youths each. Although unit designations varied in the Junior Boys, Junior Girls, and the BdM, they paralleled those of the HJ.⁸

⁸ Sautter, Reinhold, Hitler Jugend: Das Erlebnis einer grossen Kameradschaft (München: Carl Röhrig Verlag, 1942), p. 17.

The main educational goal of the Hitler Youth was to give every boy and girl a common National Socialist education. This uniformity of purpose was expressed by Hitler when he declared:

There is only one German people, and thus there can be only one German youth! And there can be only one German Youth Movement because there is only one education of youth. . . . This Reich stands, and it is building itself up for the future upon its youth. And this new Reich will give its youth to no one, but will itself take youth and give to youth its own education and its own upbringing.⁹

The education provided in the Hitler Youth was, generally speaking, composed of ideological instruction and physical training. Because both areas complemented each other, they formed a balanced program meant to produce a younger generation thoroughly imbued with the spirit of National Socialism. Given proper ideological conditioning good Nazis could be produced, but if Germany's boys and girls were to effectively fulfill their roles of future soldiers and mothers, extensive physical training was also needed. For the boys the combat sports (parachute jumping, boxing, wrestling, jiu-jitsu)¹⁰ especially reflected strong ideological purpose given Hitler's belief in the coming struggle for Lebensraum; physically fit young men had to be trained to fight to the death for their beliefs.

⁹ Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 549.

¹⁰ The trainer for the Hitler Youth in the latter sport was Erich Rahn, the jiu-jitsu champion of Germany. Ziemer, Education for Death, p. 188.

Ideological indoctrination centered around several dominant themes. Prominent among them were the necessity for struggle if the race was to survive and propagate, the declaration of German racial superiority as accepted scientific fact, and the importance of Lebensraum. Other recurrent concepts were the need for devotion to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party, the significance of the Führerprinzip in governing Germany, and a glorification of war.

Although it was never hidden from the boys that they were expected to one day fight (and if need be, die) for Germany against her enemies, Schirach was insistent that his charges were not young soldiers, but rather the bearers of an ideology.¹¹ It was consequently necessary for every youth to be thoroughly saturated with the precepts of Nazism. A youngster's value to his community was accordingly determined not by his rank or position, but by the fervor with which he embraced the National Socialist Weltanschauung.¹²

The ideological program (as well as the physical training) was carried out after school, during weekly 'home evening' (Heimabend) meetings, at weekend gatherings, in extended summertime camping, and through various special events. In addition to the usual educational aids such as printed materials and films, the Hitler Youth also adopted

¹¹Baldur von Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend: Idee und Gestalt (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1934), p. 91.

¹²Ibid., p. 130.

the style of the older German 'youth movement' to get its point across. Such things as hiking in small groups, youthful group leaders, the reading of ancient Germanic legends and tales of heroism, and the romantic nightly marches which ended at a forest camp-fire with the singing of old popular ballads and student songs, were all derived from previous traditions, as Schirach himself later acknowledged.¹³

The deeper motive behind the obvious joys of camping, hiking, and sporting activities was the desire of National Socialism to lead young people back to nature, to make them conscious of the soil which gave them life. The romantic sense of tradition, comradeship, and community which Schirach claimed he systematically cultivated in the Hitler Youth,¹⁴ was therefore meant to bring youth back to a realization of membership in the German race. In this manner every young German would not only gain improved health, but a feeling of closeness to his nation as well.

The heavy emphasis on ideology and athletics in the Hitler Youth was meant to supplement and strengthen those areas of training that the schools could not be expected to handle fully, namely, the political and the physical. Through its youth organizations the Nazi state

¹³Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler, p. 181.

¹⁴Albert Speer, Spandauer Tagebücher (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1975), p. 463.

thus assumed the responsibility of guiding the young out of school as well as in. The place of the Hitler Youth as an educational authority in the nation was defined by a series of decrees, the most important of which was the 'Law concerning the Hitler Youth' (Gesetz über die Hitler-Jugend) promulgated on December 1, 1936. According to this law:

All German young people, apart from being educated at home and at school, will be educated in the Hitler Youth physically, intellectually, and morally in the spirit of National Socialism to serve the nation and the community.¹⁵

Because membership in the Hitler Youth was now mandatory, the task of "educating German youth in the Hitler Youth" was entrusted to the Reich Youth Leader (Reichsjugendführer) of the NSDAP, Baldur von Schirach. His position, from being that of a party official, was now characterized as a governmental one with direct responsibility to the Führer. With parents and the schools, the Hitler Youth was now legally recognized as the third important influence shaping the character of Germany's youth.

The ideological instruction given in the Hitler Youth was, as indicated, accompanied by a heavy physical training program. The dominant educational themes of German racial superiority, the need for living space, and the glorification of war were all wedded ideologically to the need

¹⁵Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, p. 356. A State Youth Day (Staatsjugendtag) had already been instituted in 1934 which replaced all school instruction with Hitler Youth activities (it took place on a Saturday). Ibid., pp. 356-357.

for physical conditioning and para-military training. It was believed that only through rigorous conditioning could youth become capable of creating the new order.

Because Hitler desired an athletic youth devoid of any weakness, physical training was an important part of the Hitler Youth program from the start. The statutes of the first Nazi youth organization, the Youth League of the NSDAP which was created in 1922, made "healthy physical activity" an avowed aim; when the Hitler Youth was officially founded in 1926, its first organizational structure included two athletic divisions, one for sports and one for military sports (Wehrsport).¹⁶

In a speech to youth at the Nuremberg Party Rally in 1935, Hitler explained the rationale behind the vigorous physical training ordered for the youths. Contrasting the new ideal of young German manhood to that of the past, he said:

There were times . . . when the ideal of the young man was the lad who could hold his beer and was good for a drink. And now his day is past and we like to see the young man who can stand all weathers, the strong, young man. It does not matter how many glasses of beer he can drink, but how many blows he can stand; not how many nights he can spend on the spree but how many kilometers he can march.¹⁷

¹⁶Peter D. Stachura, Nazi Youth in the Weimar Republic (Santa Barbara, California: Books, 1975), pp. 8, 24.

¹⁷Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 542.

The German youth of the future would therefore have to be

. . . slim and slender, swift as the greyhound, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel. We must educate a new type of manhood so that our people does not go to ruin amongst all the degeneracy of our day. We do not talk, we act.¹⁸

This education for a new type of manhood made physical training a prominent preoccupation at all levels of the Hitler Youth. From the Heimabende to the extended summertime camping experience, all youngsters took part in a great number of physical education activities. Individual and group achievement were both stressed, with competition and the glory of victory receiving particular attention. Such activities as calisthenics, gymnastics, and games required little time, and were therefore regularly engaged in during afternoon, evening, and weekend meetings of Hitler Youth formations. Hundreds of special 'sports fields' were also constructed for more intensive periods of training. These fields included such things as hills, trenches, and obstacle courses, thus indicating the para-military aspects of much of the training.¹⁹

All around athletic ability was stressed rather than record breaking performances in any one area. Local sporting

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Norbert A. Huebsch, "The 'Wolf Cubs' of the New Order: The Indoctrination and training of the Hitler Youth" in Otis C. Mitchell (ed.) Nazism and the Common Man: Essays in German History (1929-1939) (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Burgess Publishing Co., 1972), p. 88.

competition led to participation in district, regional, and national athletic festivals, thereby giving individuals and teams the opportunity to demonstrate their respective levels of capability. Successful participation in events ranging from track and field through small calibre shooting was viewed not only as a demonstration of the potential worth for the party of a Hitler Youth member, but as eloquent testimony of the perfectability of 'superior' German culture. These athletic festivals were usually brought to a conclusion with an award ceremony that was heavily intermixed with further dosages of ideological rhetoric.

If all German youngsters were to receive a sound ideological and physical education in the Hitler Youth, an experienced cadre was needed to train them. Instructors were in short supply, however, because of the vast influx of new members into the youth organizations after the seizure of power. To produce a sufficient quantity of leaders imbued with National Socialist principles, leadership schools (Reichsführer Schulen) were established throughout Germany to provide systematic and methodical training for future Hitler Youth leaders.²⁰ Theoretically, all young people who demonstrated absolute devotion to Nazi ideas and who possessed a high level of physical fitness were eligible to receive training at one of these schools.²¹

²⁰Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, p. 135.

²¹Ibid., p. 108.

By the end of 1933 twenty-two Reichsführer schools were in existence, and had turned out 7000 new leaders by means of intensive three-week training courses.²² Schirach explained the brevity of these programs by pointing out the necessity of educating a great number of leaders in the shortest possible time.²³ In 1934 the Reichsjugendführer initiated the practice of putting each year's program under a different heading, which in turn became the annual slogan.²⁴ The year 1934 was termed "The Year of Training" and was dedicated to producing Hitler Youth leaders en masse. In August, 1934, Schirach claimed to have produced in 287 three-week courses, 12,727 HJ and 24,660 Jungvolk leaders.²⁵ In addition, 15,000 Hitler Youth leaders had passed special physical training programs.²⁶

Because the basic courses lasted only three weeks, the ideological schooling given in them was mainly confined to ethnology, population policy, and the older Germanic and more recent National Socialist history of Germany.²⁷

²²P. D. Stachura, "The National Socialist Machtergreifung and the German Youth Movement: Co-ordination and Reorganization, 1933-34," Journal of European Studies, Vol. 5, No. 3 (September 1975):266-267.

²³Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, p. 108.

²⁴Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 67.

²⁵Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, p. 135.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 136.

Current political themes were also discussed, the subject of Lebensraum receiving particular attention.²⁸ After graduation the new leaders were expected to communicate the essence of Nazi thought to their boys and girls at all the meetings, ceremonies, and athletic competitions that made up life in the Hitler Youth.

Over half of the teaching hours in the three week program were devoted to physical training.²⁹ Schirach's insistence that the future leaders be taught the ability to transmit enthusiasm in a lively manner was especially applicable to athletics.³⁰ Only those in top physical condition and possessed of athletic ability could be expected to effectively lead a youth that was constantly engaged in functions of a sporting nature.

The physical training given in the leadership schools consisted of fundamental conditioning exercises, sports and games, small calibre shooting, and para-military exercises (Geländesport). The goal of these activities was to develop the character as well as the body:

The Hitler Youth leader must be formed into a resolute and gallant daredevil. Speed, strength, perseverance, agility, courage, energy and decisiveness are the basic qualities that he can acquire in physical fitness programs. The Hitler Youth leader must excell in running, jumping, throwing, wrestling, boxing, swimming, life saving and marching. Through properly used and

²⁸Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 144.

²⁹Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, pp. 138-139.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 109-110.

executed physical exercises and para-military instruction, these many physical abilities will be learned.³¹

Besides the regular program, additional training was provided in gymnastics, shooting, and Geländesport for those who would specialize in teaching these subjects. Para-military instruction was particularly stressed because it gave the Hitler Youth leader the confidence necessary to lead others under the difficult circumstances encountered in cross-country maneuvers. Despite Schirach's disclaimer that the young received military training in Nazi Germany, the martial relevancy of many of the exercises associated with Geländesport (map reading, forced marches, and 'war games' formed the core of the program) is quite obvious.

With the passage of time, many leadership posts in the Hitler Youth evolved into full-time salaried positions, thus offering new opportunities for those ready and able to take advantage of them.³² The importance of athletic ability to the attainment of a party career was consequently increased, because a training scheme for full-time leaders of the Hitler Youth introduced in 1938 made 'high physical capacity' a permanent requirement for admission to such

³¹Ibid., p. 137.

³²Koch, The Hitler Youth, p. 105.

training.³³ Only the onset of the war prevented a full implementation of this plan.

To help carry out the physical training program of the Hitler Youth, an agreement was concluded between the Reichsjugendführer and the Reichssportführer on July 28, 1936. Among the items agreed upon was the participation of Hitler Youth members in the athletic competitions of Tschammer und Osten's Deutscher Reichsbund für Leibesübungen (DRL); in exchange for this, Schirach was granted the use of that organization's equipment and the assistance of its more experienced sports instructors.³⁴ Despite the programs of the leadership schools, these additional trainers and coaches were needed, for by the end of the year over five million youngsters were enrolled in the Hitler Youth.

A few months later the Hitler Youth Law of December 1, 1936, assigned all athletic training to the Reich Sport Leader, thereby putting all instructors of the DRL at the permanent disposal of the Reich Youth Leader.³⁵ Schirach's supreme responsibility for the physical education of all

³³"Neue Ausbildungsverordnung für das Führerkorps der Hitler-Jugend vom 23 Februar 1938," in Gerd Rühle, Das Dritte Reich: Dokumentarische Darstellung des Aufbaues der Nation: Das Sechste Jahr 1938 (Berlin: Hummelverlag, 1939), pp. 132-133.

³⁴Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, pp. 219-220.

³⁵Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 113.

German Youth in the spirit of National Socialism was confirmed shortly thereafter when the Reichssportführer was made his deputy.³⁶

The physical training program of the Hitler Youth can be divided into three distinct activities: athletics for basic physical fitness, competitive sports, and Wehrertüchtigung, or exercises carried on in preparation for military service.³⁷ Basic physical fitness was attained through activities such as running, hiking, marching, calisthenics, gymnastics, and swimming. These were exercises in which everyone could easily participate and they were common to all age groups. In the lower units of the Hitler Youth, however, more time was allocated to these elementary forms of bodily exertion than in the higher units because of the tender age of the participants.

Basic physical conditioning was supplemented by the extensive sporting program of the Hitler Youth.³⁸ Although Schirach used athletics to attract the young to National Socialism,³⁹ the main purpose of sporting activity--apart

³⁶Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung, p. 63.

³⁷Kneller, The Educational Philosophy of National Socialism, p. 159.

³⁸Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 1011.

³⁹Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler, p. 192.

from its contribution to physical fitness--⁴⁰ was to cultivate the all-important will-to-win through competition. The built-in adversity of sporting competition was furthermore not only considered excellent preparation for future military service, but an ideal means of strengthening the race as well.

The appeal to youth to take an active part in the affairs of their nation thus found a natural outlet in competitive sports.⁴¹ Whether competing in track and field events, individual combat sports, or team games, the young were made to feel that what they were doing was important, and that they were actively participating in the struggle to restore Germany to her former position of honor and power in the world.

Because the ultimate aim of all physical training was to prepare young men for military service, it was only natural that a large part of this training consisted of para-military exercises. In addition to the open field maneuvers of Geländesport, a more overt form of para-military physical training called Wehrsport was also engaged in. Wehrsport included such activities as the ubiquitous marching, dugout use, barbed wire cutting, bayonet drill, gas defense practice, anti-air raid drill, and artificial

⁴⁰Wilhelm Fanderl (ed.), H. J. Marschier! Das Neue Hitler-Jugend-Buch (Berlin: Paul Franke Verlag, 1933), p. 210.

⁴¹Brennecke, The Nazi Primer, pp. 75-76.

hand grenade throwing.⁴² Although practiced under different circumstances, these exercises formed part of the fixed routine at Hitler Youth camps.

Despite the varied nature of physical training in the Nazi youth organizations, it was in camping that the military orientation of the program was most pronounced. Camp life was proclaimed by the Reich Youth Leader to be "the most beautiful dream of youthful existence" and "The unforgettable experience of a lifetime."⁴³ From the Nazis' point of view this was quite true. The young, once removed from the potentially disruptive home environment, could be more closely supervised in extended camping than they were during weekend trips or hiking excursions, which were invariably characterized by improvisation and a relaxation of soldierly discipline. Youngsters were attracted by the romantic facade of tents and open-air meals, by the unlimited potential for field sports and the camp fires, all of which disguised the essential military nature of life under canvas.⁴⁴

Throughout Germany members of the Hitler Youth attended camps for three weeks, particularly in the summer-time when the weather facilitated outdoor training. Nazi ritual was an important part of the camp experience and

⁴²Kandel, The Making of Nazis, p. 115.

⁴³Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, p. 107.

⁴⁴Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 119.

included flag ceremonies, a daily 'word' symbolic of National Socialist lore employed as a salutation among comrades, and leader-group responsive chants--all measures designed to promote esprit de corps (gemeinschaftsfördernde). This ritualism also glorified Hitler and past military heroes such as Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff, thus linking Germany's military tradition with Nazism in the minds of the young.

Ideological indoctrination was naturally an inherent part of all instruction and complemented the military essence of camp life. Hitler Youth camps were characterized by strict attention to military forms and procedures, including the perfect linear arrangement of tents, sentry duties, reveille, and inspections. A heavy program of exercises, gymnastics, and field sports was meant to eradicate all weakness in the young. In camp, 'mama's boys' would learn to become independent and weaklings would be made strong.⁴⁵ The camp schedule, which called for roughly twelve hours on duty, eight hours of sleep, and four hours off, involved a high degree of regimentation.

Each day began with reveille between six and seven o'clock in the morning. Within one hour of rising the boys had undergone a cross-country run, performed a series of exercises, and stood inspection. Training began after a morning flag ceremony and breakfast. The youngsters were

⁴⁵Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, p. 107.

divided into different groups devoted to various sports and subjects of a military and ideological nature. Among the sporting events the martial virtues of team games were especially prized because they provided an easy transition to the more soldierly functions. The military activities combined Geländesport and Wehrsport and constituted the bulk of the morning's physical training. This routine, divided between the classroom and practical application, came to a halt at noon.

After a two hour break for lunch, training was resumed. Apart from preparation for evening assembly activities, afternoons were almost wholly given over to cross-country sports and maneuvers. Another flag ceremony ended the day's work.⁴⁶ In the evening the boys sat around the campfire and sang Hitler Youth songs:

We are the future soldiers. Everything which opposes
us will fall before our fists. Fuehrer we belong
to you.⁴⁷

or

A hundred bullets and ten to our aid,
A loaded rifle does the trick,
And in our fist a hand-grenade--
Come on then, you Bolshevik!⁴⁸

⁴⁶Bleuel, Das saubere Reich, p. 158.

⁴⁷International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg: International Military Tribunal, 1948), Vol. XIV, p. 460.

⁴⁸Erika Mann, School for Barbarians: Education Under the Nazis (New York: Modern Age Books, 1938), p. 129.

The military orientation of physical training was present at all levels of the Hitler Youth. Even the 'Wolf Cub' organization for boys six to ten years old was no exception. The Pimpf efficiency record book (Leistungsbuch), in addition to recording a lad's athletic achievements in such activities as running, hiking, swimming, and boxing, also noted his advancement in military prowess. In order for a boy to be promoted to the Jungvolk at the age of ten, he had to display proficiency in the following areas: marching, tracking and spying, military gymnastics, and shooting with air guns. There was ample opportunity to demonstrate these and other military skills, as weekends were almost invariably devoted to maneuvers according to the principles laid down in the official Pimpf manual The Young One in Service (Pimpf im Dienst).⁴⁹

Although the young age of the Wolf Cubs resulted in a heavy program of basic physical exercise and simple games involving competition and teamwork,⁵⁰ some of their activities were nevertheless quite arduous. Marches, for example, involved an average distance of about twelve and a half miles per day for beginners, and correspondingly more for older Pimpfs. A final test of endurance prior to entering the

⁴⁹ Ziemer, Education for Death, pp. 55, 60, 62, 72.

⁵⁰ Fanderl, H. J. Marschier!, pp. 368-370.

Jungvolk was a cross-country march of up to fifty miles.⁵¹

Such extended treks were also meant to familiarize the boys with the scenic wonders of nature and thus to fill them with enthusiastic love for their fatherland. Accompanied by the ideological observations of the Jungvolkfürher who guided them, the marches inevitably led the youngsters (so it was hoped) through the German countryside to Adolf Hitler and National Socialism.⁵²

The romantic ritualism of extended camping, with its ideologically slanted songs, chants, and fire-side discussions--all of which cultivated a sense of comradeship and community--continued this nazification process.⁵³ The Pimpf camping experience, as in the senior branches of the Hitler Youth, was also heavily based on para-military activities, although not to the same degree of intensity as in the older units. These exercises consisted largely of orientation problems, scouting games, and open-field maneuvers involving pretend enemy situations.

All of the boys' activities, from ideological instruction through physical training, helped prepare them for an initiation test they had to pass before being

⁵¹Ziemer, Education for Death, pp. 56, 63.

⁵²Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, p. 86.

⁵³Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung, pp. 87-88.

accepted into the Jungvolk. The examination consisted of basic ideological questions, reiteration of all the verses of the Horst Wessel Lied (the official song of the Nazi party), a map-reading test, participation in pseudo-war games (Geländeübungen), and the following sporting achievements: running sixty metres in twelve seconds, making a long jump of 2.75 metres, putting the shot, and completing the aforementioned final endurance march.⁵⁴ After passing this examination, the boys took the Jungvolk oath in which they pledged their readiness to serve Adolf Hitler and to give up their life for him if necessary.⁵⁵

Physical training in the Jungvolk was essentially a continuation of the activities performed as a Pimpf, except the program was more comprehensive and the performance requirements were higher. Wrestling and jiu-jitsu were now practiced and team games more than ever stressed the necessity of renouncing individual accomplishment in favor of self-subordination to the collective. There was also increased emphasis on sporting competition and victory, and all-around athletic ability became a leading indicator of potential leadership ability.

Para-military training in the Jungvolk was far more rigorous than in the Pimpf stage. The ten to fourteen year olds went on longer marches (walks of a hundred miles were

⁵⁴Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 93.

⁵⁵Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Vol. I, p. 319.

not unusual) during which they were granted less food and rest than their younger counterparts,⁵⁶ and their maneuvers lasted longer and were more difficult. All of the exercises associated with Wehrsport were now regularly engaged in, and small-bore rifles as well as air-guns were used for marksman-ship practice.

While the general direction of physical training in the Jungvolk was oriented toward games and sports, in the HJ proper most forms of para-military training received precedence over more conventional sports.⁵⁷ Long distance marches with their attendant bedding down in hay lofts and nights spent in youth hostels (Jugendherbergen) were so frequent that they literally became a way of life. Air guns were given up completely in favor of twenty-two calibre rifles and instruction in the use of revolvers.⁵⁸ Parachute jumping, gliding, mountain climbing and riding were also part of HJ training, as were flying lessons and instruction in motorized and naval sports.

The military maneuvers of the HJ were on a larger scale than the Geländeübungen of the Jungvolk and usually lasted from a week to ten days, during which time everyone was excused from their school responsibilities. The

⁵⁶Ziemer, Education for Death, pp. 103, 119.

⁵⁷Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, p. 85.

⁵⁸Günter Kaufmann, Das kommende Deutschland: Die Erziehung der Jugend im Reich Adolf Hitlers (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1940), p. 88.

leaders of these exercises were SA men and army officers who were well versed in the tricks of their military trade. The object of these war games was for one side to completely capture the other, or to gain some strategic stronghold symbolic of victory. The games were waged with particular ferocity, with no quarter asked and none given.

Sporting activities were not neglected in the HJ, however. In order to establish performance standards and to encourage athletic ambition in the boys, Schirach created the Hitler Youth Physical Fitness Badge (HJ Leistungsabzeichen) in 1934 (a corresponding award was inaugurated for the Jungvolk in 1935). Three levels of proficiency were defined, with everyone expected to achieve average minimum performances by their sixteenth birthday. To reach this goal a boy had to: run the hundred metre dash in fourteen seconds, complete a 3000 metre run in fourteen minutes, broad jump 4.25 metres, throw a special club thirty-five metres, put a five kilogramm shot 7.50 metres, perform four pull-ups, and swim 300 metres in ten minutes.⁵⁹

Besides these purely sporting exercises, proficiency also had to be demonstrated in marching, shooting, and ideological comprehension for a boy to attain the fitness badge. Those who had not met the required standards in time were subjected to additional training by the National Federation for Physical Training until they had successfully

⁵⁹Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 114.

passed all of the tests. Despite the difficulty of fulfilling so many conditions, a total of 320,154 badges were conferred between 1934 and 1943 (an additional 152,600 were awarded to Jungvolk members from 1935 to 1943).⁶⁰

Because Hitler desired German youth to demonstrate to the nation through its athletic prowess the "strength and invincibility of the race,"⁶¹ a National Sports Competition (Reichssportwettkampf) for Hitler Youth was introduced in 1935. This huge annual affair became, along with the National Vocational Competition (Reichsberufwettkampf), the second major event of the year for all age groups between ten and eighteen.⁶² The high standards of the sporting contests, in addition to focusing attention on the importance of physical fitness, were also meant to imbue the participants with a collective feeling of service to their nation through athletic achievement.

There was a general expansion of the physical training program in 1935 because Schirach had proclaimed that year's slogan to be "The Year of the Attainment of Physical Fitness" (Das Jahr der Ertüchtigung). Numerous athletic competitions and other events of a physical nature were inaugurated at all levels of the Hitler Youth, with

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 115.

⁶²Arno Klönne, Hitlerjugend: Die Jugend und ihre Organisation im Dritten Reich (Hannover und Frankfurt/M: Norddeutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1955), p. 16.

even the Reichsberufswettkampf receiving a sporting division. The heightened emphasis on physical fitness and competitive sport at this time was largely owing to the desire to prepare Germany for the coming Olympic Games of 1936.⁶³ Among the new activities was the establishment of an Adolf Hitler March. In a week-long march all HJ regiments were brought to Nuremberg for the party rallies from 1935 on. Beginning in 1937, the youths participated in the athletic contests of the National Socialist Games which were held at the annual convention for the first time that year.

During 1936 and 1937 it became increasingly obvious to the National Youth Leadership (Reichsjugendführung) that four years of strenuous Jungvolk attendance, drill, and repetitious activities had eroded the early enthusiasm of the HJ.⁶⁴ The Hitler Youth, in short, had ceased to be fun and had become just another compulsory activity in an all too-regimented state. One means of counteracting this lowered morale was to offer new para-military sporting activities that catered to the particular interests of the HJ membership.

Special formations (Sonderformationen) were therefore instituted which provided instruction in flying,

⁶³Hans-Christian Brandenburg, Die Geschichte der HJ: Wege und Irrwege einer Generation (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1968), p. 171.

⁶⁴Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, pp. 94-95.

motorized and naval sports, and riding. These elite formations were not only more attractive to older boys than monotonous service in the 'Regular' HJ, but were also of interest to the armed forces and Waffen-SS, who supported such advanced special training of 'their' HJ branches by providing equipment and instructors.⁶⁵

Hermann Göring's comment that "the German flying spirit . . . was to find a new outlet in air sports,"⁶⁶ was first applied to the Hitler Youth in the form of gliding instruction. Gliding had been the major sport pioneered in Germany after World War I,⁶⁷ and in 1933 the Hitler Youth formed its first Air Sport Squads (Luftsportscharen). These groups initially concerned themselves with studying the principles of aviation and with building model gliders. By 1936 1,500 Hitler Youths participated in the annual model gliding competition held in Germany.⁶⁸

A year later the National Socialist Flying Corps (NS-Flieger-Korps or NSFK) was created for young men over the age of eighteen. This organization included within its

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 95.

⁶⁶Göring, Aufbau einer Nation, p. 99. Among his many titles Göring was also Hitler's Minister of Aviation, and thus vitally interested in the development of the new German Air Force (Luftwaffe).

⁶⁷Herbert Molloy Mason, Jr., The Rise of the Luftwaffe (New York: The Dial Press, 1973), pp. 149-150, 174.

⁶⁸Brandenburg, Die Geschichte der HJ, p. 173.

ranks a large body of skilled instructors for both gliding and motor-driven aircraft. Soon after the creation of the NSFK the Luftsportscharen were converted into the Flying HJ (Flieger-HJ). An agreement followed shortly thereafter between the HJ and the NSFK, whereby ideological indoctrination was carried out by the former and training in flying by the latter.⁶⁹

In the beginning, the flying enthusiasts among the Jungvolk were confined to model-building during their last two years of service with that organization. By 1941, however, it had become standard procedure for these boys to go directly into the regular HJ for a few months before joining the Flieger HJ. The future flying elite were distinguished by Luftwaffe-blue uniforms, and within their own ranks the initial distinction between the younger Jungvolk members and the older boys soon disappeared.⁷⁰

The essential purpose of instruction in the Flieger-HJ was to provide a basic knowledge of the theoretical and practical aspects of flying. Members began their apprenticeship by constructing model gliders and by assisting senior boys in their first gliding attempts. Between the ages of fourteen and eighteen flight-training

⁶⁹ Erich Gritzbach, Hermann Göring: Werk und Mensch (München: Franz Eher Nachf., 1938), p. 146.

⁷⁰ The originally strict differentiation between Jungvolk and HJ had, in any event, become increasingly blurred in the last years before the war, and had been officially abolished in 1940.

with gliders and sail-planes (Segelflugzeugen) began at special technical schools located in every Hitler Youth district throughout Germany.

In 1938 78,000 boys served in the Flieger-HJ, and over 15,000 of them earned either the A, B, or C certificates in gliding that year.⁷¹ As in all the special formations of the HJ, participation in sports, shooting, and ideological instruction remained obligatory along with the professional training. At the age of eighteen everyone who had earned one of the above certificates was eligible to continue his training in the NSFK prior to joining the Luftwaffe.⁷²

Another special formation of the Hitler Youth was the Motor-HJ which was established in 1933 with an initial membership of 3,000. Every boy interested in motor sports could become a member upon reaching his sixteenth birthday. Closely affiliated with the National Socialist Motor Corps (Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps, or NSKK) from 1934 onwards, the Motor-HJ was greatly expanded after 1936. By 1938 it was officially estimated to have a membership of 90,000 to 102,000. Despite a shortage of equipment, Motor-HJ members earned 10,000 driving licenses in 1937 and 28,000 in 1938.⁷³

⁷¹Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 96.

⁷²Gritzbach, Hermann Göring, p. 146.

⁷³Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 97.

To obtain these licenses the boys attended Motor Sport Schools (Motorsportschulen) where, under the supervision of the NSKK, they received instruction in all forms of motorized open-field sports and maneuvers (Kraftfahrge-ländesport). Other activities included participation in national motorcycling cross-country competitions and extended driving tours. Youths were also trained and utilized as messengers in the style of military dispatch riders.

In addition to driving, the Motor-HJ provided instruction in engine repair, communications, and the international traffic code. Proficiency in all these areas led to the attainment of the German Motor Sport Badge (Motor-sportabzeichen) which was created in 1938.⁷⁴ At the age of eighteen the young men could transfer to the NSKK to continue their training. The ultimate goal of this program was stated in an internal memorandum of the Reichsjugend-führung; "It goes without saying that members of the Motor-HJ will later fulfill their compulsory military service in the motorized units of the Wehrmacht."⁷⁵

A very popular Sonderformation, especially in northern Germany, was the Naval HJ (Marine-HJ) which attained a membership of 62,000 by 1939. In 1935 the first Reich Naval Sport School (Reichsseesportschule) was opened in

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Kaufmann, Das kommende Deutschland, p. 94.

Prieros (Brandenburg), followed later by another in Seemoos on the shores of Lake Constance. Additional Naval Sport Schools belonging to the Reichsjugendführung were located in Lauenhain near Mittweida and in Neusiedl in Austria. Many Hitler Youth districts also possessed their own schools for naval instruction.

Training in the Marine-HJ involved mastering basic naval skills such as the art of navigation, signalling with flags and lights, and knot-tying and splicing. Para-military exercises were regularly engaged in and took the form of river crossings and mock naval maneuvers, while the predominant sporting activities were team competitions in rowing and sailing. Competition was also institutionalized by the annual Reich Naval Sport Competition (Reichsseesportwettkämpfen) held at Kiel-Laboe, which saw the best Marine-HJ crews from all over Germany vie for honors in a variety of contests.⁷⁶

The goal of all training was to pass the Naval Sport Examination (Seesportprüfung) in order to obtain the Naval Sport Badge (Seesportabzeichen) of the Hitler Youth. By passing several other examinations a boy could also earn the A, B, or C sailing certificates, the latter qualifying him to take part in an instructional cruise in the Baltic with the German Navy.⁷⁷ Occasionally the training served a

⁷⁶Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 99.

⁷⁷Brandenburg, Die Geschichte der HJ, p. 172.

distinct political purpose, as in 1940 when an inland river navigation exercise carried units of the Marine-HJ to Budapest. Following an official reception by the Hungarian government, the boys staged a public parade for the benefit of their hosts.⁷⁸ In reality, this was a very pointed political demonstration, for shortly thereafter Hungary was pressured by Germany into joining the war on the side of the Axis powers.

Compared to the above formations the Cavalry HJ (Reiter-HJ) was a small group. Established in 1938, it had awarded by the end of 1939 over 11,000 certificates and badges for proficiency in horsemanship to its members. Primarily meant to attract the youth of rural regions, the riding detachments carried out their training during evening meetings and on week-ends. Through various special courses the boys were instructed in cavalry tactics and maneuvers designed to prepare them for future combat missions requiring great mobility. Their training was therefore considered to be "an excellent sporting preparation for later service as cavalrymen in the German armed forces."⁷⁹

Physical training for girls in the predominantly male-oriented Hitler Youth was, of course, meant to prepare them for motherhood, not the battle-field. This training

⁷⁸Koch, The Hitler Youth, p. 231.

⁷⁹Kaufmann, Das kommende Deutschland, pp. 97-99.

took place in the League of German Girls (Bund Deutscher Mädel or BdM), the female branch of the Hitler Youth.

Founded in 1930 and officially declared the only National Socialist organization for girls from 1932 onward, the BdM made physical health the cornerstone of its program. The Reichsjugendführer explained the importance of exercise for girls in the following terms:

The movement springs from the conviction that each individual is responsible for the purity of the whole race and . . . is obliged to develop his physical inheritance in such a way that he will enrich the national heritage. This is especially true for the German girl as the bearer of life and gives her the right to make a personal contribution to the whole nation. With the duty of pursuing physical fitness in the BdM, this right becomes a freely accepted obligation.⁸⁰

In order to implement a program that called for two-thirds of all available time to be devoted to physical training, a total of twenty-six leadership schools for girls were founded during the first half of 1934. Offering a variety of courses, these institutions were mainly concerned with developing sport leaders (Sportwartinnen). Twenty-three female senior district sport leaders (Obergausportwartinnen) were charged with supervising the curriculum.⁸¹

Although it is doubtful whether fully two-thirds of a girl's time was taken up with physical training, there is no denying the overall heavy emphasis on athletic activities

⁸⁰Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, p. 100.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 99.

in the BdM. From the ages of ten to twenty-one the girls participated in a great number of exercises. These ranged from simple games, calisthenics, and swimming, through track and field sports, dancing, and gymnastics, to hiking and marching. As with the boys, these events took place after school, at evening meetings, and on week-ends. Week-ends were especially busy, being invariably taken up with outings, camping, and marches during which the girls carried heavy packs on their backs.

Because the aim of all physical activity was to make the girls fit to bear children, their PT was not a form of para-military training (with the exception of marching), and participation rather than competition was stressed in sporting events. Although drill was officially banned, it was not unusual for girls to be marched up and down as soldiers on the barrack-square, with a girl leader barking the commands.⁸² Occasionally such tactics took the form of ideological instruction in practice. A former BdM member has described how her own subdistrict leader brought this about:

She sometimes marched us down the Kurfürstendamm in threes and doubled us part of the way. We had to stamp our feet as loudly as we could. 'The rich Jews live here,' she used to say. 'No harm in disturbing their afternoon nap a little.'⁸³

⁸² Ilse McKee, Tomorrow the World (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1960), p. 8.

⁸³ Melitta Maschmann, Fazit: Kein Rechtfertigungsversuch (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1963), p. 27.

To stimulate enthusiasm for sporting activities and to help produce future 'heroic women,' Schirach introduced the BdM Physical Fitness Badge (Leistungsabzeichen) in 1934. The requirements for this award were a fairly good record in all activities rather than any attempt at athletic specialization, a firm understanding of cross-country marching and hiking practices, and knowledge of first aid. Those girls who were particularly gifted were allowed to develop themselves further in the sports clubs.⁸⁴

A ten-year-old girl was required to run sixty metres in fourteen seconds, perform a long-jump of two metres, throw a ball twelve metres, and correctly execute two forward and two backward somersaults. By accomplishing this she passed the Jungmadel test which entitled her to wear a special neckerchief. A German Madel could then earn the BdM's bronze Physical Fitness Badge by accurately throwing a ball at a target and marching cross-country armed only with a survey map, by jumping into cold water from a height of three metres, and by performing a flying forward roll.⁸⁵ As the girls grew older they were expected to run sixty metres in twelve seconds, long jump two and a half metres, throw a ball twenty metres, perform more difficult

⁸⁴Howard Becker, German Youth: Bond or Free (London: Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., 1946), p. 187.

⁸⁵Bleuel, Das saubere Reich, p. 161.

gymnastic techniques, engage in two hours' route-marching, and swim 100 metres.⁸⁶

The athletic skills acquired from physical training were frequently put on public display. By 1935 nearly half a million girls had already participated in over 300 sports festivals. Primarily intended to promote and glorify the PT program of the BdM, these early meets were also meant to alleviate parental anxiety over the seriousness of purpose of girls' athletics.⁸⁷ Because a heavy physical education program for young girls was a revolutionary innovation for many regions of Germany (especially for some of the rural farming areas of East Prussia), the Reichsjugendführer also felt compelled to declare that

The games of small girls and the systematic physical education of older girls can lead in no way, as many an old aunt feared, to endangering their morality and the like, but on the contrary: the harmonious development of the natural physical abilities produced in young girls that self-confidence and pride which are a better protection against moral dangers of the world, than the sermons of such people who are hermetically sealed off from real life.⁸⁸

Despite Schirach's attempt to portray girls' physical training as a meaningful activity, public opinion ascribed a general aura of moral laxity to the Bund deutscher Mädchen.

⁸⁶Hans Jochen Gamm, Führung und Verführung: Pädagogik des National Sozialismus (München: List Verlag, 1964), p. 341.

⁸⁷Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, p. 101.

⁸⁸Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung, p. 47.

Even its very initials were invested with sexual overtones. Some of the more popular interpretations of the letters BdM were: Bald deutsche Mütter (German mothers-to-be), Bubi drück mich (Squeeze me, Sonny), Bedarfsartikel deutscher Männer (Commodities for German men), and Brauch deutsche Mädchen (Make use of German girls).⁸⁹ Such irreverencies were probably unavoidable given the Nazi preoccupation with reproduction and the public's lingering suspicion of the value of extensive exercise for girls.

Physical training for girls was to have been completed between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one in the 'Faith and Beauty' (Glaube und Schönheit) branch of the BdM that was formed in January, 1938. Although the outbreak of war cut short the development of this organization, its three main subjects were sport, eurythmics, and hygiene. Apart from ideological instruction and occupational training, a final physical refinement would have been acquired through ballroom dancing, riding, and tennis.⁹⁰

In the last few years before World War II boys' physical training became more unapologetically a paramilitary activity as Hitler stepped up his preparations for war. In addition to the Sonderformationen, nothing illustrates this trend more clearly than the increased emphasis

⁸⁹ Bleuel, Das saubere Reich, p. 136.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 163-164.

on marksmanship practice after 1936. Though the Reichsjugendführung always insisted that target shooting was a sport activity, this phase of the PT program was supported by the military authorities. The Hitler Youth yearbook in 1939 declared that: "To handle a rifle should be just as natural for everybody as to handle a pen." It also stated that the army had given the HJ some 10,000 small calibre rifles in 1937, and that approximately 10,000 shooting ranges had been constructed since 1936 at which the boys could develop their skills.⁹¹

In 1937 an HJ rifle school was opened and in 1938, a year officially christened the "Year of Understanding" (Das Jahr der Verständigung) by Schirach, his organization possessed over 15,000 rifles with which nearly a million fourteen to eighteen year olds furthered understanding by participating in shooting competitions.⁹² The following year the HJ added a marksman's badge to its awards for shooting. Also from 1939 onwards the High Command of the Armed Forces effected a closer cooperation with the Reichsjugendführung by supervising Hitler Youth shooting and field exercises.

Once war began the para-military aspects of physical training became even more pronounced, with less time being

⁹¹Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Supplement A, p. 550.

⁹²Frankfurter Zeitung, 13 December 1938.

given to such fundamental exercises as calisthenics and gymnastics. In order to combat the progressively adverse physical effects of the war on young people, Arthur Axmann (Baldur von Schirach's successor as Reichsjugendführer) in 1943 called for an increase in basic physical conditioning activities and for an enlargement of the existing sports program. A National Swim Day (Reichsschwimmtag) was even introduced for the benefit of rural youths, up to 85 percent of whom still could not swim.⁹³ The deteriorating military situation prevented a full implementation of these plans, however.

An additional attempt to improve the physical well-being of the young while simultaneously intensifying their existing para-military training took place in the special pre-military training camps (HJ-Wehrertüchtigungslager) that were set up in 1944. The three week courses they offered were designed to offset the increasing nervousness and ill health of youth by bringing all newly inducted recruits to a minimum standard of fitness. This was done through a combination of toughening-up exercises, additional food, and medical attention. Everyone also received three weeks of infantry instruction before being transferred to their basic training camp.⁹⁴

⁹³Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 121.

⁹⁴Jakob Schiefer, Tagebuch eines Wehrunwürdigen (Aachen: Grenzland Verlag, 1947), p. 285.

The exigencies of war eventually drew Hitler Youths into active combat service. From 1943 onwards they were assigned to anti-aircraft duties and in June of that year a special HJ division within the Waffen-SS was created. This unit, eventually named the 12th SS-Panzer Division Hitlerjugend, saw its first action in the Normandy campaign of 1944 during which the boys " . . . fought with a tenacity and ferocity seldom equalled and never excelled during the whole campaign."⁹⁵

Hitler Youths fought in other formations as well, most notably in the Volksghrenadier divisions and in the units of the home guard (Volkssturm) which was formed in October, 1944. To the very end Germany's youth more often than not obeyed the call to assist in the defense of the Reich. Physically trained and ideologically prepared to endure the crucible of war, they responded with an idealism and willingness for personal sacrifice that was worthy of a better cause than that of National Socialism.

The role of physical training in tapping youth's latent potential for idealism and in eliciting this sacrificial response from millions of young people was a significant one. By skillfully combining ideological instruction with the need for physical conditioning, the Nazis were able to produce youngsters imbued with the spirit of

⁹⁵ Chester Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe (New York: Harper, 1952), p. 343.

National Socialism who were determined to create a better Germany through their own efforts.

The constant appeal to comradeship, community, and love of homeland proved attractive to the young,⁹⁶ and was reinforced by the sports and games of the Hitler Youth which emphasized collective achievement over individual glory. The enthusiasm of the young was also captured by the egalitarian framework of the youth organizations,⁹⁷ and by the consequent equality of opportunity that existed.⁹⁸ Underprivileged youngsters especially found they could compete on an equal basis through athletic proficiency for admission to the Reichsführer and elite schools, thus gaining the opportunity for a leadership position within the Nazi state.⁹⁹

Because of the heavy emphasis on physical training in the Hitler Youth, it is logical to conclude that the general level of youthful physical fitness was raised during the Third Reich. The many athletic badges and certificates earned by hundreds of thousands of German boys and girls

⁹⁶Inge Scholl, Die weisse Rose (Frankfurt: Verlag der Frankfurter Hefte, 1952), pp. 10-12. The Author's brother and sister were Hans and Sophie Scholl, the leaders of a student revolt against National Socialist rule known as the White Rose Conspiracy. Caught distributing anti-Nazi pamphlets in February, 1943, they were both quickly executed.

⁹⁷Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, pp. 77-78.

⁹⁸Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung, p. 84.

⁹⁹Brennecke, The Nazi Primer, pp. XXII-XXV.

would certainly seem to confirm this. The official pre-occupation with physical prowess nevertheless encouraged many youngsters to engage in reckless endurance tests and to exceed their bodily capabilities, thus forcing the Reichsjugendführung to take vigorous counter-measures.¹⁰⁰

Despite Schirach's guidelines for preventing over-exertion¹⁰¹ and the efforts of an extensive Hitler Youth Medical Service (Gesundheitsdienst) to minimize the abuses that did occur,¹⁰² the rigorousness of the PT program claimed its toll of youthful disabilities. The strain of intense physical training undoubtedly contributed to the increased nervousness of young people that was noticed both in Germany and abroad.¹⁰³ In one case, doctors examining youths aged ten to eighteen who had recently returned from Hitler Youth Camps discovered fifty cases of digestive disturbance, presumably due to nervous tension.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Bernhard Vollmer, Volksopposition im Polizeistaat: Gestapo und Regierungsberichte 1934-1936 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1957, p. 133.

¹⁰¹ Schirach, Die Hitler Jugend, pp. 108-109, 211-215.

¹⁰² Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, pp. 109-110.

¹⁰³ The Times (London), 2 July 1937. In 1937 representatives of the British Board of Education had observed that "Young people of Germany are being subjected to intense nervous strain--we were impressed by the tenseness and seriousness of expression among young people at school and in the Hitler Youth."

¹⁰⁴ Frankfurter Zeitung, 5 July 1938, quoting Dozent Dr. Joppich in the Münchener medizinische Wochenschrift.

An obvious deterioration of orthopedic health also took place. A report issued in 1937 stated that one out of every three conscripts examined in 1936 was found to be suffering from flat feet.¹⁰⁵ Since the majority of these recruits had been Hitler Youth members, it seems more than likely that the many long distance marches they had undergone as youngsters on hard roads while carrying heavy packs helped cause this particular defect.

Indicative of the concern for the physical well-being of the young was the significant move made by the regional youth leader for Hanover. In the fall of 1937 he ordered a reduction of Hitler Youth activities for the coming winter, and he appealed to school officials to do the same, because "youngsters, especially leaders, were so preoccupied with their youth service that health defects and fatigue symptoms had become unavoidable."¹⁰⁶

The frequent activity for activity's sake that was characteristic of the Hitler Youth and that was meant to form the younger generation into the desired Nazi mold, increasingly alienated many youngsters, however, because the repetitious proceedings soon began to smack of duty alone. Although a highly fragmented youthful political opposition to the National Socialist state had always

¹⁰⁵ Frankfurter Zeitung, 27 May 1937.

¹⁰⁶ Frankfurter Zeitung, 6 November 1937.

existed,¹⁰⁷ the rebellion against regimentation was non-political and frequently took the form of evading Hitler Youth duties in favor of establishing illicit cliques that pursued such normal youthful hobbies as dancing, listening to records, and visiting taverns.¹⁰⁸

Among the duties avoided were the various activities associated with physical training. Both boys¹⁰⁹ and girls¹¹⁰ discovered that whereas the games and sports of former times could be terminated at will, under the Nazis they were marked by compulsion and severe demands. Many of the weaker children could not meet the stringent athletic requirements, and after a while the average child grew weary of the severe drill, the constant exercising, and the rigid emphasis on absolute obedience. Eventually "they began to rebel against the 'supreme authority' as a disagreeable pressure which, with its reiteration of 'duty,' robbed them of all leisure and possibility of romping about at their own sweet will."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷Arno Klönne, Gegen den Strom: Bericht über den Jugendwiderstand im Dritten Reich (Hannover and Frankfurt a/M: Norddeutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1957), pp. 115-119, 132-133.

¹⁰⁸Klose, Generation im Gleichschritt, p. 222.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 116.

¹¹⁰McKee, Tomorrow the World, p. 9.

¹¹¹Max Seydewitz, Civil Life in Wartime Germany: The Story of the Home Front (New York: The Viking Press, 1945), p. 339.

Despite its drawbacks, physical training in the Hitler Youth nevertheless fulfilled its essential 'educational' function of preparing Germany's young people for their future careers as soldiers and mothers. In conjunction with ideological indoctrination, it also helped form a balanced program designed to thoroughly integrate youth into a national community based upon National Socialist ideas. The varied athletic activities furthermore played a key role in the effective control of leisure time that is so necessary to any government desirous of totalitarian rule. Because the physical training program was part of an instructional plan meant to infuse the young with the militant ideals of National Socialism, its implementation clearly reveals Nazism for what it was--a dynamic and ruthless force that led youth into a war where only death and destruction awaited.

VI.

OTHER AREAS OF PHYSICAL TRAINING

It was in the Labor Service (Arbeitsdienst) that youth received its final pre-military physical training following graduation from school and the HJ. This institution, like its New Deal equivalent, the Civilian Conservation Corps, was inaugurated during the depression at the end of the Weimar Republic for the purpose of reducing unemployment through public works. Taken over after the assumption of power, the Labor Service was soon turned to ideological advantage by the Nazis. It became the ultimate manifestation of the 'Socialist' principles of the regime by making every trainee serve under the same conditions. This egalitarian function of the Arbeitsdienst was expressed by its leader, the retired army officer Konstantin Hierl, when he stated that the best way of overcoming class conflict was to dress everyone in the same uniform as they toiled in common service to Volk and Vaterland.¹

The basic anti-intellectual bias of this service was manifested from the beginning in 1933 when it was declared

¹Völkischer Beobachter, 1 May 1933.

mandatory for all university students while remaining voluntary for everyone else.² Hitler explained why students had to learn to respect manual labor in a May Day speech in 1934:

We want to destroy the arrogance with which unfortunately so many intellectuals feel that they must look down upon labour, and on the other hand we wish to strengthen in them self-confidence through their consciousness that they too can perform bodily work. But beyond this we wish to contribute to the mutual understanding of the different classes in order to reinforce the tie which binds together the community of the people . . .³

The Arbeitsdienst, which became a universal six-month obligation for every German man between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five in 1935, was expected to develop an appreciation for unselfish work in the service of the national community in each individual.⁴ It was furthermore expected that the work would also foster a sense of comradeship that would extend beyond the period of youth, and that it would promote those qualities essential to future leaders such as responsibility, independence, discipline, and physical fitness.

²"Der Student im neuen Deutschland kennt keinen Standesdünkel," Völkischer Beobachter, 21 July 1933.

³Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, p. 443.

⁴The Labor Service is an example of what Melita Maschmann has termed the 'good tendencies' of National Socialism that appealed to the idealism of youth because they " . . . brought us up to make sacrifices for a cause which was not a part of our selfish aims . . ." Maschmann, Fazit, p. 218.

Apart from its purpose of obliterating class distinctions, the main object of the Labor Service was to engage German youth in hard physical work in camps (Arbeitslager) operated and disciplined on military lines. The young men were mainly employed on the land and performed such reclamation tasks as clearing fields for ploughing, digging ditches to drain marshes, and cutting undergrowth to clear irrigation canals.

Such work initially delayed the entry of young people into the labor market and thus opened up jobs for family men. When unemployment ceased to be a problem and labor became scarce, the Arbeitsdienst provided an increasing source of cheap labor that was used in the struggle to make Germany self-sufficient in her foodstuffs in preparation for war. Since the Nazis had always regarded the peasantry as physically the most healthy section of the population, this forced agricultural service of youth also intersected nicely with the anti-urban motif of Blut und Boden (blood and soil).⁵

That the attainment of physical fitness was one of the primary 'educational' goals of the Labor Service, was

⁵The National Socialist theme of Blut und Boden was essentially a romantic glorification of the superior moral and physical virtues of rural life. Free from the decadence of the city, the peasants, as tillers of the 'sacred' German soil, were held to be the very foundation of national strength and the biological source of pure German blood.

made clear by Hitler in his speech to the men of that organization at the 1938 Nuremberg Party Rally:

You are helping, too, to educate a new generation that stands firm on the soil of the homeland in health and power and strength. You yourselves are the expression in flesh and blood of this German manhood as we would have it in the future. Burned brown and hard as steel--that is the youth of the German people to-day . . .⁶

Echoing Hitler, Senior Labor Leader Müller-Brandenburg declared that physical education in the Arbeitsdienst was "designed to improve the entire physique of the worker, and especially to give him suppleness of limb."⁷ He further asserted that the Reich Labor Service was determined to maintain the physical superiority of German youth "because it is of enormous importance to the health of our people that our young manhood should undergo this physical education."⁸

In addition to the hard physical work in the camps, physical fitness was also promoted by military drill and by calisthenics and sports. Drill was an inherent part of camp life and consisted of basic squad work in marching, turning, and goose-stepping. It also involved a form of small-arms training with spades--"Shoulder spades"

⁶Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, pp. 982-983.

⁷Müller-Brandenburg, "State Labour Service In Germany" in Germany Speaks, p. 194.

⁸Ibid.

"Present spades" patterned after the army's 'manual of arms' drill.⁹

The obsessive drilling of labor recruits, the military-style uniforms worn by the men, the heel-clicking and saluting, and the sentry duties all combined to give the camps a distinctly military appearance. Such things were defended as 'soldierly' (soldatisch) however, in the sense that they were smart, disciplined, and manly, rather than 'militaristic' (militarisch) which implied actual training in the use of weapons. Prior to the reintroduction of universal conscription in 1935 and especially during the preliminary stages of military expansion, the Arbeitsdienst nevertheless served as a major agency of pre-military training, a function it continued to fulfill throughout the Third Reich.

Because of their genuine affection for drill and uniforms, many of the labor trainees preferred to engage in drill rather than play football in the afternoons during their mandatory sports hour--they simply considered marching and training quite honestly as a sport.¹⁰ Along with drill, the sporting activities themselves illustrate the 'militaristic' character of the camps in that they were mainly of a martial nature. The fundamental movements, marches, and

⁹G. S. Cox, "In a Nazi Labor Camp: A Spartan Routine" in John Weiss (editor) Nazis and Fascists in Europe, 1918-1945 (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), p. 157.

¹⁰Ibid.

games associated with Geländesport were regularly practiced during the sports hour and the most prominent Wehrsport activity was the throwing of dummy hand grenades. The aim of all physical training in the Labor Service was the same as that of the schools and the Hitler Youth; the promotion of health, dexterity, strength, and endurance. The military sports were deemed especially important because they fostered a good soldierly bearing and because they put the mind "in control of the body."¹¹

In the women's camps (Frauen Arbeitslager) physical fitness was almost exclusively furthered by work done in the fields of neighboring farms. The Labor Service for girls was established on a voluntary basis in 1936 and claimed only a modest membership until January, 1939, when a one year service obligation was imposed on all girls under the age of twenty-five.¹² Since the service was made mandatory only because of the severe labor shortage that existed in 1939,¹³ its main purpose was to employ young women in farm work and in assisting the mothers of large families in their household duties. The physical exercise resulting from such work was therefore in reality merely an added

¹¹Kneller, The Educational Philosophy of National Socialism, pp. 167-168.

¹²Völkischer Beobachter, 3 January 1939.

¹³"Weiblicher Arbeitsdienst und Pflichtjahr," Völkischer Beobachter, 8 January 1939.

benefit and not the result of any officially planned physical training program.

The political instruction given in the men's labor camps, while covering the main tenets of Nazi ideology, focused primarily on the glories of war and the opportunities it presented for 'manly development.'¹⁴ Such instruction provided the rationale for the Labor Service's intimate linking of physical fitness with para-military training. By doing so it also helped make the Arbeitsdienst the last step in a physical training program designed to prepare German youth from childhood on for future military service.

Most foreigners who visited the labor camps in the 1930s observed the obvious physical benefits of having city youth spend six months under the healthy conditions of these camps. One of those who visited several of these installations in various geographic regions of Germany, reported that he was impressed "by not only the truly German perfection of the organization, but also by the healthy and cheerful appearance of the young men themselves and the obvious pride they took in their hard physical labor."¹⁵

The success of the entire National Socialist physical training program for youth, in which the Labor Service

¹⁴Cox, "In a Nazi Labor Camp: A Spartan Routine," p. 156.

¹⁵Michael T. Florinsky, Fascism and National Socialism: A Study of the Economic and Social Policies of the Totalitarian State (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1936), pp. 230-231. This was the author's personal observation.

provided a final physical polishing, was noted by an American correspondent during the dark days of Nazi military triumphs in 1940:

The young in the Third Reich were growing up to have strong and healthy bodies, faith in the future of their country and in themselves and a sense of fellowship and camaraderie that shattered all class and economic and social barriers. I thought of that later, in the May days of 1940, when along the road between Aachen and Brussels one saw the contrast between the German soldiers, bronzed and clean-cut from a youth spent in the sunshine on an adequate diet, and the first British war prisoners, with their hollow chests, round shoulders, pasty complexions and bad teeth--tragic examples of the youth that England had neglected so irresponsibly in the years between the wars.¹⁶

Although youth bore the greatest burden of increased physical training in the Third Reich, the Nazis also made a vigorous attempt to raise the general level of physical fitness of the adult population as well. This endeavor primarily occurred through the vast leisure organization Strength Through Joy (Kraft durch Freude or KdF) that was created within the German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront or DAF), the huge Nazi association of all workers that was established after the dissolution of the free trade unions in May, 1933.

The Strength Through Joy organization was founded by Dr. Robert Ley, the leader of the DAF on November 27, 1933. Initially called 'After Work' (Nach der Arbeit) following the Italian Fascist leisure organization, the

¹⁶Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 256.

Dopolavoro, the KdF's function was to organize the spare time of the work force in a manner harmonious with the interests of the regime. Control of such leisure activity was vitally important since any unorganized free time would have constituted a vacuum¹⁷ in the structure of Nazi totalitarianism.

The Strength Through Joy program was therefore meant to encourage a sense of egalitarianism and community spirit, and to divert attention from the increasing regimentation of life in the Third Reich. It was also meant to render more tolerable a low wage standard caused by the need to restrict consumption if rearmament was to continue. The KdF organization was more than a mere diversionary tactic however; in addition to tranquilizing the workers politically, it can also be considered the Nazi method of dealing with the problem of increased leisure time, a problem "which tends to be characteristic of all advanced industrial societies."¹⁸

Another purpose behind Strength Through Joy was the aim of ensuring maximum relaxation for every German worker so that he could return to work refreshed and energetic.

¹⁷Ever methodical, the Nazis determined the size of this potential vacuum to be 3,740 hours per year. This was calculated by subtracting 24 percent work time and 33-1/3 percent sleep time from the 8,760 hours that make up a year, Franz Neumann, Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933-1944 (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 429.

¹⁸Michael A. Merritt, "Strength Through Joy: Regimented Leisure in Nazi Germany" in Nazism and the Common Man, p. 62.

Because of Hitler's desire for increased economic production,¹⁹ he informed Ley to "See to it that leisure and recreation keep the nerves of the toiling masses sound and strong enough to facilitate a vigorous policy."²⁰ This calloused regard for the people's good health only insofar as it affected their productive capacity, led to the institution of a varied recreational program for the masses.

To keep the workers relaxed, physically fit and strong-nerved enough to serve as pawns in the Führer's geopolitical chess-game, the 'Leisure Bureau' offered numerous opportunities to attend theatre, film, and musical performances, to go on week-end excursions as well as longer holidays, and to engage in all types of sporting activities. To make the workers realize that they were members of a true people's community (Volkgemeinschaft) based on equality of opportunity rather than on social standing,²¹ these benefits were equally available to worker and employer alike on an inexpensive basis.

Despite this egalitarian framework, Gerhard Starcke, the press officer of the Labor Front, was quite frank about the main purpose of these social opportunities:

¹⁹Domarus, Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen, p. 690.

²⁰Robert Ley, Deutschland ist Schöner geworden (Berlin: Mehden Verlag, 1937), p. 91.

²¹Willy Müller, Das soziale Leben im neuen Deutschland unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Deutschen Arbeitsfront (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1938), p. 176.

We do not send our workers on vacation on our own ships or build them seaside resorts for our own amusement or that of the individual who has the chance to make use of them. We do it merely to maintain the individual's capacity for work (Arbeitskraft) and in order to return him to his place of employment strengthened and refreshed. KdF does, so to speak, overhaul every worker from time to time, just as the engine of a motor vehicle must be overhauled after it has done a certain number of kilometers.²²

A major means of invigorating and refreshing the worker was through the extensive physical training program offered by Strength Through Joy. By participating in this program the laborer would, in accord with the organization's name, acquire new 'strength' to help rebuild Germany's armed forces.

The KdF's great interest in furthering sports was a natural consequence of Ley's belief that " . . . physical education is one of the main planks of the reconstruction programme of modern Germany . . ."²³ Since Ley declared everyone in the Third Reich a 'soldier of the Führer' engaged in the battle for production, the individual workman's health was no longer considered a private matter.²⁴

²²Gerhard Starcke, Die deutsche Arbeitsfront: Eine Darstellung über Zweck, Leistungen, und Ziele (Berlin: Verlag für Sozialpolitik, Wirtschaft und Statistik, 1940), p. 10.

²³Robert Ley, "Social Policy In The New Germany" in Germany Speaks, p. 169.

²⁴Robert Ley, Soldaten der Arbeit (München: Franz Eher Nachf., 1942), p. 139.

It was the nation's health that was the major concern of the DAF leader:

It is perhaps the most fundamental deed in the forming of a contented people when it succeeds in maintaining the people's health. This includes everything. It signifies for the individual person health and happiness in his work, in his performance, in his overall ability, in his creativity. Without health--everyone knows this--everything else has no value.²⁵

Every working German was consequently subjected to a barrage of KdF propaganda aimed at enlisting his participation in some form of physical exercise or sport. Since there were approximately thirty million members of the German labor force, and the National Federation for Physical Training (Deutscher Reichsbund für Leibesübungen) claimed a membership of only six million, a sizeable proportion of the adult population was obviously indifferent to athletic activity. It was the job of the Kraft durch Freude sports office (Sportamt) to activate as many of these non-participants as possible in the hope that once they were exposed to the pleasures of physical exertion, these people would become lifelong devotees of systematic exercise.

The sports office began its operation in April, 1934, determined to make physical activities popular among all of the people, both for the individual's benefit and for the nation's. All phases of its program were accompanied by incessant propaganda which constantly stressed the 'healthy value' of physical exercise and its relationship to the

²⁵Ibid., p. 137.

Nazi Weltanschauung. In this manner all participants received "an inner spiritual and intellectually sound development" which gave them "a deeper incentive than that of pure physical fitness."²⁶

Both the ideological indoctrination and the physical instruction were carried out by a corps of sports instructors, most of whom were (at least initially) professionals belonging to the National Association of German Gymnastic and Sport Instructors (Reichsverband Deutscher Turn, Sport und Gymnastiklehrer). The rapid expansion of the sports program eventually forced KdF to develop its own instructors, so that the total of those employed grew from 1,300 at the end of 1935²⁷ to almost 5,000 by 1938.²⁸ To further assist the worker in his athletic pursuits, all branch sports offices also offered free medical advice to those in need of such a service.

The courses offered by the Sportamt were open to anyone choosing to participate, the sole requirement being possession of a yearly sport card which could be purchased for a nominal sum. All kinds of sports were available, with special courses for beginners as well as more advanced programs. The younger workers could choose activities

²⁶Ley, Deutschland ist Schöner geworden, p. 94.

²⁷Ley, "Social Policy In The New Germany," p. 169.

²⁸Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, p. 964.

ranging from track and field, swimming, and boxing, to all types of games and winter sports, while the older men (for whom sports were also considered necessary)²⁹ were offered bicycling and golf. The KdF sports program also included women and even small children were given special gymnastic training.³⁰

Participation in all the courses was quite inexpensive. For less than a mark the working man could use the facilities of a gymnasium and instruction in swimming was not much more. Skiing trips at low group rates were also arranged in the winter through the KdF travel office. A special effort of the Sportamt was to make the fees and equipment rental as low as possible for such sports as tennis, horseback riding, and golf in order to make these formerly expensive and exclusive pursuits accessible to everyone.³¹

An additional aspect of the sporting program was the emphasis on those activities which were considered militarily useful and most similar to the para-military sporting activities of the Hitler Youth, such as riding, sailing, skiing, and pistol-shooting. This stress on

²⁹Ley, Soldaten der Arbeit, p. 212.

³⁰Ley, Deutschland ist Schöner geworden, p. 96.

³¹Robert Ley, Ein Volk erobert die Freude (Leistungsbericht und Zielsetzung zum 4 Jahrestag der NS. Gemeinschaft "Kraft durch Freude" am 27. November, 1937), p. 21.

military sports thus provided the Nazis with yet another avenue for carrying out para-military training.

Although the main purpose of KdF-sponsored physical training was to sustain and improve the workers' productive capacity, the development of a 'competitive spirit' was not neglected. In order to furnish suitable competition for its more ardent sportsmen, Strength Through Joy maintained a close working relationship with the National Federation for Physical Training. The two organizations not only arranged dual sport meetings, but provision was also made for those members of Kraft durch Freude who were interested in improving their athletic abilities to join the clubs of the Federation.³²

Competition was further stimulated by inter-factory meets involving all sections of Germany. In addition to promoting competition, these get-togethers were also meant to help Germans become familiar with their fellow countrymen from other regions of the nation. Sports were thus used to reverse traditional German particularism, a reversal that had to be effected if the Nazis were to bring about their long-proclaimed 'Volksgemeinschaft.'

In December, 1936, Strength Through Joy introduced physical training into the factories. The Labor Front explained this expansion of the KdF athletic program by stating that it was "of great political importance that the

³²Weir, Europe at Play, p. 552.

community spirit associated with physical exercise can make a considerable contribution to the highest principle of National Socialist working life--the unity of the plant in the spirit of the plant community."³³ Dr. Ley further observed that the highest work performances could generally only be obtained from workers unified by this community spirit,³⁴ and that one of the best ways of developing this spirit was through the "Common participation in sport of an entire factory community . . ."³⁵ For the promotion of 'team spirit' among the workers he particularly recommended the cultivation of competitive sports.³⁶

The major reason for the institution of physical training in the factories was, as indicated by Ley, the desire again to increase worker productivity. The concern with greater productivity at this particular time is explained by the adoption of the Four-Year Plan in October, 1936, which called for a major reorientation of the German economy in order to attain maximum self-sufficiency in raw materials. This decision to make the economy ready for war within four years required an even more efficient labor force than before. As Ley put it: "The Four-Year Plan therefore forces us to always make sure the people in their

³³Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, p. 439.

³⁴Ley, Soldaten der Arbeit, p. 210.

³⁵Ley, Ein Volk erobert die Freude, p. 19.

³⁶Ibid.

jobs and work are accomplishing the goals set for them. We have seen the devastating results when the people become lazy and negligent."³⁷

The Nazis not only felt that physical training in the factories would further strengthen the worker for his new tasks, but that it would also help prevent industrial injuries by fostering alertness in the labor force. Since it was apparently believed that youths who began working right after finishing school were particularly liable to such injuries, every plant employing more than fifteen apprentices was required to provide at least two hours of PT each week for its young employees.³⁸

All workers were expected to maintain a reasonable level of physical fitness. In order to measure their physical efficiency, PT examinations were given at regular intervals, with only average scores being required to pass. Another purpose of these examinations was to "'serve as a stimulus to some persons to maintain and develop themselves physically.'"³⁹ It appears that those who failed to pass these tests were subjected to nothing more severe, however, than general pressure from the plant authorities to raise their scores.

³⁷Ley, Soldaten der Arbeit, p. 213.

³⁸Frankfurter Zeitung, 24 July 1937.

³⁹Merritt, "Strength Through Joy: Regimented Leisure in Nazi Germany," p. 70.

Physical training in the factories consisted primarily of compulsory daily exercise periods (usually lasting no longer than ten minutes) and the fielding of athletic teams which competed both among themselves and with other factories. There was also an annual spring run through the forests and summer and winter sports festivals which featured competitions in various events. Everything possible was done to make sure that everyone at some time or other experienced the 'allurement of sporting activity.' The summer festival, for instance, included a 'Competition of Good Will' (Wettbewerb des guten Willens) in which all workers had to participate, even if this only meant a small march.⁴⁰ If we are to believe Ley's figures, there were already over 5,000 Factory Sport Associations (Betriebs-sportgemeinschaften) in existence by the end of 1937.⁴¹

These sporting activities were aided by the construction of athletic facilities in many factories under the auspices of the 'Beauty of Labor' (Schönheit der Arbeit) organization. The function of this organization was to persuade employers to improve working conditions within their plants. Because of the heavy emphasis on physical fitness, a large number of the improvements made were in the form of new swimming pools, gymnasiums, playgrounds,

⁴⁰ Diem, Weltgeschichte, p. 1012.

⁴¹ Ley, Ein Volk erobert die Freude, p. 19.

and games areas. According to the estimates of the Labor Front, some 3,000 new sports facilities had been built by 1939.⁴²

The physical fitness program of Kraft durch Freude even extended to a worker's vacation. Early morning calisthenics were invariably included in the comprehensive ship-board program that was part of any pleasure cruise organized by the KdF travel office. Both employees and employers were also encouraged to use the athletic equipment that was to be found on every ship. To further impress upon the workers that they were equal members of a great national community, the ships which were used in the travel program were designated as 'classless' and all such equipment was therefore available to everyone without differentiation.

Similarly, in 1937 the KdF sports office made gymnastics part of the established routine at all sea-side resorts. As Ley explained, "The idea has taken hold that a vacation should not be a time of absolute immobility (Bewegungslosigkeit), but that it should be used for a thorough physical renewal (gründliche körperliche Auffrischung)." ⁴³

This concept also applied to vacations spent in the so-called recreation or convalescent homes (Erholungsheimen)

⁴²Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, p. 438.

⁴³Ley, Ein Volk erobert die Freude, p. 20.

where all kinds of sports and games were played. For those workers who took their sports seriously, there was even a KdF sport camp movement (Sportlagerbewegung) which provided the opportunity to devote an entire vacation to the pursuit of athletic excellence.⁴⁴

Hiking was the final major physical activity promoted by Strength Through Joy. Thousands of hikes to all sections of Germany took place each year, either as weekend outings or as part of KdF vacation trips. In addition to its physical benefits, hiking, as Ley pointed out, was " . . . the cheapest type of vacation and is particularly suited to creating indissoluble comradeship and a love for one's country."⁴⁵ Some 15,000 trained hiking leaders were employed to develop this sense of attachment to the Fatherland by pointing out the scenic wonders of the areas visited. It was also assumed that such excursions would help dispel "Whatever regional antagonisms may still have divided Germans."⁴⁶

In evaluating the KdF physical training program, it should be kept in mind that it performed a dual function; it not only benefited the state, but the people as well. From the Nazis' point of view, PT played a major role in

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ley, Deutschland ist Schöner geworden, p. 90.

⁴⁶Ley, "Social Policy In The New Germany," p. 167.

keeping the workers occupied during their leisure time. Since they had always been the least enthusiastic supporters of National Socialism and might well have turned uncontrolled leisure time toward anti-Nazi activities, this was indeed a vital service.

The athletic 'circuses' also helped to sustain the working capacity of the labor force and furthermore served to indicate that the state cared about the worker. Given the political naiveté of the masses, it seems logical to conclude that the opportunity for many Germans to participate in organized sports for the first time may well have convinced at least some that the government did indeed care about their welfare.

Although the Nazi propensity towards over-exertion inevitably created certain health hazards for those over forty-five,⁴⁷ the official preoccupation with physical fitness could only have a favorable effect on the health of the average worker. The German working man further profited from the fitness mania by having facilities made available to him that he normally would never have had the chance to use, such as swimming pools, gymnasiums, and games areas. The low fees charged for all courses and equipment rentals were another distinct benefit.

There is no doubt that the Kraft durch Freude sporting program was popular. In the district of greater

⁴⁷Grunberger, The 12-Year Reich, p. 243.

Berlin alone, five and a half million participants in various athletic events were recorded through 1938.⁴⁸ The national figures are even more impressive. In 1935 over three million Germans availed themselves of the opportunity to take part in KdF-sponsored sports,⁴⁹ and in 1938 there were over ten million participants (not counting factory sports).⁵⁰

It seems likely that most of these people were not driven by any ideological compulsion to engage in athletic activity, but did so simply to have fun. This is indicated by the great popularity of those courses in which both men and women could participate together, such as gymnastics and swimming. The creation of the 'happy German worker' which the Nazis so ardently desired was naturally furthered by such activities.

Many visitors to Germany in the 1930s were impressed by the definite aura of positivism with which the average German regarded the Nazi regime. The role of Strength Through Joy in contributing to this general worker enthusiasm is indicated by the following experience:

I can remember a rather miserable week-end at Nuremberg when I could get no sleep at all after about 5 A.M. The enthusiastic columns of the exuberant members of the "Strength Through Joy" in military formation and

⁴⁸Starcke, Die Deutsche Arbeitsfront, p. 169.

⁴⁹Ley, Deutschland ist Schöner geworden, p. 95.

⁵⁰Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, p. 440.

at brief intervals, kept going by under the windows of my hotel, and at the top of their voices all were singing martial songs with changeless refrains that extolled Kraft durch Freude.⁵¹

Through KdF the Nazis therefore not only effectively dealt with the leisure problem facing all modern industrialized nations, but did so in a manner consistent with the aims of the state. By linking physical fitness with one's power of achievement (Leistungsfähigkeit) and tying this to the interests of all the people, National Socialism applied a progressive solution to this problem which enabled many Germans to ignore, or at least reconcile themselves to, the many disagreeable aspects of life in the Third Reich.

The importance attached to physical fitness in Nazi Germany was also manifested in the training programs of the SA, SS, and the army. In accordance with Hitler's wishes, the SA (Sturmabteilung or Storm Division) emphasized all forms of sporting activity in order to provide the storm troopers with "those athletic skills which serve as a weapon for the defense of the movement."⁵² Record-seeking was discouraged in favor of Jahn's concept of all around development because, as SA chief of staff Ernst Röhm emphasized, "We cannot rebuild the Fatherland with champions and

⁵¹Florinsky, Fascism and National Socialism, p. 152.

⁵²Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 546.

artificially nurtured 'big guns of sport' (künstlich gezüchteten Sportkanonen)."⁵³ Strength, endurance, and agility were therefore the goals of all physical training whether carried out at the SA cadet school at Feldafing, or as part of the regular service routine.

The SS (Schutzstaffeln or Guard Squads) placed an even higher value on physical training than did the SA. In conformity with its elitist pretensions, all SS candidates had to undergo various courage tests⁵⁴ and demonstrate superior athletic ability by earning the military sports insignia and the bronze Reich sports badge before being accepted into the corps.⁵⁵ Once admitted, everyone from eighteen to fifty was obligated to keep up their health and physical fitness through systematic exercise and regular participation in SS athletic contests; a regimen intended to act as a counterbalance to the dangers of urban living.⁵⁶ To ensure compliance with this high physical standard, it

⁵³ Ernst Röhm, Die Geschichte eines Hochverrätters (München: Franz Eher Verlag, 1934), p. 366.

⁵⁴ Felix Kersten, Totenkopf und Treue: Heinrich Himmler ohne Uniform (Hamburg: Robert Mölich Verlag, 1952), p. 302.

⁵⁵ Gunter d'Alquen (editor), Die SS: Geschichte, Aufgabe und Organisation der Schutzstaffeln der NSDAP (Berlin: Junker und Dönhaupt Verlag, 1939), p. 18.

⁵⁶ Ernst Nolte, Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche: Die Action francaise, der italienische Faschismus, der Nationalsozialismus (München: R. Piper & Co., Verlag, 1963), p. 474.

was made mandatory for all SS men to earn the corps' own sports badge at some point in their careers; an achievement that Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the SS, was never able to attain.⁵⁷

Physical conditioning in the German army was carried out through intensive military training and a well-developed sports program. Because Hitler placed great importance on the individual soldier's endurance,⁵⁸ a particularly noticeable feature of all training was the emphasis on marching. The performances demanded and achieved in this area were quite high, reaching as much as fifty miles in one day, a feat surpassing even the best attempts of the old imperial army.⁵⁹ Physical preparedness was further served by barrack-square drill or 'grinding' (Schleiferei) which was conducted with fanatical punctiliousness, and by extended war games which were played out over great distances.

Supporting this military training was a sporting program that was already firmly established during the

⁵⁷ Himmler spent months trying to reach the required levels of competency in the five sports that made up this badge: sprinting, swimming, distance running, jumping, and putting the shot or javelin throw. Forcing his totally unathletic body to run and to jump, he eventually had to be deliberately deceived by his adjutants into thinking that he had attained the necessary standards. Roger Manvell, and Heinrich Fraenkel, Himmler (New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1972), pp. 69, 272.

⁵⁸ Trevor-Roper, Hitler's Secret Conversations, p. 77.

⁵⁹ Herbert Rosinski, The German Army (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), pp. 233-234.

Weimar Republic.⁶⁰ Athletic activities such as riding, fencing and jiu-jitsu were particularly prized for their ability "to develop those traits of dexterity, skill, tenacity and quick reaction which constitute the make-up of the modern soldier."⁶¹ Boxing was also engaged in, although all bouts had to take place under the supervision of officers in order to avert 'ill-treatment and over-exertion.'⁶² Because of this concentration on physical development, military service was therefore not only the final step in preparing young men for war, but the culmination of all youthful physical training as well.

Physical fitness was also promoted by the Nazis in ways other than through the above organizations. An example of how this was done was the decree issued in 1933 announcing that all lawyers desiring to become judges had to undergo a period of camp service, during which time they would be trained in 'martial sports.'⁶³ Similarly, the state-owned railway system in 1938 made job security dependent on possession of the national sports badge.⁶⁴ Through these

⁶⁰Dietrich von Choltitz, Soldat unter Soldaten (Zürich, Europa Verlag, 1951), pp. 26-30.

⁶¹Santoro, Vier Jahre Hitler-Deutschland, p. 318.

⁶²Frankfurter Zeitung, 16 July 1939.

⁶³Harold Callender, "Prussianism Returns in a New Guise" in Nazis and Fascists in Europe, 1918-1945, p. 54.

⁶⁴Frankfurter Zeitung, 30 July 1938.

and countless other methods, the officially promoted fitness mania reached into almost every corner of German society.

The Labor Front and Strength Through Joy played particularly significant roles in furthering physical fitness in the Third Reich. By combining hard manual work with military-style drill, the Arbeitsdienst provided a final physical toughening for every German youth prior to his entering the armed forces. Kraft durch Freude on the other hand, through its sports office brought organized athletics to the adult masses on a nation-wide basis for the first time. Along with the schools and the youth organizations, these two institutions were thus instrumental in realizing Hitler's goal of increasing national strength and health through physical training.

VII.

POSTSCRIPT: PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT IN GERMANY SINCE WORLD WAR II

In contrast to the centralized, völkisch, national-political education of the Nazis, education in the West German Federal Republic is decentralized and essentially concerned with a striving for excellence within the framework of Christianity, democracy, and humanism. Although each of the eleven states (Länder) in the Federal Republic has its own specific guidelines for physical education in the schools, the predominant objective of all PE is to help educate the whole person through the physical. Ideally this will contribute toward making each individual a free, healthy, happy, and tolerant citizen.

Physical education in West Germany also seeks to promote the principle of 'education through and for cooperation' (Gemeinschaftsgebundenheit) and to encourage spontaneity (Spontaneität).¹ Because of these goals it has returned to the informal practices characteristic of the

¹Wolfgang Karbe, "Physical Education and Sports in East and West Germany," The Physical Educator, Vol. 19, No. 1, October, 1962, p. 109.

Weimar Republic, with maximum physical effort now being obtained through appeal rather than through harsh discipline.

The dropping of the Nazi military emphasis and insistence on conformity has also resulted in greater stress being placed on sports, games, and gymnastics. Creativity is now encouraged in all of these activities because self-expression is again considered important. Free self-expression and an harmonious development of the body are felt to be especially significant in helping each individual realize his fullest potential. This shift away from conformity and the collective and back to creativity and the individual is further reflected in the increasing use of the word Leibeserziehung for physical education, rather than the Nazi-preferred Leibesübung.

Based on the 1956 recommendations of the state ministers of education, the PE program in all school systems should include daily gym for the first two elementary grades, with students from the third grade on receiving three hours a week, plus two hours for sports and games.² Unlike under the Nazis, special programs are also available for children with disabilities. Because of the heavy

²Liselott Diem, "Federal Republic of Germany-Health, Physical Education and Recreation," in Lynn C. Vendien and John E. Nixon, (editors) The World Today in Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 141-142.

emphasis on intellectual studies and a lack of facilities in some areas, these recommendations are still not being fully carried out in all school systems, however.³ At the universities physical education is still largely optional, although sports clubs do exist.⁴

Teachers of PE are trained in the physical education departments of German universities, or at the German Sports University (Deutsche Sporthochschule) in Cologne which opened in 1947 under the leadership of Carl Diem and his wife Liselott. This institution is the successor to the former German College of Physical Education (Deutsche Hochschule für Leibesübungen) which operated in Berlin from 1920 until 1934. PE teachers are also trained at the State College for Physical Education in Mainz and at the Bavarian Sports Academy.

Like physical education, sports in the Federal Republic are also regarded primarily as an enrichment of life. The principles of freedom, tolerance, and international amity characterize the aims of the German Sport Federation (Deutsche Sportbund) which loosely unifies all sporting elements. The Federation also protects the independence of every sport club, is neutral towards all

³Van Dalen, A World History of Physical Education, p. 230.

⁴Diem, Weltgeschichte, pp. 1036, 1044.

political parties, races, and religions, and guards against any trace of nationalism or militarism in sports.⁵

Sports in West Germany are governed neither by federal nor by state laws. Their organization is carried out by the individual clubs whose freedom of action is guaranteed by the Constitution. Active participation in many sports is a prominent feature of life in the Federal Republic. By 1970 there were 10.1 million people, or 16.7 percent of the total population, belonging to the 39,201 clubs that were affiliated with the State Sport Unions (Landessportbünden).⁶

To further stimulate interest in sporting activities, the Deutsche Sportbund in 1952 revived the German Sport Badge (Deutsches Sportabzeichen) program originated by Carl Diem in 1913. The badge is awarded to anyone of either sex from the age of twelve to forty and over who is able to pass an efficiency test of average skills. All participants must meet the requirements in five different areas: swimming, running, jumping, throwing and an endurance event. Interest in acquiring the honorary medal has become so

⁵In the 1960s a negative reassessment of Turnvater Jahn's activities took place, which included a de-politicizing of the gymnastic associations. The August 9, 1958, edition of the weekly West German pictorial magazine Quick displayed Jahn's picture with one of a gymnastic parade stating: "Gymnasts are no Nationalists-Gymnasts are modern."

⁶Krockow, Sport und Industriegesellschaft, pp. 7, 43.

widespread in the last fifteen years that the badge has, in effect, become a Volksabzeichen (people's award).⁷

Although the Federal Government does not exercise direct control over sports, it does provide substantial subsidies to the German Sport Federation to be used for a variety of purposes. These include funds to make sports available to disabled persons and to help promote sports medicine, scientific, and research work.⁸ Aware of the prestige to be gained from international sporting triumphs, the government also heavily subsidizes the National Olympic Committee,⁹ and through its Sports Aid Endowment Fund distributes almost \$5 million annually to some 2,000 'needy' Olympic athletes.¹⁰

To encourage youthful participation in athletics, the government instituted the Federal Youth Games (Bundesjugendspiele) in 1950. Over five million youths between the ages of ten and twenty now take part in these games every year which are organized each summer and winter by schools, sport organizations, and youth leagues. Those who attain a given number of points based on their age and

⁷Diem, "Federal Republic of Germany--Health, Physical Education, and Recreation," p. 133.

⁸Ibid., p. 135.

⁹Detroit Free Press, November 11, 1975.

¹⁰Detroit Free Press, October 4, 1975.

sex are presented with an honor certificate signed by the President of the Federal Republic.

Although right-wing youth organizations emphasizing physical training attracted a certain number of adherents in the 1950s and early 1960s,¹¹ membership has fallen from the late 1960s to the point where many such groups now virtually cease to exist. The great majority of young people who participate in organized athletics in the Federal Republic today, do so as members of the youth sections of the sports clubs.¹²

In comparison to West Germany's decentralized, pluralistic educational system, the organization and governing of all schools in the East German Democratic Republic (GDR) is highly centralized and monistic. The educational aim of the Communist Party of East Germany is to teach all students the same beliefs, values, and attitudes based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism in order to attain a model communistic society. Physical education is consequently viewed as just one more important means to be used for achieving this goal.

The primary objectives of physical education in the GDR--apart from the attainment of health and strength--are:

¹¹Manfred Jenke, Verschwörung von Rechts? Ein Bericht über den Rechtsradikalismus in Deutschland nach 1945 (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1961), pp. 326-332.

¹²Diem, "Federal Republic of Germany--Health, Physical Education, and Recreation," p. 129.

to help everyone become a better worker, to prepare one to defend the homeland, to help everyone understand the close relationship of politics and sports and the political role of sports in international relations, and to teach pupils to accept the duty of always being physically fit.¹³

As a result of these objectives, all PE instruction emphasizes such concepts as: love for socialism-communism (Liebe zum Sozialismus-Kommunismus), political task of sports (Politische Aufgabe des Sports), international task of sports (Internationale Aufgabe des Sports), mass-sports (Massensport), and the duty of everyone--"Ready for work and the defense of the Homeland" (Bereit zur Arbeit und zur Verteidigung der Heimat).¹⁴ Two to three hours a week of physical education classes are compulsory for every East German child from the first grade on.¹⁵ In addition to the usual gymnastics and sports, these classes also feature training in such para-military physical education (Wehrerziehung) activities as marching, elementary field exercises, and artificial hand-grenade throwing.

Most PE teachers and sports coaches are trained at the German Sports Institute in Leipzig. Modeled after similar Russian establishments, the Institute also serves

¹³Karbe, "Physical Education and Sports in East and West Germany," p. 109.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵The New York Times, December 20, 1976.

as the major center for scientific research in the field of sports. A four year degree in physical education typically includes instruction in all aspects of communist ideology and the study of international affairs, as well as courses in anatomy and physiology, sport hygiene, first-aid, massage, and basic medical control as it applies to sports. All coaches graduating from the Leipzig Institute are similarly well-schooled in athletic medical control, having undergone a compulsory five-semester sports medicine course.¹⁶

Like physical education, sports in East Germany are meant to help the masses become better workers and more loyal disciples and defenders of communism. To attain these goals, political discussions are encouraged in all the sports clubs and athletic events are always invested with ideological overtones. Large sports meetings are especially used to inundate the people with political propaganda and psychological indoctrination. Such festivals thus make a great impression on the young who are usually politically naive. The emphasis on mass-sports is intended not only to improve the strength and health of all the people, but to control their leisure time as well. A final aim of all sporting activity is to produce champions who offer proof of the superiority of socialism to the world in general, and to GDR citizens in particular.

¹⁶The New York Times, December 22, 1976.

Because Article Eighteen of the East German Constitution states "Physical culture, sport and tourism as elements of socialist culture shall serve the universal, physical and mental development of citizens,"¹⁷ the aim of all athletics is to engage everyone in sport. This 'right to participate' has resulted in a thorough organization of all sporting activity, with every sport under one association. All associations in turn, are united in the German Gymnastics and Sports Federation (Deutsche Turn-und Sportbund or DTSB) which is officially controlled by the government. The DTSB, which is termed "a socialist mass organization with 2.5 million members"¹⁸ and to which every sportsman automatically belongs, carries out its administrative functions on a district level which corresponds to the country's political districts.

Most adult participation in athletics takes place in the clubs affiliated with the thirty-six sports associations. Almost all of these clubs are intended for family use and they invariably feature an abundance of facilities to suit every taste, including swimming pools, gymnasiums, and playing fields. For the men, semi-military activities and exercises are part of all weekly sport programs.

¹⁷The New York Times, July 25, 1976.

¹⁸Detroit Free Press, February 12, 1976.

There is furthermore a well-developed athletic program in the factories which is patterned after the Russian trade union example, with some 8,000 factory sports clubs now in existence.¹⁹ Calisthenics are also part of the daily routine for all workers. These exercises are led by unpaid sport leaders (Sportlehrwarte) who have been specifically trained in the use of mass-sports movements. Because of the continuous effort to improve this program, great importance is attached to the specialized study of mass-sports, with research particularly focusing on its relationship to the labor productivity and health of the people.²⁰

Regular participation in athletics for all East German youths takes place in the state youth organization, the Free German Youth (Freie Deutsche Jugend or FDJ) in which membership is compulsory. Closely modeled on the Soviet Young Communist League (Komsomol), the FDJ is nevertheless greatly indebted (as was the Hitler Youth) to the old youth movement in its excursions, camps, war games and sporting competitions. In the tradition of

¹⁹The New York Times, December 21, 1976.

²⁰F. Trogisch, "The State and Development of Sport Sociology Research in the German Democratic Republic. Review and Bibliography," International Review of Sport Sociology, Vol I., 1966, pp. 218, 222,225.

Father Jahn,²¹ it thus skillfully links physical training with nationalism and para-military training. A final pre-military physical training for every youth is provided by the Association for Sport and Technology (Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik), which organizes the GDR equivalents of what were formerly the Nazi Wehrertüchtigungslager.²² Other mass participatory devices include the holding of national junior Olympics (Spartakiads) and a sports badge program.

The most successful sporting endeavor of East Germany has been the perfection of an all-encompassing program for turning out international and Olympic champions in every area of sport. Determined to establish its own national identity separate from that of West Germany (with whom sporting contacts have diminished in recent years),²³ the GDR has created an unique sports school and championship club system that fully develops the talents of the best young athletes in the country.²⁴ Backed by perhaps the

²¹In contrast to West Germany, Jahn is considered a progressive figure in the GDR because of his opposition to the conservative forces of his time. Laqueur, Young Germany, p. 8.

²²Neues Deutschland, (East) Berlin, 14 July 1971.

²³Der Spiegel "Spiel mit Grenzen" No. 3 (10 Januar 1977), pp. 105-106.

²⁴The New York Times, December 20, 1976.

most advanced sports medicine program in the world,²⁵ and spurred on by the privileges granted to an athletic elite,²⁶ the victorious sportsmen have indeed enhanced the international reputation of the German Democratic Republic.

This all-out effort to achieve athletic supremacy underscores the fundamental difference between the two Germanies in their attitude toward physical education and sport. In direct opposition to previous Nazi practices, physical education and sport in West Germany are primarily valued as an enrichment of life and are based upon the principles of freedom and humanitarianism; in East Germany, however, they are used, as was the case under the Nazis, as a manipulative instrument to strengthen and condition the people to become effective fighters for a political cause.

²⁵The New York Times, December 22, 1976.

²⁶Sports Illustrated, Vol. 45, No. 2 (July 12, 1976), p. 63.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Physical training and sport in the Third Reich were from the start integrally tied to the aggressive, patriotic, Nazi ideology which taught that since nature bestows her favors according to strength and health, the stronger must dominate. Physical strength was thus linked to a belief in German racial superiority and used to justify the right of the German people to acquire Lebensraum at the expense of the 'inferior' peoples surrounding them. Physical training was consequently promoted by the government and forced on the people as one means of increasing national strength and health.

Since the young were the key to Hitler's policy of conquest, physical training played an important role in their education. In the schools and in the Hitler Youth, every boy was told that his athletic and para-military activities were meant to toughen him for future military service and the battles to come. Sports were an especially effective means for preparing young men to become warriors. They promoted physical fitness, which is an almost indispensable precondition for success in war, and, through the built-in adversity of athletic competition, rendered the

young more able to withstand the rigors of military life. Hitler was determined to have a physically fit youth, because he never wavered in his belief that it was not weapons that determined the outcome of battles, but the men behind them.

The Führer was also well aware of the opportunities presented for social control by physical training. He recognized that exercise in general and sports in particular were integrating activities capable of reflecting the ideological preoccupations of government. His desire to create a genuine Volkgemeinschaft based on common adherence to the Nazi world view thus found in physical training an ideal means of mass socialization. In order to promote a community of physically and psychically homogeneous people, all phases of the PT program were therefore infused with the ideological tenets of National Socialism.

With its campfires, songs, and carefully cultivated camaraderie, the program proved attractive to the heroic and idealistic inclinations of youth. Because sport is fundamentally apolitical, it particularly lent itself to exploitation for nationalistic ends. Since sport is furthermore essentially struggle, it helped to channel youthful feelings of aggression against those deemed hostile to the Nazi state. The transferral value of teamwork derived from the schoolboy love of games, was accordingly used to reinforce the sense of national solidarity by heightening the attitude of 'them vrs. us' regarding the outside world.

The emphasis on physical fitness was also used to support the Führerprinzip by which Nazi Germany was governed. Admission to the various elite schools and leadership courses and the successful completion of their programs depended heavily on a high level of all-around athletic ability. Because the purpose of these schools and courses was to train the future leadership cadre of party and state, physical training and sport would have become permanently instrumental in helping to perpetuate Hitler's regime had Germany won the war. In the balance between mind and body then, the Nazis assigned almost equal importance to the body, for they believed that the ability to excel in the struggle of sporting competition was the single most important indicator of leadership ability.

To a very large extent Hitler succeeded in producing a physically fit younger generation willing to die for its beliefs. The generally held picture of superbly conditioned youth and of Germany's wealth of sporting facilities is not entirely correct, though. Not everyone was able to meet the required physical and sporting standards, and facilities and equipment were in some areas less than plentiful. The high degree of youthful allegiance to the Nazi state which politically motivated physical training helped to create, was also not monolithic in nature. The reluctance of Catholic youth to being absorbed into the Hitler Youth, and the increased alienation

of many youngsters towards the constant exercising imposed on them attest to this. The official desire for more physical education in the schools was in addition not always complied with, as has been noted.

The question whether physical training in the Third Reich was progressive in character lacks a definitive answer. Certainly the promotion of physical fitness for everyone was in itself a good thing. Another positive aspect was the equality of opportunity offered for all men to achieve social advancement and leadership positions through proficiency in sports. The Labor Service was also progressive in that it channeled the excess energy of youth into hard physical labor that was economically beneficial for the nation. The Strength Through Joy program, moreover, with its strong emphasis on mass sports participation was a unique attempt to solve the leisure problem confronting all industrial states.

The overall weight of evidence tends to indicate that physical training under the Nazis was generally regressive in nature, however. It was used to serve a primitive, militaristic ideology which stressed an atavistic love of hardness and a neo-imperialism which had its roots in earlier Pan-German ambitions. It furthermore appears likely that one of the political goals of physical training was to create a passive mentality in the people, especially in the young. By linking PT with discipline and obedience the element of personal initiative and freedom

was definitely reduced, thus helping to make the proclaimed Volksgemeinschaft in reality nothing more than a comradeship in submission.

Equality of opportunity for social advancement based on athletic achievement can also be viewed as a natural outgrowth of the fundamental National Socialist belief in the inequality of men, and thus a logical response to what was considered the aristocratic principle of nature which promotes the eternal privilege of strength. Considered from this angle, the attempt to square an elite principle with an ostensible commitment to equal opportunity through athletics was an attempt to square the circle, and therefore essentially a step backwards.

Finally, Hitler's desire to overcome the unhealthy effects of urban living by leading young people back to nature through physical training (an endeavor to return to the sound values of an imagined healthy past), was, in effect, a partial rejection of modern industrialized society. That he chose to raise the general level of physical fitness at the expense of education further underscores this, because Hitler believed that the modern 'overvaluation of knowledge' was partly responsible for the loss of national strength and vigor.

Since physical training was one of the relatively few social issues in the Third Reich on which there was a reasonably consistent attitude, it serves as a good reflection of the evil values and consequences of National

Socialism. By being made to support a policy of internal revival for external aggression, physical training was effectively harnessed to the unworthy ends of Nazism.

If the misuse of athletics and of youthful idealism under Hitler teaches anything, it is that politics have no place in sport. As long as sport is not regarded as a 'thing in itself' but is construed in a political context, it will always serve as an expression of national purpose rather than as a means for self-liberation or self-expression for the individual.

In today's highly competitive industrialized world, athletics must above all represent an activity which is pursued primarily for its own sake. For only when sport is depoliticized will it avoid being used to turn humanity against itself.

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