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THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF BALDUR VON SCHIRACH, 1925-1940

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Christopher N. Koontz, B.A.

Denton, Texas

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This thesis examines the career of Baldur von Schirach, who headed the National Socialist Students' Union from 1928 to 1931 and the Hitler Youth from 1931 until 1940. As the leader of these Nazi youth groups, Schirach engendered a perception of National Socialism in which he saw the rise of the Nazi state as the culmination of German cultural progress. He attempted to encourage the youth of Germany to accept his idea of cultural struggle through his poetry, speeches, and ideological writings. These works reveal his conviction in National Socialist ideas such as Hitler's personality cult, the abstract idealization of youth as a political force, racism, militant nationalism, and a nihilistic conception of self-annihilating patriotism.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Baldur Benedikt von Schirach, who led the Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth, or HJ) from 1931 until 1940, played an important role in shaping the cultural policy of Nazi Germany. The rise of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Worker's Party, or NSDAP) and its leader, Adolf Hitler, established a totalitarian government in Germany that introduced dramatic changes which attempted to affect the cultural perceptions of the German people. Hitler's political program was based upon a strongly chauvinistic nationalism that exalted the German people and their supposed racial superiority. Schirach believed that the establishment of the National Socialist regime in Germany confirmed the innate supremacy of that nation's Volk by allowing the fullest expression of Germanic strength yet achieved. Foremost of his official tasks as the leader of German youth was the inspiration of this idea of cultural supremacy within the minds of Germany's children, the future servants of Hitler and the Third Reich. He attempted to accomplish this duty through a propagandistic

educational program in which his own writings were of central importance.

The Nazi government tried to alter the self-perceptions of its citizens by creating the myth of a united and harmonious community, or Volksgemeinschaft, which was supposedly brought about through the Gleichschaltung, or "coordination," of German society after the NSDAP seized power in 1933. The Nazi leaders envisioned Nazi Germany as an entirely new civilization. Thus, when dealing with the racial, patriotic, and political ideas propagated by Schirach, the words "culture" and "cultural" in this thesis will be used to convey the idea that

the central goal of Nazi propaganda was radically to re-structure German society so that the prevailing class, religious and sectional loyalties would be replaced by a new heightened national awareness.¹

"Culture" and "cultural" will also be used to define the means by which Schirach attempted to express his political ideas. He consistently integrated artistic expression with political motivation during his period of power as an official of Hitler's Germany. This fact is most evident in the poetry that he wrote for the young readers of the HJ. Schirach's use of artistic forms such as poetry, literary analysis, and oratory in the transmission of his propaganda demonstrates his knowledge that "the power of a totalitarian

¹ David Welch, "Propaganda and Indoctrination in the Third Reich: Success or Failure?" European History Quarterly 17 (1987): 403-422, 411.

state over the minds of its citizens" originates in "the control of the instruments of public education and the media of culture."²

Schirach's exaltation of the Nazi Party conveyed his belief that National Socialism represented an expression of the struggle of Germanic culture to assume its rightful place as the apex of Western civilization. Nazi Germany, to assert its absolute dominance over the lesser nations and peoples of the world, needed to wage its wars for intellectual and cultural objectives as well as for military goals. Schirach used his own pen as the primary weapon to wage his cultural war. He produced volumes of ideological works, speeches, essays, and poetry for the young readers of the Hitlerjugend, as well as for the general public of the Third Reich. He thus attempted to make his own contribution to the German cultural tradition. These works uniformly and vividly glorified Hitler, the Nazi totalitarian system, and patriotic devotion to the state and its Volk. The necessity of an unbounded and unquestioning allegiance to these crucial social components of Nazi Germany was, to Schirach, of the utmost importance, even to the point of death.

Schirach's career, along with all those intimately involved with totalitarian governments, hinged upon the continued good graces of the supreme leader. As long as

² Ronald Taylor, Literature and Society in Germany 1918-1945 (Sussex: Harvester, 1980), 214.

Schirach's ideas converged with those of Hitler, he remained an influential member of the Nazi inner circle. Schirach, cognizant of this fact, consciously and conspicuously presented himself in the vanguard of Nazism as an arbiter of Germanic culture throughout his service to Hitler's Third Reich. His use of cultural perception as a political tool, although sincere and heartfelt, was Schirach's method of perpetuating his power and prestige within the NSDAP. Thus, he slavishly followed the theories and pronouncements of Hitler in his administration of the Hitler Youth.

Schirach's direct control over the Hitlerjugend ended on 9 May 1940, when Hitler nominated him as the Gauleiter, or Regional Party Leader, of Vienna, although he continued to have influence in the formation of Nazi youth policy. During his administration of the Vienna Gau, Schirach deported over sixty thousand Jews to Poland while organizing and supervising art festivals and youth conferences based upon National Socialist principles. He remained in Vienna until April 1945, when he fled the city shortly before its fall to the Red Army. After fleeing westward, he surrendered himself to the Americans at the war's end and was brought before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg in 1945 to stand trial. The Tribunal found him guilty on the charge of "Crimes Against Humanity" and sentenced him to a twenty year-long imprisonment in Spandau Prison. Schirach served his full sentence, during which he wrote his autobiography Ich

glaubte an Hitler (I Believed in Hitler), and was released in 1966; he died on 8 August 1974.

Schirach's role as one of the Third Reich's most important cultural educators has been neglected in much of the scholarly literature written about the Hitler Youth. Most studies of Schirach and the Nazi youth movement overlook Schirach's own contributions to the educational canon of the HJ, typically dismissing his writings as the pretensions of a literary dilettante. His poetry in particular is almost universally dismissed as puerile doggerel, unworthy of more than passing mention; regarded from an aesthetic standpoint, the author of this thesis concurs with such a standpoint. What is commonly and unfortunately overlooked, however, is the fact that a modicum of ideological depth is indeed present in Schirach's writings. This thesis will attempt to provide an in-depth study of Schirach's literary works, their role in relation to Nazi cultural ideology, and the way in which they helped to propagate the irrational and nihilistic tenets of National Socialism.

The first part of the thesis will be biographical in nature. It begins with Schirach's early childhood, for it appears that Germany's defeat in the First World War and the suicide of his brother after that conflict had a tremendous impact upon the young Schirach and helped to form the nihilistic patriotism that he would later espouse as a Nazi. This chapter also discusses the close relationship that was

forged between Schirach and Hitler himself, a bond that aided Schirach greatly in his rise into the Nazi hierarchy. This relationship grew after Schirach joined the NSDAP in 1925, and was partly inspired by Hitler's approval of a poem that Schirach wrote about him. Schirach's use of poetry as a means of political expression is thus established and examined. Schirach's orientation toward youth is charted through his progress through various youth groups, from a Weimar street gang to the National Socialist Students' Union to the Hitler Youth.

A discussion of the National Socialist ideas that Schirach espoused and encouraged while he led the Hitler Youth will be the focus of the second section of the thesis. This period reached an early high point, when Hitler appointed Schirach as the Reichsjugendführer (Youth Leader of the German Reich) in 1933, a position from which he personally directed the cultural inculcation of German youth. Schirach's role in the creation of a literary canon for the HJ during the time plays a critical role in the explication of his cultural perceptions. Schirach praised an abstract idea of youth as the driving force behind the NSDAP. He believed that youth was a critical facet of traditional German culture, and that its power would clear away the political and social corruption that he saw in the Weimar Republic. To achieve this triumph of youth, he produced volumes of his own poetry and oratory that exalted Hitler and

romanticized unyielding service to the state. Thus, he sought to introduce the members of the HJ to the National Socialist Führerprinzip (Leadership Principle), which demanded absolute compliance of citizens to the leader of the state.

The third part of the thesis will concern Schirach's endorsement of Nazi racial theory. Schirach, who avidly read anti-Semitic literature before his entry into the Nazi Party in 1925, possessed a deep-seated antipathy towards Jews. Much of the ideological instruction of the HJ, which was consistent with the larger racial policies of Hitler's Weltanschauung, concerned the vilification of Jews as the eternal enemy of the German Volk. Schirach's prejudiced view of history was a crucial component of both his personal and professional obligations to his people, for he believed that the Germans represented the highest point of evolution in the development of human culture. The duty of the National Socialist state was to preserve this culture by strengthening its racial awareness and by encouraging its youth to fight for the purity of the German Volk, if necessary.

The final section of the thesis will discuss the omnipresent theme of death in Schirach's literary works. Schirach perceived death in the service of the NSDAP as a self-fulfilling political act to the state and the German people, for it confirmed one's devotion to Hitler and the Third Reich. He viewed commitment to Nazism as a sort of

transcendent bond between the self and state in which a metaphoric resurrection of the self took place through the eternal life of the NSDAP's ideals. Schirach also glorified the martyrs killed during the NSDAP's rise to power, portraying them as semi-religious figures worthy of respect, admiration, and emulation.

The primary sources for this thesis can be divided into three major groups, the first of which comprises Schirach's own literary output. A strong emphasis is placed upon his anthology of poetry, Die Fahne der Verfolgten (The Banner of the Persecuted). The title of this book suggests an allusion to the "Horst Wessel Song," the official marching song of the NSDAP, the lyrics of which were taken from Wessel's poem "Die Fahne hoch!" ("Raise the Flags High!"). This book contains examples of his poetry glorifying the heroic and militaristic ideals of the Nazi party. It also demonstrates the fact that he attempted to use artistic and cultural methods to convey his message of cultural struggle. Revolution der Erziehung (Revolution in Education), a collection of speeches Schirach made between 1933 and 1938, conveys a great deal of information about Schirach's ideas concerning the indoctrination of the Hitler Youth. Many of these essays reveal Schirach's conviction concerning National Socialist ideas such as the Führerprinzip, an emotionally-based nationalism, and militarism. One of Schirach's speeches, Goethe an uns: Ewige Gedanken des großen Deutschen (From

Goethe to us: The Eternal Ideas of Great Germans), was published by itself as a monograph. This speech includes Schirach's observations on the cultural supremacy of things Germanic and their idealized realization through National Socialist principles. The final major work that Schirach wrote used in this thesis is his autobiography Ich glaubte an Hitler, which was published after the author's twenty years of imprisonment in Spandau for his crimes. The author of this thesis has used Schirach's autobiography with great caution. Schirach recounts the early part of his life with accuracy and freely admits his mistakes in believing and propagating National Socialism, but subsequent scholarship has demonstrated several omissions and obfuscations in Schirach's account.³

The second group of primary materials involves contemporary accounts that Schirach's friends, colleagues, students, and adversaries have left. Hitler's own political

³ A typical example of the faults in Schirach's autobiography occurs in the author's account of his assumption of the HJ leadership. He simply states that he "gave up the leadership of the NS-Students' Union" in June 1931 and "concerned myself only with the Hitlerjugend," eventually obtaining its leadership. Schirach omits the fact that he gained the leadership of the HJ after waging a bitter political battle against Kurt Gruber, who led the HJ before Schirach took over his post. Schirach does not even mention Gruber's name in his book. Baldur von Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler (Hamburg: Mosaik Verlag, 1966), 134; also see Peter D. Stachura, "The Hitler Youth in Crisis: The Case of Reichsführer Kurt Gruber, October 1931," European Studies Review 6 (1976): 331-356.

and cultural ideology is embodied in his book Mein Kampf (My Struggle). This work laid the foundations for Schirach's cultural agenda, which can be determined through Schirach's servile propagation of Hitler's pronouncements. The fact that Schirach attempted to implement many of the ideas which Hitler stated in this book into the ideology and pedagogy of the HJ becomes apparent when similarities between the two are compared. Important memoirs which have been consulted include that of Schirach's wife Henriette; her recollection of their years together during the Nazi period, entitled The Price of Glory, was composed, like her husband's, as a sort of apologia. Albert Speer's books Inside the Third Reich and Spandau: The Secret Diaries give several biting criticisms of Schirach's personality, political motivations, and friendship with Hitler. A striking indictment of Schirach's deeds as the leader of the HJ can be found in Alfons Heck's The Burden of Hitler's Legacy. Psychological explanations of Schirach's devotion to Nazism are provided by Douglas M. Kelley's 22 Cells in Nuremberg and G. M. Gilbert's Nuremberg Diary.

The final crucial pieces of primary evidence come from the International Military Tribunal's prosecution of the Nazi leaders at the war's end. The collection of documents collected by the U.S. Chief Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, the actual trial proceedings themselves, and the personal recollections of individuals involved, including those of Telford Taylor, the head of the American

Prosecution Team, have been used. The evidence revealed by the trial include numerous examples of Schirach's exhortations to the youth of Germany to hate, kill, and die for their Fatherland.

The secondary sources used include the biographical observations of the German journalist-historian Joachim C. Fest, a former member of the HJ, in his book The Face of the Third Reich. Works of scholarly note concerning the Hitler Youth and Schirach's influence upon its members include Gerhard Rempel's Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS, H. W. Koch's The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945, and Walter Laqueur's Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement. The general histories of the Nazi era most frequently consulted in this thesis are Karl Dietrich Bracher's The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure, and Effects of National Socialism and Jackson J. Spielvogel's Hitler and Nazi Germany: A Brief History.

The effects of Schirach's preoccupation with death in the service of the Reich are best explained by two important secondary works. The first is Jay W. Baird's To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon, a study that examines the propagandastic use of martyrology by the Nazi leadership. The second is Saul Friedländer's Reflections on Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death, a study of the Nazi death-ethos and its pervasiveness in Nazi politics and culture.

Secondary sources concerning the literary aspects of Schirach's cultural policy include Ronald Taylor's Literature and Society in Germany 1918-1945, Christa Kamenetsky's Children's Literature in Hitler's Germany: The Cultural Policy of National Socialism, and George L. Mosse's Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich. These works examine the ways in which the written word was employed by the Nazis as a means of establishing and furthering their power within the minds of the German people.

CHAPTER II

SCHIRACH, HITLER, AND THE NAZI PARTY

Baldur von Schirach, at first glance, seems to be an unlikely candidate to become an important arbiter of German culture as it was interpreted through the doctrines of Hitler's National Socialism. Nazi ideology praised the working-class, nationally pure German. Schirach's familial background reflects no such qualities, for he was born on 9 March 1907 into a family distinguished by its wealth, nobility, and American bloodline. His paternal great-grandfather emigrated to the United States in 1855, and his grandfather, Friedrich Karl von Schirach, was a hero of the American Civil War who lost a leg at one of the Battles of Bull Run and served as an honorary member of the guard at President Abraham Lincoln's funeral.

The German-American nature of Schirach's pedigree became further established through the union of his parents. Baldur's father, Karl Baily Norris-von Schirach, was born in Kiel, Germany, after Friedrich moved back to his father's homeland in 1871; his mother, Emma Middleton Lynah Tillou, a member of a wealthy and prestigious Philadelphia

family, was an American by birth. Karl von Schirach obtained German citizenship and joined the Prussian cavalry, but this display of nationalistic devotion did not prevent his son, Baldur, from speaking English better than German in his early years.¹ Schirach's wife Henriette noted that his conviction concerning Nazism, despite the fact that he "had more Anglo-Saxon than German blood," made him willing "to sacrifice life and liberty for Germany."²

The Schirachs moved to Weimar, Germany, in 1908; when Baldur was old enough to go to school, he was sent to a nearby boarding school while his father resigned from the Prussian cavalry to assume the directorship of the Weimar Court Theater. Schirach enthusiastically recalled the "intellectual and artistic stimulation" that he received during his childhood and his adolescent years in Weimar.³ He would later employ his artistic predilections for poetry and

¹ Baldur von Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler, 7-8. Schirach, unfortunately, does not specify at which of the two Battles of Bull Run his grandfather received his wound. He eventually mastered German, and remained fluently bilingual in both German and English throughout his life.

² Henriette von Schirach, The Price of Glory, trans. and adapted by Willi Frischauer (London: Frederick Muller, 1960), 81. It appears that Frau Schirach was ignorant of the Germanic origins of the Angle and Saxon tribes.

³ Testimony of Schirach, International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg 14 1945 November - 1 October 1946, hereafter cited IMT. 42 vols. (Nuremberg: n.p., 1946), 14: 363.

literature as a means to inspire devotion within his youthful charges of the HJ to the Fatherland, the Nazi party, and Hitler.

Germany's defeat in the First World War brought a sudden end to the happiness that characterized Schirach's early childhood. Schirach, who was eleven years old in 1918, records his perceptions of Germany's downfall in that year in his autobiography. He noticed that new red, gold, and black flags of the revolution flew in the place of the former black, red, and white flags of the German Empire. Puzzled by this change, he asked his parents and teachers what the word "revolution" meant; he received the simplistic reply that Germany had simply gotten a new flag. Unaware of the political implications of the revolution, he promptly performed a self-imposed patriotic duty by procuring a new flag for his school.⁴ Flags and banners later became important symbols of patriotism and party identification in the literature that Schirach wrote for the Nazi party, and this event demonstrates the fact that, even when he was young, Schirach was impressed by such physical symbols and trappings of nationalism and political factions.

The political changes that the new flag symbolized bore baleful consequences for the Schirach family, although their independent wealth and social prestige saved them from much

⁴ Baldur von Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler, 11-13.

of the economic hardship that many Germans faced after the First World War. Schirach's father was removed from his post at the Weimar Court Theater; in an ironic turn of events for Schirach, the national committee that accepted the terms of the Treaty of Versailles convened in the very theater house that his father had overseen for a decade.⁵ More traumatic for Schirach, however, was the suicide of his older brother Karl. Karl had enlisted in the German army shortly before the war's end, but Germany's surrender denied him active service and the perception of humiliation at the hands of the Allies dashed his dreams of continuing the family's military tradition in his father's and grandfather's footsteps. Despondent, he shot himself, stating in his farewell note that "he did not wish to live" in the face of Germany's imminent "misfortune."

Schirach believed that his brother's melodramatic suicide bequeathed to him the obligation of "a special love for the Fatherland."⁶ This incident, like the changing of the flags, helped to shape Schirach's young mind and his conception of cultural patriotism. The idealization of death for the honor of the state, which was apotheosized in the National Socialist idiom, was an important theme in Schirach's poetry. Schirach felt that self-sacrifice, even

⁵ Ibid., 14-15.

⁶ Ibid., 15.

to the point of death and destruction, was the duty of every German citizen to the nation and to its Völkisch culture.

This concept of self-annihilating patriotism, formed in his early childhood, remained constant throughout Schirach's career in the NSDAP. Schirach, searching for a means by which to lessen the trauma of his brother's suicide, would later choose to romanticize death in an immature and ill-considered way. Schirach's admiration of unquestioning and unbounded service to the needs of the state stem from his emphasis upon the motivation for, but not the consequences of, patriotic actions. Karl Dietrich Bracher characterizes Schirach's intellectual immaturity by stating that he was an "eternal juvenile."⁷

Schirach's path to National Socialism began in 1923, when he joined a Weimar youth group called the Knappenschaft. This group espoused the virtues of "comradeship, patriotism, and self-control," qualities later beatified by the Nazis, and the youngsters frequently scuffled with local Communist youth groups. The egalitarian membership of the Knappenschaft, which was composed of boys from all social classes, predisposed Schirach to the social and political ideals of socialism, although he would later be more than willing to sacrifice any socialist idealism for the good of

⁷ Karl Dietrich Bracher, The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure, and Effects of National Socialism, trans. Jean Steinberg (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970), 139.

the NSDAP. The group also occasionally worked in concert with local Nazi groups, beginning Schirach's acquaintance with the NSDAP and its political ideology.

Schirach described his adolescence in the turbulent Weimar Republic years as "a period of general insecurity, want and dissatisfaction."⁸ This sentiment was not an uncommon one in the face of the uncertainty that plagued Germany during its failed experiment with democracy, although Schirach's "want" perhaps connoted intellectual or psychological needs created by Germany's political void rather than the widespread economic deprivation, which his family's wealth staved off. Whatever the motivation, the NSDAP offered a solution to all those troubling grievances through its program that applauded the innate self-worth of the ethnic German worker. This program was based upon the Dolchstoß, or "stab in the back" theory of betrayal in the First World War, anti-Semitism, anti-Communism, and chauvinistic nationalism.

Frustrated by the political malaise of the Weimar years and troubled by the presence of Communism, which was an avowed enemy of Nazism, Schirach became ideologically predisposed to National Socialism and its nationalistic tenets. Joachim C. Fest asserts that Schirach, like many others who joined the ranks of the NSDAP towards the end of

⁸ Testimony of Schirach, IMT, 14: 366-7.

the Weimar Republic, was motivated by "blind, self-sacrificing idealism," fueled by "youthful radicalism" and "a romantic attraction" to the Nazi party and its alluring promises of a strong, independent, and ethnically purified Germany.⁹ A final catalyst, however, was necessary to bind Schirach, fired by the obligation of his brother's patriotic suicide and sympathetic to Nazi ideals, to the NSDAP itself. This catalyst proved to be the Party's greatest asset: its charismatic Führer, Adolf Hitler.

Dr. Hans Ziegler, who ran a small publishing firm and was an acquaintance of Schirach's father, played a major role in Schirach's conversion to Nazism. Ziegler did two things that helped to shape the future leader of German youth. First, he encouraged Schirach to pursue his poetic aspirations by printing some of his early verse, none of which has been reprinted. More importantly, Ziegler, an activist for the fledgling NSDAP, gave the impressionable seventeen-year old Schirach his first introduction to Hitler himself in 1924. Schirach, at Ziegler's urging, attended a speech that Hitler gave in Weimar. His first impression of Germany's future dictator was one of profound admiration for Hitler's powerful personality and compelling oratorical style. Schirach reminisces in his autobiography that he did

⁹ Joachim C. Fest, The Face of the Third Reich: Portraits of the Nazi Leadership, trans. Michael Bullock (New York: Pantheon, 1970), 222.

not remember the exact contents of that speech, but recalls that he was overwhelmed by the power of Hitler's voice and presence.¹⁰ This event began Schirach's idolatrous and sycophantic attachment to Hitler. Schirach confided to Dr. Douglas M. Kelley, a psychiatrist who examined the prisoners of the Nuremberg Prison held during the International Military Tribunal, that when he discovered Hitler

I was young and impressionable, filled with an eager zeal to destroy Germany's enemies and restore my Fatherland to its rightful greatness. Hitler, in his speeches and in his person, inspired me profoundly. I wanted only to be near him, to serve him and, thereby, serve Germany. That's all I thought of, all I dreamed.¹¹

Thus, Schirach believed that he had found the answer to his nation's woes. His intellectual immaturity and personal weakness contributed to his rapid and complete political seduction by Hitler. Telford Taylor, the head of the American Prosecution Team at Nuremberg, notes that Schirach, the youngest of the Nazi criminals in the dock of the International Military Tribunal, was "certainly malleable" and among "the weakest of the defendants."¹²

Ziegler, cognizant of Schirach's awe of Hitler, took steps to introduce his young friend to his hero. When Hitler

¹⁰ Baldur von Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler, 20.

¹¹ Douglas M. Kelley, 22 Cells in Nuremberg: A Psychiatrist Examines the Nazi Criminals (New York: Greenberg, 1947), 88.

¹² Telford Taylor, The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials: A Personal Memoir (Boston: Little, Brown, 1992), 421.

returned to Weimar a short time later, he met with Ziegler to arrange his lodgings during his stay in the city. Ziegler took this opportunity to introduce Schirach to the NSDAP's leader. Schirach's reaction to this encounter was an artistic one; finding within himself "a patriotic lyrical voice," he ran home to write the first of what he described in retrospect as "one of my bad poems," a servile encomium to Hitler that characterized him as the savior of the German people.¹³ This marked Schirach's first use of a cultural medium to express his personal faith in the National Socialist Führerprinzip while accomplishing a political goal.

Ziegler published this poem in his newsletter Der Nazionalsozialist, where it eventually came to the attention of Hitler himself. Hitler rewarded Schirach for his literary labor with an autographed photograph, which the awestruck young Schirach placed in a silver frame upon his desk. Encouraged by this gift, Schirach sought to further his personal relationship with Hitler. He began this task by questioning Ziegler about Hitler's tastes in literature, music, and art, evidently hoping to find an artistic bond

¹³ The German adjective which Schirach himself uses to describe his poem is "schlechten." The poem itself is reproduced in toto in Ich glaubte an Hitler, 22; it also appears in Schirach's Die Fahne der Verfolgten (Berlin: Verlag und Vertriebs-Gesellschaft, n.d.), 39, with the simple title of "Hitler." This poem will be examined in more detail in the following chapter.

between himself and Hitler.¹⁴ Inspired by his unwavering faith in Hitler, Schirach marched to the Weimar NSDAP recruiting office on 9 March 1925, his eighteenth birthday, and joined the Sturmabteilung (SA), the paramilitary "Brownshirts" who served as the NSDAP's security forces. Schirach's personal acquaintance with Hitler would later serve to propel him from his position as a humble Brownshirt to the leader of the Hitler Youth.

Albert Speer, who served as the Third Reich's Minister of Armaments and Production from 1942 to 1945 and as Hitler's personal confidant, makes several critical remarks concerning the relationship between Schirach and Hitler in his postwar publications. Speer composed these works during his imprisonment in Spandau Prison after the International Military Tribunal sentenced him to a twenty-year period of incarceration that was concurrent with Schirach's own sentence. Speer claims that, although Schirach was certainly on good terms with Hitler throughout much of the Nazi period, "he was not close enough" to Hitler to write a definitive book on the Hitler years -- Speer evidently believed that this task was accomplished by his own book, Inside the Third Reich. Hitler, Speer alleges, never took "Baldur, the good

¹⁴ Baldur von Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler, 23.

boy" seriously, but instead treated Schirach with patronizing amusement.¹⁵

Nevertheless, Schirach's rapport with Hitler aided his establishment within the hierarchy of the Nazi Party. His ascent into the NSDAP's leadership began with his work with the party's student groups. In 1926 Hitler, impressed by Schirach's newfound political zeal, intellectual potential, and artistic inclinations, persuaded Schirach to pursue a university education in Munich. Schirach readily accepted Hitler's advice; Hitler and the NSDAP organization were based in Munich at that time, and the opportunity to be near his idol was reason enough for Schirach's decision to relocate there.¹⁶ He proceeded to enroll at the Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität in 1927, where he studied German philology and art history.

Schirach devoted the majority of his time, however, to the University's branch of the National Socialist German Students' Union (Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, or NSDStB). It was within this group that he began his study of the organization and leadership of young people; the rapid and efficient expansion of the Hitler Youth that would later take place under Schirach's administration suggests that he learned these lessons well.

¹⁵ Albert Speer, Spandau: The Secret Diaries, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 90.

¹⁶ Baldur von Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler, 33.

His work for the NSDStB, however, failed to aid the development of Schirach's talents in public speaking. Albert Krebs, who served as the Gauleiter of Hamburg from 1927 to 1929, attended an NSDStB meeting in Hamburg at which Schirach gave a speech riddled with "conscious rhetoric" and "full of stylized pretensions." Krebs noted that Schirach's "ideas were all half-baked" and that "part of Schirach's style included a very conscious projection of himself as being intellectually superior, which came across in his earlier years as simple arrogance."¹⁷ Schirach never surmounted these failings, a fact to which his later speeches and writings as the leader of the Hitlerjugend will attest. The enthusiastic but immature Schirach also began to exhibit his penchant for grandiose visions of Party projects. Despite the NSDStB's obvious lack of financial stability, he

drew up plans for a clubhouse for the Munich NSDStB group comprising [sic] reception room, library, office, ladies' room, bedroom, kitchen, bath, and servants' room, which he envisaged as "a cultural center of Munich academic life" and which would incidentally serve as his own apartment!¹⁸

Wilhelm Tempel, the head of the NSDStB, resigned in June 1928. His resignation was inspired partly by his loss of

¹⁷ Albert Krebs, The Infancy of Nazism: The Memoirs of Ex-Gauleiter Albert Krebs 1923-33, trans. and ed. by William Sheridan Allen (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976), 298-9.

¹⁸ Anselm Faust, Der Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund: Studenten und Nationalsozialismus in der Weimarer Republik. 2 vols. (Düsseldorf: n.p., 1973), 105-6, as cited in Geoffrey J. Giles, Students and National Socialism in Germany (Princeton: Princeton U. P., 1985), 40.

prestige within the group to Schirach, who had the backing of Hitler himself. Twenty days later, the members of the union elected Schirach to succeed Tempel.¹⁹ Once in power Schirach began to transform the NSDStB's public image and recruiting methods. Under Tempel's leadership, the Bund had espoused "pseudosocialist" class solidarity and "had been something of a revolutionary organization" because of its iconoclastic opposition to the "snob-appeal of the traditional German student associations," the Burschenschaften. Schirach, however, abandoned the earlier egalitarian Socialist ideals of his Knappenschaft days and forged bonds with the conservative, elitist Burschenschaften to create a veneer of social respectability for the Nazi student union. He also shifted the group's political emphasis to "militant nationalism and anti-semitism in the universities."²⁰

Schirach's escalating political obligations eventually interfered with his studies, and he never obtained a degree from the University. Gordon A. Craig suggests, somewhat tenuously, that Schirach "perhaps enjoyed Hitler's confidence" because of their shared lack of a complete formal

¹⁹ Schirach asserts that he was Hitler's personal choice to lead the NSDStB, but this did not prevent Schirach's unprecedented election from taking place -- Schirach was the only Party member to be elected to his office throughout the NSDAP's history. Hitler himself proclaimed the election result to the NSDStB. Baldur von Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler, 58-9; Testimony of Schirach, IMT, 14: 370-1.

²⁰ Dietrich Orlow, The History of the Nazi Party. 2 vols. (Pittsburgh: U. Pittsburgh P., 1969), 1: 149.

education.²¹ Hitler, the failed painter and would-be architect, may have seen Schirach as a kindred spirit. He, too, had too much innate intelligence to be formally educated, and that shaped the affinity between the two. Hitler kept an eye on Schirach during his university years, and his assessment of Schirach's duties as the leader of the NSDStB led him to the conclusion that Schirach was qualified to take over the reins of the HJ. Schirach's psychic pliability and political toadying certainly played a critical role in Hitler's appraisal -- Geoffrey J. Giles asserts that "the fact that Schirach spent his spare time writing adoring poems about Hitler confirmed that he would be a reliable lieutenant."²²

Not all of the ties between Schirach and Hitler, however, were based on Schirach's political activities. Schirach's personal relationship with Hitler became strengthened on 31 March 1932, when he married Henriette Hoffmann, the daughter of Hitler's personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann. Hoffmann, whose amiable nature made him a constant and "ideal companion" for the temperamental Führer, was the unofficial court jester of Hitler's entourage and a

²¹ Gordon A. Craig, Germany 1866-1945 (New York: Oxford U.P., 1978), 662.

²² Giles, Students and National Socialism in Germany, 41.

close associate.²³ Schirach's marriage to Hoffmann's daughter gave him opportunities to place himself in close proximity to Hitler in addition to those necessitated by his political requirements.

Hitler nominated Schirach to lead the Hitlerjugend in October 1931, marking Schirach's admission into the highest ranks of the Nazi political hierarchy. He earned this important position as a result of his personal acquaintance with Hitler himself. The Führer's favorable appraisal of Schirach's cultural beliefs and artistic talent was the foundation of the relationship between these two men and the key to Schirach's prestige as a political figure. The political ideology of both Schirach and Hitler centered upon their shared and strongly-held nationalistic conviction in the supremacy of the German race and its culture over those of other nations. Albert Speer, directly contradicting his assertion that Hitler never held Schirach in high regard, also noted that at one time Hitler may have considered Schirach as his potential successor, for Schirach corresponded to the "'artistic type'" of man that the Führer desired to lead the Third Reich after his death.²⁴ Hitler

²³ Henriette von Schirach, The Price of Glory, 190. The "apolitical" Heinrich Hoffmann later helped his son-in-law's prosecutors at Nuremberg by serving as a photographic curator for the IMT. See Robert Conot, Justice at Nuremberg (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 93-4.

²⁴ Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Collier, 1970), 276.

himself, in retrospect, effused in May 1942 that he had "found in Schirach the ideal man for the leadership of the National Socialist Youth Movement."²⁵

A strictly political agenda also contributed to Hitler's decision to make Schirach the head of the HJ. Schirach's dutiful advocacy of nationalism and anti-Semitism as the leader of the NSDStB met with Hitler's approval. Hitler wanted these aspects to be endorsed with greater emphasis in the Hitler Youth than they had been under its leader, Kurt Gruber, and he believed, quite correctly, that Schirach would fulfill this goal. Gruber's resignation of the HJ leadership followed the same pattern as Wilhelm Tempel's resignation from the NSDStB; in both cases, Schirach's fervent endorsement of the more radical ideals of the NSDAP ensured that Hitler would back him in political struggles against less radical Party members. Gruber, like Tempel, felt that National Socialism should be more socialist than nationalist; however, Schirach's aggressive nationalism and anti-Semitism led Hitler to support him in his bid to oust Gruber as the leader of the Hitler Youth.²⁶

Schirach's rise within the administration of the Nazi youth organizations involved a steady increase in his

²⁵ Adolf Hitler, Hitler's Secret Conversations 1941-1944, trans. Norman Cameron and R. H. Stevens (New York: Farrar, Straus & Young, 1953), 374.

²⁶ Stachura, "The Hitler Youth in Crisis: The Case of Reichsführer Kurt Gruber, October 1931," 344-5.

jurisdiction over party policy concerning youth. He first became officially affiliated with the HJ itself on 30 October 1931, when Hitler appointed him as the Reich Youth Leader of the NSDAP. This position, from which Gruber had resigned due to political pressure from Hitler, gave Schirach the leadership of the Hitlerjugend, the Nazi youth group formed for boys between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. A year later, Hitler appointed him as the Reich Leader for Youth Education of the NSDAP, giving him further opportunities to impose his National Socialist views upon the youth of Germany. Hitler rewarded Schirach for his efforts in youth indoctrination with the undisputed directorship of Nazi youth policy on 17 June 1933, when he bestowed upon Schirach the title of Youth Leader of the German Reich, or Reichsjugendführer (RJF).

Schirach's nomination as the RJF gave him full jurisdiction over the many Nazi youth groups that existed at that time for children of both sexes between the ages of ten and eighteen. His appointment occurred almost six months after the NSDAP began its policy of Gleichschaltung, the integration of German society as a whole into the Nazi political framework. He eagerly began to integrate the

various groups now under his control into the HJ in the spirit of this movement.²⁷

Schirach organized the revamped Hitlerjugend into four distinct branches. All youth groups throughout the Reich were disbanded while two extant NSDAP groups for boys were solidified, the Jungvolk (JV), which was comprised of boys between the ages of ten and fourteen, and the essentially unchanged Hitlerjugend, into which JV members graduated and remained until they turned eighteen. At this point, it was assumed that they would apply the skills learned in the HJ by entering the German Army, Schutzstaffel (SS), or a similar organization to serve the state. The two corresponding branches for girls, which followed the same age format as the two boys' groups, were the Jungmädel (JM) and the Bund deutscher Mädel (BdM). In 1936, when all of these groups were firmly under Schirach's control, the position of RJF was added to the Reich Chancellory, increasing Schirach's bureaucratic prestige within the NSDAP.²⁸

²⁷ The name "Hitlerjugend" applies both to the greater Nazi youth movement after 1933 as well as the original organization for boys aged fourteen to eighteen, from which it took its name and which remained a distinct group within the coordinated HJ forged by Schirach in that year. For a summary of the organization of the Hitler Youth see Christian Zentner and Friedemann Bedürftig, eds., The Encyclopedia of the Third Reich, 2 vols., trans. Amy Hackett (New York: Macmillan, 1991), s.v. "Hitler Youth." For the purposes of this thesis, the terms "Hitlerjugend," "Hitler Youth," and "HJ" refer only to the group for boys unless specified.

²⁸ Testimony of Schirach, IMT, 14: 361; Fest, The Face of the Third Reich, 227.

Jutta Rüdiger, who led the BdM from 1937 until 1945, recalled the forceful organizational vision and enthusiasm of her former superior in an interview conducted after the end of the Second World War.²⁹ She reminisced that Schirach's "idea was to have one comprehensive youth movement" in which "even the youngest would learn to give up her selfish wishes, to see that even the smallest task was part of her responsibility to the people. And we succeeded." Rüdiger asserted that "Schirach had a streak of genius. Every conference with him, once you got to know him, was an experience."

Walter Laqueur notes that the various German youth groups that flourished during the Weimar Republic years "never produced a Bismarck prepared to bully and cajole all its little groups to unite into one great movement."³⁰ Abetted by Hitler's powerful influence and the pervasive totalitarianism of the Nazi government, Schirach set out to fill this void in the leadership of German youth. His administration of the HJ began successfully; in the period between his assumption of its leadership in October 1931 to 30 January 1933, when the NSDAP officially took power, HJ membership increased by 92.2 percent, from 28,000 to 55,365

²⁹ Interview with Jutta Rüdiger in Johannes Steinhoff, et al., eds., Voices From the Third Reich: An Oral History (Washington DC: Regnery Gateway, 1989), 19-20.

³⁰ Walter Laqueur, Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement (New York: Basic, 1966), 155.

members. Membership rolls expanded tremendously after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. The ranks of the HJ swelled to 568,288 children in that year alone, and grew to 1,723,886 by 1939, a year before Schirach's reassignment to Vienna. The Nazi regime passed the Hitler Youth Law on 1 December 1936, banning all youth groups but the Hitlerjugend, but membership for ten- to eighteen-year olds in the HJ was not decreed as compulsory until 1939. Thus, Gerhard Rempel notes that "Schirach's totalitarian drive" to strengthen the HJ "was essentially successful" without the aid of legal assistance.³¹ Political opportunism certainly contributed to the rapid growth of the Hitler Youth in the wake of Hitler's rise to power, but the tremendous increase in its membership that occurred under Schirach's leadership before 1933 should not be overlooked.

Schirach's obligations to the NSDAP included more than administrative duties. He also, exercising his authority as both the RJF and Reich Leader for Youth Education, designed an educational program for the HJ that reflected his own ideological education, which was largely self-taught. The goal of Schirach's educational plan, which emphasized totalitarianism, militarism, racism, and cultural chauvinism, was to weld the members of the HJ, emotionally and

³¹ Gerhard Rempel, Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS (Chapel Hill: U. North Carolina P., 1989), 9-10; Tables 1.2 and 1.3, 267-8.

intellectually, to the Nazi Party. Although Schirach suffered from an egregious lack of common sense and his intellectual immaturity cast him as "an enthusiastic juvenile," Dr. Douglas M. Kelley noted that he "tested high in intelligence" and possessed notable "imaginative powers."³² Although Dr. Kelley's official appointment as the Psychiatrist to the Nuremberg Jail by the International Military Tribunal speaks for expertise in mental testing, Schirach's "imaginative" powers were not "great." The lack of thematic diversity in Schirach's writings seems to contradict this assertion. Certainly, the fact that Schirach viewed his literary output as an applied political tool limited his thematic scope, but he did not choose to use his artistic skills for any non-political means of personal expression. Instead, he used his intellectual and artistic skills in an effort to bind German youth emotionally and ideologically to Hitler.

³² Kelley, 22 Cells in Nuremberg, 92, 89.

CHAPTER III

SCHIRACH'S NATIONAL SOCIALIST BELIEFS: THE CULT OF YOUTH, THE FÜHRERPRINZIP, AND HITLER YOUTH INDOCTRINATION

Schirach's tenure as Reichsjugendführer, which lasted from June 1933 until April 1940, marked a turning point in the NSDAP's youth policy, which was reflected in the title of a collection of his own essays and speeches published in 1939, Revolution der Erziehung (Revolution in Education). He sought to alter the fabric of German education by introducing political indoctrination as its central pedagogic tenet, stating that

The Hitler Youth is a community of ideological education. Whoever marches in the Hitler Youth is not a number among millions but the soldier of an idea. The individual member's value to the whole is determined by the degree with which he is permeated by the idea. The best Hitler Youth, irrespective of rank and office, is he who completely surrenders himself to the National Socialist Weltanschauung.¹

The enthusiasm for Hitler, the Nazi Party, and the Romantic glorification of youth that Schirach held shaped his attitude toward the administration and indoctrination of the Hitler Youth. Schirach sought to inspire his young charges by

¹ Baldur von Schirach, Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1934), 130, as cited in H. W. Koch, The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-45 (London: McDonald and Jane's, 1975), 104.

reproducing the idealized link between German culture and the NSDAP, which existed in his own mind, within their own intellectual views. Two important cultural ideas that dominate Schirach's actions and writings are his conceptions of youth and his exaltation of the Nazi Führerprinzip, or "Leadership Principle," as the apex of German social and political development.

Schirach's conception of youth played an important role in his actions as RJF, for he believed that the innate and pervasive quality of "youth" was omnipresent in Germanic Kultur as well as in the revolutionary agenda of the Nazi party. Thus, he viewed the rise of Nazism as a sort of pseudo-Hegelian progression of Germandom, for he believed that the social cohesion brought about by the NSDAP exemplified the inner strength and vitality of the German Geist. Schirach hoped to enthrall the young people of Germany and attract them to the NSDAP by giving them a sense of participation in the society that the NSDAP was creating. The contribution of their own youthful energy to the state was, in Schirach's view, a proper patriotic duty of HJ members.

Schirach earned his appointment as RJF by impressing Hitler with his conception of a "youth state" that, although associated with and supervised by the NSDAP, would remain relatively autonomous through its self-elected leadership. The HJ, thus headed by its own members, could present an

external impression of youthful exuberance and self-awareness. Schirach, however, intended that these characteristics were to be tempered with a strict adherence to a political ideology compatible with the larger Nazi socio-political system. The circumstances of his own appointment as RJF confirm this: the HJ could elect its own subordinate leaders, but its overall head necessarily had to be designated by Hitler himself so that the Führer could demonstrate his leadership over the organization.

The idea of the Nazi "youth state" stemmed from Hitler's desire to capitalize upon his perception, as stated in Mein Kampf, that "youth has its own state, it has a certain closed solidarity towards the grown-up, and this is perfectly natural."² Schirach wholeheartedly accepted this dictum; he later claimed that he coined the popular Nazi slogan "'youth must lead youth,'" which was "widely attributed to Hitler."³ He understood well the power of youth's energetic appeal, for it led to his own introduction to the NSDAP. Schirach exploited and harnessed the anomie, anger, and frustration of young Germans to achieve his goal: their recruitment to the National Socialist cause. Inspired by Hitler's encouragement of youth, Schirach fervently set out to shape the youth of Germany into unquestioning and willing followers of the

² Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 415.

³ Kelley, 22 Cells in Nuremberg, 90.

Führer much like himself. Caught up in his zeal, Schirach failed to recognize the fact that, as Joachim C. Fest acerbically notes,

Like most of the central concepts of National Socialism, 'youth' was vague enough in meaning to be employed at will to defame or enhance the value of anything whose disparagement or commendation suited the tactical needs of the moment.⁴

The NSDAP did not introduce the cult of youth into German politics; however, it was the party that was most successful in exploiting its emotional attraction. Schirach's emphasis upon youthful rebellion through self-determination derived from, and appealed to, the Romantic desire of the Bünde, the disorganized and disparate youth movements of the Weimar era. They wanted,

like Rousseau, to return to nature, to enter a life free from the restraints of civilization, warmer, more vital and more spontaneous. To justify this aspiration, it unduly idealized primitive society, completely unaware that it is in fact hag-ridden by fears and taboos, and anything but free.⁵

Schirach's Hitlerian concept of youth impelled him to take advantage of young people by presenting them with an opportunity, through their own perception of power derived from their direct association with the NSDAP, to "engage, sometimes quite aggressively . . . traditional figures of authority: the teacher, the father, the foreman, the local

⁴ Fest, The Face of the Third Reich, 220.

⁵ Laqueur, Young Germany, 165.

clergyman."⁶ Schirach, burgeoning with pride and Romantic enthusiasm, expressed the Nazi desire to revitalize German society through such generational rebellion by proclaiming that "the NSDAP is the party of youth."⁷ Thus, the idea of youth became melded into Schirach's increasingly National Socialist conception of German culture. The Nazi Party itself embodied youth, for it asserted itself in the ambiguous, but compelling, terms of youth: vitality, ambition, hostility towards authority, and an innate and incontrovertible rectitude.

Schirach's ideas of youth manifest themselves in the literature that he wrote for the Hitler Youth. He emphasized the Nazi theory of the innate supremacy of Germanic arts and letters, including those of his own creation, and thus introduced German arts and letters into the educational program of the HJ. This implementation of the arts as a means to accomplish the indoctrination of young Germans into blind acceptance of the Nazi party line originated in Schirach's cultural conceptions, for he saw National Socialism as a logical and natural step in the progression of German cultural history.

⁶ Detlev Peukert, "Youth in the Third Reich," in Life in the Third Reich, ed. Richard Bessel (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1987), 25-40. 28.

⁷ Baldur von Schirach, as quoted in Fest, The Face of the Third Reich, 220.

Schirach attempted to link Nazi ideology to traditional German Kultur by interpreting the writings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe within a National Socialist paradigm. Goethe represented three ideals to Schirach: youth, individual genius, and an embodiment of the German spirit. Not coincidentally, Schirach also saw these traits in Hitler. He claimed that Hitler himself was an avatar of Germany's eternally "young" civilization:

Youth is an attitude. The paralyzed Chamberlain whose lips are forming words which only his wife can read and transcribe represents eternal youth as much as the old Goethe in his last days. His Faust, the Ninth Symphony, and the will of Adolf Hitler are eternal youth and know neither time nor death.⁸

Schirach attended the Weimar Festival of German Youth on 14 July 1937. He gave a speech at the festival entitled "From Goethe to Us" that ideologically associated the great Weimar native, dead for over a century, with the NSDAP. He asserted in this speech that "Goethe, like all great Germans, bore the eternal youth within himself."⁹ The foundation of Schirach's judgment lay not in Goethe's reputation as a great liberal

⁸ Baldur von Schirach, Die Hitler-Jugend, 19, as cited in U.S. Chief Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Agression. 8 vols. and suppl. (Washington DC: U. S. Government, 1946), Document 1459-PS, 4: 26. Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927) was a racist British author who was sympathetic to Hitler and corresponded with him in 1923. The "Ninth Symphony" referred to by Schirach is presumably Ludwig van Beethoven's, rather than that of Anton Bruckner or the Jewish-born Gustav Mahler.

⁹ Baldur von Schirach, Goethe an uns: Ewige Gedanken des großen Deutschen (Berlin: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachfolger, 1942), 10.

thinker who espoused the universal brotherhood of man, but instead in Schirach's allegation that Goethe "dealt with the inner vision of a unified ideal German national education." The crucial component of Goethe's educational philosophy was youth; Schirach quoted a speech Goethe had made in which he claimed that "youth shapes itself again upon youth."¹⁰ Schirach thus identified Goethe with the Nazi Party on the sole basis of their shared enthusiasm for youth. He then proceeded to equate Hitler with Goethe, for both represented the spirit of genius unique to their respective eras:

Goethe, according to Nietzsche, is not only a good and great man, but rather a culture. We serve the genius of our time. We are therefore deeply lucky to be the gifted generation which stands face to face with the Führer. Adolf Hitler teaches us respect in this time.¹¹

Imbued with such an idea, he viewed the inevitable conflicts brought about by Nazi Germany's relentless political belligerence in the 1930s as a sort of Kulturkampf -- a cultural struggle -- that was vital to the spiritual strength of Germany itself. Germany would, through the imposition of its essential cultural superiority over weaker ideologies, assert itself as the natural leader and arbiter of such policies in Continental Europe, and perhaps the entire world. Schirach naturally saw himself, as the Reich Youth Leader of

¹⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹¹ Ibid., 11.

the "party of youth," as a curator of this culture in the face of its impending conflicts.

The most important source of cultural and political ideology for Schirach was Hitler's manifesto Mein Kampf, which he read shortly after first meeting Hitler in 1924. Schirach's enthusiasm for the Führerprinzip originated in the pages of Hitler's book. He claimed that he accomplished the almost unbelievable feat of reading this lengthy and logically tortuous work in a single night when he obtained a copy, and became further enamored of, and enthralled by, its author. Schirach dedicated the introduction of his book Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt to Hitler. Speaking on behalf of the Hitler Youth, he assured Hitler that Mein Kampf "was our bible which we learned by heart," for it confirmed what beforehand they had "simply believed."¹²

Through the pages of Mein Kampf, Schirach developed a mental image of Hitler, not as a cynical demagogue, but as a fellow frustrated would-be artist as well as a brave hero of the First World War who overcame tremendous odds to attain greatness. Mein Kampf became Schirach's personal creed, and he avidly read in its pages "everything that Hitler wrote about world politics, economics, parliamentarism, revolution, Aryanism and Jews."¹³ He would later attempt to base his own

¹² Baldur von Schirach, Die Hitler-Jugend, 25, as cited in Nazi Conspiracy and Agression, Document 1459-PS, 4: 25.

¹³ Baldur von Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler, 25-6.

educational obligations as RJF upon Hitler's own Weltanschauung, for he agreed with Hitler's assertion that "the state's right to supervise its young citizens . . . is a duty."¹⁴ Schirach, as the leader of the Hitler Youth, set out to fulfill this duty by creating a monolithic youth group, organized on the tenets of National Socialism, whose members would serve Germany and its Führer through self-sacrifice and unquestioning obedience. Schirach celebrated the passage of the Hitler Youth Law, which was promulgated on 1 December 1936, by giving a speech five days later in which he proclaimed that the new law was "a creation of our Führer Adolf Hitler" that would "tie together the adolescent generation with his person and work for all time."¹⁵

The most striking example of the ideologically-driven cultural education fostered by Schirach during his tenure as RJF is his use of his own writing, especially his poetry, as a didactic tool. He attempted thus to glorify the National Socialistic ideal of Germanic culture through his own artistic expression. Schirach intended his verse to impress upon his youthful charges the idea that the loss and sacrifice of personal individuality, or of life itself, was a worthy virtue if borne for the good of the Reich. The

¹⁴ Hitler, Mein Kampf, 413.

¹⁵ Baldur von Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung: Reden aus den Jahren des Aufbaus (München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachfolger, 1938), 37.

nationalistic intent of these works is matched only by their banal and pedestrian literary qualities. The trite trappings of popular patriotism, such as flags, melodramatic assertions of comradeship, and monuments dedicated to fallen heroes abound in Schirach's writings. The literary critic Ronald Taylor characterizes Schirach as a "prolific poetaster" whose works "were unequivocal to the point of emptiness."¹⁶

Most of the poems in Schirach's anthology of poetry, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, are terse. They are composed in simple rhyming couplets or quatrains and rarely contain more than three stanzas. The reason for this brevity is threefold: it must be remembered that Schirach is writing for a young audience and that he intends his works to have a sloganistic appeal, but also that his meager thematic material is often quickly exhausted.

Although Schirach's idealized Hitlerjugend was to be theoretically autonomous, its primary goal was in fact to inculcate within the youthful minds of its members the concept of the Führerprinzip and the Hitler cult.¹⁷ Schirach believed that strict adherence to the totalitarian Leadership Principle, which required absolute obedience to the state and its dictator, would produce ideal citizens for Hitler's Germany. He thus saw his mission as RJF as a

¹⁶ Ronald Taylor, Literature and Society in Germany 1918-1945, 260.

¹⁷ Testimony of Schirach, IMT, 14: 377.

cultural mandate, in which he was to teach to the children of Germany what was true and noble in the Nazi cause so that they could identify with their place in the emerging Hitlerian society -- an existence in which their very lives were necessarily subordinate to the will and whim of the Führer.

Schirach believed that art existed, as did young citizens, to serve the state. Art, in Schirach's conception, was a synthesised expression composed of the patriotism and idealized "youth" innate to German culture. He stated this belief in 1934 with his dictum that "'Every true work of art addresses the whole nation, and as such, it also addresses youth."¹⁸ He made his artistic contribution to "the whole nation" with his turgid verse and prose, both of which became required reading for the members of the HJ. Schirach's use of poetry as a political tool created a curious, but eminently totalitarian paradox: the use of the individual's creative impulse to crush the individualistic thoughts and actions of others. Every thought, word, and deed of Nazi Germany's youth was to be directed toward the betterment of the state, for the HJ, as an extension of the NSDAP, necessarily served the German Volk. The basic aim of the Hitler Youth, as George L. Mosse states, was thus to "form

¹⁸ Baldur von Schirach, as quoted in Christa Kamenetsky, Children's Literature in Hitler's Germany (Athens, OH: Ohio U. P., 1984), 60.

men and women who were reliable because of their ideal of service and belief in the Nazi world view."¹⁹

Schirach intended that the indoctrination of the Führerprinzip into German youth begin at the earliest possible opportunity. One of his efforts to accomplish this goal was his authorship of a fable that was included in an elementary school primer. This fable presented Hitler in a light that would be appealing to very young children and is thus typical of many stories written for children in the Third Reich. These tales almost universally depicted Hitler as "a fatherly man who cared for all, was generous and friendly, and above all, loved children and animals."²⁰ Schirach keeps his fictional Hitler at a respectful distance from the masses, as befitting the great leader of the German people. He depicts Hitler's residence at an isolated mountain villa, which is surrounded by an iron fence. Despite such seclusion, Hitler is able to fill the admirers who flock to his home with "joy and jubilation" because of his "very friendly way." One of the people clamoring to see the Führer is a little girl who, being blonde-haired, exemplifies idealized Aryan racial characteristics. She informs Hitler that it is her birthday:

¹⁹ George L. Mosse, Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich, trans. Salvator Attanasio, et al. (New York: Schocken, 1966), 268.

²⁰ Kamenetsky, Children's Literature in Hitler's Germany, 175.

Thereupon the Führer took the little blonde girl by the hand and walked slowly with her through the fence and into the villa. Here the little girl was treated to cake and strawberries with thick, sweet cream. And the little one ate and ate until she could eat no more. Then she said very politely: "I thank you very much!" and "Good-by." Then she made herself as tall as she could, put her little arms around the Führer's neck, and now the little girl gave the great Führer a long, long kiss.²¹

Schirach, in this story, creates an image of Hitler that very young children could identify with in a positive manner. The Führer reciprocates the love and devotion of his follower with a tangible reward that children would easily and eagerly clamor for, making the adoration of Hitler appear to be a worthwhile and gratifying action for Schirach's young readership. Schirach, and others who wrote and promoted the use of such children's literature, thus hoped to "achieve a control over their children's attitude towards the German folk community and the goals of National Socialism."²²

The role of Hitler in Schirach's writing becomes somewhat more sophisticated when he writes for a slightly older audience. His poetry, which was written for HJ members between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, presents a more political, but no less emotional, vision of the Führer.

²¹ Baldur von Schirach, "The Führer of Elementary-School Children," in Fibel für die Grundschule, im Bezirk Düsseldorf, ed. Wilhelm Brinkman and Paul Rössing (Güttersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1935), 67-8, as cited in Mosse, Nazi Culture, 287-8.

²² Kamenetsky, Children's Literature in Hitler's Germany, 51.

Hitler, in Schirach's Die Fahne der Verfolgten, is no longer the kindly dispenser of desserts, but the political and spiritual savior of Germany. The author's intent, nonetheless, is still the same -- to inspire the Führerprinzip within the reader. Schirach's poetry propagated amongst the members of the HJ the Hitlerian personality cult that Ian Kershaw designated as the "Hitler myth," in which "the person of the Führer, as the focal point of basic consensus, formed a crucial integral force in the Nazi system of rule."²³ His poems, with their dramatic exaltation of Hitler and the Nazi Party, became a literary equivalent of the histrionic party rallies organized by the NSDAP that were "conducted with the passion of revivalist meetings" in which Hitler attained the role "of 'political missionary' and prophet."²⁴

Albert Speer asserted that Schirach's artistic works were simply the works of a political "functionary" whose poetic muse was utterly dependent upon his infatuation with Hitler. Speer, while imprisoned along with Schirach after the Nuremberg Trials, concluded that

Sometimes I think about what importance his writing, his poetry, had for him. He was always one of the leading lyric poets of the Third Reich. But is he writing anything here? In Schirach's case it rather seems to me that his poetry was merely doing his

²³ Ian Kershaw, The "Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1987), 1.

²⁴ Ibid., 42.

functionary's job; that no artistic temperament or desire to give form to reality lay behind it, but a craving to venerate. And once the object of his veneration ended, the poetry ended also; his creativity died with Hitler.²⁵

Speer's criticism indicates that Schirach equivocated the artistic and cultural expressions presented in his poetry with political action, although Speer's allegation that Schirach's verse was strictly a political function may be somewhat overstated.

The poems of Die Fahne der Verfolgten portray Hitler as a heroic, iconoclastic leader worthy of the veneration and loyalty that he demanded so strongly from the German people. Schirach's verse intended to create within the mind of the reader a political and cultural vision identical to his own, in which the question of German greatness had "only one answer: Hitler."²⁶ His poems thus represent his acceptance and advocacy of the National Socialist Führerprinzip in literary form.

Schirach, speaking for the readers of his poems, often wrote as if he were Hitler himself in his verses dedicated to the Führer. This literary tactic imparts a sense of immediacy and familiarity between the subject and the reader.

²⁵ Speer, Spandau, 372. Speer's harsh criticism of Schirach and his literary output may have been mitigated by the tense nature of the relationship between the two men in the tedious, socially claustrophobic atmosphere during their twenty year-long imprisonment in Spandau.

²⁶ Baldur von Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler, 34.

Schirach, as stated previously, wrote his first poem in praise of National Socialism at the age of seventeen after first meeting Hitler in 1924. That poem used this technique. It found its way into Die Fahne der Verfolgten, where it was given the simple title of "Hitler":

You are many thousands behind me,
And you are me and I am you.

I have thought no thoughts
That have not trembled within your hearts.

And when I form words, I know none
That are not in as one with your wishes.

For I am you and you are me,
And we all believe, Germany, in you!²⁷

Schirach, in this poem, exalts the solidarity created between Hitler and his thousands of followers created by a sense of collective will. Hitler appears as a sympathetic and patriotic leader whose political strength and legitimacy originate in his unity with Germany and its Volk. The power that Hitler derived from nationalistic patriotism and strength through numbers, the images of which played important roles in Nazi propaganda, is apparent in this poem. Schirach reinforces the coalescing power of unity offered by Hitler in his poem "To the Führer," which recalls his own redemption from personal anomie through Hitler:

It is the truth that bound me to you:
I searched for you and found my Fatherland.

²⁷ Baldur von Schirach, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, 39.

I was a leaf in limitless space,
But now you are my home and my tree.

How far I would have blown, gone in the wind,
If you were not strength, that flows from the root.

I believe in you, for you are the nation.
I believe in Germany, for you are Germany's son.²⁸

Schirach depicts Hitler as a political savior with this poem by praising the order and stability that Hitler brought to the author himself and, through extension, the people of Germany. Hitler is personified as Germany itself, and as "Germany's son" he becomes identified with the image of youth that Schirach emphasized so greatly. An innate spiritual power of Germany itself is mystically alluded to in the poem's implied suggestion that only that nation could have produced Hitler, whose very existence makes Germany's special position among nations self-evident.

Hitler is depicted not only as a secular and political messiah in Schirach's verse; he also attained the heights of religious veneration. Schirach asserted that he "had taken Nazism as my religion in my youth," and he proselytised this faith by arrogating traditional religious and ritualistic imagery in his writings.²⁹ He frequently describes Nazism as a "faith" or "belief," and thus stresses the spiritual primacy of the Führerprinzip in his literature. Such pseudo-

²⁸ Ibid., 38.

²⁹ Kelley, 22 Cells in Nuremberg, 88.

sanctimonious effusions to Hitler exhibit themselves in the poem "One Führer":

We build a monument to your faith
From blocks of hard stone.

We place a fire, eternally burning,
Within.

And you know who is the white upon the altar:
The flame without rest

And the white marble, cold and clear,
Is you.³⁰

Schirach's writings and speeches reveal his unflinching faith in the NSDAP and its leader, Adolf Hitler. Schirach's belief in Hitler, strengthened by their personal relationship, originated in his identification of Hitler and Nazism as expressions of Germanic culture. The glorification of youth and authoritarian leadership, two central tenets of National Socialist cultural policy in the Third Reich, inspired Schirach, and he attempted with his writings to inspire others with his beliefs. Schirach's fervent adherence to Nazi ideology led him to believe without a trace of irony that his educational programs were "designed to guide youth to the life work of Goethe."³¹ It seems, however, that Schirach himself never really understood Faust, Goethe's masterpiece, until after the fall of the Third Reich. Schirach's idolatry of, and dependence upon, Hitler, placed

³⁰ Baldur von Schirach, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, 42.

³¹ Testimony of Schirach, IMT, 14: 364.

him into a situation not completely dissimilar to that faced by his colleague Albert Speer. Both Schirach and Speer, entranced by Hitler's charisma and the power which Hitler had given them, failed to anticipate the repercussions of their actions as officials of the NSDAP. Speer reflected upon his deeds as a Nazi and upon his relationship with Hitler in his book Inside the Third Reich, stating that when he met Hitler, "being wild to accomplish things . . . I would have sold my soul like Faust. Now I had found my Mephistopheles. He seemed no less engaging than Goethe's."³²

³² Speer, Inside the Third Reich, 31.

CHAPTER IV

SCHIRACH'S RACIAL POLITICS: ANTI-SEMITISM, THE VOLKSGEMEINSCHAFT, AND YOUTH INDOCTRINATION

The primary goal of Schirach's literature and work as Reichsjugendführer was to teach the children of the Third Reich to obey the political dictates of Hitler's totalitarian state. In Nazi Germany, the racist policies of Hitler and the NSDAP ensured that

racial ideologies enjoyed the widest currency and the greatest political salience: the Third Reich became the first state in world history whose dogma and practice was racism.¹

Schirach's duties as the leader and educator of German youth thus included the obligation to introduce and encourage racism as an official doctrine of Hitler's governmental policy. He believed that the Jew represented both a political and a cultural threat to the Germanic Volk. Perceiving this danger to his nation and his people, he set out to strengthen the members of the Hitlerjugend for their future struggles on behalf of Hitler's Germany through his

¹ Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippermann, The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945 (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1991), 23.

writings and speeches. Schirach best expressed the cultural stakes in the battle between the Aryan and Jew in a speech given before the European Youth Congress on 14 September 1942 while he was serving as the Gauleiter of Vienna. After deporting over sixty thousand Jews from his Gau between 1940 and 1941, that

Every Jew who exerts influence in Europe is a danger to European culture. If anyone reproaches me with having driven from this city, which was once the European metropolis of Jewry, tens of thousands upon tens of thousands of Jews into the ghetto of the East, I feel myself compelled to reply: I see in this an action contributing to European culture.²

His virulent anti-Semitism played a pronounced role in his writings on cultural struggle. This racial hatred, when coupled with his advocacy of violence and militarism, would serve to warp and damage his beloved Germanic Kultur immeasurably more than Hitler's demonized Jew ever could have.

Schirach claimed during the Nuremberg Trial that his personal racist beliefs began at an early period in his life. Growing up among the Weimar social elite, he noticed during his childhood an "underhanded quiet prejudice against the Jews," which he reinforced through his extensive readings in

² Speech by Baldur von Schirach before the European Youth Conference in Vienna, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Document 3048-PS, 5: 776. Schirach personally organized the European Youth Congress, a propaganda event to which children from the occupied territories of the Third Reich were invited in order to suggest a peaceful co-existence between the Reich and its dominions.

the racist literature of the time; by the age of seventeen he had read Henry Ford's The Eternal Jew, the blatantly fraudulent The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain's The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century.³ His hatred of Jews, however, found its fullest expression after he read Hitler's Mein Kampf, which stated that the ethnic German represented the highest form of human life, while the inhuman Jew created and propagated evil, depravity, and sickness in society. Once he joined the NSDAP in 1925, he also "came under the influence" of one of the crudest proponents of Nazi anti-Semitism, Julius Streicher. Streicher, the publisher of the notorious Jew-baiting journal Der Stürmer, impressed Schirach with his "knack for clothing anti-Semitism in pseudo-scientific garb."⁴

The majority of Schirach's writings concerning racial politics tend to stress a positivistic view of the Germanic Volk and the Volksgemeinschaft, or racial community, that Hitler endeavored to create within the Third Reich, but the anti-Semitic efforts that Schirach produced while serving as RJF are striking and significant. The predominance of

³ G. M. Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary (New York: Farrar, Straus & Co., 1947), 22-4; Baldur von Schirach, Ich glaubte an Hitler, 164-5.

⁴ It is curious that Streicher's Der Stürmer, which was vulgar and, at times, pornographic, impressed the urbane Schirach. A typical example of the "pseudo-scientific garb" surrounding Streicher's racism included his belief that a Jew could be identified by his "soft and feminine" behind, which "wobbles when they walk." Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary, 23, 411.

National Socialistic interpretations of racially-based culture runs throughout the doctrinal training of the HJ, and is evidenced in Schirach's poems, speeches, and educational programs. These writings reveal his belief in Nazi ideology as a cultural mandate. Alfons Heck, a former HJ member who joined the Jungvolk in 1938 and was pressed into military service in 1944 at the age of sixteen, recalled the pervasive and banal presence of anti-Semitism in the HJ's education program:

I remembered all too vividly some of Schirach's writings in the monthly issues of our publication Hitlerjugend, as well as numerous texts used in membership indoctrination. Most were so repetitious that we leaders found it difficult to keep our followers from taking cat naps. One recurring theme was the exhortation to regard all Jews as the cunning, implacable enemy, deserving of no mercy.⁵

Schirach encouraged the members of the HJ to avail themselves of the racist writings that fueled his own hatred of Jews. He suggested that "extracts from 'Mein Kampf' or from the Führer's speeches or Rosenberg's works should be read" at weekly Sunday morning meetings.⁶ On 2 January 1934 he gave a passionate speech entitled "Houston Stewart Chamberlain's German Heart." In this speech he gave his personal endorsement of the writings of Houston Stewart

⁵ Alfons Heck, The Burden of Hitler's Legacy (Frederick, CO: Renaissance House, 1988), 29.

⁶ Cross-examination by Thomas Dodd, IMT, 14: 478. Alfred Rosenberg, the author of The Myth of the Twentieth Century, was the NSDAP's philosopher-in-residence and a rabid racist.

Chamberlain to the Hitler Youth. He thus pointed out the relevance of Chamberlain's writings to National Socialist ideology, which characterized Jews as the antithesis of German culture.

Schirach begins this speech with a brief biographical sketch, pointing out that Chamberlain's British birth means nothing; more relevant to Schirach's racial ideas is the need for the youth of Germany to realize that Chamberlain represents one of the "most meaningful revelations of the Nordic spirit." Schirach revels in the fact that Chamberlain, "the greatest thinker of his time, saw the new Reich standing before him" at a time when "hardly any Germans comprehended the National Socialist movement" and reveals that Chamberlain, before his death in 1927, sent a "wonderful" letter to Hitler in praise of the NSDAP's nationalistic politics.⁷ Schirach, interpreting the Third Reich's nationalistic racism as the dominant force in world politics, views Nazi Germany as the realization of Chamberlain's ideas, claiming that the British author "prophetically perceived the idea of the twentieth century" in his The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century.⁸

⁷ Chamberlain's letter to Hitler was dated 7 October 1923; Hitler would attempt the Beer Hall Putsch almost a month later, on 8-9 November 1923.

⁸ Baldur von Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung, 151-2.

One of Chamberlain's ideas which Schirach finds important is that he "had spiritually opened the struggle against international and anti-national powers;" the most pressing of these dangerous powers is that of Judaism. Schirach quotes a text by Chamberlain discussing the plight of the Aryan people, which states that "'an immense task to fulfill remains for us all: our internal liberation from comprehensive and suffocating Semitism.'"⁹ Schirach views Chamberlain's anti-Semitism as being significant, for

He seized what Herder had already spoken out against a century ago and raised his voice in warning against Judaism, which he certainly, honestly, and giftedly did not dispute in its individual appearance, but which he regarded in its total appearance as a terrible danger to culture.¹⁰

Schirach slips into hyperbole to link foundations of Chamberlain's racism to the Nazi cult of youth and its interpretation of Germanic culture, stating that Chamberlain was "an educated man, of Goethe's type. Indeed, he is thus something like a spiritual son of the Olympians," for he "fought for youth and its essence, against all that is antiquated and against youth."¹¹

Not all of the HJ's vituperative education against Jews which Schirach sponsored occurred at the intellectual level

⁹ Ibid., 154-5.

¹⁰ Ibid., 155.

¹¹ Ibid.

of philosophical literature. The Hitler Youth contained too many children who were too young to digest such weighty subjects and a large number of recruits from the lower-classes who would be less responsive to overtly scholastic literature. Thus, the anti-Semitic education of the HJ also involved many of the most crass elements of racial hatred, relying heavily upon physiognomical and ideological stereotypes to breach mental barriers to racist ideology. Such stereotypes wielded a terrible power in the Third Reich, although they lacked historical or ethical substantiation, and they contributed significantly to the extremism of Nazi racism.

Schirach encouraged crude stereotypical presentations of Jews in a Hitler Youth handbook that contained scripts for puppet plays to be performed for children. Schirach did not write these plays himself, but at the International Military Tribunal he accepted the ultimate responsibility for their content and dissemination, for he formally endorsed the plays in the handbook's preface.¹² The chief protagonist of one of these plays was a good Aryan German named Michael, who "had to serve the Jewish clan." Of course, the racially superior Michael, presented in "traditional manner," triumphs over his oppressors. The play ends with Michael giving Isidore, the wicked leader of the Jews whose nose, according to the

¹² Testimony of Schirach, IMT, 14: 480.

script, "must be strongly exaggerated", a vengeful kick.¹³ Schirach thus creates an unflattering image of Jews while encouraging the direction of violence against them to children at a very young age.

These grotesque morality plays constituted common fare for the youngsters of the HJ, which consciously geared much of its educational efforts to appeal to the age groups of its audiences. One group of children wrote a letter to Streicher in April 1936 to inform him of the dedicated work being performed by the Hitlerjugend in their racial education. They noted that "every Sunday our leader shows a play about the Jews with his puppet theater."¹⁴ The tasteless quality and belligerent subject matter of such educational material, which incited the children of the HJ to bear hatred against malevolently caricatured Jews invalidates Schirach's claim at Nuremberg that "our youth was anti-Semiticly inclined, but it did not call for the extermination of Jewry."¹⁵ The anti-Semitic nature of HJ racial indoctrination was the direct result of Schirach's negative cultural conception of Jews,

¹³ Cross-examination by Thomas Dodd, IMT, 14: 479. The script also contains directions for stereotypical depictions of the NSDAP's political enemies: "the Communist as a wild stormer of barricades; the Social Democrat with a balloon cap; the Center Party man with a Jesuit cap, and the reactionary with top hat and monocle."

¹⁴ Cross-examination by Thomas Dodd, IMT, 14: 481.

¹⁵ Testimony of Schirach, IMT, 14: 432.

whom he believed had to be resisted with the utmost force. He made the vehemence of his anti-Semitism apparent in a speech that he gave before the Heidelberg branch of the NSDStB in 1939 which Gregor Ziemer, a British government official, recalled in a study of the German educational system in the pre-war period. Ziemer noted that Schirach, asserting his belief that destructive acts aimed against the Jews were "contributions to European culture,"

reminded the boys of the service they had rendered to the Jewish purge. Dramatically he pointed across the river to the old university town of Heidelberg where several burnt-out synagogues were mute witnesses to the efficiency of Heidelberg students. These skeleton buildings would remain there for centuries, as inspiration for the future students; as warning to enemies of the state . . . the black remains of the synagogues would be a perpetual monument reminding coming generations of the strength of New Germany.¹⁶

While the Jew represented the nadir of racial degeneration in Nazi ideology, the so-called "Aryan" German of Hitler's "New Germany" embodied the apex of human development and achievement in the Third Reich. Schirach's writings on Germans and their racial adversaries confirms his adherence to Hitler's contention, as stated in Mein Kampf, that "only the Aryan could be considered as the representative" of peoples who are "founders of culture."

¹⁶ Gregor Ziemer, Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi (London: Oxford U. P., 1941), 176.

Schirach shared Hitler's belief that, without the influence of the Aryan, "human culture will pass."¹⁷

Another important key to Schirach's conception of the German people was his belief in the idea of the Volksgemeinschaft, or ethnic community, the creation and perpetuation of which was the goal of the NSDAP's racial policies. The Nazis envisioned a harmonious society of racially homogeneous citizens whose innate worth derived from the genetic superiority of their German blood. Schirach expected his Hitler Youth to exemplify this society, stating in a 1938 speech that

All who are of German blood belong in our group. All youth are equal before the flag. Our homes and lodgings belong not to the individual, but rather to all We are special because we are Germans, and because we hold our German Volk to be the best in the world. There can be no more special descent than that from German blood We are the good society of today!¹⁸

Schirach believed that the propagation of such ideals was "the deepest meaning of this powerful youth movement."¹⁹ To achieve this end, he presented images of happy, hardy, and healthy Germans conscious of their innate racial purity striving to achieve their goals.

Although each German bore an innate and irrevocable worth through his blood, the community that Hitler envisioned

¹⁷ Hitler, Mein Kampf, 290.

¹⁸ Baldur von Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung, 46.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

was to be one in which some members were more equal than others. Karl Dietrich Bracher notes that one of the "basically irrational" central tenets of Nazism was a crude Social Darwinism, which was "based on the right of the stronger" and upheld the "exaltation of 'action' as the highest ideal, above reason and intellect."²⁰ Thus, a pronounced stress upon competitive behavior often characterized the Hitler Youth, both in Schirach's writing and in the actuality of his administration of that group, since "competition glorified the fighter and the heroic;" as a result, the HJ "manifested a constant, restless, compulsive activity." To impress the feeling of Völkisch community, the Hitler Youth participated in many activities typical of modern youth groups, such as camping, hiking, singing events, fireside storytelling, and public service campaigns, but "the Nazi reliance upon competition and achievement" underlaid these events.²¹ Much of Schirach's writings for the Hitler Youth reveals a paradoxical goal: to bring the youth of Germany together by pitting them against each other through organized competition.

The competitive nature of Schirach's ideal youths can be seen in a short story entitled "The Sun as a Symbol of

²⁰ Bracher, The German Dictatorship, 47.

²¹ Jackson J. Spielvogel, Hitler and Nazi Germany: A History 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), 170.

Dedicated Youth." In this story written for a textbook in 1936, a marching column of Hitler Youths faces two character-building impetuses. The first is an unexpected rainfall that has made their path "not exactly the best road for a marching column." Schirach notes that the dauntless Hitler Youths are nonplussed by this fact. Of more pressing concern to them, however, is the sudden appearance of a Bund deutscher Mädel column, its members singing happily as they slog along the muddy road -- "Now, of course, the boys have to show that they can march even better." The two groups come to a halt, at which point the BdM leader claims that "even the small ones did not lose their spirits" when the rain fell. Instead they sing their song, "For Us the Sun Never Sets,"

in joyful scorn and from an inner impulse: "For us the sun never sets." It is the great German "Nevertheless" that rises up here and represents the overcoming of the Ego. Only common experience can bring something like this into being.²²

Inspired by the BdM's example, the Hitler Youths continue their march, and even nature itself begins to reflect the struggles of these German children:

As if the song itself had brought it fresh strength, the sun has fought its way into the clear sky and now shines radiantly . . . the "Nevertheless" was victorious here, as it always is when expressed and lived with full strength. The strength of this "Nevertheless" the German boy can make his own when he follows the directions of the Führer, who has assigned to him the

²² Baldur von Schirach, "The Sun as a Symbol of Dedicated Youth," Neubau des Deutschenunterrichts, Wilhelm Rathrath, ed. (Münster: Heinrich Buschmann, 1936), 238-9, as cited in Mosse, Nazi Culture, 290-1.

task "to be slim and slender, quick like a greyhound, tough like leather, and hard like Krupp's steel."²³

This brief story indicates many of Schirach's concepts of the Hitlerjugend and its relationship to the German Volk. He stresses the competitive character of his subjects by portraying the idyllic high spirit and camaraderie of the BDM marchers as a spur for the Hitler Youths to improve their own performance. He also extols the intrinsic superiority of Germans through his designation of the ever-victorious "Nevertheless" of Germans; his conclusion that "only common experience" can bring about the transcendent expression of this "Nevertheless" indicates his support of the highly-structured nature of both the HJ and the larger society of the Third Reich. Schirach also emphasizes the role of the Führerprinzip, the major cohesive social force in the Third Reich, as a catalyst in the realization of German greatness. All of these factors helped to create Schirach's visions of the Volksgemeinschaft, a mythical society based upon racial consciousness, in which he hoped that

Houston Stewart Chamberlain's heartbeat, that which we call National Socialism, pulses in all through the

²³ Ibid., 291. The directive from Hitler is from a speech given at the Nuremberg Party Rally on 14 September 1935, which is partially reprinted in Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, Nazism 1919-1945: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts, 2 vols. (New York: Schocken, 1983), 1: 416-7.

deeds of the Führer, the marching stride of the brown battalions, and the songs of the new age.²⁴

The emphasis upon constant and impulsive action appears in much of Schirach's poetry. Schirach intended to teach two lessons through his exaltation of action. The first lesson was that the accomplishment of deeds represented "thinking with the blood," which demonstrated the innate vitality of the German Volk. The second was to begin the mental preparation of the Hitler Youths for future military service. This latter aim was important to Schirach, for "the Nazis assumed that soldiers could not be made in a couple years of training but that one had to begin the process in the formative years of childhood."²⁵ He saw his Hitler Youth as the custodians of the future generations of Hitler's thousand-year Reich, and thus attempted to inspire them for their task to the German people through his words and letters. His poem "You Too!" concerns the gravity of the Hitlerjugend's obligation to the Volk:

You are also a bearer of this German deed,
 which is greater than anything ever!
 You, soldier, are this cause, which is so wonderful,
 like us.

Your hand is also consecrated in holiness.
 When foolishness and trifles are dead in you,

²⁴ Baldur von Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung, 157.

²⁵ Rempel, Hitler's Children, 177.

then you can say to Volk and Fatherland:
I am ready!²⁶

The image of the militaristic Hitlerjugend is a persistent and pervasive image in Schirach's verses. In his "Dictum," he explained the fact that each and every Hitler Youth would have a role to play in the protection of the Reich:

Not everyone can be a Feldherr,
but everyone can be a soldier!
Everyone in our ranks
is a general -- that's a fact!²⁷

The goal that Schirach hoped to achieve through such statements was to satisfy Hitler's demand that "youth should be trained in such a way that it acquires courage for action."²⁸

Schirach's poems on action and the performance of deeds are wild, romantic expressions of unthinking vitality and often invoke a martial spirit. He rejected contemplation and rationality in "Through Deeds!":

You should burn!
Not like ascetics
who know themselves
through prayers,

No! Like soldiers,
deep in their graves,
whose prayers live
through their deeds!²⁹

²⁶ Baldur von Schirach, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, 57.

²⁷ Ibid., 26.

²⁸ Hitler, Mein Kampf, 417.

²⁹ Baldur von Schirach, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, 23.

Despite this criticism of the efficacy of traditional prayer, Schirach was not above letting the Hitlerjugend pray for strength in their duty to the Reich. Arrogating religious imagery in much the same way that he praised Hitler in his biographical poems, Schirach considers the lack of bravery to be a moral transgression. In his "Prayer," he writes:

There is but one sin alone,
 this is better known than anything else . . .
 Pray, all around, when we must:
 Lord! Never let us be cowardly!³⁰

Schirach's exhortations to defend the Reich against its enemies required not only limitless devotion and courage, but also a disregard for pity when fighting against the foe. His praise for actions contributing to the Volksgemeinschaft thus takes on the elements of ruthlessness and brutality that characterizes the National Socialist phenomenon. He saw violence as a fully justified means by which to strike out against enemies who threatened the purity of the German people; his praise for the students who burned the Heidelberg synagogues attests to his beliefs. He supported similar attacks against the NSDAP's political enemies. He recounts the party's struggle against capitalism during the Weimar Republic era in his poem "Volk, to the Rifle!":

This struggle is not driven by crowns
 and not by gold!
 This is the surge of a new world,
 a holy war against licentiousness and indulgence!

³⁰ Ibid., 28.

Come to us! We brown hordes stand here,
with strong fists, hard-hearted and severe.

We will kill the enemies of German freedom!
Volk, to the rifle!³¹

Schirach thus intended to make the use of violence appear as a legitimate means of dealing with dangers to the "German freedom" offered by the Nazi state. Schirach's choice of verbiage in the last lines is curiously blunt, for he freely admits that the Nazis "will kill" their enemies.³² He does not fall back on his poetic vocabulary; instead, he explicitly condones killing as a service to the state. An implicit connection between action and violence appears in much of Schirach's writings; his identification of the heroic ideal with a stylized bellicosity in this poem exemplifies his attempts to raise politically-motivated violence into a kind of social bond. Here, he appeals to the entire German nation to join the NSDAP, replete with an offer to stain their hands with the blood of Hitler's victims.

A great deal of Nazi ideology, literature, and propaganda was based upon racism, and Schirach's works are no exception. He consistently portrays his ideas on race in a context of cultural struggle: German against Jew, and Nazi against political adversary. The key to the German's

³¹ Ibid., 25.

³² Schirach's original German reads "Wir woll'n die Feinde deutscher Freiheit morden! / Volk ans Gewehr!"

eventual and inevitable victory in these conflicts is the racial supremacy of the German. The observations of Ronald Taylor suggest that Schirach's writings on the Nazi racial state are typical of this banal and anti-intellectual period in German artistic development:

Little of what was written in this spirit can be graced with the description "literature." Mob violence, Gleichschaltung, and racial persecution are not values conducive to the creation of great art. The tone is high-pitched, reminiscent of expressionism, with an abundance of hyperboles, fiery challenges, and rhetorical appeals.³³

Schirach attempted, through his racially-oriented writings, to create a context within which the members of the Hitlerjugend would acquire an inflexible racial consciousness that emphasized a hierarchical order of peoples in which the Germans represented the highest rank. The eternal struggle of the "Aryan" bearers of culture against their racial oppressors became an integral part of Schirach's administration of the Hitlerjugend. In order to achieve victory in this cultural struggle, Schirach hoped to build up a youth fueled by a competitive spirit, an inclination to militarism and authoritarianism, and an unwavering faith in the German state and its people. The political realization of this racial Weltanschauung required a duty of service from the German people, a duty that would necessitate unquestioning service, even to the point of death.

³³ Taylor, Literature and Society in Germany 1918-1945, 259.

CHAPTER V

THE THEME OF DEATH IN SCHIRACH'S LITERATURE

Schirach had a clear and practical goal for the devotion to the Third Reich and its Führer that he hoped to inspire in the minds of the Hitler Youth with his writings and speeches. This goal, which was determined by the totalitarian nature of National Socialist Germany, was service to the state. Schirach intended for the loyalty and sense of patriotic duty that he hoped to inspire in his readers to have no bounds -- even to the point of death. Hitler himself once declared that the "prototype of a good National Socialist" was one who "would let himself be killed for his Führer at any time."¹ Schirach's conception of the ideal Nazi was no different. The emphasis placed upon death in Schirach's artistic corpus exemplifies the stress upon heroic death in the arts and letters of Nazi Germany. Jay W. Baird notes that a "radical" cult of heroism arose in the Third Reich which unleashed "the

¹ Adolf Hitler, as quoted in Joachim C. Fest, Hitler, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage, 1975), 241.

demonic in man, calling for the annihilation of the anithero."² The use of patriotic death as a literary theme is an ancient practice, illustrated in antiquity by such authors as the Roman poet Horace, but seldom has it been used in such a stultifying and negative manner as the way in which Schirach employed it in his literary endeavors.

The images of death in Schirach's writings are omnipresent and pervasive. Joachim C. Fest notes that most of Schirach's poetry reflects the "spirit of a folksy denatured romanticism" as a result of its "empty sensations of national pride." Despite such shortcomings Schirach's verses, as well as his speeches and essays, "guided his generation's self-assertiveness in the direction of flag, struggle, heroism, and self-sacrifice." A nihilistic conception of political progress through personal extinction runs throughout Schirach's writing. Many of the poems included in Die Fahne der Verfolgten, the very title of which conjures up images of a defiant and ritualistic upstart movement, concern the idealization of death for the Nazi cause, "which was the great concern of this nationalistic youth." Thus, Schirach helped to teach "a generation of young people to believe, to obey, and to die."³

² Jay W. Baird, To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon (Bloomington, IN: Indiana U. P., 1990), 244.

³ Fest, The Face of the Third Reich, 228-9.

The obsession with death that preoccupies Schirach's literary compositions is a crucial component of Nazi ideology. Saul Friedländer notes that in the Nazi ideal the "motif of death takes on a special dimension -- urgent, essential, in some ways, religious, mythical."⁴ The foundation of the Nazi death-ethos, which is frequently and deceptively masked by the sentimental Romanticism of kitsch, is the negativism of many of National Socialism's central tenets -- hatred, anti-intellectualism, racism, and nihilism.

Schirach's writings support Friedländer's thesis, for they consistently employ an unrealistic, idealized image of death which transmogrifies death into a creative, positive event. Death, in Schirach's mind, did not represent the destruction of the self, but rather the ultimate realization of patriotic loyalty to the state. He thus helped to shape the connection between Nazi ideology and death, which created

constant identification of Nazism and death; not real death in its everyday horror and tragic banality, but a ritualized, stylized, and aestheticized death, a death that wills itself the carrier of horror, decrepitude and monstrosity, but which ultimately and definitely appears as a poisonous apotheosis.⁵

Schirach extended the pseudo-religious enthusiasm with which he described Hitler to the martyrs of the NSDAP. He composed a poem, "On 9 November at the Feldherrnhalle in

⁴ Saul Friedländer, Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death, trans. Thomas Weyr (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 42.

⁵ Ibid., 43.

Munich," dedicated to the sixteen Nazis killed by police gunfire during Hitler's failed Beer Hall Putsch in 1923. The exaltations of spiritual devotion to Nazism, as well as of death, merge in this poem:

God isn't showing himself
in the old ways.
But you can feel his presence,
where the flags
of our faith wave: on the scaffold.

There, where the devils cry out:
'Recant, you dog or die!'
That for which they once built cathedrals,
for us the steps of the Feldherrnhalle
are an altar.⁶

With this poem, Schirach equates the faith of its doomed Nazis, even at the point of their own death, with the fervor of traditional Christian martyrs. He consecrates the site where the Putsch was quelled, alluding to the greatest monuments of Christianity, its cathedrals. The death of the sainted Nazis in this poem is the means by which their political belief becomes transcendent from the temporal into the spiritual, and thus to its greatest glory.

Schirach brings the theme of personal death closer to the Hitler Youths themselves in his poem "To the Flag," which memorializes the dead and their standards:

You are the beautiful one, that we wave,
You are the strength, that attracts each fighter,
You sanctify the sinner, who dies for you.
Held with high hands, you pray with the heroes.

⁶ Baldur von Schirach, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, 32; trans. Baird in To Die for Germany, 258.

You are the ardor and the will of us all,
 Who fell for you, can be seen in you.
 You are the bridge between here and there,
 Hail those, who fall in your shade.⁷

Again, Schirach stresses the spiritual and transcendent nature of death in his cultural conception of Nazism. He portrays death for the cause as a redemptive, purifying event.

The use of religious symbols in this poem merges with another important facet in Schirach's death imagery: the personification of flags. Flags played an important role in HJ indoctrination:

The flag symbolized the mythical connection with the history of the Nazi movement to the Hitler Youth. It bound to them a relationship of a following, and obligated them to fight, kill, and die for the goals of the Nazi state.⁸

Such mythical, bellicose flags abound in Schirach's poems, in which they often represent not only the state and its party, but also its violent aims and fallen heroes. The fact that "the flags of our faith" fly on the scaffolds of Schirach's poem dedicated to the Beer Hall Putsch martyrs demonstrates his use of flags as symbols of transcendental death; there, they are a metaphoric physical representation of Party faith and allegiance. "To the Flag" employs a

⁷ Baldur von Schirach, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, 7.

⁸ Benno Hafenecker and Michael Fritz, eds., Sie starben für Führer, Volk und Vaterland: Ein Lesebuch zur Kriegsbegeisterung junger Männer (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Aspel, 1993), 65.

similar poetic motif. The banner personified in "To the Flag" stands as an active, equal member of the Party's ranks: it joins in their spiritual activity by praying with them, and inspires fearless loyalty through its symbolic incarnation of power and unity.

Schirach securely ties the symbol of the flag to his death-ethos through the mystical power of the flag to act as a mediative force. This power allows the flag to resurrect the Nazi dead within its folds. The flag represents "the bridge between here and there," namely, the temporal and eternal; thus, the flag embodies the spiritual essence of Germany's martyrs. Schirach thus interprets death as a transitory state, which can be overcome through unwavering faith in National Socialism.

The theme of resurrection also manifests itself in Schirach's poem entitled "The Dead," which endows its subject with literary life. He intended this work to induce within its readers "an appropriate reverence for the cause," as well as to "remind people of the qualities of obedience and discipline demanded of them" by Hitler.⁹ Here, Schirach portrays dead Germans as full members of the Nazi community, without the need of metaphoric reanimation:

The dead march along in our columns;
The one who they butchered yesterday,

⁹ Taylor, Literature and Society in Germany 1918-1945, 258.

Was not taken to the graveyards,
No!

He who was killed yesterday by cowardly night
Was killed in darkened streets,
Was by dawn's early light,
Awakened!

The face of the dead
Is worn today by a hundred thousand men!
And they stand as a tribunal . . .¹⁰

Schirach, in this poem, brings the dead fully back to life. They march alongside the living, and serve as their judges. He exalts the heroic bravery of fallen Nazis by contrasting their virtue with the tactics of their enemies, who must rely upon craven deception to overcome the righteous National Socialists. The death of Schirach's virtuous Nazis is a transitory state of being, rectified by the purifying power of the sun and the NSDAP's sense of destiny that Schirach hoped to inspire.

Schirach's poem "Grave in the Night" represents a more concrete example of his idiomatic exaltation of death. This poem, dominated by a sinister funereal tone, impels its reader to glimpse into an open grave in order to view Schirach's conception of courage:

Torches flicker down into
the gaping black grave,
they flicker so pale.

¹⁰ Baldur von Schirach, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, 27; trans. Jay W. Baird in "Goebbels, Horst Wessel, and the Myth of Resurrection and Return," Journal of Contemporary History 17 (October 1982): 633-650, 647.

Look, this one is good:
You must likewise mold your courage,
Dead is the agony!¹¹

This poem represents somewhat of a departure from Schirach's typical depiction of death, in which the subject takes on an active role. The corpse in this poem, although Schirach refers to it in the present tense, is clearly dead; nevertheless, Schirach holds it up as a positive example upon which the reader was to base his further actions for Germany, its Volk, and its Führer.

The dead that Schirach depicted in his poetry and speeches were often the abstracted figures such as those represented in the poems discussed above. Schirach's poems never refer to their victims directly as Hitler Youths, although that group was the immediate target audience of Die Fahne der Verfolgten. Nevertheless, the possibility of death was not unthinkable for HJ members during the NSDAP's rise to power. A total of twenty-one Hitler Youths between the ages of twelve and eighteen were killed in street fights before 1933. Schirach therefore directed his attention to actual historical examples of Nazi martyrs, which provided a wellspring of source material for Schirach's pen. Herbert Norkus, a thirteen year-old Hitler Youth who was murdered by the members of a Communist youth group in 1932, became an

¹¹ Baldur von Schirach, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, 31.

important symbol of sacrificial and transcendental death in Schirach's literature.

The methods employed by Norkus's murderers were extremely brutal. He was savagely beaten and stabbed seven times -- five of these wounds were in his back. Despite, or more probably, because of, the fact that "his face had been mutilated beyond all recognition with the upper lip completely missing," the NSDAP financed an open-casket funeral for its young martyr, "a cruel if very effective dramatization of the singular brutality of his death."¹²

Eager to seize upon the propaganda opportunities provided by such a child-martyr, Schirach, working in concert with the NSDAP's Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, created a "Norkus myth." This myth allowed the Nazi party to decry that "'Judeo-Bolshevik beastliness' would not waver even at the murder of a proletarian boy from drab, industrial north Berlin."¹³ Schirach, borrowing a page from

¹² Koch, The Hitler Youth, 82; Jay W. Baird, "From Berlin to Neubabelsburg: Nazi Film Propaganda and Hitler Youth Quex," Journal of Contemporary History 18 (July 1983): 495-515, 500.

¹³ Baird, To Die for Germany, 109. Norkus's murder became a popular subject for Nazi propagandists. Karl Aloys Schenziner wrote a fictionalized account of Norkus's life and death in his popular 1932 novel Der Hitlerjunge Quex. This novel was the basis for a 1933 feature film, Hitlerjunge Quex, which was directed by Hans Steinhoff and produced by Karl Ritter. Schirach was named as the film's honorary director. See Baird, "From Berlin to Neubabelsburg: Nazi Film Propaganda and Hitler Youth Quex," 501-504.

his poetry, rhetorically and metaphorically resurrected the dead Norkus. He rhapsodized in 1934 that

This little comrade has become the myth of the young nation, symbol of the self-sacrificial spirit of all the young who bear Hitler's name. Many died in the battle of the young for the Reich; the name "Norkus" embodies all of them in the eternal comradeship of the Hitler Youth. Nothing binds us Hitler Youths together more closely than the knowledge of our brotherly link to this dead boy, nothing is more alive than this murdered one, nothing is more immortal than he who has passed away. I am more proud of this than anything else in my life: that Herbert Norkus belongs to us.¹⁴

Schirach also commemorated Norkus's sacrifice for the NSDAP with a poem, which simply bore the name of its subject as its title:

My heart burns hot for your pale hand
And your silence disturbs me in many an hour,
And your eyes, which I never knew,
Are always before me. I am exiled from you,
Eternal one. You speak with a mute mouth.

O stay with me, purifier, in the group
And torture me, that I may know nothing else
Than your greatness in the deepest ground

In need and struggle with your fatal wound.
And what I do, is on your order . . .¹⁵

In this poem, like in "The Dead," the moribund subject is metaphorically resurrected through his redemptive death for the Nazi Party in order that he may redress the wrongs done to him by the enemies of National Socialism. Although dead,

¹⁴ Baldur von Schirach, as quoted in Arnold Littmann, Herbert Norkus und die Hitlerjugend vom Beusselkietz. Nach dem Tagebuch des Kameradschaftsführers Gerd Mondt und nach Mitteilungen der Familie (Berlin: Steuben Verlag, 1934), 6, as cited in Baird, To Die for Germany, 109.

¹⁵ Baldur von Schirach, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, 8.

Schirach's poetic Norkus is able to compel Schirach, speaking for his reader, to perform his "orders," much like the tribunal formed by "The Dead." Schirach likewise reinforces the sense of community with the dead; while "The Dead" march alongside the living in order to judge their actions, Schirach, in a similar manner, implores his literary Norkus to remain within the HJ fold to inspire his comrades.

Schirach helped to propagate the Norkus cult both within and outside the Hitler Youth by erecting a facade of pageantry and propaganda around Norkus. He declared 24 January, the anniversary of Norkus' death, as an official state holiday. He also made annual speeches, which were broadcast across Germany by radio, each New Years' Day at Norkus' grave in Berlin. These speeches, in which he "issued marching orders to the Hitler Youth," often centered around the theme of heroic sacrifice for the state.¹⁶

Schirach's book of speeches and essays Revolution der Erziehung includes his New Year's Day address from 1935. The martyrdom of Norkus becomes an impetus for the future actions of the HJ, especially in their preparation for possible death. Much of the speech is aimed towards admonishing the Hitler Youth to concern themselves with their health, for Schirach declared 1935 "The Year of Physical Education." However, Schirach uses the memory of Norkus in an

¹⁶ Baird, To Die for Germany, 118.

emotionally-charged manner as a means to inspire the HJ in the upcoming year:

Three years ago in January our enemies murdered our comrade Herbert Norkus. Thus the hardest year of struggle of National Socialism began with a bloody promise. The youth of the movement was given the honor to inaugurate the future of the fallen every year. The HJ seeks with enormous effort to be worthy of this distinction.¹⁷

Once his audience has thus been emotionally obligated to Norkus for his sacrifice, Schirach's speech moves to the immediate practical task at hand. They must, "as the youth of the greatest political party of youth," set an example for others through their "resolution and performance." Schirach confirms Norkus' sanctified status by equating him with "the mute teachers" of the Third Reich: the dead killed in the First World War and the Beer Hall Putsch martyrs. Without such examples of discipline, ardor, and willing self-sacrifice, Schirach declares that the Hitler Youth would merely "be a youth group like every other." He then reminds them that he stands on the hallowed ground of Norkus' grave, and refers to the date of his murder as the true beginning of the Hitler Youth, for which they must

thank not last of all the holy symbol of young sacrifice and heroism, who is named Herbert Norkus, for what the Hitler Youth has become since January 1932. With his name on our lips we cry in the new year at his simple tomb, to lead the German youth in the new year with the same seriousness and also with the same truth, to live and work as German youth for the Führer, for whom he also fell . . . our movement was not founded upon money,

¹⁷ Baldur von Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung, 18.

but rather through the sacrificial death of inspired youth.¹⁸

Schirach thus again reiterates his idea of death as a creative force, for he suggests that Norkus's death played an important role in strengthening the Hitlerjugend during the time since his death. Norkus's murder certainly helped the HJ, insofar as that it gave the NSDAP a highly emotional propaganda subject for its struggle against Norkus' "Judeo-Bolshevik" murderers. However, Schirach's nearly unlimited authority as the Youth Leader of the German Reich, which he had wielded for over a year at the time that he gave this speech, played a much more important role in the HJ's rapid growth in the years after 1932.

Schirach did not limit himself to the martyrs of the 1930s -- he also exploited Germany's dead from the First World War in his mission to bind the youth of Germany to National Socialism. Germany's defeat and subsequent humiliation by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 remained a powerful and painful memory for many Germans; over 1,800,000 German soldiers had been killed in that losing cause.¹⁹ Schirach's morbid imagination impelled him to turn to this rich source of subject material to inspire the future soldiers of Germany. He directly associated the dead of the

¹⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹⁹ Martin Gilbert, The First World War: A Complete History (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), 541.

First World War with Hitler, who was wounded three times in that conflict, on the basis of their shared suffering for the good of Germany.

Schirach held Hitler up to the HJ as the model for their future military endeavors, stating that Hitler "obliged to us the sacrifice of the Great War, so that we may acquire the ability to sacrifice those from our own ranks for the Fatherland."²⁰ He composed a poem that paraphrased a speech given by Hitler in "the heavy atmosphere of an over-crowded Munich beer cellar" during the NSDAP's rise to power. In this poem, he portrays Hitler as a courageous fighter committed to his beliefs, and still willing to give up his life for Germany:

Could be that the columns which halt here,
That these endless brown rows of men
Are scattered in the wind, split up and dispersed
And will desert me. Could be, could be . . .

I shall remain faithful, even though deserted by all --
I shall carry the flag, staggering and alone.
My smiling lips may stammer mad words,
But the flag will fall only when I fall
And will be a proud shroud covering my corpse.²¹

The eleven thousand "outrageously overconfident" German soldiers killed at Langemarck, Flanders, in October 1914 also became grist for Schirach's literary mill. Most of these soldiers "were university and gymnasium students, thrilled

²⁰ Baldur von Schirach, Goethe an uns, 11.

²¹ Baldur von Schirach, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, 41; trans. Willi Frischauer in Henriette von Schirach, The Price of Glory, 192.

with the opportunity thrust upon them at this historic moment in their nation's history."²² Schirach recognized the fact that the image of these optimistic, patriotic young soldiers who cheerily sang on the way to their deaths was a perfect exemplar for the Hitler Youth. He boasted that his Hitlerjugend was composed of the same type of youth as those killed at Langemarck in his poem "Hitler Youth":

Stride strongly, different from the others:
 Here go the mighty!
 (From such kind lie many in Flanders' fields)
 One will grow and become a proud form.

Your hearts and hands show the way
 to the summit.
 No, no power, no fire or no iron
 will halt this one life in its course!²³

Schirach, anxious to further associate the legacy of the Langemarck dead with the Hitler Youth, organized a donation on behalf of the HJ to the Langemarck cemetery upon his assumption of the leadership of the Langemarck Foundation of German Students. He proclaimed on 11 November 1934 that this deed created a spiritual link between the war dead and the HJ, stating that "the dead of our heroes' cemeteries speak with honored voices in every boy and girl of the new Germany." Summoning his reserve of poetic hyperbole, he concluded his speech by asserting that he could "think of no better expression, than that of our young poets of the front: Live

²² Baird, To Die for Germany, 3.

²³ Baldur von Schirach, Die Fahne der Verfolgten, 24. The parentheses in the third line are Schirach's own.

for Langemarck!"²⁴ Here, Schirach's tendency to endow the dead with the characteristics of the living appears again, along with his idea of progress through personal death. He also extends his cultural conception of German armed struggle to the First World War, identifying the soldiers of that war with poets.

Schirach made another speech on that same date in 1935 which also commemorated the Langemarck dead. He claimed that the deaths of the fallen proved their virtue, suggesting to the Hitlerjugend that

Year after year the German youth should convene a ceremony on this day and raise their hearts in confession to truth and sacrifice, and in confession to the spirit of Langemarck. And this day should not be a day of sorrow, but rather a recurring meeting of the living youth with the spirits of the fallen. This will be a festival of reunion, and the sign of the ceremony is not the black crepe of the funeral, which means pain, but rather the shining flags, in which the young soldiers of Langemarck are again brought to life and rage ahead, in accordance with their belief and their spirit.²⁵

Schirach thus, in much the same manner as in his poem "To the Flag," resurrects the dead through the mediative power of the flag. Although he presents death here as a positive and joyous event, he still conveys the solemnity of German militarism through the bellicose tasks which the resurrected soldiers will carry out with the Hitler Youths.

²⁴ Baldur von Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung, 28-9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

Schirach proceeded to identify self-destruction directly with the betterment of the state. He reminded the HJ that their very lives were subject to the needs of the state; thus inspired to march to their possible death, they formed a spiritual link with the Langemarck dead. Schirach, speaking on behalf of the dead, implied that their self-annihilating obligation of duty to Germany linked them to National Socialism, and thus to the Hitler Youth. He declared that when the HJ truly reproduced the spirit of the Langemarck dead, the latter would rise from their graves and march alongside the HJ "under fluttering flags into eternity," for

the idea of duty stands for us Germans above war and peace. Fulfillment of duty, as the dead of Langemarck and the youth of today understand it in their minds, is service to an idea that is greater than ourselves. In such a meaning, the devotion of an individual to the idea and work of the National Socialist state is an action in the spirit of our fallen comrades. The truth of the idea of the state is truth to the dead.²⁶

This statement concisely reflects Schirach's conception of death, in which death becomes a self-fulfilling political obligation to the National Socialist state, its Führer, and the German Volk. He intended to shape the future servants and soldiers of Nazi Germany with his literary works by introducing its youth to the requirements demanded of them by Hitler's totalitarian state: unquestioning admiration, unbounded loyalty, and the willingness to fight and die for the abstract ideals of National Socialism. This obedience to

²⁶ Ibid., 32.

Hitler and the Third Reich transcends temporal action in Schirach's writings; instead, it becomes a cultural act, whereby one realizes his true allegiance to Germany through his willingness to follow the dictates of the Führer without thought. Death in the course of service to the state represents an affirmation of not only the will of the individual, but also of the worthiness of the national goals for which he dies.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The writings that Baldur von Schirach produced during his service as the Reichsjugendführer of the Third Reich demonstrate his firm conviction in National Socialist political ideology. Schirach melded the central tenets of National Socialism -- totalitarianism, racism, and nationalism -- onto his own ideas to synthesize a unique cultural policy for the youth of Germany. He believed that the German people, through the NSDAP, had attained their pre-ordained status as the pinnacle of human culture, and his writings represent his attempt to utilize elements of culture, such as poetry and oratory, to reflect and propagate this idea.

The basis of Schirach's connection of patriotic support for the NSDAP and Germanic Kultur was his belief that the Nazis were creating an entirely new society based upon the precepts of totalitarianism. Several experiences from Schirach's childhood and adolescence -- the suicide of his brother after Germany's defeat in the First World War, the political turbulence of the democratic Weimar regime, and his flirtations with socialist ideals -- made him susceptible to

the pseudo-romantic patriotism espoused by the Nazis. After meeting Hitler in 1924, Schirach's conversion to National Socialism was completed. He believed then that Hitler represented the future of Germany itself through the leader's charismatic projection of strength and confidence.

Schirach saw Hitler as a political as well as a cultural savior for Germany. He believed that Hitler, with his message of authoritarianism, militarism, and racial determinism, represented a figure in German history equal to that of Goethe. Hitler, Schirach thought, would return the vitality, energeticism, and youthfulness that characterized German romanticism. He thus sought to mold the organizations that came under his control -- the National Socialist German Students' Union and the Hitler Youth -- along the precepts laid out by Hitler in his book Mein Kampf and in his speeches.

Schirach's speeches and poetry were works of propaganda designed to foster popular support for the Nazi government. Propaganda took on a special role in the Third Reich, for it represented the primary means through which the NSDAP carried out its cultural policies.¹ Since the Nazi Party's self-imposed obligation of protecting racial purity made itself responsible for the cultural well-being of its citizens, its propaganda "had a 'revolutionary' role," for it "had the task

¹ Welch, "Propaganda and Indoctrination in the Third Reich: Success or Failure?," 408-9.

of re-educating the nation for a new society."² Schirach eagerly seized his opportunity to help shape the NSDAP's cultural policy by attempting to reconcile it with traditional German Kultur, grafting bits and pieces of literature and history onto National Socialist political dogma. He took romanticism to its most extreme limits, exalting heroic struggle and death as transcendent spiritual events.

Gordon A. Craig notes that the original Romantic movement in Germany of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries itself was an intrinsically irrational "protest of youth" that was "marked by a high degree of emotionalism and excess." The early Romantics embraced and exalted the tumultuous aspects of the human spirit, and often represented death as "the most elemental of all powers and the ultimate solver of all problems."³ Schirach's political writings, with their exaggerated emphases upon an idealized youth, absolute devotion to the state, wild action, and self-sacrificial ardor, seem to be almost a caricature of the Romantic tradition.

The actual effects of Schirach's theories upon the members of the Hitler Youth is difficult to ascertain, for the Nazis, despite the efforts of Schirach and others like

² Ibid., 410.

³ Gordon A. Craig, The Germans (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 190-5.

him, failed in their most important cultural goal -- the creation of an ideologically- and ethnically-united Volksgemeinschaft. The Third Reich, for all the totalitarian goals of its leadership, never became a nation like the fictional Oceania of George Orwell's 1984, in which the government determines and monopolizes every single facet of an individual's life.⁴ As H. W. Koch notes,

the image of millions of little Hitler Youths diligently and enthusiastically studying or learning by heart Hitler's Mein Kampf is one derived from fiction and not from reality.⁵

The impact of Schirach's endorsement of National Socialist ideals upon the members of the HJ can be determined only in individual cases, for it is impossible to gauge the attitude of an entire generation of German youth.

Karl-Heinz Huber interviewed two former Hitler Youths in the 1980s, asking them what they remembered best about the man who had led them. The first, "Herbert H.," recalled that he met Schirach while standing in the first rank of a Hitler Youth formation that the RJF reviewed in Munich in 1935. He remembered only that Schirach "smelled very good; he was wearing shaving lotion or some sort of perfume." The second, "Bernhard S.," heard Schirach speak at one of the Nuremberg Party Rallies, and asserted that Schirach "had spoken very

⁴ For discussions on the practical failures of Nazi ideology see Koch, The Hitler Youth, 130-1; Mosse, Nazi Culture, xxi; and Spielvogel, Hitler and Nazi Germany, 117-8.

⁵ Koch, The Hitler Youth, 131.

clearly and convincingly."⁶ These somewhat dispassionate remembrances contrast dramatically with the judgment of Alfons Heck. Heck, another former Hitler Youth, characterized Schirach as a sort of Pied Piper for the NSDAP, bitterly recalling his outrage upon hearing that the International Military Tribunal had not handed Schirach the death sentence at Nuremberg. Heck believed that Schirach "surely had to die," for "the fanaticism he had inculcated lead [sic] to the death of millions of German adolescents."⁷

Schirach's writings do represent the ideology of the Nazi government, if not the ideas of the Third Reich's people as a whole. His cultural policy had a clear impact upon the practical daily administration of the Hitlerjugend. During the Weimar Republic period, the HJ was dominated largely by working-class youths who supported a vague notion of socialism as the key to the revitalization of Germany. The main purpose of the HJ before Hitler seized power in 1933 "was to rouse youth and to direct their resentment against the state."⁸ Once the NSDAP assumed power, however, this goal

⁶ Karl-Heinz Huber, Jugend unterm Hakenkreuz (Berlin: Verlag Ullstein, 1982), 32.

⁷ Heck, The Burden of Hitler's Legacy, 36.

⁸ P. D. Stachura, "The Ideology of the Hitler Youth in the Kampfzeit," Journal of Contemporary History 8 (July 1973): 155-167, 158.

changed diametrically: the HJ was instead to support the state at all costs.

Many of the HJ's basic aims did not change with Schirach's administration, for the HJ had always been anti-Semitic, anti-Communist, and strongly nationalistic.⁹ However, Schirach's introduction of the idea of cultural struggle altered the means by which the achievement of these basic goals would be accomplished. The socialism of Schirach's Volksgemeinschaft was based upon race, not economic distinctions. The Hitler Youth would struggle for the spiritual good of the German Volk, as well as for its political well-being. They would fight not only for Hitler and Herbert Norkus, but also for Goethe and Houston Stewart Chamberlain.

Schirach certainly failed in his totalitarian task to bind the youth of Germany to Hitler completely and irrevocably, although he certainly won innumerable minds to the Nazi cause; it is more useful to look at Schirach as a prototypical Nazi administrator. H. W. Koch notes of Schirach that

Schirach provides another example of the almost total colourlessness which is so typical of most of the leadership of the NSDAP. One is reminded of Hannah Arendt's brilliant phrase, the 'banality of evil,' except that Schirach was not really evil so much as stupid, and, given the circumstance, a stupid man can be as dangerous as an evil one. He was not only stupid but also ambitious, ambitions over which he draped the

⁹ Ibid., 160-2.

cloak of nationalistic pathos, which he chose to call youthful idealism. It may be true that we have the leaders we deserve but the Hitler Youth is then an exception, for in spite of all reservations it did deserve better.¹⁰

Schirach was an ideal Nazi: he was enthralled by authority, emotionally stunted, and dedicated to carrying out the tasks given to him by Hitler in the name of the German Volk and its superior cultural heritage. The cultural policies that Schirach implemented while leading the youth of Germany demonstrate his equation of artistic expression with political power, as well as the means by which the Nazis attempted to control the intellects of the Third Reich's citizens.

¹⁰ Koch, The Hitler Youth, 71.

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