

# **Hitler's Messengers: The Hitler Youth and the Propagation of Nazi Ideology Amongst Ethnic Germans of the Batschka**

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the creation of National Socialist youth groups within ethnic German communities of the Batschka. Located in a former Habsburg territory that fluctuated in borders, politics, and ethnic composition during the early twentieth century, the Batschka's populations became embroiled within a multitude of contestations by greater state, national, and ideological projects during the 1930s and 1940s. The Batschka's "*Donauschwaben*" especially were targeted by the Third Reich, which— through the mass "education" of ethnic Germans in the region— hoped to forge an "Aryan master race" that would be willing to fight and die "for *Reich* and *Führer*." Youths became crucial within this scheme. Ideologized within the framework of "Hitler Youth" formations, youths were not merely to "educate" themselves about National Socialist definitions of "Germanness," but also to act as agents of "education" and "conversion" within their communities.

This study explores Nazi tactics of youth mobilization and their effects on the social interactions, political affiliations, and national identities of the Batschka's ethnic German communities. Split into macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of analysis and employing a range of sources— including 1930s and 1940s German ethnographic studies and *Volks geschichten*, contemporaneous German-speaking press from Hungary and Yugoslavia, Nazi youth propaganda, oral histories, and *Heimatgemeinde*-based memoirs— this thesis investigates the various actors and perspectives involved with the Nazi mobilization of "*volks deutsche*" youths. As this study illustrates, the "effects" of Nazi youth programs were manifold and far removed from a traditional interpretation of the "totalitarian masses." Rather, their impact was divisive, as the Batschka's ethnic Germans became confronted with, and defended, conflicting interpretations of their own national identities.

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## Introduction

Friedrich expected it would be the journey of a lifetime. In early August 1944, the sixteen-year-old packed his bags and, with thirty other German boys and girls from the villages surrounding Novi Sad, Vojvodina, traveled to Weimar, Germany. For one month, these youths slept amongst the baroque splendor of *Schloss* Belvedere, shared stories with various *Spielmannszug* musicians also staying on the premises, and read Schiller and Goethe. They visited the Erfurt Cathedral to hear the world's largest organ. They tasted their first ever chocolate, oranges, and bananas. And they waited for the arrival of Adolf Hitler.

Friedrich, born in Bukin in the Batschka, was one of the elect few from the territory to participate in this expedition. As an active member of his local Hitler Youth group, Friedrich now had the privilege of traveling to Germany, to see— for the first time in generations— the “motherland.” In a seemingly utopic setting, far removed from the horrors of the war that engulfed Germany in 1944, Friedrich was to become an emissary for the *Third Reich*, reporting on his opulent journey and the “glories” of Nazi Germany back in his Southeastern European homeland— a homeland which, for its over 173,000 German inhabitants,<sup>1</sup> would no longer exist one mere month after his return.<sup>2</sup>

Considering the wealth of research that has been dedicated in past decades to the Third Reich and its abominable consequences, it is perhaps surprising how few narratives like

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<sup>1</sup> Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito: The Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans* (Belgrade: s.n. 2000), 32.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Friedrich Fischer\* and Caroline Mezger, 24 May 2011. \*Name changed as per contract signed between interviewer and interviewee.

Friedrich's have been heard. While issues such as the rise of the NSDAP, Hitler's personality cult, National Socialist propaganda, the Holocaust, and SS and *Wehrmacht* crimes along the Eastern and Western fronts have received considerable attention, historical scholarship still reveals astonishing gaps in relation to one particular topic: the Nazi government's efforts in "harnessing" for their cause the up to 27 million ethnic Germans living outside of Germany's borders.<sup>3</sup> This thesis will explore the topic of Nazi policy towards these so-called "*Volksdeutsche*" during the interwar and World War II periods, interweaving two yet largely unexplored threads: ethnic German enclaves of the Batschka— a territory now split between the Vojvodina and Southern Hungary— and the role that the Nazi youth movement played in molding the political and national self-identification of "*Volksdeutsche*" individuals, communities, and movements within the region.

The first thread of this research relates to the history of ethnic German communities in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe that, for decades, has found itself within a minefield of historiographical contention. Supposedly formed from the twelfth century onwards by a steady trickle of settlers from Germany, these communities— especially within the Habsburg realm— flourished especially during the eighteenth century, as imperial decrees urged (primarily Catholic) German farmers to "repopulate" territories devastated by the Ottoman invasions.<sup>4</sup> During the interwar and World War II periods, as empires crumbled, these communities became situated within regions highly contested by various nascent nation-states. Largely due to evidence of particular ethnic communities therein, states attempted to conquer territories like the Batschka first "spiritually," and then physically, as these regions became part

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<sup>3</sup> Z.A.B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 71.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance Karolyi Kocsis and Eszter Kocsis-Hodosi, "Chapter 5: The Hungarians of Vojvodina," in *Ethnic Geography of the Hungarian Minorities in the Carpathian Basin* (Budapest: Geographical Research Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1998), 139-142.

of various national irredenta. Especially during the Second World War, as the arena for the conquest of territories and— for the Third Reich, the establishment of an “Aryan” “millennial Empire”— seemed to open, individuals of various ethnicities within these multi-ethnic regions thus became a focus for widespread nationalist and political indoctrination and mobilization.

Significant studies on ethnic German enclaves of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, and the role that these played during the Second World War, have been conducted in recent years. Gary Cohen, Jeremy King, and Tara Zahra, for instance, have provided interesting insights into projects launched by both Czech and German governments to “nationalize” the various ethnic and linguistic groups in Bohemia, a process which— especially in light of post-1938 Nazi occupation— ultimately resulted in fascist indoctrination and ethnic cleansing. Other scholars, such as John Connelly, Elizabeth Harvey, David Furber, and Doris Bergen, have further studied the Nazi invasion of Poland, and the degree to which Nazi “colonial” projects (aimed also in part at the indoctrination of *Volksdeutsche*) played a role in the perpetration of atrocities in the region. Scholars like Zoran Janjetović and Carl Bethke have offered insights into the *Volksdeutsche* movements of the Vojvodina, while Norbert Spannenberger, Ekkehard Völkl, and Akiko Shimizu have published about German minorities in Hungary and the *Reich*-dominated West Banat, respectively.

Despite this research, however, virtually no inquiries have been made into *Volksdeutsche* of the Batschka specifically. The ethnic German enclaves of this region, however, warrant separate attention. On the one hand, the region was home to over 173,000 ethnic Germans in 1931,<sup>5</sup> became a target of Nazi studies by the early 1930s and Nazi programs in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and was ultimately transformed into one of the

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<sup>5</sup> Zoran Janjetovic, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 32.



greatest contributors of SS troops amongst Europe's *Volksdeutsche* communities.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the Batschka also presents an interesting comparative perspective on a trans-national level. Part of the Kingdom of Hungary before 1918, most of the Batschka came under the purview of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1920 (the rest remained in Hungary). In 1941, after the Axis powers' invasion, the Batschka once again formed a single administrative unit under Horthy's Hungary. Home to a panoply of ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities—including the German "*Donauschwaben*"— this region hence represents not merely an interesting avenue of study on the nationalization and radicalization of multi-ethnic territories across time and "identities," but also across political situation and greater national context.

As this study will show, contests over the allegiance of various ethnic groups within disputed borderlands— especially amongst ethnic German populations— occurred predominantly over the mobilization of youths, a topic that forms the second thread of this thesis. As historians such as Gerhard Rempel, H. W. Koch, Michael Kater, and Elizabeth Harvey have indicated, a mobilization of Germany's youth was envisioned as a cornerstone towards the creation and perpetuation of mass support for the Nazis, as well as towards the ultimate realization of their genocidal, palingenetic, ultra-nationalistic, and virulently racist and anti-Semitic ideology. First created in February 1922 as the Nazi "Youth League," the Hitler Youth and its subsidiary organizations (like the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*), by 1933, expanded their scope to become an "imperializing" force.<sup>7</sup> Hundreds of thousands of German youths

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Janjetovic, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 165-166. This is echoed in Nazi publications also; see, for example, Franz Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, published by *Landesgruppe der Auslandorganisation der NSDAP in Ungarn* (Hungary: Druckerei- und Verlags-AG, Ujvidek-Neusatz, 1944), 139.

<sup>7</sup> Recent studies, such as David Furber's 2004 "Near as Far in the Colonies: The Nazi Occupation of Poland" (*The International History Review*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 541-579) stress the manner in which Nazi programs and policies in Eastern and Southeastern Europe were conducted in an imperialistic framework. The conceptualization of such "Eastern colonies" also becomes evident in Nazi publications in relation to Hungary and the Hitler Youth. By April 1938, for example, one German publication in Budapest already regularly referred to German communities in Hungary as the "*Reichsdeutsche Kolonie Ungarn*" ["Führer, Volk und Reich!- Aufruf Gauleiter Bohles an die

were sent especially into the newly conquered Eastern territories to help with the “re-education” of ethnic Germans and their recreation into “proper” Germans with Nazi proclivities (also conceptualized as an “*Umvolkung*” of German-speaking communities at the time).<sup>8</sup> As this thesis will show, however, the ideologization and mobilization of youths within regions like the Batschka assumed a much more diversified form. Exchange programs between “*Volksdeutsche*” and “*Reichsdeutsche*” youths, convergences with National Socialism of various extant folkloric groups, media campaigns, and educational institutions— all imbedded within a complex web of covert Third Reich-*Volksdeutsche* organization-host state relationships— ultimately constructed the stage upon which German youths, and thus their greater communities, were to “become” National Socialists.

This thesis will study the Third Reich’s conceptualizations of the Batschka and its people, the projects launched by the National Socialists to appeal to ethnic German youths within the territories, as well as the effects that such attempts had, on the individual and on the community level, on the social interactions, political affiliations, and national self-identifications of the region’s “*Donauschwaben*.” In order to explore these issues, the thesis will be split into four distinct sections, each dedicated to a separate layer of analysis. The first chapter will explore the Third Reich’s imagined geography of Southeastern Europe and the role that regions like the Batschka were assigned to play within the creation of Hitler’s “millennial empire.” Using German ethnographical, historical, and political publications from the 1930s and 1940s, this chapter will provide an analysis of the perceived geographical limitations, ethnic composition, and economic and strategic advantages of regions like the Batschka for the

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Auslanddeutschen und Seefahrer” in *Deutsche Nachrichten: Mitteilungsblatt der Reichsdeutschen in Ungarn*, Vol. 3, Number 1 (April 1938), 3].

<sup>8</sup> Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler’s Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 136, 160.

expansion of the Third Reich. Paying particular attention to conceptualizations of the “*Volksdeutsche*,” and their potential uses for the Reich, within the Batschka, this chapter will lay the groundwork for a further discussion of the significance of the mobilization and “education” of youths within this territory.

The second chapter, also based on a macro-level historical interpretation, will first provide a brief explanation of the historical origins, evolution, and purposes of the Hitler Youth and its subsidiary organizations (like the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* or the *Jungvolk*) within Germany. Implementing both extant secondary literature and primary propaganda materials from the Third Reich, this chapter will then illustrate how the Hitler Youth quickly evolved from an organization geared towards the indoctrination of youths within Germany to a medium for the large-scale ideologization of German-speaking youths across Europe. Discussing programs like the *Landdienst*, the *Kinderlandverschickung*, various exchange programs between “*Reichsdeutsche*” and “*Volksdeutsche*” children, and the establishment of Nazi youth groups, schools, and organs of propaganda abroad, this chapter will illustrate the arsenal of strategies employed by the Third Reich to indoctrinate German-speaking children— and thus their greater communities— in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe.

The second chapter will be followed by a meso-level interpretation of the actual manifestations of such planned projects within the Batschka. Analyzing various German-speaking publications from Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the Batschka itself, this chapter will trace the evolution of German youth organizations within the Batschka from more generalized folkloric clubs to their, by the 1940s, fully radicalized “*Deutsche Jugend*” form. Placed within a discussion of the general development of Hungarian and Yugoslav *Volksdeutsche* organizations, the historical trajectory of the Batschka after 1941, and various competing

political and national projects within this region, this analysis will show how a large segment of the Batschka's Germans— including its youth— soon became one of the most radicalized *Volksdeutsche* populations in Central and Eastern Europe.

The final chapter will implement a micro-historical examination on the effects of the activities of National Socialist youth programs in the Batschka. Introducing various oral history interviews conducted with German individuals raised in the Batschka during the 1930s and 1940s, this chapter will investigate the memories of individual involvement with, or observations of, National Socialist youth activities in various Batschka communities, and the effects that these may have had on these communities' social composition, political activities, and national self-perceptions. Further presenting primary materials— like photographs, personal memorabilia, and memoirs— this chapter will attempt to illustrate the fragmentary impact that the incursions of National Socialism— particularly amongst youths— had on these multi-ethnic and predominately German towns.

As this thesis will ultimately show, the Third Reich's mobilization of youths within the Batschka was intended to serve as a cornerstone towards the creation of a German population loyal to the *Reich*, to the *Führer*, and to the tenets of Nazism within a highly contested territory. A region coveted by Germany from at least the early 1930s onwards for its potential as an agricultural breadbasket and provider of manpower, the Batschka became a hotbed for National Socialist planning and activities for nearly two decades thereafter. Crucial to the “harnessing” of the region and its Germans, for the Reich, would be the inculcation of “*Volksdeutsche*” with National Socialist values, an inculcation tied to the supposed creation of a “German” identity that, most efficiently, would occur through the education of youths. As this study will indicate, the larger consequences of such activities were diversified: some became, through such

activities, highly enthusiastic supporters of the Nazi regime; some were persecuted for their anti-Nazi beliefs; still others vacillated between the two. Ultimately, however, the incursions of the Third Reich had significant consequences for these communities, as all were forced to take a stance on, and forge a definition of, their own political and national identities.

## Chapter 1: Theoretical Frameworks

An exploration of the creation of National Socialist youth groups amongst the Batschka's "*Volksdeutsche*" communities, and a concomitant analysis of the effects of such groups on the political and national identifications of these communities, necessitates, first and foremost, a theoretical framework that lays the analytic and methodological foundations for such an undertaking. As this thesis employs a range of approaches, this theoretical frameworks chapter, too, will be composed of various intermingling intellectual threads. The Hitler Youth and its subsidiaries were projects driven by the aims and tenets of National Socialism; any discussion thereof thus first requires an elucidation of concepts like "totalitarianism" and "fascism." This chapter will therefore initially provide some theoretical underpinnings of this vast subject, presenting the conceptualizations of "totalitarianism" most pertinent to this study. Describing the nationalistic component of totalitarian projects, this chapter will then provide a discussion of nationalism, especially as created amongst minority communities of contested borderlands. Ultimately, it will then offer an explanation for manners in which national self-identifications, and their fluctuations, can be studied. In particular, the final section will offer a discussion on the methodological and theoretical implications of employing oral history, which is utilized for the final chapter of this thesis.

### 1.1 National Socialism as Totalitarianism and Fascism

Theories of totalitarianism have been circulating for decades, engaging in fluctuating and competing cycles of definition, reconceptualization, delegitimization, and reassertion. During the 1950s and 1960s, with Hannah Arendt or Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski,

for instance, “totalitarianism” reached its initial theoretical formulations, based heavily on principles of complete state domination, terror, coercion, intrusions into the private sphere, mass ideologization, and the centralized party.<sup>9</sup> By the 1970s, with the “social turn” that permeated historiographies in general, totalitarianism studies began focusing not merely on Arendtian models of “total domination” and state terror, but moved increasingly towards a study of societies under totalitarian rule, taking a differentiated stance, for instance, between the oversimplified victim versus perpetrator dichotomy, analyzing mechanisms of social support for totalitarian regimes, and taking a more de-ideologized approach towards these regimes.<sup>10</sup> During the 1980s and 1990s, with the general “cultural turn” of historical studies, totalitarianism studies followed suit: focusing on the specific rituals, rhetoric, practices, and aesthetics of totalitarian regimes, intellectuals like George Mosse or Stephen Kotkin increasingly turned, once again, to ideology as a key to the creation of a— socially highly differentiated— mass movement.

It seems that current studies on totalitarianism— which are themselves experiencing a kind of “revival”<sup>11</sup>— are taking an approach largely constructed upon this “cultural turn.” Analyzing not merely the social implications of totalitarian politics, but also the rhetoric and aesthetics employed by these regimes, current studies on totalitarianism seem to be amalgamating previous trends of historical research and supplying “totalitarianism studies” with renewed emphases on— as Emilio Gentile claims— the “sacralisation of politics” and, as

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<sup>9</sup> To this effect, see, for instance, Roger Griffin, “Introduction: God’s Counterfeiters? Investigating the Triad of Fascism, Totalitarianism and (Political) Religion,” in *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, edited by Roger Griffin (London: Routledge, 2005), 4-8.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Sheila Fitzpatrick, “The Bolshevik’s Dilemma: The Class Issue in Party Politics and Culture,” and “Stalin and the Making of the New Elite,” in *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 16-36, 149-183.

<sup>11</sup> See Emilio Gentile, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation,” in *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, edited by Roger Griffin (London: Routledge, 2005), 43.

I will show, nationalism studies.<sup>12</sup> It is within this spirit of combining a socially discerning view of totalitarianism, with an analysis of its “cultural” productions and its effects on the national, that I would like to present this thesis.<sup>13</sup>

While the definitions of “totalitarianism” are variegated, also according to the trends listed above, it is perhaps Emilio Gentile’s current definition that proves to be most suitable for this project. According to Gentile’s definition, totalitarianism is:

an *experiment in political domination* undertaken by a *revolutionary movement*, with an *integralist conception* of politics, that aspires toward a *monopoly of power* and that, after having secured power, whether by legal or illegal means, destroys or transforms the previous regime and constructs a new State based on a *single-party regime*, with the chief objective of *conquering society*; that is, it seeks the subordination, integration and homogenisation of the governed on the basis of the *integral politicization of existence*, whether collective or individual, interpreted according to the categories, myths and values of a *palingenetic ideology*, institutionalized in the form of a *political religion*, that aims to shape the individual and the masses through an *anthropological revolution* in order to regenerate the human being and create the *new man*, who is dedicated in body and soul to the realisation of the revolutionary and imperialistic policies of the totalitarian party, whose ultimate goal is to create a *new civilisation* beyond the Nation-State.<sup>14</sup>

Gentile’s definition is instructive on several levels as one considers National Socialism. The National Socialists, as is commonly accepted, came to power with an agenda of revolutionizing society based on the tenets of Nazism and the total control of the NSDAP. Employing notions of charismatic leadership (as first studied by Max Weber, for example), the National Socialists elevated Hitler to the status of a “divine” leader within an “elaborate

<sup>12</sup> Gentile, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion,” 43.

<sup>13</sup> Definitions and conceptualizations of “culture,” of course, vary. In the context of this thesis, it is helpful to consider the definition in relation to propaganda analysis by Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell: “Culture, defined as actual practices and customs, languages, beliefs, forms of representation, and a system of formal and informal rules that tell people how to behave most of the time, enables people to make sense of their world through a certain amount of shared meanings and recognition of differing meanings. People bring to their understanding of cultural artifacts (images, architecture, literature, etc.) other aspects of their culture that link the artifact to a recognizable context.” In Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 193.

<sup>14</sup> Gentile, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion,” 33-34.



political religion” that would “save” the German nation.<sup>15</sup> This “salvation,” according to the National Socialists, on the one hand, would occur through a “cleansing” of the German “*Volkskörper*”— both the individual body and the body politic— according to strict eugenicist, racist, and anti-Semitic lines.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, however, this “revolution” would also occur through imperialistic expansion, the reclamation of “*Lebensraum*,” and the establishment of a “new world order” according to the dominance and colonization of the “Aryan master race.”<sup>17</sup>

Particularly in regards to the rabidly nationalistic dimension of National Socialism, however, the mere use of a totalitarian framework does not suffice. It is here that Gentile’s definition of totalitarianisms of the right— fascism— becomes instructive:

Fascism is a modern political phenomenon, which is nationalistic and revolutionary, anti-liberal and anti-Marxist, organised in the form of a militia party, with a totalitarian conception of politics and the State, with an ideology based on myth; virile and anti-hedonistic, it is sacralised in a political religion affirming the absolute primacy of the nation understood as an ethnically homogeneous organic community, hierarchically organised into a corporative State, with a bellicose mission to achieve grandeur, power and conquest with the ultimate aim of creating a new order and a new civilisation.<sup>18</sup>

Certainly an anti-liberal and anti-Marxist “political phenomenon” with a racial, expansionist understanding of the German “nation,” National Socialism— according to the above definition— was hence not merely a totalitarian, but a distinctly fascist project. Particularly fascism, according to both Gentile and Roger Griffin, was further defined by a specific type of nationalism: “palingenetic ultra-nationalism.” According to Griffin,

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<sup>15</sup> Griffin, “The Palingenetic Political Community: Rethinking the Legitimization of Totalitarian Regimes in Inter-War Europe,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 3 (Winter 2002), 28; Arthur Schweitzer, “Hitler’s Dictatorial Charisma,” in *Charisma, History and Social Structure*, edited by Ronald M. Glassman and William H. Swatos Jr. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 149, 151, 153.

<sup>16</sup> Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 84.

<sup>17</sup> See John Connelly, “Nazis and Slavs: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice,” in *Central European History*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1999), pp. 1-33, for example.

<sup>18</sup> Gentile, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion,” 35.

“palingenetic ultra-nationalism” denotes “the myth that the organically conceived nation is to be cleansed of decadence and renewed.”<sup>19</sup> The German nation, for the National Socialists, was hence comprised of the Aryan “*Volkskörper*,” a biological entity that was supposed to be “cleansed,” preserved, and propagated through the party’s various projects— including, as this thesis will show, the Hitler Youth and its subsidiary programs.

Gentile, in his definitions and historiographical treatises, further explores the significance of ideology in totalitarian projects. For Gentile, ideology is key, as it becomes the focal point of the totalitarian “political religion” that “sacralizes an ideology, a movement or a political regime” and thus formulates itself as “the primary and indisputable source of the meaning and the ultimate aim of human existence on earth.”<sup>20</sup> Generally based precisely on this “palingenetic myth” of the nation,<sup>21</sup> ideology as a source of sacralized political power became a crucial component of National Socialist programs, especially ones like the Hitler Youth aimed specifically at political and nationalist indoctrination.

According to Gentile, the “sacralisation of politics” was explicitly distinct from theories of the “aesthetization of politics” postulated by intellectuals like George Mosse.<sup>22</sup> While Gentile unequivocally removes himself from an aesthetic interpretation of the creation and perpetuation of the National Socialist movement, however, I suggest that the “sacralisation” and the “aesthetization” of politics, certainly in the case of National Socialism, became mutually reinforcing. National Socialism— perhaps even more extremely in the case of youth programs— became a sacralized ideology, with Adolf Hitler as its “divine leader” and

<sup>19</sup> Griffin, “Introduction: God’s Counterfeiters?,” 9.

<sup>20</sup> Gentile, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion,” 34.

<sup>21</sup> Gentile, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion,” 62.

<sup>22</sup> Gentile, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion,” 64-65.

indoctrinated Germans as its “missionaries.” This ideology, however, had to be instilled, and the means for indoctrination— among other factors— became the aesthetic.

In his 1975 *The Nationalization of the Masses*, Mosse indicates how within fascism, “the general will became a secular religion,” whereby “the people worshipped themselves,” “new politics sought to guide and formalize this worship,” and a “newly awakened national consciousness” helped create the basis for the perception of a “common citizenship.”<sup>23</sup> For Mosse, “national myths and symbols and the development of a liturgy” enabled the creation of a “mass movement which shared a belief in popular unity through a national mystique.”<sup>24</sup> Nationalism, according to Mosse, became formulated according to the “*Volk*,” an “entity held together by its historical myths and symbols.”<sup>25</sup>

Mosse’s conceptualizations are particularly crucial within a study of the indoctrination of German-speakers across state boundaries and, at times, even cultural and linguistic barriers. The idea of a “*Volksgemeinschaft*”— the notion that Germans around the world formed one national community— were essential to National Socialist youth programs abroad. “Germanness,” through the National Socialists, apparently became a matter of “common citizenship,” of shared “historical myths and symbols”— all something, provided the “proper” “racial” constitution was apparent, that could be learned. Through the recitation of the National Socialist “liturgy,” national identity could not merely be expressed and celebrated, but could also turn an individual within a nationally liminal position into a vanguard of the totalitarian movement. Through the political symbolism of the National Socialists, the Party, the German people, and the “believer” as such were worshipped, and the “liturgy” further disseminated.

<sup>23</sup> George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 2.

<sup>24</sup> Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses*, 4.

Before delving into the next section of this chapter, it is crucial to consider one more claim by Gentile that is particularly useful for the conceptualization of this thesis. As he states: “The concept of totalitarianism understood as an *experiment of political dominion* does not refer to any ‘perfect’ and ‘completed’ totalitarianism in any of its forms. It refers, instead, to a *process* which by its nature can never be considered ‘perfect’ or ‘completed’.”<sup>26</sup> Fascism was totalitarianism, and certainly dominated by the terror so prominent in Arendtian accounts thereof. Totalitarian regimes attempted to control the thoughts and activities of “their” people, however, such domination never attained a complete form. As this thesis will show, totalitarian projects, like the creation of National Socialist youth groups amongst “*Volksdeutsche*,” certainly attempted to assert ultimate control over the German people across Europe’s boundaries. These projects indeed forced individuals and communities penetrated by their activities to take a stance on their own political and national identifications, and in some instances, succeeded in inculcating individuals with a National Socialist brand of a German national identity. The mere perceived necessity of such indoctrinating programs, however, illustrates how the Third Reich itself was highly aware of its lack of “completed totalitarianism”; as the final chapter of this thesis will further show, the influx of fascist projects within “*Volksdeutsche*” communities also sparked a broad range of non- or anti-totalitarian responses.

## 1.2 Nationalizing the Masses within Interstitial Spaces

As the discussion above has made apparent, the “nation” was a fundamental component of the National Socialist projects and ideology. It is therefore crucial, at this point, to address in

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<sup>26</sup> Gentile, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion,” 58.

greater detail the fundamental concepts evoked by any discussion of “nationalism,” “ethnicity,” and “identity.” A comprehensive elucidation of this sociologically and historiographically contested field would naturally exceed the boundaries of a theoretical frameworks chapter; this section will therefore briefly present the most pertinent definitions and theoretical underpinnings of the “creation” of a “national identity” within contested borderlands.

Studies on, and definitions of, nationalism are copious; as John Hall wrote in 1993, “no single, universal theory of nationalism is possible.”<sup>27</sup> However, perhaps one of the most quoted definitions in the discussion of nationalism is that of Ernest Gellner. In his 1983 work *Nations and Nationalism*, Gellner discusses how “nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Gellner differentiates between “nationalist *sentiment*” (the “feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the [political] principle”) and a “nationalist *movement*” (“one actuated by a sentiment of this kind”).<sup>29</sup> The “nation,” as he further claims, is more difficult to describe, but a concept with two inter-related components. First, “two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.”<sup>30</sup> Second, “two men are of the same nation if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation.”<sup>31</sup>

Echoing Mosse’s concern for the mythological and symbolic formation of the “nation,” Gellner envisions the “nation” as primarily based on “culture”— the definition and perpetuation of which create further grounds for “national” contestations. As Gellner further

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Alexei Miller, “Russification or Russifications?,” in *The Romanov Empire and Nationalism* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>28</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 7.

indicates, the nation is also constituted by national (self) identifications. “National belonging”—contingent upon shared feelings of “groupness”—is thus constituted by a mutual recognition of “national identity,” a concept which, according to Anthony Smith in his 1991 study *National Identity*, is a “...complex construct composed of a number of interrelated components—ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic, and legal-political.”<sup>32</sup>

National Socialism contained a rabidly “nationalistic” strand; nevertheless, this “nation” was based not merely upon ideas of the “*Kulturnation*,” but also upon eugenicist principles of “ethnicity.” Modern definitions of “ethnicity” are painted with a rather broad brush; thus, as Rogers Brubaker describes, “‘ethnicity’ is the more inclusive term, embracing much (but not all) of what we mean by nationhood and nationalism, and much else besides (as suggested by the terms ‘ethnoracial,’ ‘ethnoreligious,’ ‘ethnoregional,’ ‘ethnolinguistic,’ and ‘ethnocultural’).”<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless—and as especially the first research chapter of this thesis will show—the National Socialist conceptualizations of ethnicity were quite clear: ethnicity was the “race”—as it flowed through the veins of the biologized “*Volkskörper*”—and the perpetuation of the “Aryan” “master race” was the precondition for the realization of a fully German “nation.”

As Gellner and Brubaker further show, the “‘nation’ is ordinarily imagined as grounded in a particular territory.”<sup>34</sup> “Nationalism” is thus frequently dependent upon the desire for a fulfillment of particular territorial aims. Perhaps also interested in the reacquisition of particular “national” irredenta, the “nation” is thus generally—as Eric Hobsbawm similarly illustrates—

<sup>32</sup> Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 15.

<sup>33</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 14.

<sup>34</sup> Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, 14. For a similar sentiment, see Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.

an expansionist unit.<sup>35</sup> In the case of National Socialism, this expansionist element is apparent; the creation of *Lebensraum* for the German “nation” was a key motivator for projects like the creation of National Socialist youth groups across Central and Eastern Europe. However, the relationship between the “nation” and National Socialism’s *Lebensraum* are further complicated by the fact that National Socialism formed the cornerstone of the Third Reich, a state entity with distinctly imperial aims.<sup>36</sup> Projects like the mobilization of youths occurred within territories, like the Batschka, coveted for German “re-conquest” and ethnic “reorganization”; however, they were also targeted at territories, as in South America or China, never conceived as regions originally inhabited by the German “race” and nation.<sup>37</sup>

It is thus apparent that measures taken to “nationalize” ethnic German individuals within Central and Eastern Europe’s multi-ethnic territories also followed “imperial” aims, in which national belonging— conceived along ethnic lines— was to be “taught,” ironically, to members conceptualized as already belonging to the “German race,” for purposes of geopolitical domination. Particularly within Europe’s various interstitial spaces— caught between competing national and state interests and comprised of a multitude of ethnicities, religions, languages, and nations themselves— various populations, like the ethnic Germans, hence became a primary target for national, imperial, and political indoctrination. The “reawakening” of a national identity within territories like the Batschka thus became, for the Nazis, paramount to the creation of an “Aryan master race” loyal to the *Führer* across Europe’s formal and informal boundaries.

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<sup>35</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 32.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion on the complex relationship between empires and nations, see, for instance, Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller, “Nation-Building and Regional Integration, c. 1800-1914: the Role of Empires,” in *European Review of History*, volume 3 (2008), pp. 317-330.

<sup>37</sup> For more on the Third Reich’s non-European colonization efforts, see, for instance, Connelly, “Nazis and Slavs: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice.”

As Tara Zahra indicates in her 2008 *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*, children within Europe's various nation-building projects further assumed a unique position. As she claims, "children became targets of nationalist activism in part because they presented tremendous problems for nationalists" as they "seemed to slip so easily between linguistic and national communities" and "therefore threatened to expose the deepest assumptions of nationalist politics as myths."<sup>38</sup> Describing competing attempts in the Czech lands to instill either a German or a Czech national identity within these children, Zahra illustrates clearly some of the assumptions most fundamental to "identity" studies: that identity is "unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented"; that it can be a function of either "collective" or "individual" "selfhood"; that it is formulated within an interactive process between the "self" and the "other"; and that it can be assumed for potential social and political gain.<sup>39</sup>

In his writings about "identity," Brubaker offers several important critiques of this notion. Identity, of course, is not something that all individuals have or seek; it is not something that needs to be "discovered"; it is not the foundation for "group boundedness and homogeneity."<sup>40</sup> While this appears to be accurate, it is also apparent that for the National Socialists, exactly these "fallacies" were the aim: the "awakening" of a "German" (Nazi) national identity for the creation of a homogeneous, bounded "*Volksgemeinschaft*" across the globe. This, however, raises a further crucial question. As Brubaker, in his 2006 *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* states (quoting Eric Hobsbawm), a strict distinction should be made between nationhood and nationalism as "constructed

<sup>38</sup> Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 3-4.

<sup>39</sup> Rogers Brubaker, "Identity," in *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, edited by Frederick Cooper (Los Angeles and Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 64-66.

<sup>40</sup> Brubaker, "Identity," 67-68.



essentially from above” and as perceived and constructed “from below.”<sup>41</sup> Using this analytical framework, Brubaker shows how, as one analyzes “nationhood and nationalism from below as well as from above,” there arises a stark “disjuncture between intense and intractable nationalist politics and the ways in which ethnicity and nationness are embodied and expressed in everyday life.”<sup>42</sup>

Considering that much of what the historical record has left us about the interwar and World War II periods are precisely the rhetoric, ideas, and propaganda penned and disseminated “from above,” the question rises how it is possible to study this “from below” perspective. The “official” National Socialist conceptualizations of “nation,” “ethnicity,” and the creation of a particular “identity” can certainly be studied. However, how is one to analyze the effects that “official” nationalizing projects had “from below,” their own fluctuations, and the interactions between these two levels? Brubaker, in his 2006 study, attempted to solve this problem through a combined analysis of the macro- and micro- level perspectives, as well as on the “meso” level interactions— as expressed within mediating factors of the proximate community (like the family, cultural organization or Church)— between the two.<sup>43</sup> It is precisely this methodological and interpretive framework that I will adopt in this thesis; my chapters will thus be arranged in telescopic fashion, moving from the “macro,” into the “meso,” and ultimately to the “micro” levels of analysis. The precise manner in which it may be possible to study the “from below” reactions to “from above” nationalizing efforts, however, warrants further attention. It is to this topic that this chapter will now turn.

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<sup>41</sup> Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, 13, 16.

<sup>43</sup> Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, xiv.

### 1.3 Oral History

Oral history is an approach that is still largely discredited or overlooked by current historians of Central and Eastern Europe's *Donauschwaben* communities during the Second World War.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps exasperated by the currently predominant historiography on such topics— largely memoir-based community volumes, frequently penned by individuals who had themselves been deeply entrenched in pro-Nazi activities within their former *Donauschwaben* hometowns<sup>45</sup>— newer, more “scientific” studies generally eschew an oral history approach, seemingly concerned with its potential for reproducing or reifying these vague, subjective, and collectively exonerating *Heimatbücher*-type histories. As this thesis will show, however, oral history— when applied carefully— still provides crucial insights into the micro-level implications of phenomena like the creation of National Socialist youth groups within the Batschka.

Oral history is, of course, a field with highly diversified methodologies. As one of the founders of current oral history practices, Paul Thompson, states in his 1978 volume *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, it is difficult to pinpoint *the* way to conduct oral history research. As Thompson explains: “...there are many different styles of interviewing, ranging from the friendly, informal, conversational approach to the more formal, controlled style of questioning.”<sup>46</sup> As Hugo Slim and his fellow researchers similarly described in their 1993 article “Ways of Listening,” further differentiations should be made between “life story interviews” (conducted privately and one-to-one with the interviewee), “family-tree

<sup>44</sup> See, for instance, Norbert Spannberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944 unter Horthy und Hitler* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2002), 12 or Stephan Olaf Schüller, *Für Glaube, Führer, Volk, Vater- oder Mutterland? Die Kämpfe um die deutsche Jugend im rumänischen Banat (1918-1944)* (Berlin: LIT Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2009), 17.

<sup>45</sup> See Schüller, *Für Glaube, Führer, Volk, Vater- oder Mutterland?*, 449.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 196.

interviewing” (which reconstructs the stories of multiple family members through the eyes of one or more narrators), “single-issue testimony” (which focuses on one particular theme in the interviewee’s life), “diary interviewing” (using the daily oral or written recordings of groups of people), and “group interviews” (conducted with several interviewees simultaneously).<sup>47</sup>

Despite this plethora of methodologies— the choice of which depends largely upon the conditions and aims of a particular interview project— it seems that oral history enjoys, epistemologically speaking, a much more unified theoretical basis. To this effect, it is instructive to call upon Alessandro Portelli. According to Portelli in his famed *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, oral history is defined primarily and specifically by its oral nature.<sup>48</sup> Oral testimony differs starkly even from its written transcript in that the speech act contains information that is impossible to transmit in written form. As Portelli describes: “...the same statement may have quite contradictory meanings, according to the speaker’s intonation, which cannot be represented objectively in the transcript, but only approximately described in the transcriber’s own words.”<sup>49</sup> Idiosyncrasies of the speech act, for Portelli, include differentiations in rhythm and speed, “velocity of narration” (or “...the ratio between the duration of the events described and the duration of the narration”), changes in volume, and shifts in tone or accent.<sup>50</sup> For Portelli, these factors are crucial for the interpretation of an oral account, as they all convey a certain meaning; frequent but irregular pauses, for instance, may reveal a significant emotional attachment to the episodes described.<sup>51</sup> For Portelli, hence, it is

<sup>47</sup> Hugo Slim, et al. “Ways of Listening,” in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 116-119.

<sup>48</sup> Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany State University of New York Press, 1991), 46.

<sup>49</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 47.

<sup>50</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 47-49.

<sup>51</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 48.

important to consider the oral form of these testimonies, as they reveal meanings that even a transcript never could.

Portelli, too, sees a specific significance in the incorporation of oral sources into historical studies. For Portelli, “the first thing that makes oral history different ... is that it tells us less about *events* than about their *meaning*.”<sup>52</sup> Oral accounts give historians “facts” on a complex epistemological plane. Events and acts are recounted not necessarily as they occurred, but as what the interviewees “...wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.”<sup>53</sup> The importance of oral history thus “...may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge... ‘wrong’ statements are still psychologically ‘true,’ and... this truth may be equally important as factually reliable accounts.”<sup>54</sup>

The aim of oral history hence seems to include the re-incorporation of the individual voice into a larger, collective narrative; through the infusion of the individual experience, and its interpretation, into an account of “History,” a more differentiated view can be created not merely for the analysis of history as such, but for interrelated questions of “national identity” or the creation of a mass political movement. This statement, however, must be problematized on several levels. “Individual” experiences are also shaped— and remembered and recounted— with the collective in mind.<sup>55</sup> As Portelli further describes, “oral history is a dialogic discourse”<sup>56</sup>; thus, the individual memory— already shaped through a collective experience, and the intertextuality of a lifetime of external references— is recounted, within the confines of

<sup>52</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 50.

<sup>53</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 50.

<sup>54</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 51.

<sup>55</sup> For a detailed discussion of experience, see Joan Scott, “Experience,” in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 22-41.

<sup>56</sup> Portelli, “Oral History as Genre,” in *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 3.

a particular linguistic code and expectations about the interview's audience, to an interviewer, who— through their own cultural, social, political and linguistic lens— interprets what was said and presents it within the framework of their own research. This research is in turn reproduced, consumed, and interpreted by a variety of audiences, who reinterpret the “individual” experience across a new temporal or intellectual distance.

Particularly within the field of totalitarianism studies, such discussions have far-reaching implications. As Luisa Passerini explains in her *Memory and Totalitarianism*, oral histories derived from witnesses of totalitarian regimes present historians with additional, unique challenges. According to Passerini, totalitarianism is a term subject to diverse interpretations and definitions. However, as she posits in a 1992 article, among these variations and critical conceptualizations of “totalitarianism,”

...we can accept two ideas: that totalitarianism is not only external to us but also inside ourselves, with its roots continuously present in our societies and our lives; that totalitarian systems are social systems like other ones, in the sense that their language and discourse have a meaning for their protagonists, even if that meaning is unacceptable to us.<sup>57</sup>

Furthermore, for Passerini, “totalitarianisms are products of the twentieth century that go far beyond earlier manifestations of absolutism and autocracy in their effort to completely control political, social, and intellectual life, made possible by modern industrialism and technology.”<sup>58</sup> All memories gathered about a totalitarian system, for Passerini, are hence inevitably influenced by the totalitarian projects, language, and acts under which they were acquired. The problem thus presented to researchers is twofold. On the one hand, historians must overcome their own limitations in comprehending, and their own biases in interpreting,

<sup>57</sup> Luisa Passerini, “Introduction,” in *Memory and Totalitarianism*, edited by Luisa Passerini (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 7.

<sup>58</sup> Passerini, “Introduction,” 7.

memories derived under a system that may be very foreign to their own.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, it is also crucial to challenge the degree to which totalitarian systems actually shaped consensus among the “masses,” and to what extent the totalitarian “comedy of unanimity” actually affected individuals’ perceptions.<sup>60</sup> As Richard Crownshaw and Selma Leydesdorff further discuss in their introduction to Passerini’s 2005 volume *Memory and Totalitarianism*, “...totalitarianism does not homogenize the lives lived under its regimes.”<sup>61</sup> Historians must hence consider subjectivity in the historical experience— perhaps the very purpose of oral history— and restore past and present agency to the individual being interviewed.<sup>62</sup>

However, in attempting to “restore” this agency and “voice” to individuals, historians of topics such as personal involvement with the National Socialist mobilization of youths must also be aware of the problems involved with an “unhabilitated” subject matter. Gabriele Rosenthal, in her 1998 study *The Holocaust in Three Generations: Families of Victims and Perpetrators of the Nazi Regime*, describes the problems inherent to gathering oral accounts of— actual or purported— perpetrators.<sup>63</sup> For Rosenthal, the primary problem here, as with victims’ testimonies, frequently is not what is spoken, but what is not said. As Rosenthal describes, “... perpetrators or collaborators of the Nazi period continue to wrap themselves in silence or, through detailed stories of the painful experiences they went through during the war and in the post-war period, to portray themselves as innocent ‘witnesses’ without actually

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<sup>59</sup> Passerini, “Introduction,” 6-7.

<sup>60</sup> Passerini, “Introduction,” 8.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Crownshaw and Selma Leydesdorff, “On Silence and Revision: The Language and Words of the Victims,” in *Memory and Totalitarianism*, edited by Luisa Passerini (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2005), xv.

<sup>62</sup> Crownshaw and Leydesdorff, “On Silence and Revision,” xiv-xv.

<sup>63</sup> The extent to which children, who were mobilized within National Socialist youth groups, can actually be deemed “perpetrators” is, of course, questionable. Nevertheless, as I found in my research, an interviewees’ perception that I might possibly perceive a participation in such youth activities as incriminating frequently sufficed to create the aura of breaking a taboo topic, and to elicit responses as if individuals were accused of perpetration.

giving a witness testimony.”<sup>64</sup> Similarly, perpetrators “... can present their past as unincriminated” by censoring “...all of the incriminating events linked to National Socialism in their life story... and glossing over their experiences connected with systematic persecution and annihilation.”<sup>65</sup> The perpetrators hence, through the silences they create, attempt to assume the more morally defensible position of a victim, leading frequently not merely to a problematic silence, but to downright “distortion.”<sup>66</sup>

The difficulties of gleaning reliable narratives— and breaking the silence— from either the victims or the perpetrators of totalitarian systems frequently is not merely the product of the interviewees, but of the interviewer. In terms of testimony by (supposed) perpetrators, “...intimations of involvement in Nazi crimes are often passed over or blocked out by the listeners because of their own fears... fears about exposing the past of people we encountered who despite their pleasant personalities may have done terrible things.”<sup>67</sup> This is, for Rosenthal, especially prevalent amongst researchers who are themselves burdened by the legacy of the past; non-Jewish Germans, even today, “... were socialized in our families and in German daily life in milieux where taboos about addressing certain themes, prohibitions against asking

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<sup>64</sup> Gabriele Rosenthal, “National Socialism and Antisemitism in Intergenerational Dialog,” in *The Holocaust in Three Generations: Families of Victims and Perpetrators of the Nazi Regime*, edited by Gabriele Rosenthal (London: Cassell, 1998), 240. Again, it must be stated that categories of “witness,” “victim,” “collaborator,” and “perpetrator” (and related questions of volition) are complex, contested, and not mutually exclusive. Especially the role or “categorization” of children raised within a totalitarian project is complex, and should be emphasized as such. For different perspectives on this specifically in relation to involvement with the Hitler Youth, one might further consider articles like Michael Kater’s “The Responsibility of Youth,” in his *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 247-265, or Gerhard Rempel’s “Conclusion,” in his *Hitler’s Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 255-263.

<sup>65</sup> Rosenthal, “National Socialism and Antisemitism in Intergenerational Dialog,” 240.

<sup>66</sup> This is what Rosenthal calls the “perpetrator-victim inversion,” “National Socialism and Anti-Semitism in Intergenerational Dialog,” p. 244. Furthermore, as Passerini describes on p. 16 of her “Introduction”: “Fighting silence is not enough; ‘silence’ is not even an appropriate term for the task to come: what is to be fought is not only silence but distortions or ‘false memory.’”

<sup>67</sup> Rosenthal, “National Socialism and Antisemitism in Intergenerational Dialog,” 241.

further questions and certain exonerating depictions were and continue to be operative.”<sup>68</sup> Both with victims’ and perpetrators’ testimonies, therefore, researchers in oral history face silences and omissions created not only by the victims, but by their own inhibitions and restrictions.

It is with such complex considerations in mind that I approached the micro-historical level of this thesis. In preparing for, conducting, and analyzing various eyewitness testimonies, I explored two basic research questions. First, as this topic has never been studied previously and finding source material initially presented considerable challenges, I was interested in finding indices of a National Socialist youth movement within the Batschka itself— was there an organized Hitler Youth within these ethnic German communities? How did these organizations operate? What activities did these groups engage in, and for which purpose? Besides attempting to elicit a thick description of such activities within its witnesses, however, I was also interested in how to obtain further sources— textual, archival, and oral— to “verify” and further elucidate such narratives of local Hitler Youths; luckily, in conducting research on my interviewee’s hometowns, as well as through the interviewees’ own collections, acquaintances, and knowledge, I was, in every case, able to find such extra-textual references. Second, I also intended, through my interviews, to study individual memories of the effects of such activities, on the personal, community, and family levels, on the national and (as National Socialism was also a political enterprise) the political self-identifications of ethnic Germans within the Batschka.

I was able to find various interviewees through a “snowball effect” amongst personal acquaintances. The interviewees, all German individuals born in the Batschka between 1928 and 1943, had a variety of recollections that they shared: in some cases, individuals quite frankly described their own experiences within their local “Hitler Youth” groups; in other

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<sup>68</sup> Rosenthal, “National Socialism and Antisemitism in Intergenerational Dialog,” 241.



instances, where individuals had been too young to participate themselves in such formations, they instead recounted observations of family or community involvement with National Socialist groups, including youth groups and exchanges with Nazi Germany. In other cases, the interviewees belonged to the alternative Catholic youth groups, attended Serbian and Hungarian schools, and experienced discrimination for ignoring or countering the National Socialist educational and extracurricular activities.

All five of my interviewees were contacted first by phone.<sup>69</sup> After clarifying my research project and interests, as well as elucidating the stipulations of a legal contract— which was signed before or after each interview<sup>70</sup>— an interview time and date was set. In cases where the interviewees lived in Europe, I traveled to conduct personal interviews; with interviewees in the United States, I utilized Skype telephone calls.<sup>71</sup> In all instances, the interviews were recorded digitally, and interviewees were given the chance to turn off the recording at any point during the interview. For ethical considerations and privacy protection, the recordings and transcribed sections were only made available to the supervisors of this M.A. thesis; furthermore, all names within this thesis are anonymized.<sup>72</sup>

While the precise interview structure varied depending on individual interviewing situations and the types of responses given, I attempted to follow the same basic approach in each interview: asking individuals first about their place and date of birth (and thereafter for a

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<sup>69</sup> While all of the interviews were transcribed and analyzed, I did not explicitly include all of them within the final production of this thesis, as an accurate, detailed, and adequately comprehensive representation of all of the narratives would have exceeded the limitations of this thesis.

<sup>70</sup> This contract stipulated the interview's use and themes, the manner in which the collected material would be stored and employed, the anonymization of the interviewees, etc.

<sup>71</sup> The interviewees were further given the choice on whether they would prefer to conduct the interviews in English or in German. Individuals who have spent most of their life in the United States chose to speak in English (perhaps this is also due to the fact that I first introduced myself to them in English), though these particular interviews generally vacillated between the two languages (see footnote 76). Individuals currently living in Germany conducted the interview in German.

<sup>72</sup> For more on the ethical considerations of oral history interviews, consider Valerie Yow, "Ethics and Interpersonal Relationships in Oral History Research," in *The Oral History Review*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 51-66.

description of their hometown, if not already given spontaneously), I hoped to gain a more free-flowing life history narrative, in which pertinent biographical data, themes, and concerns emerged.<sup>73</sup> Attempting to not intervene in the presented narrative for at least ten seconds if a pause occurred, I followed not merely what was said, but— where certain omissions may have been made— how the narrative was framed, and with what purpose. Thereafter, I asked questions first primarily based upon the presented narratives, using certain sensitive vocabulary and asking more sensitive questions only based upon the vocabulary and themes voluntarily already presented by the interviewee.<sup>74</sup> Within the final section of the interviews, I then asked questions that had perhaps been external to the interviews thus far; it is here that I generally asked about interethnic relationships, national identity, and youth groups, though these themes were generally already touched upon during the more semi-structured portion of the interviews.<sup>75</sup>

The interviews conducted led to a range of results. Some provided this project with rich descriptions and interpretations of personal memories of youth groups within the Batschka specifically; others eschewed topics like the National Socialist mobilization of youths nearly entirely. Nevertheless, even these latter interviews provided insight into the production of individual memories and, since all interviews were conducted with persons originally from only two villages, the production of “community memories” and the potential intersection between various levels of individual, family, and community narratives.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, most

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<sup>73</sup> For a further discussion of life story narration, see Gabriele Rosenthal, “The Narrated Life Story: On the Interrelation Between Experience, Memory and Narration” in *Narrative, Memory and Knowledge*, in *Narrative, Memory and Knowledge: Representations, Aesthetics & Contexts*, edited by K. Milnes, C. Horrocks, N. Kelly, B. Roberts, and D. Robinson (West Yorkshire, England: University of Huddersfield, 2006), pp. 1-17.

<sup>74</sup> Thus, I never mentioned “Hitler” or “Nazi” before an interviewee mentioned such terms themselves.

<sup>75</sup> For a discussion of the benefits and dangers of free-flowing interviews, and the importance of precise vocabulary and the establishment of trust, see Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 197-199.

<sup>76</sup> Interestingly, the interviews’ language here was crucial. The interviews with individuals now living within the United States were conducted in English; however, especially when more controversial topics arose— which do

interviewees were able to provide elaborate descriptions of “daily life” within their hometown during the 1930s and 1940s, and point me to further sources and interviewees for this project. It is in conjunction with these interviews, and sources related to their hometowns— like photographs, community publications and histories, and personal memorabilia— that I will present the final chapter of my thesis. While this “micro” level interpretation certainly will not be able to “read” the hearts and minds of youths within the Batschka’s German communities during the 1930s and 1940s, it will at least attempt to present a critical interpretation of the memories, and the representations, thereof. Ultimately, while it will not be possible to present a clear, Rankean depiction of events “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*” through such an analysis, I will at least illustrate a level that is perhaps more central to questions of national identity and the social effects of totalitarian projects— the question of *wie es eigentlich empfunden*.<sup>77</sup>

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not form part of the frequently shared *Donauschwaben* historical narratives of expulsion, general daily life within their former hometowns, etc.— the interviewees switched to their German mother tongue.

<sup>77</sup> “As it actually occurred/was” versus “as it actually is/was perceived/felt/remembered.”

## Chapter 2: The Nazi Imagined Geography— *Lebensraum* Ambitions towards the Batschka, 1930s - 1940s

### 2.1 The Batschka: A Brief Geographical and Historical Introduction

The Batschka (Serbo-Croatian: Bačka, Hungarian: Bácska) is a territory currently split between Hungary and Serbia, whereby its northern segment lies within southern Hungary's Bács-Kiskun County, and its southern segment— the majority of the Batschka's territory— forms the northwestern part of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Located between the Danube and Tisza, the Batschka experienced centuries of settlement and conquest by various ethnic and state entities. During the early modern period, the Batschka was inhabited primarily by Hungarians, though following Ottoman conquests in Southeastern Europe in the fourteenth century, the region experienced a significant influx of Serb migrants.<sup>78</sup> In 1527, Ottoman forces began their occupation of various southern Hungarian territories, including the Batschka. An extensive demographic shift hence occurred: entire Hungarian villages were cleared (as in 1541 throughout the Batschka) and the region became home to a plethora of ethnicities, including Turkish, Serbian, Turkish, Bosnian, and— in some cases— Greek, Jewish, and Gypsy populations. Over time, the region also hosted various Catholic Schokatz (Šokac, Sokác) and Bunjewatz (Bunjevci, Bunyevác) communities, who had migrated primarily from Bosnia and Herzegovina as Christian troops liberated various Ottoman territories during the late seventeenth century.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Karolyi Kocsis and Eszter Kocsis-Hodosi, "Chapter 5: The Hungarians of Vojvodina," in *Ethnic Geography of the Hungarian Minorities in the Carpathian Basin* (Budapest: Geographical Research Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1998), 138-139.

<sup>79</sup> Kocsis and Kocsis-Hodosi, "Chapter 5: The Hungarians of Vojvodina," 140.

In 1699, the Ottomans were driven out of the Batschka, whereafter the Batschka and its neighboring territory towards the East, the Banat, became Habsburg lands. According to a Hungarian census, the Batschka's tax-paying households, by 1720, were 97.6% Serbian and Croatian, 1.9% Hungarian, and 0.5% German.<sup>80</sup> This composition changed drastically over the following decades. Particularly after the accession of Maria-Theresa to the throne in 1740, the Habsburgs began a large-scale resettlement program, whereby thousands of Hungarian and German immigrants were granted permissions and taxation benefits to migrate to the regions of southern Hungary now devastated by the Ottoman wars. Particularly Catholic Germans were thus settled in the Batschka, Germans who had originated from across the Holy Roman Empire, though particularly from its southern and western regions (including Luxemburg, Alsace-Lorraine, and the Alpine territories).<sup>81</sup> Especially with the reign of Joseph II (1780-1790), German immigration became predominant; it was also during this time that Germans of a protestant confession were permitted to settle in the region.<sup>82</sup>

In 1802, the Batschka became a unified entity as the Austro-Hungarian Empire's Bács-Bodrog County. This unification occurred through an administrative amalgamation of the lower "Bács" county (named after one of its fortresses, Bács) and the upper "Bodrog" county (that had similarly been named after a fortress within its realm).<sup>83</sup> According to contemporaneous reports, the two counties had merged so thoroughly by 1820 that no difference could be made between the two— the county was hence known by contemporaries primarily as "Bács."<sup>84</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Kocsis and Kocsis-Hodosi, "Chapter 5: The Hungarians of Vojvodina," 140.

<sup>81</sup> Stephan Olaf Schüller, *Für Glaube, Führer, Volk, Vater- oder Mutterland? Die Kämpfe um die deutsche Jugend im rumänischen Banat (1918-1944)* (Berlin: LIT Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2009), 23-24.

<sup>82</sup> Kocsis and Kocsis-Hodosi, "Chapter 5: The Hungarians of Vojvodina," 141.

<sup>83</sup> Hermann Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, Schriften des Deutschen Ausland-Instituts Stuttgart. A: Kulturhistorische Reihe, Band 28 (Stuttgart: Ausland und Heimat Verlags-Aktiengesellschaft, 1931), 30.

<sup>84</sup> Cited in Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, 30. It is also to the territory thus demarkated that this thesis primarily refers.

After the tumultuous mid-nineteenth century, during which the Batschka briefly became part of the Serbian Voivodeship (1848-1849) and the Voivodeship of Serbia and Banat of Temeschwar (1849-1860), the Batschka officially became a Hungarian territory again after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, as the Bács-Bodrog County.<sup>85</sup> According to a Hungarian census, by 1880 the Vojvodina housed some 1.2 million inhabitants, whereby 35.5% of these were Serbian, 24.4% German, 22.6% Hungarian, and 6.2% Croatian.<sup>86</sup>

Following the First World War and the dissolution of Europe's various empires, the Batschka again became divided. While the northern Batschka remained within Hungary, most of the Batschka (along with the rest of the Vojvodina) now came under the authority of the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.<sup>87</sup> This shift in administration was controversial; as the only territory within Yugoslavia that did not have an absolute Slavic majority, the evolution of the Vojvodina's various territories into an officially Yugoslav region became disputed not merely by the regions' former rulers (like Hungary), but also by its various ethnic minorities, including the Germans.<sup>88</sup> This subject will be dealt with more closely in the following chapters. Nevertheless, according to the Yugoslav census of 1931, out of a total population of 611,838 in the (southern) Batschka, 173,058 were Germans (or 28.3%).<sup>89</sup> Particularly this minority, which had increased and flourished so drastically during the past centuries, became a bone of contention during the early twentieth century. It is to the interests that this population garnered, particularly from the German authorities, that this chapter will now turn.

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<sup>85</sup> Kocsis and Kocsis-Hodosi, "Chapter 5: The Hungarians of Vojvodina," 142.

<sup>86</sup> This was the first Hungarian census conducted on the basis of linguistic (mother tongue) affiliation; the groups are hence divided according to mother tongue. Kocsis and Kocsis-Hodosi, "Chapter 5: The Hungarians of Vojvodina," 142.

<sup>87</sup> Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito: The Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans* (Belgrade: s.n., 2000), 25-27.

<sup>88</sup> Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 19.

<sup>89</sup> Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 32.

## 2.2 The Expansion of German Interests in Southeastern Europe

The National Socialist emphasis on *Lebensraum* has been thoroughly explored in historiography. Formulated by various Nazi leaders during the 1920s— as in Hitler’s notorious 1926 *Mein Kampf* or through the 1926 Bamberg Conference’s conclusions that “Germany’s future could only be secured by eastern colonization”<sup>90</sup>— the concept of *Lebensraum* became deeply entwined with National Socialist theories of eugenics and worldwide domination of the “Aryan master race,” ultimately setting a cornerstone for some of the greatest atrocities of the Second World War. What has perhaps only recently been emphasized, however, is the differentiated and fluctuant nature in which the National Socialists saw the lands potentially subjected to *Lebensraum* ambitions.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler himself explains how the German people must “... terminate the endless German drive to the south and west of Europe, and direct our gaze towards the lands in the east... but if we talk about new soil and territory in Europe today, we can think primarily only of *Russia* and its vassal border states.”<sup>91</sup> Historians like Georg Hirschfeld or John Connelly agree that from the outset, *Lebensraum* ambitions— in terms of an intensive colonization of certain territories, their “ethnic restructuration” according to Nazi eugenicist views, and their eventual incorporation into the *Reich*— was focused primarily on Eastern Europe, especially Russia.<sup>92</sup> Southeastern Europe— including territories like the Batschka— were initially coveted predominately for their economic potential, and not for immediate ethnic cleansing and incorporation into Germany.

<sup>90</sup> Georg Hirschfeld, “Nazis Germany and Eastern Europe,” in *Germany and the European East in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Eduard Mühle (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 71.

<sup>91</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, edited by John Chamberlain, Sidney B. Fay, John Gunther et al. (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939), 950-951.

<sup>92</sup> Hirschfeld, “Nazis Germany and Eastern Europe,” 71; John Connelly, “Nazis and Slavs: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice,” in *Central European History*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1999), 9.

The idea that the National Socialists regarded Southeastern Europe, including regions like the Batschka, as interesting particularly for economic reasons is supported by various studies by recent German historians. As Carola Sachse, in her 2010 volume *“Mitteleuropa” und “Südosteuropa” als Planungsraum* shows, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s, German interests in Southeastern Europe were not necessarily coupled with the idea of militaristic conquest; rather, ideas of an “informal empire,” primarily based upon economic ties and the fostering of common notions of the German “*Volk*” with Germans abroad, became the *Leitmotif* for German involvements with Southeastern Europe.<sup>93</sup> Regions like the Batschka, after all, were generally known as a “breadbasket of Europe,” and were envisaged as stretches of bountiful soil farmed by (amongst others) several hundred thousand “*Volksdeutsche*”<sup>94</sup> that might cultivate not merely crops, but a “*Kulturboden*” for Germany.

As historians like Willi Oberkrome have shown, especially the post-World War I period saw an increasing interest in the regions and peoples of Southeastern Europe. Following the for Germany humiliating Treaty of Versailles and various territorial and economic losses, German academia became increasingly fascinated by Germans living in regions that, economically and

<sup>93</sup> Carola Sachse, “Einführung: ‘Mitteleuropa’ und ‘Südosteuropa’ als Planungsraum. Der Mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftstag im Kontext,” in *“Mitteleuropa” und “Südosteuropa” als Planungsraum: Wirtschafts- und kulturpolitische Expertisen im Zeitalter der Weltkriege*, edited by Carola Sachse (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 16-17.

<sup>94</sup> In order to make the distinction between “*Volksdeutsche*” and “*Reichsdeutsche*,” it might be helpful to draw upon Elizabeth Harvey’s definitions thereof: “*Auslanddeutsche*” and “*Volksdeutsche*,” during the interwar period, referred to citizens of other nation-states that, “due to their language and historical and cultural affinities,” could be counted as part of the “German minority” of these respective states. As Harvey further explains, “*Auslanddeutsch*” could, later on, also refer to “*Reichsdeutsche*” (born within Germany and with German citizenship) who lived abroad. Elizabeth Harvey, “Mobilisierung oder Erfassung? Studentischer Aktivismus und deutsche ‘Volkstumsarbeit’ in Jugoslawien und Rumänien 1933-1941,” in *“Mitteleuropa” und “Südosteuropa” als Planungsraum: Wirtschafts- und kulturpolitische Expertisen im Zeitalter der Weltkriege*, edited by Carola Sachse (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 364. Furthermore, according to Lumans, German authorities from the Weimar period onwards distinguished between four categories of “*Volksdeutsche*”: 1) Germans who had been separated from the *Reich* due to post-World War I settlements (such as in Northern Schleswig, East Prussia, or Upper Silesia); 2) Germans who were part of the now disintegrated Habsburg Empire (such as the Sudeten Germans, the Transylvania Saxons, and the Danube Swabians); 3) Germans within Europe that had never belonged to the German or Habsburg Empires (like the Baltic Germans); and 4) Germans living overseas, outside of Europe. Valis O. Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 23-24.



otherwise, might be beneficial to Germany. Historiographies increasingly formulated their studies in terms of a “*Grenzkampf*” (border fight), in which not merely irredentist legitimizations were sought for lost territories, but also a bolstering of the German “*Volk*”— at home and abroad— in general.<sup>95</sup> Entire research institutions mushroomed across Germany with the goals of “*Ostforschung*” (the study of the East) and “*Kulturraumforschung*” (the study of “cultural space”); thus, Bonn, Leipzig, Innsbruck, and Munich (as with the *Deutsche Akademie*) saw the creation of such institutions, while previously established centers of “*Volkstumsforschung*,” like the Deutsches Ausland-Institut in Stuttgart (established in 1917) further flourished.<sup>96</sup>

Especially from the Weimar period onwards, these institutions fostered the writing of so-called “*Volksgeschichten*”— amalgamated studies of historic, ethnographic, and geographic structures and tendencies within countries of German interest. These studies, of course, rested primarily upon notions of the German “*Volk*.” According to the contemporary historian Manfred Hettling, definitions of the *Volk* have varied significantly across time and political agenda, but have generally incorporated notions of a shared culture, history, politics, religion, biology, or territory, which, for most of these *Völker*, have constituted a glue for community formation.<sup>97</sup> Crucially, by 1918, according to Hettling, the *Volk* had become a *Kompensationsbegriff* (a compensatory term).<sup>98</sup> Around 1800, *Volk* could compensate in the German case what France already had realized with “*nation*”; around 1918, *Volk* could once

<sup>95</sup> Willi Oberkrome, “Entwicklungen und Varianten der deutschen Volksgeschichte (1900-1960),” in *Volksgeschichten im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit*, edited by Manfred Hettling (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 42.

<sup>96</sup> Oberkrome, “Entwicklungen und Varianten der deutschen Volksgeschichte (1900-1960),” 42-43.

<sup>97</sup> Manfred Hettling, “Volk und Volksgeschichten in Europa,” in *Volksgeschichten im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit*, edited by Manfred Hettling (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 8-11.

<sup>98</sup> Hettling, “Volk und Volksgeschichten in Europa,” 12.

again promise the recuperation of all that had been lost at Versailles.<sup>99</sup> The *Volk*, over the course of the nineteenth century, had already experienced an “elevation” to the position of a political actor; *Volk* became defined by language, culture, state, heritage, history, and race; *Volk* was no longer merely constricted to “spiritual” features, but bestowed with physical and geographical demands.<sup>100</sup> Particularly during the Weimar period, such demands intensified, as nations found themselves in a political “race” to prove which (appropriated) *Volk* had existed in which localities first, creating various claims for territorial legitimacy.<sup>101</sup> Especially countries that conceptualized a rupture between their “nation” and their geographical borders thus engaged in a historization of their *Volk* and its localities; nations like the Germans were thus also conceptualized as an “ausserstaatliche Grösse” (an entity beyond state boundaries), whose *Volk* was unjustly severed from the “motherland” within the national irredenta.<sup>102</sup>

All *Volksgeschichten* were not created equal, however, and varied significantly depending on current political conditions, both within Germany and outside of its borders. It is to this evolution of thought, particularly about the Batschka, that this chapter now turns.

### 2.3 A Weimar Study of the Batschka

In 1931, the Deutsche Ausland-Institut in Stuttgart published a volume entitled *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*. Its author, Hermann Rüdiger, apparently had himself coined the term “*Donauschwaben*” in 1922 to denote the ethnic Germans (other than

<sup>99</sup> Hettling, “Volk und Volksgeschichten in Europa,” 12.

<sup>100</sup> Hettling, “Volk und Volksgeschichten in Europa,” 12-13, 20.

<sup>101</sup> Hettling, “Volk und Volksgeschichten in Europa,” 17.

<sup>102</sup> Hettling, “Volk und Volksgeschichten in Europa,” 13, 16-17.

the Transylvania Saxons) who had belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>103</sup> An expert on German communities within Central and Southeastern Europe, Rüdiger spent much of the 1920s researching the Batschka. In this particular volume, he first generally describes the notion of the *Donauschwaben*, then offers a rough historical overview of the Hungarian and “South Slavic” (Yugoslav) states, introduces the Batschka geographically, historically, and ethnographically, and finally dedicates several pages of research to individual settlements with significant ethnic German populations: Apatin, Hodschag (Odžaci, Hódság), Kula, Neusatz (Novi Sad, Újvidék), Palanka, and Sombor (Zombor).

In his introduction, Rüdiger explains how “at the largest rivers in Europe, the Volga and the Danube, hundreds of thousands of German farmers live far away from the German *Urheimat* [original, ancient homeland].”<sup>104</sup> According to Rüdiger, particularly after the First World War, these Germans’ “political and *völkish*” lives had undergone “extraordinary” changes, as the *Donauschwaben* of the former Habsburg Monarchy were split between Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Romania after the “ripping apart” of Austria-Hungary. Furthermore, only since this “disintegration” of the Habsburg Monarchy had Germans in this region unified in a “*völkisch*” sense within their new states. As Rüdiger claims, however, it was not yet clear in 1931 how the “maintenance” of the German language, economy, and culture would develop in the future.<sup>105</sup>

Immediately after his statement of uncertainty about how the German minorities within the former Habsburg realm would prosper, Rüdiger dedicates an entire chapter on the geological and geographical structure of the regions of Danube Swabian settlement, as well as a brief discussion of the collapse of the Monarchy and the development of the “South Slavic”

<sup>103</sup> Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 10.

<sup>104</sup> Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, 7.

<sup>105</sup> Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, 7.

state (which, he says, his readers can simply read about elsewhere).<sup>106</sup> He then transitions into the publications' main topic: the Batschka.

For Rüdiger, the Batschka consists of the former Bács-Bodrog County, and is nestled between the Danube and Tisza within the southern Hungarian plains.<sup>107</sup> As Rüdiger explains, the geographical conditions of the region (primarily flat, sparsely settled land with no geological barriers) make it impossible to distinguish clearly between different districts, linguistic, and "Volk" territories.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, he describes how the Batschka, historically, could be split into an upper, a middle, and a lower region. Furthermore the Batschka could be divided into eight "groups" of primarily German settlements, each centered around their respective administrative centers of Gara, Sombor, Apatin, Hodschag, Palanka, Werbass (Vrbas, Verbász), and Novi Sad.<sup>109</sup> Providing population statistics for various German towns, including their German, "Serbo-Croatian," Hungarian, and "other" ethnic groups, Rüdiger simply offers statistics derived from official state censuses, discusses any irregularities that he observed (as explained by the re-distribution of districts in 1921, which suddenly changed census results), and concludes that administrative and border reorganizations across the decades did not hurt the Batschka's German minorities in one way or another.<sup>110</sup>

Rüdiger's *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka* can be interpreted as a *Volksgeschichte*, as it represents an inquiry into the geographical, ethnographical, and historical features. Certainly, it focuses primarily on the German minority within the Batschka, and expresses some trepidation about how this ethnic group may develop in the upcoming decades. Furthermore, in his description of the Batschka's climactic, geographical, and economic

<sup>106</sup> Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, 7-30.

<sup>107</sup> Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, 30.

<sup>108</sup> Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, 30.

<sup>109</sup> Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, 31-32. He does not mention the eighth center.

<sup>110</sup> Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, 34.

features, he articulates an interest on Germany's part not merely in the "cultural," but also in the economic potential of the region. Ultimately, however, his study seems relatively free from militaristic and ideological aims— in stark contrast with studies later commissioned by the Third Reich on the Batschka and its German minority.

## 2.4 A Post-Gleichschaltung National Socialist Study of the Batschka

As the National Socialists' grip over Germany tightened, a gradual *Gleichschaltung* occurred in German institutions, including various academic and foreign policy-related entities. Increasingly, activities were conducted and funds were raised for the sole purpose of buffering the "Volkstum" abroad. Institutions like the *Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland* (VDA), for instance, established in 1881 and originally a private institution, was renamed the "*Volkstum für das Deutschtum im Ausland*" after 1933, and worked closely with the Third Reich's government to finance German schools across Europe and sending "*Reichsdeutsche*" students abroad to gather data about territories like the Batschka and "Germanize" the *Donauschwaben* communities there.<sup>111</sup>

As Elizabeth Harvey has shown, after 1933, another organization, the *Bund Auslandsdeutscher Studenten* (BADSt) began sending *Reichsdeutsche* students into ethnic German communities in Southeastern Europe, with the aim of working as "missionaries" for Hitler's "new world order." Besides being given the mandate to "Nazify" Germans in Romania and Yugoslavia, these students were also given the task of collecting "racial-biological" data on the "Volk" in order to prepare for the large-scale incorporation and militarization of the German

<sup>111</sup> See, for instance, Valis O. Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 25.

populations there.<sup>112</sup> Also with the potential initiation of international Hitler Youth activities in mind (which might combine ideological and practical training within these territories for *Reichsdeutsche* youths, while concomitantly indoctrinating *Volksdeutsche* youths abroad), several research “expeditions” were hence launched during the 1930s. Starting in 1934, for instance, groups of students from Halle traveled to the Batschka. In cooperation with the local *Erneuerungsbewegung*, these students studied the “living conditions, traditions, and population biology” of Germans in the Batschka.<sup>113</sup> The first main research trip occurred in 1934 in the evangelical village of Batschka Dobro Polje; the second occurred in 1936 in the Catholic town of Bukin.<sup>114</sup> In both cases, physiological data (including height, weight, build, and head circumference) of the towns’ German populations were sought; particularly these (ultimately eugenicist) measurements apparently caused such an uproar amongst these communities’ inhabitants that they were dropped altogether in Bukin.<sup>115</sup>

The shift in policies, activities, and ideological ambitions towards the Batschka after Hitler’s *Machtergreifung* becomes highly apparent within the *Volksgeschichten* published thanks to such efforts of data collection during the 1930s and 1940s. One example of this can be found with Erich Walz’s study of the Batschka, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 Bei Ungarn Gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat* (“The Germandom in the Parts of the Batschka and Banat that Remained in Hungary in 1920”). Published in 1943, this volume seems to create a nexus between two periods of German *Volksgeschichte*. As described by Oberkrome, roughly from 1933 to 1943, *Volksgeschichte* became increasingly “multidisciplinary,” drawing on various sources and methodologies to create “idolizations of the *Volk*,” provide suggestions for

<sup>112</sup> Harvey, “Mobilisierung oder Erfassung?,” 364-365.

<sup>113</sup> Harvey, “Mobilisierung oder Erfassung?,” 375-376.

<sup>114</sup> Harvey, “Mobilisierung oder Erfassung?,” 376-377.

<sup>115</sup> Harvey, “Mobilisierung oder Erfassung?,” 377. Bukin will become significant again in this thesis’ oral history chapter.

the correction of “Jewishly-induced malformations of modernity,” and provide guidance to German military and civilian personnel within the newly occupied territories.<sup>116</sup> After 1943, in a *Grenzlanduniversität* Königsberg-dominated era of ethnographical studies, *Volksgeschichte* became virtually indistinguishable from the goals of the Third Reich’s eastern policy; henceforth, “*Raumforschung*” was conducted according to the evaluation of “*Dienstvölker*” (peoples of purported service to the *Reich*) and the realization of National Socialist genocidal aims in Eastern Europe.<sup>117</sup>

In the foreword to *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 Bei Ungarn Gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, it becomes evident that the Deutsche Auslands-Institut (DAI) in Stuttgart was the volume’s publisher— as in Rüdiger’s case twelve years prior. Established in 1917 as the “Museum und Institut der Kunde des Auslanddeutschtums,” the Auslands-Institut also experienced a gradual *Gleichschaltung* after 1933, ultimately coming under the direct control of the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* (VoMi) and thus, indirectly, the SS during the 1940s.<sup>118</sup> Apparently, this volume intended to complete a series of studies by the (by 1943) deceased Professor Carl Uhlig, who, between 1931 and 1936, had supervised the publication of other volumes on German populations in Hungarian territories like the Hungarian “*Mittelgebirge*,” the Tolna, and the Baranya.<sup>119</sup> According to the foreword, much of the data presented in the volume was collected a decade earlier, however, due to Uhlig’s apparent illness and death, its

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<sup>116</sup> Willi Oberkrome, “Entwicklungen und Varianten der deutschen Volksgeschichte (1900-1960),” in *Volksgeschichten im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit*, edited by Manfred Hettling (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 83-84.

<sup>117</sup> Oberkrome, “Entwicklungen und Varianten der deutschen Volksgeschichte (1900-1960),” 87-90. For a description of how the VoMi gradually came under SS control, see Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries*, 31-61.

<sup>118</sup> For more information on this, see Katja Gesche, *Kultur als Instrument der Aussenpolitik totalitärer Staaten: Das Deutsche Ausland-Institut 1933-1945* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), pp. 82-86.

<sup>119</sup> Erich Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, Schriften N.R. Deutsches Ausland-Institut (Brünn, Wien, München: Rohrer, 1943), 5.

publication was delayed.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, the author of this volume, Erich Walz, was apparently born in 1907 in Baiersborn bei Freudenstadt, Württemberg; in August 1941, he himself had fallen on the eastern front “for *Führer*, *Volk*, and *Reich*.”<sup>121</sup> Since his death, however, the Auslands-Institut conducted some “minor adaptations” to his manuscript; thus, only “some very necessary factually-based changes” were made, and the term “*Minderheit*” [minority] was replaced by the now more “common” term “*Volksgruppe*.”<sup>122</sup>

In light of this foreword, it is perhaps difficult to reconstruct what precisely Walz had written; however, it seems that much of Walz’s work had been preserved. In his own foreword, for instance, he explains how his studies had a purely “geographical approach.”<sup>123</sup> As the Auslands-Institut similarly explained, this volume was compiled strictly on the basis of a “geographical settlement method” (“*siedlungsgeographische Methode*”), whereby “foreign” *Völker* were studied just as extensively as the German ones to understand the influences of these Germans’ “environment” on their habits.<sup>124</sup> Unlike Rüdiger, who simply presented various ethnicities as presented by state censuses and focused primarily on an initial grouping of German communities there, Walz’s concern already centered around the unveiling of “negative” influences of “foreign” “*Volksgruppen*.”

The content of *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 Bei Ungarn Gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, unlike Rüdiger, focuses primarily on the portions in the Northern Batschka still under Hungarian administration. Nevertheless, Walz also offers descriptions of the entire Batschka, in which he delineates the territory just like Rüdiger. Claiming that the Batschka is equivalent to the former Bács-Bodrog County, Walz, like Rüdiger, further splits

<sup>120</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 5.

<sup>121</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 5-6.

<sup>122</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 6.

<sup>123</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 12.

<sup>124</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 5, 6.



the region into three sub-regions (here; the “Southeastern,” the “Northwestern,” and the “Northeastern”) and presents statistics from the 1921 and 1931 censuses.<sup>125</sup> Like Rüdiger, too, Walz focuses his analysis on several sub-groups: first, he presents the “physical-geographic and economic-geographic features of the *Lebensraum*” (whereby the term “*Lebensraum*” is new and not used in Rüdiger’s study), which includes subsections on geographical boundaries, population figures by ethnicity, geomorphological features from plate tectonics to rock formations, climate, flora and fauna, and the “economic bases” of the territory.<sup>126</sup> Second, Walz provides a chapter on settlements of the Batschka and Banat, including the historical formation of settlements and the construction and layout of towns and individual buildings.<sup>127</sup> Third, Walz includes a section on “population,” which considers “population density,” “actual and natural population movement,” and the various “nationalities.”<sup>128</sup> Fourth, Walz analyzes the Batschka and Banat’s economy, including issues of property ownership, soil use, and cattle breeding.<sup>129</sup> Finally, Walz includes a lengthy appendix, including population statistics derived from the censuses of 1880 to 1931, a “chronology” of the settlement of specific villages, and various demographic, linguistic, topographical, and agricultural maps.<sup>130</sup>

While, based on this basic layout, the intention of Walz’s study may have been harmless enough, its rhetoric and modes of analysis quickly illustrate its radical (National Socialist) agenda. Already in his introduction, Walz describes how, “for over half a century, a repetitively increasing and decreasing stream of the best German blood flowed into the wide

<sup>125</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 13-15.

<sup>126</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 15-35.

<sup>127</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 35-53.

<sup>128</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 64-78.

<sup>129</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 96-106.

<sup>130</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 116-119 and maps.

territories of the European East and Southeast.”<sup>131</sup> While, after a time, the direct ties between the “motherland” and its “daughter settlements” slowly “loosened,” the ethnic Germans in these territories remained the greatest “enthusiasts” of their German heritage.<sup>132</sup> Unlike Germans within Germany, who never found themselves in such a direct “struggle” with “foreign *Völker*,” these Germans had always considered their “*Volkstum*” as “the highest good and the content of their entire longing”; thus, when German troops first entered Hungary during the First World War, they were met with “glowing eyes” by their compatriots.<sup>133</sup> These Germans of the Batschka and Banat, for Walz, were further where the “German *Bauerntum* (agricultural folk) had reached a zenith,” a standard that should be adopted once again by his countrymen within Germany.<sup>134</sup>

Nevertheless, as Walz describes, the Germans in this region had, as in most of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, met severe challenges. His chapter on populations is indicative here. Distinguishing between “actual population statistics”— which included immigration— and “natural population statistics”— based on natality and mortality— Walz highlights certain “cancers” that had been damaging the “human material” (“*Menschenmaterial*”) of the Germans in the territory.<sup>135</sup> One of these “cancers” included abortion, a practice supposedly introduced in Csávolgy (Bács-Kiskun County, Hungary) by a Jewish doctor in 1884.<sup>136</sup> Despite attempts by Jesuit missionaries, for instance, to curb the practice, this “Jewish” measure seemed to have been successful; population numbers dropped drastically within the Batschka

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<sup>131</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 9. This quotation also contrasts nicely with Rüdiger’s comparatively harmless opening line about how “at the largest rivers in Europe, the Volga and the Danube, hundreds of thousands of German farmers live far away from the German *Urheimat* [original, ancient homeland].” Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, 7.

<sup>132</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 9.

<sup>133</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 9.

<sup>134</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 10.

<sup>135</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 64, 72-73.

<sup>136</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 75.

from then on, and women became so ashamed that they even stopped attending mass.<sup>137</sup> Walz thus urges that measures be taken to stop abortion practices, as this severely undermines the “health of the Volk” (“*Volksgesundheit*”) and might, one day, lead to its collapse.<sup>138</sup>

Besides his anti-Semitic and eugenicist analysis, Walz also expresses negative opinions of the Magyars. For Walz, the Magyar was a mere “*Dienstbote*” (servant), while all other “nationalities”— primarily the Germans and the Bunjewatzen— were, in most cases, independent farmers.<sup>139</sup> Walz further criticizes the Hungarians for imposing Magyarization policies on the German populations in these regions, and for falsifying statistics to boost Hungarian population numbers within them.<sup>140</sup> As Walz laments, any German who was forcefully educated in Hungarian was frequently listed as Hungarian in censuses; thus, entire villages “fell prey” to faulty questionnaires that suddenly listed ethnic Germans as “German-speaking Hungarians.”<sup>141</sup> Areas with especially low numbers of Germans, for Walz, were therefore— for instance— the product of a “German-hating notary” who attempted to “break into” an already “weakened zone of the German *Volkskörper*.”<sup>142</sup> Nevertheless, as Walz concludes towards the end of his volume, it was only thanks to German efforts and skill that the Hungarian “puszta” flourished; the Germans had always constituted the “most valuable population element” within the Hungarian lands.<sup>143</sup> After 1941— after the convergence of Hungarian and German efforts and the invasion of Yugoslav territories— it would further

<sup>137</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 75.

<sup>138</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 77.

<sup>139</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 76.

<sup>140</sup> Unlike Rüdiger, for instance, in his explanation that the changing of district lines in 1921 led to some irregularities. Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, 34.

<sup>141</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 79.

<sup>142</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 92.

<sup>143</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 110.

finally be possible for the Germans to overcome the “yoke” of Hungarian oppression, and begin a “powerful reconstruction” in “*völkisch*, biological, and economic terms.”<sup>144</sup>

The image that Walz thus paints in his *gleichgeschaltet* DAI study of the Batschka is one of ominous threat to the “pure” German “human material” within the region. Now, at least according to this official, government-funded study, an official part of the German “*Lebensraum*,” the Batschka became not merely a territory with great economic potential, but also one with a militaristic and an ideological purpose. The Batschka’s *Donauschwaben* farmers thus not merely became the “purest” form of “Germandom,” who engaged in a daily struggle for their own existence within a “hostile” world of foreign and “inferior” ethnicities (and would, within this battle, need to be supported); they also represented “human material” for the *Reich*, which could provide Germany with the resources and soldiers that it would need in its war for domination in Southeastern Europe. This population, however, would not merely need to be studied; it also needed to be educated, to rise to the modern “German” standards of hygiene, rates of natality, and “ethnic” “awareness.”<sup>145</sup>

## 2.5 Late Third Reich Conceptualizations of the Batschka

A final transformation in Germany’s conceptualization of the Batschka and its people can be detected in Franz Riedl’s 1944 *Nachbarland Ungarn*. Published by the propaganda ministry of the *Landesgruppe der Auslandorganisation der NSDAP in Ungarn* (Hungary’s NSDAP branch), Riedl’s work is not, strictly speaking, a *Volksgeschichte*, though it assumes some of the same tactics and insights. As the book’s introduction states, the goal of this

<sup>144</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 111.

<sup>145</sup> See, for instance, Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 72-74.

publication was to provide all *Reichsdeutsche* who are entering Hungary for the first time—especially members of the *Wehrmacht*—with a quick guide to the history and current relations of “our beautiful host state.”<sup>146</sup> Hopefully, as the introduction continues, this book would help individuals “correctly value” the “*Waffenbrüderschaft*” (brotherhood in arms) that Hungary and Germany had experienced over two World Wars.<sup>147</sup>

By 1944, of course, relations between Hungary and Germany had changed—now allies in a, for them, increasingly precarious war, the German evaluation of the “Magyar” suddenly altered drastically. While Walz’s publication had still expressed a deep-felt animosity for the Magyars, Riedl suddenly explains how “the closest ties have existed between Germandom and Magyardom for a thousand years.”<sup>148</sup> The Magyar, like the German, as Riedl explains, “... is, in the truest sense of the word, in love with his race and will, in every life situation, profess his love to *Volk* and fatherland.”<sup>149</sup> Like Rüdiger and Walz, furthermore, Riedl explains how the Hungarian lands are inhabited by Magyars, Germans, Romanians, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Bunjewatz, Schokatz, and Armenians.<sup>150</sup> However, the Nazi eugenic tone here becomes unmistakable: Jews and Gypsies are connoted as “foreign elements,” and Germans are warned that especially in Hungary, Jews live “without markings” and “mimic” other “races” to approach unwitting Germans and provoke or take advantage of them.<sup>151</sup>

After a lengthy description of Hungarian history—in which concurrent and friendly relations with Germany are at all times emphasized<sup>152</sup>—Riedl finally enters a discussion of

<sup>146</sup> Franz Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, published by the Landegruppe der Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP in Ungarn (Ujvidek-Neusatz: Druckerei- und Verlags-AG, 1944), 3.

<sup>147</sup> Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, 3.

<sup>148</sup> “*Seit einem Jahrtausend bestehen innigste Verbindungen zwischen Deutschtum und Magyarentum...*” Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, 5.

<sup>149</sup> Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, 10.

<sup>150</sup> Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, 6.

<sup>151</sup> Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, 6, 17.

<sup>152</sup> Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, 31-50.

ethnic German populations within Hungary, including a description of particular communities. As Riedl explains, the Hungarian “Germandom” is at all times loyal to the state and loyal to the *Volk* (“*staatstreu und volkstreu*”), which explains the willingness that the over 40,000 current Hungarian-German members of the Waffen-SS had shown in joining the armed forces.<sup>153</sup> The Batschka in particular had been valuable within the German war efforts. As Riedl explains, the Batschka is home to the most “economically valuable” Germans, which number (an inflated) quarter of a million people.<sup>154</sup> Located within a fertile basin, as Riedl explains, the Batschka gave rise to many valuable and specialized crops— like wheat, corn, hemp, sunflowers, and sugar beet—that turned it into Hungary’s most valuable agricultural territory.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, despite being an extraordinarily “mixed territory” ethnically, the Batschka’s Germans had not only excelled in agricultural and economic production, but also in the rearing of Honvéd, *Wehrmacht*, and SS soldiers.<sup>156</sup>

By 1944, thus, the positioning of the Batschka— at least in official propaganda— was clear. A territory now under direct Axis control, the Batschka was no longer a region under ethnological study from a distance, but a region that could be directly exploited for its agricultural productivity and “human material.” The direction in which the Batschka’s *Donauschwaben* population would take was no longer— as under Rüdiger— a matter of speculation. Rather, the economic and militaristic incorporation of the region by the Third Reich became a fact, and one that had materialized, and that required buffering, by the rearing of a population enthusiastic (or at least compliant) with the Third Reich’s activities.

<sup>153</sup> Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, 58.

<sup>154</sup> Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, 59.

<sup>155</sup> Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, 139.

<sup>156</sup> Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, 139.

## 2.6 Conclusions

In a 1999 study, the historian John Connelly claimed that especially in terms of the Third Reich's geopolitical ambitions in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, "opportunity and ideology shaped one another."<sup>157</sup> This, too, is seen in the evolution of German conceptualizations of, and activities towards, the Batschka. A region that, especially over the course of the past two hundred years, had given rise to a significant German minority, the Batschka garnered increasing attention during the interwar periods, as Germany sought and explored its "*Volk*" across Eastern and Southeastern Europe. By the late Weimar period, thus, the Batschka had already been consolidated in German studies as a fruitful territory, with great potential of manpower, resources, and a major German population yet undecided in its future economic, cultural, and national path. After the National Socialist *Gleichschaltung* of German institutions, including schools of *Ostforschung* and research and exchange programs abroad, Germany's intentions towards the Batschka concretized; Germans in the region were regarded as a "master race" amongst a multitude of "servile," "inferior races" within the German *Lebensraum*. The Batschka, as in Walz's description, had for thousands of years hosted "the best German blood," blood that presented some of the most valuable potential "*Menschenmaterial*" ("human material") as the *Reich* planned its "powerful reconstruction" of the region in "*völkisch*, biological, and economic terms."<sup>158</sup>

As publications like Riedl's show, by 1944, the Reich's situation had changed once again. Now allied with Hungary and slowly losing the War, Germany's rhetoric in terms of the Batschka also changed: no longer could the *Reich* so openly claim the region as part of Germany's own *Lebensraum*. Rather, Germans within the region were now painted as loyal

<sup>157</sup> Connelly, "Nazis and Slavs," 4.

<sup>158</sup> Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, 111.

both to their German *Volk* and to their Hungarian homeland. Large-scale *Wehrmacht* and SS-recruitment, by then, had been a reality for several years. The Batschka's German "*Menschenmaterial*"— both economically and militaristically— was thus exploited by the *Reich*, with ultimately fatal consequences for the individuals involved.

Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to claim that the Third Reich regarded the Batschka's German communities as simply willing to engage in, and subscribe to, Germany's plans in relation to the region. Connections would first have to be made with the ethnic German communities within the region; the *Donauschwaben* within the region would then have to be taught and trained to be "German," to act as the "human material" that the Third Reich had envisioned, and to be enlisted, both physically and mentally, for the Third Reich's greater goals in creating their "millennial world empire." It is here that the Reich began to vigorously employ some of the tactics they had applied within Germany: the gradual *Gleichschaltung* of various institutions, and, above all, the creation of a population enthusiastic towards the tenets of National Socialism, who would be willing to fight and die for its ideals. As in Germany, a primary means for this large-scale indoctrination would consist of the "harnessing" of youths— a youth trained and ideologized within National Socialist youth programs, implemented as a further disseminating tool for the Nazi ideology, and ultimately drafted into the *Reich*'s armed forces.



### Chapter 3: The Hitler Youth— Origins, Evolution, and the Employment of Youths as an Instrument of International Propaganda

In 1936, the leader of the Hitler Youth and eventual *Gauleiter* of Vienna, Baldur von Schirach, declared in his volume *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*: “There is one thing that is stronger than you, my *Führer*; it is the love of the young Germany towards you... your name is the happiness of youth, your name, my *Führer*, is our immortality.”<sup>159</sup> The degree to which Adolf Hitler had initially embraced the creation of a Nazi youth movement is historiographically contested<sup>160</sup>; nevertheless, it is evident that the coordination of Germany’s youth soon became central for the perpetuation of the Nazi movement. A formation that counted some eight million members within Germany by the outbreak of World War II alone, the Nazi youth movement became crucial initially in the indoctrination of youths within Germany.<sup>161</sup> By the mid-1930s, however, it became apparent to the leadership that National Socialist youth groups would also need to be deployed outside the *Reich*, as the “creators” of a

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<sup>159</sup> Baldur von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1934), foreword.

<sup>160</sup> See, for instance, H.W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945* (New York: Dorset Press, 1975), 46-47. Koch— himself a former participant in the Hitler Youth— seems to appropriate a more functionalist perspective on the topic of the Hitler Youth. As he states, for instance, “... Hitler was not as yet fully aware of the traditions of the pre-war German Youth Movement, of the emphasis of youth being led by youth, a point that was to be a cause of occasional friction until after 1933. He considered a National Socialist Youth Movement politically useful but only under the wings, so to speak, of the storm troopers” (p. 46). This is also echoed by more contemporary historiographies of the Hitler Youth, as with Michael Kater, who states that “Hitler himself did not take a great interest in them [the *Hitler Jugend*] at that time [the 1920s] because he focused only on adults old enough to vote for his Party” [Michael H. Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 16]. Other historians of the Hitler Youth— like Gerhard Rempel, seemingly adopt a more intentionalist perspective. Therefore, according to Rempel: “From the start of his political career in Munich after World War I to the final bizarre moments in his Berlin bunker, Hitler was obsessed with youth as a political force in history” [Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler’s Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 1]. Rempel’s analysis, however, fluctuates over the course of his study; thus, most of his analysis in relation to the Nazi Party and Third Reich as a whole focuses on the interplay of various governmental and non-governmental structures in the creation of a “national community” centered around Hitler (p. 6).

<sup>161</sup> Rempel, *Hitler’s Children*, 268.

(National Socialist) German identity amongst the approximately 27 million ethnic Germans abroad.<sup>162</sup> This chapter will first provide an overview of the origins, development, and ideology of the Hitler Youth within Nazi Germany. It will then explore the manners in which Hitler Youth institutions and programs aimed not merely at the indoctrination of youths within Germany, but especially at their creation into “disciples” of the Third Reich. In particular, it will consider the strategies employed by Hitler Youth groups and activities in forging “*volksdeutsche*” communities loyal to the “*Führer*” and to the tenets of Nazism—ultimately hoping to turn “German blood” across Europe, including the Batschka, into a fully disciplined “*Menschenmaterial*,” poised and ready to fight for the Third Reich.

### 3.1 The Formation of the Hitler Youth

Youth movements had a long history in Germany prior to Nazism’s ascent. The turn of the century especially saw the flourishing of a plethora of youth organizations, each with its own political or religious affiliation or social agenda. The *Wandervögel* offer one pertinent example of such early youth movements. Founded in 1901 by male Protestant adolescents and their adult leader in Steglitz, a middle-class suburb of Berlin, the *Wandervögel* reacted against the supposed cold materialism and bourgeois decadence of their elders. Roaming the countryside, *Wandervögel* girls and boys held campfires, sang folksongs, and stressed an emotional, natural individuality unfettered by the constraints of industrializing society.<sup>163</sup> The *Wandervögel*, however, presented only one amongst many organizations that Germany’s youth

<sup>162</sup> Z.A.B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 71.

<sup>163</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 7-8; Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 26-27.

could join— local religious groups, youth groups directed by the Catholic Church, or the Boy Scout movement, introduced to Germany in 1909, all were among the possibilities.<sup>164</sup>

World War I represented a turning point in the development of these youth groups. The *Wandervögel*, for instance, regarded the war as a chance to fulfill their romantic, nationalist ideals and rushed to enlist as soldiers. By November 1918, over half of these 12,000 volunteers were slain. As a result, the *Wandervögel* and their followers became increasingly militaristic, and assumed the trappings of a martial organization, including a rigid hierarchy, uniforms, drills, the exclusion of their female members, and a chauvinist nationalism. The *Wandervögel* hence— previously in rebellion of industrialization's frigidity— now became anathema to the Weimar Republic's liberal, democratic goals. The *Wandervögel* thus disintegrated into the more radicalized *Bünde*: rightwing, anti-democratic youth groups that rejected the, in their view, defeatist and shameful Weimar Republic.<sup>165</sup>

In their increasing political radicalization, however, the *Wandervögel* were not alone. Other German youth groups underwent similar transformations, while new ones— with specific political agendas— arose. In the interwar environment of political instability, economic distress, and the large-scale unemployment that especially affected the young, political groups found new adherents with increasing facility. The Weimar Republic thus became dotted with radicalized youth groups ranging from the left-wing *Antifasistische Junge Garde* (*Antifa*) and *Rotfrontkämpferbund* to the right-wing *Jungnationaler Bund*.<sup>166</sup> It is estimated that towards the end of the Weimar Republic, approximately five million of Germany's young belonged to some

<sup>164</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 28-29.

<sup>165</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 8-9.

<sup>166</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 7.

form of youth group, whether to the Boy Scouts, the Catholic Church's youth groups, or Weimar's budding politically radicalized associations.<sup>167</sup>

It was within this environment of Weimar's political and economic instability, in addition to Germany's mushrooming youth groups, that the Hitler Youth emerged. The Hitler Youth underwent several permutations and stages of development before finally achieving the colossal, regimented, and highly ideologized form it is most famous for today. The earliest discussions about the creation of a separate Nazi youth league began in 1921, when the founders of the newly established NSDAP conceived strategies for their ascent to power. As the historian H.W. Koch describes, Hitler was ambivalent about the creation of a youth group; Anton Drexler, a driving force of the early NSDAP and Hitler's advisor, was downright contrary to the diversion of Nazi funds towards the founding of yet another right-wing "Kindergarten."<sup>168</sup> Nevertheless, by early 1922, a consensus was reached within the NSDAP about the formation of a Nazi youth group. On March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1922, a proclamation was thus published in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the NSDAP's official newspaper, announcing the creation of the "Youth League of the National Socialist Worker's Party," a "youth section" that would be organized and directed by the SA.<sup>169</sup> The purpose of this League, according to the article, was "...to gather all our young supporters who, because of their young age, cannot be accepted into the ranks of the storm troopers."<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, "the movement has its own statutes; it will educate its members in the same spirit which characterizes the party" so that the young, upon whom the "future of the Fatherland" depends, "... receive the best possible

<sup>167</sup> Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Hitler and Nazi Germany: A History* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), 166.

<sup>168</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 46-47.

<sup>169</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 47.

<sup>170</sup> Quoted in Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 47.

training for their difficult task in the future.”<sup>171</sup> The NSDAP’s Youth League was hence initiated primarily as the feeding grounds for future SA members.

Shortly after the official announcement of the creation of the Youth League of the National Socialist Worker’s Party, the NSDAP issued the League’s statutes. These ten statutes, besides settling logistical and organizational matters, also contained the tenets of the Nazi youth movement as it would emerge. According to the statutes, the same “spirit” would pervade the League as the NSDAP; its aim was “...to reawaken and to treasure those characteristics which had their origin in the Germanic blood, namely ‘love of one’s country and people, enjoyment of honest open combat and of healthy physical activity, the veneration of ethical and spiritual values, and the rejection of those values originating from Jewry and Mammon.’”<sup>172</sup> Membership to the League was restricted to “Aryan” boys between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, while an absence of membership fees was designed to encourage these “desired” boys from all social strata to join.<sup>173</sup> After leadership of the Youth League was entrusted to Gustav Adolf Lenk, a pioneer of earlier youth movements, in May 1922, two divisions of the Youth League further emerged, one for fourteen to sixteen-year olds, the other for sixteen to eighteen-year olds. Termed the *Jungsturm Adolf Hitler*, the latter branch was designed to prepare young men for service in the SA— drills, SA-type uniforms, and street violence included.<sup>174</sup>

With Hitler’s failed Beer Hall Putsch in November 1923, Nazi youth groups underwent a period of transformation. As the first NSDAP essentially dissolved, so too did the early Hitler

<sup>171</sup> Quoted in Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 47.

<sup>172</sup> Quoted in Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 48.

<sup>173</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 48-49.

<sup>174</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 49.

Youth.<sup>175</sup> During the next two years, several successor youth movements emerged, including that of Kurt Gruber, a young NSDAP lawyer. Termed the Greater German Youth Movement, it was his youth group which, by July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1926, and amongst qualms on Hitler's part, became the *Hitler-Jugend, Bund der deutschen Arbeiterjugend*.<sup>176</sup> The Hitler Youth was born. An intricate hierarchy and organization was hence imposed on the Hitler Youth, which appointed Gruber *Reichsführer* of the Hitler Youth, and gave him— and the SA— control over the education, welfare, military, sport, propaganda, film, and other newly designed Hitler Youth branches.<sup>177</sup> By 1928, the Hitler Youth was split into *Gaue*, *Kreise*, and *Ortsgruppen* similar to that of the NSDAP, a female branch— the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, or BDM— was formed, and a separate league, the *Jungvolk* (“Pfimpfe”) was set up for the ten to fourteen-year old age cohorts.<sup>178</sup>

During the 1920s, the Hitler Youth became an increasingly significant part of the Nazi program. Not satisfied with the progress they were making with the recruitment of new Hitler Youth members, however, the NSDAP, as soon as it came to power in January 1933, passed a succession of increasingly restrictive legislation. Previously purely voluntary organizations, Hitler's youth groups were, during the 1930s, turned into a legally compulsory exercise for all German boys and girls. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1936, for instance, the Hitler Youth Law was declared, which stipulated that “... the entire German youth within the territory is coordinated in the Hitler Youth.”<sup>179</sup> All other youth organizations became illegal, including, for instance, that of the rival Catholic Center Party, which at that time hosted over one million members.<sup>180</sup> On March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1939, one of the most significant pieces of legislation of the time was further

<sup>175</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 56.

<sup>176</sup> Hitler was mistrustful of Gruber and of the youth movement he had created independently of Hitler's instruction. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 60-61, 64.

<sup>177</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 64.

<sup>178</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 64-69; Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 16.

<sup>179</sup> Quoted in Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 22.

<sup>180</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 22.

passed, a law which stipulated that "... all adolescents from age ten to eighteen are obligated to put in service in the Hitler Youth."<sup>181</sup> Service in the Hitler Youth and its subsidiaries, such as the BDM or the *Jungvolk*, hence became mandatory for all "Aryan" boys and girls. Defiance of this law would bring severe sanctions: at least theoretically, gymnasium students could be refused an *Abitur* (a qualification necessary for entering university), while working youths could be denied apprenticeships, jobs, and the acquisition of inherited farms.<sup>182</sup> By November 1942, Heinrich Himmler enacted additional legislation that could imprison and fine dissenting youths and their parents, even making them subject to the Gestapo.<sup>183</sup> These tactics seemed to have worked. While the Hitler Youth had secured some 100,000 members by January 1933, by December 1936, it already boasted over 5.4 million.<sup>184</sup> According to Nazi statistics, some 98.1% of all German youths were under the direct purview of Nazi youth groups by early 1939.<sup>185</sup>

Despite the NSDAP's initial hesitations in forming a youth group, the Hitler Youth soon became one of the cornerstones of the Nazi program. In particular, it became a vehicle with which the Nazis sought to appeal to the entire German population. By making Hitler Youth service mandatory, the Nazis targeted the more malleable, enthusiastic sensibilities of a

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<sup>181</sup> Quoted in Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 23.

<sup>182</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 25.

<sup>183</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 26-27.

<sup>184</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 19.

<sup>185</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 23. While this official statistic is, of course, rather high, it must be stated that most historiographies agree that "dissent" against Hitler Youth membership was also common amongst youths. Before 1933, youths simply eschewed Hitler Youth activities; after the Hitler Youth became mandatory, many youths within Germany still engaged in alternate activities (as through the Church, the home, or popular culture—consider, for instance, the spread of the "Swings," groupings in which boys and girls consumed and engaged with Anglo-American films, swing and jazz music, and fashions) [see, for instance, Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 113-166, and Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 204-227]. Furthermore, even with youths who engaged in Hitler Youth activities, one of course cannot assume that the Nazi ideology could "penetrate the minds of all the members" (Koch, 116). This issue will become more apparent within the following chapters of this thesis.

generation which, in 1933 alone, comprised one third of Germany's population.<sup>186</sup> It is also with this increasingly restrictive legislation that the nature of Hitler Youth membership changed. What had, during the 1920s, been framed as a revolutionary and voluntary movement of a vanguard became, by the late 1930s, a more routinized project, whereby non-membership within the Hitler Youth became not only a subversive oddity, but illegal. Nevertheless, throughout these various stages of development, the Nazi movement was framed as the ascension of the young—most of its leaders between 1925 and 1932, for instance, were of an average age of thirty-one.<sup>187</sup> By recruiting the young—either through persuasion or coercion—the NSDAP hoped to ensure its initial success and its ultimate longevity.<sup>188</sup> And it would do so through the systematic indoctrination of Germany's budding generations within the framework of the Hitler Youth.

### 3.2 Ideological Content and Dissemination of the Hitler Youth

The Hitler Youth, as was already stipulated in the 1922 statutes of the Youth League, followed a specific ideology. As an organization intended first for the creation of SA, then SS, and Nazi Party leaders, the Hitler Youth of course followed the doctrines of Nazism.<sup>189</sup> This included an adherence to anti-Semitism and conceptualizations of a Darwinian “ethnic struggle” between “Aryans” and racial “undesirables” (such as Jews, Gypsies, or the mentally

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<sup>186</sup> Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 11; Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 5.

<sup>187</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 10.

<sup>188</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 11.

<sup>189</sup> After the so-called “night of the long knives” in 1934, the Hitler Youth was divorced from the SA and instead became the training grounds for future SS leaders. Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 9-12.



ill).<sup>190</sup> The German *Volk*, as Griffin has also shown, was to become the expression of a new type of human being— nationalistic, powerful, cleansed of “racial impurities,” and prepared to assume Hitler’s task of the creation of a “millennial world empire.”<sup>191</sup> The Hitler Youth, however, also harbored its own specificities.<sup>192</sup> In particular, Hitler Youth literature stressed the inculcation of “duty, obedience, honor, courage, strength, and ruthlessness” in its members.<sup>193</sup> The young became the “guardian” of the continuation of the Nazi movement, as they were purportedly, unlike their elders, unfettered by bourgeois degeneracy and Germany’s “shameful” World War I defeat.<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, Hitler’s “personality cult”— though prevalent throughout Nazi ideology— was especially crucial to the Hitler Youth.<sup>195</sup> Germany’s youth was to be trained in a blind faith in Hitler, who— also in line with Gentile’s model of a “sacralisation of politics”— assumed the figure of a divine father figure in propaganda during the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>196</sup> One songbook published in Leipzig in 1941 clearly illustrates the religious trappings that the Hitler youth’s *Führer*-adulation assumed:

<sup>190</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 116.

<sup>191</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 116-118.

<sup>192</sup> It should be stated, however, that some historiographies also doubt that the Hitler Youth, or even the National Socialists, had a unified, “systematic” ideology as such; historians like Koch thus conceive of this “ideology” as more of a “hotch-potch” of “tenets” “propounded by Hitler.” *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 116.

<sup>193</sup> Spielvogel, *Hitler and Nazi Germany: A History*, 169.

<sup>194</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 117-118.

<sup>195</sup> For more on Hitler’s “personality cult” and related issues of “charismatic leadership,” see Arthur Schweitzer, “Hitler’s Dictatorial Charisma,” in *Charisma, History and Social Structure*, edited by Ronald M. Glassman and William H. Swatos Jr. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 149, 151, 153.

<sup>196</sup> It is useful here to consider a more precise definition of “propaganda.” According to Jowett and O’Donnell: “Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.” Furthermore, Jowett and O’Donnell conceive of “subpropaganda,” a type of propaganda where “the propagandist’s task is to spread an unfamiliar doctrine, for which a considerable period of time is needed to build a frame of mind in the audience toward acceptance of the doctrine” and in which “facilitative communication”— in the form of radio, television, press releases, periodicals, language classes, books, pamphlets, etc.— is employed to “keep lines open and maintain contacts against the day when they will be needed for propaganda purposes.” These concepts will become especially crucial within the following chapter. Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 7, 26.

*Mein Führer! Als ich dich sah zum erstenmal, da wusst' ich: du bist die Treue, du bist mir Wille und Gebot, der eine, der aus Nacht und Not, uns vorwärts führt aufs neue.*

*Erst jetzt hat dieses Leben Sinn: Ich habe wieder heimgefunden. Wo ich auch immer stehen mag, zu jeder Stunde, jedem Tag, bin ich mit Deutschland und mit dir verbunden.*

*Und so, bereit zu jeder Opfertat, will ich dein Kämpfer sein und dein Soldat!*<sup>197</sup>

Hitler, within Hitler Youth propaganda, was portrayed as a divine leader for the German people, and one who would— as can be gleaned from this nationalistic “liturgy”— lead youths to their true *völkisch* and national calling.<sup>198</sup>

Hitler’s followers, however, would need to be specifically trained to carry out the Nazi “mission.” As Joseph Goebbels declared in 1930: “True leaders are born. Leadership cadres, however, may be trained. To engage in politics one must be called, yet to function administratively it suffices to be instructed, drilled, trained, and bred.”<sup>199</sup> It was hence the Hitler Youth’s task to “breed” new generations of Nazis, a task that was carried out with an elaborate, and ever-expanding, indoctrination machine.

The endeavored indoctrination of Germany’s youth was to be carried out, first and foremost, in the Hitler Youths’ weekly meetings— generally held on weekends— in which the young were drilled in marches, war games, trumpet fanfares, rifle practice, and other

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<sup>197</sup> “My Führer! As I saw you for the first time, I knew: you are the loyalty, you are my will and commandment, the one who leads us forwards anew through night and need. Just now does my life make sense; I have found my way home. Wherever I may stand, at every hour, every day, I am connected to Germany and to you. And thus, ready for every act of sacrifice, I will be your fighter and your soldier!” Baldur von Schirach, “Mein Führer!,” in *Das Lied der Getreuen; Verse ungenannter Österreichischer Hitler-Jugend aus den Jahren der Verfolgung 1933-37* (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam Jun. Verlag, 1941), 17.

<sup>198</sup> See George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 2.

<sup>199</sup> Quoted in Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 12.

militaristic exercises that would prepare them for future service in the *Wehrmacht*.<sup>200</sup> Sports especially held a premium for their role in steeling the *Volk*'s bodies; thus boxing, skiing, swimming, fencing, soccer, running, and similar exercises became mandatory, both within these Youth meetings and in public schools.<sup>201</sup> In an attempt to combine nationalist education with physical training, hours-long marches became common, which took Hitler Youth members to historically important sites of purported future conquest (such as Schleswig or East Prussia).<sup>202</sup> Nazi ideology was further incorporated into the Hitler Youth newspapers— like *Die Junge Front* and the *Hitler-Jugend-Zeitung* (both already established in 1928)— which furthered the nationalist, anti-Semitic education of the Hitler Youth, while simultaneously reporting on Hitler's "glorious" conquests abroad.<sup>203</sup> Hitler Youth songs exalted the "Fatherland," the Germanic blood and soil, and the virtues of battle and death.<sup>204</sup> Special *Hitler-Jugend Heime* (Hitler Youth homes) were created as community centers for the young, where Hitler Youth members could spend all of their recreational time if desired (or enforced).<sup>205</sup> Special divisions within the Hitler Youth— such as its choirs, orchestras, radio stations, and motor, flier, or marine sections— further ensured that all talents would be fostered, harnessed, and targeted towards the fulfillment of the Third Reich's palingenetic goals.<sup>206</sup>

While initially focusing on Hitler Youth-specific institutions to spread Hitler's word, the NSDAP realized by the mid-1930s that it could also exploit other organizations for the indoctrination of Germany's youth. Textbooks with a Nazi focus were thus introduced into

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<sup>200</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 29.

<sup>201</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 30.

<sup>202</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 30.

<sup>203</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, 71.

<sup>204</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 33.

<sup>205</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 33-34.

<sup>206</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 32.

schools; biology was infused with racial ideals, German history was dotted with notions of superiority and conquest, while foreign languages were taught specifically for communication with future “subjects.”<sup>207</sup> Hitler’s regime further stipulated the recruitment of new Hitler Youth leaders by public school teachers.<sup>208</sup> The Nazi government created independent *Adolf-Hitler Schulen*, opening the first of an eventual ten in Pomerania on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1937.<sup>209</sup> Taking the indoctrination of youth to an extreme, these “Adolf Hitler Schools” organized tours of concentration camps in 1941, where the young could catch a first-hand glimpse of the “internal enemy,” receive an explanation of Nazi Germany’s euthanasia program, and learn to react with disgust towards Jews, Gypsies, and other “enemies” of the Third Reich.<sup>210</sup> Even the *Kinderlandverschickung* (KLV), the systematic removal of some five million urban German children into safety from bombardments in the countryside, provided the Nazis with the means for further indoctrination; placed under the direct administration of the Hitler Youth, youths evacuated by the KLV between the ages of ten and fourteen were frequently placed in Hitler Youth houses, where they became subject to grueling drills and racial education.<sup>211</sup>

Hitler Youth groups were mobilized for practical tasks of violence and racial hatred, too. During the 1938 *Kristallnacht*, for instance, Hitler Youth members helped to smash, burn, and destroy Jewish property and round up Jewish prisoners.<sup>212</sup> At home, Hitler Youths were mobilized for the war effort, collecting rags, paper, metal scraps, and other materials initially, clearing debris after bombings, and acting as air-raid wardens and rescuers once the brutalities

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<sup>207</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 50.

<sup>208</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 41, 44.

<sup>209</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 48.

<sup>210</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 50, 64.

<sup>211</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 44-48; Emmy E. Werner, *Through the Eyes of Innocents: Children Witness World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), 48-54; Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 125.

<sup>212</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 62-63.

of war had also hit Germany.<sup>213</sup> At the front, Hitler Youth members famously became cannon fodder for the *Volkssturm*, Hitler's final push towards victory from October 1944 to the Third Reich's collapse in May 1945.<sup>214</sup>

### 3.3 The Hitler Youth's Foreign Activities

The Hitler Youth, however, was not merely the target of indoctrination and an eventual labor division for the Nazi regime; by the early 1930s, Hitler's youth was also envisioned as an indoctrinating force of its own. The Hitler Youth, though crucial within the confines of Germany, would hence also extend its reach into the international realm. Starting in the 1920s, NSDAP functionaries had already begun to envision a separate "foreign policy" for their youth organizations.<sup>215</sup> Working in conjunction with the Association for Germans Abroad, Ribbentrop's Foreign Office, and Rosenberg's Ministry for Occupied Eastern territories, the Hitler Youth eventually became instrumental to Hitler's "Eastern Policy."<sup>216</sup> This policy infamously included the "reclamation" of German territories— such as Pomerania, East Prussia, Silesia, or the Sudetenland— for the creation of "*Lebensraum*" in Eastern Europe, as well as the mass deportation of Slavs and Jews, and the resettlement of Germans into these and other European regions.<sup>217</sup> Hitler's Youth, in this scenario, would fulfill a crucial role. It would be the task of the Hitler Youth to spread Hitler's vision of a German *Reich* to the so-called "*Volksdeutsche*" in these territories of purported future conquest. In doing so, the Hitler Youth

<sup>213</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 36; Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 11, 300.

<sup>214</sup> Werner, *Through the Eyes of Innocents*, 123-136; Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 233-244.

<sup>215</sup> Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 21.

<sup>216</sup> Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 21.

<sup>217</sup> Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 143-144.

would help rear a new flock loyal to Hitler for the eventual creation of an empire of Aryan “masters.”

One of the first, and most significant, projects that employed the Hitler Youth as agents of propaganda was the *Landdienst*. The Weimar period had already seen the growth of the so-called *Artamanen*, an association of young men founded in 1924, that volunteered on farms and estates in the politically disputed border territories between Poland and Germany.<sup>218</sup> The *Artamanen*’s purpose, however, lay not primarily in boosting the German agricultural sector. Rather, the *Artamanen* sought to drive Polish farm hands off of purportedly German territory.<sup>219</sup> Toiling sometimes for years at a time, these young men aimed at the creation of “racially pure” pastoral lives and the placement of “German” agriculture into “Aryan” hands. Boasting some two thousand workers by 1929, the *Artamanen* eventually became the model for Hitler Youth initiatives in disputed territories.<sup>220</sup>

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1934, the Hitler Youth and the *Artamanen* officially merged to create the *Landdienst*. Initially a voluntary exercise, Hitler Youth members could now spend the harvest season toiling on borderland farms for a small wage of nine *Reichsmark* per month.<sup>221</sup> The movement flourished rapidly: while in 1934 the *Landdienst* involved some five hundred participants, by 1936 the movement had already grown to 6,600 members.<sup>222</sup> After the outbreak of World War II in 1939, however, *Landdienst* service came under the direct jurisdiction of the Nazi regime, and became subject to increasingly stringent regulations.<sup>223</sup> Hitler Youths were now channeled directly into the newly conquered areas of western Poland. There, it became

<sup>218</sup> Rempel, *Hitler’s Children*, 107.

<sup>219</sup> Michael H. Kater, “Die Artamanen: Völkische Jugend in der Weimarer Republik,” *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 213, No. 3 (December 1971), 577.

<sup>220</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 107.

<sup>221</sup> Rempel, *Hitler’s Children*, 109.

<sup>222</sup> Rempel, *Hitler’s Children*, 109.

<sup>223</sup> Rempel, *Hitler’s Children*, 122-123.

their responsibility to “re-educate” *Volksdeutsche* communities and “... lead them back to the proper ways of the life and livelihood of their forefathers.”<sup>224</sup> In addition to their agricultural service, Hitler Youths were now used explicitly as an ideologizing tool. By 1940, tens of thousands of Hitler Youths moved to the borderlands under the purview of the *Landdienst*, giving *Volksdeutsche* German lessons, teaching them Nazi-specific culture (including Nazi literature and German folk songs and dances), and teaching them “German” standards of nutrition and hygiene.<sup>225</sup>

As the Nazi territorial occupation expanded, so too did the Hitler Youths’ mission; first implemented in the newly annexed territories of Poland, the Hitler Youth began working with ethnic Germans in Bessarabia, Bukovina, the Baltic states, Volhynia, Southern Tyrol, Bohemia-Moravia, and western territories such as Eupen-Malmady or Alsace, the Netherlands, and Norway as the war unfolded.<sup>226</sup> By 1942, this service became mandatory for all German youths.<sup>227</sup> Young girls, too, were now sent by the thousands into these territories by the BDM to indoctrinate *Volksdeutsche* within their homes.<sup>228</sup> It is estimated that by 1944, when the program largely crumbled due to the Third Reich’s retreat, some 215,633 youths had participated in the *Landdienst* and its subsidiary programs.<sup>229</sup>

The Hitler Youth’s role in attempting to indoctrinate *Volksdeutsche*, however, did not only occur within the framework of the *Landdienst*. In July 1941, for instance, the Ethnic German Liaison Office (VoMi) stipulated the creation of Hitler Youth branches in Slovakia,

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<sup>224</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 34.

<sup>225</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 34-35.

<sup>226</sup> Rempel, *Hitler’s Children*, 141-142, 145; Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 34-35.

<sup>227</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 35.

<sup>228</sup> Rempel, 149-154. For a more detailed description of the BDM experience abroad, see, for example, Elizabeth Harvey, “‘We Forgot All Jews and Poles’: German Women and the ‘Ethnic Struggle’ in Nazi-Occupied Poland,” *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, *Theme Issue: Gender and War in Europe c. 1918-1949* (Nov., 2001), 447-461.

<sup>229</sup> Rempel, *Hitler’s Children*, 136.

Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Northern Schleswig.<sup>230</sup> Hitler Youth groups were hence established amongst *Volksdeutsche* across Hitler's purported future *Reich*, with Hitler Youth leaders from Germany at their helm.<sup>231</sup> The goal of these groups was the "*umvolkung*" of ethnic German populations across Europe: ethnic Germans were to become not only "racially pure," but also ardent followers of "Germanic" culture and Nazi thought.<sup>232</sup>

In terms of conceptualizing the aims and extent of such projects, it is also instructive and crucial to consider the Nazis' aims as put forth by them in contemporaneous publications. In 1939, for instance, the *Gauverlag der Auslands-Organisation der NSDAP* (the "Gau" publishers of the NSDAP's foreign office) lamented how, for a long time, the "alienation" between Germans outside the *Reich* and their homeland had assumed "threatening" proportions; many had "betrayed their fatherland" as they no longer wanted to be Germans, as they no longer spoke their mother tongue and taught their children foreign languages.<sup>233</sup> Only National Socialist groups could attempt to fight for "Enlightenment" (conduct an "*Aufklärungskampf*") for Hitler amongst these Germans.<sup>234</sup> Among these groups, too, various youth activities emerged, like the newly established Hitler Youth seafaring organization, which would create connections with *Auslanddeutsche* youths and raise them as National Socialists.<sup>235</sup> As the *Auslands-Organisation* further claimed in 1940, Germans within the *Reich* and Germans outside the *Reich* created a "*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*" ("community of fate") that had National

<sup>230</sup> Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 148

<sup>231</sup> Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 148.

<sup>232</sup> Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 160.

<sup>233</sup> *Jahrbuch der Auslands-Organisation der NSDAP, 1939*, Vol. 1 (Berlin: Gauverlag der Auslands-Organisationen der NSDAP, Seefahrt und Ausland G.m.b.h., December 1938), 32, 43.

<sup>234</sup> *Jahrbuch der Auslands-Organisation der NSDAP, 1939*, 44.

<sup>235</sup> *Jahrbuch der Auslands-Organisation der NSDAP, 1939*, 142. According to an article in the same volume, the "*Auslanddeutsche*" consist of "all individuals of German blood that live beyond the boundaries of the *Reich* as German-conscious people and possess German *Reich* membership" ("Alle Deutschblütigen, die jenseits der Grenze des Reiches als deutschbewusste Menschen leben und die deutsche Riechsauehörigkeit besitzen, sind Auslanddeutsche."). p. 28.



Socialism at its core; the German national identity and German fate thus became irrevocably linked to the *Reich* and to the Nazis.<sup>236</sup>

The role of the Hitler Youth in conducting this “*Aufklärungskampf*” amongst Germans outside the *Reich* further becomes apparent in Baldur von Schirach’s 1934 *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*. In his work, von Schirach dedicates an entire chapter to the Hitler Youth’s “*Auslandsarbeit*” (foreign work). According to von Schirach, “the Hitler Youth is concerned with youth, not with grand politics.”<sup>237</sup> The main goal of the Hitler Youth’s foreign engagements— including “study” trips and exchange programs with other youth groups abroad— was the creation of “purely humane mutual communication between youths.”<sup>238</sup> According to von Schirach, the past year had only seen limited interactions between German and “foreign” youths, including a friendly visit of the Hitler Youth in Hungary, and a reciprocal visit by *levente* youths in Germany. Therefore, as von Schirach claimed, “Hitler Youths, who travel abroad, do not travel as propagandists for National Socialism; their task is not teaching, but learning” towards the ultimate goal of creating trans-national sensibilities amongst the world’s youth.<sup>239</sup>

The propagandistic nature of von Schirach’s work is apparent. Nevertheless, it allows for some further glimpses into the planned construction of the German youth movement abroad. As von Schirach explained, the *Mittelstelle für volksdeutsche Jugendarbeit* was, in 1933, incorporated into a more general *Mittelstelle Deutscher Jugend in Europa*. Within this organization, three main tasks were hence delineated: the conducting of field trips in border territories and abroad for all German youths from within the *Reich*; the *Volksdeutscher*

<sup>236</sup> *Jahrbuch der Auslands-Organisation der NSDAP, 1940*, Vol. 2 (Berlin: Gauverlag der Auslands-Organisationen der NSDAP, Seefahrt und Ausland G.m.b.h., December 1939), 12.

<sup>237</sup> von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 154.

<sup>238</sup> von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 154.

<sup>239</sup> von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 154.

*Arbeitsdienst* (labor service); and the education of *Auslanddeutsche* youths within the *Reich*.<sup>240</sup> In terms of the field trips, *Reichsdeutsche* youth groups were to seek contact with ethnic Germans abroad, engaging them in folk song, theater, dance, and similar cultural productions that would create a “connection to the new Germany.”<sup>241</sup> These trips would further present an opportunity for the recruitment of youths capable of leadership positions within the Hitler Youth; these would then be brought to the *Reich* for training.<sup>242</sup> The *Volksdeutsche Arbeitsdienst*, in turn, would open schools abroad in order to educate *Auslanddeutsche* according to the tenets of National Socialism. Free books and youth publications would further be provided to these groups to create “a spiritual connection to the *reichsdeutsche* Hitler Youth.”<sup>243</sup> Additionally, a press organization—the *Pressedienst Ostraum*—would be targeted towards the ethnic German youth movements in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austrian, Romania, and Yugoslavia, with the ultimate goal of bringing news from the *Reich* into the *auslanddeutsche* press, and vice versa.<sup>244</sup> Finally, in terms of its “educational department” (*Schulreferat*), the Foreign Office would provide for the education of lecturers (who could educate youths abroad, as well as *auslanddeutsche* guests in the *Reich*), initiate the publication of magazines like *Volk und Reich*, establish libraries, and disseminate “special” articles in newspapers and magazines across Europe’s German-speaking press.<sup>245</sup> As von Schirach states, the goal of these efforts was:

... that every Hitler Youth and every BDM-girl, regardless of their location in the world, will create a large camaraderie [*Kameradschaft*], and that they will— despite spatial separation— march in one direction and live and act within the same spirit...<sup>246</sup>

<sup>240</sup> von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 156.

<sup>241</sup> von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 157.

<sup>242</sup> von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 157.

<sup>243</sup> von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 157-158.

<sup>244</sup> von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 158.

<sup>245</sup> von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 159.

<sup>246</sup> von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 162.

As these elaborate schemes traveled across Europe, their purpose became increasingly explicit. On the one hand, “*reichsdeutsche*” youths were sent abroad within various foreign service and *Kinderlandverschickung* operations, with the goal of experiencing, firsthand, the “true” “original” German “blood” that environments like the Batschka— according to German ethnographies and *Volks geschichten* of the time— still harbored. These youths, however, were not merely to be “educated” within these programs; they also acted as “educators.” Teaching ethnic German youths abroad about the contents and benefits of a “German” identity, these “*reichsdeutsche*” youths suddenly became “emissaries” for the Nazi “gospel,” and themselves were granted the perception of actively fighting for its tenets. On the other hand, “*Volksdeutsche*” youths, who had been ideologized within such programs, were then also supposed to act as a further indoctrinating tool within their communities. As one 1941 article within Hungary’s Nazi youth paper, the *Junkamerad*, stated, for instance:

*Deutsche Jugend!* Maybe your parents are still ambivalent about the *Volksbund* [Hungary’s Nazified German organization]. However, it is your task to also fight for your parents. Through you, they must become Germans. Maybe it won’t occur rapidly, maybe they also won’t have the necessary dedication; however, they will march, and they even will be glad when you are kilometers ahead of them.<sup>247</sup>

Hitler Youths were thus intended explicitly as an indoctrinating device, as one that would teach “true” “Germanness” to their broader communities, and ultimately forge a mobilized population in the millions that would be prepared and inspired to fight for the Third Reich.

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<sup>247</sup> “*Deutsche Jugend! Vielleicht stehn eure Eltern dem Volksbund noch gleichgültig gegenüber. Ihr habt aber die Aufgabe, auch für eure Eltern zu kämpfen. Durch euch müssen sie Deutsche werden. Es geht vielleicht nicht so schnell, vielleicht fehlt es auch an der nötigen Einsatzbereitschaft bei ihnen, aber sie werden marschieren und werden sogar froh sein, wenn ihr um Kilometer vor ihnen steht.*” “Erster Landesjugendtag der deutschen Jugend in Ungarn,” in *Der Jungkamerad: Das Blatt der Volksdeutschen Jugend Ungarns*, Vol. 1, No. 12 (July 1941), 1.

### 3.4 Conclusions

The history of the Hitler Youth is complex, as it underwent various permutations throughout its existence. Initially designed as a means for infusing the Nazi movement with a regenerative vitality during the 1920s, the Hitler Youth gradually became a crucial vehicle for the Nazi-specific nationalist indoctrination of youths within Germany. As Hitler's visions of his larger Third Reich seemed to begin materializing in the early stages of World War II, however, the Nazi leadership increasingly transformed the Hitler Youth; initially the target of National Socialist indoctrination, these youth groups themselves were soon regarded as agents of propaganda for Hitler's anti-Semitic, nationalistic, palingenetic dogma outside the borders of Germany. As von Schirach and similar leaders realized, Hitler's young could become "...the self-conscious bearers of a 'superior' culture," perpetuate the indoctrination that they themselves had been subjected to, and ultimately help create a "nationally" aware class of "Aryan masters" within Europe's contested regions.<sup>248</sup> The *Reich* thus expended great efforts in creating youth exchange programs, fostering Hitler Youth formations within their future (or actual) territories of conquest, and disseminating National Socialist youth literature abroad.

Ultimately, it was therefore first the *reichsdeutsche*, then the *volksdeutsche* youth that were to act as Hitler's messengers; they could help the *Führer* construct his *Reich*, as they slowly— through the dissemination of his propaganda— forged a National Socialist German "*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*" across Europe's boundaries. These aspirations and activities also flourished within the Batschka, as local German political and cultural organizations underwent a gradual *Gleichschaltung*, much endemic German press morphed into an agent of National Socialist propaganda, youths from the *Reich* flooded local *Donauschwaben* communities within

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<sup>248</sup> Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 164.

the framework of student, KLV, Hitler Youth, and BDM expeditions, local German schools became increasingly tied to Nazi Germany, and individual “Hitler Youth” groups mushroomed across the region. It is to these subjects that this thesis will now turn.

## Chapter 4: The Transformation of the Batschka's *Volksdeutsche* Youth Organizations from a Transnational Perspective— From Students of Folk Tradition to “Harbingers of [Nazi] Enlightenment”,<sup>249</sup> to SS Fodder

The Batschka, by the interwar period, had become a territory sought by the *Reich*, and— like other regions containing ethnic German communities— a terrain increasingly targeted by National Socialist youth groups and activities. By the 1940s, thousands of youths from the Batschka actively engaged in Hitler Youth programs; most others at least became witnesses of KLV, student exchange, educational, and other ideological methods employed to infuse the local *Donauschwaben* with Nazi German values and self-identifications. This development, however, was gradual, and caught within complex negotiations of fluctuating state boundaries, administrative conditions, *Donauschwaben*— Third Reich— host state relations, and wartime circumstances. This chapter will provide an overview of the development of ethnic German organizations in the Batschka, with particular focus on German youth groups. The chapter will not merely present a discussion of the general evolution and activities of ethnic German (particularly youth) organizations in the region as it has been presented in secondary literature, but also an analysis of the representation of these events within the ethnic German media of the time.

As described previously, the Batschka underwent several administrative changes; being split initially between Hungary and Yugoslavia, the Batschka formed a unified territory once again after 1941. Any discussion of the development of ethnic German organizations in the Batschka hence poses certain challenges: the Batschka, for much of the time under

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<sup>249</sup> Weekly Hitler Youth column in *Deutscher Volksbote: Wochenblatt für Kultur, Politik und Wirtschaft*, Vol. 2, Number 7, 18 February 1940, p. 4.

consideration for this thesis, formed no single unit; various parts of the territory came under different influences and developed diverse political tendencies depending on their current host state; and, by the time the Batschka was reunited, the organizations within this territory were also compelled to merge, a process which once again transformed the structure and nature of “*Volksdeutsche*” organizations of the region. In an attempt to do these complexities justice, this chapter will first present the post-World War I evolution of ethnic German (youth) organizations in Hungary. It will then discuss the distinctive development of ethnic German organizations in Yugoslavia, and the effects that these disparities had on the Batschka’s 1941 reunification. Finally, the incorporation of the Batschka’s ethnic Germans into the *Reich*’s armed forces will be presented.

#### **4.1 Hungary: The Evolution of the *Volksbund* and the *Deutsche Jugend*, 1919-1944**

Hungary’s Germans presided over a long tradition of individual cultural and youth organizations. According to the historian Josef Volkmar Senz, these organizations generally revolved around either religion or vocation within the German-speaking communities. Thus, for centuries, religious groups, workers’ guilds, farmers’, and (later) workers’ organizations assumed the main responsibility for the training and oversight of the *Donauschwaben*’s youth outside the home. It was only during the nineteenth century, when the German communities experienced an economic and political upswing, that these organizations truly blossomed and assumed an increasingly nationalistic stance. During this time, traditional German teachers’, farmers’, and clerics’ organizations thus were increasingly supplemented by various German

singing and athletic groups, many of which already began making a nationally-minded education a priority.<sup>250</sup>

While such developments were true of most “*Donauschwaben*” communities, the end of the First World War, for most historians, represents a watershed.<sup>251</sup> With the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy and its carving into various successor states, ethnic German communities of the region, too, were split across new borders. Henceforth, ethnic German communities began developing virtually independently from each other across state boundaries, each, in their own way, becoming increasingly radicalized.

Many historians agree that Hungary’s Germans, in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, were faced with greater difficulties in establishing cohesive ethnic German organizations than those in other Habsburg successor states. Faced with the collapse of what such historiographies agree was an integrative polity (the monarchy), Germans became increasingly subjected to the ongoing Magyarization campaigns, in which Hungary’s minorities were pushed to assimilation through forced name changes, discrimination in the workforce, and increasingly restrictive education laws.<sup>252</sup> Until 1940, German higher educational institutions were outlawed, German schools dwindled, and the so-called *Volksbildungsverein*— one of the first German organizations— was allowed no members under the age of twenty-one.<sup>253</sup>

Furthermore, while the seeds of nationally-based thinking had already been planted within

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<sup>250</sup> Josef Volkmar Senz, *Geschichte der Donauschwaben* (München: Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, 1987), 208.

<sup>251</sup> See, for instance, Senz, *Geschichte der Donauschwaben*, 208; Valis O. Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries: the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 113; Norbert Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944 unter Horthy und Hitler* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2002), 1.

<sup>252</sup> Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries*, 113. Especially crucial here, for instance, were Apponyi’s 1907 educational laws, which restricted the development of minority schools. According to some estimates, in 1855, for instance, there were some 2,400 German schools in Hungary; by 1918, this number had already dwindled to 417, of which 254 belonged to the Transylvanian Lutheran school system. Wigant Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege: Schulen— Erziehungsheime und Erziehungsanstalten des Volksbundes der Deutschen in Ungarn— 1940-1944* (Rothenburg ob der Tauber: Schneider, 2005), 9-10.

<sup>253</sup> Senz, *Geschichte der Donauschwaben*, 209.



Hungary's ethnic German communities before the War, these communities, especially after the War, became geographically too fragmented and unable to provide a solid structural foundation for the flourishing of a cohesive ethnic German movement. Through the 1920 Trianon Treaty, the ethnic Germans decreased from 10.4% to 6.9% of Hungary's total population; regions like most of the Batschka— which had apparently already housed the most politically mobilized German community in Hungary, with Edmund Steinaker's *Ungarländische Deutschen Volkspartei*— were ceded to other successor states.<sup>254</sup> The immediate postwar period hence saw a considerable degree of confusion not only for the greater successor states, but also for their ethnic German minorities.

It was within this climate that Hungary's Germans attempted to launch a consolidated movement for the preservation of their own cultural and political position. In 1923, Hungary's former Minister for Minorities, Jakob Bleyer, founded the *Ungarländische Deutscher Volksbildungsverein* (UDV), an organization acknowledged by the Hungarian authorities in 1924 as the minority's only official representation.<sup>255</sup> Bleyer, in much recent historiography, is portrayed as a conciliatory figure; Bleyer and the UDV hoped to affirm German minority rights and help support German culture within Hungary, while at all times maintaining loyalty to the Hungarian state.<sup>256</sup> Seeing its mandate as primarily based in the countryside, the UDV launched various cultural initiatives (“*Kulturarbeit*”) in Hungary's towns, opening libraries, supporting musical organizations (under the heading of “*Volkslied und Volksmusik*”), and holding festivities, like a banquet in April 1927 in honor of the founding of the UDV's Budapest

<sup>254</sup> Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 1.

<sup>255</sup> Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 113.

<sup>256</sup> Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 113.

chapter.<sup>257</sup> In most of these projects, the UDV was silently financially supported by the German government, through funds allocated to the *Verein für Deutsche Kulturbeziehungen im Ausland* (VDA).

At the same time, however, it seems that Bleyer's more conciliatory stance backfired. Suspicions of meddling by Germany rose amongst Hungarian officials, Magyarization policies did not abate, and Germans grew increasingly restless.<sup>258</sup> By 1933, with the death of Bleyer, the UDV essentially collapsed. Bleyer's successor, Gustav Gratz, was challenged by Franz Basch, a former student of Bleyer's born in Zurich in 1901 and a founding member of the more decidedly nationalistic 1920s student organization *Suevia*, for being a puppet of the Hungarian authorities.<sup>259</sup> Observing Hitler's *Machtergreifung* in January 1933, Hungary's more nationalistic ethnic Germans—including Basch—observed political changes in the *Reich* with enthusiasm, as a triumph of the “national idea” within Germany, and an action that would, for them hopefully, result in more *Reich* support for its fellow Germans in Hungary.<sup>260</sup> This *Reich* support was quick to follow. In 1934, Basch founded the rival *Volksdeutsche Kameradschaft*, an organization that thereafter dominated Hungary's *Volksdeutsche* organizations. Aware of the potential of such an organization, Nazi leaders in Berlin were quick to lend their support; the VoMi recognized Basch as the official leader of the Hungarian *Volksdeutsche*, and his *Kameradschaft* as the only official link between Berlin and this minority.<sup>261</sup> By July 1937, the VoMi officially renounced the legitimacy of the more moderate UDV and began to reinforce—

<sup>257</sup> Georg Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte. Band III: Die Tragödie der Selbstbehauptung im Wirkfeld des Nationalismus der Nachfolgestaaten 1918-1944* (München: Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, 2010), 99-100.

<sup>258</sup> According to Spannenberger, some 80,000 to 100,000 Magyarizing name changes were still planned by Hungarian officials in 1933. Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 78.

<sup>259</sup> Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 114; Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte*, 98; G.C. Paikert, *The Danube Swabians* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 114. Apparently, the Hungarian government began funding the UDV in an attempt to foil the more radical German organizations—a plan which was discovered and henceforth discredited the UDV. Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 114.

<sup>260</sup> Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 79.

<sup>261</sup> Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 114.

also financially— the *Kameradschaft*'s “*Volkstumsarbeit*.”<sup>262</sup> On November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1938, the Hungarian authorities— now under the anti-Semitic Béla Imrédy government— recognized the reconstituted *Kameradschaft*, the *Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn* (VDU), with Basch as its leader, as the official “organ” of the German minorities in Hungary.<sup>263</sup>

As the exact nature and aims of the VDU are historiographically contested, it is perhaps most helpful to present the VDU's program as it was put forth by Basch and the VDU itself. During the founding meeting of the VDU on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1938, for instance, Basch and his entourage demanded a solution to the growing “school question” and an increase in German mother-tongue class instruction, the creation of individual Kindertages, primary, and secondary schools, the unification of the German “*Volk*” into one political party, and a legal basis for the creation of German charity and youth organizations.<sup>264</sup> Basch further explained the *Volksbund*'s stance in the March 1942 edition of the VDU's own periodical, the *Südostdeutsche Rundschau*. According to Basch, the VDU maintained a dual aim: the creation of a bridge between “homeland” [Hungary] and “motherland” [Germany], and between the Hungarian and the German people.<sup>265</sup> While the maintenance of friendly relations with Hungary— certainly in the official rhetoric— remained a must, the purpose of the *Volksbund*, its organizations, and its publications would be the creation of a “*Sprachrohr*” (direct speaking line) between *Volksdeutsche* and *Reichsdeutsche* and a fortification of their “spiritual and social” bonds, the

<sup>262</sup> Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte*, 153; Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 121, 127. The Reich funding helped finance primarily German-speaking publications in Hungary, the *Suevia*, the Hungarian German economics office, propaganda (“*Volkstumsarbeit*” in German villages), and the *Volksbildungsverein*. Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 106.

<sup>263</sup> Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 115.

<sup>264</sup> Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege*, 27; Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 144-145.

<sup>265</sup> *Südostdeutsche Rundschau: Zeitschrift der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Ungarn*, March 1942, 7.

support of German cultural projects, and the maintenance of unconditional “*Volkstreue*” through its traditional values of “blood, idea, and language.”<sup>266</sup>

It was during this time that German youth organizations in Hungary also began to flourish and establish themselves as crucial components of the *Volksdeutsche* movement. The early 1930s had already seen a minor *Wandervogel* movement amongst ethnic Germans in Hungary. Furthermore, local German youth organizations increasingly began to stress “*völkisch*” values, organizing folk music and theater events, field trips, and even work camps.<sup>267</sup> Exchanges between students, especially in the Batschka, began to flourish, as “*Reichsdeutsche*” were sent on ethnographical and ideological missions into *Volksdeutsche* communities, and *Volksdeutsche* students traveled to Germany to gain access to higher education, and, ultimately, insight into Nazi ideology, youth training, and youth organizations.<sup>268</sup>

The activities of ethnic German youth groups in Hungary can be more concretely fathomed through an analysis of Hungary’s German-speaking press during this time. As this press suggests, it was especially during the late 1930s— when the *Volksbund* gained increasing impetus and *Reich* agencies were already deeply entwined with Hungary’s *Volksdeutsche* activities— that German youth groups began to gain momentum and increasingly profess National Socialist goals. Some of the most interesting and telling representations of German youth activities can be gleaned from the publication of the VDU’s more radical branch, the *Deutsche Nachrichten: Mitteilungsblatt der Reichsdeutschen in Ungarn*, printed in Budapest.<sup>269</sup>

<sup>266</sup> *Südostdeutsche Rundschau*, March 1942, 8, 3, 6.

<sup>267</sup> Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege*, 44.

<sup>268</sup> See, for instance, Elizabeth Harvey, “Mobilisierung oder Erfassung? Studentischer Aktivismus und deutsche ‘Volkstumsarbeit’ in Jugoslawien und Rumänien 1933-1941,” in “*Mitteleuropa*” und “*Südosteuropa*” als Planungsraum: Wirtschafts- und kulturpolitische Expertisen im Zeitalter der Weltkriege, edited by Carola Sachse (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 363-390; Senz, *Geschichte der Donauschwaben*, 209.

<sup>269</sup> Thomas Spira, “The Radicalization of Hungary’s Swabian Minority after 1935,” *Hungarian Studies Review*,

An analysis of the *Deutsche Nachrichten* quickly brings its National Socialist proclivities to light. In early April 1938, for instance, the paper published articles urging Hungary's Germans to travel to Vienna to vote in favor of Austria's *Anschluss* with the *Reich*— the “dream” of a greater Germany would hence come true, a dream which would represent a manifestation of “blood-based bonds,” a profession of loyalty to the “National Socialist worldview,” and a demonstration that state boundaries “against the laws of nature” would be annulled.<sup>270</sup> Within this conceptualization, Hungary's Germans were further portrayed as forming a colony, the “*Reichsdeutsche Kolonie Ungarn*.”<sup>271</sup> It is hence in this newspaper that the activities of the “Hitler Youth” in Hungary make their first unabashed appearances.

While it seems that no legal basis existed for a “Hitler Youth” in Hungary at that time (more about the legal position of these organizations later), reports on the *Hitler Jugend* (HJ), the *Deutsche Jugend* (DJ), and the *Bund Deutscher Mädchen* (BDM) appear in every monthly issue of the *Deutsche Nachrichten*. The April 1938 issue, for instance, reported on evenings of folk song, dance, and theater of the “*Reichsdeutsche Kolonie*” youth in Budapest.<sup>272</sup> In May 1938, the *Deutsche Nachrichten* further advertised the *Reichstagung der Auslanddeutschen* in Stuttgart of that year, urging all boys and girls over the age of twelve to attend and experience the “real *Grossdeutschland*.” Transport by low-cost bus would be organized from Budapest to Stuttgart by the NSV (the National Socialist welfare organization).<sup>273</sup> That same month, twelve local Hitler Youths apparently attended an Easter fieldtrip, during which they marched through

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Vol. XI, No. 1 (Spring 1984), 10.

<sup>270</sup> *Deutsche Nachrichten*, April 1938, 3, 8.

<sup>271</sup> This term appears in virtually every issue of the *Deutsche Nachrichten*. See, for instance, April 1938 (p. 11), May 1938 (p. 4); September 1938 (p. 4).

<sup>272</sup> *Deutsche Nachrichten*, April 1938, 12-13.

<sup>273</sup> *Deutsche Nachrichten*, May 1938, 5-6.

the Hungarian countryside and played a football match against the local Hungarian club in Tihany (which, according to this paper, they naturally won).<sup>274</sup> In August 1938, additional details on the field trip to Stuttgart were published— the *Volksdeutsche* boys would live in Hitler Youth camps for the duration of their stay in Germany, while the girls would be accommodated in youth hostels.<sup>275</sup>

In October 1938, the *Deutsche Nachrichten* published a “Hitler Jugend” article by Theo Stadler, the *Reich’s* head of the *Grenz- und Auslandsamt der Reichsjugendführung* (the *Reich’s* youth organization’s foreign office). According to Stadler, Herbert Engel had been appointed as the *Landeskreisjugendführer* in Hungary, a step that effectively turned the Hungarian Hitler Youth into an independent *Landeskreis* within the *Reich’s* organizational structure. As Stadler further explained, the “service year” 1938/1939 would thus include an increase in advertising, so that the youth of “the former Austrian citizens” could be collected and unified by the local Hitler Youth. All units of the Hitler Youth would meet regularly on Saturday afternoons in the *Reichsdeutsche Schule* in Budapest.<sup>276</sup> While this statement itself is a product of the *Deutsche Nachrichten’s* propaganda, it is nevertheless crucial; the Hitler Youth, within Hungary and as represented in most secondary sources, only became an official organization after 1942. This article, however, suggests that within the *Reich*, the Hungarian German youth organization was already considered an official, legal, and significant entity— one that would need to be developed further to the *Reich’s* advantage.

An expansion of youth propaganda can indeed be detected. By late 1938, a regular Hitler Youth column began to announce new local leadership amongst the *Hitler Jugend* and BDM, weekly events and meetings, and various accomplishments (such as the creation of a

<sup>274</sup> *Deutsche Nachrichten*, May 1938, 14-16.

<sup>275</sup> *Deutsche Nachrichten*, August 1938, 9.

<sup>276</sup> *Deutsche Nachrichten*, October 1938, 7.

fencing club at the *Reichsdeutsche Schule*).<sup>277</sup> Beginning in March 1939, an article appeared every few months on a “*Lustiger Abend der HJ*” (a fun evening by/with the Hitler Youth). Describing youth performances of German plays, songs, and dances, these articles frequently also featured photographs of glowing girls and boys in German folk costume or Hitler Youth uniform, the curved swastika emblem of the Hungarian *Volksbund* generally draped behind them.<sup>278</sup>

It was not merely such announcements and images, however, that circulated amongst Hungary’s ethnic Germans. By the spring of 1939, the *Deutsche Nachrichten*— now in larger A4-type format and (unlike previously), gothic script— began printing articles on the importance of youth to the *Reich*.<sup>279</sup> In May 1939, for instance, the newspaper printed an extensive analysis on the compulsory nature of the Hitler Youth within Germany. According to this article, the Hitler Youth essentially formed an “activist troupe” amongst the young, which would help create a path for National Socialism and new “warriors” for the Party.<sup>280</sup> By November 1939— the Second World War was now well on its way— the militaristic nature of the Hitler Youth within Hungary was brought to the forefront. In its November issue, for instance, the *Deutsche Nachrichten* printed an article, including a photograph of enthusiastic German youths singing at a local *Rundfunk* studio, entitled “the Hitler-Youth in Wartime.”

<sup>277</sup> See, for instance, *Deutsche Nachrichten*, December 1938, 9-10.

<sup>278</sup> See, for example, *Deutsche Nachrichten*, March 1939, 9-10; April 1939, 9-10; March 1940.

<sup>279</sup> It is perhaps interesting to note here, that along with the new format, the paper’s financial situation also seemed to change. Previously including a copyright page with requests for donations in every issue— the January 1939 edition even contained a pink slip warning readers to actually pay for their subscriptions— these disappeared in April 1939.

<sup>280</sup> “*In der Kampfzeit der Bewegung sollte die Hitlerjugend als aktivistische Truppe der jungen Generation mithelfen, dem Nationalsozialismus den Weg zu bereiten und der Partei junge Kämpfer zuführen...*” *Deutsche Nachrichten*, May 1939, 4. It is interesting that even after the Hitler Youth became compulsory, it was still, in propaganda, advertised as an “activist troupe” (see previous chapter); perhaps the Nazi authorities deemed that participation within the Hitler Youth groups would seem more attractive by youths when it was framed as a “revolutionary” exercise. It is also these types of statements that indicate this propaganda’s “agitative” nature; as Jowett and O’Donnell indicate, this “agitative propaganda” is generally comprised of an “activated ideology” that attempts to “rouse an audience to certain ends” and attain “significant change” [Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 16].

According to this article, special measures were to be taken by the *Reichsjugendführung* to prepare all German boys for *Wehrmacht* service. It was therefore the duty of all sixteen to eighteen-year old boys to join the Hitler Youth, which would now train at least two Sundays per month for three months in preparation of wartime service.<sup>281</sup>

During the ensuing months, such Hitler Youth columns continued; weekly meetings, the creation of new chapters, and an explication of the German youth's duties were printed. In June 1943, the *Deutsche Nachrichten* even reported on a Hitler Youth summer camp held in Hungary, in which German youths received copious amounts of food, fresh air, and exercise. Another such camp was to be held between August 14<sup>th</sup> and September 15<sup>th</sup> of that year— a joint effort between the Nazi Youth groups of Hungary, Serbia, and Croatia in Kolibica (Colibita) Transylvania.<sup>282</sup> By 1944, as Germany's military situation grew increasingly precarious, the *Deutsche Nachrichten*'s reports shifted. Previously portrayed primarily in the field of recreational activities, the Hitler Youth in Hungary were soon depicted only in military service, as valiant soldiers for the German cause. In March 1944, for example, the *Deutsche Nachrichten* printed an article on the first Hitler Youth "volunteers" fighting on the front; by September 1944— the *Deutsche Nachrichten*'s last edition ever— a full-page spread praised "youth service in total war," lauding the German youths' military service at and behind the front, as well as work in air raid shelters and provision stocks on the home front.<sup>283</sup> German youth organizations in Hungary, at least as can be gleaned from the *Deutsche Nachrichten*'s reports, had hence developed from clubs fostering language and folk traditions to workshops of National Socialist indoctrination and military training.

<sup>281</sup> *Deutsche Nachrichten*, November 1939, 5-6.

<sup>282</sup> *Deutsche Nachrichten*, 11 June 1943, 8. In the August 6th, 1943 issue, it was later announced that due to "unsurmountable difficulties," the camp would be held in the Beregvar castle instead. *Deutsche Nachrichten*, 4.

<sup>283</sup> *Deutsche Nachrichten*, 29 September, 1944, 8.



While these reports from the overtly National Socialist branches of the *Volksbund* are telling, it is also useful to consider the reports of another German publication initially on a less directly confrontative path with the Hungarian state. In particular, the *Deutscher Volksbote*—the VDU’s official bi-weekly publication—presents an interesting complement to the *Deutsche Nachrichten*’s polemics. Unlike the *Deutsche Nachrichten*, the *Deutscher Volksbote* further contains several in-depth descriptions on the youth movement in the Batschka specifically, which will be considered in the following section.

As the official publication of the VDU, the *Deutscher Volksbote* had to exercise more prudence in its presentation of ideas and debates than the *Deutsche Nachrichten*, so as not to disrupt the already precarious German-Hungarian relationship within Hungary. The publication hence displayed an interesting mixture of clearly “*völkisch*” ambitions with pro-Hungarian rhetoric.<sup>284</sup> Especially before 1941—when Germany and Hungary became full Axis partners—the *Deutscher Volksbote* never used terms such as “National Socialist” or “Hitler Youth,” while simultaneously publishing articles congratulating Horthy on the occasions of his birthday, name day, or other accomplishments.<sup>285</sup> Nevertheless, evidence of a germinating *Volksdeutsche* movement can be found here also—especially in relation to the youth.

One of the most fascinating examples of the radicalization of youth organizations and activities is provided by the *Deutscher Volksbote*’s recurring reports on one town within the Hungarian segment of the Batschka: Gara. In its February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1940 edition, the *Deutscher Volksbote* began its coverage. In an article entitled “The Youth of the Batschka Sings and

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<sup>284</sup> See, for instance, an article and its ensuing editorials in the *Deutscher Volksbote* from February 4th, 1940. In this article entitled “Germany—the World’s Largest Power,” the author describes Hitler’s recent speech about how the 80 million Germans living in Central Europe will rise again and overcome the humiliation of World War I. The ensuing editorials largely claim that Germans have always prided themselves in the balance struck over generations between German minorities, the Hungarian state, and the Hungarians. pp. 1-2.

<sup>285</sup> This is also an interesting contrast to the anti-Magyar material printed within Germany during the same time, as in Walz’s work.

Dances,” one of the paper’s main authors and editors (and a *Deutsche Jugend* leader), Philipp Böss, described a youth event held between January 24<sup>th</sup> and January 27<sup>th</sup> in Gara. Despite a meter of snow outside, claimed Böss, the “loyalty of those in our *Volk*” was strong enough that ten villages sent some 195 boys and girls to the event.<sup>286</sup> As he further explained, “where the flag of the *Volksbund* is raised, nobody may be absent.”<sup>287</sup> Opulent decorations apparently filled the room, including a large portrait of the *Reichsverweser* Horthy, surrounded by “national colors” and pine branches. And then the speeches began.

Philipp Böss, himself apparently a speaker at this event, described how, despite these difficult times, the *Volksjugend* had shown its loyalty and had dedicated itself to the preservation of local “Germandom.” “*Volk*” and “*Volkstum*,” for Böss, were values of “eternity,” anchored in the German “soul.”<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, it was especially the responsibility of the youth to maintain German culture, by learning its dances and songs.<sup>289</sup> Youth would be the foundation of the *Volk*’s future, it would be their responsibility to make sacrifices, and to diligently learn and spread the German heritage. Furthermore, as Böss explained, the Batschka specifically had neglected their “*Volkslieder*” (folk songs) and “*Volkstänze*” (folk dances) in recent years; the fact that youths there were learning these again was therefore even more meaningful.<sup>290</sup> After Böss’ speech, Franz Basch himself apparently also gave a speech. While

<sup>286</sup> “Im Stillen erwogen wir, wer nun diesmal stärker sein wird: die Treue unserer Volksgenossen in der Batschka oder die unendlichen Schneefelder, die den Weg versperren.” *Deutscher Volksbote*, 4 February 1940, 4.

<sup>287</sup> “Wo die Fahne des Volksbundes gehisst wird, darf eben keiner fehlen.” *Deutscher Volksbote*, 4 February 1940, 4.

<sup>288</sup> Gentile’s “sacralisation of politics” becomes evident here, as does Mosse’s analysis of the “spiritual” components of the National Socialist conceptualization of a national “*Volksgemeinschaft*.”

<sup>289</sup> Again, one should consider Mosse’s theorizations that the cultural—such as “historical myths and symbols”—were employed by the Nazis in their creation of a national “liturgy” that was to forge a “mass movement which shared a belief in popular unity through a national mystique.” George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 2-4.

<sup>290</sup> “Es versammelte sich die Volksjugend, weil er sich zur Aufgabe gestellt hat, das heimatliche Deutschtum nicht nur für heute und morgen, sondern für alle Zeiten zu sichern. Volk und Volkstum sind Ewigkeitswerte, tief in der Volksseele verankert. Die Jugend aber ist vor allem Träger dieses Volksgutes. Unsere völkische Kultur muss eben

the transcript of his presentation was not published in this article, Böss made sure to note how “love and loyalty” emanated towards Basch from the audience. This admiration, as Böss explained, sprang not from fear, but from a deep-felt reverence towards Basch’s determination in defending the rights of the *Volk*.<sup>291</sup> The article thus ended.

On the same page of this newspaper, another article was printed that illustrates the ideology surrounding such events even more clearly. Writing about the “*Volksgemeinschaft*,” a Michael Kracher wrote how the *Volksgemeinschaft* was primarily based on the *Führerprinzip*, a very “Germanic” “inheritance.” “*Volksgemeinschaft*,” Kracher continued, was not something that could be learned, but something that slumbered in every German, and that could be awakened in him. *Volksgemeinschaft*, finally, was composed of the “holy values of the *Volk*: mother tongue, *Volkstum*, poetry, and folk song.”<sup>292</sup> It hence becomes evident that— although terms like “Hitler Youth” or “National Socialist” never arose within the early phases of this paper, the essential tenets of the Nazi movement were being propagated— also amongst the Batschka’s youth.

The indoctrination of Gara’s youth progressed, and this evolution is hinted at in later issues of the *Deutscher Volksbote*. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1940, for instance, a short article announced the founding of an official local *Volksbund* chapter in Gara on February 15<sup>th</sup> that year.<sup>293</sup> In April 1940, an article described how Gara was “surpassing” everyone; after the official founding of the local *Volksbund* chapter, the local Germans had apparently “commenced their work with great enthusiasm.” Especially the youth, as the article further

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*in den Herzen der erwachten Volksjugend tiefste Wurzeln fassen... Die Jugend, das Fundament unserer Volkszukunft, muss aber zur Opferbereitschaft für diese Zukunft erogen werden...*” *Deutscher Volksbote*, 4 February 1940, 4.

<sup>291</sup> “Die Liebe und Treue zu Dr. Basch entspringt weder der ‚Macht‘, auch nicht der Furcht, nein, sie ist einfach tiefe Verehrung und Treue zu einem Mann, der redlich und entschlossen für die Rechte des Volkes eintritt.” *Deutscher Volksbote*, 4 February 1940, 4.

<sup>292</sup> *Deutscher Volksbote*, 4 February 1940, 4.

<sup>293</sup> *Deutscher Volksbote*, 25 February 1940, 4.

describes, was delighted to be able to openly profess “their honest way” within a legal framework. Since the founding, two more organized youth events had taken place, including a dance at which “we showed how determined we are to keep our *Volkstum* pure.”<sup>294</sup> Furthermore, the schooling of youths had apparently already shown positive effects— Gara’s youth was now able to independently organize shows, dances, and concerts (all, of course, featuring both the Hungarian national anthem and the *Volkshymne* “*Seid gegrüsst ihr deutschen Brüder*”).<sup>295</sup> The radicalization of Gara’s youth was hence publicly on its way.

By 1941, increasingly few words were minced in the *Deutscher Volksbote* about the nature of such youth groups. A weekly youth column began to announce the “Hitler Youth’s” local events and chapter foundations, activities in the *NS-Erziehungsheim* in Budapest, and Hitler Youth summer camps.<sup>296</sup> By May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1944, the *Deutscher Volksbote*’s entire front page was dedicated to the role of the Hitler Youth in the *Volkstumskampf*— an article that also proudly stated that the Batschka was “surpassing” all the other local groups with its fervor and enthusiasm.<sup>297</sup> By the end of the war, as in the *Deutsche Nachrichten*, changes in the *Deutsche Volksbote*’s coverage on youth became more drastic. By May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1944, the newspaper’s official subtitle became “*Kampfblatt unserer Bewegung*” (the fight pages of our movement). By September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1944, it changed to the “*NS-Kampfblatt unserer Bewegung*” (the National Socialist fight pages of our movement). Articles on youth, accordingly, also shifted; no longer were “*völkisch*” events of song and dance depicted in the headlines, but military training, SS-recruitment, and losses on the front.

<sup>294</sup> *Besonders die Jugend freut sich, da sie nun in einem gesetzlichen Rahmen ihre Geschlossenheit und ihren ehrlichen Weg öffentlich bekunden kann... Da haben wir gezeigt, wie wir entschlossen sind, unser Volkstum rein zu halten. Die Jugendschulung hat Früchte getragen...* “ *Deutscher Volksbote*, 25 February 1940, 4.

<sup>295</sup> *Deutscher Volksbote*, 25 February 1940, 4.

<sup>296</sup> See, for instance, *Deutscher Volksbote*, 22 August 1941, 4; 30 January 1942, 5.

<sup>297</sup> *Deutscher Volksbote*, 22 May 1942, 1.

While the spread and evolution of Nazi youth groups in Hungary, as well as within the Hungarian Batschka, should be clearer by now based on this presentation of German-speaking media, it is still crucial to consider the legal frameworks within which this movement developed. It is here that this chapter again turns increasingly to secondary sources.

Most secondary material available on the German youth movement in Hungary cites June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1941, as the movement's defining moment. On this day, some 12,000 to 15,000 members of the *Deutsche Jugend* (as the Hungarian Hitler Youth was termed officially) met at the *Landesjugendtag* in Mágocs (Magotsch, Magoč), Hungary. Accompanied also by some 8,000 *Volksbund* members, the assembled youths listened to speeches pushing for the legalization of the *Deutsche Jugend*, as this would be crucial for the “reawakening” of the German “spirit.”<sup>298</sup> *Landesjugendführer* Mathias Huber also gave a speech in which he defined the upcoming goals and tasks of the *Deutsche Jugend*. According to Huber, the aim of the DJ was the “creation of the new German man.” This new German man— a National Socialist— could be formed first by the construction of physical, military-ready bodies, and, second, through the “breeding” of willful, responsible, and knowledgeable minds.<sup>299</sup> As soon as the rally ended, the German youths apparently marched through the streets of Mágocs, chanting “*Heil Hitler*” and “*Sieg Heil*”— a display that prompted the town's Hungarian residents to throw eggs at the passing budding radicals.<sup>300</sup>

When this display of the German youth movement's growing power occurred in Mágocs— for the historian Norbert Spannenberger an event emblematic of the *Gleichschaltung*

<sup>298</sup> Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte*, 171; Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 149; Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege*, 44; Zsolt Vitári, “VIII. Hitlerjugend és Magyarorszag a haboru idejen,” Ph.D. dissertation, 523-527. For images from a propaganda booklet printed in Hungary on this *Landesjugendtag*, see appendix.

<sup>299</sup> Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte*, 171.

<sup>300</sup> Vitári, “Hitlerjugend,” 527.

of the *Volksbund* according to the model of the NSDAP— the “Hitler Youth” had not actually been legalized as an independent entity within Hungary yet.<sup>301</sup> By executive order of the prime minister on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1941, the *Deutsche Jugend* was acknowledged and legal procedures began that would turn the *Deutsche Jugend* into a youth organization supervised by the Hungarian Ministry for Religion and Public Education. This process was only completed in February 1942, however, when an ordinance was passed that made it possible for ethnic German *leventes* (members of the mandatory Hungarian pre-military youth groups) to form their own sections. These “*Deutsche Jugend*” groups would be allowed to use the Hitler salute, however, they would not be able to opt completely out of *levente* training.<sup>302</sup>

Unsatisfied with these concessions, however, Hungarian and German officials continued their negotiations. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942, an agreement on the legalization of the *Deutsche Jugend* could be reached. According its statutes, the aim of the *Deutsche Jugend* would be to train German youths— outside of school— according to the “National Socialist worldview,” and, at the same time, instill within them loyalty towards the Hungarian state. The *Deutsche Jugend*— open only to “the children of Hungarian citizens of German ethnicity”— would thereafter be allowed to hold cultural, athletic, and “ideological” events, circulate German-speaking press, and establish youth homes and centers.<sup>303</sup> At the same time, however, the *Deutsche Jugend* officially remained a youth organization under supervision of the Hungarian government, and a legal subsidiary of the *levente*, only open to the children of *Volksbund* members.<sup>304</sup>

<sup>301</sup> Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 168, 276.

<sup>302</sup> Vitári, “Hitlerjugend,” 514-515.

<sup>303</sup> Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege*, 45.

<sup>304</sup> Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 316-317.

Despite these official concessions to the Hungarian state, it seems that the *Deutsche Jugend* also followed its own agenda (as can be seen, for instance, within the *Volksdeutsche* press, where the movement was officially termed the “Hitler Youth”). As a 1943 *Jahrbuch* for *Deutsche Jugend* members indicates, for instance, the Hungarian “Hitler Youth” was structured precisely like its counterpart in Germany, being split according to gender (with male DJ and female DMB— *Deutscher Mädelsbund*— groups) and age (with a cohort for six to ten-year-olds— the “Kg,” or *Kindergruppen*— for ten to fourteen-year-olds— the “DJv” or “*Jungvolk*,” for fourteen to eighteen-year-olds— the actual “DJ,” and for eighteen to twenty-one-year-olds— the “M” or “*Jungmannschaft*”).<sup>305</sup> Furthermore, distinct leadership and geographic distinctions were made (with “Banne,” “Kreise,” and “Stämme”), which split Hungary’s Hitler Youth into seven administrative units (“Schwäbische Türkei,” “Mitte,” “Buchenwald,” “Westungarn,” “Sathmar und Karpatenland,” “Nordsiebenbürgen,” and— eventually— the “Batschka”).<sup>306</sup> Furthermore, National Socialist boarding schools were further established, and Nazi propaganda materials circulated amongst Hungary’s German youth organizations.<sup>307</sup> The songs, poems, marches, salutes, and uniforms of the *Reich*’s Hitler Youth were adopted. A new youth paper, the *Jugend voran*, was printed to further disseminate National Socialist propaganda amongst Hungary’s *Volksdeutsche* youth.<sup>308</sup>

As the *Deutsche Jugend* became legally sanctioned by the Hungarian authorities, Franz Basch and his colleagues began circulating more brazen statements in public media on the German youth. One month after the *Deutsche Jugend*’s legalization, in May 1942, Basch’s

<sup>305</sup> *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Jugend in Ungarn 1943*, edited by Herbert Mars and Mathias Huber, Vol. 3 (Novi Sad: Landesjugendführung der DJ. Abteilung Presse und Propaganda. Deutsche Druckerei u. Verlags A.G., 1943), 132-133.

<sup>306</sup> *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Jugend in Ungarn 1943*, 132-134.

<sup>307</sup> Spannenger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 318.

<sup>308</sup> Spannenger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 319.

monthly publication, the *Südostdeutsche Rundschau*, printed two articles regarding Hungary's youth. The first, penned by Hungarian Lieutenant-General and *levente* leader Alajos von Béldy, described the "pre-military exercise and education of Hungary's state youth." Explaining the importance of youth training in the prevention of another Trianon Treaty-type "catastrophe," Béldy described the mental and physical steeling of the young that would need to occur within the mandatory *levente* as preparation for Honvéd service. The rearing of youths, according to Béldy, no longer belonged in private hands, but within the firm control of the "nation."<sup>309</sup>

Immediately after this statement, Mathias Huber, the *Landesjugendführer* of Hungary's *Deutsche Jugend*, issued a report on the significance of the *Deutsche Jugend*, now an official branch of the *levente*. After decades of struggles, claimed Huber, hundreds and thousands of youths had finally learned to wave the flag of the German youth movement with "unsurpassed glowing enthusiasm."<sup>310</sup> Now that the *Deutsche Jugend* was legal, it could openly create "the new German human being."<sup>311</sup> And it would do so through National Socialist training from as young an age as possible, and the formation and "breeding" of character, physical fitness, and "racial awareness."<sup>312</sup> "The motherland is the blood source of our *Volk* and the creator of this mighty idea that fills us all today," Huber continued; while the *Deutsche Jugend* thus did not wish to create autonomy for itself within the Hungarian state, it would nevertheless be used to perpetuate and propagate National Socialist values.<sup>313</sup> Images of joyful, athletic, well fed, enthusiastic, and Nazi uniform-clad German youths in swastika-draped meeting halls further dotted the article, leaving nobody in doubt that the German youth movement was there, alive, and potent.

<sup>309</sup> *Südostdeutsche Rundschau*, May 1942, 161-165.

<sup>310</sup> *Südostdeutsche Rundschau*, May 1942, 167.

<sup>311</sup> *Südostdeutsche Rundschau*, May 1942, 168.

<sup>312</sup> *Südostdeutsche Rundschau*, May 1942, 168-171.

<sup>313</sup> *Südostdeutsche Rundschau*, May 1942, 172.



## 4.2 Yugoslavia: An Alternate Path to Nationalistic Self-Awareness, 1919-1941

As was demonstrated in the preceding section, the Hungarian “Hitler Youth” arose primarily within the framework of more traditional German youth organizations. Due to direct support from the *Reich* and its agencies, a radicalization of the main ethnic German organizations, the increasingly open circulation of National Socialist propaganda amongst German youths, and the Hungarian state’s increasing willingness (and diplomatic need) to accommodate for right-wing German movements, the *Deutsche Jugend* eventually flourished within Hungary as an agent of National Socialist *Gleichschaltung* and indoctrination. In this development, however, Hungary’s ethnic German movements still lagged behind those of Yugoslavia. As will be described in this section, Yugoslavia’s right-wing ethnic German youth movements effectively gained more momentum much more rapidly, so that the Batschka’s reunification brought some of the (officially) most politically and nationalistically radicalized *Donauschwaben* communities under Hungarian rule in 1941.

As is described by numerous recent historians on the topic, ethnic German organizations after World War I found it relatively easy to organize themselves within Yugoslavia due to its already inherently multi-national nature and its uncoordinated policies (depending on the region and dominant nationality in charge) towards the “German question.”<sup>314</sup> In 1920, Yugoslavia’s Germans founded the *Deutsche Partei* (DP), a party which, by October 1922, had brought at least two Batschka representatives into the Yugoslav

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<sup>314</sup> See, for instance, Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries*, 118.

parliament.<sup>315</sup> That same year, Yugoslavia's Germans also founded the *Schwäbisch-Deutscher Kulturbund* (the SDKB, or *Kulturbund*), with headquarters in Novi Sad (Batschka). According to their founding statutes, the goal of the *Kulturbund* was the buttressing of German cultural "needs" in Yugoslavia, including the distribution of books, art, music, and film; the creation of libraries and educational institutions (also for teachers); the organization of cultural events; and the financing of social works and scientific projects.<sup>316</sup> As in the Hungarian case, Germany's VDA assisted some of these earlier projects, however, as none of Yugoslavia had officially belonged to Germany, it was not eligible for official *Reich* aid.<sup>317</sup> By 1924, the *Kulturbund* was shut down by government officials and its assets distributed to the state. Its activities could only be resumed in 1927.<sup>318</sup>

According to historians like Valdis Lumans, Germans in Yugoslavia experienced difficulties organizing a cohesive political entity especially during the 1920s. Already the site of an active *Erneuerungsbewegung*— a young, right-wing activist movement professing ideals of ethnic identity, the indivisibility of the *Volk*, and similar, pro-Nazi sentiments— German communities in Yugoslavia were split amongst loyalty to the "older breed" of politicians loyal to the Yugoslav state (as in the *Deutsche Partei*), and these newer, more radical political elements.<sup>319</sup> Furthermore, especially during the 1930s, Germans were prohibited from establishing political organizations. Germans in Yugoslavia, especially those with a political agenda, thus began to utilize the *Kulturbund* as a means for political change. By 1938, the *Kulturbund* had established some 866 German cultural, athletic, educational, and social welfare

<sup>315</sup> Benedikt Helmlinger, *Bukiner Heimatbuch: Werdegang, Aufstieg und Untergang der deutschen Gemeinde Bukin in der Batschka/Jugoslawien* (Magstadt: Helmlinger, 1974), 208.

<sup>316</sup> Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 118; Helmlinger, *Bukiner Heimatbuch*, 119.

<sup>317</sup> Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 118.

<sup>318</sup> Helmlinger, *Bukiner Heimatbuch*, 209; Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 118.

<sup>319</sup> Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 119, 28; Helmlinger, *Bukiner Heimatbuch*, 208-209.

organizations with a total membership of 50,000 individuals. Some four daily newspapers, twenty-five weekly, four bi-monthly, and nine monthly German-language newspapers were printed. Male and female youth groups, established between 1931 and 1940 and under the direction of *Landesjugendführer* Josef Beer, flourished.<sup>320</sup>

As in the case of the Hungarian VDU, these organizations and newspapers became increasingly radicalized as they were employed as a platform for radical right-wing politics. These developments created a mounting chasm within Yugoslavia's ethnic German population, as certain factions protested the *Erneuerers'* rising influence, and the *Erneuerer* in turn sought even more power.<sup>321</sup> *Reich* agencies, realizing their potential for gain within this struggle, decided— as in the Hungarian case— to activate the VoMi. Within a series of diplomatic negotiations between the *Kulturbund*, the VoMi, and local German leaders, the *Kulturbund* elected Sepp Janko, the son of a tenant farmer and an energetic, young, and pro-right wing leader, as the head and unifying force of the *Kulturbund* in August 1939. While Janko did not officially belong to the most extreme *Erneuerer*, it does seem that he ultimately became— presumably also motivated by personal gain— a political agent of the Third Reich and a leader of the SS.<sup>322</sup>

Under Janko, the (by now *gleichgeschaltet*) *Kulturbund* commenced officially on a path to “capture” Yugoslavia's entire ethnic German community.<sup>323</sup> Like the Hungarian VDU, the *Kulturbund* disseminated copious propaganda along *Erneuerer* and Nazi lines, professing

<sup>320</sup> Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte*, 568, 608. According to Wildmann, however, the *Deutsche Jugend* as such was only mentioned as an incorporated branch of the *Volksgruppe* after the Yugoslav War, in May 1941. p. 612.

<sup>321</sup> Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte*, 567-569.

<sup>322</sup> For Janko's own reflections on his involvement, see “Ein Gespräch des ‘Donautal-Magazins’ mit Dr. Sepp Janko,” in *Das Donautal-Magazin*, Nr. 91, Volume 1 (Argentina: May 1997), 12-17.

<sup>323</sup> Zoran Janjetovic, “Die Donauschwaben in der Vojvodina und der Nationalsozialismus,” in *Der Einfluss von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus auf Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa*, edited by Mariana Hausleitner and Harald Roth (Munich: IKGS Verlag, 2006), 223-225; Senz, *Geschichte der Donauschwaben*, 216.

loyalty to the “motherland” and the “sacrality” of the “honor, blood, and soil.”<sup>324</sup> Unlike the VDU, however, the *Kulturbund* under Janko also openly proclaimed their adherence to the “*Führerprinzip*”—the *Kulturbund* would be *the* representative of Germans in Yugoslavia, and all of its organizations would be structured logistically and ideologically according to Hitler’s institutional and dogmatic creations in the “motherland.”<sup>325</sup> The *Kulturbund* further helped establish and/or fund German-speaking schools and boarding schools, many of which were located in the Batschka and trained both secondary students and prospective German teachers.<sup>326</sup> As will be discussed in the final chapter, these institutions later also became a primary site for National Socialist education.

The young, too, were mobilized in (largely uncoordinated) youth organizations, and implemented as workers in *Reich* projects amongst *Volksdeutsche* in the region.<sup>327</sup> On August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1940, for instance, Sepp Janko—under direction of the *Führer*—called all German youths of Yugoslavia to serve in transit camps established in Zemun (Semlin, Zimony) and Prahovo, which housed Germans from Bessarabia and Bukovina “returning” to the *Reich*. According to Janko, this was precisely the type of challenge that would enable the realization of the Germans’ “calling.”<sup>328</sup> Activities in this camp were documented for propaganda purposes and further described and depicted in a propaganda volume published in Novi Sad in March 1941 by the *Landespropagandaamt der deutschen Volksgruppe in Jugoslawien* (the official propaganda office of the Germans in Yugoslavia). Within this publication, dozens of images,

<sup>324</sup> Janjetovic, “Die Donauschwaben in der Vojvodina und der Nationalsozialismus,” 223; Senz, *Geschichte der Donauschwaben*, 214-215.

<sup>325</sup> Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte*, 593-594.

<sup>326</sup> Crucial here were, for instance, the *Deutsche Gymnasium* in Apatin (founded in September 1940), the *Deutsche Bürgerschule* in Novi Sad (founded in 1941), the *Deutsche Bürgerschule* (founded in 1933 by the *Deutsche Schulstiftung*), the *Deutsche Gymnasium* (re-established in 1940), and the *Deutsche Lehrerbildungsanstalt* (founded in 1931) in Neuwerbass. Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege*, 71-93.

<sup>328</sup> Heinrich Reister-Leopold Egger, *Das grosse Aufgebot* (Novisad-Neusatz: Druckerei- und Verlags-A-G., 1941), 10.

entitled with propagandistic slogans, created a highly idealized image of ethnic Germans—which had supposedly been “corrupted” by decades of “Romanian-Russian” influence— finally returning “home” to the *Reich*.<sup>329</sup> Yugoslav Germans were depicted as coordinating with Bessarabia and Bukovina Germans in distributing copious amounts of food, first-rate medical care, and clothing.<sup>330</sup> Girls and boys were portrayed as organizing German folk and athletic events together, or standing in rows in folk costume by the hundreds, greeting visitors such as Sepp Janko, Princess Olga of Yugoslavia, Yugoslavian Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković, SS leaders Toni Schnitzler and Werner Lorenz, or Himmler’s wife.<sup>331</sup>

The mobilization and ongoing indoctrination of Yugoslavia’s German youth, it seems, raised considerable concerns among the *Kulturbund*’s rivals. In *Die Donau*— a weekly paper published by the Catholic Church in Apatin (Batschka)— for instance, frequently published articles advertising the Catholic Youth organization, the *Marienbund*, as the only and “true” carrier of “German” values. On April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1937, for example, the newspaper’s editor, Father Adam Berenz, published an article asserting that “we are the youth of the German *Volk*!” Nobody, as Berenz explained, was more dedicated to the German *Volk* and *Volkstum* than the Catholic Church. Yugoslavia’s German Catholic Youth would thus need to openly profess their beliefs and help realize the German “fate,” a fate determined by the will of God.<sup>332</sup> Just several months earlier, *Die Donau* had also published a statement by Vladimir Utović, a university student in Belgrade and the apparent head of the “Yugoslav youth.” According to Utović, all youth in Yugoslavia— regardless of nationality— would need to unify under loyalty to

<sup>329</sup> One image of a smiling German boy, for instance, contains the caption “when the Romanian-Russian shell falls, a true German core radiates towards us.” Egger, *Das grosse Aufgebot*, 38.

<sup>330</sup> Some images are particularly haunting. Two in particular depict large piles of clothing and shoes— reflecting precisely what we now associate more with piles of “supplies” collected in concentration camps. Egger, *Das grosse Aufgebot*, 69.

<sup>331</sup> Egger, *Das grosse Aufgebot*, 104-106, 86-97.

<sup>332</sup> “Deutsche Jugend in Volk und Kirche,” in *Die Donau*, 24 April 1937, 3.

Yugoslavia to fight the splintering of the state and the spread of Bolshevism. German youth, especially, should be warned that it should “stay what it is” and know that Yugoslavia respects alternate nationalisms, as long as these respect the unity of, and loyalty towards, the Yugoslav state.<sup>333</sup>

The qualms expressed by both Catholic and Yugoslav state leadership about the spread of National Socialism indeed did not seem to be unfounded. As in the Hungarian case, the German press in Yugoslavia also seemed to be undergoing a gradual *Gleichschaltung*, while simultaneously reporting on the radicalization of local German organizations. In early 1941, for instance, the Yugoslav *Deutsches Volksblatt*, printed in Novi Sad by the *Kulturbund*, began reporting on similar “*Volksabende*” (“*Volk* evenings”) as the Hungarian press. According to the March 1<sup>st</sup> issue, for instance, the town of Kula (Wolfsburg) in the Batschka had hosted a successful *Volksabend*, which had been organized entirely by the local youth. As the author stated, especially the gymnasts had “delighted” the audience due to their “unified and rigid posture.”<sup>334</sup> Apparently, the *Deutsche Jugend* in other Batschka towns, like Topola (Bačka Topola, Topolya), had also begun to organize German language courses for their local communities. As the article continued to explain, the *Deutsche Jugend* of Topola was showing an “activism” that was unique and commendable for such a young youth group; thanks to their enthusiasm, at least 30 “*Volksgenossen*” (fellow ethnic Germans) were now studying the language of their “forefathers,” a pursuit for which support by the “*Volksgemeinschaft*” would be guaranteed.<sup>335</sup>

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia in April 1941, the Yugoslav *Deutsche Volksblatt* began openly professing pro-National Socialist sentiments. Suddenly draped with a swastika in

<sup>333</sup> “Die jugoslawische Jugend an die deutsche Jugend,” in *Die Donau*, 2 January 1936, 5.

<sup>334</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt: Tageszeitung der Deutschen Jugoslawiens*. Vol. 23, No. 6595 (1 March 1941), 5.

<sup>335</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt*, 1 March 1941, 5.

its banner, the *Volksbote* began issuing articles on how it supposedly took only nine German soldiers to capture Belgrade, and how the Belgrade parliament was now cloaked in swastikas.<sup>336</sup> By 1942, the Yugoslav *Deutsches Volksblatt* had become the “*Tageszeitung der Deutschen Südbungarns*” (the daily paper of the Germans in Southern Hungary). Now under control of the Hungarian *Volksbund*, the Novi Sad *Volksblatt* began printing frequent articles on youth activities, exchanges, and SS recruitment. On April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1942, for instance, the paper was dedicated to the departure of SS recruits from Novi Sad and its surrounding towns. Novi Sad, according to this article, had always been a center of the *Volksdeutsche* “tradition”; an epicenter of *Kulturbund* activities since the 1920s, Novi Sad had now attracted a “Germandom” prepared to fight, a “Germandom” that was now being sent to war in a massive procession of Nazi flags and *Deutsche Jugend* formations.<sup>337</sup>

Despite the concerns and propaganda launched by *Kulturbund* critics, it therefore seems— at least according to pro-National Socialist sources of the time— that the *Kulturbund* had largely succeeded in its aims of forging a *Donauschwaben* population enthusiastic for its own tenets, as well as for the activities of the Third Reich. By late 1940, the “*Volksgruppenführung*” boasted that some 98% of Yugoslavia’s German population had become members of the *Kulturbund*, and that the *Kulturbund* had indeed succeeded in unifying the entire German minority under its wing.<sup>338</sup> The degree to which, for instance, the Batschka’s population had actually been “coordinated” by the *Kulturbund* and National Socialist ideology and organizations is highly debatable, and the subject of the following chapter. Nevertheless, it seems that at least outwardly, an enthusiasm had been created within a considerable portion of the Batschka’s Yugoslav German population. This gave rise to several awkward instances with

<sup>336</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt: Tageszeitung der Deutschen Jugoslawiens*. Vol. 23, No. 6634 (18 April 1941), 5.

<sup>337</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt: Tageszeitung der Deutschen Südbungarns*, Vol. 24, No. 6921 (10 April 1942), 1.

<sup>338</sup> Janjetovic, “Die Donauschwaben in der Vojvodina und der Nationalsozialismus,” 223.

the Batschka's re-annexation by Hungary in April 1941, for instance. In joyful anticipation of being reconnected to the "motherland," entire towns in the Batschka were draped with Nazi flags and swastikas to greet the incoming soldiers. Unlike the Banat, which was "liberated" by the *Wehrmacht*, the Batschka was taken over by the Hungarian *Honvéd*, whose troops hence marched through these streets, perplexed at the display of National Socialist imagery and surrounded by a confused German population.<sup>339</sup>

#### 4.3 The Final Years: Problems with the Batschka's Reunification and Sweeping SS Recruitments

The year 1941 indeed represents a major turning point in the history of the Batschka. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1941, the Dragiša Cvetković government signed the Tripartite Pact, which joined Yugoslavia to the Axis powers. Two days later, the regime was overthrown by a military coup. While the new government promised to honor all previous commitments— like Yugoslavia's pre-existing pact with the *Reich*— Germany's government evaluated these developments as a threat to their plans of domination in Southeastern Europe. Hitler thus ordered troops— already assembled for a previous plan to invade Greece— to enter Yugoslavia. By April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1941, Yugoslavia had collapsed and the Vojvodina was disassembled. Sirmia became part of the newly established Independent State of Croatia (ISC), the western Banat became a *de facto* autonomous province in Serbia under direct German

<sup>339</sup> See several reports by eyewitnesses in the following documentary film: *Schicksal der Donauschwaben*, produced by Astrid Beyer and Günter Czernetzky (Stuttgart: Südostdeutscher Rundfunk, 1998). Also see Spannenberg, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 286.



control, and the Batschka was reunited, becoming a territory of Hungary.<sup>340</sup> It is estimated that with the accession of the Batschka's 175,000 Germans, Hungary ultimately encapsulated a total of 800,000 ethnic Germans, making it a country with one of the world's largest German minorities, and increasingly interesting for *Reich* officials.<sup>341</sup>

As described by historians such as Zoran Janjetović, the Batschka's Germans were generally dissatisfied with the prospect of joining the "intolerant" Greater Hungary. Previously, the Batschka Germans had enjoyed greater liberties in developing their own cultural, educational, and political institutions, a prospect that they now saw as ending. As Spannenberger further describes, while the *Kulturbund* had a tradition lasting for several decades, the *Volksbund* was a much younger formation (established in its most recent state only in 1938). In Yugoslavia, too, the administration of separate German organizations was freer from state intervention, and had greater success in anchoring itself amongst ethnic German communities in the region. Furthermore, most Batschka German leaders expressed frustrations about the Hungarian *Volksbund*'s apparent loyalty to the Hungarian state; for them, the *Reich*, not the variable "host state" was of primary importance.<sup>342</sup>

Nevertheless, the Batschka's Germans were forced to observe the complete subsumation of their organizations into the Hungarian model. After April 1941, the *Kulturbund*, the *Genossenschaftsverband*, and the *Deutsche Schulstiftung* all became subsidiaries of the *Volksbund*. Sepp Janko lost his authority over the Batschka Germans and now controlled only the Banat's *Kulturbund*. The Batschka's new "*Kulturbund*" received a

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<sup>340</sup> See, for instance, Janjetovic, "Die Donauschwaben in der Vojvodina und der Nationalsozialismus," 229-231; Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 120-121; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Nationalitätenpolitik in Jugoslawien: die deutsche Minderheit, 1918-1978* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 40-45.

<sup>341</sup> Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 268; Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 223.

<sup>342</sup> Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 261-263.

different leader, Sepp Spreitzer, and the territory— now rejoined with the Hungarian Batschka— became an administrative unit (with seven sub-units) overseen by various ministries of education, propaganda, legal protection, health, and youth. German schools and boarding schools, such as those in Apatin, Novi Sad, and Werbass, were adopted by the Hungarian German administration.<sup>343</sup> All German youth groups now officially formed part of the *Deutsche Jugend*, under the leadership of *Deutsche Jugend* head Mathias Huber. By the autumn of 1941, the Batschka's German administration officially became the *Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn— Schwäbisch-Deutscher Kulturbund— Gebietsführung Batschka*.<sup>344</sup>

Despite initial misgivings about the loss of independence by Batschka German organizations, it seems that the Batschka Germans (also known as “*Batschkanesen*” by the Hungarian German community<sup>345</sup>) soon saw their absorption into the *Volksbund*'s structures as an opportunity. Especially in the early phase of the Batschka's incorporation, the Batschka's Germans became known as “agitators,” professing a more radical National Socialist ideology and engaging in inflammatory rhetoric dotted with National Socialist phraseology. Even the VoMi expressed concerns about the “lack of discipline” exhibited by Batschka Germans, which— as the VoMi feared— confronted Hungarians with a whole new “tone” that they were not accustomed to and that would create diplomatic difficulties between the German and Hungarian states and peoples.<sup>346</sup> Furthermore, it is estimate that the *Kulturbund* had incorporated approximately 96.5% of all Batschka Germans (generally calculated by households with *Kulturbund* membership cards).<sup>347</sup> This was a far cry from Hungary's much

<sup>343</sup> See Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege*,; Janjetovic, “Die Donauschwaben in der Vojvodina und der Nationalsozialismus,” 51.

<sup>344</sup> Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 261-265.

<sup>345</sup> Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 329.

<sup>346</sup> Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 168.

<sup>347</sup> This calculation, made by the *Kulturbund*, is of course questionable. While most historians agree that *Kulturbund* membership was much higher in the Batschka than *Volksbund* membership in Hungary, many sources

lower *Volksbund* membership percentage, which even after the Batschka's annexation hovered around twenty percent.<sup>348</sup> Nevertheless, as soon as the administrative unification of the territories was completed, Batschka Germans quickly took over key positions in the *Volksbund* administration, making the Batschka both “qualitatively and quantitatively” the most substantial birthplace of *Volksbund* leadership.<sup>349</sup>

Even within the *Deutsche Jugend*, it seems that the incorporation of the Batschka's youth introduced a whole new dynamic. As the historian Zsolt Vitári describes, the assembled *Deutsche Jugend* at their opening rally in Mágozs in June 1941 began chanting “*ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer.*” According to Basch, these chants were started by the enthusiastic Batschka German delegation.<sup>350</sup> Furthermore— unlike the German youths raised within Hungary— the Batschka's young ethnic Germans were not accustomed to mandatory *levente* service, causing major conflicts between *levente* leaders and Batschka youths. As Vitári describes, demonstrations by German youths against *levente* leaders in towns such as Hódság became so severe that the German embassy attempted to intervene in 1944, requesting freedom from *levente* training for *Deutsche Jugend* members. Bullying by *levente* officers continued, however (some cases as extreme as the burning of a swastika into a German boy's chest), creating even larger resistance by Batschka German youths.<sup>351</sup>

It was also only after the Batschka's annexation that the *Deutsche Jugend*'s uniforms across Hungary began to mirror precisely those of the German *Hitler Jugend*. Boys wore the

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(also primary— more about this in the oral history chapter) agree that *Kultur/Volksbund* membership dwindled with the progression of war, dropping to less than two-thirds. See Wildman, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte*, 593-594, for instance.

<sup>348</sup> Calculated from Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte*, 169-170.

<sup>349</sup> Spannenger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 263.

<sup>350</sup> Vitári, “Hitlerjugend,” 523-527. One wonders whether this was perhaps also simply an act of scapegoating a territory not previously under Basch's control.

<sup>351</sup> Vitári, “Hitlerjugend,” 537-538. These actions perhaps shed a whole new light on the Hungarian German newspaper reports describing how the “Batschka surpasses them all.”

familiar brown shirts and black shorts, a swastika wrapped around their upper arm. Girls wore dark skirts and white blouses, like their BDM equivalents in Germany. National Socialist indoctrination, especially within the *NS-Erziehungsheime*, became an increasingly time-consuming affair, training both mind and body for a “*völkisch* revival according to the National Socialist doctrine.”<sup>352</sup> By 1943, the Batschka’s *Deutsche Jugend* had further clearly articulated its goals. As proclaimed in the 1943 *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Jugend in Ungarn*, ninety percent of all German youths in the Batschka (or 22,000 individuals) had been “coordinated” by the *Deutsche Jugend* already; now, it was the job of the *Deutsche Jugend* leaders to increase these memberships daily.<sup>353</sup> As the proclamation continued:

We will let them curse us, we youths from the Batschka, however, know that our Lord, that has created us for battle, loves us. Therefore, the entire youth of the Batschka sees only one goal: ‘To bring the outsiders into our ranks through games, sports, and schooling and to create the new, upcoming type of human being, who is healthy in body and mind and who will proceed openly and honestly through this, for us Germans such a beautiful, life.’<sup>354</sup>

According to propaganda issued by the Batschka’s *Deutsche Volksblatt* in 1943 at least, the creation of a fully “Germanized,” National Socialist youth, by that time, had become a reality. In its November 23<sup>rd</sup> issue, the *Volksblatt* described how a *Kinderlandverschickung* group from Germany marched through the streets of Werbass with the local *Deutsche Jugend* troops and pupils from the town’s German middle school.<sup>355</sup> Apparently, the *volksdeutsche* and

<sup>352</sup> Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte*, 172.

<sup>353</sup> *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Jugend in Ungarn* 1943, 154.

<sup>354</sup> “Wir lassen schimpfen gegen uns, wir Jugendliche der Batschka aber wissen, dass uns der Herrgott, der uns zum Kampf erschaffen hat, liebt. Daher sieht die ganze Jugend der Batschka nur ein Ziel: ‘Die Aussenstehenden noch zu uns herüber zu holen und durch Spiel, Sport und Schulungen einen neuen kommenden Menschentyp zu schaffen, der gesund an Körper und Geist ist, und der offen und ehrlich durchs neue, für uns Deutsche so schöne Leben gehen wird.’” *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Jugend in Ungarn* 1943, 154. It is hard to overlook the “palingenetic” and “new man” components of such proclamations (consider Griffin and Gentile).

<sup>355</sup> According to some estimates, approximately 8,000 German KLV children were ultimately hosted by ethnic German families in the Batschka and the *Schwäbische Türkei* (in current-day Tolna, Baranya, and Somogy). These

*reichsdeutsche* youths looked so similar in “folk costume, posture, racial features, etc.” that confusion arose as to which students came from Germany and which from the Batschka.<sup>356</sup> This, as the author claimed, constituted undeniable proof that the “*Volkstumskampf*” in the region had succeeded. Finally, as if through a “miracle,” the hard work of a generation had borne fruit; individuals who had, for seventeen years, grown up “within the skirt of the *Führer*” now formed the next link on an “everlasting chain” on the “fighting lineage.”<sup>357</sup>

The coordination and “education” of German youths within a greater Hungary, including the Batschka— at least in official propaganda— hence appeared to be complete. The purpose of this coordination, too, became rapidly apparent: the large-scale mobilization of SS and *Wehrmacht* troops. The history of military conscription amongst ethnic Germans in the Batschka is complex, and cannot be dealt with fully within the parameters of this thesis. Nevertheless, as historians like Spannenberger have indicated, even early “ethnographical” trips taken by *Reich* officials within the Batschka were carried out under SS leadership and aimed, by the early 1940s, primarily at the assessment and recruitment of the Batschka’s “*Menschenmaterial*.”<sup>358</sup> Lured into the formal boundaries of the *Reich*— or the more directly *Reich*-administered Banat— through “youth camps” and “youth exchanges,” several hundred German youths from Hungary (including the Batschka) joined the SS in September 1941 within these territories alone.<sup>359</sup>

Initially cloaked as “voluntary recruitments,” military enlistments before 1942 drew thousands of recruits, all of whom, in joining the German military forces, lost their Hungarian

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families then received financial assistance from the VDU. Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn, 1938-1944*, 310.

<sup>356</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt: Tageszeitung der Deutschen Südungarns*, Vol. 25, No. 7401 (23 November 1943), 3.

<sup>357</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt*, 23 November 1943, 3.

<sup>358</sup> Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 284.

<sup>359</sup> Spanneberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 284-286.

citizenship.<sup>360</sup> At least according to *Reich* statistics, by October 1941, the Batschka had actually supplied soldiers more “enthusiastically” than any other Hungarian region: while only 125 *Volksdeutsche* from “Trianon Hungary” served in the *Wehrmacht* at that point, approximately 1,500 individuals from the Batschka had enlisted into the *Wehrmacht*. Another 2,000 ethnic Germans from the Batschka served in the *Waffen-SS*.<sup>361</sup>

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942, the German and Hungarian governments struck a diplomatic deal, according to which 20,000 ethnic Germans from Hungary could be legally recruited into the German armed forces, and whereby all recruits would initially have to be given the choice on whether to join the Hungarian *Honvédség* or the German military.<sup>362</sup> During the ensuing “first wave of recruitment,” some 17,690 individuals from Hungary enlisted in the German military (primarily Southeastern Europe’s SS Division “*Prinz Eugen*”); 12,868 of these came from the Batschka.<sup>363</sup> After a second diplomatic agreement on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1943— whereby Germans currently serving in the *Honvéd* could choose to transfer into the German armed forces— another 22,125 Hungarian *Volksdeutsche* joined the *Waffen-SS*, while 1,729 enlisted in the *Wehrmacht*.<sup>364</sup> During the third and final official “wave” of recruitments— sparked by a

<sup>360</sup> Valis O. Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries: the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 224.

<sup>361</sup> G.C. Paikert, *The Danube Swabians* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 147; Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 284. It is also important to note the difference between the SS and the *Waffen-SS*. The *Waffen-SS* was employed directly and regularly in military operations, while the ordinary SS generally did not fight directly on the fronts. Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, 144. Such statements further correspond to sources like Riedl’s *Nachbarland Ungarn* (discussed in the second chapter), which claimed that the Batschka had been most successful in rearing German soldiers [Franz Riedl, *Nachbarland Ungarn*, published by the Landegruppe der Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP in Ungarn (Ujvidek-Neusatz: Druckerei- und Verlags-AG, 1944), 139].

<sup>362</sup> Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries: the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945*, 224; Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, 146.

<sup>363</sup> Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito: The Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans* (Belgrade: s.n., 2000), 66.

<sup>364</sup> Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, 146; Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries*, 224-225. According to Lumans, it was especially starting from this second wave of recruitments that recruitment tactics, led by German officers, became increasingly brutal and began exerting great psychological pressure on individuals to join the German and not the Hungarian armed forces. Furthermore, according to Janjetović, some 8 out of 18 transports of German soldiers during this recruitment came from the Batschka (Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 66).

final German-Hungarian agreement signed on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1944— German soldiers (which now encompassed men up to the age of sixty) were no longer given a choice between the *Waffen-SS* and the *Honvéd*.<sup>365</sup> According to some statistics, approximately 120,000 ethnic Germans from Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Romania had served in the German armed forces by the end of the War<sup>366</sup>; 20,000 SS recruits— as at least the *Deutsches Volksblatt* stated in late 1943— came from the Batschka.<sup>367</sup> German youths of the Batschka— “bred” and “educated” to at least a degree within arenas like the Hitler Youth— thus ultimately helped forge an army of thousands that would fight and fall for the *Reich*.<sup>368</sup>

#### 4.4 Conclusions

The history of ethnic German organizations— including youth groups— within the Batschka is complex. Caught between a variety of state structures and the interests of diverse national, ideological, and political actors, German organizations within the Batschka experienced a significant period of evolution during the early twentieth century. Already the seat of various religious, vocational, athletic, cultural, and folkloric clubs designed for the maintenance of a “*Donauschwaben*” heritage, the Batschka— especially after its division following the First World War— experienced a differential radicalization across its boundaries. Within Hungary, Germans experienced the gradual formation and *Gleichschaltung* of Basch’s

<sup>365</sup> Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, 146; Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries*, 225.

<sup>366</sup> Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, 147.

<sup>367</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt: Tageszeitung der Deutschen Südingarns*, Vol. 25, No. 7348 (19 September 1943), 1.

<sup>368</sup> One should, however, not come to simplistic causal conclusions. The attempted totalitarian indoctrination of German youths within the Batschka and their inclusion into Nazi youth groups did not lead necessarily to large-scale military service, and membership within such groups was certainly not a pre-condition for recruitment into the German army. The precise relationship between high proportions of military recruitment and apparent *Deutsche Jugend* membership within the Batschka remains a matter of speculation; however, more light will be shed on such issues within the following chapter.

*Volksbund*; within Yugoslavia, Janko's *Kulturbund*— perhaps even more radicalized in its National Socialist leanings and activities than the *Volksbund*— similarly developed from a cultural organization into a pawn of the VoMi. German youth organizations— particularly ones associated with Hungary's and Yugoslavia's state-sanctioned ethnic German organizations— similarly underwent a transformation. By the 1940s, these, too, had turned into distinctly National Socialist formations, also due to various programs by the *Third Reich*, which financed local “Hitler Youth” groups and supplied them with the leaders, ideological materials, “purely” German KLV and exchange children, and organizational structures necessary for the full-blown transmission of a “German—Nazi” identificatory equation.

After the 1941 incorporation of the entire Batschka into Hungary, the Batschka especially began causing headlines within the German-speaking press. Supposedly fostered within a more multi-nationally liberal Yugoslavia, the Batschka's pre-existing *Deutsche Jugend* and *Kulturbund* formations suddenly became incorporated within the Hungarian *Volksbund* structures, causing tensions about this more “radicalized” territory. Youths within the Batschka had apparently been raised in greater numbers with the tenets of National Socialism; it was also the Batschka that had supplied over ten times as many *Wehrmacht* soldiers by October 1941 as the rest of Hungary combined.<sup>369</sup> These claims, however— based mainly on the assertions made by German leaders and press organs themselves— raise several questions. Why did ethnic Germans within this region ultimately provide the *Reich* with such a sizeable youth movement and military force? How did individuals themselves experience these activities? How much credence can be given to news reports of the time, which claimed that ninety percent of the Batschka's German youths had become ardent followers of Hitler's Germany?<sup>370</sup>

<sup>369</sup> Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, 147.

<sup>370</sup> See, for instance: *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Jugend in Ungarn 1943*, 154.



Did the National Socialist aspiration of indoctrinating youths actually help create a certain “German” identity and loyalty to the Third Reich within the Batschka’s *Donauschwabern* communities? What were the alternatives? It is also to an elucidation of these questions that this thesis now turns.

## Chapter 5: Perspectives from Below— Current Reflections on Past Fragmentations

While the above analysis has presented the development of National Socialist youth organizations within the Batschka in fair detail, perhaps the most significant angle from which to consider this topic has been neglected so far: a micro-historical analysis of the effects of Nazi youth mobilizations on the *Donauschwaben* individual and the *Donauschwaben* community. It is here that this thesis now turns to an investigation of individuals' personal memories of their childhood in various towns within the 1930s and 1940s Batschka. While all *Donauschwaben*, who had grown up as German children within the Batschka, of course have diverse memories and viewpoints on topics like the “Hitler Youth” activities within their hometown, one thing nevertheless is evident: all former German children of the Batschka, who before 1944 were old enough to be cogent and capable of retaining memories, have at least some personal recollections of the incursion of National Socialism into the lives of their communities, and the fragmentations which ensued.

The stories presented here are not intended to be representative— indeed, the sample of interviewees was too small and haphazard to stake claims towards any “archetype” of the “German youth’s experience.” The following chapter should thus be taken more as a presentation of three diverse and personal perspectives on the topics of childhood in the Batschka’s German communities during the 1930s and 1940s, the mobilization of youths, experiences of war, and related considerations of social cleavage and national identity.

## 5.1 Perspective One: Children Observe Nazi Activities

On April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1943, five-year-old Johanna Bauer\* stepped onto a stage.<sup>371</sup> Dressed as a forget-me-not, she lined up with six or seven other little girls, all clothed as different flowers, and all equally nervous about their upcoming task. It was Hitler's birthday. In celebration of this occasion, each little girl had been asked to recite a poem at their Kindergarten's official festivity. Johanna began her poem:

*Vergissmeinnicht mit blauem Stern,  
Kommt her geielt von nah und fern.  
Vergesst es nicht, seid dankbar dran,  
Was Adolf Hitler euch getan.*<sup>372</sup>

Finished with her poem, Johanna was allowed to leave the stage. Fighting the urge to cry, Johanna joined her parents—who were seated within the front third of the rows of seats—and began listening to the “bombastic speeches” (“*schwulstigen Ansprachen*”) about Hitler and “*Volk und Vaterland*” that ensued.<sup>373</sup>

Johanna was born in March 1938 into a family from the predominantly German village of Kernei (Krnjaja, Kerény), Batschka. Kernei, established in 1765 primarily by Germans who had settled there through the Habsburg's immigration policies, became (at least according to official German sources) a purely German town by the mid-nineteenth century, though its former inhabitants also remember Hungarian, Serbian, and “Czech” families who lived there during the 1930s and 1940s, and who composed perhaps ten percent of the population.<sup>374</sup> In

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<sup>371</sup> Name changed as by agreement signed between interviewer and interviewee on 27.7.2011. The interview was conducted in German as an in-person group interview with Johanna and her brother, Michael\*.

<sup>372</sup> “*Forget-me-nots with blue star; Quickly come hither, from near and afar; Do not forget, be thankful too; For all that Adolf Hitler has done for you.*” Johanna Bauer\* in an interview with her, her brother Michael\*, and Caroline Mezger, 27 July 2011.

<sup>373</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>374</sup> Michael Eichhorn, “Ortsplan Kernei” (HOG Kernei, 2007); Johanna and Michael Bauer, interview.

1944, Kernei had a population of approximately 6,347.<sup>375</sup> Like other Batschka villages, Kernei was predominately agricultural, and its inhabitants generally belonged to one of three social categories: the “lower class” of farm girls and boys (“*Knechte*” and “*Mägde*”), cattle herders, and day laborers; a “middle class” of craftsmen and small farmers; and an “upper class” (the “*Herreleut*”<sup>376</sup>) composed of grand land-owning farmers and a few “studied” individuals.<sup>377</sup>

Kernei, like other towns and villages in the Batschka, had experienced considerable changes during the interwar period. As in other, now Yugoslav, German towns, Kernei gave rise to a plethora of German-oriented organizations, including its own branch of the *Kulturbund* in 1920.<sup>378</sup> The aim of this *Kulturbund*, according to contemporary *Donauschwaben* publications, was the maintenance of the German language and culture. Especially after World War I— as German populations became suddenly immersed first in a Serbian, then (after 1941) a Hungarian-speaking administration and increasing attempts at Magyarization— an “awareness arose that one is German.”<sup>379</sup> As in other *Donauschwaben* communities of the Batschka, Kernei— through its *Kulturbund*— thus established a German-language library of circa 500 volumes, sent many of its girls and boys to the German *Lehrerbildungsanstalt* in Neu Werbach, began holding folkloric *Heimabende*, and hosted cultural and athletic events for youths.<sup>380</sup> Like many German communities in the Batschka, Kernei also hosted multiple *Kinderlandverschickung* units (from Westfalen in 1942, Hamburg in 1943, and Vienna in 1944,

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<sup>375</sup> Eichhorn, “Ortsplan Kernei.”

<sup>376</sup> Michael Bauer, interview.

<sup>377</sup> Eva Ackermann, “Kerneier Hochzeiten. Strategien und Bräuche in einem donauschwäbischen Dorf in den 1930er Jahren,” (Unpublished paper, 1996), 3.

<sup>378</sup> Heinrich Ehrlich, “Das Vereinswesen in Kernei,” in *Kerneier Heimatblätter: Mitteilungen an Kerneier in aller Welt*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1967), 15. The founding year of Kernei’s *Kulturbund* is disputed and placed, by some, as late as 1922 [see Johann Schmidt, “Vor 60 Jahren wurde der Schwäbisch-Deutsche Kulturbund (SDKB) gegründet,” in *Kerneier Heimatblätter: Mitteilungen an die Kerneier in aller Welt*, vol. 24 (Easter 1981), 14.]

<sup>379</sup> Schmidt, “Vor 60 Jahren,” 5.

<sup>380</sup> Ehrlich, “Das Vereinswesen in Kernei,” 15.

as well as several groups from Bakony and Transylvania).<sup>381</sup> An official *Deutsche Jugend* was established.<sup>382</sup> Between 1942 and 1943, the local *Kulturbund* even opened its own German-speaking Kindergarten.<sup>383</sup>

Johanna's family, during the 1940s, consisted of her two parents, her two younger brothers (born in 1940 and 1943), and an extensive array of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, primarily centered around Kernei. Especially her mother's side of the family seemed to have been fairly well-off and owned large estates (according to Johanna's brother, they were the village's "fifth richest family").<sup>384</sup> These estates were farmed by tenant farmers and day laborers, whereby these day laborers— according to Johanna and her brothers' recollection— consisted, especially during the harvest season, primarily of Bosnians; their grandmother's goat herder was, according to their memory, a Hungarian man with an affinity for Magyar folkloric costume.<sup>385</sup> Johanna's father's side of the family consisted primarily of skinnners and furriers; her father, however, had attended the German *Lehrerbildungsanstalt* in Sombor and became a teacher.<sup>386</sup>

Due to Johanna's fathers' occupation as a teacher, she and her immediate family moved frequently. Johanna herself was thus born in Batsch-Brestowatz (Bački Brestovac, Szilberek), however, the family moved to Paraput/Parabutsch (Ratkovo, Paripás) in 1942 or early 1943.<sup>387</sup> It was also Paraputsch from which most of Johanna's memories about her childhood in the Batschka originate. It was in Paraputsch that she attended the "completely normal

<sup>381</sup> Ehrlich, "Das Vereinswesen in Kernei," 15.

<sup>382</sup> Schmidt, "Vor 60 Jahren," 15.

<sup>383</sup> Ehrlich, "Das Vereinswesen in Kernei," 16.

<sup>384</sup> Michael Bauer, interview.

<sup>385</sup> Johanna and Michael Bauer, interview.

<sup>386</sup> Johanna and Michael Bauer, interview.

<sup>387</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

Kindergarten” that held celebrations for Hitler’s birthday.<sup>388</sup> It was also in Paraputsch that her family began welcoming youths from Germany in their own home.

According to some estimates, during the early 1940s, German families in the Batschka and the “Schwäbische Türkei” hosted approximately 8,000 children as part of a *Kinderlandverschickung* or youth exchange operation.<sup>389</sup> Johanna’s family, too, welcomed some of these children. As Johanna recalls, youths from Germany were “invited” to stay with families in the Batschka, as this region was experiencing neither war nor hunger. One day, representatives (usually women) from every willing *Donauschwaben* family thus gathered at the local Kindergarten. After each German child’s name was called out, a *Donauschwab* would call out “here!,” and the child would be distributed to this family. Johanna’s family, however, hosted the “Führer” of this group. This young man apparently slept in her family’s living room. Every morning, five-year-old Johanna was asked by her mother to carry this man’s mail into the living room; as Johanna assumes, her mother was simply irritated by how long he slept and used this mail delivery to awaken him.<sup>390</sup>

Whether these particular children arrived in Paraputsch as part of a *Kinderlandverschickung* is unclear. Nevertheless, Johanna recalls that these groups— and they probably came several times— used to “march nicely” through their town, all clad in black shorts, brown shirts, “and a diagonal thing” across their chests.<sup>391</sup> Johanna did not know what exactly these youths did on a daily basis; nonetheless, they generally gathered near the Kindergarten, marched in their uniforms, and were hosted generously by the

<sup>388</sup> Quotation Johanna’s own words. Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>389</sup> Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944*, 310. As Spannenberger explains, these children were generally hosted by *Volksbund* members. The KLV, also according to Spannenberger, further aimed at “strengthening” these families’ “German consciousness” (“...um bei ihnen das deutsche Bewusstsein zu stärken.”), p. 311.

<sup>390</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>391</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

“*Batschkadeutschen*.”<sup>392</sup> Germans in the Batschka, Johanna explains, were always very hospitable; and “when someone came from *Germany*! That was always something very special... one really did... appreciate it.”<sup>393</sup>

Johanna’s family, it seems, had generally shown an interest for everything “German,” and had fostered ties with Germany for some time. Johanna’s uncle (on her mother’s side) had apparently received an agricultural education on Hanover during the 1930s. After his studies, he returned to the Batschka with an “enthusiasm” (“*Begeisterung*”) for National Socialism—ultimately, he also became one of Kernei’s first members of the “*Volksbund*.”<sup>394</sup> Johanna’s mother, too, had traveled to Germany as a young woman. During the interwar period, she had received an education first at a Serbian, then at a Hungarian boarding school. (Her mother’s mother—widowed during the First World War—attempted to raise at least one child so that they would be able to communicate with the authorities). Sometime between 1932 and 1934, however, her mother traveled to Magdeburg to work at an orphanage. Thereafter, their mother also developed a certain “enthusiasm.”<sup>395</sup>

As Johanna explains, her mother used to sit at the piano and play “soldiers’ songs”—songs that she herself still remembers.<sup>396</sup> Her mother, as Johanna conjectures, must have also been quite instrumental in organizing the hosting of German youths within their town, as her mother had an unusually close “connection” to Germany. Furthermore, whenever someone began to approach their family home, Johanna’s mother would tell her to check the radio to make sure that it was not tuned into an “enemy station” (a “*Feindsender*”); Johanna did her

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<sup>392</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>393</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>394</sup> Johanna and Michael Bauer, interview. It also seems that two individuals with the same family name had become the two successive leaders of Kernei’s *Kulturbund* during the 1920s. See Ehrlich, “Das Vereinswesen in Kernei,” 15.

<sup>395</sup> Johanna and Michael Bauer, interview.

<sup>396</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

best, she says, though she wasn't always entirely sure how the radio should be adjusted as she could not yet read.<sup>397</sup>

The early 1940s, as Johanna remembers, were filled with tensions. In terms of the region's other minorities, she and her brother were not aware of any major conflicts— her grandmother's farm was still maintained by Bosnian and Hungarian laborers, and, according to their estimations, all Jews had left Kernei for the district's administrative center, Sombor, due to a disagreement over slaughtering methods in 1913 anyways.<sup>398</sup> Nevertheless, particularly within the German community, there seem to have been increasing frictions. As Johanna remembers, she once visited her mother's mother in Paraputsch. During a walk through the town, she noticed how some of the houses had “some kind of black ‘V’ marked on them” that were probably painted with a stencil, “since all of the symbols looked the same.” Thinking back, as Johanna explains, these individuals were presumably part of the *Volksbund*, though she was not entirely sure what that means. Nonetheless, Johanna pointed at these houses, exclaiming to her grandmother that “it is *them* that live there!.” For some reason, Johanna felt like “evil” people might be living there; her qualms, however, were eased when her grandmother abruptly responded by exclaiming “So what? Those are also just people.” Johanna agreed— why should one discriminate against people with a different opinion?<sup>399</sup>

Especially 1944 was wrought with difficulties. Johanna's father— unable to quickly learn Hungarian, which was now required of all teachers in the Batschka— instead became employed by the *Wiener Donaudampfschiffahrtsgesellschaft* as a German instructor— probably to “maintain Germandom or something” (“... *um das Deutschtum zu erhalten*”).<sup>400</sup> Her family

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<sup>397</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>398</sup> Johanna and Michael Bauer, interview.

<sup>399</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>400</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.



thus moved to Pécs. There, her father— as Johanna remembers— was called to the local German school one day, where he and a large group of other men were herded into trucks and carried away into SS service. As Johanna further recalls, most of her male relatives in Kernei, by that time, had already been drafted into the German army. In late 1944, her youngest uncle apparently deserted the army; as a result, his father (her grandfather) was taken as a prisoner by German soldiers, who had converted the local school into a jail. Her aunt, this uncle's brother, decided to help her father and, despite the dangers involved, brought clothing for him to the jail (he had been arrested in the middle of the night and only wore pajamas). After some heated negotiations with the guards, during which she condemned the large-scale forced conscription of her male relatives— she was finally able to bring him the garments. Her grandfather, as Johanna explains, was never “enthusiastic” about the Nazis— he himself had fought during the First World War and knew the cost of militarization. Nevertheless, he, like so many of their relatives, ultimately perished in a Partisan prisoners' camp after their village was evacuated in October 1944.<sup>401</sup>

Military conscription within the Batschka had indeed seen a curious development within the past decades. Johanna's father— like many other men of his generation— had, as a young man, fought within the Yugoslav forces. During the early 1940s, her father then served within the Hungarian army. In 1944, he was ultimately drafted into the German SS. As Johanna's brother explains, their father “first swore eternal loyalty to the Yugoslav forces... then to the Hungarian forces... and in the end he fought for the Germans... He was born in Austria-Hungary, but he died as a German.”<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>402</sup> Michael Bauer, interview.

What exactly, in this context, is meant by “German” is difficult to elucidate. Certainly, it seems that Johanna’s family, too, had grappled with these questions. As Johanna describes, particularly after the First World War, when the official state language (“*Amtsprache*”) changed, Germans had difficulties, as “they only knew German.” The Germans were thus “quite helpless, and then even the German schools were taken from them.”<sup>403</sup> One of her aunts, for instance, was mainly educated in Yugoslav schools— for the rest of her life, she was never able to spell correctly in German (her mother tongue), so that Johanna always thought as a child that she was “stupid.”<sup>404</sup> According to Johanna, the Batschka’s Germans were increasingly “restricted” (“*eingeschränkt*”) after World War I. For Johanna, it was therefore understandable that individuals increasingly “orientated” themselves towards Germany. They began to seek an education in Austria or Germany, and became fascinated especially with German technology (as Johanna exclaims: even her uncle— who was educated in Hanover— now had a tractor).<sup>405</sup>

It was largely due to these “restrictions” that Germans now faced under a new administration that they “became— thought more nationally.” As a child, she felt that everything German “was indeed venerated” (“*Das Deutsche war schon hochgehalten*”).<sup>406</sup> “The Germans as the competent... and the better ones... and the hard-working ones”— this is the image with which she was presented.<sup>407</sup> In some cases, thus, it seems that a new national “enthusiasm” turned into an enthusiasm for National Socialism. After experiencing all these

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<sup>403</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview. She here probably refers to the increasingly restrictive Hungarian legislation on German schools, which caused most German schools in the area to close (see previous chapter).

<sup>404</sup> It is interesting to note here that according to official report cards from the German schools in Neu-Werbass, one of the few classes that German students frequently failed between 1941 and 1943 was their German language course, even when they had Hungarian classes as well. See, for instance, “Matrikel 1941/1942- Deutsche Bürgerschule Neu-Werbass,” ANS F-207 v. 9 (1941-42).

<sup>405</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>406</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>407</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

post-World War I “restrictions,” “one thought Hitler is the savior [chuckles], he will bring everything back to how it was.”<sup>408</sup> Her grandmother, for instance, had lost her husband during the First World War. A “real German”— a strong, farming woman who raised all of her children mostly on her own— thus also began to develop an “enthusiasm.” Two of her children— Johanna’s mother and uncle, who had spent some time in Germany— ultimately also became “enthusiastic.”

As Johanna further explains, most Germans within her town were “clueless about what was really behind” National Socialism (“...*ahnungslos, was wirklich dahinter steckt*”).<sup>409</sup> Certainly, there were “plenty” of individuals in their community who were not “enthusiastic”— these individuals were then further joined by others who became gradually disillusioned by the Nazis. Another aunt of Johanna’s, for instance, had traveled to Germany as a volunteer factory worker in 1943 or 1944. When she returned, she was “subdued” (“*gedämpft*”) in her “enthusiasm”— her experiences in Germany, for some reason, had “neutralized the whole thing” for her, so that she became “cautious” (“*verhalten*”) about the *Volksbund* and its activities.<sup>410</sup> By the time forceful SS recruitments started within their hometown, too, the “Germans” seemed to assume an entirely new persona. Previously, “Germans” from Germany created an example as something that “Germans” in her community aspired to be. As Johanna describes her aunt’s experiences of bringing her father clothing in jail, however, the (*Reichs*-) “German” suddenly becomes the “occupying” force, and the German soldier a potentially dangerous being.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> “... *da hat ma sich gedacht, der Hitler ist der Erlöser [lacht], der bringt wieder alles, wie’s war.*”

<sup>409</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>410</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

<sup>411</sup> Johanna Bauer, interview.

The Third Reich was thus certainly a presence within Kernei, Paraputsch, and other communities inhabited by Johanna's family. Johanna herself, raised with Nazi songs in her ear and odes to Hitler in her memory, witnessed the marching of (*reichs-*) German children through her town, the hosting of a youth leader in her home, tensions between *Volksbund* and non-*Volksbund* individuals, the recruitment of her male relatives into the SS, and the ultimate dissolution of her community in October 1944, as the Batschka's German villages were cleared during the *Vertreibung*. As Johanna describes, an initial "enthusiasm" for National Socialism was "understandable," since Hitler suddenly appeared, to many, as a solution to the problems faced by Germans within a multi-ethnic, fluctuating borderland. According to her description, it seems that a rising national awareness— created during the tumultuous interwar period— increasingly met with National Socialism, as *reichsdeutsche* organs began to profess a certain national superiority that attracted many individuals previously "restricted" and teased for their own linguistic and national affiliation. For many, the National Socialists thus became an embodiment of "true Germanness." However, it also seems that this connection was tenuous. Not all ethnic Germans within the Batschka equated "German" with "Nazi" or "*Volksbund*"; many also changed their minds over the course of the Second World War. Furthermore, Nazism, for many, was not necessarily a means for the fulfillment of a "national" cause, but— as can be seen by Johanna's uncle's tractor, her father's new job as a German teacher, or her mother's and uncle's education— an opportunity for material or social "progress." Finally, while families indeed were divided in their political affiliations and opinions, it seems that particularly children followed primarily the example of their immediate environment— the nuclear family and other pre-existing social ties— in which activities and beliefs they followed. These elements will also become apparent in this next perspective.

## 5.2 Perspective Two: Children Resist Nazi Activities

Kernei clearly hosted an active, and increasingly “*gleichgeschaltet*,” *Kulturbund* that—by the late 1930s— attracted individuals from a multitude of families, generations, and professions. According to some estimates, 92 to 95 percent of Kernei’s “German inhabitants” belonged to the *Kulturbund* in 1941 (when membership reached its pinnacle).<sup>412</sup> Kernei, however, was also home to ethnic Germans who never subscribed to the *Kulturbund* and its tenets, and who suffered severe discriminations as a result. This is also the perspective of Fritz Schneider\*, born in Kernei in October 1931.<sup>413</sup>

Fritz was born into a family of farmers with modest means. Both of his parents had been raised in Kernei, and, in 1919— following his father’s military service in the Habsburg forces— they got married. Two years later, his older brother was born. Fritz’s family, as he explains, had always been “tied” to the Catholic Church (“*religiös gebunden*”) — two of his aunts, for instance, were nuns.<sup>414</sup> His father, who had experienced difficulties during his military service as he did not know Hungarian, decided that his sons would need to learn the state language. Fritz’s brother was thus sent to a Serbian school, although, as Fritz jokes, it ultimately did not help him very much when he had to join the Hungarian armed forces after 1941.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Schmidt, “Vor 60 Jahren,” 15. As Schmidt also explains, immediately after 1933 and particularly after 1942/1943, membership numbers decreased, though they saw a steady increase from the late 1930s until 1941 (p. 15).

<sup>413</sup> Name changed according to contract signed between interviewee and Caroline Mezger on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The interview was conducted in person, with the interviewee individually, and in German.

<sup>414</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview with Caroline Mezger, 10 August 2011. It is also interesting to note that according to Kernei’s official yearly publication by its former *Donauschwab* inhabitants, a man with Fritz’s ancestors’ name led the Catholic Church choir, which “aimed at the beautification of Church services through choir singing, but also the maintenance of folk song.” Ehrlich, “Das Vereinswesen in Kernei,” 16.

<sup>415</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

Fritz, who has spent most of his life informing himself about Kernei— its establishment, development, and ultimate downfall— and who has visited his hometown nearly every year during the past three decades, also describes the village as being mainly agricultural. As he explains, when the village was first settled during the eighteenth century, it was essentially trilingual: German, Hungarian, and “*Slawisch*.” Nevertheless, as he explains, different nationalities began marrying only each other and settling in different places. By 1810, Kernei was thus a “purely German community” (“...*eine rein deutsche Gemeinde*”). Only the train station manager and the village director (“*Gemeindedirektor*”) were, “depending on where [they] belonged to at a given moment, either Serbian or Hungarian.”<sup>416</sup> Kernei’s economy depended primarily on cattle breeding and farming, though in 1938, Kernei’s first major industry arose with the establishment of three hemp factories. As Fritz explains, “through the war, the demand for... products, especially for the construction of ships and ropes and so on rose”— larger farmers thus established their own private factories, which catered primarily to the German industry.<sup>417</sup>

This relatively “peaceful” atmosphere was shattered when “the war broke out against Yugoslavia” in 1941. As Fritz recalls, his family’s horses were confiscated; “one noticed there that an entirely new era was dawning.”<sup>418</sup> The question then also arose on “what happens now?” A bifurcation of the population (“*Zweiteilung der Bevölkerung*”) had already occurred; one group was sorry (“*haben es bedauert*”) that “the Hungarians weren’t there anymore,” while the other “did not expect that they would be returned to Hungary.”<sup>419</sup> Especially this latter

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<sup>416</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>417</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>418</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>419</sup> It is also interesting to note that according to Fritz’s description, similar reactions occurred when most of the Batschka became a Yugoslav territory after World War I. As he states: “What was now easier for many was that the pressure, uh, Magyarization and the use of the Hungarian language ended. [...] However, one could not fathom

group was dismayed that it was not the Germans who had entered their territory, as “it was stated that sooner or later, we would also be taken in by Germany and we would belong to the German state.”<sup>420</sup> This latter group, as Fritz elaborates, was mainly composed of *Kulturbund* members.

For Fritz, the *Kulturbund* arose during a time when Kernei was still a “unified” “community” [*Gemeinschaft*]. “Originally, the *Kulturbund* was actually a good thing,” Fritz elaborates. “It was actually intended for the preservation of the German culture and language,” and— back then— even prominent individuals like “this Father Berenz,” who later resisted the *Kulturbund*, was one of the founding members of the *Kulturbund* in Apatin.<sup>421</sup> However, much of this changed after 1933. After this date, more and more members of their community returned from their studies in Germany and “brought this National Socialist body of ideas with them” (*dieses nationalsozialistische Gedankengut mitbrachten*).<sup>422</sup> Thereafter, “the community split strongly” between two camps: *Kulturbund* followers (*Kulturbundanhänger*) and *Kulturbund* opponents (*Kulturbundgegner*). *Kulturbund* followers were generally known as “the browns” (*die Braunen*), while its opponents were known either as “Magyarone” or the “blacks” (*die Schwarzen*).<sup>423</sup>

According to Fritz, this bifurcation of Kernei’s German population had “severe consequences.” “Walls were smeared—‘traitor,’ ‘Jew,’ and so on and so forth— that occurred

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that... this area would now belong to Yugoslavia and would no longer be part of this grand tradition of Austria-Hungary.”

<sup>420</sup> “Denn es hat geheissen früher oder später werden wir also von Deutschland hier eingenommen und wir werden hier zum deutschen Staat gehören und das war also dann eine grosse Enttäuschung als dann ‘41 die Ungarn einmarschierten in Abmachung mit Deutschland...”

<sup>421</sup> It was Father Berenz who published *Die Donau*, as mentioned in the previous chapter of this thesis.

<sup>422</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>423</sup> As Janjetović explains, there were four main “categories” of *Donauschwaben* in Vojvodina: 1) „Those who identified National-Socialism with Germany“; 2) The “Hitlerites,” who were “enchanted” by Hitler, equated the *Führer* with Gerany, and made the bulk of the *Kulturbund*; 3) The “Magyarones,” who include “the hesitant ones,” the “pro-Hungarians,” the “ethnic turncoats, liberals, cosmopolitans, and reformist socialists”; and 4) “Ideological enemies of National Socialism” like church-goers. As Fritz’s description shows, however, this scheme seems like an oversimplification. Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 45-46.

straight through families.” As Fritz continues: “Parents no longer spoke with their sons or children and vice versa and one neighbor no longer spoke to the other.”<sup>424</sup> Especially as the first voluntary military recruitments occurred, these conflicts intensified.<sup>425</sup> As Fritz explains, especially when men began to fall on the front, a “real hatred against one another” emerged, as the bereaved criticized that “my son had to fall in Russia, and they’re still running around here!”<sup>426</sup> His father, too, was heavily criticized, as he had refused to volunteer for the German forces. Ultimately, however, he also had to enter the military in 1944. Betrayed and reported on by his own neighbors— *Kulturbund* followers— Fritz’s father was captured in the middle of the night by SS members. Taken away with 180 other men, he was first brought to Sombor, where they were all locked for two weeks into the local synagogue. Then “they were forcefully clothed [in uniform] and then followed the Germans on their retreat.” “The tragic thing,” Fritz continues, “was that initially they were implemented [*eingesetzt*] with the refugees, across the Danube, but finally as the war ended, one implemented this group of persons... that were forcefully recruited and clothed... for the surveillance of Jews [*Judenüberwachung*].”<sup>427</sup> Fritz’s father, previously discriminated for not participating in *Kulturbund* or German military activities, thus ultimately worked at the Mauthausen concentration camp, an event under which his father “suffered for the rest of his life.”<sup>428</sup>

As Fritz explains, his own family had belonged to the “*Schwarze*.” It was generally clear in the neighborhood who belonged to which “camp,” Fritz claims. His family home was

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<sup>424</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview. As he further states: “One cannot imagine, what would have happened [laughs] if we wouldn’t have been expelled... how these two groups... could have reconciled.”

<sup>425</sup> As Fritz explains, when his brother was around twenty years old (around 1941), “there was the option... of going to Croatia, over the Danube, and to voluntarily enter the German forces.” His father, however, forbade his brother from doing anything of the sort— a veteran himself, he insisted that one has to wait to serve until one is explicitly called. His brother thus ultimately served in the Honvéd from 1942 onwards.

<sup>426</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>427</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>428</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.



thus frequently vandalized by *Kulturbund* followers— “in the end,” Fritz states, “we didn’t even replace the windows anymore, because they were then just broken again... and this label, ‘Jew’ or ‘traitor’... we didn’t have to paint over it anymore, because the next evening, it was there again.”<sup>429</sup> As Fritz recalls, *Kulturbund* followers all had “a ‘V’—victoria— with a laurel leaf, and, written above it, ‘*der deutsche Sieg*’” on their homes’ facades.<sup>430</sup> As Fritz states, there were probably *Kulturbund* followers who did not necessarily appreciate these markings on their homes, however, “once they were in [the *Kulturbund*]... they did not dare to resist [*“trauten sich auch nicht zu wehren”*] when someone came to paint this German twig on their houses.” Fritz’s mother always vehemently opposed any such markings on their house— when anyone asked her whether she would like one, she sent them away, and when such a sign appeared anyways, his family would paint over it— a difficult task, as Fritz explains, as “one had to repaint the entire gable, otherwise there would still be an indication that it was there.”<sup>431</sup> Approximately half of the houses had this sign, Fritz recalls, and everyone who had “gone” to Germany did.

After finishing the fourth grade at age eleven— the highest level of schooling available within Kernei— Fritz traveled to Szeged, where he spent the 1942/1943 and 1943/1944 academic years at a Hungarian Piarist boarding school. Despite initial linguistic difficulties in this predominately Hungarian school, Fritz eventually caught up and learned to speak Hungarian fluently. Whenever he returned to Kernei for the holidays, however, he again experienced discrimination. As soon as he arrived at Kernei’s train station, “former classmates and other boys” would be waiting for him. They then teased him, tore off his school cap, “threw it in the clay [ground] and stepped on it.” “Why don’t you take a different, German cap,

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<sup>429</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>430</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>431</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

why do you need to wear a Hungarian cap?” the children would taunt. “Such smaller conflicts were common even among children,” Fritz explains.<sup>432</sup>

The “bifurcation” of Kernei’s German population, according to Fritz, was noticeable even amongst youths. Within his town, there were two youth organizations, one organized by the *Kulturbund*, the other by the Catholic Church. (As Fritz estimates, perhaps 70% of Kernei’s youth was associated with the *Kulturbund*’s youth programs, including the *Deutsche Jugend*.) Youths also considered precisely who attended which club. Even “when one thought [...] that could be a boyfriend or a girlfriend, one did question, well, is he in the *Kulturbund*? Or is he in my... color? What shall I do here?.”<sup>433</sup>

Fritz’s father actually had a brother who was “involved” with the *Kulturbund*. His two daughters— with whom Fritz had virtually no direct contact, as his father and uncle only began speaking to each other again after the War— also belonged to the local *Kulturbund* youth organization. As Fritz describes, his uncle’s daughters “were in that age and then they wanted to participate in everything, right? What was offered by the *Kulturbund*— work with youths [*Jugendarbeit, Jugendeinsätze*], youth holidays, camps, and so on.”<sup>434</sup> While their father himself did not get actively involved in such activities, he nevertheless “silently accepted everything.” Therefore, while Fritz went to church services on Sundays with the other “*Kulturbundgegner*” (*Kulturbund* opponents), his two cousins attended youth meetings. “It wasn’t much,” states Fritz. “They marched from the school to the sport fields and did sports there and sang songs.” This is merely what one could observe from the outside— he himself did not know what occurred “internally.” However, as he realized, these groups were generally led by male and female leaders (“*Führungskraft*”) who had “gone away [presumably either to

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<sup>432</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>433</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>434</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

Germany or a larger German school within the Batschka] and returned with medals... the men in leather boots.” These groups generally wanted to “show that we have nothing to do with the Church anymore” and that they “expected that the German *Reich* would be established here.”<sup>435</sup>

Particularly these marches, from the school or *Kulturbund* center to the sports fields, were generally followed by a large “*Tamtam*” (hullabaloo). Perhaps 150 to 200 youths would march in one column, “the women with white shirts and so on,” the boys “with light brown shirts and everything that belonged to it,” and all singing “*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*.” All the youths who participated in these processions did indeed seem “enthusiastic” (“*Begeistert*”)— a maldevelopment (“*Fehlentwicklung*”) “feared” by his own immediate family (“*Elternhaus*”). These “enthusiasts” would also attend meetings once or twice a week (“*Kulturabende*”), where “German *Liedgut* [song heritage] was practiced,” and where “propaganda speeches were delivered,” especially by “*Wanderlehrer*”— lecturers who were “especially strongly connected to National Socialism” and who traveled from place to place “making very strong advertisements and propaganda for the Third Reich and the readiness to fight for the fatherland and so on and so forth.”<sup>436</sup> As Fritz observed, youths would generally emerge from these meetings with “enthusiasm,” many also prepared “to fight for an ideology [*Gedankengut*] that they could not really understand and nevertheless [...] believed, that the German is a *Volk* that must have the upper hand and that we all need to participate in that.”<sup>437</sup>

Kernei also had a *levente*, however, as Fritz explains, “they had no big... attraction... also with non-*Kulturbund* individuals [*“Nichtkulturbundlern”*], because everything was in

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<sup>435</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>436</sup> “... es ist dann auch sehr viel Reklame gemacht worden und äh Propaganda gemacht worden für das Dritte Reich, für die Bereitschaft zu kämpfen für das Vaterland und so weiter und so fort.”

<sup>437</sup> “... zu kämpfen für ein Gedankengut, was die also gar nicht richtig... verstehen konnten, und trotzdem hat man das... nein, das muss also durchgezogen werden, wie das eben halt gesagt worden ist... Deutsche... ist... ein... Volk was die Vorherrschaft haben muss und da müssen wir alle dabei sein.”

Hungarian, and one did not know Hungarian... it even went too far for *Kulturbund* opponents, when one constantly had to hear ‘magyar földön élsz, magyar kenyeret eszel.’<sup>438</sup> And then even *Kulturbund* opponents thought ‘you stupid guy, what’s this? I’m eating, producing my bread myself, no?’”<sup>439</sup> Most Germans thus remained within German-speaking organizations. Many further refused to attend non-German schools. As Fritz explains, youths from Kernei— who had a “certain precondition” (“*die Voraussetzung*”)— traveled to Apatin or Neu Werbass to attend the German secondary schools there. Many who returned from these institutions, Fritz states, “had nothing to do with the *Kulturbund* and National Socialism”— many, however, did. Along with students who had been educated within the *Reich*, these pupils began acting as “agitators” (“*Agitatoren*”) amongst youths within their hometowns, reporting on “what they experienced in Germany and strongly... spreading the ideology.”<sup>440</sup>

Fritz also witnessed Kernei’s various KLV programs. These children, as Fritz explains, generally attended classes in the morning with the teachers that had accompanied them from Germany. They then usually spent the afternoons within the *Kulturbund*’s house. These children wore their “uniform” (with “shorts” and “light brown shirts”), hoisted a flag every morning, took it down every evening, and held processions. As Fritz further claims, these youths were “strongly integrated into the *Kulturbund*, where... leading personalities had a strong influence on the *Kulturbund*.” Furthermore, as Fritz describes, the KLV children became instrumental in the local silk worm production— Kernei’s inhabitants had always raised silk

<sup>438</sup> “On Hungarian soil you live, Hungarian bread you eat.”

<sup>439</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>440</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

worms as a supplementary income, and these boys and girls collected mulberry leaves and fed these silk worms every afternoon.<sup>441</sup>

As Fritz recalls, these KLV youths were “an interesting group.” “They talked a lot about Germany, which was something very new for us,” he explains. These boys and girls— which were apparently a little bit older than him (“maybe 12 to 16 years old”)— did not really “politicize,” Fritz claims. Rather, they told Kernei’s youths about Germany, about how “Germany is cleanliness” (which they apparently complained about in Kernei), how “Germany is punctuality and [...] honesty.”<sup>442</sup> “Interestingly,” as Fritz adds, “they [the KLV groups] could not understand or know what to do with these conflicts, that occurred down there” between Germans of the same community. Fritz therefore “had a better relationship with two or three of these boys than with the neighboring children”— the KLV youths simply did not care whether “one was in the *Kulturbund* or not.” As he explains, even today, “contacts remain” between these former KLV youths and the former inhabitants of Kernei.<sup>443</sup>

Despite the all of the “propaganda from Germany,” which “taught that everything that comes from Hungary is against Germandom... that they wanted to Magyarize us...,” Fritz explains, “there was no political or racist manner in Kernei.” On the contrary, in 1941, when Hungary began to occupy their territory, Germans hid the local Serbs and Bunjewatz “until everything settled down” as “one made sure that no problems would occur with these people.”<sup>444</sup> According to Fritz, furthermore, Kernei’s last Jew, a Dr. Zinn, retired to Sombor in 1905. In this regard, there were thus no “incidents” or “confrontations” within Kernei.

<sup>441</sup> For a personal account of this, see “Meine KLV-Zeit in der Batschka,” in *Kerneier Heimatblätter: Mitteilungen an die Kerneier in aller Welt*, vol. 32 (1989), 37-43.

<sup>442</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>443</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview. Numerous issue of the ongoing Kernei *Donauschwaben* publication (the *Kerneier Heimatblätter*) further contain memoirs of KLV individuals who had stayed in Kernei, as well as contact information and updates to maintain communication between former KLV children and their hosts.

<sup>444</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

Nevertheless, as Fritz elaborates, in October 1944— as the German army retreated— a group of Jewish prisoners was herded through Kernei, many of them shot on the open street. As Fritz explains, this was an event that incited many *Donauschwaben* to flee Kernei and travel westwards soon thereafter.<sup>445</sup>

During the early 1940s, Kernei thus was embroiled within a diversity of conflicts; the conflict that Fritz, according to his own reports, remembers and suffered under the most was the bifurcation of the German community within Kernei. The battles waged between *Kulturbund* followers and *Kulturbund* opponents also revolved significantly around notions of “Germanness.” As Fritz explains, organizations like the *Deutsche Jugend* hoped to “solidify Germandom” (“*das Deutschtum zu festigen*”) and “spread the German body of ideas” (“*das deutsche Ideentum zu verbreiten*”), particularly in order to counteract and liberate oneself from a perceived “pressure” (“*Druck*”) from Yugoslavia and Hungary. However, what had begun as a “good intention of the *Kulturbund* [in preserving the German language, etc.]... slid mindlessly into the propaganda of the Third Reich.”<sup>446</sup> “Pressure” thus mounted within the community to join the *Kulturbund*, to voluntarily join the SS and fight for “Germany,” and to equate “Germanness” with National Socialism. Other arenas for the expression of a German identity did exist, as Fritz asserts. Kernei’s Catholic youth groups, for instance, were also strongly infused with “German *Volksgut* and German folk song.” Yearly German courses were also held by these organizations in a cloister in Banja Luka.<sup>447</sup> Nevertheless, as soon as the *Deutsche Jugend* appeared, more and more youths joined the ranks of the *Kulturbund*.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>446</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>447</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>448</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

Fritz's own feelings of national belonging, thus, were and are complex. As Fritz explains, when he decided to attend the Hungarian Piarist school in Szeged, his father told him:

*Aber komm' ja nicht damit, dass du plötzlich irgendwie ungarisch denken willst... Du bist Deutscher, und du bleibst Deutscher... Bist wohl ungarischer Staatsangehöriger und must alle deine Pflichten erfüllen, must die Sprache erlernen, aber komm' mir nicht auf die Idee, wie so viele anderen...[deinen Namen zu wechseln oder die deutsche Sprache zu verlernen].*<sup>449</sup>

For Fritz's father, it was important for his children to learn the "state language" and fulfill their duties as citizens of whichever particular state they currently found themselves in. Nevertheless, he also insisted that, no matter what, "we are German people, and we will stay German people."<sup>450</sup> The particular brand of "Germanness" that Fritz's family pursued— tied to the Church and removed from the *Kulturbund*— was, however, not necessarily accepted by his entire *Donauschwaben* community. Even today, as Fritz sighs, he is approached by former *Kulturbund* members from Kernei. "Na, du Magyarone?" ("So, you Magyarone?"), they tease him. As Fritz explains, he then usually responds by stating "let it be, at all times I was as good a German as you, and still am so today."<sup>451</sup> Certainly, as Fritz explains, he had "not felt as a Hungarian," but he had "felt for Hungary"— perhaps more so than many of his peers. Fritz thus became very bitter, he says, after he was forced to leave Hungary for being a German.

As Fritz explains, attraction to the *Kulturbund*, and their particular notions of "Germanness," depended primarily on social status. Very wealthy individuals, in his opinion, usually countered the *Kulturbund*, so that they could remain on their estates and not fear

<sup>449</sup> "But don't you dare start thinking somehow Hungarian... You are a German, and you will remain a German... You are certainly a Hungarian citizen and must fulfill all of your duties, must learn the language, but don't come to the idea, like so many others... [to change your name or forget the German language]."

<sup>450</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>451</sup> "Lass mer das sein, so guter Deutscher wie du bist war ich alle Zeit und bins auch heute noch."

potential military recruitment.<sup>452</sup> For the lower classes, the *Kulturbund* was perceived as “socially redemptive” (“*sozial erlösend*”). Germany, it seemed, could now provide Kernei’s Germans with programs and support that Hungary, for instance, did not: “social support” (“*Sozialhilfe*”) for mother and child, and health insurance, for example. “Germany” and the *Kulturbund*, for these individuals, acted as a means for social security and mobility. Non-*Kulturbund* members, in turn, were accused of being a mere “vassal of Hungary”— something that these *Kulturbund* opponents “did not want to accept,” since they had frequently been the original founders of the *Kulturbund* during the 1920s, but who had abandoned it after they saw “where it drifts— against the Church and so on and so forth.”<sup>453</sup>

Kernei’s inhabitants experienced an extensive infiltration of National Socialist projects within their own community during the late 1930s and early 1940s. As the *Kulturbund* became increasingly radicalized— and its grip over social programs, youth groups, and military recruitment tightened— Kernei’s German population split. Individuals determined to define their own “German” identity according to markers like the Church were increasingly discriminated against by individuals who followed the *Kulturbund* and its National Socialist ideology in a hope of “social redemption.” As “Germanness” became increasingly tied to National Socialism, too, *Donauschwaben* with alternate ideas became regarded, by many, as “un-German,” as “*Magyarone*,” “traitors,” and “Jews.” As Fritz’s and Johanna’s experiences further indicate, children generally followed their parents’ example in which activities they joined; however, as Fritz mentions, he also had a neighbor whose daughter constantly destroyed her windows, as her daughter was in the *Kulturbund*, and she herself was not.<sup>454</sup> For

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<sup>452</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview. It is perhaps interesting, then, to compare this to the Bauer family’s economic standing and political affiliation.

<sup>453</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>454</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.



Fritz, furthermore, youths became very “enthusiastic” about the *Kulturbund* and all of the promises— of the leadership, advancement, and significance of the German youth— that its propaganda made. Although they might not have entirely understood it, as Fritz explained, many nevertheless became so “enthusiastic” that they were “prepared to fight for an ideology.”<sup>455</sup> It is to the perspective of a previously “enthusiastic” individual that this chapter now turns.

### 5.3 Perspective Three: Children Engage in Nazi Activities

Approximately fifty kilometers south of Kernei, near the bank of the Danube, lies a village called Bukin (Mladenovo, Dunabökény). According to histories published by its former *Donauschwaben* inhabitants, Bukin was first settled during the “*Schwabenzüge*,” which began with the signing of Article 103 by the Hungarian Parliament in 1723 and which stipulated that new, imported (Christian) settlers would receive tax exemptions, liberty, and the right to property within the Batschka.<sup>456</sup> In 1749, the first two hundred German families thus settled in Bukin, and joined the “previous Slavic population of 36 tax-paying citizens” (as counted in 1727). At least according to this history, these Slavic inhabitants “stayed in the village and formed, for 200 years, a peaceful village community in good neighborliness with the new settlers.”<sup>457</sup> Exact population statistics are difficult to come across; nevertheless, it seems that by 1944, Bukin was inhabited by approximately 548 families, each containing at least three

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<sup>455</sup> Fritz Schneider, interview.

<sup>456</sup> Andreas Pfuhl, *Bildband Bukin: 1749-1945: Ein deutsches Dorf in der Batschka* (München: Donauschwäbisches Archiv, 2002), 21.

<sup>457</sup> Pfuhl, *Bildband Bukin*, 21.

registered family members and nearly all— according to last names, at least— of German origins.<sup>458</sup>

Like Kernei, the *Donauschwaben* of Bukin established a range of German-specific organizations during the interwar and World War II periods— numerous published photographs on Bukin thus attest to the activities of Church, folkloric, and choral clubs (like the “*Gesangsverein Cäcilia*”) during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.<sup>459</sup> However, in 1924, Bukin also saw the establishment of its own *Kulturbund* chapter.<sup>460</sup> According to Benedikt Helmlinger, a historian from Bukin, the village’s *Kulturbund* was dissolved— like all other *Kulturbund* chapters across Yugoslavia— shortly thereafter; nevertheless, in 1935, Bukin’s local chapter again opened its doors. Particularly during the late 1930s, as Helmlinger explains, the *Kulturbund* became increasingly influenced by the “*Erneuerungsbewegung*,” which “imported a new teaching from Germany that would be propagated amongst our youths” and that would “stand as an enemy against the Church.”<sup>461</sup> Besides a quick mentioning of violent SS recruitments in Bukin between 1941 and 1944, and the division of Bukin’s population into “*Schwarze*” and “*Braune*,” not much else is revealed about this period of Bukin’s history. As Helmlinger ominously states: “An intellectual current produced in the Third Reich and brought to us destroyed love, peace, and harmony; it divided the community, friends, neighbors, relatives, not even rarely individual families.”<sup>462</sup>

<sup>458</sup> Pfuhl, *Bildband Bukin*, 432-479.

<sup>459</sup> See, for instance, Pfuhl, *Bildband Bukin*, 215, 227.

<sup>460</sup> Benedikt Helmlinger, *Bukiner Heimatbuch: Werdegang, Aufstieg und Untergang der deutschen Gemeinde Bukin in der Batschka/Jugoslawien* (Magstadt: Helmlinger, 1974), 209.

<sup>461</sup> Helmlinger, *Bukiner Heimatbuch*, 211.

<sup>462</sup> Helmlinger, *Bukiner Heimatbuch*, 215. “Eine im Dritten Reich produzierte und zu uns gebrachte Geistesströmung zerstörte die Liebe, den Frieden, die Eintracht; entzweite die Gemeinde, Freunde, Nachbarn, Verwandte, ja sogar nicht selten die einzelnen Familien.”

One individual with memories of these conflicts, “intellectual currents,” and “propaganda” amongst youths is Friedrich Fischer\*, born in Bukin in February 1928.<sup>463</sup> Friedrich, who has one younger sister, was the son of a merchant, who, even during the 1930s, traded agricultural products (like wheat and corn) for “mechanical products” from Germany.<sup>464</sup> As Friedrich explains, the Batschka was “an agricultural paradise, especially for rich cattles and farms... and that stuff grew, beautifully.”<sup>465</sup> Located close to the Danube, his father would help organize shipments of this produce for “technology” from Germany— “which we were very far behind [in].”<sup>466</sup> Due to his job, Friedrich’s father knew several languages, including some Hungarian and Serbian, and also frequently traveled to Novi Sad (sometimes with Friedrich) to make financial transactions at the local bank, which was apparently led by a Jewish man, an Adolf Greenberg.<sup>467</sup>

Bukin, according to Friedrich’s description, was a town of approximately 3,500 to 3,800 inhabitants, about eighty percent of which “spoke only German” and were Catholics.<sup>468</sup> The other twenty percent, as he recalls, spoke “Yugoslavian, or Serbian.” The police departments, as he explains, were generally also run by individuals “of Yugoslavian or Serbian descent”— Bukin’s fire department, however, was “all local” as “most of them spoke just German.”<sup>469</sup> As Friedrich remembers, the Batschka had at least one representative, a Hans Trischler, with the Yugoslav government in Belgrade before 1941. It was also thanks to his father’s connections that Friedrich had apparently “met the man” as a young boy.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> Name changed according to contract signed between interviewee and Caroline Mezger on 24th May 2011. The interview was conducted individually via Skype telephone call and in English.

<sup>464</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>465</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>466</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>467</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>468</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>469</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>470</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

Before 1941, Friedrich recalls, he attended the local secondary school in Bukin, but then moved to Batschka-Palanka to attend a “middle school,” as Bukin had no available schooling after the fourth or fifth grade. As Friedrich explains, in Batschka-Palanka, “German-speakers” “were in the minority.” “It came to the point where [...] everything was taught in Yugoslavian,” he further states. As Friedrich recalls, the “Yugoslavs” were “a bit jealous or despise, I don’t know”— tensions between Germans and Serbians mounted during his time in Batschka-Palanka, so that ultimately “they [the Serbians] always referred to us as the Nazis, the names of the Germans... slang, more.”<sup>471</sup>

In 1941, “as the Germans came through” “animosities between the Serbs and the Germans” mounted, Friedrich explains.<sup>472</sup> Furthermore, as Friedrich states, “in 1941, when the German troops came through [...] they realized what kind of a treasure our part of the country [was].”<sup>473</sup> Immediately after 1941, therefore, “a lot of people... were asked if they like to volunteer for the German army. And a lot of them would, because for us that was... a beautiful experience... that Germany wanted us.”<sup>474</sup> Enticed by the sudden interest that Germany had shown in them, many men volunteered, Friedrich explains. However, the more that such recruitments occurred, and the more that armed skirmishes between Partisans and Germans in the region “escalated,” the more the “animosities” within individual towns also increased, Friedrich says. “There were some really bad [...] feelings down there,” Friedrich recalls— as a result of these tensions, he thus decided to move to Novi Sad in 1941 as a thirteen-year-old,

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<sup>471</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>472</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>473</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview. Judging by Elizabeth Harvey’s study, however, it seems that the Third Reich was aware of Bukin’s “value” well before 1941— See Elizabeth Harvey, “Mobilisierung oder Erfassung? Studentischer Aktivismus und deutsche ‘Volkstumsarbeit’ in Jugoslawien und Rumänien 1933-1941,” in *“Mitteleuropa” und “Südosteuropa” als Planungsraum: Wirtschafts- und kulturpolitische Expertisen im Zeitalter der Weltkriege*, edited by Carola Sachse (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 376-377.

<sup>474</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

where he attended the *Deutsche Bürgerschule*, “a boarding school mostly of young people of German descent from that territory.”<sup>475</sup>

The *Deutsche Bürgerschule* was established in 1941 by the *Deutsche Schulstiftung*, becoming the first German secondary school in Novi Sad since 1868.<sup>476</sup> One of the major differences Friedrich perceived in the *Deutsche Bürgerschule* was that the language of instruction was German, except for five hours per week, which were dedicated to Hungarian.<sup>477</sup> “The Serbian people [...] kept eyes on us” even in Novi Sad, Friedrich claims; however, “... the Hungarians left us alone... because that they had allied to Germany. And, more or less we could do everything, and we didn’t need to be afraid of anything.”<sup>478</sup> It was also at the *Bürgerschule* that Friedrich was “roped in” and, like so many of his fellow *Donauschwaben*, “made a player of [his] nationality.”<sup>479</sup>

As Friedrich explains, his entry into the *Deutsche Bürgerschule* was an eye-opening experience. Before, “the Hungarians, they gave us their books and also the Yugoslavs, they gave us their books”— something that “we [German pupils] never liked” due to linguistic difficulties and emphases on “fictitious warriors” like “Kraljević Marko.”<sup>480</sup> “When the Germans came in” (in 1941), however, “they saw how in need for German... everything, from the dictionary to German books...” these students were. As Friedrich recalls, the Germans therefore “brought everything down there to us, and it was free.” The students at this German

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<sup>475</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>476</sup> Wigant Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege: Schulen— Erziehungsheime und Erziehungsanstalten des Volksbundes der Deutschen in Ungarn— 1940-1944* (Rothenburg ob der Tauber: Schneider, 2005), 89. During its first academic year (1941/1942), the school hosted some 369 boys and girls; by the following year, this number already increased to 442, of which 249 were boys and 193 girls (Weltzer, 89).

<sup>477</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>478</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>479</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>480</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

school “just ate that all up, the knowledge that we got from that.”<sup>481</sup> Previously, as Friedrich states, he and his fellow German pupils “did not know... *anything* about German history,” and most of them could not read and write properly in German. Now, thanks to these books, as well as various “guest speakers” from Germany, “such great interest” was created within Friedrich and his fellow students. “They [he and his fellow students] were mesmerized,” Friedrich explains; “they were just amazed! Because [...] we sort of worshipped the Germans.... Because they brought everything down there for us.”<sup>482</sup>

As Friedrich explains, when the Hungarians took over the Batschka, “they empowered the freedom to receive all this from Germany [...] and it was beautiful.” After 1941, “we could go out into the open sort of with our beliefs.”<sup>483</sup> It was also from this time onwards, as Friedrich states, that “they formed what you call a... a cultural club. You know, that you are visiting, that you are German”; this “cultural club” also included a “Hitler Youth,” which Friedrich became part of. As he explains, he was “not active” in Bukin’s youth group, as, after 1941, attended private schools outside his hometown. As he recalls, however, Bukin also had a “Hitler Youth”— an organization which had existed previously as a folkloric youth organization, but that “turned into Hitler Youth.”<sup>484</sup> Friedrich, however, “was active” within the “Hitler Youth” associated with the *Bürgerschule* in Novi Sad.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>482</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>483</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>484</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>485</sup> According to the school’s rector, Josef Zorn, in his 1943/1944 annual report: “All pupils [of the *Bürgerschule*] were in the DJ and worked with enthusiasm on their spiritual and bodily strengthening, within the spirit of the German National Socialist worldview, in the sense of paragraphs 2 and 3 of the statutes of the *Deutsche Jugend*.” (“*Alle Schülerinnen und Schüler waren in der DJ und arbeiteten mit Eifer an ihrer geistigen und körperlichen Ertüchtigung im Geiste der deutsche nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung im Sinne der § 2 und 3 der Satzung der Deutschen Jugend.*” Quoted in Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege*, 90.)

As Friedrich recalls, he lived at the *Bürgerschule*'s dorm, "a three-story home close to the park" for the school's boys and girls.<sup>486</sup> As he says, "it was very, very healthy, because they did not let us, they had to have the windows open all year round and there was no hot water." The dorm's inhabitants would all "get up early in the morning," do "calisthenics" and running, would shower, and would then march "as a group" of "maybe sixty" to the school, "singing our songs." At the school, they would have breakfast at the cafeteria, attend classes, and then have lunch at the same cafeteria again. Friedrich does not know whether this school and the dorm was officially financed by Germany, however, he assumes that "it was... sort of geared for all this to train us, to become maybe soldiers or whatever [...] we were all just German youths, boys and girls, and, in school."<sup>487</sup>

This "training," however, took place in a variety of arenas. As Friedrich recalls, "even on Sundays [...] our youth group would get together and we had professors who were a little bit older and knew about German culture and [...] German poets like Goethe and Schiller."<sup>488</sup> Every night after dinner, Friedrich explains, he and his fellow students would further be called to a "*Versammlung*" (meeting) in the "*Essraum*" (cafeteria), where "we were greeting" and "there was always a big map of the East front and also the West front, and it was always explained to us where the Russians advanced or the Germans retreated, advanced."<sup>489</sup> "Looking back," as Friedrich states, he thinks "that was just a wonderful thing... that they shared all this with us. So we were not, left in the dark about what's going on. [...] It was very interesting."<sup>490</sup> Furthermore, during the youth meetings, Friedrich and his fellow youth group members

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<sup>486</sup> According to Weltzer, the *Bürgerschule* in Novi Sad—like many other German schools across Hungary—had dorms, called "*NS-Erziehungsheime*," which were organized by the *Volksbund*. The *Bürgerschule* in Novi Sad had a female and a male dorm, which, by 1943/44, hosted 60 and 50 pupils respectively. Furthermore, it was only the children of *Volksbund* members who could study at the *Bürgerschule* (Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege*, 89-91).

<sup>487</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>488</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>489</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>490</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

“learned how to march and to use compass.” They “were in uniform” with “a scarf,” “a knot,” “a hat,” “a shirt,” and “different markings.” They conducted “field maneuvers.” As Friedrich explains, he “certainly” did enjoy these activities and has “good memories about that.”<sup>491</sup>

As Friedrich recalls, a variety of “knowledge” was conveyed during his time at the *Bürgerschule* and during his involvement with the associated “Hitler Youth.”<sup>492</sup> On the one hand, this “knowledge” was linguistic (the German language) and cultural (Goethe and Schiller). On the other hand, however, these activities also “brought us up to political knowledge of what’s going on.” The precise content of this “knowledge” is a bit unclear from the context of this interview; nevertheless, as Friedrich states, “we were encouraged to be better than anybody else. In everything we did, the knowledge or the sports, and so on.” Youths were also taught that “mind and body goes together, so if you had a good body, you have a good mind.”<sup>493</sup>

In 1943, Friedrich left the *Bürgerschule* in Novi Sad and attended the *Lehrerbildungsanstalt* (teachers’ preparatory school) in New Werbass (Novi Vrbas, Újverbász).<sup>494</sup> It seems that during his time in the *Lehrerbildungsanstalt*, Friedrich continued his involvement with the Hitler Youth. Because he was “active with the youth program,” Friedrich was “selected” in August 1944 to travel to Weimar, Germany, where he and thirty to thirty-two other youths stayed in the *Schloss Belvedere* (as discussed in the introduction to this

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<sup>491</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>492</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>493</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>494</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview. Organized as a private German school by the *Deutsche Schulstiftung* in 1931 in Grossbetschkerek (Zrenjanin, Nagybecskerek), Banat, the *Lehrerbildungsanstalt* was moved to Neu Werbass in 1933, and became officially sanctioned by the Hungarian authorities in 1941. The *Lehrerbildungsanstalt*, too, had an “*NS-Erziehungsheim*,” which was established in 1943 and controlled by the *Volksbund*. Its inhabitants also all belonged to the *Deutsche Jugend*. (Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege*, 92-93). Furthermore, as newspaper reports of the time indicate, it was only the children of *Volksbund* members and SS “volunteers” that would be admitted to the school [see, for instance, “Neuwebass— Ein grosses Schülerlager,” in *Deutsches Volksblatt*, Vol. 25, No. 7401 (23 November 1943), 3; or an official call for applications for the *Lehrerbildungsanstalt* in the *Deutsches Volksblatt*, Vol. 25, No. 7302 (25 July 1943), 4].



thesis). There, as Friedrich states, “we were sort of... all duped”; “when we left there, when we came back to our towns— Bukin, and Palanka, and Vrbas, and Titel, and Tovarisevo, and so on, where we used to live,” they were all supposed to report on “how good things were in Germany, however, it’s, it wasn’t that good. But where we were, we had everything.”<sup>495</sup>

As Friedrich recalls, it was particularly the younger generation that became “infatuated... or fascinated” with Germany, especially German technology. For the young especially, “they were really teaching us new things [...] so naturally, we, we thought the world at that time of Germany.”<sup>496</sup> In Friedrich’s opinion, “the older generation” had generally only attended “the fourth or sixth grade of school”; they therefore stood in relation to these novelties as Friedrich now stands in relation to “all the [current] gadgetry.” As Friedrich states, “we did not know that much about Hitler, but later on, yes, we listened to the, to the radio, you know, we read it in the newspapers and so on...”<sup>497</sup> Every night, “everybody listened mainly to the German news,” particularly the radio show “*Brave Heimat*,” which would begin with Marlene Dietrich’s “Lili Marlene” and continue with greetings from soldiers around the world. Especially German technology “fascinated” Friedrich— the Germans “had radios, they had telephones, they had everything,” he explains. His father even had a motorcycle. Ultimately, Friedrich and his fellow youths were thus “roped in.” In retrospect, however, he “realized” that “we were... well... sort of a storage area for Germany. The supplies, and with the food, and also with the manpower.”<sup>498</sup>

This “roping in,” however, did not occur for everyone, as Friedrich recalls. In Bukin, for instance, “there were two factions”: one that “was more or less very supportive of the

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<sup>495</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>496</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>497</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>498</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

German [...] soldiers or armies,” and another that “said, ‘no, it’s too much, we lived here for so many years and we didn’t need that.” This second “faction,” Friedrich explains, were called “*Die Schwarze*,” which meant that “they didn’t want anything to do with [...] Germany.” The *Schwarze*, according to Friedrich, comprised perhaps thirty to thirty-five percent of Bukin’s population; generally, these were also “prosperous” individuals who “didn’t want their, their sons going into the army, where they have so much land, homes, and everything nice.” Unlike individuals with less property and social standing who “were looking for maybe a better life” and were “more adventurous,” these “*Schwarze*” “were more protective because they had more to lose.”<sup>499</sup>

The “distrust” and “animosity” that arose due to this division of Bukin’s German population also affected youths. As Friedrich recalls, “Hitler Youth” meetings were generally held on Sunday mornings, at the same time as Church services, so “our meetings were sort of... scheduled for the similar times that you had to decide, well, are you going to Church or are you going to Hitler Youth meetings?” As Friedrich explains, the choice was “up to the individual”; however, “as soon as you did not come to the meetings, on Sunday mornings, well, then... more or less you became ‘black.’”<sup>500</sup> These divisions in Bukin’s population, Friedrich states, prevailed right until October 1944, when the town’s Germans were faced with the decision of fleeing the approaching Red Army or staying. “*Die Schwarze*,” Friedrich explains, generally stayed, where many of them eventually became prisoners and slave laborers of the Soviet or Partisan forces and ultimately perished.

Despite Friedrich’s “fascination” with the Germans as a youth, he seems to have become disillusioned after the expulsion of Bukin’s German population in 1944. While, as a

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<sup>499</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>500</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

youth, he could identify himself with Germans who had come from Germany because of their common language, he ultimately perceives that “we were... roped in... we were... pushed around and even after the war... nobody wanted us, because we dressed different, we talked different, and we didn’t have much to offer.”<sup>501</sup> Particularly his time as a refugee in Germany was “sad,” as he and his (surviving) family were not accepted by the local population as equals, even though they had “fought for Germany.” After the war, Friedrich said, “the guy from Berlin could go home to Berlin and the guy from Bukin could go where? [...] We lost the war, however the people, the German people, well in my eyes, didn’t lose the war. We were the *total* losers of that conflict.”<sup>502</sup>

Nonetheless, as Friedrich states, the period between 1941 and 1944, for him, represented “an awakening of my nationality.” Before, he explains, he was generally identified as having been born in Yugoslavia; now, however, he can claim that he is “from Germany.” He did in fact live in Germany for five years, he states. Furthermore, in 1945, he had also served in the “German army,” which he would not “deny.” The period before 1944, as Friedrich claims, gave him “a perspective on things, of reality.” However, as he adds, he now feels “even so that I am an American.” After having spent the past sixty years in the United States— a country that “gave [him] everything”— and even having served with the U.S. Army in Korea, he “would fight for it [the United States] again.”<sup>503</sup> Friedrich’s “nationality” thus was assembled throughout a lifetime of experiences, and represents a complex amalgam of components. Caught within the conflicts of a multi-ethnic society in flux and contestation, Friedrich saw his involvement within the *NS-Erziehungsheime* and the *Deutsche Jugend* as a “privilege,” which

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<sup>501</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>502</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

<sup>503</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

enabled an “awakening” of his national identity.<sup>504</sup> Despite feeling like “an American,” Friedrich thus claims that he is a “German”— something that he, according to his own accounts, could only do due to his experiences between 1941 and 1944.

## 5.4 Conclusions

The diversity of experiences, perspectives, and reflections of the Batschka’s former German inhabitants on the 1930s and 1940s cannot be underestimated. Nevertheless, certain features become apparent in all of the perspectives presented above. It is apparent that Nazi Germany became a presence within all *Donauschwaben* communities. This presence— as experienced through the *Kulturbund/Volksbund*’s activities, the media (newspapers and particularly the radio), the establishment of pro-National Socialist schools and dorms, visits by KLV children and youths from Germany, the establishment of endemic “Hitler Youths,” and SS recruitments— acted divisively. On the one hand, it seems that interethnic conflicts— which, according to the witnesses above, had already existed during the interwar period— were exacerbated. On the other hand, the expansion of German (National Socialist) activities also split *Donauschwaben* communities internally— a division remembered most clearly by German individuals who had been raised in the Batschka themselves.

Divisions that arose within German communities (between “*Schwarze*” and “*Braune*”), however, did not occur primarily through the establishment and indoctrinational tactics of National Socialist youth programs. Rather, it seems that programs perpetuated (and potentially exacerbated) pre-existing societal divisions. Children, at least according to the perspectives presented above, generally followed the model of their parents, and, at times, the model of their

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<sup>504</sup> Friedrich Fischer, interview.

schools and immediate social circles. Although Fritz, for instance, recalls a girl who smashed her mothers' windows for not being in the *Kulturbund*, it generally seems that youths did not innovate entirely new paths for themselves apart from their original upbringing. Pre-existing divisions hence channeled youths into different activities and associations— education within a Hungarian Piarist school versus the German *Lehrerbildungsanstalt*, or membership within the Catholic versus the National Socialist youth groups, for instance.

These diverse activities further fostered diverse notions of “Germanness.” All of the individuals interviewed above insisted that they were German, and that they and their families always had been Germans. For some, however, this “Germanness” became associated more closely with resistance to National Socialism and markers like the Church; for others, “Germanness” entailed adherence to the National Socialist models “imported” from Germany. Nevertheless, direct interactions with “Germany” and with “Germans,” for all of the interviewees, were fascinating in their youths. Somehow, the *Donauschwaben* now seemed to become part of something larger, and were presented with definitions of their own “nationality” (strong, “awakened,” and at society’s vanguard) that many had longed for. Many of these hopes, however, were of course crushed for these youths, as they learned at the end of the war what such a “nationality” entailed, and how the *Donauschwaben* German was not necessarily regarded as a “German” within Germany (or by other members of their own *Donauschwaben* community). Ultimately, it seems that regardless of their own associations, all youths were, during this time, confronted with issues of national identity— of their own “Germanness” and the manners in which this national identity is expressed.

## Conclusion

The history of the National Socialist mobilization of youths is complex, especially when this mobilization occurred within a multi-ethnic borderland like the Batschka, which was located for decades at the nexus of competing national, ideological, and state projects. A region under German study and scrutiny from the interwar period onwards, the Batschka, by the 1930s, became a territory coveted by the Third Reich not only for its strategic location and agricultural potential but, most importantly, for what the Nazis considered to be its “*Menschenmaterial*.” The over 173,000 “*Donauschwaben*” living within this region— who, prior to the National Socialist *Machtergreifung*, were already the subject of *volksgegeschichtliche* interests— were thus envisioned, by the 1930s, as the ideal providers of not merely produce, but people— people who might offer the *Reich* the fully ideologized “Aryan” fighters it required to forge its “millennial world empire.”

However, these ethnic Germans— who had lived within the Batschka since at least the eighteenth century— would, according to National Socialist conceptualizations, first need to be “purified,” “educated,” and “trained,” as— according to authors like Walz— these individuals had experienced centuries of “corruption” due to their position within a “foreign,” multi-ethnic environment. The Batschka’s *Donauschwaben*— on the one hand conceived as the “purest” form of “Germandom” at the epitome of the bucolic National Socialist fantasy of the “*Volk*”— would, on the other hand, need to be brought up to modern “German” levels of “hygiene,” linguistic knowledge, and national and “racial” “awareness.”

The “education” of ethnic Germans within the Batschka, as in other contested European regions, was to occur, for the National Socialists, primarily through the mobilization of youths. The Hitler Youth, as was discussed within this thesis’ third chapter, had originally been

established by the NSDAP during the 1920s as a means for infusing a regenerative vitality into the Nazi Party, as well as for rearing German soldiers and a generation loyal to the *Führer* and to the *Reich*. By the 1930s, however, the Hitler Youth and its subsidiary programs, like the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* or the *Jungvolk*, became deeply entwined with the National Socialists' foreign projects. Activities like the *Landdienst* or the *Kinderlandverschickung* all served as a means by which German children previously "educated" within the parameters of National Socialism themselves turned into "educators." More specifically, German youths could now travel abroad and, in reporting on the "glories" of the *Reich*, teaching "German" language and literature, and (at least as was envisioned by the National Socialists) repeating the National Socialist "liturgy," become messengers and "activists" for National Socialism themselves.

As this thesis has shown, however, the spread of National Socialism and Hitler Youth-type formations and programs within the Batschka did not originate only from the "import" of German children (which previous historiographies on such subjects have mainly emphasized so far). Rather, the National Socialist mobilization of youths within the Batschka also occurred through a complex negotiation and adaptation of pre-existing, endemic structures and organizations. National Socialist organizations and activities—youth-based or otherwise—did not meet upon a vacuum as they attempted to enter and ultimately engulf the Batschka's ethnic German communities. They were rather confronted with a plethora of extant and evolving ethnic German cultural, religious, and political organizations, shifting political conditions on a local and state level, and ongoing negotiations and discussions on the political and national "identity" of an already divided post-Habsburg minority.

As the German-speaking press of Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the Batschka indicate, a *Gleichschaltung* of official German press organs does seem to have occurred within these

regions during the 1930s and 1940s, a transformation which, as diverse secondary literature has shown, largely occurred due to the increasing control of the Third Reich (as through the VoMi) of ethnic German organizations and official discourses. Furthermore, if some credence can be given to at least some of the information within this press, it is also apparent that youth projects, like the establishment of local “Hitler Youth” groups, the conducting of youth exchange programs, or the foundation of *NS-Erziehungsheime*, became not only more popular within the Batschka during the late 1930s and early 1940s, but more openly and radically publicized too. As is depicted within more pro-National Socialist publications (like the *Südostdeutsche Rundschau*, the *Deutscher Volksbote*, or the *Deutsches Volksblatt*), anti-National Socialist newspapers like *Die Donau*, and current secondary literature, it was especially during this period that many pre-existing youth formations within the Batschka turned into “Hitler Youths,” and that (at least formal) non-association with such programs, like in Germany, gradually became not the norm, but an aberration.

The mobilization of ethnic German youths within the Batschka by pro-National Socialist forces hence became increasingly common during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Such observations, however, also raise multiple questions. On the one hand, how much did this *Gleichschaltung* of the (youth) press reflect a *Gleichschaltung* of official ethnic German or state institutions and communities within Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the Batschka specifically? How much of this transformation of German “cultural” youth clubs into full-fledged “Hitler Youths”—uniforms, drills, National Socialist chants, and racial “education” inclusive—can be attributed to the Third Reich’s concerted efforts to infiltrate ethnic German communities abroad, and how much to already existing *Erneuerer*-type movements, rising national awarenesses, or the opportunism and initiatives of local leaders like Basch, Janko, and



individuals within ethnic German communities themselves? On the other hand, if one were to assume that membership within Nazi youth organizations in the Batschka indeed lay anywhere between the National Socialist estimate of ninety percent<sup>505</sup> and the oral history interviewees' estimation of seventy percent<sup>506</sup> of all eligible girls and boys, did this majority of *Donauschwaben* boys and girls actually operate as the transformative “activists” that the National Socialists had envisioned? In other words, did youths mobilized within the *Deutsche Jugend* and its associated programs actually experience a “conversion” to National Socialism, and then act as “missionaries” for a National Socialist German identity themselves within their communities?

While these questions remain to be answered in more complete detail by future studies, it is precisely within the juxtaposition and interplay of the various sources and levels of analysis presented within this thesis that possible solutions lie. As particularly the final, oral history chapter has shown, historians must be wary of reaching macro-level conclusions about micro-level lines of inquiry. Therefore, while it becomes apparent that the totalitarian model of organizations like the Hitler Youth— as informed by intellectuals like Mosse, Gentile, or Griffin, for instance— can be highly instructive when envisioning the aims, tenets, and methods of National Socialism, they say little about the ultimate “effects” of Fascist programs.

As Gentile has stated, “totalitarianism”— as far as it can be “empirically” studied— does not represent “total domination” but rather an “experiment” that, to date, has (fortunately) remained “incomplete” and “unperfected.”<sup>507</sup> The study of totalitarianism, at least within the

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<sup>505</sup> See *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Jugend in Ungarn 1943*, edited by Herbert Mars and Mathias Huber, Vol. 3 (Novi Sad: Landesjugendführung der DJ. Abteilung Presse und Propaganda. Deutsche Druckerei u. Verlags A.G., 1943), 154.

<sup>506</sup> Friedrich Fischer\* and Fritz Schneider\* interviews.

<sup>507</sup> Emilio Gentile, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation,” in *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, edited by Roger Griffin (London: Routledge, 2005), 58.

framework of this thesis, thus refers primarily to the dynamics and processes that occur as actors (like the Third Reich) attempted to assert a model of “complete control.” Furthermore, as this thesis has shown, this occurred not only within the confines of a limited geographic or intellectual space, but across visions of a “palinegenically” revolutionized greater “empire.” As the study of the mobilization of ethnic German youths within the Batschka has indicated it is therefore imperative to also consider “from below” perspectives on the interactions and collisions of the personal and community spheres with the mass-based visions of totalitarian coordination propounded by the Hitler Youth and similar projects.

As particularly the final chapter of this thesis has illustrated, German individuals who had been born within the Batschka between the 1920s and early 1940s indeed all seem to have retained memories of the incursions of National Socialism into their communities. Most have personal recollections of “Hitler Youths” marching in their streets, KLV children reporting on their experiences in Germany, exchanges between Germans from the *Reich* and *Donauschwaben*, the propagation of Hitler’s words through the media, the mass-recruitment of SS soldiers, and the bifurcation of ethnic German communities into “*Schwarze*” and “*Braune*.” Especially depending on the paths followed by their immediate social circles (their nuclear families, church, or schools, for instance), these individuals also have recollections of personal experiences with “Hitler Youth” membership, or discrimination by pro-*Kulturbund* members of their community. The Third Reich’s totalitarian projects therefore certainly had reached the Batschka’s ethnic German communities, and have left their mark on the memories of its former German inhabitants.

Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to assume that projects like the “Hitler Youth” within the Batschka succeeded in creating a unified, ideologized mass of “*Menschenmaterial*”

prepared to fight for the *Reich* and the tenets of National Socialism. As the interviews presented in this thesis indicate, the *Reich* did not necessarily even succeed in creating an “activist troupe” of girls and boys that would help “convert” their greater communities; at most, such formations helped exacerbate pre-existing tensions, “strengthen” the pro-National Socialist sentiments that a child might have already been exposed to through other channels (like their family), and further divide ethnic German communities.

Furthermore, it is apparent that National Socialist youth programs within the Batschka became only one component, and fueled only parts, of an ongoing discourse on questions of “national identity.” Certainly, the *Deutsche Jugend*, the KLV exchanges, the *Gleichschaltung* of schools, and the propaganda that accompanied such programs and activities helped provide and inculcate some individuals (at least temporarily) with notions that the “true” German is a National Socialist and a follower of the Third Reich, a seemingly expansive, modernizing, and powerful force that the *Donauschwabern*, in adhering to National Socialism, could become part of. Nevertheless, certain individuals within the Batschka’s ethnic German communities also followed other definitions of “Germanness,” whereby the Church, the following of more “traditional” German folkloric culture, and/or resistance to National Socialism became the hallmarks for a “true” “German” identity.

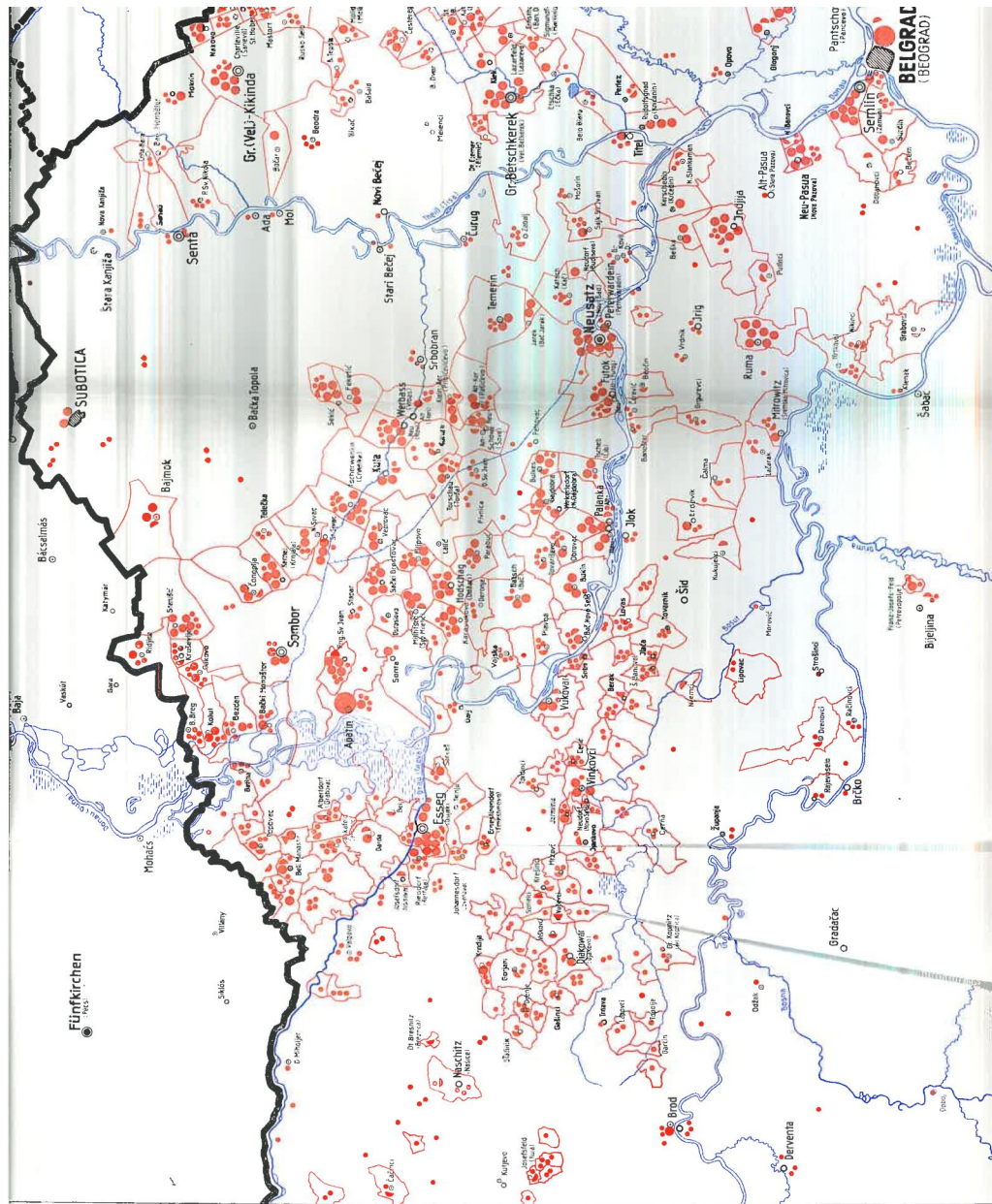
The markers of a “German” identity, for *Donauschwabern* individuals who witnessed the propagation of National Socialism within their communities, differed during the 1930s and 1940s, and further evolved continuously over a lifetime of experiences. While the introduction of Hitler Youth programs in the Batschka thus certainly affected individual lives, and seemingly forced all individuals to take a stance on questions of their own “national” identity (even if perhaps only *a posteriori*), totalitarian projects like the Hitler Youth within the

Batschka did not have a homogenizing effect. One must therefore exert great prudence in dissecting the various perspectives, interpretations, and levels of discourse inherent to any study of “totalitarianism,” as, ultimately, historians deal not with a “*Menschenmaterial*,” but with “*Menschen*.”

## Appendix

### Selection of Source Images

I) Map of Vojvodina, as assembled by W. Krallert in Vienna in 1941. (Red dots indicate ethnic German communities according to the 1931 census.)



Source: Conze, Werner. *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. Edited by Werner Conze, Theodor Schieder, et al. Bonn: Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte, 1961.

## II) The *Deutsche Jugend* and related activities, as depicted in official press reports.

### 1) *Südostdeutsche Rundschau*, Budapest, April 1942: Photographic Report on *NS-Erziehungstätte* in Budapest. (Selection)



Source: *Südostdeutsche Rundschau: Zeitschrift der deutschen Volksgruppe in Ungarn*. Edited by Philipp Böss. Volume 1, Number 2 (April 1942). Budapest: Kultura Verlagsgesellschaft M.B.H., 1942-1944.



2) *Südostdeutsche Rundschau*, Budapest, January 1943: International youth conference in honor of Baldur von Schirach's establishment of the *Europäischer Jugendverband*. (Selection)



Source: *Südostdeutsche Rundschau: Zeitschrift der deutschen Volksgruppe in Ungarn*. Volume 2, Number 1 (January 1943). Edited by Philipp Böss. Budapest: Kultura Verlagsgesellschaft M.B.H., 1942-1944.

3) Caption: “SS-Ausbilder im WEL Hodschag/Batschka” [SS Educator in the Wehrtüchtigungslager (military education camp for Hitler Youths) in Hodschag, Batschka].



Source: Holzträger, Hans. *Die Wehrtüchtigungslager der Hitler-Jugend 1942-1945: Ein Dokumentarbericht*. Ippesheim: Verlag des Arbeitskreises für Geschichte und Kultur der deutschen Siedlungsgebieten im Südosten Europas e.V., 1991.

4) Images from the 1943 *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Jugend in Ungarn*, an annual events planner and propaganda booklet for Hungarian *Deutsche Jugend* members.



Caption: “For the first time this year a section of the Budapest DJ participated as a guest of the Levente at the St. Stephen’s celebrations.”





*Jungvolk* procession in the streets of Budapest.

Caption: "Also on the streets of the state capital the marching step of the Deutsche Jugend resounds. It fills the German life with new content."



"Jungvolk boys are hard. Jungvolk boys are taciturn. Jungvolk boys are comrades. The highest [ideal] of the Jungvolk boy is honor."

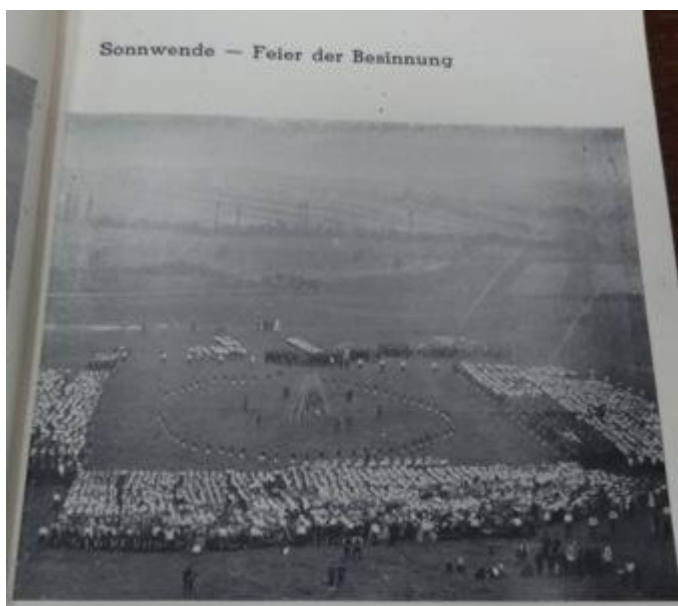


Levente leader von Bély (accompanied by the S.A.-leader Dietrich von Jagow) greets the Budapest NS-*Erziehungsheim* children after the arrival of the first *Kinderlandverschickungs* transport in Budapest.

Caption: "The comradeship between the DJ and the Levente was deepened further..."

Source: *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Jugend in Ungarn*. Edited by Herbert Mars. Volume 3 (1943). Novi Sad: Landesjugendführung der DJ, Abteilung Presse und Propaganda. Deutsche Druckerei u. Verlags-A.G. Ujvidek-Neusatz: 1943.

##### 5) Propaganda printed on the 1941 *Landesjugendtag* in Mágozs



Reenactment of an "Ancient Germanic" solstice celebration (p. 9).



Franz Basch (pictured in front and center), followed by his direct employees, is greeted by the crowds. (p. 14)



*Jungkameradinnen* (female DJ) salute incoming *Volksbund* flags (p. 16).



German girls attend in their folk costumes (p. 23).

Source: Reister, Heinrich, and Bruno Klein. *Erster Landesjugendtag Mágocs 1941*. Budapest: Landespropagandaamt des Volksbundes der Deutschen in Ungarn, 1941.

6) Deutsches Volksblatt, Novi Sad, 10 April 1942. Photos of the departure of SS recruits in Novi Sad.



Source: “Der letzte Sonderzug mit volksdeutschen SS-Freiwilligen aus der Batschka abgerollt- Das Deutschtum der Stadt und des gesamten Kreises bereitete ihnen eine überwältigende Abschiedskundgebung.” In *Deutsches Volksblatt: Tageszeitung der Deutschen Südungarns*. Vol. 24, No. 6921 (10 April 1942). p. 1.

7) “Hitler Youth” Marching through Novi Sad



Source: “Drugi Svetksi Rat (1941-1945).” In *Zavičaj na Dunavu: Suživot Nemaca i Srba u Vojvodini*. Book printed for exhibition at Museum of Vojvodina, Novi Sad: 2011. p. 65.



### III) Images related to the oral history chapter.

#### 1) Kernei

##### a) *Jungkameradinnen* Procession, 1943.



Caption: “Eine Mädchengruppe im Jahre 1943, wie sie vom Vereinshaus zum Sportplatz marschiert.” [“A girls’ group in the year 1943, as they march from the community center to the sports field.”]

Source: *Kerneier Heimatblätter: Mitteilungen an alle Kerneier*. Edited by Johann Schmidt. Vol. 47 (Easter 2004). Rüthen: Kerneier Heimatausschuss. p. 51.

##### b) *Kinderlandverschickung* 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade cohorts, as hosted in Kernei in 1943.



Source: *Kerneier Heimatblätter: Mitteilungen an alle Kerneier*. Edited by Johann Schmidt. Vol. 47 (Easter 2004). Rüthen: Kerneier Heimatausschuss. p. 56.

c) Nazi youth propaganda from Germany that circulated in Kernei.



Source: Heimatgemeinde Kernei.

d) SS-Recruits leave Kernei on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1942.



Source: *Kerneier Heimatblätter: Mitteilungen an alle Kerneier*. Edited by Johann Schmidt. Vol. 47 (Easter 2004). Rüthen: Kerneier Heimatausschuss. p. 48.

## 2) Bukin

### a) Traditional houses in Bukin.



### b) Women of Bukin in traditional dress, circa 1939.





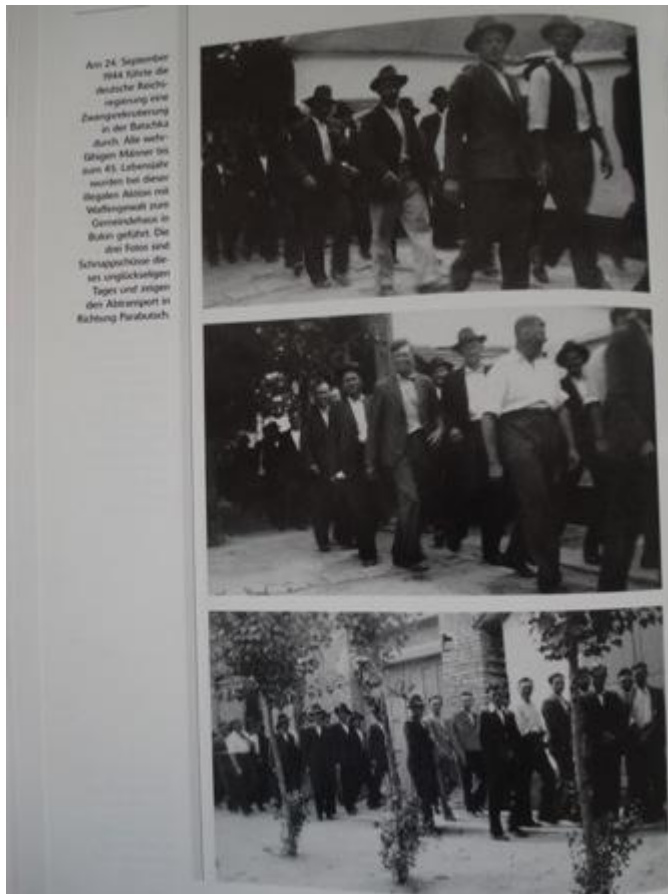
c) Bukin's primary school in 1943 with its nine to ten-year-olds. (Notice the flags and map of Hungary in the background.)



d) A German man, born in Bukin in 1920, as a Honvéd soldier in 1941 (border control unit, "Határvadász").



e) Men recruited into the SS leave Bukin on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1944.



Caption: "On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 1944, the German Reichs-government carried out a forceful recruitment in the Batschka. All men capable of military service until the age of 45 were led, through force of weapons, to the town hall in this illegal action. The photos are snapshots of this unhappy day and show the transportation in the direction of Parabutsch." (p. 338)

Source: Pfuhl, Andreas. *Bildband Bukin: 1749-1945: Ein deutsches Dorf in der Batschka*. München: Donauschwäbisches Archiv, 2002.

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