THE DUALITY OF THE HITLER YOUTH: IDEOLOGICAL INDOCTRINATION
AND PREMILITARY EDUCATION

Aaron M. Miller

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APPROVED:
Geoffrey Wawro, Committee Chair
Donald Mitchener, Committee Member
Walter Roberts, Committee Member
Harold Tanner, Chair of the Department of History
David Holdeman, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences
Victor Prybutok, Vice Provost of the Toulouse Graduate School
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This thesis examines the National Socialists' ultimate designs for Germany's youth, conveniently organized within the *Hitlerjugend*. Prevailing scholarship portrays the Hitler Youth as a place for ideological indoctrination and activities akin to the modern Boy Scouts. Furthermore, it often implies that the Hitler Youth was paramilitary but always lacks support for this claim. These claims are not incorrect, but in regard to the paramilitary nature of the organization, they do not delve nearly deeply enough. The National Socialists ultimately desired to consolidate their control over the nation and to prepare the nation for a future war. Therefore, they needed to simultaneously indoctrinate German youth, securing the future existence of National Socialism but also ensuring that German youth carry out their orders and defend Germany, and train the youth in premilitary skills, deliberately attempting to increase the quality of the Wehrmacht and furnish it with a massive, trained reserve in case of war. This paper relies on published training manuals, translated propaganda, memoirs of former Hitler Youth members and secondary literature to examine the form and extent of the ideological indoctrination and premilitary training—which included the general Hitler Youth, special Hitler Youth subdivisions, military preparedness camps akin to boot camp, and elaborate war games which tested the youths' military knowledge. This thesis clearly demonstrates that the National Socialists desired to train the youth in skills that assisted them later in the Wehrmacht and reveals the process implemented by the National Socialists to instill these abilities in Germany's impressionable youth.
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The perceptive captain knew that the Hitler Youth had been far more fanatic than the average party member. Fortunately for so many of us Hitler Youth leaders, our age protected us. Since one had to be 18 to join the Nazi Party, Americans trying to sort out the culpable leaders from the followers looked upon the Hitler Youth merely as misguided children. We misguided children had been far more ruthless than our elders. I was very happy about that benign neglect, but my time was running out.

Alfons Heck

*A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days when God wore a Swastika*
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<tr>
<td>AHS</td>
<td>Adolf Hitler Schule</td>
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<tr>
<td>BdM</td>
<td>Bund deutscher Mädel</td>
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<tr>
<td>HJ</td>
<td>Hitlerjugend</td>
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<tr>
<td>JM</td>
<td>Jungmädchen</td>
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<td>JV</td>
<td>Jungvolk</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAPOLA or NPEA</td>
<td>Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCO</td>
<td>Noncommissioned Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>OKH</td>
<td>Oberkommando des Heer</td>
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<td>OKW</td>
<td>Oberkommando der Wehrmacht</td>
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<tr>
<td>RJF</td>
<td>Reichsjugendführung</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRD</td>
<td>Streifendienst</td>
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<td>SS</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

In 1934, Baldur von Schirach, the Reichsjugendführer (Reich youth leader), wrote a monograph on the Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth or HJ); in which he described the structure of the organization, the activities it performed, and how he envisioned its future.\(^1\) Here, Schirach consistently claimed that the institution lacked a military focus: the Hitler Youth “is not an organization for playing soldier…. The HJ has never tried to imitate the army…. In all other respects the HJ is in its whole structure, a youth movement and not a young military.”\(^2\) Over a decade later, Schirach maintained his assertions during his Nuremberg trial. Despite this, he admitted that the Marine-Hitlerjugend (Marine-HJ), a special division within the organization, held premilitary value.\(^3\) While Schirach—and presumably other National Socialist officials—were quick to claim they had no premilitary ambitions for the German youth, a joint study conducted after the war by the British, Canadian, and American staffs came to a different conclusion. This study analyzed German documents, memos, training manuals, and information obtained from captured National Socialists. In regard to the Hitler Youth, the committee concluded that:

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\(^1\) The Hitler Youth is an amalgamation of the Jungvolk (JV), Hitlerjugend (HJ), Jungmädel (JM), and Bund deutscher Mädel (BdM), and therefore, can be an ambiguous term. Some scholars use it to refer to only the Hitlerjugend subsect of boys, others use it to denote the entire organization, while still others use it to refer to both the Jungvolk and the Hitlerjugend subsects. Throughout this study, the term Hitler Youth will generally be used to describe the male component of the larger organization as the primary sources are not always clear which cohort of the organization is meant. Furthermore, when necessary, the study will either use JV, HJ, or HJ organization to clarify which cohort is being discussed. Baldur von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend, Idee und Gestalt* (Berlin: Verlag und Vertriebs-Gesellschaft, 1934).


\(^3\) Throughout this study, the term premilitary describes skills and activities that are not entirely militaristic such as the employment of camouflage or operating a military-grade rifle. Instead, premilitary training provided a foundation to obtain further military skills and activities, which included acquiring the ability to orient using a map or estimating distances; Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler’s Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 19; and Richard Ernst Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization” (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1975), 154-155. See also, Herbst Reinecker, *Jugend in Waffen!* (Berlin: Verlag Dr. Friedrich Osmer, 1936), 36-40.
The restrictions imposed on the German Armed Forces by the Treaty of Versailles made anything in the nature of premilitary training impossible for over a decade. Nevertheless, just before World War II, when the need for some sort of military preparation of German youth began to be openly expressed, the foundation was already laid. German youth had gradually been organized and, from the middle thirties on, was centralized under the Hitler Youth. It was a relatively simple matter to take over and slightly remodel a training which already had certain semimilitary characteristics. The youth organization was gradually organized and developed to produce an ever-increasing reserve of young men physically and morally ready for rigorous military training.\footnote{German Training Methods: A Study of German Military Training (Washington, D.C.: German Military Documents Section, Allied Intelligence Study, 1946), 81.}

The joint study, therefore, argued against Schirach’s declarations. The committee determined that the Treaty of Versailles effectively deterred paramilitary training in the 1920s but that it could begin after the mid-1930s. This change became possible because by the mid-1930s, the youth had been organized into one institution—which mirrored a military structure—and because Adolf Hitler had repudiated the Treaty of Versailles in 1935.

In addition to asserting that the Hitler Youth organization was not premilitary in nature, Schirach also proposed how the youth should be introduced to the National Socialist Weltanschauung (ideology). This was a paramount topic because if the National Socialists could not convince youth of their views, their “thousand year Reich” would cease to exist when the current ruling generation passed away. Additionally, it was believed that by indoctrinating youth the National Socialists would have an easier time of quelling dissenters among the adult population. As a result, the National Socialists created an educational program that utilized the two largest youth-oriented organizations in Germany—the school system and the Hitler Youth. These two organizations worked in tandem, slowly building upon each-other’s work as the German youth became ever more exposed to the National Socialist Weltanschauung.

Elementary schools initiated the re-education process by exposing youth to numerous stories that aimed to foster a belief in, as well as a desire to obey, the Führer, shamelessly promoted
militarism while portraying the soldier as the ideal role model (besides the Führer), and attempted to act as a recruiting agency for the Hitler Youth. Once the boys and girls entered the HJ, they were exposed to core National Socialist tenets, such as racial purity, the importance of the völkisch community, and geographic expansion. These same ideas were reinforced by the school system, most notably in the middle- and junior-high schools, through biology, mathematics, and geography lessons. The National Socialists believed that by inculcating German youth with these ideas, they would be eager to receive premilitary training as a precursor to joining the Wehrmacht (German Armed Forces) because they would harbor a strong sense of nationalism and militarism as well as an innate desire to serve and obey Hitler—who wanted them to enlist in the armed forces to serve the Reich. The Hitlerjugend was more than a vehicle for transmitting the National Socialist Weltanschauung to the youth; it also enabled the large-scale premilitary training of the youth.

In 1939, with the Hitler Youth already engaged in numerous premilitary activities, the National Socialists attempted to standardize training by providing training manuals for HJ leaders. As a result, two war-time manuals were published: Geländeaufgaben für die Hitler-Jugend (Terrain Lessons for the Hitler Youth) and Kriegsausbildung der HJ im Schiess- und Geländedienst (War Training of the HJ in Shooting and Terrain Service). In Kriegsausbildung, the Reichsjugendführung (Reich Youth Leadership, RJF) clearly outlined their intentions for the HJ: every member of the Hitler Youth should strive to obtain the War Training Certificate of the Hitler Youth, which was the principal documentation of their training for a future in the Wehrmacht. To acquire this certificate, the youth had to prove proficiency in shooting and field maneuvers. Moreover, Kriegsausbildung stated that the HJ’s standard curriculum incorporated

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shooting, field training, and ideological education.\textsuperscript{6} While marksmanship training and ideological education are easily understood, the term field training proves ambiguous. Authors such as Hannsjoachim W. Koch and Michael H. Kater describe field training as marching in formation, camping, and drill, but they are only partially correct. The youth received standard military combat training, which included the employment of camouflage, the ability to determine distances, map reading, night orientation, and most importantly, the engagement in military styled war games. In his memoir, Alfons Heck recalled that he—as with many other youths—did not enjoy the overly nationalistic speeches, themes, and rhetoric involved in the Hitler Youth, but that he endured them for he, like most 10-year-olds, thoroughly enjoyed the hiking, camping, war games, and sports that the HJ offered.\textsuperscript{7} The Hitlerjugend attracted numerous boys with its offer of an exciting life filled with rifle shooting, camping, and war games. The Hitler Youth, therefore, exhibited military elements, which included military structure and ceremonies. Furthermore, it included a premilitary system since it endeavored to train the youth in skills directly relevant to a future in the Wehrmacht: specialized, branch-specific skills, marksmanship, and field training—which culminated in the youths’ participation in war games and in the establishment of Wehrertüchtigungslagern (Military Training Camps, WELs) which provided the youth with a condensed form of basic training.

Besides a distinct military organization and the expectation of adhering to a military hierarchy, one of the Hitler Youth’s initial forays into the realm of premilitary training was the establishment of special interest groups; over time, these groups evolved into recruitment agencies for particular branches of the military. These groups, the Sondereinheiten (special

\textsuperscript{6} Kriegsaußbildung der HJ, 5, 7, 34. Similar statements were made by the joint study of British, Canadian, and American staffs, see German Training Methods, 81.

groups), allowed the boys to find like-minded peers while also engaging in activities more relevant to their interests than the Allgemeine Hitlerjugend (general Hitler Youth). These groups also served another purpose; they began training the youth in skills that directly related to a particular branch of the service. The Marine-Hitlerjugend (Marine-HJ) attracted boys whose interests centered on sailing by teaching them seamanship skills such as sailing small craft, navigating by the stars, and tying different kinds of naval knots—all skills required for Kriegsmarine (Navy) sailors. The Flieger-Hitlerjugend (Flieger-HJ, Flying-HJ) appealed to those who were interested in aviation. Flieger-HJ instruction involved building gliders, repairing gliders and airplanes, the principals of aerodynamics, and, for the older boys, the flying of their own glider—skills that benefited every Luftwaffe (Air Force) or commercial pilot. The Motor-Hitlerjugend (Motor-HJ) taught the youths to make minor repairs to motor vehicles, European traffic laws, and provided the opportunity to earn a driver’s license, which groomed them for a future in the motorized divisions. The Nachrichten-Hitlerjugend (Intelligence and Communications HJ) maintained communications and lighting at HJ events. The members in this division acquired skill in operating telephones and telegraphs, the ability to make minor electrical repairs, and to set up base communications—which benefited the signal corps. Finally, the Streifendienst (Patrol Service) put the boys in a role similar to that of a military police, and thus they acquired law enforcement skills and became potential candidates for areas of the Schutzstaffel (Protection Squad, or SS). These various Sondereinheiten groomed their members by instilling branch-specific abilities in the young boys. This, the National Socialists hoped, would improve the different branches of the Wehrmacht because the recruits already possessed important skills.
While learning specialized skills for particular branches of the service proved significant, a good soldier required additional expertise—including superb marksmanship and a sound understanding of field exercises. Since almost every Sondereinheit demanded that the boys participate in the Allgemeine HJ activities, the RJF infused the Allgemeine HJ with premilitary training. In the realm of marksmanship training, the boys received first-hand experience with rifles—the younger boys used an air-rifle while the older ones were given a small-caliber rifle—with the expectation that they become proficient marksmen. To assist in this effort, the boys learned the different mechanisms of their rifle, the principles of ballistics, rifle maintenance, and the different shooting positions. Through their marksmanship training, the National Socialists hoped that the youth acquired superb marksmanship skill, which proved necessary on the modern battlefield despite the advances in modern automatic weaponry.

Another component of the HJ’s premilitary training involved field training, which was itself subdivided into field exercises, small terrain games, and large terrain games. During basic training and advanced training, soldiers learned to operate in a military organization—such as a squad, platoon, or company—as well as to operate in the field; the boys of the Hitler Youth received similar training. First, the boys received training in basic terrain skills, such as analyzing different sections of terrain to see what advantages and disadvantages they offered, map reading and orienting, the proper application of camouflage, compiling and reporting messages, and the basic duties of a reconnaissance patrol. After acquiring these skills, requirements dictated that the youth demonstrate their proficiency in them by attempting to earn their Leistungsabzeichen der Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth Performance Badge) as well as participating in smaller terrain games. The design of these smaller games tested the youth’s ability in one particular skill set; one game had the boys stalk up on an enemy position,
undetected, in order to rescue a number of their captured comrades, another had the boys quickly and effectively camouflage themselves from their HJ leader, while another had the boys continually observe an enemy’s actions and report this information back to their leader. These games ensured the exposure of the youth to the material—and thus should have learned it—but they also subtly groomed the HJ leaders for positions of leadership later in the *Wehrmacht*. HJ leaders grew accustomed to commanding their own groups and possessing the freedom to pursue their own inclinations, which prepared and acclimated them to the German army’s treatment of its officers. Lastly, after showing some mastery of the field exercises, the youth were able to participate in the capstone of their HJ field training—the large terrain games. These games, which were pseudo war games for the youth, gave the boys a clearly defined objective and had them devise a plan of action in accordance with the information their reconnaissance troops provided. By participating in the HJ field training, the National Socialists attempted to prepare youth for a future as soldiers. By exposing the boys to these skills early and repeatedly, they not only became more physically fit and hardened, but they also possessed soldiering skills, which idealistically provided the dual benefits of decreasing training time and increasing the effectiveness of the *Wehrmacht*’s troops.

In 1943, when the *Wehrmacht* began to retreat and was in short supply of personnel, Hitler ordered the creation of the WELs. These camps, which were staffed by former HJ members who had enlisted but who could no longer perform front-line duties, provided select boys with a condensed, three week long course akin to basic training. These courses were intended to prepare the youth for immediate service in the *Wehrmacht* by refreshing the youths’ knowledge of marksmanship and field training. Shortly after their creation, however, these camps’ purpose changed from preparing the youth for immediate service to reinforcing the skills
they had already learned and preparing them to instill these skills in their own local HJ groups. The WELs’ first purpose—being a shortened form of basic training—is enlightening because it demonstrates that the National Socialists’ attempt to infuse premilitary training into the HJ was working because it would not have been possible to shorten effectively basic training to three weeks if the youth had not received previous military training. Furthermore, their second purpose—that of creating standardized instructors—is equally enlightening. In 1943 and 1944, the Wehrmacht was retreating. They were also outnumbered and in dire need of personnel. Although these WELs were staffed with men who were wounded and no longer capable of performing front-line duties, they nevertheless deprived the Wehrmacht of a valuable resource. By training select boys and sending them back to their local groups, the National Socialists hoped to eventually standardize training at the local level without the need of the WELs—at which point, the WELs could be shut down and the personnel could be redirected to directly assisting the Wehrmacht. The Hitler Youth organization, therefore, had a dual purpose: to indoctrinate the children with the National Socialists’ ideology and to teach the children skills necessary for future military service.

Given the immense popularity of the Second World War and of the German military—in the layman’s world—it is surprising that there are so few books that discuss the military aspects of the Hitlerjugend. The scholarly world has largely accepted this omission in the literature on the Third Reich; perhaps because it fits with the historiography of the Hitler Youth in general. While the historiography of the Hitler Youth is lacking—especially in English—it is still more extensive than the historiography of the premilitary HJ.8 Most works on the Hitler Youth are

8 For books relating to the HJ in German, see Arno Klönne, Hitlerjugend. Die Jugend und ihre Organisation im Dritten Reich (Hanover, 1960); Matthias von Hellfeld and Arno Klönne. Die betrogene Generation: Jugend im Deutschland unter dem Faschismus (Cologne: Norddeutsche Verlagsanstalt O. Goedel, 1985); Gerhard Linne, Jugend im Deutschland. Vom Sturm und Drang zur APO (Gütersloh: Verlagsgruppe
content to examine a new area of the organization instead of reexamining previous works on the subject. Furthermore, a majority of the books relating to the Hitler Youth are geared toward a popular, rather than scholarly audience; as such, these books often lack citations, are comprised mostly of pictures, and have only a few pages devoted to the different aspects of the organization—much like an encyclopedia.\(^9\) It is important to examine here briefly the historiography in order to ascertain how this study fits into the scholarship as well as why this study is necessary.

In 1946, Howard Becker wrote one of the earliest, post-war accounts of the Hitler Youth.\(^{10}\) Becker examined the German youth movements, the creation of the Hitler Youth from the pre-war youth movement culture, the National Socialist’s subjugation of the youth to their youth organization, and the National Socialist’s formation of a religion from their Weltanschauung—which the youth eagerly believed and followed to their deaths. Since this book was published shortly after the end of the Hitler Youth, it understandably relies on research from the 1930s and thus neglects the later stages of the movement. In 1975, Hannsjoachim W. Koch, a former HJ member who obtained his doctorate at Keele University in Staffordshire, England, in 1965 wrote another of the earliest—and most complete—post-war books about the Hitler Youth. His book, which draws from his research as well as his personal experiences, examined the roots of the German youth movements, the formation of the organization in the 1920s, its development from a small party youth movement to the nigh all-encompassing


\(^{10}\) Howard Becker, *German Youth: Bond or Free* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).
organization it became, dissent within the ranks, and the youths’ role during the war. After Koch’s book, a lacuna exists in the scholarship on the HJ. In the late 1980s and the 1990s, some scholars began to examine the female components of the youth organization, such as Gabriela Kinz, Martin Laus, and Alison Owings, but it was not until Michael H. Kater’s *Hitler Youth* that both the male and female components were examined in a scholarly book. Kater’s work was unique in that it was one of the first that devoted a large proportion of its length to the dissenters within the organization.

Throughout Becker’s, Koch’s, and Kater’s works, as well as the more popular histories, the HJ is often called a paramilitary organization, and the youths’ role in war is often discussed. None of these authors, however, substantiate their paramilitary claims. The authors are content to label the HJ a paramilitary organization and rely on the reader not to question how they came to this conclusion—as the authors never provide a citation for this claim. As mentioned previously, there has been a shortage of scholarship on the premilitary aspects of the *Hitlerjugend*. There are, however, two principal monographs which examine this aspect: Gerhard Rempel’s *Hitler’s Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* and Richard Ernst Schroeder’s dissertation, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization.” While these sources prove invaluable to an examination of the military aspects and training of the HJ, they lack an in-depth examination and analysis of the youth’s exposure to various premilitary skills. Such an examination and analysis is necessary to show the extent of the National Socialists’ plans as well

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13 Rempel, *Hitler’s Children*; and Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization.”
as their intentions for the youth. Rempel’s argument that the Hitler Youth organization provided a stepping stone to the *Schutzstaffel* and that the HJ and the SS had a close working relationship throughout the Third Reich seems to have been written before he conducted his research. Though Rempel’s research does point to cooperation between the two organizations, it does not support this claim as strongly as he intended. Instead, he often portrayed a closer cooperation between the *Wehrmacht* and the Hitler Youth as well as describing the difficulties in forging cooperation between the SS and the HJ. Furthermore, while Rempel admits that the link between the SS and the HJ was primarily concerned with obtaining a reservoir from which to recruit ideal soldiers, he chose not to support this claim and instead examined the “institutional and social processes through which the SS manipulated and exploited the HJ in order to facilitate the supply of personnel for its numerous programs, tasks, and functions.”

Similarly, Schroeder’s work was also flawed, though in a different manner. Besides grammatical and organizational problems which occasionally make Schroeder’s dissertation hard to follow, Schroeder fails to cite properly his information, statistics, and claims, which leaves scholars questioning whether his arguments can be trusted. Furthermore, when Schroeder cited information he drew from a narrow selection of sources, such as records only from Swabia or one or two correspondences. With these sources, he attempted to extrapolate the general situation throughout the Reich. Though it is true that numerous documents were destroyed—either purposely or as a consequence of the total war—and others were captured by the Soviets and thus denied to the Western world, Schroeder should have used caution in extrapolating a nation-wide situation from (predominately) Swabian records. Despite these flaws, these studies are still valuable for scholars interested in the military aspects of the HJ because they provide an initial foray into the subject as well as a guide to relevant sources. As neither of these

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monographs, however, closely examined the training regimen of the organization, a new study is required to address this topic.

Such a study will provide insights into the Third Reich as it demonstrates how the National Socialists intended to train youth and how extensive the training was meant to be. Since the Hitler Youth also existed as a tool for ideological indoctrination, these measures must also be examined if a clearer picture of the Hitlerjugend is to be obtained.

In summation, the current state of Hitler Youth scholarship is relatively sparse compared to the scholarship on the Third Reich and is often dominated by books aimed at the popular audience. Furthermore, these books focus predominately on only one of the two principal purposes of the organization—that of ideological indoctrination. While they ignore the militant purpose of the HJ, they do make token references to it being a paramilitary organization. This assumption has largely been accepted as fact—only Rempel and Schroeder examine this topic in any detail. Of these two studies, only Schroeder’s dissertation concludes that the organization was paramilitary from its earliest form, which was created during the Kampfzeit (time of struggle, 1925-1933). While Schroeder’s work is significant to the study of the HJ, it lacks detailed examinations of the youth’s field training and instruction in the Sondereinheiten and it does not demonstrate the organization’s true nature. The Hitler Youth was more than a paramilitary organization; it was a premilitary organization that was charged with preparing the German youth for a future in the Wehrmacht. This study investigates the largely unexamined yet accepted notion that the Hitlerjugend was paramilitary; furthermore, since the Hitler Youth also served the purpose of indoctrinating the German youth in the National Socialist Weltanschauung, this study must also examine the youth’s indoctrination in a way that has previously not been attempted—namely how their indoctrination was aimed at preparing the youth for a future in the
military. Such a study leads to the conclusion that the Hitler Youth was more than previously assumed—it was not simply an organization tasked with perpetuating the National Socialists’ Weltanschauung nor was it simply a paramilitary organization. It was an organization tasked with teaching the youth valuable premilitary and military skills which would benefit them during their later years in the Wehrmacht.

Here it is important to outline the difference between a paramilitary and premilitary organization, as this study will argue that the Hitlerjugend was the latter, not the former. A paramilitary organization is one that mirrors a military organization—often adopting a military hierarchy, chain of command, military styled ceremonies, and/or standardized uniforms. A premilitary organization, on the other hand, is one that precedes military service or activity—members of such a group might learn to stand at attention or to dress in the appropriate attire, or they could learn to handle military-grade weapons or the proper execution of field maneuvers. Paramilitary organizations, therefore, may be premilitary in nature and thus be militarily significant, but they do not necessitate premilitary elements; however, premilitary organizations are often militarily important because they instill fundamental military skills in the members before they enter military service. While this may appear to be an argument of terminology, in the study of the HJ it is significant as labeling the organization as paramilitary downplays the role that the National Socialists bestowed upon it. Instead, by correctly identifying, and labeling, the organization as premilitary, it becomes possible to see the National Socialists’ intentions for the youth as well as to accurately ascertain what the Hitler Youth held for the young boys who would become military recruits.

Third Reich scholars must contend with the fact that numerous documents were destroyed or lost; this is especially true in the case of Hitler Youth scholars. During the last days
of the war, a number of Hitler Youth leaders buried or destroyed their HJ records and belongings because they believed that if the Allies discovered they were a member of the HJ, they would be captured as a prisoner of war or shot for being a partisan. Alfons Heck provides a chilling insight into the lack of official documentation on the Hitlerjugend. As the Allies advanced in Germany, Heck’s boys retreated toward Koblenz. Heck, however, arrived back in Wittlich too late to have received this order, so when he went to the local HJ headquarters at the town Gymnasium, he encountered only one person, Monika Mohn. When Heck asked Mohn where everyone had gone and why she had not gone with them, she replied, “‘What does it matter now?’ she shrugged. ‘I volunteered to burn our documents. Nothing is now on record of Bann 244 Wittlich.’” If Mohn destroyed the records of Bann 244, how many other Banns had done the same? New Hitler Youth documents may yet come to light from the homes and archives of Germany and Russia. With the general dearth of secondary sources, translated primary sources, and categorized archival documents, this study will rely on a number of sources, such as elementary school primers and middle-school textbooks, training manuals provided for the HJ, memoirs of HJ leaders, and secondary sources. This thesis seeks to prove what has only been implied in histories of the Hitler Youth, namely that the National Socialists endeavored to prepare the youth for war by indoctrinating them with their Weltanschauung and instituting premilitary training into the Hitler Youth’s events, and to ascertain the pervasiveness of this premilitary regimen.

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15 Heck, A Child of Hitler, 183, see also 183-199.
16 Heck, A Child of Hitler, 180. Koch also provides a similar example where he burned numerous documents—but instead of attempting to hide the truth, he did so in order to keep his stove lit during the winter of 1945/1946; see Koch’s preface in Koch, The Hitler Youth.
CHAPTER 2

INDOCTRINATION

Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich was a dictatorship and, as with most dictatorships, it utilized a mixture of propaganda and terror to placate, subdue, or co-opt its citizens. These methods, which the extent of their effectiveness is open to debate, were seen only as a short-term solution to Germany’s unavoidable problem: that of lasting support from the masses.¹ According to Hitler’s grandiose vision, the Third Reich was to last a thousand years; therefore, if his regime had to continually use propaganda and terror, it would soon expend large amounts of time, money, and effort in securing support for the Reich. The National Socialists, therefore, needed to find a long-term way of securing the support of the masses. To garner this support, the National Socialists needed either to subdue or win over the numerous segments of German society and they also needed to inculcate thoroughly the society with their ideology so that the Reich would not end with the death of the current generation. Although the German youth was just one of the numerous facets that had to be brought under the yoke of the regime, Hitler saw the youth as the only way of guaranteeing the Reich’s continuation. In 1933, he explained why it must be the youth—not the current generation—that secured his Reich: “we older ones are used up . . . . We are rotten to the marrow.”² Continuing, he said that the current generation had “dull recollection[s] of serfdom and servility,” and furthermore, that they carried “the burden of a humiliating past.”³ However, “look at these young men and boys! What material! With them I can make a new world.”⁴ It is clear that Hitler believed the current generation of Germans was

¹ For more information about the effectiveness of National Socialist propaganda, see Ian Kershaw’s “How Effective Was Nazi Propaganda?,” in Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations, ed. David Welch (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1983), 180-205.
³ Rempel, Hitler’s Children, 1.
⁴ Rempel, Hitler’s Children, 2.
not suitable for carrying out the National Socialists’ goals in the future but that youth, which was malleable and impressionable, could be molded into ideal National Socialists that believed unconditionally in the National Socialist Weltanschauung (ideology) and that it would be these molded youth who ensured the Reich’s continuation. The process by which the youth were molded into ideal National Socialists was a long one and one which encompassed the two largest extant organizations geared toward the development of the youth: the school system and the Hitler Youth.

The youths’ first experience with the National Socialists’ attempt to inculcate them with the National Socialist Weltanschauung was in the primary schools. These schools acted like American elementary schools—in them children learned basic things such as the different colors, how to socialize, and how to read and write. One of the more useful tools of these schools was the primer. During the time of the Third Reich, these primers were edited—or new primers were created—so as to teach ideological messages. The most common stories were intended to create a longing to become a part within the larger German youth—thus understanding the concept of a völkisch community; to not only elevate the Führer but to also make him seem father-like—thus laying the ground for the National Socialist religion with Hitler as the chief deity; and to glorify the German armed forces.

It must be noted that, despite their best attempts, the Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth or HJ) never attained membership of all eligible youth. As a result of this, and of the organization not being mandatory for the first six years of the Third Reich, many primers tried to foster a desire to belong to a group while simultaneously glorifying the HJ in an attempt to persuade

subconsciously the youth to enroll in it. One such story is exemplified by “The Day of the Youth” from a Württemberg city primer. In this story, the local youth held a Youth Day at the school, which was filled with marching, games, contests, and prizes. Karl, a boy too young to join the Jungvolk (Young People or JV), went to the school and saw his brother—along with other Hitler Youth members—marching and singing in rank and file. Karl, desiring to join his older brother, attempted to enter the formation but was not allowed in. This did not stop Karl though; instead he marched and sang alone behind the older kids and thought the whole time, “if only I were older.” This story was intended to show the German youth how much fun the members of the HJ had and to teach them that all children, just like Karl, should desire to join their ranks and partake in the marching and singing. Similarly, “The Jungvolk!” and “Hitler Youth!” from a 1936 primer also acted as a recruitment tool for the HJ as they described the fun activities of each group. For example, “The Jungvolk!” concluded that “yes, the Jungvolk have a good time. They fight, they march, they build camps, they sing, they play, and in their meetings they also sing, read, and work.” Similarly, “Hitler Youth!” portrayed the marching youth in a manner akin to a fanfare, thus making it more attractive to the youth and more effective as a recruitment tool. These primers are full of similar stories in which the Hitler Youth was lauded; additionally, these stories were told in simple, short sentences—often with alliteration—so as to facilitate learning. Furthermore, they often described the HJ enthusiastically and the stories were often accompanied with bright, colorful pictures. All of these subtleties were designed to create in the young readers a yearning to join the Hitler Youth—where they would then have a lot of

9 “Hitler Youth!,” from Zimmermann, Hand in Hand fürs Vaterland; Kamenetsky, Children’s Literature in Hitler’s Germany, 179.
fun. The truth, however, is that once the youth joined the ranks, their National Socialist education would extend outside the school and their indoctrination would become more intense. Furthermore, once the youth enrolled in the Hitler Youth, they were forged into one community—a community of youth. This was important not only because it offered the National Socialists another avenue to indoctrinate the youth, it also taught the youth one of their most basic tenets: that the community is more valuable than the individual—which will be discussed at greater length later in this study.\textsuperscript{10}

The primers were also used to create a belief in the \textit{Führer} and to create a desire to serve him. In this capacity, the primers often portrayed Hitler as a friendly, smiling, father-like figure who was always accepting of children. In one story, three children traveled in order to present Hitler a gift of flowers on his birthday—which greatly “pleased him.”\textsuperscript{11} In another story, a child and his family eagerly climbed the Obersalzberg to see the \textit{Führer}. After their strenuous climb, the family reached the house but was stopped at the gate by the \textit{Schutzstaffel} (Protection Squadron or SS) guards. To their surprise, the \textit{Führer} exited the house and greeted all of the visitors; he even stopped to talk with the child. This conversation—and the opportunity to see the \textit{Führer}—deeply impressed the child, so much so that he later told his parents that he would “never forget that day.”\textsuperscript{12} In another primer, next to a picture of two children handing flowers to the smiling \textit{Führer}, a dialogue between the two children and Hitler is depicted. One of the children, hoping to impress his \textit{Führer}, said “I know you well, and love you as I do my father and mother. I will always be obedient to you as I am to my father and mother. And when I am bigger, I will help you…and you will be proud of me, as my father and mother are!”\textsuperscript{13} In

\textsuperscript{10} Pine, \textit{Education in Nazi Germany}, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{11} “Adolf Hitler’s Birthday,” from \textit{Fibel für die Volksschulen Württembergs}.
\textsuperscript{12} “By the \textit{Führer},” from \textit{Fibelfür die Volksschulen Württembergs}.
\textsuperscript{13} “Untitled,” from Zimmermann, \textit{Hand in Hand fürs Vaterland}. 
response, Hitler informed the two children that he—and the National Socialists—want them to be one people—a Volk—and that this people should be loyal, obedient, peace-loving, brave, hard, and proud because “we of the older generation will pass away, but Germany will continue to live in you. You….hold our banners firmly in your hands!”

These stories often portrayed Hitler in a friendly, father-like fashion in order to make him relatable to the youth. More importantly, these stories were intended to create a link between the reader and the Führer; the children should not only believe in him and love him but they should also aim to please him as if he was their loving father.

These primers also tried to both instill a love of the military in the youth and to glorify the military institution itself. One story, in a Bremen city primer, described how little Hansi rushed outside—along with all the other boys and a few adults—to watch as the soldiers marched back from their field exercises. Hansi, however, soon lagged behind. Finally a military truck, carrying two soldiers in the back, came down the road. After smiling at Hansi, “one [soldier] jumped down and lifted Hansi up. Now he sat between them. All the people along the street were surprised. ‘That is certainly the littlest soldier in the entire Wehrmacht! [German Armed Forces]’ they said. And the big boys said: ‘if only we could sit there!’ Hansi rode along to the base. It was the best day of his life.”

In another story, young children watched as young soldiers, covered in dust from the road, marched in columns with their steel helmets and glimmering weapons. As the soldiers marched, they were accompanied by the sound of music and singing. These stories, along with numerous other ones in the primers, allowed the

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14 “Untitled,” from Zimmermann, Hand in Hand fürs Vaterland.
15 Pine, Education in Nazi Germany, 54-55; Kamenetsky, Children’s Literature in Hitler’s Germany, 174-175, 183.
17 “Our Army,” from Fibel für die Volksschulen Württembergs.
National Socialists to create an image in which the population was always eager to see—and to cheer on—the soldiers, which were oftentimes accompanied by music. This enthusiasm and fanfare was intended to promote a sense of militarism within the youth; furthermore, they were to begin associating the Wehrmacht with fanfare, shinning weapons, and communal praise. 

Once this connection was made, it was easy for the youth to view the military—and in particular the soldiers—as something to emulate. Thus, these stories, along with similar ones, helped to teach the youth that they should desire to grow up and become soldiers. In one story, a youth tells of such a desire: “I am a soldier… I already march straight, [and] in step like a man. With determined courage I leave the house each morning…. I exercise until late in the evening until I am ordered: to bed, comrade!” This youth, as well as little Hansi mentioned above, clearly state that they wanted nothing more than to become soldiers and to be included with the soldiers that they encountered. These notions were further strengthened by stories that taught boys that they should be strong and willing to sacrifice everything for Germany. The story of Hans, who had an altercation with Fritz, is a prime example of the type of stories that the National Socialists hoped would teach their future soldiers how to behave: “Hans, why are you crying? What a face! Little girls cry, boys, little Hans, do not. Little Fritz hit you? Did you not defend yourself? Hold tight your gun, helmet, and sword! And stop crying! Shame on you, such a big boy with such a teary face! Little girls may cry—boys, little Hans, do not!” This story stresses that German boys should be tough and strong, that they should not cry, and ultimately that they should hold a weapon and defend themselves—and presumably, the Fatherland. From these stories, the German youth learned that proper boys should not only be

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18 Kamenetsky, *Children’s Literature in Hitler’s Germany*, 179.
strong and tough, but that they should also support the soldiers while ultimately aspiring to become one.

This examination of primary school primers was not exhaustive by any means, but it was sufficient to illuminate a few points of interest. First, these primers, which were the first source of National Socialist teachings and propaganda that the youth were exposed to, were designed to convince the youth that their *Führer* was a warm, friendly man whom they should attempt to serve and to please—almost as if he was their own father. Second, these primers promoted militarism, which was then emphasized to provide a perfect role model for the youth: the soldier. Third, and last, these primers combined the sense of order and enthusiasm for the troops with the youthful desire to belong. As a result, the youth began to idolize Hitler and the *Wehrmacht* while also harboring a desire to become a member of the Hitler Youth where they would form close bonds of friendship and participate in fun activities such as marching and singing. This innate desire to belong to a group was then capitalized upon by the National Socialists, as the Hitler Youth represented a quasi, or a miniature, *völkisch* community. Thus, the elementary school primers taught the youth the basics of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*: that the *Führer* is the loving father-figure of Germany, that the soldier is the epitome of manliness and that the military should always be lauded, and that the *völkisch* community was paramount. Stressing the *völkisch* community, however, had another role for the National Socialists: it acted as a recruiting tool for the Hitler Youth organization. This was a vital concern for the National Socialists since membership within the organization was not mandatory until 1939, and thus, they required a way to convince the youth to join the ranks of the Hitler Youth where their ideological indoctrination could continue.

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22 Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 54-55.
Once youth left elementary school and progressed to the American equivalent of middle- and junior high-school, the youth had reached the age requirement to enter the Hitler Youth organization. Although the children had already been subjected to ideas of militarism and a number of Nazified fairy- and folktales, it was not until they entered the Hitlerjugend that they began receiving the fundamentals of the National Socialist Weltanschauung. In this endeavor, the National Socialists fully utilized both the HJ and the school system; the Hitler Youth familiarized the youth in the National Socialist ideas of race, racial purity, and Germany’s need for territorial expansion while the schools further built upon these ideas.

During the spring, summer, and fall, the Hitler Youth were involved in numerous outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, playing war games, competing in sports, and performing military drills. These activities were designed not only to keep the youth continually busy while establishing a link between the youths, thus teaching them the importance of belonging to a larger völkisch community, they were also designed to continually harden the youth’s body. Hitler, along with his National Socialists, saw this as advantageous for two main reasons. First, according to the National Socialists, war was inevitable, and in war, Germany would need its youth to be strong and physically fit. Second, according to National Socialist ideology, a healthy mind could only be housed in a physically fit body; furthermore, a healthy mind and body was most advantageous for a state. During the winter months and times of inclement weather, however, the Hitler Youth held weekly meetings (Heimabende, home evenings) in their

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23 For a discussion of Nazified fairy- and folktales, see Kamenetsky, *Children’s Literature in Hitler’s Germany*, pt. 2.
24 Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 29-33; Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 104.
clubhouses (*HJ-Heime*) instead of their regular outdoors activities.\(^{27}\) During these meetings, the HJ leader utilized materials, provided by the *Reichsjugendführung* (Reich Youth Leadership, RJF), to teach about the history of the National Socialists, the *völkisch* community, Germanic heroes, and the importance of racial purity—among other topics.\(^{28}\)

One such document was an annual outline for the entire winter program, thus allowing the leaders to plan ahead and to combine topics from month to month. The 1938/39 educational outline, although it was designed for the *Bund deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls or BdM), offers valuable insight into the types of topics which the youth were to be exposed to and is therefore valuable to examine as the core principles between the BdM and the HJ were not overly dissimilar during the winter weekly meetings—although their activities during the summer months varied. During the youths’ first year (age 10 to 11), they were expected to become familiar with “*Our Führer, Adolf Hitler,*” the Brother Grimm’s fairytales, and a number of Germanic sagas—predominately from the *Niebelung* and the *Saga of Gundrun.*\(^{29}\) Their second year was devoted to learning about their Germanic past and the great Germanic figures, such as Hermann the Cherusker, Heinrich the Lion, and Frederick the Great.\(^{30}\) The third year was spent discussing the Great War and the men and women who fought for Germany during and after the war. The fourth, and final year before progressing into the HJ or the BdM, was devoted to the *Führer* and his comrades, such as Herbert Norkus, Rudolf Heß and Hermann

\(^{27}\) Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 33.
\(^{30}\) “I. Education for the Hitler Youth by Age Group,” from *Dienstvorschrift der Hitler Jugend; “II. Weekend Training 1938/39,”* from *Dienstvorschrift der Hitler Jugend.*
Göring.  

After these four years in the Jungvolk or Jungmädchen (Young Girls or JM), the youth were expected to know that the Führer was a model of work and struggle and that they should work for the Führer. They were also expected to know the history of the National Socialist movement, draw a map of the Reich from memory, be able to sing the “Horst Wessel Song” and “Deutschland über Alles,” as well as an additional three HJ songs. From this brief examination, it can be seen that during their first four years of the Hitler Youth the children were exposed to numerous nationalistic topics as well as continually reminded of Hitler’s greatness during their home meetings. This nationalistic instruction was important for the National Socialists because they wanted to create a deep pride in the youth over their Germanic heritage. They were also expected to realize how great Germany and the Führer were.

Once the youth entered the HJ or the BdM, their education—both in the schools and the Hitler Youth—became more direct and focused more on the National Socialist Weltanschauung. During their first year in the HJ or the BdM (14 year olds), the children learned about “The Battle for the Reich,” which included topics such as the “The Reich belongs to the Kaiser,” the Thirty Years War, the era of Bismarck, and the Great War. The second year was devoted to the Kampfzeit (time of struggle); although much of this year focused on the National Socialist’s party program and Hitler’s “unification” of the state under one party, the youth were still exposed to National Socialist ideas of combating international Bolshevism and incorporating all those of German blood within the borders of the Reich. During their third year, the youth were taught the importance of blood and racial purity within the völkisch community while their last year was devoted to the study of important historical people, such as Friedrich Schiller, Jakob

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31 “I. Education for the Hitler Youth by Age Group,” from Dienstvorschrift der Hitler Jugend.
32 “III. Worldview Questions for the Jungmädchen Achievement Badge,” from Dienstvorschrift der Hitler Jugend.
33 “I. Education for the Hitler Youth by Age Group,” from Dienstvorschrift der Hitler Jugend.
and Wilhelm Grimm, and Gorch Fock.\textsuperscript{34} Just as with the JV and JM, most of the meetings in the HJ and BdM—for this particular winter—were devoted to nationalistic lessons. However, the third year was significant as it was devoted to explaining one of the National Socialists’ main tenets—that of race and racial purity.

While the examination of the winter curriculum may suggest that the youth were predominately exposed to nationalistic topics and only briefly received instruction in the most important aspects of the National Socialist Weltanschauung—that of racial purity and territorial expansion—this is not the case. In 1938, the \textit{Zentralverlag der NSDAP} (the central publishing house of the \textit{Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei}, NSDAP) published the \textit{Nazi Primer}. This book was intended to be an authoritative text that could be used by Hitler Youth leaders as well as the average member of the Hitler Youth. Furthermore, the book compliments the \textit{Heimabende} meetings by devoting almost all of its pages to the discussion of race, racial purity, and territorial expansion. As such, it is important to examine the structure and content of the \textit{Primer} to understand how the youth were indoctrinated with these National Socialist beliefs. The \textit{Nazi Primer} opens with a discussion of the different “races” prevalent in Germany (Nordic, Phalic, Western, Dinaric, and Eastern Baltic) and how they differ, both physically and spiritually.\textsuperscript{35} It then asks if new races are created by external (environmental) influences or by internal influences (such as mutations). Answering this, the \textit{Nazi Primer} utilizes the genetic experiments of Gregor Mendel while illuminating three Mendelian laws: the law of uniformity, the law of segregation, and the law of independence.\textsuperscript{36} It is unnecessary to describe these laws, but it is important to note that they explain an offspring’s physical appearance—its phenotype—

\textsuperscript{34} “I. Education for the Hitler Youth by Age Group,” from \textit{Dienstvorschrift der Hitler Jugend}.


\textsuperscript{36} \textit{The Nazi Primer}, 39, 40-42, 46-47.
and its genetic code—its genotype. By using an example involving malnourished (a phenotypic attribute) animals, the Nazi Primer argues that one’s phenotype is not inheritable, and, furthermore, that although offspring can have different phenotypes from their parents, these offspring do not constitute a new race.\textsuperscript{37} Using examples similar to this, the Nazi Primer concludes that “in no instance up to this time have environmental influences brought about the formation of a new race.”\textsuperscript{38} This conclusion taught the youth that “a Jew both in Germany and in all other countries remains only a Jew. He can never change his race by centuries of residence with another people.”\textsuperscript{39} As a result, the youth were not only exposed to National Socialist ideology, they were also given the justification for why the Jews must be expelled from Germany—if Germany is to become a völksch state, and non-Germans cannot become Germans, they must be expelled.

External factors cannot create new races; therefore, new races are only created by internal forces—through mutations within the cell. According to the National Socialists, however, these mutations “often lead to damaging transformations [in the offspring]. Above all, sexual power is often lost. Also, externally stunted forms are frequent.”\textsuperscript{40} These mutations were always seen as disadvantageous because they not only negatively affect the individual’s chance of survival and ability for reproducing, but these mutations also often caused unforeseen consequences in future generations of offspring. In their attempt to portray this idea to the children, they created an idea of a genetic stream. Genes traversed the generations much like a leaf floating down a river; similarly, what affected the leaf upstream would have an impact on the leaf downstream.\textsuperscript{41} This genetic stream could become contaminated in two ways: first, a person with genetic mutations

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37} The Nazi Primer, 54.
\item \textsuperscript{38} The Nazi Primer, 56.
\item \textsuperscript{39} The Nazi Primer, 56.
\item \textsuperscript{40} The Nazi Primer, 58-59.
\item \textsuperscript{41} The Nazi Primer, 61-62.
\end{itemize}
passes them onto their offspring and thus passes disadvantageous mutations into the future; second, the stream becomes infused with “blood that is essentially and racially foreign to it.” Regardless of how it was polluted, once the stream became polluted, all future generations are predisposed to “weaknesses of the blood,” such as club-foot, blindness, and any number of mental illnesses. Therefore, youth were taught that it was their duty to preserve the purity of the genetic stream—that they should not only abstain from reproducing if they knowingly had a “weakness of the blood,” but that they should also not reproduce with inferior races. Through this discussion of racial defilement and genetic mutations—which were also stressed in mathematic problems as is shown later—the youth began to differentiate between different “races” and to think of the future of their “race.” Furthermore, they began to understand the National Socialists’ anti-Semitic and eugenic policies; these actions were undertaken in order to establish a more pure, and thus stronger, Germany.

While the *Nazi Primer* extensively dealt with one of the major ideological principles—racial purity—it also dealt with another main principle of the National Socialist’s Weltanschauung: Germany’s desire for, and right to, expand its current borders. The youth learned that due to Germany’s central location in Europe, its history consisted of numerous wars—both of aggression and of defense—and as a result, Germany’s political borders have continually changed. Furthermore, the youth were taught that:

The Germanic territory had, during the period of the migrations, spread out over all Europe. The political significance of this lies, not only in the fact that for once the peoples of Europe were refreshed with Nordic-German blood and the common basis of western culture was strengthened, but also in the fact that through Germans Europe achieved unity for the first time. Whereas the Roman Empire had not pushed beyond the limits of the Rhine and Danube and did not include all of central and eastern Europe, the Germans flooded Europe from the Urals to Gibraltar, from the North Cape to

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42 *The Nazi Primer*, 62.
43 *The Nazi Primer*, 63-68, 77-78.
Constantinople. Europe, as a cultural and spiritual unity, is therefore the work of the Germans.\textsuperscript{44}

This passage simultaneously reminded the youth of their “race’s” superiority and of Germany’s glorious past: not only did Germany eclipse the greatest empire, Rome, but German culture had spread throughout Europe and established the foundations of Western culture. Later, in its discussion of colonies, the \textit{Nazi Primer} not only portrayed colonial expansion as a necessity for the continued well-being and growth of a nation, it also claimed that the German colonies—as opposed to the British, French, and Spanish colonies—actually improved through the German’s rule and that they were profitable for the state.\textsuperscript{45} It is clear that the National Socialists wanted to portray Germany’s glorious past in an attempt to foster a nationalistic love for their country in the youth.

Additionally, the youth were taught that the “dictate of Versailles robbed the German Reich” of its colonies and European territory. This in turn, deprived Germany of innumerable advantages that were crucial for the nation’s continued expansion and good health, such as raw materials for economic growth and land for food, jobs, and future population expansion.\textsuperscript{46} The Treaty of Versailles, therefore, not only weakened the German economy, it also increased Germany’s population density—both of which were seen as disadvantageous as they decreased Germany’s position in global affairs and insured Germany’s decline. As a result, the National Socialists were determined to seek the raw materials and territory that Germany was owed due to

\textsuperscript{44} The \textit{Nazi Primer}, 127.
\textsuperscript{45} The \textit{Nazi Primer}, 170-171. This idea was further formulated and proposed in a more convincing manner in \textit{Du und dein Volk}, which is discussed later in this paper.
\textsuperscript{46} The \textit{Nazi Primer}, 187.
its “past and present achievements”—even if that meant another world war—and through the
_Nazi Primer_, the youth began to feel the same way.\footnote{The Nazi Primer, 205-207; R. H. Samuel and Hinton Thomas, _Education and Society in Modern Germany_ (1949; repr., Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1971), 78.}

The organization and language employed in the _Nazi Primer_, leads the reader to draw connections between the glorious Germanic past and the loss of land at the hands of the Triple Entente. The National Socialists hoped that the youth would be filled with immense pride in their ancestors and the German nation while also believing that their superior “race” and culture entitled them to territory—which was a prerequisite for national growth. Then, the discussion on the loss of territory would cause the youth to become enraged at the injustice—after all, should not Germany be entitled to colonies and territory as it had already proved that these relations were mutually beneficial? Furthermore, as the bearers of superior culture—as evidenced by a unified Western culture—should not Germany be entitled to the necessary space for national growth? This potent blend of national pride and a fear of an imminent decline were intended to garner support for a future war—a war in which Germany would regain its lost territory and restore its preeminent position in European affairs.

So far, it has been shown that the youth’s education in the National Socialist Weltanschauung began in the elementary schools with basic ideas of militarism, a belief in the _Führer_, and a desire to belong to a larger group—the precursor to the _völkisch_ community. Then, as the youth turned ten and entered the _Hitlerjugend_ organization, they were taught about Germany’s glorious past and its national heroes, while also being introduced to the ideas at the center of the National Socialist party—that of racial purity and national expansion. It is now time, then, to return to the schools to see how the educational system supported the child’s indoctrination within the Hitler Youth.
In 1933, when the National Socialists took control of Germany, they began to bend every aspect of society to their ultimate aims—the educational system was no exception. In 1940, an educational directive was published which stated that “the only subject that has any place in the school curriculum is that which is necessary to achieve this aim [serving the state and the people]. All other subjects, springing from obsolete educational ideals, must be discarded.” Therefore, the only subjects that should be taught were those that inculcated the youth with the National Socialist Weltanschauung and thus prepared them to serve the Reich. As a result, many subjects—and their textbooks—underwent changes in order to represent better National Socialist ideas. Biology and mathematics became useful tools for the National Socialists to reinforce the HJ’s lessons on the importance of race, while geography reinforced the idea of geographic expansion.

Through the Hitlerjugend, youth learned about the importance of maintaining the integrity of the genetic stream. This lesson was supplemented by school discussions and experiments pertaining to the “survival of the fittest,” which was one of the main components of the National Socialist Weltanschauung. The youth were taught “that all creatures…are in a constant battle for survival” and that in this fight, they must obtain—and defend—sufficient room and resources in order to survive. To apply this to humans, students were reminded that humans are creatures and thus mankind also competes in this struggle to survive, even if it does not appear so; instead of competing against other animals such as lions or wolves, mankind was

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48 Erziehung und Unterricht in der Volkschule, 1940, quoted in Samuel, Education and Society in Modern Germany, 83.
49 Pine, Education in Nazi Germany, 41.
50 Pine, Education in Nazi Germany, 43. Additionally, this topic was discussed above in the Nazi Primer, however, for a more extensive examination of how the Nazis taught Mendelian laws as they applied to race and blood purity, see The Nazi Primer, Chapter 3: Race Formation: Heredity and Environment, 36-60, and Chapter 4, Heredity and Race Fostering, 61-83.
engaged in a mortal struggle against disease, bacteria, and genetic mutations. According to this logic, it was vital that the youth kept their bodies strong and healthy so as not to lose this struggle.52 These biological lessons of the “survival of the fittest” complimented the lessons the youth learned in elementary school—about being tough and soldier-like—and in the Hitler Youth—about keeping the genetic stream pure. Through these lessons, the youth began to view the weak with contempt and pity, much like their National Socialist elders.

Biology also enabled the National Socialists to stress the importance of belonging to the larger community—the völkisch community. To instill this idea in the youth, the National Socialists used an appropriate biological model based on two types of insects: bees and ants. These insects were chosen because they

Are not only the sum of individuals; each individual shares a united drive in service of the entire group. They do not have an individual will any longer, but rather their actions have only the goal of serving the welfare of the whole, the welfare of the community. The state-building drive in insects has created a higher order from the drives of the individuals. Their species has become a higher order, one will in many parts. The individual member of a beehive does a single task…. Each individual activity serves the whole. It is the same with ants. Certain ant species even have a warrior caste that fights in the front lines for the rest; the battle against the enemies of the state here, too, involves the whole group.53

Through this model, the students were supposed to learn that: the individuals’ prime responsibility is to serve the larger group; “major accomplishments are possible only by the division of labor;” each individual must be willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of the community; and that these species—as with humans—ensure their survival via producing a large amount of kin.54 These ideas are very similar to the ideas the youth were taught in the Hitler Youth. Furthermore, just as an ant or a bee sacrifices itself to save the community, each soldier—which each boy was to emulate and become—was expected to sacrifice himself for the

greater good of the community. Therefore, while the schools and the Hitler Youth taught biology in different ways, they nevertheless complimented each other in the youths’ racial teachings about genetics and the importance of racial purity for the future of the nation.

Under the National Socialists, mathematics was altered to incorporate military questions and racial ideas. While the students began to learn how to do simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, it was not uncommon for them to be reminded of Germany’s “heroic struggle” during the Great War; one such question had the students arriving at the conclusion that Germany and its allies were outnumbered by 23,000,000 men. Once the students progressed to more difficult problems, they were tasked with solving military problems—presumably not only to make the questions more interesting for the young males but also to prepare them for future military service. One such question asked the students to calculate the payload capacity of a modern bomber and then to calculate how many 0.5 kg incendiary bombs could be added to the existing arsenal if the bomber’s payload capacity was increased by fifty percent. Admittedly, the vast majority of students would never be required to solve problems like this later in life, but these questions did at least familiarize the youth with them and they were likely to have been more interesting than calculating how many apples and oranges one could buy with a set amount of money.

In addition to military related questions, mathematics was used to help reinforce the ideas of racial purity that the youth were learning in the Hitler Youth and in biology. One such question stated that “a mentally-handicapped person costs the public 4 Reichsmark per day, a cripple 5.50 Reichsmark and a convicted criminal 3.50 Reichsmark. Cautious estimates state that within the boundaries of the German Reich 300,000 persons are being cared for in public mental

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55 Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 52.
56 Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 51-52.
The students were then asked “how many marriage loans at 1,000 Reichsmark per-couple could annually be financed from the funds allocated to institutions?” Similar questions aimed to convince the students that the cost of educating mentally or physically disabled children was greater than that of a “sound person;” the education of people “afflicted with hereditary maladies” resulted in an annual expense of approximately 1,200,000,000 Reichsmarks. These questions, and similar ones, taught the students that mentally-handicapped people were not worth as much to the state as a healthy person and that they should be eliminated in order to support financially population growth. Furthermore, they reinforced the ideas of racial purity that the youth were taught within the Hitler Youth and in biology classes. By attaching a monetary value to the “unfit,” students saw how much they would cost the state by knowingly polluting the genetic stream and thus endangering the racial purity.

While some subjects, such as mathematics, were imbued with components of the National Socialist Weltanschauung and still resembled their pre-National Socialist courses, others, such as geography, did not fare as well. In its attempt to incorporate the Weltanschauung, geography began to focus heavily on how the Treaty of Versailles altered Germany’s political borders, the National Socialists’ desire to obtain Lebensraum (living room), and the justification for this expansion. A brief examination of a middle school geography textbook should prove sufficient to see how the subject propagated National Socialist ideas because by the date of publication for this particular textbook, 1943, the National Socialists had already brought the

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59 The Nazi Primer, 69-70.
60 Pine, Education in Nazi Germany, 48.
school system completely under their control and had standardized the literature that was used in schools.\footnote{Glimer W. Blackburn, \textit{Education in the Third Reich: Race and History in Nazi Textbooks} (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1985), 37.}

One of the textbook’s main topics was also one of Germany’s growing issues: overcrowding. Since 1870, the German population had increased drastically despite its decreasing birth rate; Germany’s population increased from 40 million people in 1870 to 65.2 million in 1933 while its birth rate dropped from 37.2 births to 19.2 births per 1,000.\footnote{“Population Growth,” from Reinhard Müller, \textit{Deutschland: Sechster Teil}, ed. and tran. Randall Bytwerk in the German Propaganda Archive, accessed October 20, 2014, http://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/textbk02.htm.} This population explosion was then accentuated by an examination of how much of the world’s surface was owned by each of the great nations: Britain owned twenty-seven percent, Russia sixteen percent, the United States of America seven percent, and Germany only 0.6 percent.\footnote{“Insufficient Living Space,” from Müller, \textit{Deutschland}. France was not included in this list because the textbook does not provide data on France. Furthermore, it does not explain why France was not included, and any explanation for its exclusion would be a speculation at best.} Therefore, it was argued, that unlike the other great powers, Germany had no land to absorb its surplus population and as a result it suffered from overcrowding.\footnote{“Insufficient Living Space,” from Müller, \textit{Deutschland}. Another textbook, cited in Samuel, \textit{Education and Society in Modern Germany}, gives the population density as 135 people per square kilometer (78).} In addition to the typical problems of overcrowding, it caused hundreds of thousands of Germans to emigrate annually. Thus, it was concluded that “regaining our colonies will make it possible to send some of our surplus population to them. The great majority of settlers, however, will join those in the East…and will find…a new home where German land can be put to German uses.”\footnote{“Insufficient Living Space,” from Müller, \textit{Deutschland}.} Youth were taught that regaining Germany’s colonies was extremely beneficial for Germany and that in lieu of regaining the colonies, Germany must expand eastwards—which served the National Socialists’ visions of \textit{Lebensraum} and of racially restructuring the east.
After establishing why Germany needed to regain its colonies, the textbook attempted to incite rage in the youth over the loss of their colonies. It argued that Germany’s colonies were obtained “legally…not through theft, as was the case of some of the colonies of other nations” and, furthermore, that Germany had not exploited its colonies but instead had developed them.66 Supporting this, the book claimed that from 1903 to 1913, Germany had quintupled the foreign trade of its colonies and that it improved the colonies’ infrastructure and standard of living: plantations blossomed, diseases were either reduced or eliminated, schools were built, and, above all, Germany gave to its colonies “German order.”67 The book further argued that at the end of the Great War, Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America, acknowledged the mutually beneficial relationship between Germany and its colonies and strove to allow Germany to keep its colonies. However, the Diktat of Versailles—which either completely ignored or grotesquely distorted Wilson’s Fourteen Points—stole Germany’s colonies with the lies that Germany was “unfit” to rule colonies and that Germany only desired colonies for militaristic purposes; as a result of this injustice, the “entire nation demands a formal apology for these lies about our colonies.”68 By discussing the loss of Germany’s colonies in such an inflammatory way, youth first felt pride in their nation for advancing the colonies and then felt slighted by the Triple Entente by their theft. Once outraged by the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles, the youth would be more willing to either support war or to participate in war to regain its colonies and to rectify the injustice.

66 “The Development of the German Colonies,” and “The Value of the German Colonies,” from Müller, Deutschland.
67 “The Value of the German Colonies,” and “Lies about the Colonial Question,” from Müller, Deutschland.
Through this examination, it is readily apparent that there are similarities between the textbook and the Nazi Primer. Perhaps the most striking of the similarities is the language and the organization of the text. Both texts employ the same tone in their discussion of Germany’s colonies and the loss of them at the hands of the Triple Entente. Furthermore, both texts are laid out similarly: first they appeal to the strong sense of nationalism which has been fostered in the youth from the beginning of their education and then they incite rage in the youth by alluding to the inevitable decline of the Reich if Germany does not regain its colonies or obtain territory in the East. Therefore, for the students, the information presented in the textbooks would have sounded familiar as it was essentially a repeat of what they had learned in the Hitler Youth.

As the youth completed their mandatory schooling, they were given a pamphlet that summarized a few major topics that the youth had learned through school and the Hitler Youth. This pamphlet, Du und dein Volk (You and Your Volk), acted as a capstone for the youths’ early education by reminding them about Hitler’s importance and the importance of racial purity. Similarly, this pamphlet acts as a capstone for this chapter as it summarizes a number of topics the youth were exposed to and taught during their years in the school system and the Hitler Youth.

Throughout the youths’ primary education, Hitler was portrayed as a loving father; children desired to meet him and to appease him as if he were their own father. Later, during their time in the HJ, they learned about Hitler’s heroic struggle for Germany during the 1920s. This same image was depicted in Du und dein Volk. In its discussion of the Weimar Republic, Hitler is portrayed as Germany’s savior as he struggles to save Germany from its “political, cultural and, economic misery.”69 According to the National Socialists, the Weimar Republic

was not based on ethnic principals and its constitution was heavily influenced by the Jews. Hitler, however, “recognized with brilliant clarity and precision what was at stake.”70 As a result, he desired not only to dismantle the Treaty of Versailles, which was “a huge task that then seemed impossible,” but also to make Germany a world power again.71 Through Hitler’s “brilliant vision and unprecedented toughness [and] with superhuman sacrifice,” he dismantled the Treaty of Versailles.72 By portraying Hitler as the heroic savior of the nation, the National Socialists hoped that the youth would both attempt to emulate and serve him—and thus the Reich—unconditionally; however, this portrayal of Hitler was not unique to Du und dein Volk—it had been used in the elementary primers and in the lessons during Hitlerjugend meetings. Furthermore, this image suggested that Hitler was battling Jewry via his attack on the Weimar constitution—the youth too were taught that they should combat Jewry because the Jews threatened the racial purity of the völkisch community.

Realizing that youth were leaving the educational system and the Hitler Youth, and thus would no longer be as easily reached, the National Socialists wanted to use Du und dein Volk to remind youth to remain pure and to avoid things that were foreign to the soul—which essentially resulted in another biology lesson in which youth were taught—yet again—about racial purity. The pamphlet asked youth to think about their ancestors and to create a family tree. This was intended to remind them that while they were individuals, they were part of something larger and were never alone; this in turn reminded them of the importance of belonging to a larger community.73 While Du und dein Volk explicitly mentions a kinship group, it is obvious that the

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70 “People and State,” from Du und dein Volk.
71 “People and State,” from Du und dein Volk.
72 “People and State,” from Du und dein Volk; Ziemer, Education for Death, 49-50.
73 “Your Ancestors,” and “Your Kin,” from Du und dein Volk.
National Socialists meant *völkisch* community—which was something that was repeatedly taught to them throughout their years in the schools and the HJ.

Having the youth think about their ancestors, however, served another purpose; it also served to remind them about the genetic stream that flowed through generations and time. This was supplemented by a brief discussion about genotypes, phenotypes, and of the laws of inheritance. The discussion stressed that it is impossible to determine one’s genotype simply by looking at them for two reasons: first, some genes are capable of mixing and thus producing something different—for example, a white rose and a red rose can produce offspring of three different colors: white, red, or pink—and second, some traits are dominant while others are recessive.74 It was, therefore, each individual’s duty to know as much about his or her ancestors as possible in order to determine if he or she possessed any undesirable genes, such as any undesirable recessive genes or hereditary diseases. If he or she discovered that they possessed any, it was their duty not to procreate and thus pollute the genetic stream because this could not only lead to unfavorable mutations, but it could also lead to the death of the Reich. According to the National Socialists, cultures and nations die—or decline—only when this “racial value continually diminishes. A people ages and dies when its genetically ill and racially inferior elements grow more rapidly than its genetically healthy and racially valuable elements.”75 As a result, “genetic and racial decline is a daily, hidden, creeping danger” and it is “more dangerous for a people than even the bloodiest war.”76 Through this perhaps macabre discussion, youth were reminded that they should work toward purifying the genetic stream and the German *Volk*. None of this information, however, was new—youth had heard it all before during their time in the *Hitlerjugend* and in the schools. This, however, was the purpose of this pamphlet; it was not

74 “Your Marriage and Your Children,” from *Du und dein Volk*.
75 “Your People,” from *Du und dein Volk*.
76 “Your People,” from *Du und dein Volk*.
to instruct but to remind. The National Socialists wanted to ensure that youth had not forgotten its previous lessons in racial purity and the role that they played in ensuring the survival of the German people.

This chapter has examined a number of prominent publications used in elementary schools, the Hitler Youth organization, and middle- and junior-high schools in an attempt to ascertain how the National Socialists indoctrinated the youth with their Weltanschauung. This examination has discovered that in addition to the normal functions of an elementary school, the National Socialist-controlled elementary schools used modified primers to foster a love for the Führer and a desire to obey him in the children, glorified militarism and encouraged the boys to become soldiers, and acted as a recruiting agency for the Hitler Youth. This examination has also discovered that it was in the Hitler Youth organization that the youth began to be indoctrinated with the core tenets of National Socialism, such as racial purity and territorial expansion. These lessons, however, were not unique to the Hitlerjugend, instead they occurred concurrently with the lessons of the schools; the middle- and junior-high schools also espoused these topics through biology, mathematics, and geography lessons.

Ideological indoctrination is important for any totalitarian state, and National Socialist Germany was no exception. In Hitler’s Germany, the indoctrination of youth became a paramount concern as it allowed the National Socialists to inculcate youth with their racial ideas and their desire for territorial expansion. Furthermore, it allowed the National Socialists to create a youthful cohort that believed in the Führer and were eager to obey him. This belief and obedience to the Führer was vital as the National Socialists could use it to recruit children to the Hitler Youth and to utilize them in times of war. This belief and obedience to the Führer was instrumental in getting youth to defend Germany, but this was complimented by the school’s
glorification of militarism. The boys, therefore, grew up learning that they should emulate and support soldiers while also obeying Hitler. When they entered the Hitler Youth, where they received more ideological indoctrination, they also began to receive premilitary training. Because they had previously been conditioned to glorify the military, emulate the soldiers, and obey Hitler, the members of the Hitler Youth were eager to undergo this premilitary training.
CHAPTER 3
DIE ALLGEMEINE HITLERJUGEND

While the Sondereinheiten (special groups) taught the youth valuable technical skills, not every member of the Hitler Youth organization joined one of these special groups. The National Socialists, therefore, needed another way of instilling premilitary skills in the youth. As a result, they decided to utilize the Allgemeine Hitlerjugend (general Hitler Youth). During the early- and mid-1930s, a number of people examined the Hitler Youth and foresaw its military value; among them were Dr. Hans Willi Ziegler, a university professor and racial theorist, and Dr. Helmut Stellrecht, who became the Chief of the Physical Training Office of the Reichsjugendführung (Reich Youth Leadership, RJF). Both men advocated the teaching of premilitary skills to youth. They believed that the success of the Wehrmacht (Germany’s Armed Forces) depended on the boys of the Hitler Youth. Additionally, Ziegler and Stellrecht recommended that youth receive instruction in the irregular warfare of the American Indian or frontiersman as opposed to systematic basic training.\(^1\) Instead of pursuing drill and weapons practice, the men proposed that youth build corporeal toughness through physical exercises such as sports, hiking, and camping. Furthermore, by experiencing nature through camping and hiking in the wilderness, the boys—like American Indians—could silently move and stalk through the environment.\(^2\) Ziegler and Stellrecht believed that such a training regimen would make the boys physically fit for military service as well as improve their skills as reconnaissance scouts. As scouts, the boys could maneuver undetected and became accustomed to living in the wilderness. The National

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Socialists undoubtedly agreed with most of Ziegler and Stellrecht’s ideas, however, they did not adopt the proposed training program entirely because they aimed to emphasize marksmanship and field training. The National Socialists, therefore, modified the training ideas to include what they believed were important for a future soldier: in accordance with Stellrecht and Ziegler’s ideas, the boys in the Hitler Youth experienced activities that increased their physical strength and taught valuable premilitary skills such as marksmanship, rifle maintenance, and field operations. The Reichsjugendführung, however, lacked the necessary equipment to undertake such a training regimen. Despite the RJF’s initial attempts to remain independent, it needed help and soon accepted the assistance of the Wehrmacht—which had recently become interested in the youths’ training—in order to witness the fruition of the National Socialists’ militaristic dreams for the youth.

Two of the largest—and most widely known—aspects of the Hitler Youth concerned its ideological indoctrination and its emphasis on physical education. The youth participated in physical exercise during school and Hitler Youth meetings, but the National Socialists disliked the amount of time the boys spent at school, with their family, and at church because it detracted from their physical education. On 8 June 1934, therefore, a law was promulgated that cancelled classes on Saturday and designated the day to be a Staatsjugendtag (State Youth Day). Every Saturday, members of the Hitlerjugend organization spent the day outdoors performing activities such as “jumping, running, discus throwing, swimming, ball playing, and gymnastics;” they participated in competitive sports, hiked in the wilderness, marched around town, and even went

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on camping trips. Later, as the premilitary training increased, the Staatsjugendtagen consisted of war games, field maneuvers, long and overnight hikes, and target practice. During the winter months and inclement weather, the boys continued their training by exercising indoors—often in the local gymnasium. The youth disliked indoor training since it required them “to climb ropes and ladders, swing from rings under the ceiling, struggle over double and single bars, jump and tumble along on obstacle course, and line up for boxing and wrestling matches.” Moreover, the intensity of these sessions often left the boys exhausted, bloody, and “reeking of sweat.”

Despite the unpleasantness of these indoor activities, the youth tolerated them because they enjoyed the outdoor activities. Jurgen Herbst recounted how the indoor activities paled in comparison to the outdoor ones, as well as provided insight into the premilitary aspects of these sessions:

> It was better during warm and sunny weather when we marched to the city athletic fields where we played soccer and competed with each other in the sixty-meter dash and broad and high jump. We learned to throw wooden clubs that bore a resemblance to hand grenades and we marched into the countryside where we were taught how to camouflage ourselves with bunches of grass and twigs, to estimate distances, to read maps, use the compass, follow animal and human tracks, build fires, erect and safeguard tents against windstorms and water, and in every way possible to prepare ourselves for military service.

As Herbst mentioned, the design of these activities prepared the youth for their future as soldiers; through them, the boys improved their health, strengthened their bodies, and became more

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7 Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past*, 44.

8 Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past*, 44.
courageous as well as self-reliant. Additionally, these outdoor exercises were intended to train the boys subconsciously to pay attention to their senses and learn to rely on their instincts.  

Boys entered the *Jungvolk* (Young People, JV) at age ten and were immediately placed on probation. While in this stage, their leader, often a boy who was only a few years older than them, taught them the rudimentary skills necessary for their future in the *Hitlerjugend*: attending the weekly Wednesday and Saturday meetings and activities, marching in formation, standing at attention, and drill—such as turning left, right, and about face while in formation. Moreover, the boys experienced an introduction to the ideological indoctrination of the organization by learning about the National Socialists and the Hitler Youth, which incorporated important HJ slogans and songs such as the Horst Wessel song and *Deutschlandlied*. After their six-month probationary period, each member of the JV proved their physical prowess, bravery, and knowledge of the National Socialist culture. These requirements consisted of a *Mutprobe* (test of courage) and an oral examination. The *Mutprobe* consisted of a task which was supposedly terrifying to the youth, such as diving head first off a three to five meter diving board, jumping “in full battle-dress and boots from the window of the first floor of a block of flats,” or climbing up the side of a ravine without proper support. The oral examination tested the boy’s knowledge of the

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histories of the *Hitlerjugend*, National Socialist Party, and Hitler as well as their knowledge of important HJ songs and slogans.\(^{12}\)

After passing the test, the boys acquired full admittance into the *Jungvolk* and began their training regime to obtain their *Jungvolk* performance badge. In order to obtain this badge—which denoted satisfactory training within the JV—a boy had to run sixty meters in eleven seconds, make a three meter standing jump, throw a handball thirty meters, perform two forward and two backward somersaults, swim 100 meters in three and a half minutes, march fifteen kilometers in one day without a pack, and obtain a score of twenty with five rounds of an air-rifle at eight meters.\(^{13}\) By working toward, and meeting the requirements for this badge, the younger members of the organization began preparing their bodies and minds for a future military career; the aerobic exercises and activities strengthened their bodies and their experience with handball tossing and air-rifle shooting was a precursor to tossing hand grenades and shooting a military rifle.

Once the boys turned fourteen and entered the ranks of the *Hitlerjugend*, their training intensified. They still attended weekly *Heimabenden* (home evenings), participated in sports, hiked in the wilderness, and frequented camps, but they also began their premilitary training in earnest. Because of this, the HJ Performance Badge demanded much more from the boys than the JV Performance Badge. In the sphere of pure physical exercise, the HJ badge was a mere extension of the JV badge—boys had to run 100 meters in fourteen and a half seconds and 3,000 meters in fourteen and a half minutes, make a standing long jump of four meters, perform three pull-ups, swim 300 meters in twelve minutes, bicycle twenty kilometers in sixty minutes, hike twenty kilometers in four to four and a half hours, shot-put five kilos seven meters, and toss a


\(^{13}\) *German Training Methods*, 85.
dummy hand grenade thirty meters. Additionally, the boys demonstrated their prowess with a rifle by shooting a small-caliber rifle (a rim-fire rifle, .22 cal./5.6mm) from the prone position—without a rest—and had to obtain a score of no less than a five, or no less than thirty with five shots. 14 As with the JV, these tasks aimed to prepare the youths’ bodies for a future career in the Wehrmacht.

While the members of the JV attended camps, hiked in the wilderness, and even played pseudo war games, the boys of the HJ adopted a fully premilitary component, as well as a military component, to their education by way of terrain sports and field maneuvers—which were a way for the youth to learn field operations, military formations, and reconnaissance tasks. The HJ Performance Badge, therefore, included aspects from the boys’ field training as well. The boys had to correctly read a map on a scale of 1:100,000, identify four targets at distances up to 300 meters, estimate the range of three different targets between fifty and 500 meters, deliver an oral message 300 meters, camouflage themselves properly with their surroundings, and stealthily approach—to within 200 meters—of an occupied area without being detected. 15 While the boys enjoyed many of these activities, they nevertheless served the goals of the National Socialists. The exercises conditioned the bodies of the youth to suit better their life in the Wehrmacht. The continuous emersion in a military-hierarchy and in an organization steeped with national symbols prepared them to follow orders, love the Vaterland (fatherland), and to function within the strict command structure of the Wehrmacht. The terrain exercises and terrain sports, to which the Hitlerjugend exposed the youth, taught the boys numerous skills that decreased the time required in basic training as well as equipped them with skills well suited for reconnaissance duties.

14 German Training Methods, 86.
15 German Training Methods, 86; see also, Kater, Hitler Youth, 29-30.
Given the ultimate destination for these youth, it is understandable—and even expected—that the Wehrmacht exhibited an interest in the youths’ training. Despite their attentiveness, Baldur von Schirach—who fiercely protected his organization and who held to his maxim that the “youth must be led by youth”—was hesitant to allow the Wehrmacht too much say in the training of the youth or to tie the youth directly to the Wehrmacht. Slowly, however, the Wehrmacht formed connections with the HJ, which it employed to foster an “older brother” type of relationship with the boys and to oversee their physical and field training. The Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces, OKW) assigned a liaison officer to the Reichsjugendführung in an attempt to nurture a connection with the Hitler Youth. This liaison was tasked with advising the RJF in matters concerned with the physical education and military training of the youth. In addition, the liaison utilized his connections with the Wehrmacht to establish and foster a relationship between the boys of the Hitler Youth and the soldiers of the Wehrmacht in order to arouse the youths’ interest in the military and to persuade them to enlist as either officers or as noncommissioned officers (NCOs).

Members of the Oberkommando des Heer (High Command of the Army, OKH) saw what the OKW had done and decided that it too should attempt to forge connections with the youth in order to train and guide them into the Army—which is undeniably where the vast majority of them ended up (unless they were a member of a Sondereinheit). Shortly after the Reich Youth Law was passed in 1936, Walter von Reichenau, the General der Artillerie (General of the Artillery, comparable to a United States lieutenant general), issued an order to Wehrkreis VII (military district VII) which demanded that each Army headquarters appoint a liaison officer to each local HJ group. This officer was tasked with “supervising [the] cooperation in such areas as

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16 Kater, Hitler Youth, 53-54.
17 German Training Methods, 95; see also Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Evaluation and Dissemination Section G-2 (Counter-Intelligence Sub-Division), The Hitler Jugend, 14-15.
marksmanship training, small unit field maneuvers, training of HJ leaders, sports, visits to Army barracks and installations, films, and social gatherings.” These officers, like the OKW’s liaison officers, forged bonds with the youth; the most common way they did so was by attending the HJ’s Heimabenden. During the pre-war years, if the liaison-officer served during the Great War, they shared their war stories; if they had not, they sang songs with the boys and told stories of their time in the Heer. The officers also established connections by taking the boys to army barracks, posts, and field maneuvers. During these trips the boys witnessed the life of a soldier and were encouraged to inquire about anything they saw or heard. Perhaps more importantly, these liaison officers oversaw the marksmanship and field training of the youth, ensuring that they met the Army’s standards.

General Reichenau issued his order to only one of the eighteen original Wehrkreis, however, the assumption that other Wehrkreis received similar commands proves plausible because in 1937 the OKH assigned Erwin Rommel, then an Oberstleutnant (lieutenant colonel) and an instructor at the Potsdam War Academy, to the RJF in order to oversee and regulate all the military training of the Hitler Youth. Unfortunately for the aims of the National Socialists and the Heer, Rommel’s assignment failed to yield any rewards as Rommel and Schirach quickly quarreled on the amount of military training that the youth should receive. Furthermore, Schirach did not like the idea of the youth being trained by men who were not former Hitler Youth members. These issues quickly led to the termination of Rommel’s appointment when he

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19 Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 101-103; for a fictional account of how these officers were to interact with the boys, see Hans Graf von Blumenthal, Hitler-Jungen erleben die Wehrmacht (Berlin: Traditions-Verlag Kolk & Co., 1939).
20 Koch, The Hitler Youth 171; and Kater, Hitler Youth, 29.
was assigned to the Theresian Military Academy in the castle Wiener Neustadt in 1938.\(^{21}\)

Despite the brevity of Rommel’s work with the Hitlerjugend, it does illuminate two things. First, it demonstrated the Army’s interest in, and involvement with, the Hitler Youth as Rommel attempted to integrate all the previously established connections between the two organizations. Second, the infusion of military topics and activities—such as trips to local barracks or field maneuvers—into the Hitler Youth were not meant simply to captivate the youth. The fact that Reichenau’s order to Wehrkreis VII, and the instructions given to Rommel, pointed to standardizing marksmanship and field training demonstrates that the Hitlerjugend clearly intended to train the boys in premilitary aspects, resulting with the Heer having an easier time training recruits as well as having a better stock of recruits.

Although Schirach and Rommel disagreed and failed to make a general HJ-Heer arrangement work, the military training of the youth continued at various levels. At the higher levels, the OKH and OKW proceeded to create an official connection with the Hitlerjugend. In January 1938, Ludwig Beck, the Chef der Oberkommando der Heer (Chief of the High Command of the Army) issued an order to every Wehrkreis that stipulated all Hitler Youth leaders should receive military training in weekend courses—supervised by officers from each Wehrkreis.\(^{22}\) While this order would have provided the HJ with military training, it was not an agreement with the RJF and, therefore, the HJ did not need to comply with the spirit of the order.\(^{23}\) A year later, in January 1939, Wilhelm Keitel, the Chef der Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces) and Schirach reached an


\(^{22}\) Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 107.

\(^{23}\) Due to the fragmentary state of sources, it is currently not possible to determine if the RJF fully complied with this order. Some leaders did receive weekend training, but it is also likely that others did not.
agreement that ensured all Hitler Youth leaders received instruction in “all areas of premilitary training.”

According to this agreement, Hitler Youth leaders attended two-week courses, which familiarized them with marksmanship and field training. The OKW financially backed the training, and if possible, the courses occurred at HJ camps. Moreover, the OKW supplied any required materials and personnel needed for such training. Schirach, who had opposed Rommel’s ideas, partly because he did not want non-former HJ leaders instructing the youth, guaranteed that this new arrangement with the OKW included a provision that the “trainers were former members of the HJ and that each course was headed by a current HJ leader.”

Additionally, while the leaders acquired an education in “all areas of premilitary training,” instructors specifically emphasized marksmanship and field exercises; of the approximately 120 hours of instruction, fifty-five hours were devoted to field maneuvers, thirty-one to marksmanship, twenty-five to miscellaneous HJ subjects, and eight to parade ground drilling.

This agreement between Keitel and Schirach provided the Hitler Youth with a basis for training every leader of the organization in matters of military importance. After completing the course, these leaders returned to their groups and passed on their knowledge to their boys. Through this manner, premilitary training disseminated throughout the entire Hitler Youth.

The Keitel-Schirach agreement mandated that all HJ leaders receive military instruction, but on 22 October 1941, the OKW and the RJF concluded another agreement. This new arrangement asserted that all boys of the HJ were to receive premilitary training—with the assistance of the Wehrmacht. The Wehrmacht supplied instructors, bases, and materiel for the HJ to train with but the military instructors remained subordinate to the Hitlerjugend Führer

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24 Quoted in Rempel, Hitler’s Children, 41.
26 German Training Methods, 90.
(Hitler Youth leader)—except while on bases owned and operated by the Wehrmacht. Alfons Heck, a former HJ Führer, recalled his time at one of these training courses during the winter of 1942/43—when he was about fourteen or fifteen years old. Heck described the training as only slightly different from the ordinary HJ regimen:

riffles were nothing new to us—from the age of 10, we had been instructed in small-caliber weapons—but this was different. We spent most of the day on the rifle range, handling the standard Wehrmacht carbine with its sharp kick, as well as the 08 Pistol, the 9mm handgun our foes called the Luger. We also learned to throw live hand grenades and fire bazookas at dummy tanks. Finally, during the last two days of the course, we were introduced to the MG-41, a machine gun capable of firing 1000 rounds per minute.

Heck’s account of his military training during the winter of 1942/43 indicates that despite the German invasion of the Soviet Union and their defeat at Stalingrad, the National Socialists and Wehrmacht continued to furnish materiel and personnel to train the young generation. This is telling as the National Socialists could have diverted these officers and materials to the Eastern Front, which might have aided the Wehrmacht temporarily, but instead they focused on the long-term goal of preparing the youth war. Furthermore, it demonstrates that Heck, who was only fourteen or fifteen years old, was already familiar with rifles and target practice and now had become accustomed to larger, military-grade weaponry. This type of weapons training for the youth suggests that the Wehrmacht had an easier time training recruits who had gone through the HJ training because they were already familiar with military weapons. Moreover, this training enabled the National Socialists to employ the youth in the defense of the Reich if necessary.

As Germany prepared for, and started, a war, the Hitler Youth increased and intensified its premilitary program. By 1941, the HJ established a twelve month training regimen for the older boys of the Allgemeine Hitlerjugend, which focused heavily on marksmanship and field

27 Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 110.
28 Heck, A Child of Hitler, 65; see also Koch, The Hitler Youth, 195.
This program called for approximately 160 hours of training over the course of the year: the youth trained every other Sunday from 9am-1pm, one Sunday a month from 3pm-6pm, and on twenty-four Saturdays from 8pm-10pm. After completing this course, the boys took a test, which, if passed, resulted in them earning their Kriegsausbildungsschein der Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth War Training Certificate). This intensive training prepared the youth for a future in the Heer. As such, the boys learned numerous premilitary skills, including target detection and description, effective map reading and orienteering, range estimation, the utilization of the terrain in order to camouflage oneself, deception of the enemy, reinforcement of a position, night marches, establishing a forward post, the proper employment of a gas mask, communicating oral messages, sand-table preparation, and rifle training—including maintenance.

An examination of the requirements for the Hitler Youth War Training Certificate provides insight into the type of training the youth experienced. The test consisted of three main categories—shooting, terrain, and individual training. The shooting portion of the test consisted of a theoretical and a practical examination. The theoretical portion of the shooting exam consisted of five questions, which required the boys to list the factors that influenced the trajectory of a bullet, determine the drag effect on a bullet’s velocity, the importance of a rifled barrel, and the effect of rotation on the trajectory of a projectile. Similarly, it had five questions pertaining to weapon doctrine—requesting that the youth list the main components of the small-caliber rifle, describe the composition of the breach, the purpose of the safety, and the proper method for oiling and de-oiling a rifle. The practical portion of the shooting exam tested the boys’ ability to shoot the small-caliber rifle by requiring the boy to make a score of thirty with

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29 German Training Methods, 90; Koch, The Hitler Youth, 236; and Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 9.
30 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 9, 15; and German Training Methods, 90.
31 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 10-14.
32 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 20.
five shots from the prone position—with a rest—at fifty meters and a score of twenty-five with five shots from the prone position—without a rest—at fifty meters. The second portion of the test—the terrain service section—was also subdivided into a theoretical and practical section. The theoretical portion asked fifteen questions that tested the youth’s knowledge of terrain description (one question), map usage (three questions), communications (two), camouflage (two), terrain utilization (two), security (three), and recon tasks (two). The test proposed questions like what were the types of ground coverings, what was meant by “open” terrain, what scale were maps drawn to, to identify specific man-made structures on the map such as a bridge, road, dam, and/or village, what information must be included in a written message, what four questions must be answered in a message, what words should be avoided in a message, when does one need to camouflage themselves (and what were common camouflage errors), what must be taken into account when camouflaging oneself from aerial observation, how does one proceed through a forest, what is a combat outpost, what is the main purpose of a HJ patrol, what preparations must be made before a patrol departs, and what tasks does the patrol have? The practical portion of the terrain section requested that the youth perform ten tasks in the same categories which the theoretical portion examined. For instance, they required the youth to locate themselves on a map, orient the map to their current position, identify varying terrain points on the map, estimate the distance to targets—with no more than thirty percent error—at three different ranges (fifty to 100 meters, 100 to 400 meters, and 500 to 1,000 meters), effectively camouflage themselves against aerial observation in both open and rough terrain, approach certain features such as a forest or a road undetected, draft a written and an oral

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33 *Kriegsausbildung der HJ*, 15-16.
34 *Kriegsausbildung der HJ*, 16-19.
message, and set up a field post on the outskirts of a feature such as a village or forest.\textsuperscript{35} The third and final portion of the exam tested the youths’ ability to recognize and follow orders, including halt, at ease, turn to the right/left, march, and march in place. It also assessed the youths’ capacity to function in formations similar to an infantry squad and platoon.\textsuperscript{36} Due to the extensive nature of the War Training Certificate, obtaining it provided the youth with a solid foundation in field maneuvers—which was useful during the terrain sports (war games)—and also gave the youth a foundation on which the \textit{Wehrmacht} could build upon during basic training.

As mentioned above, members of a \textit{Sondereinheit} received different training than the members of the \textit{Allgemeine HJ}. These youths trained within their group and sought to achieve badges and certificates applicable to their particular group. As the war progressed, however, these special certificates were redesigned to prepare the youth to pass the \textit{Allgemeine HJ} test and receive their War Training Certificate. In this way, every German boy received training that made him an eligible candidate for the War Training Certificate. This was vital to the National Socialists because it meant that the entire cadre of youth had acquired training in marksmanship and field exercises: the youth knew the parts of a gun, they possessed the ability to make an accurate shot and knew the conditions that affected a shot’s trajectory, they could utilize a map, camouflage themselves effectively as well as stealthily approach enemy positions, and they could perform the duties of a scout. The members of the Hitler Youth, therefore, received premilitary training from a young age and were virtually transformed into a military force—almost like a proto-\textit{Volkssturm} (Germany’s national peoples’ militia from October 1944-45) comprised of only teenage boys.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Kriegsausbildung der HJ}, 16, 17-19.  
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Kriegsausbildung der HJ}, 21-32.
The members of the Hitler Youth obtained technical knowledge in the *Sondereinheiten* and general premilitary skills from either the *Allgemeine Hitlerjugend* or the training courses established from the joint HJ-*Wehrmacht* cooperation. Additionally, the HJ provided another premilitary skill to a select number of youths: leadership. As mentioned before, the Hitler Youth operated on a mantra of “youth shall be led by youth;” the leaders believed that only members of the Hitler Youth should lead the boys (and girls) because only they could relate to the boys and only they had their best interests at heart. Before the war, the average age of a HJ *Führer* was only three to five years above the youth he/she led, therefore, a *Bannführer*, who was responsible for over 600 boys, was on average twenty-four years old.\(^{37}\) Once the war started, and many of the young men either volunteered or were drafted, the Hitler Youth was left under-staffed. One of the solutions the National Socialists employed was to simply lower the age of the leaders, making the age gap between the leader and the subordinates smaller and smaller. At thirteen, Jurgen Herbst received a promotion to *Jungenschaftsführer*, a position that placed him in charge of ten boys who recently joined the JV; subsequently, he obtained the rank of *Jungzugführer*, which put him in charge of thirty boys. On his sixteenth birthday, he was appointed *Fähnleinführer*, which put him in charge of one-hundred boys. Another leader, Alfons Heck, was promoted to *Bannführer*, the highest rank for a boy still in the HJ itself, sometime around his sixteenth or seventeenth birthday.\(^{38}\)

These leaders never possessed free rein over their group—at least in theory. The RJF sent orders and agendas to the *Bannführer*, who then passed the information on to his *Gefolgschaftführers*, who each led a *Gefolgschaft*—which, with its 180 or so boys was the basic building block of the HJ organization. In theory, the *Gefolgschaftführer* ensured that his boys


abided by the party’s policy. However, due to the National Socialist’s belief in the *Führerprinzip* (leader principle)—as well as the Army’s tradition of bestowing every officer with a great amount of freedom to attain his goals and orders—the *Gefolgschaftführer* and their assistants were usually left to lead and operate on their own; often the *Bannführer* only involved himself in his subordinates’ affairs when they exhibited poor leadership. These young leaders, therefore, were essentially given the freedom to lead their boys as they saw fit, or in Herbst’s words, “we *Jungvolkführer* were free of direct adult supervision and interpreted the directives that were handed down to us from party headquarters to our own liking.” Some youth leaders, such as Herbst and his fellow leader Etzel (full name never given), rejected the proscribed *Heimabend* lessons of racial purity, anti-Semitism, National Socialist history, and the singing of HJ songs. Instead, he transformed these nights into fun evenings full of adventure and war stories, charades, and singing folk and military songs from the *Wandervogel* era. Furthermore, rather than partaking in the boring physical exercises in the gymnasium, Herbst and his boys went to the shooting range, played soccer, performed “paramilitary exercises in the woods and hills surrounding Wolfenbüttel,” and went skiing in the local parks and forests. While this freedom gave the leaders the ability to ignore political lessons and premilitary training (if they were careful about how they did it), it also allowed them to focus on fun activities that doubled as premilitary training. For instance, during one winter break, Etzel and Herbst took their gang of boys south of Wolfenbüttel to St. Barbara Cottage, which lies at the base of the Sonnenberg Mountain. Here they showed their boys the proper way to wax and carry their skis, pack a

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41 The *Wandervogel* era began around 1896 and lasted into the first part of the twentieth century. During this time, many of the youth groups developed a wander-lust and engaged in outdoor activities such as hiking and camping. See Koch, *The Hitler Youth*, 24-27.
backpack, and more importantly, they participated in an extended premilitary exercise that involved them dividing into two groups, climbing to the summit of the mountain—at night and in a blizzard—in an attempt to find a hidden metal cache, all the while racing against the opposing group.\(^{43}\) This trip, which was not proscribed by the RJF, permitted the leaders to take their boys on an enjoyable trip that not only raised morale and infused their Hitler Youth activities with excitement, but also allowed the leaders to spend an extended period of time in a premilitary setting—thus hardening the boys’ bodies and teaching them the appropriate way to operate in the field and in a military hierarchy.

The lax oversight, however, presented a potential problem for the National Socialists because the youth did not have to—and often did not—follow the proscribed agendas. Herbst’s friend, Etzel, depicted the various ways the youth leaders’ choices could undermine the political intentions of the National Socialists:

\begin{quote}
Did you never notice that we rarely followed the official plans of the party? When they wanted us to carry out paramilitary service, we took the boys out of town into the woods, played cops and robbers and sang folksongs. When they called for ideological training, we told our boys how to care for a backpack and how to wax their skis. Have you ever heard of another Fähnlein that marched through town singing “The Internationale?” You yourself took the boys on a field march of three kilometers that day when we were to have discussed the “race problem.” When I joined you out there in the boondocks, I read you all the story of Huck and Jim on the raft from that paperback I found among my uncle’s books. I told my aunt about that later, and she couldn’t stop laughing. But you and the boys had no idea what went on that afternoon. If the Nazis had found out—that is, if they had had the brains to understand the irony of it all—they would have accused us of “sabotaging the war effort, and mocking the Führer’s pet doctrines.”\(^{44}\)
\end{quote}

Although the leadership of the Hitler Youth was largely left unsupervised, the RJF and the National Socialists asserted their control and occasionally ordered certain HJ groups to perform tasks—especially once the war had begun to turn against Germany. When the RJF and OKW did become involved in the affairs of the Hitler Youth, they generally treated the members more

\(^{43}\text{Herbst, Requiem for a German Past, 95-98.}\)

\(^{44}\text{Herbst, Requiem for a German Past, 148.}\)
as soldiers than as boys, perhaps because they had no alternative or perhaps because the boys had received premilitary training. In his memoir, Heck provided a chilling example of how the RJF and OKW took a direct interest in Heck’s HJ group and ordered them to prepare the defenses of the Reich. Heck, who was then only fifteen, recounted that shortly after D-Day, Colonel Molden of the OKW addressed Heck and his boys; in his address, Col. Molden informed the boys that they were to head west to the Westwall to man the anti-aircraft battery near Remisch and to reactivate the bunker line in the vicinity. Next, Col. Molden revealed to Heck that he realized the ambiguity in his orders but he trusted Heck to nevertheless accomplish the task. Before leaving, he notified Heck that he was “going to have a bunch of pretty wild boys” on his hands, and that he must never allow any breach of discipline. Furthermore, once Heck entered a war zone, he possessed the ability to have people shot if he deemed it necessary. Heck encountered further troubles as he never received orders detailing his sleeping assignment or where to establish a home base; despite this, Heck knew he needed to secure lodging for his boys, so he commandeered a school despite the protests of the principal—even going so far as to order the shooting of the principal if he returned. Although Heck received a directive to active a bunker system but did not receive instructions detailing the activation process, Heck and his boys eagerly started their undertaking; many other youths were involved in similar undertakings throughout the Reich and they, too, eagerly undertook their tasks, because, as Koch stated, “they felt that the hour had come, the moment in which they counted, in which they would no longer be pushed aside because they were too young.” Heck’s mission at the Westwall is illuminating as it demonstrates his leadership abilities: he maintained order and succeeded in reactivating a

45 Heck, A Child of Hitler, 95.
46 Heck, A Child of Hitler, 95.
47 Heck, A Child of Hitler, 96-98.
48 Koch, The Hitler Youth, 249.
section of the defenses while only having minimal contact with members of the Wehrmacht and RJF.

The freedom the officers were given could easily undermine the political aspirations of the National Socialists—as Herbst demonstrated, but it also assisted the military efforts of the National Socialists—as Heck showed; although whether or not the National Socialists recognized that this freedom aided their military aims is up to speculation. The autonomy the HJ leaders experienced was similar to the freedom a German officer could expect—he was given a broad objective, but how he attained the goal was up to him. Understandably, officers had a stricter sense of independence than that experienced by the Hitler Youth leaders, but nevertheless, the leaders were exposed to the idea of accomplishing a task without strict oversight or explicit instructions. Furthermore, HJ leaders were placed in positions of power from an early age (about thirteen or fourteen), which slowly prepared them to operate in a military hierarchy, issue orders, and above all, care for their charges. Thus, not only were Hitlerjugend leaders worthy candidates for admission to the special HJ leader schools, like the Adolf Hitler Schools or the Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten (National Political Institutes of Education, NPEA or more commonly NAPOLA), but they were also good applicants for officer training to become NCOs.49

Besides the ideological indoctrination of the youth, the Hitler Youth organization aspired to prepare physically the youth for their future service to Germany. The youth began this regime slowly; the boys became increasingly involved in numerous sports, outdoor activities, and competitions. Through these activities, the youth continually strove against the elements or against their peers—which the National Socialists believed strengthened the boys. Soon after the

49 Rempel, Hitler’s Children, 203; see also Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Evaluation and Dissemination Section G-2 (Counter-Intelligence Sub-Division), The Hitler Jugend,12-13.
entire German youth was organized within the HJ, other institutions—such as the Wehrmacht—became interested in it for the opportunities it provided. Although the HJ and the Wehrmacht started off on the proverbial “wrong foot,” they nevertheless were able to forge a working relationship in 1939 when Keitel and Schirach agreed to create a program whereby all HJ leaders received premilitary training. Over time, this expanded to the entire HJ and the boys were pressured to obtain their War Training Certificate of the Hitler Youth, which tested the youth’s ability in marksmanship and numerous field exercises. Furthermore, HJ leaders received additional premilitary training by way of their leadership position. Hitler Youth leaders received a large degree of freedom in the performance of their duties, much like a German military officer. Through their position, these leaders received a sort of leadership training, which made them excellent candidates for advancement to the officer corps later in life.
CHAPTER 4
SONDEREINHEITEN

Through their memoirs, former Hitler Youth members, such as Alfons Heck, Jurgen Herbst, and Wilhelm Gehlen, paint a picture of German youths eager to join the ranks of the Hitler Youth—some even went so far as to falsify their birth records or persuaded officials in order to join before their tenth birthday.¹ Despite their readiness to join, the youth soon began to dread attending the weekly Heimabende (home evenings) as well as performing their HJ duties. Koch argued that the wane in zealousness began to manifest itself in 1936 and 1937. Moreover, he suggested that this decrease inspired the creation of the HJ Sondereinheiten (special groups), which allowed the boys to participate in activities closer to their own interests, but also infused their now-monotonous drill with intrigue and new skills to master.² While Koch’s analysis that the special groups raised morale and enthusiasm for Hitler Youth activities proves convincing, he failed to account for the establishment of the various groups. For his arguments to hold validity, the creation of these groups needed to occur during or after 1936; however, the Marine-Hitlerjugend, for example, existed in some form since the Kampfzeit (time of struggle, 1925-1933).³ Furthermore, Koch contended that the Hitler Youth existed simply to indoctrinate the youth with the National Socialist Weltanschauung (ideology) and that these groups existed

³ Richard Ernst Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization” (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1975), 154-155.
simply to raise morale, but his assertion mitigates the true intentions of the organization. Instead, the Hitler Youth incorporated these *Sondereinheiten* to improve the preparation of the youth for military service.

In addition to increasing military readiness of the youth, the *Sondereinheiten* permitted the boys to indulge their interest while competing against peers who engaged in similar specialties, which inadvertently intensified competition and benefited individual gratification. Most of these special groups required the boys to complete four years in the *Jungvolk*. Once accepted into a group, the boys allocated the majority of their time to meetings and activities within their *Sondereinheit*, instead of participating with the *Allgemeine Hitlerjugend* (general Hitler Youth). This system furnished the boys with a general ideological and physical education with the JV and HJ prior to receiving a more specialized and militaristic training with the *Sondereinheiten*. Since the creation of the *Sondereinheiten* intended to prepare the Hitler Youths for service within a particular branch of the *Wehrmacht* (Germany’s Armed Forces), the groups became specialized: the *Marine-Hitlerjugend* (Marine-HJ) catered to those who were interested in the *Kriegsmarine* (Navy); the *Flieger-Hitlerjugend* (Flying-HJ) to those interested in the *Luftwaffe* (Air Force) or in commercial flying; the *Motor-Hitlerjugend* (Motor-HJ) to those interested in the motorized divisions; the *Nachrichten-Hitlerjugend* (Signal-HJ) to those interested in the signal corps, and the *Streifendienst* (Patrol service) for those interested in the *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squad, or SS).

The Marine-HJ, a division within the *Sondereinheiten*, traced its inception to the *Kampfzeit*. Before the creation of the official *Hitlerjugend*, Gustav Adolf Lenk created a proto-

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Hitler Youth during the winter of 1921-1922. In 1923, Lenk’s organization added a marine division, which permitted boys who lived in regions near bodies of water the opportunity to receive specialized training.\(^6\) This institution persisted through the various changes to the Hitler Youth and eventually evolved into the Marine-HJ. The Marine-HJ and the Allgemeine HJ emphasized different areas of training. For example, the boys in the general HJ participated in numerous physical exercises that focused on sports such as boxing, track, shot-put, and soccer, while the members of the Marine-HJ concentrated on gymnastics. Each division accentuated training that advanced its specialized skills. Gymnastics made the boys more limber and agile—which proved advantageous on maritime vessels. Furthermore, the boys received training in drill, marching, and marksmanship, similar to the boys in the general HJ. Despite this, the majority of the Marine-HJ’s training consisted of more technical and practical applications: lessons centered on seamanship, knotting, splicing, Morse Code, navigation, handling small boats, the use of rudders, oars, sails, and proper signaling.\(^7\)

From the Marine-HJ’s formation under Lenk’s proto-HJ to its incorporation in the official HJ, nearly 21,000 boys joined; by 1938, it increased to between 50,000 and 70,000.\(^8\) The Marine-HJ’s popularity proves misleading as it had neither the resources nor the instructors to teach adequately the youth. The Marine-HJ, therefore, relied heavily on support from the Marine-Verein 1890 (Marine Club 1890) and later from the Kriegsmarine.\(^9\) A close cooperation between these organizations prompted the Oberkommando der Marine (Naval High Command, OKM) and the Reichsjugendführung (Reich Youth Leadership, RJF) to reach an agreement that


\(^7\) Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 155-156; German Training Methods, 87; and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Evaluation and Dissemination Section G-2 (Counter-Intelligence Sub-Division), The Hitler Jugend, 17.

\(^8\) Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 154-155. Koch estimates the number at 62,000, but neither he nor Schroeder give a year for these estimates. See Koch, The Hitler Youth, 230-231.

transformed the Marine-HJ into a training and recruitment agency for the *Kriegsmarine*. This arrangement altered the goal of the Marine-HJ. Instead of providing the youth with a fun alternative to the general HJ, it now emphasized the training and recruitment of sailors. Reflecting this new objective, the Marine-HJ handbook clearly stated that “the Sea Sport Exam ‘C’…is the highest educational goal for Marine-Hitler lads. The knowledge and ability needed for this exam is a good basis for later service in the Navy. Those Marine-HJs who pass the ‘C’ exam belong to the seagoing brotherhood and must serve their military obligation in the Navy.”

This last caveat ensured that the work, time, and money that the *Kriegsmarine* invested in training the youth would not be wasted if the youth were called up for service in either the *Luftwaffe* or the *Heer* (German Army).

Boys in the Hitler Youth attempted to obtain badges or certificates by taking tests that demonstrated their knowledge. Earning one offered the boys a sense of accomplishment and pride, a certain degree of prestige within the organization, and either an opportunity for advancement in the ranks or preferential treatment. Members of the *Allgemeine Hitlerjugend* worked toward obtaining their *Leistungsabzeichen der Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth Performance Badge), and later, during the Second World War, the *Kriegsausbildungsscheines der Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth War Training Certificate). Members of the Marine-HJ, however, did not pursue these badges; instead, they endeavored to acquire their Sea Sport certificate. In order to obtain the Sea Sport certificate, rank C, the boy in question had to demonstrate his mastery of a number of pre-military skills. Areas of expertise included the ability to shoot five rounds at fifty meters with a .22 caliber rifle while lying prone and without a rest, obtaining a cumulative

11 Each badge had three ranks, A, B, and C. A boy must successfully pass each exam before he could work on the requirements for the next rank. He, therefore, would first obtain the A badge then the B and finally the C badge.
score greater than thirty, indicating proficiency in handling small boats, which included the “proper execution of various rowing commands, rowing over 1,000 meters in [a] cutter, [demonstrating the] correct behavior in boats, [and] maintenance of boats.” Additionally, the examinee had to send ninety letters in two minutes, forty-five seconds with a semaphore, and ninety letters in eight minutes via Morse Code. Moreover, he needed to have a basic knowledge of seamanship, such as tying various knots, perform other manual work, and manifest the ability to throw a line fifteen meters in a five meter wide lane. The requirements for obtaining the Sea Sport certificate, rank C, were understandably technical in nature; the Navy required a certain set of skills which did not translate to either the Heer or the Luftwaffe. As such, the Marine-HJ designed its curriculum for the explicit purpose of training the boys in fundamental maritime skills that transferred to the Kriegsmarine. Later, as the war progressed, the Marine-HJ adopted an even more militaristic training regimen. This new program intended to have the younger HJ boys (fourteen and fifteen years old) obtain the Sea Sport certificate whereas the older boys (sixteen through eighteen) acquire the more prestigious and demanding War Training Certificate.

With the advancement of the war, the Marine-HJ—with the Navy’s assistance— instituted three week training courses for Hitler Youth leaders. The Hitler Youth organization funded these courses ensuring the attendance of any promising youth, which resulted in benefiting the Navy and the HJ. Courses provided either an introductory or a refresher course in maritime skills before the youth began his service in the Kriegsmarine. Secondly, the courses provided local HJ leaders with basic knowledge, which permitted them to disseminate their education to

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12 German Training Methods, 87.
13 German Training Methods, 87.
14 German Training Methods, 92-93.
the groups they led. By implementing this system of obtaining badges, which denoted aptitude, and of holding intensive training sessions, the National Socialists hoped to prepare a portion of the young generation for naval service. Successful execution of the system decreased the time required in basic training (and also during any subsequent training) and increased the quality of the individual sailors—which ultimately improved the quality of the Navy.

The *Luftwaffe* relied heavily on a particular type of knowledge along with explicitly specialized and technical skills. Therefore, the National Socialists expressed an interest in providing youth with aviation and mechanical knowledge that allowed them to streamline the *Luftwaffe*’s training process. Moreover, they intended to produce advanced pilots, mechanics, and radio operators. Fortunately for the National Socialists, gliding had become a popular sport in Germany during the early twentieth century. This popularity led to individual HJ groups developing model airplane clubs as early as 1934. Unlike the Marine-HJ, which included only members of the Hitler Youth, these clubs encouraged members of the *Jungvolk* (JV) to join. Initially, these clubs operated in an unofficial manner; the boys attended all official Hitler Youth activities but during their free time they pursued their hobbies. In 1935, the official *Flieger-HJ* emerged within the HJ with the aid of the *deutsche Luftsport Verband* (German Air Sport Association). With this addition, the *Sondereinheit*’s membership rose rapidly—in 1938, enrollment from the *Jungvolk* reached approximately 73,000 and the *Hitlerjugend* achieved

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17 In 1934, there were roughly 10,000 *Pimpfe* (the youngest members of the organization) in these clubs; see Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 158-159; and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Evaluation and Dissemination Section G-2 (Counter-Intelligence Sub-Division), *The Hitler Jugend*, 17.
18 Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 157-158.
74,000. By mid-1943, roughly 136,000 HJ boys had enrolled—and the RJF advocated increasing the number to 200,000 in order to sustain the Luftwaffe’s recruitment demands.¹⁹

Within the Flieger-HJ, the boys received both theoretical and practical instruction in aviation. When the boys entered as a JV, their education consisted of creating model airplanes and gliders while learning the basics of aerodynamics. As they progressed into the HJ, they began building and repairing real-life gliders while receiving instruction in aerodynamics, aeronautics, aerial geography, meteorology, the history of aviation, the organization of the German Air Force, air traffic signaling, and even lessons on the theaters of war dominated by the Luftwaffe.²⁰ The Flieger-HJ employed a training curriculum that expected the boys to spend two to three hours a week in theoretical instruction, three hours a week on glider construction and repairs, and to make one flight a month, except in March and April, when they flew twice a month.²¹ Despite this proposed regime, Alfons Heck’s memoir describes a different story. Heck recalled participating in numerous prolonged trips to the Flieger-HJ “bases,” and while there, he engaged in several flights. These flights were necessary because requirements demanded numerous flights before the boys became eligible to test for the different ranked badges. The practice of multiple flights a month breached the proscribed protocol; however, it does not reflect the only violation. Initially, a division existed between the boys in the JV and HJ with regard to lessons and duties. This separation, however, soon disappeared and the JV and HJ boys received the same instruction—certification rank remained the only distinguishing factor.²² This change ensured that all the members were eligible for specialized training within the Flieger-HJ and that the most qualified boys, regardless of age, received the most advanced training.

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¹⁹ Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 158-159.
²⁰ German Training Methods, 93; and Koch, The Hitler Youth, 229-230.
²¹ German Training Methods, 93.
As with the Marine-HJ, the Flieger-HJ depended on additional assistance in training youth in adequate premilitary methods since the Hitler Youth organization lacked the necessary supplies, space, and technical knowledge required for this undertaking. As mentioned above, the Flieger-HJ and the German Air Sport Association worked together: the Association provided the HJ with knowledgeable instructors as well as gliders to train the boys. As the popularity of the Sondereinheit—and of gliding itself—grew, the National Socialists created a party sanctioned group for aviation enthusiasts as well as glider and airplane pilots over the age of eighteen: the Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (National Socialist Flyer Corps, NSFK). Despite sanctioning the group, and despite the value it gave to the Hitler Youth, the government continually failed to allocate enough money to the group. Ultimately, the Luftwaffe became an instrumental part of the Flieger-HJ, providing a prompt supply of training materials, workshops, and instructional personnel. Additionally, the Luftwaffe forged personal bonds with the members of the Flieger-HJ by frequently welcoming the boys to their bases, where Luftwaffe officers entertained the boys’ questions, showed them around the facilities, and provided the opportunity to pilot them up into the air in military aircraft. These bonds created a sense of comradery with the youthful members as well as ignited their enthusiasm and passion for aviation. More importantly, it acclimated the youth to life on a military base as well as provided them with a glimpse of a career in the prestigious Luftwaffe. Unfortunately for the Luftwaffe, allied bombing greatly interrupted the HJ training as their facilities sustained damage, the instructors received transfer orders, and allowing the boys to fly became increasingly dangerous. Despite these set-backs, the members of the Flieger-HJ received instruction which made them suitable Luftwaffe recruits. If the Allied threats had not limited the National Socialists’ ability to

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continue the program without interruption the members of the *Flieger-HJ* who entered the
*Luftwaffe* would have proved excellent candidates for any position from mechanic to fighter
pilot. Moreover, their multiple years of training and familiarization in the principles of aviation,
aerodynamics, and maintenance conferred additional benefits.

The Treaty of Versailles restricted—if not prohibited—Germany from mechanizing its
armed forces. Therefore, when Hitler and the National Socialists took control of Germany, the
*Reichswehr*—and later the *Wehrmacht*—quickly began a “clandestine” mechanization and
modernization process. This mechanization process demanded a large cadre of skilled
mechanics and skilled personnel in order to keep the vehicles operational and to drive them.
This need of skilled technicians led to the creation of another of the more popular—and perhaps
more utilitarian—*Sondereinheiten*: the *Motor-HJ*. In 1933, the *Motor-HJ* had approximately
3,000 boys—aged sixteen and up—within its ranks; by 1938 it had grown to roughly 90,000, and
by 1941 it had reached nearly 200,000.25 This popularity might be the success of *Motor-HJ*
recruitment, but it could also be a result of the allure of a unique prospect offered by the
*Sondereinheit*: in addition to earning their performance badge, members had the opportunity to
obtain their driver’s license. In 1937, 10,000 members received their driver’s license, and
28,000 the following year.26

Just as the *Flieger-HJ* relied on the support of the NSFK, the *Motor-HJ* needed outside
assistance as the RJF could not afford the requisite materials or instructors. Realizing this
deficiency as well as the possible advantage of allying with the *Nationalsozialistisches
Kraftfahrkorps* (National Socialist Motor Corps, NSKK), Baldur von Schirach approached Major
Adolf Hühnlein, the *Korpsführer* (Corps Leader) of the NSKK, to propose cooperation between

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the two organizations. Major Hühnlein agreed to this collaboration and the NSKK began providing instructors, motorcycles, workshops, classrooms, and training fields for the driver’s test. With NSKK assistance, members of the Motor-HJ learned to drive motorcycles and make minor mechanical repairs. Furthermore, they learned technical knowledge, which was applicable to other motorized vehicles, such as the workings of the internal combustion engine, frequent problems and solutions to mechanical complications, and traffic laws—both international and German. Whereas members of the Marine-HJ and Flieger-HJ were obligated only to perform the duties of their Sondereinheit and not of the Allgemeine Hitlerjugend (presumably because their training was more intensive), members of the Motor-HJ were required to accomplish their usual HJ duties in addition to their new duties as a Motor-HJ member—which included the previously mentioned theoretical lessons as well as eighty hours of driving lessons and 105 hours of mechanical instruction. As the war continued, the NSKK assumed even more responsibility. It began to allow members of the Marine-HJ to attend its Motor-HJ camps in order to train them in mechanics and mechanical repair—which applied to their future work in the Kriegsmarine. Furthermore, the NSKK began to offer six-week intensive courses designed to prepare members for military service, for when the course concluded, they were required to join the Wehrmacht. Members of the Motor-HJ acquired highly specialized and technical training, which made them prime candidates for the mechanized divisions of the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS (Armed SS). Members of the RJF echoed this sentiment, as one internal memorandum argued against Schirach’s statement that the HJ held no military value, stating that “it is self-evident that

27 Koch, The Hitler Youth, 230.
28 German Training Methods, 88; Koch, The Hitler Youth, 230.
29 German Training Methods, 87-88; Koch, The Hitler Youth, 230; and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Evaluation and Dissemination Section G-2 (Counter-Intelligence Sub-Division), The Hitler Jugend, 16.
30 Koch, The Hitler Youth, 230.
31 Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 160-161
members of the Motor-HJ [italics in original] will later serve in the motorized units of the
Wehrmacht.”32 Additionally, in 1943, the Waffen-SS created the 12th Panzer Division, which
consisted of former Hitler Youths and Hitler Youth volunteers—presumably most of these boys
were members of the Motor-HJ.33 Training by the NSKK and the Motor-HJ provided the
members with the general instruction and indoctrination of the HJ, a foundation in driving,
mechanical repair, and the acquisition of their driving license, which all eased the Wehrmacht’s
mechanization process.

Whereas the previous Sondereinheiten were particularly suited for service with one of the
three main branches of the armed forces—the Marine-HJ for the Kriegsmarine, the Flieger-HJ
for the Luftwaffe, and the Motor-HJ for the Heer—the Nachrichten-Hitlerjugend (Signal-HJ)
accommodated any of the branches of service. Furthermore, the Signal-HJ fulfilled a definite
mission within the Hitler Youth organization and simultaneously represented one of the less
popular groups. In 1938, the Signal-HJ numbered nearly 29,000 boys, who focused primarily on
tasks such as setting up, operating, and maintaining telephones, radios, speakers, search lights,
lighting, and public address equipment at HJ camps, ceremonies, and HJ-owned buildings.34
This practical education intended to acquaint the boys with laying wires, sending messages in
Morse Code, and operating and repairing electrical devices. When the boys reached military
age, they joined the Signal Corps, where these skills became applicable and advantageous.

32 Quoted in Koch, The Hitler Youth, 230.
34 Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 161-162; German Training Methods, 88; and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Evaluation and Dissemination Section G-2 (Counter-Intelligence Sub-Division), The Hitler Jugend, 16.
The last Sondereinheit of the Hitler Youth, the Streifendienst (Patrol Service, SRD), possessed a distinct purpose within the organization, similar to the Signal-HJ. Throughout the Kampfzeit and the Third Reich, attendance within the Hitler Youth was problematic. For the National Socialists to accomplish their goals of indoctrinating the youth with their Weltanschauung and providing premilitary training for the youth, the youth needed to be present at the HJ meetings and activities. Parents, however, often feared the organization because they recognized their own power and influence in their children’s’ life deteriorating and as a result, they tended to prevent their children from performing their HJ duties. Additionally, the vast majority of the youth undoubtedly found the National Socialist’s Weltanschauung dense and boring. Low morale and attendance in the HJ can also be attributed to war weariness and the youthful tendency to lose interest or change their mind—although neither of these causes have been documented yet. Because of these factors, countless boys avoided their weekly meetings and failed to do their duties. Moreover, leaders often witnessed boys out of uniform or in uniform at inappropriate times, which prompted Schirach to create the Streifendienst in July 1934 to combat “juvenile crime, delinquency, and undisciplined behavior within the HJ.” The members of the Patrol Service often concerned themselves with routine police responsibilities that included “patrolling local neighborhoods, enforcing uniform regulations, curfew restrictions, and military courtesy,” they also “ensured that underage children stayed out of theaters and taverns, and even staged inspection raids on youth hostels to check for youngsters hiking or wandering without authorization or out of proper uniform.” They supervised the Hitler Youth’s behavior in public places, ensuring “a high standard of cleanliness and order in the HJ

35 Koch, The Hitler Youth, 229.
38 Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 166.
quarters,” and performed “police duties at crowded assemblies, bivouac guard duty, convoy duty, [searched] for missing persons, and investigations and [inquiries] in the case of punishable offenses and breaches of discipline.”\textsuperscript{39} Finally, the SRD assisted and advised members on outings, helped with railway station duties, and protected “public property against damage by HJ hiking groups.”\textsuperscript{40} The SRD, in essence, became a quasi-military police within the organization. Originally, the SRD had no policing power itself; instead, it employed its close ties to the SS and the Gestapo to report delinquents. As time progressed, the Patrol Service continued a close working relation with the SS and Gestapo, but it began to assume policing authority by routinely—and sometimes forcibly—bringing members to HJ meetings and activities as well as handling cases that involved illegal actions.\textsuperscript{41} Four years later, Schirach made an arrangement that affected the future of the \textit{Streifendienst}. In August 1938, Schirach and Heinrich Himmler, the \textit{Reichsführer} of the \textit{Schutzstaffel} (Reich leader, or head, of the SS), signed an agreement which wed the SRD to the SS. This deal required every member of the SRD to enroll in the SS upon his eighteenth birthday, provided the SS with the responsibility for teaching every member of the SRD the history and duties of the SS, and assured the continuation of constant communication between the two groups.\textsuperscript{42} While this agreement freed the RJF from the burden of supplying and training the members of the Patrol Service, it also ensured that the Patrol Service became a feeder organization for the SS. Since the members of the SRD transitioned to the SS when they turned eighteen, an emphasis on exhibiting the superior Aryan qualities became a requirement within the SRD, like within the SS. Furthermore, candidates seeking admittance into the Patrol Service had to meet the SS requirements for racial purity—which

\textsuperscript{39} German Training Methods, 88-89.  
\textsuperscript{40} German Training Methods, 88-89.  
\textsuperscript{41} Koch, \textit{The Hitler Youth}, 111; and Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 164-165.  
\textsuperscript{42} Rempel, \textit{Hitler's Children}, 36-37.
required, among other things, a detailed family tree tracing one’s pure German status as well as a physical examination by a SS medical officer. Soon after the conclusion of the August 1938 agreement, the SRD assumed new responsibilities and duties—becoming a quasi-Gestapo within the Hitler Youth organization.

While the National Socialists emphasized the indoctrination of the entire German youth with their Weltanschauung, their motivations extended as they intended to create feeder organizations for their important military agencies. These feeder organizations represented much more, however, as they were unique, interesting, and fun outlets for the boys to explore while within the HJ. For the boys, these Sondereinheiten offered an alternative to the repetitive weekly meetings and duties of the Allgemeine HJ by allowing them to engage in activities that aligned with their interests and hobbies. For the National Socialists, these Sondereinheiten provided a way to train the youth in premilitary skills—each Sondereinheit focused on supplying a particular agency: the Marine-HJ created sailors for the Kriegsmarine, the Flieger-HJ prepared pilots for the Luftwaffe, the Motor-HJ helped with the general mechanization of the Wehrmacht, the Nachrichten-HJ trained boys for the Signal Corps, and the Streifendienst provided the SS with excellent recruits. Ultimately, these Sondereinheiten exemplified a brilliant system that lessened the burden of training recruits for the more technical and specific branches of the Wehrmacht as well as for improving the quality of the military.

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43 Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 165-166; and *German Training Methods*, 89.


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CHAPTER 5
MARKSMANSHIP TRAINING

The cursory discussion of the Hitler Youth’s emphasis on marksmanship and field training has failed to accentuate the importance it held to the organization. The National Socialists considered these elements as a significant component of the training regime and the youth spent a large portion of their time training in these categories.

The Wehrmacht (Germany’s Armed Forces), due to their experiences in the Great War, realized that despite the advent of modern, automatic weapons, marksmanship was still a vital and necessary skill. Since good marksmanship would allow the German soldier to out-shoot his opponent, and since the German soldier was already physically “superior” to his opponents, Germany could not lose a future engagement. This, in turn, led to the desire to train the entire youth cohort in the fundamentals of ballistics, rifle care, and marksmanship before they entered the Wehrmacht. An obstacle to the Wehrmacht’s goal concerned the Hitlerjugend’s inability to neither provide financially the materiel for such a large training regimen nor provide competent instructors for the youth. Recognizing the potential posed by the youth, the Wehrmacht became involved with the youths’ training—though this is not surprising as they were the only qualified institution to do so. In 1937, the Wehrmacht donated 10,000 small caliber rifles (.22 cal./5.6mm) to the Hitlerjugend. With this gift, the Reichsjugendführung (Reich Youth Leadership, RJF) quickly developed a training regimen for the youth; in the end it created a program that divided the boys into one of three classes based on their ability: basic, advanced, and special.

2. Richard Ernst Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization” (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1975), 100.
Regardless of placement, the requirements dictated that the boys attend marksmanship training for at least two hours each week. During these meetings, the first half addressed the theory of shooting—the principles of ballistics, components of a rifle, and the maintenance of a rifle—while the second half provided the boys with actual range time where they shot at a target fifty meters away. To heighten the effectiveness of the training, however, the youth needed competent instructors, which they woefully lacked. Due to the Wehrmacht’s interest in the Hitler Youth and the close ties that the Wehrmacht intended to form with the youth, via the liaison officers and HJ visits to military bases, it is likely that some HJ groups received training by military personnel. While this is speculation, it is known that by the end of 1938, approximately 30,000 HJ leaders had been instructed, to some degree, in marksmanship at the various Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten (National Political Institutes of Education, NPEA or more commonly NAPOLA). While the HJ leaders inadvertently learned good marksmanship, the schools’ true purpose emphasized training so that the leaders provided proficient instruction to their HJ groups. This tactic, also utilized in the youth’s field training, intended to train a cadre of boys in order to disseminate the knowledge to others. This allowed a relatively small number of professional, qualified marksmen to train the entire Hitler Youth. The NAPOLA schools made an important first step, but the training of the HJ required more instructors. The aforementioned agreement between Wilhelm Keitel and Baldur von Schirach established two-week courses that the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces, OKW) predominantly funded, allowing for more members of the HJ to receive training in premilitary marksmanship and field exercises. Additionally, it permitted the members to become

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3 Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 31; *German Training Methods*, 90-91; and Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 176-177.

eligible marksmanship instructors themselves. Even this measure, however, could not ensure that the entire HJ received adequate rifle training. In 1941, therefore, the National Socialists published a training manual—similar to the ones they produced for the JV, HJ, and Sondereinheiten. The manual, *Kriegsausbildung der HJ im Schiess- und Geländedienst*, addressed the basics of marksmanship as well as provided the reader with a rudimentary level of knowledge to begin teaching his peers.

With regard to marksmen training, the majority of memoirs briefly mention that the HJ members practiced with an air-rifle. In his revealing memoir, Alfons Heck remarked that “rifles were nothing new to us—from the age of 10, we had been instructed in small-caliber weapons” and Wilhelm Gehlen wrote: “Brother Len was 15 now and spent a lot of time at the Hitler Youth meetings. He was learning how to fire a rifle, and one day he even brought it home, minus live rounds of course. He took it to bits and showed me how to assemble it. He said that in a week or so he would be able to do it blindfolded.” The vast majority of memoirs, however, do not discuss their marksmanship training. By employing only memoirs, it becomes impossible to determine whether the youth received practical instruction such as loading and firing a rifle, or if they acquired theoretical knowledge such as the principles of ballistics and rifle maintenance. Other primary sources present a similar problem—they either briefly mention marksmanship training.

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6 For examples of training manuals, see HJ im Dienst. Ausbildungsvorschrift für die Ertüchtigung der deutschen Jugend (Berlin: Verlag Bernard & Graefe, 1935); Marine-HJ im Dienst. Lehrbuch für die Praktische und Theoretische Ausbildung der Marine-HJ (Berlin: E. S. Mittler, 1942); Pimpf im Dienst. Ein handbuch für Das Deutsche Jungvolk in der HJ (Potsdam: Ludwig Voggenreiter Verlag, 1938); Mädel im Dienst. BDM-Sport, (Potsdam: Ludwig Voggenreiter Verlag, 1940); and Mädel im Dienst. Ein handbuch, (Potsdam: Ludwig Voggenreiter Verlag, 1934).
7 *Kriegsausbildung der HJ.*
training or they neglect it altogether; furthermore, this trend plagues the secondary literature as well. The lack of sources make *Kriegsausbildung der HJ* vital as it describes—sometimes in minutiae—how the HJ were intended to be trained. While this alone does not prove that the youth were trained in such a manner, it does demonstrate the proposed training, which is equally important. Before examining *Kriegsausbildung der HJ*, it is important to assess the requirements for the three classes of marksmanship training as well as for the HJ Marksmanship Award since these stipulations illuminate the seriousness of the National Socialists regarding the training of the youth.

Every HJ started in the basic course, regardless of previous rifle experience. Progression from the basic to the advanced course demanded that the boy shoot five rounds at a twelve ring target at fifty meters and make a score of twenty-five without an individual shot falling below a four while lying prone with a rest. Moreover, he had to shoot a score of twenty with no individual shot below three while lying prone without a rest. Then, to progress from the advanced to the special class, he had to make a score of thirty-five, with no shot below a six, without a rest and a score of thirty, with no shot under a five, without a rest. Once he was in the special class, he had to shoot a thirty-five, with no score under an eight, with a rest and a score of thirty, with no one shot below a seven, without a rest. Furthermore, he had to shoot a score of thirty, with no one shot below a five, from the kneeling position in order to obtain his Hitler Youth Firing Award. Once the boy received his HJ Firing Award, he had the opportunity to earn the HJ Marksmanship Award, which required substantial skill. First, a candidate must shoot ten rounds prone, with a rest, and get a score of 100; second, he had to shoot ten rounds prone,

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10 Kater, *Hitler Youth*, and Hannsjoachim Wolfgang Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development, 1922-1945* (1975; repr., New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000) are the best examples of this, but it can be seen in others as well.

11 *German Training Methods*, 91; *Kriegsausbildung der HJ*, 62-63.
without a rest, and receive a ninety-five. Third, he was required to shoot ten rounds standing, without a rest, and achieve a score of sixty-five. Fourth, he must shoot five rounds each prone, kneeling, and standing—all without a rest—and make a score of 130. Fifth, three rounds prone, without a rest and in one minute (rapid fire), and make three bull’s-eyes; and lastly, he had to shoot five rounds prone, without a rest and at a human-shaped target, landing all three rounds in the scoring area. In addition to obtaining these awards, the individual members of the HJ occasionally held competitions within their Bann to determine the best marksman, which caused the youth to make an effort in order to succeed at these competitions.

Again, with the lack of sourcing it is currently impossible to know if the HJ kept these requirements, or even if the young boys achieved the stipulations, but they do indicate that the National Socialists—likely because of a strong desire of the Wehrmacht—were eager to train their boys in the use of a rifle. It is also important to note that these regulations point to a fairly high level of proficiency in marksmanship. By attempting to train the youth at such high levels of accuracy prior to entering the Wehrmacht, the Wehrmacht attempted to ease their task of training new recruits. Furthermore, by training the youth, who later would become soldiers, to become proficient marksmen, the Reich would possess an advantage over its enemies in a war.

Although good accuracy is important to shooting, a good marksman needs to have a basic understanding of the theoretical aspects of shooting: knowledge of their rifle, ballistics, and gun maintenance. Furthermore, acquiring a sound understanding of ballistics assisted more than just infantry soldiers: it benefited artillerymen, marksmen, and even certain sailors.

Kriegsausbildung der HJ intended to impart this theoretical knowledge to its reader. Once a boy had read Kriegsausbildung, he, in theory, understood the fundamentals of marksmanship and had

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12 German Training Methods, 91.
the ability to teach his peers. In this way, the HJ trained the entire organization without assistance of the Wehrmacht—which experienced difficulty in finding spare soldiers to educate the HJ—and the RJF—which did not have qualified instructors. It is, therefore, important to briefly examine Kriegsausbildung because it demonstrates the level of detail involved in the HJ marksman training.

A good soldier understood his rifle’s mechanisms and took care of them, for a poorly maintained rifle failed to shoot accurately or reliably. With this maxim in mind, the training manual began—albeit after a brief statement of purpose and a schedule for the HJ’s war training—with the technical specifications of the boys’ training rifle, the Deutsches Sportmodell (German Sport Model, DSM). The DSM was a small caliber rifle, shooting a 5.6mm round, with a triangular notched sighting system; while the rifle could be equipped with a glass scope, the HJ were forbidden to do so.14 The youth, however, were required to know more about their rifle; specifically the rifle’s main components (barrel, sight, breach, stock, hand-guard, fitting, and even the bullets themselves) are examined early on in regard to their purpose and functionality.15 Proficiency in identifying the parts of the rifle and their function, however, was not enough. The boys became familiarized with proper firearm maintenance because failure to maintain their rifle would lead to inaccurate shots—as well as posing a danger to the shooter or others. Kriegsausbildung stressed this lesson by stating that “the HJ is committed to the regular treatment of a KK-gun [Klien-Kaliber, small-caliber] and has to know the rules about the treatment of the KK-gun and to painstakingly follow [them]. He needs to know that the performance of his weapon depends on the nature and treatment.”16 The manual required the Hitler Youth to clean their rifle immediately after its use in order to prevent rust and the pitting of the barrel, for both

14 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 38.
15 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 38-41.
16 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 41.
of these proved detrimental to the effectiveness of the gun—sometimes making the gun inaccurate. To further emphasize this lesson, the manual described a variety of ways to clean the DSM, depending on the cleaning materials available to the HJ group.\textsuperscript{17}

In addition to learning the parts of their rifle and proper maintenance, the youth learned the factors that affected a bullet’s ballistics and the various shooting positions. In order for this to happen, the youth first learned that a bullet’s trajectory was not a straight line, but instead traveled in a parabolic arc (more specifically, a parabolic arc which has an initial elevation in the y-direction), always approaching the x-axis (the ground). Once the boys established this shooting principle, they learned that certain things could affect the trajectory of the bullet—and that the shooter can combat these effects. A bullet’s trajectory was affected by the following factors: its initial velocity (in both the x- and y-axis), gravity, drag, and the rotation of the bullet.\textsuperscript{18} A bullet’s initial velocity, or muzzle velocity, determined how far the bullet moved along the x-axis. The higher the velocity, the longer it would travel before making substantial movement in the y-axis. This change in the y-axis was caused by gravity pulling the projectile back toward the earth. While the initial velocity and the force of gravity were constants, and therefore could not be altered by the shooter, the shooter could anticipate these forces and elevate the aim of his rifle prior to making the shot. This would result in a bullet having both an x- and a y-axis component in its initial velocity, which in turn meant it would take longer for the bullet to fall below the intended target.\textsuperscript{19} A bullet was also affected by a force called “drag.” Drag was the force exerted by the air as the bullet passed through it. This was a minor factor that usually only slightly slowed the projectile. Drag, however, played a larger role if a bullet was not shot through a rifled barrel, as the drag caused the bullet to tumble—resulting in a far less accurate

\textsuperscript{17} Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 41-43.
\textsuperscript{18} Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 44.
\textsuperscript{19} Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 44-48.
shot. This force was combated by applying a rotational force on the bullet; this rotation was applied as the bullet traveled through the barrel and engaged the riffling of the barrel. The resultant spin on the bullet stabilized it, much like the spin on a thrown football, ensuring the bullet flew straight for a much longer duration. After describing these aforementioned factors, *Kriegsausbildung* transitioned to instruction on holding a rifle and shooting positions—of which four were detailed: prone with a rest, prone without a rest, freehand kneeling, and freehand standing.21

After examining the fundamentals of shooting, the manual shifted to describe the recommended structure and management of a shooting class. It listed the obvious safety precautions: never leave a rifle loaded, never head downrange until all shooters have stopped firing and have unloaded their weapons, etc.. While these safety measures are important, they do not illustrate the National Socialist’s intentions; what does, however, is the section’s mention of a shooting notebook. The manual stated that all HJ members possessed a shooting notebook and they were required to carry it with them to marksmanship practice. While at the practice, one boy was designated as the session’s scribe. Each boy handed his notebook to the scribe before assuming a shooting position and picking up the rifle. The scribe was responsible for recording the date of the shooting, the name of the instructor and the scribe, the weather conditions, the shooting position, and the result of the shot.22 This process ensured that every shot was painstakingly recorded in the notebook and facilitated the tracking of the overall progress of the HJ shooter.

It is difficult to assess the receptiveness of the HJ to *Kriegsausbildung der HJ* or if they even read it, regardless, it is still an important source as it elucidates the intentions of the

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21 *Kriegsausbildung der HJ*, 48-56.
22 *Kriegsausbildung der HJ*, 58, 60, 64.
National Socialists. It is clear that they designed this book as a training manual for the youth and that they wanted the youth to have a good understanding of the fundamentals of ballistics and marksmanship. The youth could employ the manual in conjunction with a Wehrmacht officer to receive an excellent education in shooting, or they could use it individually and teach its contents to their peers. In this way, the entire HJ received training in a standardized fashion.

Furthermore, the boys learned more about shooting than is generally the case with young boys—whether they are involved with an organization like the Boy Scouts or if they are taught by their fathers and grandfathers. The boys of the Hitler Youth understood the fundamental principles behind ballistics, which not only made them better marksmen but also allowed them to apply this knowledge subsequently in the Wehrmacht, perhaps as an artillerist. Moreover, it aimed to instruct the boys on a rifle’s proper function and maintenance, thus improving their effectiveness if they were to become infantrymen. It is important to remember that this book was published in 1941, but that the boys of the Hitlerjugend had received marksmanship training since 1937—if not earlier. If the boys had not acquired any marksmanship training prior to the publication of this book, it increases the possibility that the National Socialists published it with the intention of relying on the children as a final resource for defense. However, since they experienced training prior to its publication—and prior to the outbreak of the Second World War—it is more likely that the National Socialists planned to utilize the boys in the Wehrmacht, not as a final defense, and that the publication of the book demonstrated their efforts to standardize the training of the youth while struggling with supplying instructors due to the demands of the war.
CHAPTER 6

TERRAIN TRAINING AND GELÄNDESPIELEN

If the Wehrmacht (Germany’s Armed Forces) intended to employ the boys of the Hitler Youth, the boys required more than an adequate knowledge of rifles and skills in marksmanship. A quality infantryman also needed to know how to operate in the field. Infantrymen should understand the intricacies of evaluating the land, using a map, correctly utilizing camouflage, scouting regions, and relaying messages. It was, therefore, important to instill this information in the youth—in addition to their knowledge of marksmanship and the technical skills of the various branches. In order to accomplish this, the National Socialists adopted an approach similar to the one they applied to marksmanship training. Ideally the youth engaged in field training with their Wehrmacht liaison officer or with a HJ leader who had undergone special training at either a Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten (National Political Institutes of Education, NPEA or more commonly NAPOLA) or an Adolf Hitler School. As time progressed, the impracticality of this method became apparent as the schools failed to train enough leaders and there was an insufficient number of liaison officers to oversee an adequate amount of the youth’s field exercises. As a result, the National Socialists decided to publish a training manual—based on the HJ, JV, and Sondereinheiten manuals and which resembled its successor, Kriegsausbildung der HJ. This manual, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend (Terrain Lessons for the Hitler Youth), enabled the HJ groups to practice field exercises without a proper instructor.1 Geländeaufgaben provided a good introduction to terrain exercises, but it did not meet the expectations of the National Socialists. Two years later, when Kriegsausbildung was published, the pertinent sections of Geländeaufgaben were updated and included in

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1 Josef Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend (Berlin: Gerhard Stalling, 1939).
Another correlation exists between the marksmanship training of the HJ and their field exercises: by and large, the individual members of the HJ ignored the extent of their field training in their memoirs and only make token references to marching or hiking in the woods. Furthermore, other primary sources neglect to examine their field training. It is because of this lack of sources and information that Geländeaufgaben and Kriegsausbildung are important because they demonstrate the National Socialists’ proposed training regimen—even if they cannot determine that the youth were, in fact, trained in such a manner.

These two books introduced their goals quite boldly, stating that they intend to mold the members of the HJ organization into proficient masters of the terrain who are able to properly execute orders in any type of environment. In order to accomplish this, the youths’ training encompassed the art of terrain utilization and recognition, camouflage, scouting positions, and providing security for their own positions. After learning these skills, the youth participated in Geländespielen (terrain games, but, in reality, they were war games), which were the “highest game the German boy has.” During these terrain games, the Wehrmacht and National Socialists believed that the youth had to apply everything they had learned in their field exercises and

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4 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 8, 66; and Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 1-11; Gerhard Rempel, Hitler’s Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 179.
combine it with their courage, chivalry, physical endurance, strength, cunning, and agility in order not only to defeat their opponent but to also learn from the exercise. They were, therefore, intended to improve the youths’ physical and mental dexterity, his decisiveness and boldness, and his ingenuity and cunning. These war games were ingenious; they not only taught the youth the appropriate way to operate in the field as an infantryman, but they also were popular with the youth because they appealed to their youthful desires. Gerhard Rempel also believed that the war games were a unique tool; he described them as follows:

Terrain games were in some ways a unique invention, designed to exploit a typical tendency in most young boys. What red-blooded seventeen-year-old could resist the chance to express his natural inclination in the company of cohorts to romp through forest and glen, searching for opponents, defending his territory, waylaying enemies, scuffling and wrestling in wild abandon? Loosely structured, terrain games tested what boys had learned about the use of terrain and encouraged fierce group conflict by having one group assault another with the object of capturing certain symbols of victory such as hat decorations, arm bands, or swagger sticks.... With “Indian-like maneuverability, cleverly camouflaged, with exploitation of even the smallest natural advantage, frequently through the application of a cunning sally” adept terrain gamesters out-foxed their opponents and in the process learned skills and techniques that any infantryman can appreciate.

These exercises were popular with the youth because they allowed them to compete with their peers, escape the authority of their parents (sometimes for prolonged periods of time), and to prepare for their future in the service. One member of the youth promised to spend time with his father on his last day of leave; instead, the boy decided to participate in a night-time war game because he enjoyed them so much.

One of the most significant aspects of the youths’ terrain training was clearly the war games (terrain games), but before the youth participated in these grand exercises, they must first learn the basics of field exercises in order to employ these skills and knowledge during the war game. Before the youth proceeded into the field for training, however, they had to attend a

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5 Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 1-10, 11; Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 66.
6 Rempel, Hitler’s Children, 182.
7 Herbst, Requiem for a German Past, 24.
preparatory meeting at a sand table; these tables were also used before each war game as they allowed the boys to assess the situation as a whole. The sand table was a large box, approximately two meters long, one-and-a-half meters wide, about chest high, and filled with river sand. The sand could be wetted and sculpted in such a way as to resemble a particular section of terrain (based on an established scale); the box also included other noticeable features, such as miniature trees, buildings, and infrastructure, which could be drawn with chalk or created and painted by the boys as a sort of hobby. Additionally, the box had holes cut into the sides so a boy, who was sitting, could obtain an “eye-level” view—as opposed to the “bird’s eye view” provided by looking down at the table. The youth utilized these tables before every field exercise and war game because it permitted the youth to learn what was expected of them, familiarized the youth to the terrain they would be operating in, and allowed the instructor to address common pitfalls before the group went into the field, thus maximizing their time in the field while also training the boys in the art of coup d’oeil. Furthermore, during times of inclement weather these tables were used in lieu of actual field training because the youths’ terrain education took precedence over poor weather. The sand table was seen as a vital part of the youth’s education and Geländeaufgaben went so far as to state that a HJ Heimabend (home evening) without a sand table “must soon be an impossibility.”

The members of the Hitlerjugend were taught that the terrain greatly affected shooting by elevating the shooter, hindering line of sight, or by providing cover. Therefore, one of the first field exercises the youth were taught was terrain description and analysis—based on coup d’oeil.

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8 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 66.
9 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 66-68.
10 German Training Methods: A Study of German Military Training (Washington, D.C.: German Military Documents Section, Allied Intelligence Study, 1946), 91; Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 109-111; and Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 66-68.
11 Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 109.
The main goal of this type of training was to ensure that the youth could properly identify sectors of terrain and to describe the sector in “concise, correct and well-constructed sentences.” The secondary goal was to certify that the youth could analyze the terrain—to know the advantages and disadvantages of each type of terrain offered in terms of maneuverability and weapon usage. Since these skills would be useful later during the war games and during their time in the Wehrmacht, it was recommended that this training be undertaken in the smallest possible groups—either fire teams or squads—so that each boy received adequate time and instruction during the exercise. The boys were also advised to perform these exercises in every body position—laying prone, kneeling, and standing—as the terrain appeared differently depending on the eye-level of the observer.

By the end of their training, the boys were able to identify numerous terrain forms from three main categories: soil increases, ground wells, and floor coverings. Soil increases included features such as hills, waves, cliffs, saddles, and mountains; ground wells consisted of defiles, troughs, valleys, gorges, and cauldrons; and floor coverings included brush, hedges, cleared fields, and meadows. Additionally, the youth learned to identify the different types of forests (deciduous, coniferous, and mixed forests), soils (loam, clay, sand, lime, peat, rock, stone), trees (oak, beech, alder, pine, spruce, birch, mixed forest, orchards, etc.), waters (stream, river, stream, canal, lake, pond, sea, marsh), and infrastructure (road, dirt road, path, dam, railway, village, city, factory, barn, farm, etc.). Armed with this knowledge, the boys possessed the ability to accurately survey a sector of terrain and later describe it to the commander—a skill that would be vital to those destined to become reconnaissance scouts. These lessons also taught the boys how

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12 German Training Methods, 91.
13 German Training Methods, 91; and Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 69.
14 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 72.
15 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 72.

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to utilize the terrain features; for instance, they learned not to walk to the crest of a hill because they will be backlit and thus easily identified. With this knowledge, the scouts knew how to approach locations undetected, which provided even more reconnaissance to the commander. After being briefed by the scouts, the commander, who had similar knowledge, could order his troops to either attack the opponent from a favorable position or to establish a defensive position in an adequate location.

Along with their instructions on terrain analysis and description, the youth were taught to use a map. Although this skill was not directly premilitary in nature, the map usage of the Hitler Youth encroached into premilitary realms—if not in training, then in purpose. During their map lessons, the youth were exposed to topographical maps that resembled the maps used by the military—in fact, the maps employed during their terrain games even had military-styled markings for the troops and lines depicting their lines of advance.\(^\text{16}\) From these maps, the youth identified the various types of terrain, which they had learned in their terrain description lessons. By being able to recognize the terrain on the map, the youth could quickly—and accurately—locate themselves on the map and plot a course to their destination. To assist the youth in reading a map, they learned to orient themselves—which included the use of a compass, the sun, a clock, and even the stars.\(^\text{17}\) The ability to orient themselves and use a map were undoubtedly useful for the HJ’s camping and hiking trips, but it was also useful for the war games that the youth participated in later in their Hitlerjugend careers as well as during their inevitable service in the Wehrmacht.

After acquiring the ability to recognize different geographical features and to read a map, the youth were exposed to one of their more important lessons: the utilization of terrain to one’s'}
advantage through reinforcement and deception. The Wehrmacht had learned from the Great War, and later from their experiences in the Second World War, that utilizing terrain was essential for reducing the number of casualties as well as increasing the effectiveness of their own firepower. The National Socialists (likely spearheaded by the Wehrmacht), therefore, were determined to train the youth in the use of the spade as early as possible.\textsuperscript{18} During these lessons, the boys were taught to “dig in” and to fortify their positions, which included digging fox holes, establishing dummy trenches and positions, and reinforcing their positions with mounds of earth.\textsuperscript{19} While the Hitler Youth conducted most of these lessons outside of combat zones, in a non-threatening area, the progression of the war forced the National Socialists to utilize more and more of the civilian population to aid with the war effort. In regard to the HJ’s spade training, some groups of boys were ordered to fortify and reactive particular defensive positions. One such case involved Alfons Heck’s group who received orders to head to the Westwall to dig numerous trenches and anti-tank ditches for the Wehrmacht.\textsuperscript{20} While this occurred late in the war, it nevertheless demonstrated that the National Socialists did not mind employing youth in the war effort; it also indicates that the youth learned enough during their field exercises to be militarily valuable—at least in regard to fortifying positions.

While learning to “dig in” and to utilize the spade were important for the longevity of the soldiers, the boys were taught from the beginning that the most effective measures incorporated a combination of spade use and camouflage—which was defined by Kriegsausbildung as the exploitation of both natural and artificial means to make it either impossible or difficult for the enemy to detect oneself.\textsuperscript{21} The members of the HJ learned to use twigs, grass, straw, earth,

\textsuperscript{18} German Training Methods, 92; and Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 96, 102.
\textsuperscript{19} Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 102.
\textsuperscript{20} Heck, A Child of Hitler, 92-110.
\textsuperscript{21} Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 96.
tarpaulins (or similar items), cloth, and face paint to camouflage themselves in the environment. Throughout these lessons, the manual continually stressed three points: first, that incorrect and bad camouflage, instead of blending in, attracts the attention of the opponent, and thus must be avoided at all costs; second, that careless motion, speaking, reflective materials, and light sources must be avoided as they can ruin even the best camouflage; thirdly, that the boys need to camouflage themselves from the front as well as from the sides and top. While these three principals proved important for the effective and proper use of camouflage, they were not the only principles that the manuals attempted to teach the boys. Another significant lesson that the members of the Hitlerjugend had to learn concerned the role that lighting plays in camouflage; if a camouflaged person has a light source, such as the sun, behind him, he becomes backlit, making it easier for an observer to detect movement. Similarly, positioning oneself in a bright area or an area with light-colored undergrowth should also be avoided. Summarizing these points, Kriegsausbildung provided a simple synopsis: always use the shadows, avoid sunlit places, seek dark backgrounds, and avoid bright backgrounds. The effective use of camouflage was reliant on the correct use of lighting, but it also required the use of natural materials. However, the use of inappropriate materials undermines even the best attempts at camouflage. The boys were taught, for example, that using straw to camouflage oneself can be effective, but not if the person operates in grass or an unplowed field. Using natural materials such as grass and twigs, however, proved problematic as they quickly faded in the sun; they must, therefore, be replaced frequently. Lastly, the youth were taught that perfect camouflage often required the

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22 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 97.
23 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 97-98.
24 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 97-98.
use of the spade to move and alter the earth—though they must remember that recently moved earth was easy to detect and the boys should take care to not let this be seen.  

Lastly, the youths learned to assess the terrain, which they had encountered during their terrain description and analysis lessons. These lessons were intended to teach the youth to maneuver unseen by taking advantage of camouflage and the terrain. The boys learned that a proper terrain assessment began with the consultation of a map. By first examining a map, the youth were able to understand the “lay of the land” as well as to quickly draw conclusions about certain features, such as hills and forests. Next, the boy surveyed the land with his own eyes. After this, he ascertained the advantageous and disadvantageous components of the terrain. He then combined this information with the knowledge gained from the map, and created a plan of action that utilized this knowledge, as well as any possible camouflage, in order to accomplish his mission—whether it be scouting the enemy position, surveying a route for his squad, or simply to establishing an observation post. The skills the boys acquired in their camouflage and deception training centered on making the boys impossible or difficult to detect as well as providing them with the knowledge of maneuvering in the terrain without being discovered.

While map reading, and to an extent terrain description and analysis, was not inherently premilitary, it is difficult to disprove that these covert skills lacked a military element. Besides hunting, there is no practical, non-military activity that requires this kind of knowledge. This suggests that the National Socialists had military plans for the members of the Hitlerjugend and it also foreshadows the type of terrain games the youth participated in.

Before the youth participated in the field games, however, they had to learn two more vital skills: estimating the distance to a target and relaying messages. Distance estimation was an  

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25 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 97.  
26 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 109-110.
important skill and played a major role in many of the HJ activities and terrain games. In order for the youth to be able to estimate the distance to a target, he must first be able to quickly and correctly identify a target. For this, the youth were led into a sector of land and ordered to locate an object, such as the building with a red door and an open window on the second floor, or a tree, with no leaves, which lays a thumb’s width to the left of the hill in the right third of the sector. Once the youth accurately identified the target(s), he then memorized the image of the target so that he could later draw an accurate picture—which was a beneficial skill for reconnaissance troops.\textsuperscript{27}

After learning how to identify a target, the youth were taught to approximate the distance to the target. The boys learned two main methods for estimating distances: through comparison and through stacking. An evaluation based on comparison required the youth to inspect the target and recall a previous distance in order to gauge the new distance. A stacking estimation involved recalling a previously known distance and continually stacking these intervals until the youth reached the intended target.\textsuperscript{28} In order to accomplish such estimations, the youth had to first commit to memory standard distances so that they had a reference point from which to base their estimations; the youth had to memorize daily distances as well as fifty, one-hundred, and two-hundred meters. Additionally, they had to learn to identify a person at long distances (200, 400, and 600 meters).\textsuperscript{29} Distance appraisal was not easy nor was it straightforward; it was affected by a number of factors: the type of the terrain, the lighting (sunlight, moonlight, or overcast conditions), the time of day, the weather, and the target itself (is it in undergrowth, does the background make it hard to see, is it camouflaged, is it moving?). Lastly, they eye-level of the observer affected approximations. Because of these factors, if was vital that the youth

\textsuperscript{27} Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 89-90.
\textsuperscript{28} Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 92.
\textsuperscript{29} Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 90-91.
receive extensive practice estimating distances as well as performing these exercises in all the body positions (laying prone, kneeling, and standing—although laying prone was stressed the most), in all different types of terrain (fields, forests, from hills, etc.), in various kinds of weather and lighting, and during different times of the day. 30 By the end of their training, the youth were expected to be able to accurately identify a given target and to estimate the distance to it. During their terrain games, this skill was invaluable as it allowed the reconnaissance scouts to explore the region ahead and to report their findings to the commander. It also allowed the commander to plan troop movement if they intended to cover the distance by a specified time. Similarly, these situations likely appeared again in the military as reconnaissance troops were required to scout enemy positions and commanders had to create plans and coordinate with other troops in a timely manner.

It was important for the members of the Hitler Youth to learn how to approximate distances, but this information became irrelevant if the observer was unable to relay this information to the proper person. Therefore, another skill that was crucial for the HJ terrain games—and later, within the Wehrmacht—was constructing and delivering messages. Throughout their time in the Hitler Youth—not just during their field training—the boys were continually subjected to Meldewesen (communications) as they were taught how to receive and report messages to their superiors or inferiors. The boys soon learned that each message, either written or oral, was to answer the following questions: when was something done (when was the enemy spotted), who or what (who or what was seen), how (how was the enemy spotted), and where (where was the enemy spotted)? Additionally, if it was a written message, it had to include when the message left, where the message was sent from, who was dispatching the message, how it was to be delivered (messenger, cyclists, etc.), and the name and address of the

30 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 89-91, 96.
recipient. It was also important that the boys learned to differentiate, and clarify, between what was known (from their personal observations) as well as what was pure conjecture—which must then be justified.\textsuperscript{31} Furthermore, the boys were warned against using ambiguous terms such as left, right, above, and below in their messages as these words were relative to the observer and were not accurate enough for the recipient of the message; instead, they were taught to use cardinal directions in their messages.\textsuperscript{32} Previously, it was discussed that the HJ officers were given minimal oversight and thus operated in a characteristically German militaristic way—the same can be said about their system of reporting messages. In the \textit{Wehrmacht}, officers were expected to employ short, concise sentences to relay information to other officers and to the enlisted men. Due to this staccato way of speaking, their messages sounded similar to a telegraph. Within the HJ, the boys were also taught to communicate via short, concise messages—exactly as the \textit{Wehrmacht} operated.\textsuperscript{33} This could have been a coincidence or a side-effect of the \textit{Hitlerjugend} being trained by \textit{Wehrmacht} liaison officers, but it is more likely that this was done intentionally—it behooved the \textit{Wehrmacht} for its incoming recruits to understand how to comprehend and give orders.

While creating and sending messages was a main element of the HJ’s communication training, it was not the only facet; the boys also learned hand gestures, which assisted them in their reconnaissance and security roles. When members of the security division—discussed later—found an opponent, they raised both arms into the air. This motion could be repeated many times to indicate the distance of the opponent; for example, if a boy raised his arms into the air five times, it told the rear observer that the enemy was spotted five-hundred meters away. The forward boys could also stretch their arm in a given direction to indicate from which

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{German Training Methods}, 92; and \textit{Kriegsausbildung der HJ}, 103.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Kriegsausbildung der HJ}, 103.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Kriegsausbildung der HJ}, 103.
direction they detected the enemy. If, however, no enemy could be seen and the area was
deemed clear, the forward security members could either pivot their hat on their head or wave it
above their head. 34 It was important for the HJ members to learn these hand signals because they
allowed the youth to relay important information silently and instantaneously—furthermore, they
were used repeatedly during their war games. During the majority of the war games,
commanders relied on the information gathered by their reconnaissance and security divisions,
which often made split-second decisions about whether or not to engage an enemy or had to
report their information in a timely manner. These hand gestures allowed the groups to
communicate over large distances without waiting for a messenger to make the trip between the
two locations.

The last component of the Hitler Youth’s field training—besides the terrain games—was
reconnaissance and security. Militarily speaking, both of these were important because every
company sent troops forward to scout out the area in front of it, ensuring that the company was
not surprised, ambushed, delayed, or became lost, and to screen the company’s movements.
While reconnaissance and security divisions may sound similar, the HJ’s instruction emphasized
the lack of similarity. Scouts were sent far ahead of the company (in good weather and visibility,
this could exceed three-hundred meters) and were tasked with continually exploring the terrain.
The security division, on the other hand, operated between fifty and three-hundred meters ahead
of the company and were tasked with listening for opponents, preventing the company from
walking into an ambush, and screening the movements of the company so that enemy
reconnaissance troops could not gain an accurate picture of the company. 35 Although these two
divisions had different objectives, both within the military and within the HJ, they will be

34 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 113-114.
35 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 113.
combined into one group for the purpose of this study as they both required the same skillset. Save for the war games the youth participated in, the tasks of the security divisions were the epitome of the *Hitlerjugend* field training. Members of the security divisions were expected to consistently detect an object (or an opponent), correctly draw conclusions about the object or opponent, such as their intended advance or the occupation status of a village, to exploit the terrain, through camouflage and terrain assessment, to move undetected, and most importantly, to relay this information back to the company—either by written and oral messages or through hand signals. These expectations tested all the knowledge that they boys had previously learned through their terrain lessons: their terrain assessment helped them to locate paths of ingress as well as to know what type of terrain they would operate in; their map reading and orienteering skills helped them stay on path and never get lost in the wilderness; their camouflage and deception training allowed them to move undetected; and their communication training allowed them to accurately report their findings.

In addition to these abilities, the boys were taught specialized skills that assisted them in their assigned tasks. Most of these tasks revolved around obtaining information about the land (so the company could advance) and locating and studying the enemy. Within the HJ, the boys were assigned a number of objectives that paralleled military operations: locate a village and report on its general situation—the occupation status, the approach routes, exit routes, main roads, and the water condition; explore a particular forest—does it have protruding corners which can conceal an approach, is it occupied, what sort of trees are in it, what is the undergrowth like, is it passable; report on a body of water—what direction does it flow, how strong is the current, how deep and wide is it, what condition are the banks, can it be waded, are

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36 *Kriegsausbildung der HJ*, 113.
there any fords or bridges? They were also taught how to detect the presence of an enemy by observing artificial and natural things. For instance, a church tower usually denoted a populated area, high chimneys indicated a factory, bridges in a meadow suggested a ditch or a brook, roads on both sides of a river meant that there was a ford or ferry, clouds of dust could indicate how fast a vehicle was traveling along a road, and flocks of birds or animals were usually a precursor to human activity in the region. Locating the enemy, however, was just half the assignment; once the boys discovered the opponent, they did not return to the company to provide a report; instead, they stayed in a hidden location and observed the opponent—for determining the enemy’s strength, patrol patterns, and guessing his plan of action potentially provided paramount information. Only after obtaining this information, did the boys send back a portion of their contingent to the main division to deliver a report. While these boys returned with the information, the remaining boys either continued to gather information on the opponent or bypassed the position and continued with their mission. During the observation of the enemy positions, the youths’ talents in camouflage and distance estimation were paramount. Their abilities in communications, map reading, and terrain assessment, however, did play a role in their observation, but they were more prevalent while the boys located the enemy. Because they utilized all the skills they learned during their field training, the reconnaissance troops not only epitomized the field training of the Hitler Youth—they were also vital during the HJ terrain games as commanders could not move their forces without the information provided by these groups.

One common perspective of the Hitler Youth is that they went on camping and hiking trips in the wilderness; while this is true, it was, however, not purely for the youths’ enjoyment.

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37 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 114.  
38 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 115.  
39 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 114.
Rather, it was done to strengthen the boy’s bodies, to harden them to the elements and a future life as a soldier. The boys were also subjected to a training regime that taught them the basics of field training. It is possible that the National Socialists wanted to teach these skills to the boys so that they could participate in the terrain games, which could be a way to boost morale and interest within the Hitlerjugend, but this is unlikely the case. As has already been discussed, the members of the HJ were able to learn specialized military skills within the Sondereinheiten and learned to shoot and maintain a weapon through collaboration with the Wehrmacht. These facts, combined with the fact that both the field training manuals were published by 1941, indicates that the National Socialists were interested in militarizing the Hitlerjugend (or at least familiarizing the youth with the military). If these manuals had been produced near the end of the war, when Germany relied heavily on the Volksstrum—or even after 1943 when Germany resorted to using members of the Hitlerjugend, called Flakhelfern, to man anti-aircraft batteries—it would have been possible that the manuals were intended to prepare the boys for the Volksstrum, but because they were published before the war began to turn on Germany, the most likely scenario is that the National Socialists wanted to prepare the youth for military service as well as reduce the time required for basic training.

While the previous skills had a military purpose in-and-of themselves, they had another purpose, for, “the aim of our terrain training is the Geländespiele (terrain game).”^40 These terrain games, which were in reality miniature war games, were overseen by referees and games masters, and were intended to test the youths’ field training. Because the individual field training was necessary for the proper execution of a terrain game, the boys were required to have performed adequately in the individual terrain training before they participated. Furthermore, before they participated in these large terrain games, the boys had to perform adequately in a

^40 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 128.
number of small terrain games; these were similarly structured to the larger terrain games, but the small terrain games tested only one particular set of skills—such as stalking, observation, communication, or camouflage—and often required fewer participants. The focus of these games did not emphasize a winner, but instead stressed the proper execution of the required skill set and fulfillment of the given task. The large terrain game, on the other hand, was considered to be a great success when each team worked extensively with reconnaissance troops and achieved their objectives while making sound decisions based on their field training. Each terrain game, weather large or small, had to be centered on an idea (securing and stowing equipment, occupying and evacuating, advancing and retreating, attacking and defending, locating and observing, etc.) and required a game master, referees, an opponent, a pre-game meeting as well as a post-game meeting. During the pre-game meeting, the game master addressed his referees and the two team leaders. He clearly described the intent of the game (what skills should be tested), the mission objectives and the tasks for the game, the time constraints (which the game master usually allowed twice as much time as should be needed because they were not to rush the participants), the zone of operation (which was not to be crossed and which was chosen based on the goals of the game), and the meeting site where the parties gathered at the end of the game. During the post-game meeting, the team leaders and referees provided a report on how the mission unfolded. When they finished, the game master gave his critiques of the game—although he was able to harshly berate the teams for failures, he was strongly advised to find something praiseworthy to say instead. These games were run very similar to how the Reichswehr, and later the Wehrmacht, ran their war games; this is no

41 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 128, 133.
42 Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 11-13; and Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 128, 133-134.
43 Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 11-13; and Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 133-134.
44 Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 13-14; and Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 134.
coincidence though. The National Socialists had military ambitions for the Hitlerjugend, it therefore makes sense that the capstone of their premilitary education would be similar to the capstone of the military’s basic education.

As previously mentioned, before the youth participated in the large terrain games, the youth had to first complete smaller war games—these were not only easier to schedule and hold, but they also tested one particular set of skills as opposed to numerous skill sets at once. The most common smaller games involved stalking, camouflaging, reporting messages, and reconnaissance patrol exercises. During the stalking exercise, the boys were divided into two groups that were differentiated by a colored ribbon on their arm or cap: red and blue. The red team was tasked with guarding two members of the blue team, preferably in a dense forest or a similar environment, by establishing a circular field post—approximately one-hundred meters in diameter. If a member of the red team spotted a member of the blue team, he was to call the blue member out, who was then forced to stand up—being effectively eliminated from the game. For the blue team to win, they had to release their two boys from their “cell” and escort them past the red cordon. In order to free the prisoners, one-fifth of the blue team (usually about three boys) had to make it to the prisoners; then, once they were freed, they had to escape outside the post—all without being detected.45 It is not difficult to conclude that this game was intended to test the boys’ ability to camouflage themselves, approach and operate undetected, and to effectively guard a position. It is also easy to see how this situation—or a similar one—might occur during wartime; thus, having the youth learn how to perform this objective would theoretically make them better suited to perform such duties in the military because they had been performing these tasks for years.

45 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 128-129.
Another common task was to test the boys’ ability to camouflage themselves. For this exercise, the HJ Führer led his boys into a predetermined location and told them that he was going to turn around for three minutes. At the end of the three minutes, he turned back around under the assumption that he should not be able to detect any of them. Once the leader turned back around, he attempted to find his boys; once the exercise was over, he briefed his group on what he observed and provided ways to improve. One flaw with this exercise concerned the duration; the boys were given three minutes to quickly move away from their leader, find a suitable location, and then to camouflage themselves. This did not leave much time for thinking, though perhaps that was the purpose of the exercise—to test the instincts of the boys since the stalking exercise would have already tested their ability to remain undiscovered. Either way, it is clear that the National Socialists wanted their youth to be trained to conceal themselves from enemy observation. This would lend to them being scouts in the Wehrmacht; what the National Socialists did not count on, however, was that this training greatly assisted the youth during the late days of the war when many of them laid in wait with a Panzerfaust (armor fist, the German equivalent to the American bazooka) to halt the advance of Allied tanks.

Another small terrain game that the youth had to master before they participated in the large field games focused on communication. For this exercise, the HJ group, which resembled a ten man squad, was divided into two groups: red and blue. Red team consisted of a leader and a field team, comprised of a leader and two boys, while the blue team consisted of the remaining four to five boys. The red leader positioned himself approximately two-hundred meters behind his field team, which ideally was located on a hill. The blue team either formed a reconnaissance

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46 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 129-130.
team and scouted the region before the red team, or they established a field post within sight of the red team. Then, for the next two-and-a-half hours, the red field team continually observed the blue team, periodically sending a messenger back to their leader, relaying all the information they had gained. This game provided a dual lesson: first, the blue team reinforced their lessons that pertained to camouflage, reconnaissance, and security while the red team reinforced their camouflage, observation, and communication skills. Furthermore, this exercise, along with stalking, had distinctly militaristic applications as it is vital for a commander to have accurate, up-to-date information on a target before he makes any decisions.

The last common, small terrain game was the reconnaissance patrol. For this exercise, the boys were again divided into two groups: red and blue. Ideally, the HJ Führer found a section of terrain with a forest, a road intersection, and a hill that overlooked them both. The two teams started an equal distance away from the forest with the goal of occupying the forest and the intersection. Before the team could occupy these places, they must first use reconnaissance troops to scout the path ahead as well as to determine if the location was already occupied. If occupied, the boys had to assault the location in order to obtain the position. During the exercise, the reconnaissance troops continually remained in contact with their leader (every quarter of an hour) as well as notified him of their current position. At the end of the two-and-a-half to three-hours allotted for this exercise, it did not matter who had first occupied the two locations, what mattered instead was that the reconnaissance troops proceeded properly, observed acceptably, and reported correctly. As with a number of the other small terrain games, this game tested the boys’ ability to maneuver undetected and to not only properly scout an area but to also relay this information back to the headquarters. This game was the most

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48 *Kriegsausbildung der HJ*, 131.
49 *Kriegsausbildung der HJ*, 132-133.
similar to the larger terrain games in its structure as it involved two groups maneuvering and vying for positions. Furthermore, this game was very militaristic in nature as each battalion, company, platoon, and/or squad relied on scouting prior to their movements to ensure they were not flanked or to avoid encountering an opponent unknowingly.

After completing their individual field training and participating in a number of the smaller terrain games, the youth were finally able to partake in the crowning jewel of the Hitler Youth field training: the large terrain game. As mentioned previously, these games were run very similarly to how the Reichswehr and Wehrmacht ran their war games: they included a clearly defined purpose, two opponents, an area of terrain in which to operate, referees to observe the troops as well as ensure they did not exceed the boundaries or violate the rules, and were conducted in a military fashion. These games were intended to test the youths’ skills in everything they had learned during their field training as well as prepare them for a future in the Wehrmacht. Both Geländeaufgaben and Kriegsausbildung der HJ described numerous war games (often in minute detail) that the youth could perform or use as a template to create their own, but as most of these games revolved around a similar purpose and tested similar skills, it is unnecessary to examine them all; therefore, a simple, yet thorough, overview of these games will serve for the purpose of this study.

One particular game focused around assaulting a fortified position, in which the attacking team utilized a feint to deplete the opponent’s reserve troops. For this game, the boys were divided into two teams: red and blue. The red team had just “raided” A-Dorf (a generic village name) and had retreated into a nearby forest, where they then set up camp and established a number of field posts to either warn the main camp of an approaching enemy or to prevent the enemy from approaching in the first place. The blue team, on the other hand, was in the vicinity
of A-Dorf when they received news of the raid and were tasked with locating and arresting the red team. For this game, the two teams were to attach a ribbon to either their cap or their bicep to indicate which team they were on; furthermore, the blue team was given a wooden baton—measuring forty centimeters long and approximately two-three fingers wide—with which they could defend themselves or attack the opponent. There is no mention of when a member of the red team is eliminated, though it can be assumed they are eliminated when they lose their colored ribbon, however, the mission clearly states that if a blue boy loses his baton, he is eliminated from the game.50

After describing the situation, Kriegsausbildung provided an example of how the game should unfold via a narrative—most likely to assist Hitler Youth groups that did not have a liaison officer assisting them or that did not have a leader trained at a NAPOLA or an Adolf Hitler School. Because of the lack of sources, it is currently not possible to ascertain how these games played out in reality; therefore, it is important to examine how the National Socialists intended these games to unfold. In the case of the current game, the red team started in A-Dorf with their leader and his lieutenants studying a map in an attempt to locate a suitable location to establish a fortified camp. After locating an appropriate place, the red team marched toward the location, making a large detour to prevent the blue team from knowing their path. While en route to the location, the red leader sent a number of scouting parties to see if the intended destination was indeed suitable.51 The blue team, on the other hand—after a delayed start that allowed the red team enough time to establish a camp—sent forth a number of reconnaissance teams to locate the enemy positions. These troops were warned against openly engaging the opponent, but if confrontation was inevitable, the scouts were to ensure it was conducted with stealth and

50 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 135.
51 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 136-137.
surprise. After receiving reports from his reconnaissance troops, the blue leader assessed the terrain and advanced toward the red camp in such a way that his progress was screened. Furthermore, the blue leader sent a small contingent to attack the red camp on its flank—attempting to draw out the red’s reinforcements. This game, if it was carried out like the training manual prescribed, would not only strengthen the boys’ bodies through physical exercise (and the fact that one team would be beaten with batons), it would also test the commanders’ ability to think tactically and the scouts’ ability to stay hidden while locating an enemy.

Another common war game the youth participated in was one that extensively tested the reconnaissance patrol’s abilities. As with the previous example, this war game will be examined from the perspective of the narrative the manual provided. This exercise began with a Hitlerjugend company spending the night in the town of Billen. The company wanted to proceed to Hill 210, which lay approximately 400 meters southwest of Ackern, in order to compete in a war game being held nearby; however, while staying in Billen the HJ Führer received word that the bridge at Lehen had been destroyed. Armed with this information, the leader called a reconnaissance patrol—consisting of one leader and three boys—to him and ordered them to depart at 0730 with the following objectives: first, advance toward Hill 210 and see where the Langbach river was passable and determine if the marsh past it was also traversable; second, to determine if the forest around Hill 210 had underbrush, and if so, if it was dense or sparse; third, can the city of Ackern be observed from the northern side of Hill 210? The patrol left at 0730, as scheduled, and progressed toward the Langbach river, searching for a ford where they could cross. The scouts found a suitable location, approximately 450 meters west of Lehen. They then

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52 Kriegsausbildung der HJ, 136-137.
53 Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 15-16.
sent one man back to the company stationed in Billen—so that the company could begin
marching toward Hill 210—while the remaining members of the patrol proceeded to Hill 210.
Upon reaching the hill and completing their mission, the reconnaissance patrol sent another
messenger back to the company with the following report: 1) Langbach was passable
approximately 450 meters west of Lehen, and both sides of the river were marshy but easily
traversable; 2) the forest to the southeast of Hill 210 contained spruce trees and no undergrowth,
and the visibility in the forest was about thirty meters; 3) Ackern was visible from the northern
edge of Hill 210; 4) We have attached white pieces of paper to tree branches marking the way to
our position on the hill; and 5) We will remain on Hill 210 and observe Ackern until the
company arrives.  

Perhaps the reconnaissance patrol war game does not belong with the larger war games
because it did not have two teams competing against each other or referees watching and
providing criticism to the boys. It did, however, have the other staples of a larger war game: it
took numerous hours to complete, relied heavily on reconnaissance troops to scout a path for
advance, had military styled orders and reports, and tested the boys’ field exercise abilities.
Despite the fact that there was no opponent to compete against, everything that this game offered
was performed in the other war games: the teams habitually sent out reconnaissance troops to
scout ahead and to provide information while advancing toward their final objective.
Furthermore, this war game depicts how a company could, perhaps should, reach the location for
war games because immediately after this example, the manual went on to describe another war
game in the vicinity of the first.

While the Hitler Youth company—presumably the same company from the previous
example—rested in the forest south of Hill 255 (south of Lehen), the commander received word

54 Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 16-18.
that an enemy was approaching the village of Marn and that they should be there by mid-afternoon. The commander, therefore, called reconnaissance patrol B, consisting of one leader and four boys, to him and gave the following order: first, advance to Lehen by way of Hill 255 and see if it was occupied; second, advance to Marn and determine the opponent’s strength, where their posts were, and the opponent’s defenses; lastly, remain on the northern edge of Lehen and observe Marn while sending a messenger back to report to me on Hill 255. Once Patrol B reached the top of Hill 255, the leader decided he could not advance directly north to Lehen because the northern slope of the hill was clearly visible from Lehen. He also noticed that the ground east of Lehen was protected by numerous hedgerows and undergrowth which his team could utilize to hide their advance. Based on this knowledge, he decided that his patrol should advance north-easterly, utilizing the hedgerows and undergrowth, and take the forest approximately two-hundred meters east of Lehen. As a precaution, he sent two boys one-hundred meters ahead of the patrol to act as a security division while the remaining three members slowly advanced. They made it to the forest and determined that it was clear; then, the two members of the security division were sent to Lehen to determine if it was occupied. Taking care to use the terrain to hide their approach, the two boys approached Lehen. Upon arriving, they did not detect any suspicious movement and waived their cap about their head—a nonverbal signal for “all clear.” Seeing this, the leader and his two boys examined the map and saw that two hills, one north and the other northeast of Marn, would provide excellent positions for observing Marn. Before they could move toward the hills, they saw an enemy reconnaissance team leave Marn in the direction of Lehen. One of the boys urged the commander to ambush the enemy, but the commander knew that this would be foolish—despite

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55 Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 18-23.  
56 Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 18-23.
having wooden batons—because they were outnumbered; furthermore, he knew that gathering information on the enemy was more valuable than attacking a reconnaissance patrol. While he observed the enemy, Patrol B’s two man security division advanced from Lehen to the two hills, previously mentioned, near Marn. One of the boys signaled “all clear,” while the other indicated that he saw an opponent in a gravel-pit north of Marn. After receiving their intel, the leader of Patrol B composed a message and sent it to the company commander while the rest of his Patrol—including the two on the hills near Marn—stealthily advanced on Lehen to ambush the enemy reconnaissance patrol. Patrol B was successful in surprising the enemy and eventually overcame them—eliminating them from the game. This scenario stressed the importance of reconnaissance troops during the war games; the company commander needed to send his troops to determine if they could progress to Lehen. Patrol B accomplished this, but they also provided the company with the opponent’s location—the gravel pits north of Marn—and eliminated the enemy’s patrol.

The manual stopped the ideal scenario after the enemy reconnaissance patrol was defeated though it is likely—based on the other games in the book—that the main company, after receiving Patrol B’s intelligence, would have advanced toward the gravel-pit and engaged the enemy in close-quarters combat with wooden batons. The training manuals include numerous other war games, such as the Kampf (struggle or fight) patrol, sweeping advances, retreats, and even meeting engagement simulations; however, this particular war game epitomizes the war games of the Hitlerjugend. The youth were divided into two groups, occasionally armed with wooden batons (other times relying on their unadulterated physical strength and fighting prowess), and were given a broad objective—in this case, to occupy and secure Marn. Then, the

57 Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 18-23.
58 Remold, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitlerjugend, 18-23.
commander studied his map and created a war plan while sending out reconnaissance patrols to gain intelligence on the enemy as well as scout a path for the company’s advance. The boys also made use of topographical maps, similar to military maps, to orient themselves, plan a march, decide how best to obtain intelligence, and to plan where to attack or defend from. These types of war games tested and honed the boy’s field training exercises as the participants assessed the terrain for advantages, camouflaged themselves and stalked through the wilderness, estimated distances, and communicated numerous orders. It is possible to argue, although persuasively is doubtful, that the work of the Sondereinheiten was nothing more than a way to increase moral within the Hitlerjugend and to increase interest in the HJ work; however, the field training that the youth went through could only have one purpose: to train the youth in military and premilitary skills. These boys, who were trained in the fundamentals of basic training, were destined for service either in the Wehrmacht or in the Volksstrum. The National Socialists, therefore, desired to prepare the youth for their future—and by doing so, created a better soldier.
CHAPTER 7

WEHRERTÜCHTIGUNGSLAGERN

Before the war, and to an extent during the war, the National Socialists claimed that they were not teaching the youth anything with military value—although this study has argued against that line of thought; after 1942, with the creation of the Wehrertüchtigungslagern (Military Training Camps, WELs), they were no longer able to make this claim. Near the end of 1942, Adolf Hitler, likely with some persuasion from the Wehrmacht (Germany’s Armed Forces), decided that Germany’s youth were not adequately prepared for war and that they needed more training.¹ This, in and of itself, suggests that despite the HJ’s work with the Sondereinheiten and the field training, the youth were not as receptive to it as the leaders had wanted. It is also possible, that due to the lack of qualified instructors—which was only exacerbated by the fact that Baldur von Schirach refused to let non HJ personnel have direct influence over the youth—the Hitler Youth was not able to meet the National Socialists’ expectations. The most likely answer, however, is that both are correct. Regardless of why Hitler decided to establish the WELs, the fact remains that in 1942 he did order their creation.

These WELs were to be staffed by a combination of HJ leaders, young commissioned and noncommissioned officers (NCOs), as well as a few enlisted men, and were intended to provide a three-week course in military education—focusing on field training. Most of the instructors were supplied by the Heer (Army), but some were provided by the Schutzstaffel (Protection Squad, or SS); regardless of which military branch they belonged to, nearly all the instructors had been enlisted within the HJ while they were younger and had sustained combat injuries which prevented them from performing frontline duties. Additionally, the WELs were

¹ German Training Methods: A Study of German Military Training (Washington, D.C.: German Military Documents Section, Allied Intelligence Study, 1946), 92.
originally intended to provide the older boys of the Hitler Youth with a condensed form of basic training, whereupon completion they were to transfer straight to the Wehrmacht. This quickly ceased and the camps were transformed into a military preparedness course for all older HJ boys, whereupon completion they would earn their War Training Certificate of the Hitler Youth, as opposed to entering the service. As these were intended to train the entire HJ, the National Socialists provided free transportation to and from the WELs, accident and health insurance, and free medical treatment—which closely modeled the structure and system implemented in basic training. At the camps, the youth were “trained in handling carbines, hand grenades, and later also the recoilless antitank grenade launcher (Panzerfaust). Toward the end of the war, special stress was laid on patrol activity and antitank combat.” One particular youth provided a unique—not to mention rare—insight into the type of training the boys were subjected to at the camps:

The weeks at Rodewald were cold, wet, and miserable. We sixteen year-old recruits were drilled in the basics of infantry combat…. We were sent out day and night through swampy meadowlands that made us sink knee-deep into mud. Every ditch, hidden under snow-crusted ice, had us plunge into freezing water. We were taught how to storm make-believe enemy trenches with drawn bayonets and how to fire bazookas [Panzerfaust] at haystacks. We were doused with tear gas and sent through the billowing clouds, sometimes crawling and sometimes running full speed, with our gas masks on our faces until our lungs gave out and we collapsed in the icy mud. Our barracks were cold, and we suffered from diarrhea and fevers. American bombers high above us drew their contrails across the sky. When their accompanying fighters appeared and engaged in aerial combat with German jet planes, we pressed our bodies in the water-soaked icy grass to avoid detection and being strafed. Our drill sergeants assured us that this was but child’s play compared with what awaited us on the front.  


3 Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 183.

4 German Training Methods, 92.

Besides the obvious combat-oriented skills, these camps also included lessons in areas such as parade drill, military courtesy, physical exercise, first aid, and ideological indoctrination.\(^6\) Therefore, these camps were not overly novel to the youth; instead, they were a repetition (and sometimes an elevation) of what they had already been learning—or supposed to be learning—within the HJ. This becomes more apparent when combined with the WELs’ original purpose: to give the boys of the HJ a condensed course of military skills. It would be impossible to condense basic training to three weeks and expect the youth to adequately learn it; however, this was not necessary as the youth had already learned many of the skills required of them. These camps were simply refresher courses for the youth before they enlisted in the service.\(^7\) When the National Socialists shifted from requiring the youth to enlist directly after completion of the three weeks to earning their certificate, the purpose of the WELs shifted as well; it became a quick way to train individual boys in the necessary skills, which, when combined with Geländeaufgaben and Kriegsausbildung, would allow the youth to train their peers—which became increasingly necessary after 1942 when the Wehrmacht could no longer provide the HJ with sufficient liaison officers. Furthermore, this system of peers training peers suggests that the National Socialists were thinking of the long-term use of the youth. By utilizing this system, the WELs could become increasingly unnecessary as the entire HJ organization received training similar to the training offered at the camps. This, in turn, would free up the personnel of the camps who could then directly assist in the war effort.

With the current sources, it is impossible to determine how many members of the HJ actually read, applied, or were even taught the premilitary skills presented in the training manuals; however, it is possible to determine approximately how many boys attended the WELs,

\(^6\) Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 185.
\(^7\) Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 177.
and therefore to obtain an estimate of how many boys did undergo premilitary training—at least in the latter half of the war. By the end of 1943—one year after the WELs were established—there were 226 camps in operation. Furthermore, these camps awarded approximately 361,500 war training certificates; by the March 1944, this number had risen to approximately 437,500.⁸ While this is not a large number or even a large percentage of the organization’s boys, it is respectable in the fact that the National Socialists were able to train nearly half a million boys in premilitary skills in less than two years; this is even more remarkable than it first appears because the National Socialists managed to accomplish this during the end of the war when the Wehrmacht was severely stretched and did not have the personnel to oversee HJ activities.

Therefore, despite the limitations that the National Socialists faced, they put forth a valiant effort with the creation of the WELs, or as Gerhard Rempel argued: “roughly 10 percent of the boys went through the training experience without mastering the basic skills required to graduate ‘with results.’ But on the whole the WELs had turned out to be a successful way to implement universal premilitary training for Germany’s adolescent population.”⁹

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⁸ Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitary Organization,” 184-185; Kater, Hitler Youth, 196-197; and Rempel, Hitler’s Children, 185. Ideally, we could put this number into perspective of the percentage by relating it to the number of HJ members. This, however, is not currently possible. Good estimates state that the organization numbered approximately nine million boys, aged ten to eighteen, but there is not enough data to estimate the number of boys aged sixteen to eighteen—the intended age range for the WELs. If the nearly nine million members of the HJ were evenly distributed between the JV and the HJ, then nearly ten percent of the HJ members would have received their certificate; however, as only half the boys of the HJ were theoretically eligible for training in the WEL, this would suggest that nearly twenty percent had received their certificate—but this is pure mathematical speculation and should not hold weight.

⁹ Rempel, Hitler’s Children, 186; see also, Kater, Hitler Youth, 197.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

The National Socialists possessed grand visions of Germany’s future; they dreamed of a “thousand year Reich.” If they were to make this dream a reality, though, they would need to instill their Weltanschauung (ideology) in the German population so that once the current, ruling generation aged and passed on their positions, the new generation would strive to uphold their elders’ dreams. Furthermore, since these dreams required a racial restructuring of Germany and of Europe, as well as the forceful acquisition of Lebensraum (living space), it was important to ensure that Germany had a well-trained stock of men to sustain their military forces as these actions would inevitably lead to open conflict with Germany’s European neighbors. Therefore, if the National Socialists were to achieve their long-term goals, they had first to accomplish two shorter-term goals: first, re-educate the population with their ideology, and second, establish a training regimen in which to train eligible males. The National Socialists realized that German youth held the key to these two prerequisites; they could be indoctrinated through focused propaganda and prepared for military service through premilitary training.

When the National Socialists took control of Germany in 1933, Germany had an impressive educational system in place. Although they did eventually establish Adolf Hitler Schools (AHS) and Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten (National Political Institutes of Education, NPEA or more commonly NAPOLA), the National Socialists were more than willing to use the extant system. Shortly after gaining control of the state, the National Socialists began to ensure that the schools were equipped with proper teachers and teaching material, such as re-written primers and textbooks. With these materials, the schools began to inculcate the youth with various aspects of their Weltanschauung. The elementary school primers initiated this
process by introducing the children to stories revolving around the *Führer*, nationalism, militarism, and the Hitler Youth: the children began to see Adolf Hitler as a loving father figure whom they should strive to please, similar to how they strive to please their own father; they started to glorify the military institution and to emulate soldiers; and they became envious of the older children who were members of the Hitler Youth organization because they desired to join it as well. Each of these lessons was seen as vital to the National Socialists. If the youth saw the *Führer* as a father-figure, they would be likely to obey his orders and take up arms to defend the Reich. Additionally, since the children were trained to see the military as something to be celebrated and a soldier as something to be emulated, the youth were likely to enlist in the *Wehrmacht* (German Armed Forces) when they became of age—which, when combined with their love of the *Führer*, strengthened the idea that they would fight for and defend the country. Lastly, by building a desire to join the Hitler Youth in the children, they were all the more likely to join the organization on their tenth birthday. Once the children entered the organization, their ideological education was intensified as it began to touch on more central tenets of National Socialism—namely racial purity and territorial expansion. While these lessons were taught in the Hitler Youth, they were also taught concurrently within the middle and junior-high schools. The children were taught how genetics work, how a nation’s population could become polluted over time, and how the Jews could never become German. Furthermore, they learned that Germany needed to expand its borders if it wanted to solve many of its ailments and to grow in the future.

While the *Hitlerjugend* was undeniably useful in the youth’s indoctrination, it was not a necessary component as the school system was capable of also providing this education. The Hitler Youth did, however, offer a unique opportunity to the National Socialists: it allowed the
training of the youth in pre-military and military skills. The Hitler Youth was not one giant organization. Instead it was the aggregate of the Jungvolk, the Hitlerjugend, the Jungmädel, and the Bund deutscher Mädel; furthermore, the HJ was subdivided between the Allgemeine HJ and the Sondereinheiten. These Sondereinheiten were akin to special interest groups that provided the youth with a unique experience. Not only did these groups allow the youth to find like-minded peers to befriend—which raised morale and interest within the organization—but they also provided the National Socialists one of their major assets in their goal of preparing the youth for war. These groups taught youth the basics of a particular branch of the Wehrmacht, therefore, the boys would be qualitatively better than the regular recruit, which in turn would raise the quality of that branch—and by extension, the Wehrmacht.

As all the boys would not, and could not, enlist within the Sondereinheiten, the National Socialists had to instill military knowledge through the Allgemeine HJ—where the remaining boys were and where the majority of ideological indoctrination took place. While the boys of the Allgemeine HJ did not undergo highly specialized training and were not groomed for a particular branch of the service, they were nevertheless subjected to premilitary training. As many of the boys in the Allgemeine HJ were destined for the infantry, the National Socialists decided to train them in the skills most applicable to the infantry: marksmanship and field exercises. Through the Great War, the Heer (Army) learned that despite modern automatic weapons, marksmanship was still an important, if not necessary skill for the infantry. Because of this, the members of the HJ began marksmanship training shortly after they entered the JV; the younger boys learned to operate and shoot an air rifle while the older boys were given a small caliber rifle. Before the youth were able to head to the shooting range, however, they were required to undergo theoretical lessons which taught them the components of their rifles, rifle maintenance and
cleaning, the different shooting positions, and the fundamentals of ballistics. Although the boys’ training started with small rifles, they were eventually introduced to hand grenades, machine guns, and even the Panzerfaust (armor fist, the German equivalent to the American bazooka)—all of which they were expected to learn to handle and with which they were expected to become excellent shots.

However, being a good marksman alone does not make a good infantry soldier; therefore the members of the HJ were also rigorously trained in field training—which consisted of field exercises, small terrain games, and large terrain games. Through their field training, the boys were expected to master skills relevant to the infantry; they learned to maneuver and operate as a group ( akin to a squad, platoon, and even a company), to assess the advantages and disadvantages of different terrain elements, to use a map in order to locate themselves and to move to an objective, to camouflage themselves against both ground and aerial observation, to estimate distances, to communicate via written, oral, and non-verbal methods, and to be a member of a reconnaissance or security patrol. In addition to these skills, which they had to demonstrate in order to obtain their Leistungsabzeichen der Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth Performance Badge), the boys also learned how to operate in a military hierarchy—which had the added benefit of grooming the HJ leaders for positions as commissioned and noncommissioned officers (NCOs). While the Reichsjugendführung (Reich youth leadership, RJF) and the Wehrmacht had grand designs for the organization, they often operated in a manner akin to how the German army interacted with its officers: the officers were given an order and were expected to accomplish it, but how they managed it was almost entirely up to them. This gave the leaders a great amount of freedom, which could be a benefit on the battlefield, but when applied to the HJ often allowed the boys to counteract the National Socialists’ ideological
aspirations. Regardless of this, the HJ leaders did receive valuable experience in commanding others and in making tactical decisions—both of which made them ideal candidates for officer training.

After learning the basics of field exercises, boys had to demonstrate that they had mastered these skills before they could participate in the capstone of the HJ’s field training: terrain games. The youth participated in small, couple hour long, contained exercises which tested the youth in one particular skill set. Some games asked the youth to infiltrate an enemy position undetected in order to rescue two “prisoners,” another tasked the youth with effectively camouflaging themselves in a manner of minutes, and yet another had the boys perform continual reconnaissance on an enemy and relay the information to the commander. After demonstrating competence in these smaller games, the youth were able to participate in larger war games which operated very similarly to the Reichswehr’s and Wehrmacht’s war games. The National Socialists provided the HJ with numerous examples of these war games in their training manuals, Geländeaufgaben für die Hitler-Jugend and Kriegsausbildung der HJ, but there were nearly infinite possibilities for these games. Regardless of the games’ objectives, they all had similar characteristics which tested and reinforced the youth’s premilitary skills; these games were designed to simulate the operation of platoons and companies. Each team had a team leader who acted as a commander: analyzing incoming intelligence, creating a plan of action, and issuing orders to his subordinates. Before the commander could make any decisions, however, he had to send reconnaissance teams into the field to discover a path for advance as well as to locate and study the enemy. These reconnaissance troops had to utilize all their previous field training lessons to perform their duty and remain undetected while the commander had to make sound decisions based on the reconnaissance troops’ information.
While the HJ’s field training and war games trained the entire organization in premilitary skills and prepared the youth for a career as a soldier, it was decided that this was not enough—or that it was not happening fast enough, and Hitler ordered the creation of *Wehrertüchtigungslagern* (Military Training Camps, WELs). These camps, which were staffed by a combination of HJ leaders and officers—including NCOs—who had previous experience in the HJ and who had been injured in combat and thus could not return to the frontlines, were intended to be a three-week refresher course for the older boys before sending them off to the *Wehrmacht*. Shortly after their creation, however, they stopped restricting their cadets to those who were to immediately enter active duty and instead became a place where HJ boys could receive intensive training akin to modern infantry training. Here, the boys were exposed to all the things that their field training was intended to teach them; they learned to maneuver in a group, to camouflage themselves, to compose and relay messages, to maintain and shoot a variety of weapons, and were physically pushed to extremes.

Taken individually, these aspects provide an unclear picture as to what the National Socialists’ intentions were in regard to the *Hitlerjugend*, however, when these elements are taken together, the picture becomes clearer: the National Socialists wanted to indoctrinate youth with their *Weltanschauung* and to militarize the German youth by training the children in premilitary skills. To accomplish these tasks, they utilized the Hitler Youth. This picture, however, is not crystal clear yet. The current state of scholarship on the *Hitlerjugend* prevents a clearer picture from being formed: there are currently no studies that examine the effectiveness of this training—or known surveys of *Wehrmacht* and youth—and there is a general dearth of scholarship. This study has attempted to close this gap in the scholarship while also opening the door for a future study into the *effectiveness* of the premilitary training; additionally, this study
has attempted to show that the Hitler Youth organization was indeed exposed to premilitary training—despite the lack of sources and the survivors’ reluctance to mention it. In fact, the unanimous omission of this sort of training should not blind us to the undeniable reality that such intensive military training occurred in special units as well as the Allgemeine Hitlerjugend.

While this study does not seek to examine the effectiveness of the Hitler Youth’s ideological indoctrination or the premilitary training, but because it can be said, with a degree of certainty, that the National Socialists dreamed—and attempted to achieve said dream—of militarizing the German youth as a way preparing them for service in the Wehrmacht, it is important to make a quick statement about the effectiveness of this training. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, a joint committee of American, British, and Canadian staff members was formed to analyze captured Wehrmacht documents. Their conclusions, discussed below, have been largely ignored—or at the very least, accepted without questioning—by the scholarship of the Hitler Youth. In their examination of the HJ, the committee reached mixed conclusions. On one hand, they stated that “valuable preliminary work was done for the Armed Forces,” and that any deficiency in training was due to the fact that the Wehrmacht desired to keep a safe distance from the HJ and that they refused to become intertwined with the HJ because traditionally, the German Officer Corps, and the military, was apolitical and did not like to become engaged in politics.¹ On the other hand, however,

the HJ leaders responsible for training, who were often inexperienced and too young to hold such posts were apt to draw up schedules for military training which demanded achievement far beyond youthful capabilities. Furthermore, they lacked the necessary experience to carry out these training programs effectively. In consequence, their efforts often resulted in aimless drilling and in playing at soldiers, a state of affairs completely at variance with the ideas of the Armed Forces.²

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¹ German Training Methods, 97.
² German Training Methods, 97.
This, they claimed, had detrimental effects on the premilitary efforts of the National Socialists. They believed that the general education in the HJ had already predestined the boys to be arrogant and to believe they knew better than their elders—which has since been documented by scholars—but when combined with the premilitary education, the youth were prone to disagreements with their training officers and that “they started their military careers convinced that they already knew everything required of them, possibly even better than the standards demanded.”

Because of this, instead of decreasing the time required in basic training, the Wehrmacht had to spend more time training the boys because they had to “break down their arrogance, especially in the case of leaders who while still comparatively young, had occupied high positions often entailing responsibility for thousands of boys. Attempts to do this, however, frequently ended in failure.”

Furthermore, since the National Socialists were never able to standardize the premilitary training, the boys who were drafted into the service demonstrated varying degrees of aptitude, which again increased training time. Despite these criticisms, the committee concluded that

In spite of these drawbacks, it cannot be denied that—particularly in the last years of war—the war training in the HJ was a good preparation for routine duty in the Armed Forces, especially when work with the special units was concerned. By the time the boys who had passed through this training were drafted into the Armed Forces, they had developed a resistant and hardened physique. Moreover, in certain branches of training, they were so advanced that it was only necessary to give them a short refresher course in these subjects when they entered the Armed Forces (general bearing, discipline, rudiments of outdoor training, map reading, etc.) As a result, a considerable amount of time was saved and the young recruits could be given a more thorough training in other subjects or sent to the front before conclusion of their basic training.

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4 German Training Methods, 97.

5 German Training Methods, 97. See also, Schroeder, “The Hitler Youth as a Paramilitry Organization,” 203-204; and Koch, The Hitler Youth, 238-239.
It is undeniable that the National Socialists encountered setbacks while attempting to prepare the entire male youth population for a future of war and of soldering. Another setback they faced was the fact that the youth entered the Hitler Youth at different times; some before the Sondereinheiten (special groups) were formed or before the training manuals were produced. As such, the vast majority of the youth did not go through the entire prescribed regime either before they entered the service or before the war was over. An entirely different study—in terms of sources and methodology—is necessary to ascertain the overall effectiveness of the training.

What is argued in this thesis is that, based on the thoroughness of the manuals and the HJ exams—and on the opinions of the joint staff committee—it is clear that the youth were given ample military and field training and were physically hardened for military service. They emerged from this military training with a sound understanding of weapons, field maneuvers, and various tasks of a soldier.

This thesis, therefore, has examined the hitherto unexamined yet assumed perception that the Hitlerjugend was a paramilitary organization. It also re-examined the well-studied, and well known, aspect of the organization’s ideological indoctrination in terms of its relation to the militarization of the youth. This reevaluation of such a basic assumption of the youth has indeed affirmed that the youth was paramilitary in nature; however, it also discovered that the Hitler Youth was much more than a paramilitary institution—it was a premilitary institution. The Hitler Youth was tasked with two important goals: first, to indoctrinate the youth in the National Socialist Weltanschauung, which, with its focus on militarism and nationalism, sought to convince the youth to join the Wehrmacht; and second, to instill valuable premilitary and military skills in the youth in preparation for their future military service. This thesis, then, has supported the prevalent assumption in the historiography of the HJ, but it has also advanced the
scholarship by arguing that the National Socialists had further-reaching plans for the youth than simply organizing them along a military hierarchy and instilling their twisted version of Social Darwinism. Instead, they desired to create a cadre of youthful males who were able to quickly, and more importantly, adequately bolster the ranks of the Wehrmacht with partially trained personnel. Ultimately, this distinction between being premilitary rather than the previously assumed paramilitary may appear to be an argument of terminology, but in the study of the HJ it is significant because labeling the organization paramilitary downplays the National Socialists’ plans for the organization. Instead, by correctly identifying, and labeling, the organization as premilitary, it becomes possible to see the National Socialists’ intentions for the youth as well as to gain a new perspective into the regime’s attempts to militarize the society at large.

This, in turn, opens doors to future inquires which are beyond the scope of this study. One of the biggest questions which future studies must examine is that of effectiveness. Did the image the National Socialists promulgated via their training manuals and HJ literature match what the youth were actually taught and experienced? How effective was the indoctrination and propaganda at persuading the youth to volunteer in the Wehrmacht or to join the Hitlerjugend? Did the indoctrination of the elementary schools actually convince the youth to join the ranks of the Hitler Youth? Did the indoctrination within the HJ heighten the desire to enlist or to become enthusiastic supporters of the regime? And if so, how does this contribute to the ongoing debate of the population’s complacency and culpability in the Third Reich’s crimes? How effective was the premilitary training? Were the members of the Sondereinheiten better prepared for their future in the special branches of the Wehrmacht than recruits who were not members of these groups? Were the members of the HJ able to master military skills quicker than other soldiers? Did they perform better either in basic training or on the battlefield when compared to non-HJ
members? Hopefully these—and other yet unasked—questions will be the subject of future studies, but presently, this thesis has facilitated the emergence of a clearer, and more accurate, image of the *Hitlerjugend* from the relatively silent scholarship. The resultant image is one of an organization designed to not only indoctrinate the German youth, but also to prepare them for a future of struggle and strife by instilling valuable premilitary skills in them prior to their stint in the *Wehrmacht*. 
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