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**THE REICH LABOUR SERVICE IN PEACE AND WAR:
A SURVEY OF THE REICHSARBEITSDIENST AND ITS PREDECESSORS
1920-1945**

by

Hartmut Heyck, B.A., M.L.S.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
degree of Master of Arts

Department of History
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Ottawa, Ontario
July 31, 1997

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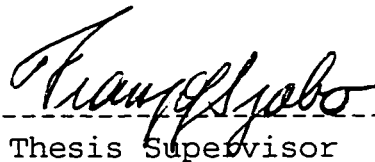
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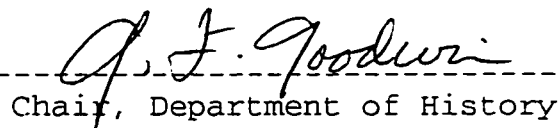
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the origins, aims and organisation of Nazi Germany's Reich Labour Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst* = *RAD*). From the late nineteenth century there had been many proponents of compulsory or voluntary labour service, both in Germany and abroad, and in 1931 the German government established camps for youth employment. In 1933 these camps were "coordinated" by the National Socialists. In 1935 service in the *RAD* became compulsory for young men; in 1939 for young women.

In the decade 1935-1945 some three million young *RAD* men and women were engaged in various public works and military projects. Despite its many opponents and its questionable economic, political or ideological utility, *RAD* leader Konstantin Hierl, with Hitler's blessing, was able for virtually the entire period to retain a special position within the German administration for the Labour Service. This thesis argues that the ideological component of *RAD* training was likely the decisive element in its survival.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Much of the material I used in the writing of this thesis on the German *Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD)* was obtained for me by the always helpful staff of the Interlibrary Loan Department at the MacOdrum Library of Carleton University. Special thanks to Callista Kelly. I made also use of the resources of the Carleton University, University of Ottawa, and McGill University libraries. I obtained some material from private German sources, specifically Wolfram Mallebrein, Heinz Minde and Horst Wagner, and made use of the resources of the Bundesarchiv in Kornelimünster, the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg, and the Wehrgeschichtliche Museum at Rastatt. As well, I obtained valuable insights into the daily routine of life in the *RAD* from personal interviews. The persons who assisted me in this way are listed in the Bibliography.

For helpful advice and encouragement I wish to thank my thesis supervisor, Professor Franz A. J. Szabo of the Carleton University History Department.

Ottawa, July 31, 1997

Hartmut Heyck

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

<i>FAD</i> (Freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst)	Voluntary Labour Service
<i>NSAD</i> (Nationalsozialistischer Arbeitsdienst)	National Socialist Labour Service
<i>NSDAP</i> (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei)	National Socialist German Workers Party
<i>OKW</i> (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht)	High Command of the Armed Forces
<i>RAD</i> (Reichsarbeitsdienst)	Reich Labour Service
<i>RAD/wJ</i> (Reichsarbeitsdienst der weiblichen Jugend)	Reich Labour Service for young women
<i>RADA</i> (Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für deutsche Arbeitsdienstpflicht)	Reich Working Group for German Compulsory Labour Service
<i>RAF</i> (Reichsarbeitsführer)	Reich Labour Leader
<i>RDA</i> (Reichsverband deutscher Arbeitsdienstvereine)	Reich Federation of German Labour Service Associations
<i>SA</i> (Sturmabteilungen)	Storm Troopers

INTRODUCTION

This thesis owes its origin in part to the fact that very little in German and almost nothing in English has been published since the war about the German Reich Labour Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst* or *RAD*), an organisation which between 1935 and 1945 greatly affected the lives of more than three million young Germans who served in it for periods of between six weeks and six months. At its peak in the early war years the *RAD* had a strength of about 370,000 young men and 100,000 young women who were deployed throughout Germany and occupied Europe. Its existence was, thus, not inconsequential.

In peacetime, the most common tasks of the male Labour Service were the reclamation and cultivation of land, the straightening and damming of rivers, the building of autobahns and other roads, and the harvesting of crops. The *RAD* "maidens" were mostly employed on farms as mothers' helpers. When war began, the duties of the *RAD* changed. Most young men were now employed on military objects such as the West and Atlantic Walls, the manning of anti-aircraft guns, road building and maintenance, and the guarding of prisoners of war in Germany and throughout occupied Europe. Only in early 1945 were *RAD* fighting divisions established, too late to see organised action. The young *RAD* "maidens" continued to help out

on farms, but later in the war also worked as searchlight and wireless operators, munition workers, fire wardens, streetcar conductors and Red Cross helpers.

There were some contemporary books written about the RAD and its founder, Konstantin Hierl, but few of these explored the history of the labour services movements prior to 1933 or took it beyond the beginning of the war. For obvious reasons, they have to be used with caution.¹ Most of the few post-war works on labour services in Germany deal with the predecessors of the RAD; they trace their history to the formation of the RAD in 1935 when service became compulsory and all other labour services were disbanded by the National Socialist government.² Only a few cover the period from 1933 to 1945; they were written more to justify the RAD and its activities

¹For example, Herbert Erb and Hans Henning Freiherr Grote, Konstantin Hierl. Der Mann und sein Werk (München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., Franz Eher Nachf., 1939); Günther Hase, Der Werdegang des Arbeitsdienstes. Von der Erwerbslosenhilfe zum Reichsarbeitsdienst (Leipzig: "Der Nationale Aufbau" Verlag Günther Heinig, 1940); Konstantin Hierl, Ausgewählte Schriften und Reden, ed. Herbert Freiherr von Stetten-Erb. 2 Vols. (München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachf., GmbH., 1941). For some background of the female RAD see [Lilli] Marawske-Birkner, Der weibliche Arbeitsdienst. Seine Vorgeschichte und gegenwärtige Gestaltung. Leipzig: "Der nationale Aufbau" Verlag Günther Heinig, 1942.

²Among the most useful are: Wolfgang Benz, "Vom freiwilligen Arbeitsdienst zur Arbeitsdienstpflicht," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, XVI, No. 4 (October 1968), pp. 317-46; Peter Dudek, Erziehung durch Arbeit. Arbeitslagerbewegung und freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst 1920-1935 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1988); Henning Köhler, Arbeitsdienst in Deutschland. Pläne und Verwirklichungsformen bis zur Einführung der Arbeitsdienstpflicht im Jahre 1935 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1967).

than to evaluate them.³

A major reason for the historiographical neglect of the RAD is the lack of primary sources. According to Helmuth Croon, its last archivist, most of the important records of the RAD had been moved to bombproof buildings or mines during the war but appear to have been destroyed at the approach of the allied armies or have vanished since then. Writing in 1950,⁴ he stated that there was very little material on the RAD in German archives. This situation appears still to be true, although a number of documents dealing with the RAD have since been located in various German and foreign archives, many in collections of other organisations, such as the *Wehrmacht* and the Interior Ministry.

The paucity of archival material is one reason why no full-length study of the RAD and its history has so far been

³For example, Konstantin Hierl, Im Dienst für Deutschland 1918-1945 (Heidelberg: Kurt Vowinkel Verlag, 1954); Helmut Kläbe; Hans Oeser; and Gustav Bertram, Arbeitsdienst - Gemeinschaftsdienst. Ein Problem von Generationen (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Selbstverlag des Verfassers, 1973); Wolfram Mallebrein, Männer und Maiden. Leben und Wirken im Arbeitsdienst des Deutschen Reiches und in anderen europäischen Staaten in Wort und Bild. (2nd corr. ed.; Preussisch Oldendorf: Verlag K. W. Schütz KG, 1985); Reinhold Schwenk, Der Arbeitsdienst und seine Führer (Düsseldorf: Bund der Notgemeinschaften ehem. Arbeitsdienstangehöriger und ihrer Hinterbliebenen, [1966]). Reprint of Ph.D. dissertation for the Philosophical Faculty, University of Cologne, "Geistige und materielle Grundlagen der Entstehung des Führerkorps im Arbeitsdienst und seine Gleichschaltung und Neuformung nach 1933."

⁴Helmuth Croon, "Aktenhaltung und Archivgutpflege im Reichsarbeitsdienst," Der Archivar. Mitteilungsblatt für deutsches Archivwesen, III, No. 4 (December 1950), pp. 154-78.

written. It has also been either entirely ignored or barely mentioned even in major works on the Third Reich.⁵ Other factors also come into play: The difficulty in establishing the value and usefulness of the RAD's peace- and wartime activities, the fact that its members were not charged with any war crimes, and the impression that it was not a glamorous

⁵In Robert S. Wistrich, Who's Who in Nazi Germany (London: Routledge, 1995) neither Hierl nor RAD are listed. Dietrich Orlow in his The History of the Nazi Party: 1933-1945 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973) lists neither the RAD nor Hierl in the Index. More surprisingly, Hierl does not appear in the "Checklist of Less Familiar Nazi Leaders" (pp. 499-503). One could argue that the RAD does not belong in the book, because it was technically not part of the NSDAP, but Hierl, as a Reichsleiter since 1936, certainly should be there. There is nothing on the RAD in, for example, Joseph W. Bendersky's, A History of Nazi Germany (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1985); Karl Dietrich Bracher's The German Dictatorship (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), Alan Bullock's Hitler, A Study in Tyranny (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1961); Gordon A. Craig's, Germany 1866-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Joachim C. Fest's The Face of the Third Reich (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970); Klaus Hildebrand's The Third Reich (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984); Ian Kershaw's The Nazi Dictatorship (Third ed.; London: Edward Arnold, 1993) or John Toland's Adolf Hitler (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976). There are one or two paragraphs in Karl Dietrich Erdmann, Die Zeit der Weltkriege: Vol. 4, Fasc. 2 of Gebhardt, Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte (Ninth ed.; Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1976); Walther Hofer, Die Diktatur Hitlers bis zum Beginn des zweiten Weltkrieges. Second part, 1933 to 1945, in Walther Hofer and Herbert Michaelis, eds., Deutsche Geschichte der neuesten Zeit von Bismarcks Entlassung bis zur Gegenwart (Konstanz: Akademische Verlagsanstalt Athenaion Dr. Albert Hachfeld, 1960), and Jackson J. Spielvogel, Hitler and Nazi Germany. A History (2nd ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1992). In Martin Broszat's The Hitler State (London: Longman, 1981) there is a little more than one page. - The entries in the Meyers and Brockhaus encyclopedias, the two standard German reference works, consist of less than a quarter column each. The Encyclopaedia Britannica and the Encyclopedia Americana are silent on the topic.

or significant organisation. Finally, there is little likelihood of a revival of a compulsory labour service like the *RAD* in either Germany or any other democratic country.

Nevertheless, an analysis of the *RAD* is relevant to many of the most controversial historiographical problems of the Third Reich. Principal among these are such fundamental issues as the "social revolutionary" character of the National Socialist regime, the importance of ideology and indoctrination, and Hitler's "feudal" governing style.

The "socialist" roots of the *NSDAP* and, by extension, the *RAD*, have long been recognised by some historians. For example, Friedrich Hayek showed in some detail that the "connection between socialism and nationalism in Germany was close from the beginning."⁶ Hayek pointed out that the German youth movement, among others, was strongly anti-liberal and had a long tradition of combining socialistic with nationalistic ideas.⁷ The question is whether these traditions were reflected in the practice of National Socialism, or, in other words, whether its policies led to "social reaction" or to "social revolution" in the Third Reich. There is no agreement among historians and sociologists on this important problem. Some consider the social policies of the Hitler regime revo-

⁶Friedrich A. Hayek, The Road to Serfdom, with a foreword by John Chamberlain (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), p. 168.

⁷Ibid., p. 180.

lutionary, others counter-revolutionary; some call them modern and forward-looking, others reactionary and backward. The Third Reich was certainly not "socialistic" in the usual, Marxist, sense, but it supported and initiated such "social" policies as free holiday trips for workers, easier access to higher education for gifted children of the working classes, social mobility, and the winter aid programme for the poor. A number of writers have examined this issue with varying conclusions.⁸

David Schoenbaum called the Labour Service "[t]he institutional manifestation of Nazi labor policy which combined the propagandistic pathos, economic expediency, political dedication, corruption, exploitation, and occasional idealism of Nazi labor policy in general."⁹

Certainly the alleged socialism of the National Socialist regime should not be overstated. Its best-known proponent, Gregor Strasser, had abandoned most of his socialist ideals

⁸Among them Bendersky, in Chapter 3, "The Historical Roots of Nazi Ideology"; Ralf Dahrendorf, in Society and Democracy in Germany (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd, 1967); Richard Grunberger in The 12-Year Reich. A Social History of Nazi Germany 1933-1945 (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971); Kershaw, in chapter 7, "The Third Reich: 'Social Reaction' or 'Social Revolution'?"; Walter Laqueur, in Fascism: Past, Present, Future (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), and David Schoenbaum, in Hitler's Social Revolution. Class and Status in Nazi Germany 1933-1939 (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1966), especially Chapter I, "The Third Reich and Its Social Promises."

⁹Schoenbaum, p. 83.

after 1927, long before the NSDAP achieved power.¹⁰ Although the original Party Programme was not altered, its anticapitalistic points were largely ignored because Hitler was more interested in attracting the middle class and wealthy sponsors than to appeal to workers. Konstantin Hierl, the leader of the RAD, frequently referred to the function of the RAD as "social school of the nation" or in similar terms.¹¹ By this, however, he apparently meant little more than that young German men and women of all social classes and origins would live, work and exercise together for six months and cheerfully perform menial tasks, usually in isolated locations. What he tended to stress was that during their tour of duty they would be instructed in the basic beliefs of National Socialism.

Indoctrination with National Socialist ideology and military drills formed an important part of life in the RAD. Several hours per week were spent on "civic lessons" in which the doctrines of National Socialism were expounded. Among them were anti-Semitism, eugenics, the dignity of labour, the failure of parliamentary democracy, and the necessity for discipline. How successful these attempts at indoctrination were is difficult to establish, although one cannot doubt that they

¹⁰Bendersky, pp. 62-63.

¹¹Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 87; Hierl, Ausgewählte Schriften, Vol. 2, pp. 80, 86, 96, 136ff. In a press release in 1933 he called the Labour Service "the school leading to German socialism." Ibid., 95. Later, references like this were rare.

left some traces in the impressionable minds of the young.¹²

Military drills, including marching and exercises with spades, were performed daily. These drills were designed to prepare young Germans for life in a state governed by National Socialist principles, and to produce men who could be smoothly integrated into the armed forces. Apparently this paramilitary life did not appeal to all parents - or historians. While granting that the public thought "no man's education complete without the discipline of the barrack-square", Richard Grunberger claimed, without documentation, that nevertheless "the spade-wielding drill-obsessed *Reichsarbeitsdienst* - national labour service - with its coarse, anti-religious atmosphere and ill-trained instructors promoted parental misgivings" ¹³

Hitler's "feudal" ruling style has been the subject of

¹²The importance given to indoctrination by the RAD leadership can be gauged by the number of publications directly devoted to it. Among them are: Will Decker, Die politische Aufgabe des Arbeitsdienstes. ("Schriften der Deutschen Hochschule für Politik" - I. "Idee und Gestalt des Nationalsozialismus," Heft 15.) (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt Verlag, 1935); Germany, Reichsarbeitsdienst, Richtlinien für den staatspolitischen Unterricht im Reichsarbeitsdienst, Dv. [Dienstvorschrift] 10 (Leipzig: "Der nationale Aufbau" Verlag Günther Heinig, 1937); [Rudolf] Maßmann, Der Führer im Reichsarbeitsdienst als Persönlichkeit und Erzieher im Großdeutschen Reich (2nd ed.; Leipzig: "Der nationale Aufbau" Verlag Günther Heinig, 1938); Hellmut Petersen, Die Erziehung der deutschen Jungmannschaft im Reichsarbeitsdienst (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt Verlag, 1938).

¹³Grunberger, p. 22.

much analysis without completely satisfactory answers.¹⁴ The RAD certainly appeared to be a classic case in point, because, sometimes bypassing regular channels, i.e., the Ministers of Labour and the Interior, Hitler supported Hierl and the Labour Service against attempts by Göring and other power brokers in the NSDAP or the government to have the RAD abolished or absorbed into one of the other organisations, for example the SA. Hierl also benefitted from his good personal relationship with Hitler's gatekeeper, Martin Bormann.

In the absence of even the most rudimentary survey of the National Socialist Labour Service, this thesis attempts to outline the history, aims, and activities of the RAD and its actual or spiritual predecessors. When researching the history of the RAD, one is facing a number of important questions, such as where the idea of a labour service for youth origi-

¹⁴Hitler was considered a strong dictator by, among others, Bullock, op. cit., Norman Rich in Hitler's War Aims (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973); Andreas Hillgruber in Hitler's Strategie (Frankfurt: Bernard & Graefe Verlag für Wehrwesen, 1965); Bracher, op. cit.; Broszat, op. cit.; Otto Dietrich in The Hitler I Knew (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1957), and Eberhard Jäckel, in Hitler in History (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1984).

He was described as "weak" by Hans Mommsen in Beamtentum im Dritten Reich (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1966); Edward N. Peterson in The Limits of Hitler's Power (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969); Timothy W. Mason in Social Policy in the Third Reich (Providence, RI: Berg Publishers, 1993); Peter Hüttenberger in Die Gauleiter (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1969); Peter Diehl-Thiele in Partei und Staat im Dritten Reich (München: Beck, 1969) and others.

Scholars like Ian Kershaw feel that Hitler was strong if not omnipotent when he wanted to be, at least until the middle of the war, but let things slide when he was not interested in the matter at hand. Kershaw, p. 79.

nated and what the motivation for such an idea was, who in the National Socialist leadership was behind the movement to establish a labour service, and why it was considered important. Why did Hierl insist on a compulsory rather than a voluntary service? Why were both young men and women included in such a service?

Other questions concern the type of work the *RAD* performed, whether the choice of the projects was governed by economic or ideological considerations, what the value of the work was and where most *RAD* camps were situated. Lastly, how did the war affect the deployment of the Labour Service? Did the *RAD* and its philosophy survive the war; were there attempts to revive it after its dissolution?

For an answer to these questions, I have used, among others, documents in the Bundesarchiv Kornelimünster, the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg and the Wehrgeschichtliches Museum, Rastatt. In addition to these, I have conducted interviews with several former members of the *RAD* and gained valuable firsthand information. I have been able to obtain many of the monographs published by and about the *RAD* during the Third Reich. Although presumably factually correct, they have to be used with discretion, because almost all of them were written by leaders of the *RAD* and are, thus,

at least to some extent self-serving.¹⁵ A balanced and informative work by an American observer has several chapters on the German labour services, including one on the Reich Labour Service. I was able to obtain only one pre-war work containing information on the RAD written by an opponent of National Socialism.¹⁶ Finally, a number of books containing primary material have been published since the war. Their quality is uneven, but these, too, were indispensable for my studies.¹⁷

¹⁵These writings include selections from Hierl's writings and speeches covering the years 1919-1940 in Hierl, Ausgewählte Schriften; Decker, op. cit.; [Hermann] Müller-Brandenburg Die Leistungen des deutschen Arbeitsdienstes. Deutsche Informationsstelle. ("Die Wirtschaftskraft des Reiches," Nr. 4.) Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, [1940]); Erb and Grote, op. cit.; Frieda Sopp, Der Reichsarbeitsdienst der weiblichen Jugend (Berlin: H. Büttner, [1943]); Helmut Stellrecht, Der deutsche Arbeitsdienst. Aufgaben, Organisation und Aufbau (Berlin: Verlag von E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1933); Marawske-Birkner, op. cit., and [Rolf] von Gönner, ed., Spaten und Ähre. Das Handbuch der deutschen Jugend im Reichsarbeitsdienst (Heidelberg: Kurt Vowinkel Verlag G.m.b.H., 1937).

¹⁶Kenneth Holland, Youth in European Labor Camps. A Report to the American Youth Commission (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1939); Albert Schreiner, Hitler treibt zum Krieg (Reprint of Paris, 1934 ed.; Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1979).

¹⁷They include Hierl's memoirs, Im Dienst, which provide good insights into both the history of the RAD and his own motivations, and several document collections: Akten der Reichskanzlei. Regierung Hitler 1933-1938, published for the Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften by Konrad Repgen; for das Bundesarchiv by Hans Booms. Die Regierung Hitler. Part I: 1933/34. Vol. 1: 30. Januar bis 31. August 1933. Vol. 2: 12. September 1933 bis 27. August 1934, ed. Karl-Heinz Minuth (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1983); Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht (Wehrmachtführungsstab). Vol. I: 1. August 1940 - 31. Dezember 1941, comp. and annot. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen; Vol. II: 1. Januar 1942 - 31. Dezember 1942, comp. and annot. Andreas Hillgruber. Vol. III: 1. Januar 1943 - 31.

Among the secondary sources I have used are the few post-war monographs on the RAD of which I have become aware.¹⁸ There is also good material on the history of the labour services during the Weimar Republic and the early years of National Socialism.¹⁹

While this material is not as voluminous as one would like, it nevertheless permits a preliminary survey and assessment of the RAD from 1935 and 1945 and its predecessors. What is still missing are documents relating to its day-to-day

Dezember 1943, comp. and annot. Walther Hubatsch. Vol. IV: 1. Januar 1944 - 22. Mai 1945, intro. and annot. Percy Ernst Schramm (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard & Graefe Verlag für Wehrwesen, 1961-1965); hereafter cited as Kriegstagebuch; [Franz] Halder, Kriegstagebuch. Daily notes by the Chief of the General Staff of the Army, 1939-1942. Vol. I: Vom Polenfeldzug bis zum Ende der Westoffensive (14.8.1939 - 30.6.1940). Vol. II: Von der geplanten Landung in England bis zum Beginn des Ostfeldzuges (1.7.1940 - 21.6.1941). Vol. III: Der Rußlandfeldzug bis zum Marsch auf Stalingrad (22.6.1941 - 24.9.1942), ed. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1962-1964); hereafter cited as Halder, and Ursula von Gersdorff, Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914-1945, "Beiträge zur Militär- und Kriegsgeschichte," Vol. 11, published by Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1969). Some useful accounts of life in the RAD for young women are Lotte Goetze and Inge Mütze, eds., Damals in Weser-Ems. Erinnerungen an den Arbeitsdienst im Bezirk XVII Weser-Ems (Göttingen: Im Selbstverlag der Autoren, 1978) and Lilo Walendy-Schmeidler, ed., Arbeitsmädchen im Kriegseinsatz. Letzte Berichte vor dem Ende (Witten: Buchdienst Witten, n.d.)

¹⁸Kläbe, Oeser, and Bertram, op. cit., an apologia by three former RAD leaders, three books by Mallebrein, Einer für Alle, Konstantin Hierl: Schöpfer und Gestalter des Reichsarbeitsdienstes (Hannover: National-Verlag, 1971, and Männer und Mädchen, as well as Schwenk, op. cit. Schwenk's book deals mainly with the sociological and occupational background of selected RAD leaders and is a fairly balanced account.

¹⁹Benz, op. cit.; Köhler, op. cit., and Dudek, op. cit.

operations, especially during the war. Perhaps more will yet be discovered, permitting us to improve our understanding of this important institution and what part it played in the government of the Third Reich and the German people.

CHAPTER I. LABOUR SERVICES IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC AND THEIR IDEOLOGICAL GODPARENTS

(i) EARLY CALLS FOR LABOUR SERVICES IN GERMANY AND ABROAD

On February 1, 1933 the new government under Adolf Hitler announced its agenda to the German people. It included the declaration: "Compulsory labour service and the 'back-to-the-land' policy are two of the basic principles of this programme."¹ The idea that young people should in some way contribute to the public good did not, however, originate with the Third Reich nor was it confined to any specific national, social, religious, political or military group.

The call for a compulsory labour service for women apparently even predated that for men. In 1794, during the French Revolution, Thérèse Cabarrus-Fontenay, the later Princess Chimay, unsuccessfully advocated the introduction of compulsory service for women on behalf of the poor and sick.²

In the nineteenth century a labour service for unemployed young men was suggested by the British writers Thomas Carlyle

¹Norman H. Baynes, ed., The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922 - August 1939. An English trans. of representative passages arranged under subjects (2 vols.; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), I, p. 114.

² Marawske-Birkner, pp. 23-24.

and John Ruskin among others.³ Carlyle proposed that in return for food, clothing and shelter, unemployed youths should join ". . . [i]ndustrial Regiments . . . regiments not to fight the French or others, . . . but to fight the Bogs and Wildernesses at home and abroad . . ." ⁴ Ruskin expressed similar sentiments to military students in England.⁵ The response to these proposals is not known, but in any case no labour service institutions seem to have emerged from these initiatives.

Another advocate of some kind of labour service was Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism. In his diary for 1895 he spoke of "labor battalions along military lines"⁶ who would contribute to the common welfare in the proposed new Jewish state. Some post-war apologists for the Reich Labour Service cited this as proof that the idea of a militarised labour service was not a National Socialist invention. They did, however, not entirely approve of Herzl's suggested system which they found to be exclusively concerned with material things, while the primary purpose of the Reich Labour Service

³Holland, p. 3.

⁴Thomas Carlyle, Latter-Day Pamphlets (New York: Harper, 1850), pp. 42-43, cited by Holland, p. 3.

⁵Holland, p. 3.

⁶Raphael Patai, ed., The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl. Vol I, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Herzl Press and Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), p. 64.

allegedly was to provide a "social school of the nation."⁷

One of the first proponents of a compulsory labour service for young people in the twentieth century was the Austrian publicist Josef Popper who in 1912 proposed a "general nurturing duty" (*allgemeine Nährpflicht*). He envisioned a "nurturing army" (*Nährarmee*) in which youths of both genders would for several years work to improve agricultural output and "socialise" agriculture. Popular among drawing room reformers, Popper's ideas had no practical consequences at the time, although many of his ideas reappeared later in various other labour service schemes.⁸

In 1912, a proposal also surfaced in the United States which called for an "army enlisted against Nature". Its author, the American philosopher William James, decried war but felt that its glamour was too great to be displaced easily. "So long as anti-militarists propose no substitute for war's disciplinary function, no moral equivalent of war, analogous, as one might say, to the mechanical equivalent of heat, so long they fail to realize the full inwardness of the

⁷Hierl, Im Dienst, pp. 87, 94-95; Kläbe, Oeser, and Bertram, p. 14; Wolfram Mallebrein, Konstantin Hierl: Schöpfer und Gestalter des Reichsarbeitsdienstes (Hannover: National-Verlag, 1971), p. 39.

⁸Kläbe, Oesen, and Bertram, p. 16. "Nährpflicht" is undoubtedly a play on the German word for compulsory military service, i.e., "Wehrpflicht". Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the German in this thesis are by me.

situation."⁹ James criticised the social injustices of his time and proposed a remedy:

If now - and this is my idea - there were, instead of military conscription a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against Nature, the injustices would tend to be evened out, and numerous other goods to the commonwealth would follow. The military ideals of hardihood and discipline would be wrought into the growing fibre of the people; no one would remain blind as the luxurious classes are now blind, to man's relations to the globe he lives on, and to the permanently sour and hard foundations of his higher life. To coal and iron mines, to freight trains, to fishing fleets in December, to dishwashing, clothes-washing, and window-washing, to road-building and tunnel-making, to foundries and stoke-holes, and to the frames of skyscrapers, would our gilded youths be drafted off, according to their choice, to get the childishness knocked out of them, and to come back into society with healthier sympathies and soberer ideas. They would have paid their blood-tax, done their own part in the immemorial human warfare against nature; they would tread the earth more proudly, the women would value them more highly, they would be better fathers and teachers of the following generation.¹⁰

James' ideas, which would not have seemed out of place in the writings of a Konstantin Hierl or many other German labour service proponents, were neither at the time nor later realised in the United States. F. D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps was drawn up along different lines; above all, it was voluntary.¹¹

In Switzerland there were attempts to introduce a compul-

⁹William James, "The Moral Equivalent of War", in Memo-
ries and Studies (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1911),
p. 283.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 290-91.

¹¹Holland, pp. x-xi.

sory six-months labour service in 1920. When these efforts remained without results, the initiator, T. Waldvogel, appealed to students to volunteer for farm work. He had some successes and for several years there were more applicants for such summer work, including many foreign students, than could be accommodated.¹² Another Swiss who proposed a compulsory civic service for young men was Pierre Ceresole, the son of a former Swiss President. He sought to interest young people in working for international understanding by undertaking joint projects and eventually to replace military with civic service. His "International Civil Service" operated some work camps in France and England as well as Switzerland, but the overall participation rate was small and his work finally showed few lasting results.¹³

The government of Bulgaria had more success in its attempt to introduce a compulsory labour service. In June 1920 it adopted a law which established such a service. The stated purpose of the law was the harnessing of the energies of young workers in an effort to develop responsible citizens and benefit the national economy. Because it was possible to "buy" oneself free from the service by paying a fee, it was not really universal, but there were still about twenty thousand recruits at work at any given time. In the first four-

¹²Schwenk, p. 1.

¹³Ibid., pp. 1-2.

teen years of its existence, the Bulgarian labour service built more than two thousand kilometres of rural roads and undertook many other useful public works. Because of the nature of the country's economy and infrastructure, the Bulgarian experience was not considered transferable to Western Europe by contemporary observers.¹⁴

In Germany the desirability of some kind of service to the state by the youth of the country had been discussed at least since the late nineteenth century. The first of these proposals, by Ida von Kortzfleisch, concerned a compulsory service year for young women, an idea which she modified and reworked over a number of years. However, since her major motivation was to give the young women a more practical education in home economics to make them better housewives and "supports",¹⁵ her efforts cannot be considered direct fore-runners of the Reich Labour Service of the 1930's and 1940's. Service to the "community of the people" was at best an added benefit of her scheme. Similar proposals for voluntary or compulsory service for young women were advanced by other educators and clergymen before and during World War I.¹⁶

Proposals for a labour service for young men came relatively late in Germany. The reason for this lag was mainly

¹⁴Ibid. p. 2.

¹⁵Marawske-Birkner, p. 25.

¹⁶Marawske-Birkner, pp. 33-52, names among others Georg Schwiening, Professor Zimmer and Helene Lange.

the existence of the military draft for men. In 1912 a group of professors submitted a memorandum to the German Minister of War in which they suggested that differences between the classes could be reduced by the establishment of voluntary camps in which young men would join in undertaking projects of public benefit.¹⁷ Given the general mood in Germany at the time, this scheme found little favour among the military and was never implemented.

Prior to 1935, there had been only one functioning compulsory labour service in Germany: the Patriotic Auxiliary Service (*Vaterländischer Hilfsdienst*). It was established during World War I by the imperial government as part of the "Hindenburgprogramm" to assist the authorities in the war effort. The government acted in the belief that it was entitled to the services of its citizens not only in the army but also in the civilian sector. The programme had received widespread support but ended with the German collapse in 1918.¹⁸

The Patriotic Auxiliary Service was the result of an initiative by the army leadership under Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff. In a letter dated August 31, 1916 to the Minister of War, the two generals and later politicians

¹⁷Holland, pp. 6-7.

¹⁸Wolfgang Benz, p. 317; "Hindenburgprogramm," Meyers Enzyklopädisches Lexikon, Vol. 13 (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut, 1971).

called for the mobilisation of the entire population, both male and female, between the ages of seventeen and sixty for the war effort. They were only partly heeded: Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg opposed the forcible inclusion of women in the programme for economic, moral and social reasons. His views prevailed: The final law decreed that only men were to be drafted. Labour unions, too, had objected to the proposals and had called them a militarisation of work. Most women's organisations declared their members' willingness to obey whatever law was adopted, but stressed that most women would work even harder without compulsion.¹⁹

As the German economy worsened after the First World War, many organisations renewed the call for some kind of voluntary or compulsory labour or community service. There were at least four motives for wanting to establish such a service: the wish to fight youth unemployment, to cultivate unused land in order to alleviate food shortages, to influence German youth along certain political, religious or moral lines, and to create a substitute for the compulsory military service which had been prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles.

The calls for some kind of labour service came from politicians and soldiers, both active and retired, from leaders of the various youth movements, from educators and church leaders concerned about weakening morals, and from

¹⁹Gersdorff, pp. 20-22; p. 20, note 10.

agriculturalists worried about the flight from the country to the cities, especially of the young. The goal was to keep idle youths off the streets, to teach them some skills, and to instill discipline in the young people. Almost all these calls for action involved sending them into the countryside, away from the allegedly corrupting influences of the city. Some advocates of a labour service had longer-range plans. Motivated by memories of drastic food shortages during and after the war, supposedly caused by the misuse or neglect of the available agricultural land, they were looking for young people to settle permanently in the country on small farms (*Siedlungen*) to improve agricultural output and reduce Germany's dependence on imports.

There were scarcely any efforts made to engage young people in the cities. The reason for this was mainly the fear that work done by any labour service would interfere with the normal workings of a free market economy. This point was particularly stressed by the labour unions who were always suspicious of the labour service movement because they were afraid that the young labourers would depress wages and act as strike breakers.²⁰

The advocates of a labour service for young people can further be divided into two groups: Those who called for a voluntary labour service (*Freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst = FAD*)

²⁰Köhler, p. 27.

and those who urged compulsory labour service (*Arbeitsdienstpflicht*). The idea of a voluntary labour service was generally advocated by government officials, union, church, and youth leaders, and many socialist politicians as a means to fight unemployment, particularly youth unemployment. Advocates of a compulsory labour service were mainly found among those nationalistic circles who felt that German youth needed more discipline than was imparted by schools or employers.

Leading proponents of compulsory labour service were the *Stahlhelm* (Steel Helmet), a large, politically active veterans organisation with a strong paramilitary youth wing, members of various *Wehrverbände* (paramilitary defence associations), and right-wing political parties, but not at first the National Socialists, who with a few exceptions had until the late 1920's shown little genuine interest in this topic. The supporters of a compulsory labour service were in part encouraged by the example of the war-time Hindenburg Programme.

What made the idea of a compulsory labour service in peacetime attractive was the existence of an economic crisis. This was true for the postwar period from November 1918 until the fall of 1923, when currency reforms revived the German economy for a few years, and again in the late 1920's and early 1930's following the onset of the Great Depression.²¹

One of the first German politicians to advocate a compul-

²¹Ibid., pp. 7, 11-38.

sory national labour service was, surprisingly, not a right-wing extremist but the Catholic Centre politician, Matthias Erzberger. In 1919/20 he proposed the establishment of an organisation in which all Germans between eighteen and twenty-five years of age were to serve for eighteen months. They were to be employed in agriculture, coal mining and home construction. In addition to serving as a substitute for military duty, the national service was meant to instill positive feelings toward the new republic and to curb criminal behaviour among the youths.²² Erzberger's initiative gained little support and was cut short by his retirement from politics.

In 1921 a private society, the German Federation for Compulsory Labour Service (*Deutscher Bund für Arbeitsdienstpflicht*) was founded in Hamburg. In this city there was at the time much interest among various youth groups and also the trades in the idea of a compulsory labour service. The Federation had little success, however. After a short burst of publicity it went nationally largely unnoticed and soon no more was heard from it.²³

1924 was an especially busy year for advocates of a labour service for youth. This is somewhat surprising as the economic situation and employment opportunities had improved

²²Klaus Epstein, Matthias Erzberger und das Dilemma der deutschen Demokratie (Berlin, 1962, p. 422, cited by Benz, pp. 517-18.

²³Benz, p. 318; Köhler, p. 37.

in Germany after the introduction of the *Rentenmark* and the stabilisation of the German finances in December of 1923. Most of the calls for a labour service came from the political right. Not all of these parties, however, wanted the service to be compulsory.

One which did was the German Social Party (*Deutsch-Soziale Partei*), which, pointing to the example of Bulgaria, called for a national labour service. The practical results, however, were meagre. The party's plans foundered on the lack of financial support by the government and the general disinterest of the young people.²⁴

Also in 1924, the General State Commissioner of Bavaria, Gustav von Kahr, proposed a law which called for compulsory labour service. Rather than pointing to the problem of unemployment or the need for more industrial output as the reasons for the law, he advocated the undertaking of public works as a means of creating assets and of instilling in the young self-respect and moral values. Von Kahr's efforts were rejected by the Bavarian government on financial grounds.²⁵

Up to this point the various proposals for labour services had in common that they remained just that, proposals. One of the first able to implement his ideas at least to some extent was Artur Mahraun, the founder and leader of

²⁴Schwenk, pp. 4-6.

²⁵Benz, pp. 318-19.

the *Jungdeutscher Orden*. In 1924 he published a plan in which he demanded the establishment of a compulsory "general and equal" labour service.²⁶ Instead of the prohibited military service he proposed for a majority of young men a compulsory two-year term (*Volksdienstpflicht*) as civilian workers.²⁷ Initially, the main projects were to be the reclamation of waste lands and the draining of wetlands. Later rivers were to be diked, canals dug, power stations constructed and hospitals built. Mahraun's chief aim was the withdrawal of one million young people from the regular workforce to make room for older unemployed workers. In addition, leadership positions in this labour service were to be offered to war veterans or displaced public servants.²⁸

Mahraun's ideas, although not implemented at this time for lack of money and government support, are important because the *Jungdeutscher Orden*, which had as its goal the establishment of a "people's state" (*Volksstaat*), had up to 200,000 members²⁹ and was one of the largest organisations interested in a labour service. After the government intro-

²⁶Ibid., p. 319.

²⁷Artur Mahraun, Das Jungdeutsche Manifest. Volk gegen Kaste und Geld. Sicherung des Friedens durch Neubau der Staaten (2nd ed.; Berlin: Jungdeutscher Verlag, 1928), pp. 159-70.

²⁸Benz, p. 320; Mahraun, p. 162.

²⁹"Jungdeutscher Orden," Meyers Enzyklopädisches Lexikon, Vol. 12 (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut, 1971).

duced the Voluntary Labour Service Law of 1931, the *Jung-deutscher Orden* participated in about 350 projects before it was "coordinated" in 1933 by Reich Labour Leader Hierl.³⁰

Another reason for recalling Mahraun's ideas and writings is that many of his slogans were later appropriated by the National Socialists in their literature which was full of phrases lifted from Mahraun.³¹ For example, he used the expression, "Compulsory people service is a school for the community of the people (*Volksgemeinschaft*)."³² This idea was later echoed by Hierl when he spoke of his goal of shaping the labour service into "the social school of the nation."³³

One point stressed by Mahraun but ignored by the National Socialists was the principle that "the people's state has its roots in the *Weltanschauung* of the Christian doctrine."³⁴ Although the "Proclamation by the Government to the German Nation" on February 1, 1933 stated that this same "[government] regard Christianity as the foundation of our national morality . . . ,"³⁵ one does not have to be overly cynical to doubt the Hitler government's commitment to this principle.

³⁰Köhler, p. 151.

³¹Benz, pp. 319-21.

³²Mahraun, p. 169.

³³Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 87.

³⁴Mahraun, p. 178.

³⁵Baynes, The Speeches, p. 113.

Another organisation whose ideas and members influenced the future National Socialist Labour Service was the "*Bund Artam*" or the "*Artamanen*". In early 1924 the leader of the "*Adler und Falken*" youth movement and the leaders of the various *Bauernhochschulen* (High schools for farmers) co-published an appeal to their members and to the national youth in general in which they encouraged them to volunteer for farm work, especially in eastern Germany. The *Artam* programme was noteworthy for its xenophobic slant, directed mainly at Polish transient harvest workers,³⁶ and its anti-Semitism.³⁷ It is of interest that some of the *Artamanen* later achieved prominence in the Hitler regime. Among others, Heinrich Himmler, future concentration camp commandant Rudolf Höß, and Reich Peasant Leader and "blood and soil" proponent Walter Darré had been members of the *Bund Artam*.³⁸

A close collaborator of the *Artamanen* was the founder of the "*Landwerk*", Karl Schöpke, who in 1925 had established an organisation with the goal of encouraging young city dwellers to volunteer for work on farms, in forests and on the moors. Schöpke wanted to stem the flight of young farm youths to the city where they expected a better life. In his book,

³⁶See "Der Aufruf Kotzdes, Tanzmanns und Obendorfers vom 20. 1. 1924", reprinted in Schwenk, pp. I-II.

³⁷Michael H. Kater, "Die *Artamanen* - Völkische Jugend in der Weimarer Republik," Historische Zeitschrift (1971), p. 599.

³⁸Köhler, p. 40.

Deutsches Arbeitsdienstjahr statt Arbeitslosen-Wirrwarr!,³⁹
Schöpke first depicted in some detail the economic and moral consequences of high unemployment while at the same time, somewhat illogically, he decried the shortage of farm workers.

Like most proponents of a compulsory labour service, Schöpke did not explain why it should be necessary to force people to work in a time of enormous unemployment. He did, however, point out that the purpose of a compulsory labour service was not only work but also education to good citizenship for rich and poor. He then went on to describe his solution, i.e., a partly compulsory, partly voluntary labour service which was settled in idyllic surroundings and marched to work accompanied by music and song.⁴⁰ Like most of his fellow-enthusiasts, Schöpke ignored, belittled or underestimated the financial and organisational difficulties of his scheme, but instead pointed to the fact that he himself had already practised what he preached in his "*Landwerk*".⁴¹ Some of the organisational details proposed by him were later found in the *Reichsarbeitsdienst*. Schöpke himself joined the National Socialist Labour Service in 1933 but left it in 1934 "for political reasons".⁴²

³⁹Karl Schöpke, Deutsches Arbeitsdienstjahr statt Arbeitslosen Wirrwarr! (München: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1930).

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 106.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 76.

⁴²Benz, p. 329, footnote 50.

The above-mentioned schemes had in common that they showed little regard for economic realities. Almost all their proponents seemed to be caught up in romantic, idealised ideas of what the "good old times" had been like and a desire to reverse or at least slow developments which they did not see as progress. Chief among their complaints was the supposed unruliness and moral decay of the post-war youths, disregarding the fact that these complaints were not new but that their fathers and forefathers had voiced similar criticisms about them. The loss of the war and the decline of authority of the military classes did, in fact, result in some loosening of overall discipline and behaviour, but not to the extent that such drastic measures as compulsion to work on civil projects should have been necessary. Furthermore, the efficacy of such attempts at modifying behaviour was rather uncertain.

Another advocate of compulsory labour duty whose ideas resurfaced in the Reich Labour Service was a former Economics Minister of Saxony, Walter Wilhelm. In his book, Volk im Dienst, he offered detailed analyses of the economic and human cost of unemployment, drafts for proposed legislation and suggestions for organising a labour service. He dismissed criticism that many of his schemes would not be economically viable by pointing to the cultural value of the Pyramids or

the Cologne cathedral, neither of which "paid".⁴³ Wilhelm also advocated work for its psychological value: "Primitive work, manual labour, work on the soil" were the only way for German rejuvenation.⁴⁴

There is no denying that many people involved in the labour service movements had altruistic motives, such as teaching unemployed youths some skills or relieving their families, at least for a few months, of the necessity to support them. There was also the hope that youths so employed would be less likely to succumb to communist or anarchist propaganda. It was also thought that it might be possible to instill in the young people living in camps some of the social values which they seemed to have lost. The latter hope was entertained mainly by representatives of the churches.

As Henning Köhler has pointed out, Germany would soon have run out of appropriate land if all those suitable had been drafted to clear, drain and level it. Estimates place the number of eligible workers at up to 500,000 per year.⁴⁵ An additional problem would have been that much of the land in need of improvement was in private hands and thus not easily or necessarily available for public works projects.

⁴³[Walter] Wilhelm, Volk im Dienst. Wesen und Wirken der allgemeinen Arbeitspflicht. Ein deutscher Sieben-Jahr-Plan (Leipzig: Paul List Verlag, 1931), p. 172.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 171.

⁴⁵Köhler, p. 26.

(ii) VOLUNTARY LABOUR CAMPS BECOME REALITY

In spite of the efforts by various youth and political organisations to establish some kind of functioning labour service, none was successful during the early 1920's. Somewhat surprisingly, the first to perform meaningful voluntary labour service were students who had been members of the *Wandervogel* movement. The *Bund der Wandervögel* (literally, Federation of migratory birds) was a youth organisation whose somewhat romantic goals - patterned to some extent on the student and boy scout movements - were a return to nature, the teaching of survival skills and the strict adherence to an egalitarian democracy. There was, in addition, also considerable stress on cultural activities, including theatrical performances and music.⁴⁶

The *Wandervögel* were joined by members of other youth groups, including the *Deutsche Freischar*, the *Bündische Jugend*, and also youths from England and Scandinavia. Beginning in the spring of 1925, these groups organised labour camps for students and later also for young farmers and apprentices. The first of these camps was held in the spring of 1924 near Hanover with about fifty participants. These camps were short - only about three weeks - and never had more than 150 participants. Much of the time there was

⁴⁶George L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology. Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich (New York: The Universal Library, Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), pp. 171-89.

spent in cultural activities, such as theatre, singing, and crafts. Work was often done only as a sideshow. Each year between 1924 and 1931 several camps were organised. It is noticeable, though, that despite the voluminous literature on the subject relatively few young people ever attended these camps. Over the seven-year period they were operated, only a few thousand took part.⁴⁷ Among these were few who later had any influence in the Reich Labour Service.

The various German governments, of which there were fifteen during the 1920's, had ignored the appeals for some kind of a voluntary or compulsory labour service throughout the period. They were politically too weak to undertake anything so controversial and were also never convinced that there was any economic justification for it. This appears to have been the main factor they considered. They certainly were not swayed by the various largely impractical and expensive proposals for a compulsory labour service put forward in the *Reichstag* by the National Socialists beginning in 1928.⁴⁸

By 1930, however, the government became alarmed by the enormous increase in unemployment in the wake of the depression which had begun in 1929. It was also pushed into action by the publicity successes of newly-founded associations whose goals was the introduction compulsory labour service. The

⁴⁷Schwenk, pp. 13-18.

⁴⁸Dudek, p. 89; Köhler, pp.51-52.

first important such organisation, founded in April 1930, was the Reich Working Group for German Compulsory Labour Service (*Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Deutsche Arbeitsdienstpflicht* = RADA). Its members tended to the political right; chief among them were the *NSDAP* and the *Stahlhelm*. The RADA was not supported by the churches nor by the Social Democrats, the labour unions or the Communists. Nevertheless it claimed a membership of sixty organisations. The programme of the RADA was quite unrealistic and ideological. It assumed, for example, that the economic value of the work done would pay for the costs of the huge army of labourer they wanted to see employed on various soil improvement schemes. Until the programme was implemented, however, most members of the RADA supported voluntary labour service, albeit grudgingly, as an interim measure. They were sure that after the fall of the Weimar Republic, for which they planned and which they expected, they would be able to realise their ambitions.⁴⁹

Despite the agitations of the RADA and other, similar pressure groups, the government still hesitated to take action. Among the reasons for the hesitation were the continued resistance of the labour unions who feared a lowering of wages and the possibility of a ready supply of strike breakers, and the opposition from construction companies who were concerned about unfair competition. But when during 1931

⁴⁹Benz, p. 326; Köhler, pp. 66-67.

the number of unemployed, many of whom did not qualify for unemployment insurance, grew from four to six million, the government under Chancellor Heinrich Brüning finally decided to get involved in a voluntary labour service. On June 5, 1931 President Hindenburg issued the "Second Decree for the Support of Economy and Finances" in which the responsibility for encouraging and financing a voluntary labour service (*FAD*) was handed to the Reich Office for Labour Procurement and Unemployment Insurance (*Reichsanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung*).⁵⁰

This decree was far from satisfactory, because only recipients of unemployment insurance and emergency aid who were willing to work, so-called "labour service volunteers" (*Arbeitsdienstwillige*), were fully eligible, while welfare recipients, even if willing to work, were not. There was no age limit, although the measure was aimed mainly at young people. In any case the maximum period which could be spent in the *FAD* was generally only twenty weeks.⁵¹

Public and private corporations and other organisations, including church parishes and various foundations which wished to have work done were designated "sponsors of work" (*Träger der Arbeit*). Only public works which would normally not have been undertaken were eligible for the programme. The "spon-

⁵⁰Köhler, pp. 90-91.

⁵¹Benz, p. 323.

sors of work" undertook to house, feed and clothe the volunteers and to give them some pocket money. The Reich Office for Labour Procurement and Unemployment Insurance transferred to the "sponsors of work" the amount normally paid as unemployment insurance up to a maximum of two *Reichsmarks* per day. It was also responsible for ensuring that the participants were treated in accordance with the relevant regulations.

The management of the camps and the organisation and supervision of the work was assigned to "sponsors of service" (*Träger des Dienstes*). These were financed by the "sponsors of work" with funds supplied by the government. Often "sponsors of work" and "sponsors of service" were identical. At least in theory, organisations espousing extreme political views were to be excluded from the programme.⁵²

The camps were either "open" (*offene Maßnahmen*) or "closed" (*geschlossene Maßnahmen*). An "open" camp was non-residential; a "closed" camp was a camp where the inhabitants lived and worked full time and where they were not only fed and housed but often also clothed.⁵³ Until 1932 most camps were "open" because there were not enough facilities to house them. By the end of 1931 more than forty "sponsors of service" were looking after about seven thousand volunteers. By

⁵²Benz, pp. 323-24; Kläbe, Oeser, and Bertram, pp. 35-36.

⁵³Croon, p. 153.

June 1932 this number had risen to seventy thousand.⁵⁴

The "closed" camps were administered by leaders who could serve a maximum of two years. Although unsalaried, they received in addition to free room and board up to thirty *Reichsmarks* per month as a "leader's supplement". Because of the generally dismal employment situation, there was never any lack of qualified leadership candidates. Many of the *FAD* leaders were later employed by the Reich Labour Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst = RAD*).⁵⁵

In July 1932 the new government under Franz von Papen modified the voluntary labour service law. Important changes were the appointment of a Reich Commissioner for the Labour Service, and the limiting of the programme to youths under the age of twenty-five, now however including all young people, not only those receiving unemployment insurance or social assistance. The decree also reiterated the reasons for a voluntary labour service. Article 1 of the decree stated:

The voluntary labour service affords the young Germans an opportunity to undertake together voluntarily serious work for the benefit of society and at the same time to improve physically and intellectually-morally.

Article 2 read:

(1) The tasks of the voluntary labour service must have general utility and at the same time be supplementary. The labour service must not lead to a reduction of work opportunities in the free labour market; it has to be limited to tasks which would not now nor in the fore-

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 37; Schwenk, pp. 31-32.

⁵⁵Schwenk, p. 32.

seeable future be undertaken without the employment of the voluntary labour service.

(2) The voluntary labour service serves the common good; it may not be misused for political or anti-state purposes.⁵⁶

As Reich Commissioner for the *FAD* the government appointed the president of the Reich Employment Office, Friedrich Syrup, who reported directly to the Minister of Labour. His appointment marks the beginning of the institutionalisation of the German labour service.⁵⁷ His two main tasks consisted in the financial administration of the labour service programme and the organisation of leadership courses and schools.⁵⁸

One of the regulations issued in clarification of the law narrowed the definition of what was valuable for the economy (*volkswirtschaftlich wertvoll*). The definition included mainly soil and forest improvement projects and the establishment of rural settlements. It excluded much of what traditionally had been done by women, such as work with the poor, old and sick. If women worked on projects which were not considered "valuable for the economy", they could not receive the full subsidy of two Marks per day. If, however, they volunteered to work in a male *FAD* camp as kitchen helpers or cleaning women, they were entitled to the full amount.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Germany, Reichsgesetzblatt, Part I, Nr. 45, July 18, 1932, p. 352.

⁵⁷Benz, p. 315.

⁵⁸Köhler, p. 117.

⁵⁹Marawske-Birkner, pp. 190-91.

The authorities did attempt to find suitable projects for women, but were only marginally successful. One year after the first *FAD* law had been passed, only 247 projects or 4.4 per cent of the 5,633 projects approved involved women. This percentage is rather pitiful even allowing for the fact that the unemployment rate for women in this age group was less than half that of young men.⁶⁰

The chief reason for a perceived bias among the lawmakers against young women was that their misfortune was not as conspicuous as that of the young men. When not gainfully employed, they stayed at home and helped with the household chores or looked after the children of other family members or neighbours. Still, they probably could have used the skills, discipline and income they might have acquired in a camp.⁶¹

The build-up of the voluntary labour service (*FAD*) by the government in the winter of 1932/33 took place at the same time as reductions in other areas of social policy. The end result was thus a neutralising of the overall impact of the measures.⁶² By November 1932 about 285,000 persons were employed under the *FAD* programme which had a budget of sixty-five million *Reichsmarks*.⁶³ Compared with the number of

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁶²Benz, pp. 324-25.

⁶³Dudek, p. 183.

unemployed in Germany at this time, six million,⁶⁴ this number was almost negligible. Still, the labour service movement began to have a practical impact. On January 6, 1933, only a few weeks before Hitler's NSDAP achieved power, a number of "sponsors of service" formed the Reich Working Group of Sponsors of Service Associations (*Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft der Dienstträgerverbände*) which strove to coordinate the various federations and organisations.⁶⁵ The largest organisation in this working group was the *Stahlhelm*. The National Socialists did not join, but members of their recently formed organisation, the *Reichsverband deutscher Arbeitsdienstvereine* or RDA, attended sessions of the Working Group as observers.⁶⁶

⁶⁴F.A. Krummacher and Albert Wucher, eds., Die Weimarer Republik. Ihre Geschichte in Texten, Bildern und Dokumenten, 1918-1933 (Wiesbaden: R. Löwit, 1965), p. 325.

⁶⁵Benz, p. 325; Köhler, p. 155.

⁶⁶Köhler, p. 239.

(iii) THE NATIONAL SOCIALISTS AND THE LABOUR CAMPS

The National Socialists did not participate in the efforts of the various groups to organise voluntary labour camps until the early 1930's, but this did not mean that they had no opinions on the subject before that time. Both Konstantin Hierl, the future Reich Labour Leader, and Adolf Hitler had put their views concerning youth service in writing in the early 1920's.

Konstantin Hierl was born in 1875 in the Upper Palatinate where his father was a provincial judge. He graduated with high honours from the gymnasium in Regensburg and at eighteen he joined the army as an officer-cadet. He excelled at the war college and advanced rapidly. In 1907 he was seconded to the Prussian General Staff in Berlin where he stayed for several years. In 1911 he was appointed an instructor at the war academy in Munich; in 1913, now a major, he joined the staff of an army command under Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria. During the First World War Hierl was a senior staff officer on the Western front.

After the end of the war Hierl was asked by the new republican government in Berlin to form a free corps for the defence of democracy. His unit was responsible for driving communist military forces from Augsburg, and later occupied other Bavarian cities and towns. Hierl joined the *Reichswehr* and was posted as a liaison officer to Berlin. In 1922, now

a colonel, he was appointed to teach history and military tactics at the *Reichswehr* ministry. During this time he published a four-volume work on the First World War.

In November 1923 he addressed a memorandum to the Chief of the Supreme Command of the *Reichswehr*, General Hans von Seeckt, in which he suggested the "introduction of an official general compulsory labour service lasting one year for all - initially male Germans between the completed seventeen and twenty years of age who are suitable for labour."⁶⁷

In his memorandum Hierl went on to list the following goals of such a service:

- Reconciliation of mental and physical labourers through mutual understanding and appreciation by common labour;
- Overcoming the spirit of marxist class struggle through the spirit of the community of labour;
- Overcoming the self-righteous German particularism through the spirit of the community of the people;
- Physical and moral training for the tasks of the defender of the fatherland;
- Development of leaders.⁶⁸

Hierl stated that he had been influenced in his thoughts by a study of the Bulgarian labour service, of which he did not, however, completely approve, because it was a purely military organisation and it was also not entirely compulsory since it was possible to avoid service by paying a fixed sum of money. Hierl's appeal to Seeckt, who in the wake of the Hitler putsch of November 1923 had been named Chief of the

⁶⁷Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 180.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 181.

executive powers in Germany and thus had considerable political as well as military influence, fell upon deaf ears. In retrospect Hierl admitted that Seeckt acted correctly in not involving himself in matters which were beyond his mandate and interests. Because Hierl made no attempt to hide his disappointment that his advice was being ignored, he lost favour with Seeckt and in September 1924 opted for or was forced into early retirement.⁶⁹

Disappointed by what he considered too meek a government in Berlin, Hierl joined the *Tannenberg-Bund*, a creation of World War I General Erich Ludendorff of Tannenberg fame whom Hierl greatly admired. Ludendorff's goal was to gather the national elements in Germany, independent of political parties. In 1923 he had participated in the "Hitler putsch" and was charged, but later acquitted. While Ludendorff at first seemed to share many of Hierl's ideas, he later fell under the spiritual influence of his second wife who wanted to transform the "Tannenberg-Bund" into a religious-philosophical community. Hierl could not follow this conversion and in 1927 he quit the "Bund".

Hierl later stated that he had always been a nationalist and, under the influence of his wartime experiences, had also become a socialist.⁷⁰ He deplored the enmity between nation-

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 17-21.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 45.

alists and socialists which had survived the war. He first became aware of Hitler in 1920, when as military commander (*Stadtkommandant*) of Munich he attended a number of political meetings at which Hitler was one of the speakers. He subsequently corresponded with Hitler but did not meet him personally until 1923.

After leaving the "Tannenberg-Bund" Hierl spent two years working on his writings and giving speeches. He stated in his memoirs that although his sympathies were with Hitler and his ideas, he had an aversion to party politics and the demagogic rantings of many politicians. He claimed that the ruffianly behaviour of the SA (*Schutzabteilungen* = storm troopers) also repelled him. Hierl again took up his ideas of a compulsory labour service for youths and spoke about them in various meetings. All the while he maintained contact with some of the leading National Socialists, including Gregor Strasser, who, impressed by Hierl's ideas for a compulsory labour service, persuaded him to join the NSDAP on Hitler's fortieth birthday in 1929. Hierl claimed that when he congratulated Hitler, the latter stated that by joining the NSDAP Hierl had given him the best birthday present.⁷¹

Hierl's association with the Strasser wing of the NSDAP might have been fatal for him had he maintained it. Gregor and Otto Strasser headed the social-revolutionary wing of the

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 62-63.

NSDAP in the early days of the movement. Gregor Strasser, like Hierl, had been a free corps leader, one of whose young assistants had been Heinrich Himmler. He had joined the *NSDAP* and the *SA* early and had great success in organising chapters of the party in northern Germany. Together with his brother - - and with the help of Joseph Goebbels - he founded several newspapers during Hitler's imprisonment at Landsberg in 1924 and dominated the party, alienating along the way Hermann Göring and Ernst Röhm.

Although in disagreement with some of Hitler's policies, which he considered anti-socialist and pro-establishment, Gregor Strasser from 1926 to 1927 was Propaganda Leader for the *NSDAP*, and from January 1928 until December 1932 in charge of party organisation. Late in 1932, at a time when he had abandoned most of his socialistic ideals and had decided that he could live with capitalism, he had a falling out with Hitler over the extent to which the *NSDAP* should cooperate with the other political parties in parliament. He resigned all his party offices but retained his membership in the *NSDAP*. His brother Otto had been expelled from the Party in 1930, also because of policy differences with Hitler.

Gregor Strasser withdrew from politics and became active in industry; nevertheless he was assassinated in June of 1934 during the "Night of the Long Knives". Otto Strasser went into exile and survived the war and Hitler in Switzerland and

Canada.⁷²

It is not clear from Hierl's memoirs how he avoided being identified with the Strasser faction of the party after its fall from grace. An immediate declaration of loyalty to Hitler may have been enough.⁷³ Himmler and Goebbels had switched to the winning side much earlier. After the war Hierl stated that he did not believe that Gregor Strasser would have participated in any plot against Hitler and admitted that Strasser's death was political murder.⁷⁴

In his memoirs Hierl gave the impression that he had little to do with the National Socialists and their ideas until the late 1920's. This is not so. In 1925, in a speech to war veterans in Munich, he praised Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist ideas. In the same speech he also attacked the "Jewish plutocracy". More anti-Semitic statements are found in a speech to the *Tannenberg-Bund* in 1926.⁷⁵ His anti-Semitism continued right to the end of the Third Reich and even afterwards. There is evidence that in his political testament, written in May 1944 for Hitler, Hierl rejected as

⁷²Peter D. Stachura, Gregor Strasser and the Rise of Nazism (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 64-65; Robert S. Wistrich, Who's Who in Nazi Germany (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 246-48.

⁷³Stachura, p. 117.

⁷⁴Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 134.

⁷⁵Hierl, Ausgewählte Schriften, Vol. 1, pp. 215, 217, 227-28.

a potential successor his long-time and close collaborator in the RAD, Will Decker, because Decker's wife had in a previous marriage had a Jewish husband.⁷⁶ After the war Hierl continued to voice anti-Jewish sentiments, although he firmly distanced himself from the "barbarism" of the holocaust.⁷⁷

After joining the NSDAP, Hierl was appointed to Organizational Section II in the national office of the Party and among other tasks was given the assignment to look after "agriculture, military matters and labour service."⁷⁸ In the summer of 1929 Hierl had a chance to report to Hitler on his ideas concerning a compulsory labour service. According to Hierl, Hitler immediately grasped the meaning of a "compulsory youth labour service as social school of the people" and agreed with him completely. Hitler's approval was vital for Hierl if he was to win over the NSDAP to his plans.⁷⁹ In 1931 Hitler appointed Hierl Commissioner for Labour Service in the NSDAP. According to one writer, the main purpose of this appointment was to remove Hierl from his position in the organisational department of the party because of incompetence.⁸⁰ With Hitler's help, Hierl was able to implement his

⁷⁶Köhler, footnote 16, p. 246.

⁷⁷Hierl, Im Dienst, pp. 51-53; 141.

⁷⁸Mallebrein, Hierl, p. 49.

⁷⁹Hierl, Im Dienst, pp. 69-70.

⁸⁰Benz, p. 330.

ideas from 1933 on; he eventually led an organisation of several hundred thousand men and women.

Hitler's interest in some kind of labour service for young men and women also goes back to the early 1920's. There is no evidence, and Hierl does not claim, that he discussed the idea of a compulsory labour service with Hitler then. There was no need to do so. The right-wing national press and parliament were full of demands for such an institution.⁸¹ It is thus difficult to determine who, if anyone, suggested to Hitler the ideas expressed in Mein Kampf:

The folkish state must not only carry through and supervise physical training in the official school years; in the post-school period as well it must make sure that, as long as a boy is in process of physical development, this development turns out to his benefit. It is an absurdity to believe that with the end of the school period the state's right to supervise its young citizens suddenly ceases, but returns at the military age. . . .

In what form the state carries on this training is beside the point today; the important thing is that it should do so and seek the ways and means that serve this purpose. The folkish state will have to look on post-school physical training as well as intellectual education as a state function, and foster them through state institutions. This education in its broad outlines can serve as a preparation for future military service.⁸²

Hitler continued his ideas concerning the upbringing of the young:

Analogous to the education of the boy, the folkish state can conduct the education of the girl from the same viewpoint. There, too, the chief emphasis must be laid on physical training, and only subsequently on the pro-

⁸¹Köhler, pp. 14-23.

⁸²Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943), p. 413.

motion of spiritual and finally intellectual values. The goal of female education must invariably be the future mother.⁸³

It is clear from the above that Hitler, unlike many of his right-wing contemporaries, did not regard any future labour service as a substitute for but rather as a complement to the draft. He maintained his ideas, which he had dictated to Rudolf Hess at Landsberg prison in 1924, almost to the end of his life and he permitted Hierl to act accordingly.

Unlike Gregor Strasser, his early mentor among the National Socialist leadership, Hierl initially did not believe that the *NSDAP* should participate in a voluntary labour service. He had objected especially to the fact that only the unemployed and "socially weak" could serve in the *FAD*. Hierl was also afraid that special interest groups might abuse the institution of a labour service. "The great danger existed that in this way the future establishment of a state labour service as social school of the nation would be more abused than used by falsifying and discrediting the idea."⁸⁴ Hitler backed Hierl in opposing the participation of the *NSDAP* in any voluntary labour service, partly because Hitler agreed with him that any labour service should be a state and not a party organisation.

When it became clear by 1931, however, that the accession

⁸³Ibid., p. 414.

⁸⁴Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 70

to power by the National Socialists was not as imminent as they had thought, Hierl changed his mind on participation.⁸⁵ In this he was in part influenced by Helmut Stellrecht, a "specialist for the labour service" who had been placed in his office by Gregor Strasser. Stellrecht, unlike Hierl, wanted the National Socialists to participate in the labour service movement immediately, whether compulsory or not.

In October 1931, to disguise their true intentions, that is, the planning of a National Socialist compulsory labour service, they founded the Association for the Retraining of Voluntary Workers (*Verein zur Umschulung freiwilliger Arbeitskräfte*) under Hierl's leadership in Berlin. The Association was to serve as an umbrella organisation for similar groups throughout Germany.⁸⁶ On November 11, 1932 it was renamed Reich Federation of German Labour Service Associations (*Reichsverband Deutscher Arbeitsdienstvereine = RDA*).⁸⁷

One reason for changing tactics was the passage of the labour service legislation by the Brüning government in June 1931 described above. Hierl saw an opportunity for undertaking some state-financed preliminary work to develop his own version of a compulsory youth labour service. Another reason for Hierl's change of mind were the activities of another

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 71.

⁸⁶Dudek, p. 70.

⁸⁷Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 77; Schwenk, pp. 53, 55.

member of the Strasser wing of the NSDAP, Paul Schulz, who on his own initiative in early 1932 had established one of the first National Socialist labour service camps in Hammerstein (Pomerania) under the guise of the Association for the Retraining of Voluntary Workers (*Verein zur Umschulung freiwilliger Arbeitskräfte*). In this camp the National Socialists trained the future leaders of the planned service and tried out various ideas. Hierl insisted on close supervision of all activities there by the national office in accordance with his belief in the "Führer Prinzip", that is, that leadership had to come from the top and that a leader had to be accountable only to his superior.⁸⁸ Only in this way, Hierl felt, could uniformity of teachings and organisation be assured.

Using existing organisations, Hierl and "suitable personalities who belonged to the Party or were sympathetic toward it,"⁸⁹ arranged to have work camps set up to which the Party could send those of its young adherents who were willing to work. In a similar manner labour service associations were formed under various, "politically neutral", names. Hierl later insisted that these associations had not belonged to the Party nor received any financial assistance from it.⁹⁰ Apparently using his income as a NSDAP Reichstag deputy to

⁸⁸Benz, p. 330; Schwenk, p. 49.

⁸⁹Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 71.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 71.

pay for his expenses, he spent much time travelling the country, making speeches and building up a group of supporters.⁹¹

He often used a standard speech explaining his ideas of a compulsory labour service. One of the main points he made was that the chief purpose of a labour service should not be the fight against unemployment but the creation of more usable agricultural land and the education of the young: "The main purpose of education in the labour service consists in forming the young Germans into members of the community of the people, into valuable citizens of the German nation."⁹²

Hierl was aided in his efforts by the newly elected National Socialist government of the state of Anhalt which had established a labour service camp near Dessau under the leadership of a retired military officer. This camp, together with the one at Hammerstein, can be regarded as the model for all later RAD camps. As in Hammerstein, the main goal of the camp was not the undertaking of public works but the training of future RAD leaders and the development of organisational methods.⁹³

One of the reasons Hierl was initially not more successful in pursuing the build-up of a National Socialist labour

⁹¹Ibid., p. 72.

⁹²Hierl, "Aufklärungsvortrag über nationalsozialistischen Arbeitsdienst," in Ausgewählte Schriften, Vol. 2, pp. 36-37.

⁹³Benz, pp. 330-31.

service was the lack of support for and even open opposition to his plans by the SA. Its leaders were opposed to a voluntary labour service in principle; compulsory labour service was only acceptable to them if they had a large role in running it. Their aim was to find positions for as many of their unemployed members as possible. The result was an order by the supreme SA-leadership that any SA leader who joined a voluntary labour camp had to give up his post in the SA.⁹⁴ The friction between the SA and the Labour Service continued in 1933 and only lessened after June 1934 when the SA lost much of its power and influence as a result of the purge of Ernst Röhm in the infamous "Night of the Long Knives".

When the National Socialists gained power in January 1933, they had laid the groundwork for a compulsory labour service. They had been mainly active in the states which were already controlled by National Socialist governments: Anhalt, Thuringia, Saxony and Oldenburg. In practical terms they were outperformed by other organisations, including the *Stahlhelm*. By September 1932 they had erected only a few camps of their own.⁹⁵ Since Hierl's goal from the beginning had been a compulsory service under a National Socialist regime, this lack of visible achievements did not disturb him. He correctly felt that time was on his side.

⁹⁴Benz, p. 331.

⁹⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER II. LABOUR SERVICES UNDER THE NATIONAL SOCIALISTS

(i) THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST LABOUR SERVICE (NSAD) IS CREATED

The timing of the ascent to power by Hitler and his *NSDAP* in early 1933 surprised Hierl as much as most other observers. In his memoirs he revealed that the appointment of *Stahlhelm* leader Franz Seldte as Labour Minister and Minister Responsible for the Labour Service in Hitler's cabinet came as a disappointment to him. If he thought that he should have been chosen for this post himself even though Hitler was allowed only two National Socialist ministers in his cabinet, he certainly showed great political naivete. He hurried to Berlin to get his role in government and party clarified by Hitler. Despite Hitler's obvious preoccupation with more important matters Hierl managed to see him on January 31. He later reported that "[his] concerns about the future developments of the Labour Service were alleviated after an interview with the Reich Chancellor."¹ According to Hierl, the following day Hitler had inserted this "terse" statement in the government Proclamation: "The idea of a compulsory labour service belongs to the foundations of our programme."²

¹Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 74.

²Ibid. This quotation appears to be somewhat inaccurate. See Hitler, Speeches, I, p. 114.

After January 31, 1933 there began a determined struggle between Hierl and Labour Minister Seldte for supremacy in the Voluntary Labour Service (*FAD*). Initially Hierl, although Commissioner for the Labour Service in the *NSDAP*, had to be content with watching developments from the sidelines. He was delegated by Hitler to work as the representative of the *NSDAP* under Seldte at the labour ministry where he was received "not exactly with open arms."³

According to Hierl, Seldte saw in the labour service a non-governmental semi-military youth organisation which could be organised along the lines of the *Stahlhelm*. Hierl, on the other hand, wanted to transform the voluntary labour services into forerunners of a compulsory youth labour service to serve as a "purely state-run social school of the people."⁴ We are quite well informed about the machinations which eventually led to Hierl's appointment to Reich Labour Leader, because the correspondence between Hierl and Hitler and the cabinet minutes dealing with the Labour Service have survived and have been published.⁵

Because Seldte's *Stahlhelm* provided the largest contingent within the *FAD*, the new cabinet had no problem in

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Akten der Reichskanzlei. Regierung Hitler 1933-1938. Part I: 1933/34. Vol. 1: 30. Januar bis 31. August 1933; Vol. 2: 12. September 1933 bis 27. August 1934. See Introduction.

handing the leadership of the organisation to him. He was now both Labour Minister and Reich Commissar for the Labour Service. Although the relevant cabinet session took place on February 2, 1933, Hitler did not countersign the document of appointment, which on February 4 had been signed by President Hindenburg, until March 11, apparently as a result of various disputes within and without the cabinet.⁶

Seldte's apparent "victory" did not last long, however. As early as March 1 Hierl dictated a memorandum for circulation among the ministries concerned in which he called for a quick conversion of the *FAD* into a compulsory labour service with him as state secretary in charge. The new service was without delay to be transformed from state-supported but private organisations into a single state organisation. Instead of reporting to the state-run labour offices, the labour service would immediately become independent. Seldte's representative, Heinrich Mahnken, to whom Hierl had probably dictated the memorandum, strongly objected to these plans in writing, yet by March 31 the Minister had become convinced that his best course lay in making Hierl State Secretary for the Labour Service in the Labour Ministry and he recommended this appointment to cabinet which approved it.⁷

⁶Cabinet Session February 2, 1933, in Akten der Reichskanzlei, Part I, Vol. I, p. 32; footnotes 21 and 22.

⁷Akten der Reichskanzlei, Part I, Vol. I, pp. 140-41, footnotes 1 and 5; p. 278.

When it became clear to Seldte and Finance Minister Lutz Count Schwerin von Krosigk that Hierl, backed by Hitler, had no intention of being shunted aside, they tried several tactics, including a proposal to establish a new Ministry for Labour and Youth, to neutralise him. The Labour Service was to play only a subsidiary role in this new Ministry as one of four sections in the youth sector.⁸ In cabinet discussions even Hitler conceded that the proposed budget for the Labour Service, probably prepared under Hierl's supervision, was too large. The fiscal situation of Germany allowed at most the expenditure of two hundred million Marks for 300,000 men, not the 375 million Hierl had requested. Hitler stressed that the Labour Service was to be operated in a very frugal manner to allow for the recruitment of the highest possible number of young people. He stated that one also had to consider that it was important not to build up something which could not be permanently maintained. Later in the discussion Hitler remarked that the Labour Service should not be regarded from an economic point of view. He saw in it above all an instrument outstandingly suited for a conscious education for *Volksgemeinschaft*. The controversial concept of labour had to be restored to its proper place [in society] in such a way that, without regard to rank or origin the German people, both manual and intellectual workers would come to a mutual appre-

⁸Ibid., pp. 286-89.

ciation of each other through common service.⁹

Toward the end of May Hierl's *Reichsleitung des Arbeitsdienstes*, the leadership of the Labour Service within the *NSDAP*, circulated the draft for a "Law for the Preparation of a General Compulsory Labour Service" to several ministries for comment. The law was to allow for the systematic conversion from a state-run voluntary to a compulsory service. One very important task of the new organisation would be the training of a cadre of permanent staff.¹⁰

Both the Finance Ministry and the Foreign Office objected to this scheme, pointing to the discussions in the Technical Commission of the Disarmament Conference in Geneva on May 29 in which the victors of the World War had severely attacked the government of Bulgaria for having started a paramilitary labour service. The Foreign Office was particularly precise in its submission which was dated the day on which the Commission had voted to forbid Bulgaria to continue its labour service.¹¹ While not objecting to the organisation of the proposed new service as such, the Foreign Office pointed to several of its aspects which could be misunderstood in other countries as measures to create a paramilitary service. Although the submission had listed a number of measures which

⁹Ibid., pp. 288-89.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 546, footnote 2.

¹¹Ibid., p. 554, footnote 2.

were meant to neutralise foreign criticisms, such as the avoidance of the appearance of a military structure, the Ministry was not persuaded.¹² The misgivings of the Foreign Office seem to have convinced Hitler. On June 16, 1933 a Chiefs meeting (*Chefbesprechung*) under Hitler decided to postpone the introduction of a compulsory labour service at least until April 1, 1934 and to retain the status quo concerning its financing and organisation.¹³

In the meantime Hierl in his capacity as NSDAP Commissioner for the Labour Service had taken over the chairmanship of the Reich Federation of German Labour Service Associations (*Reichsverband deutscher Arbeitsdienstvereine = RDA*). This meant that while as Secretary of State he was nominally working under Labour Minister Seldte, Hierl in reality retained much of his independence. He used his position to place his confidants in charge of the labour camps in the various *Gaus*. Except for the *Stahlhelm* camps, which were for the time being left intact, all other camps were more or less forcibly absorbed by the National-Socialist-controlled district associations.¹⁴

On April 28, 1933 Labour Minister Seldte and Hierl ordered that no new work proposals be approved by the Ministry

¹²Ibid., pp. 555-59.

¹³Ibid., p. 559, footnote 7.

¹⁴Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 76.

unless the applying organisation belonged to the RDA or to the *Stahlhelm*. Existing projects run by other organisations had to be terminated when the approved term expired.¹⁵ In another decree, promulgated in the summer of 1933, the government ordered all "open" camps for women as well as those "closed" camps for women which had been erected near cities abolished by the fall of the year. The effect of this decree was the abandonment of camps whose inhabitants were working in the cities and a sharp turn toward aid for agriculture (*Landhilfe*).¹⁶ When there was resistance to the take-over, the SA auxiliary police provided the necessary persuasion to achieve compliance, a fact Hierl does not mention in his memoirs.¹⁷

The *Stahlhelm* camps were next to be centralised. They were taken over by the National Socialists in July 1933 with little resistance from Labour Minister and *Stahlhelm* leader Seldte. From now on the entire Voluntary Labour Service was under the control of the National Socialists.¹⁸

To gain even more independence from the Labour Ministry, Hierl arranged to have the supervision of the labour camps transferred from the Government Labour Offices to "District

¹⁵Stefan Bajohr, "Weiblicher Arbeitsdienst im 'Dritten Reich'. Ein Konflikt zwischen Ideologie und Ökonomie," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, XXVIII, No.3 (1980), p. 337.

¹⁶Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, Die Frau im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation (Tübingen: Grabert-Verlag, 1978), pp. 213-14.

¹⁷Köhler, p. 253; Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 76.

¹⁸Benz, p. 334.

Commissars" whose twenty-nine offices were changed to state offices in August of 1933. These commissars (*Arbeitsgau-führer*) were mainly recruited from the earlier National Socialist district labour leaders, although some came from the *Stahlhelm*, a concession Hierl probably had to make in order to mollify Seldte and because of a shortage of qualified NSDAP candidates.¹⁹ The camps themselves were technically still run by the Reich Federation of Labour Service Associations. In December 1933 Labour Service recruiting offices were opened throughout the Reich to assure a continued supply of workers.²⁰ There was concern because the number of workers in the Voluntary Labour Service had dropped from 263,000 in July to 232,000 in December 1933 for seasonal reasons and because of an improvement in the employment situation.²¹

The approval and use of a separate budget for the Labour Service was the source of well-documented friction between Hierl and the Labour and Finance Ministries. In several letters to Hitler during August 1933 Hierl complained that his request for a budget was being delayed by bureaucratic manoeuvres. Even after Hitler intervened directly with the Finance Minister, the delays continued for several more months. One

¹⁹Hierl, Im Dienst, pp. 76-77.

²⁰Kläbe, Oeser, and Bertram, p. 61; Schwenk, p. 54.

²¹Germany, Statistisches Reichsamt, Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich (Berlin: Verlag der Reimar Hobbing G.m.b.H., 1934), p. 302.

result of this was that many of the employees of other ministries, who had joined Hierl's organisation in anticipation of a positive career change but were unwilling to continue working without an assured future, had begun to return to their old departments, thus creating a serious leadership and administrative vacuum. Another consequence was the reluctance of many camp leaders to order needed supplies because of the uncertainty regarding the budget.²²

During September and October 1933 several more "Chiefs meetings" in which the affairs of the Labour Service were discussed took place at the Reich Chancellery. Hierl's wish to operate with complete independence from the Labour Ministry was considered but rejected as illegal by the Justice Minister. Seldte's suggestion, born of frustration, to have Hierl replace him as Reich Commissar for the Labour Service with the rank of state secretary who would report directly to the Chancellor was turned down by Hitler, probably on the advice of Interior Minister Frick who wanted to avoid too much decentralisation of the government. Frick instead suggested the merger of the SA and the Labour Service, since according to him the two organisations shared a common goal, namely the physical improvement of the German youth by paramilitary sports activities and education for labour.

The idea of a merger with the SA was abhorrent to

²²Akten der Reichskanzlei, Part I, Vol. I, docs. 202, 203, pp. 709-13.

Hierl.²³ He realised that a merger with the numerically much larger SA would mean the end of the Labour Service and his influence on its development. He also felt that "the undisciplined behaviour of Röhm and his companions with their drinking bouts and their illegal interference in public affairs were a disgrace to the National Socialist movement"²⁴ Nothing concrete came of the merger proposal. The bureaucracy continued to delay the implementation of any decisions.

In November Hierl wrote to his superior, Labour Minister Seldte. Decrying the frequent changes made in the organisation of the Labour Service, he stated that the lack of a sharp division between the Labour Ministry and the Leadership of the Labour Service (*Reichsleitung des Arbeitsdienstes*) had led to delays ("*Hemmungen*") which had retarded the organic development of the Labour Service by three to four months. Because of these delays the Labour Service still had no approved budget. For the resulting grim consequences which might show up in the coming winter he could not accept responsibility.²⁵

²³Akten der Reichskanzlei, Part I, Vol.II, doc. 240, p. 933, footnotes 4 and 5; p. 958, footnote 5; Benz, pp. 338-39.

²⁴Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 133. Apparently Hierl had complained as early as March 1931 to Hitler that Röhm's homosexuality was becoming an issue in the Presidential campaign and had asked Hitler to dismiss him. It might have been better for Röhm if Hitler had not rejected Hierl's suggestion. Dietrich Orlow, The History of the Nazi Party: 1919-1933 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969), p. 251.

²⁵Akten der Reichskanzlei, Part I, Vol.II, doc. 240, pp. 933-34.

Hierl's complaints did still not result in budget approval. He consequently wrote to Hitler on December 28 - in his capacity as Commissioner for the Labour Service in the NSDAP, not as State Secretary in the Labour Ministry - to complain once more. He claimed that among other consequences the budgetary delaying actions by the Labour Ministry were responsible for many Labour Service men having insufficient winter clothing. He also told Hitler that his superior had recently informed him that the Labour Service continued to be governed by the Voluntary Labour Law of July 1932, an assertion which delivered the Labour Service to the machinations of bureaucrats who had shown a hostile attitude toward the Service. He could not in all conscience agree to such a capitulation. The attempt to return the affairs of the Labour Service to the time of July 1932 had to be described as naked reaction. Hierl then asked Hitler to consider freeing the Leadership of the Labour Service from its intolerable restraints by placing it as a Supreme Reich Office directly under the Chancellor, i.e., Hitler.²⁶ No written response by Hitler to Hierl's request has been reported. In any case, it took until 1943 before his wish was granted.²⁷

Hierl had opponents not only outside the Labour Service. One of his severest critics was Helmut Stellrecht, the author

²⁶Ibid., pp. 1051-52.

²⁷Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 108.

of a widely-read book in which he had detailed the tasks and organisation of a future labour service.²⁸ An undoubted expert on the subject, he felt that as Reich Organisation Leader for the Labour Service operating out of Party headquarters in Munich he should have been placed in charge of the service after the *NSDAP* came to power. In the fall of 1933 he managed through a series of intrigues to get a report detailing many instances of incompetence and even corruption supposedly rampant in the Labour Service camps sent to the Reich Chancellery. The report was endorsed by many prominent party officials throughout Germany who claimed that many idealistic adherents of the labour service idea had been repulsed by the conditions they had found in the camps. Stellrecht even managed to speak to Hitler about his misgivings. In response, Hitler merely referred him to Hierl.²⁹

Stellrecht, like Hierl a man with a military background, differed from his superior fundamentally and made no secret of his contrary views. In contrast to Hierl he had supported participation of the National Socialists in voluntary labour camps as early as 1931.³⁰ After 1933, he opposed Hierl's goal of establishing a compulsory state-run nonpolitical labour service; he also objected to the proposed paramilitary organi-

²⁸Stellrecht, op. cit.

²⁹Benz, pp. 339-40.

³⁰Benz, p. 330.

sation which included parade ground drills. He felt that Hierl wanted to make the Labour Service a parallel organisation alongside the Army. Instead, he wanted to see a politicised service under strong Party rule. In speeches and writings he attacked those who would be leaders without any ideas of their own, meaning Hierl.³¹

Hierl would have none of this. He transferred his rival as Gau leader to the Koblenz district. Stellrecht, however, declined the appointment and in the fall of 1933 accepted an invitation to take on pre-military training of the Hitler Youth under Baldur von Schirach instead. Ironically, his last public words on the matter appeared after his departure from the Labour Service. In 1934 his Arbeitsdienst und Nationalsozialismus, in which he repeated many of his criticisms of Hierl in veiled but unmistakable terms, was published.³²

Hierl himself was quite aware that neither living conditions nor leadership in the camps were satisfactory. In December 1933 he decried the corruption, thefts, and misappropriations of monies and materiel rampant in many camps and vowed to clean house.³³ To achieve this and to quell any attempt to usurp his powers, he called a meeting of the district and senior headquarters leaders at the Wartburg in Feb-

³¹Ibid., p. 341.

³²cited by Benz, p. 341.

³³cited by Köhler, p. 255.

ruary 1934. According to his own report, he received overwhelming support from the assembly.³⁴ In any case, the intrigues against him became fewer.

In February 1934 the Reich Federation of German Labour Service Associations was renamed National Socialist Labour Service (*Nationalsozialistischer Arbeitsdienst* or *NSAD*).³⁵ Despite its new name it was not a Party organisation but remained a public corporation which was financed out of the budget of the Labour Ministry.³⁶

On April 1, 1934 the *NSAD* took over the administration of its own financial affairs.³⁷ Hierl's satisfaction with this new arrangement was diminished considerably, however, when he found out that instead of the 260 million *Marks* he had requested for the coming year the Finance Ministry had proposed to reduce the Labour Service budget to 108 million. Hierl's request seems quite extravagant when one considers that the total ordinary budgetary expenditures for the central government for 1934/35 were just under six billion *Marks*.³⁸

On May 2 Hierl wrote to Hitler, complaining about the

³⁴Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 80.

³⁵Schwenk, p. 55.

³⁶Schwenk, pp. 55-56.

³⁷Benz, p. 342.

³⁸Germany, Statistisches Reichsamt, Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich (Berlin: Verlag für Sozialpolitik, Wirtschaft und Statistik G.m.b.H., 1935), p. 423.

proposed budget cuts. He stated that they would necessitate a reduction from 230,000 to 120,000 men in the Service as well as the dismissal of between eight and ten thousand leaders. Work projects already begun would have to be abandoned; monies invested by local governments and municipalities in the infrastructure would be wasted. This would only make sense if the government planned to abolish the Labour Service altogether. Hierl mentioned that SA leader Röhm had told him some time ago that Hitler was planning to do just such a thing. Hierl rather aggressively asked how such actions jibed with Hitler's speech of May 1, 1933 in which he had declared a compulsory labour service to be one of the basic principles of the government programme. Although the meeting with Hitler which Hierl had requested apparently did not take place, his letter had some effect, because at Hitler's urging the Labour Service budget had by December 1934 been increased to 195 million Marks.³⁹

One month later, on June 1, 1934, Hierl again wrote to the Reich Chancellery asking to have his position clarified. The tone of this letter to State Secretary Lammers at the Reich Chancellery was again quite aggressive:

This matter must . . . not be dragged into July. It is intolerable to have the budget still represented by the Labour Ministry. One cannot have a matter represented by its adversary. The present state of unclarity and

³⁹Akten der Reichskanzlei, Part I, Vol. II, doc. 342, pp. 1257-58 and footnotes.

half-measures must now finally be overcome and a full decision must be taken.

For this reason I beg you urgently, Pg. [Partei-genosse = party comrade] Lammers, to bring the matter with all due speed to a firm conclusion. Otherwise I have to bother the Führer and you again and again, I have to do this for the sake of the cause to which I have dedicated myself.

Give me at long last an opportunity for completely unhindered, independent action and work, then you will be left alone by me.⁴⁰

Hitler's answer came toward the end of June when events took place which changed the future of the Labour Service considerably. During a visit to the Labour Service leadership school at Buddenburg and several labour camps in Westphalia on June 29, 1934, Hitler informed Hierl that he was to replace Minister Seldte as Reich Commissar for the Labour Service. Hitler then went on to Bad Godesberg where, according to Hierl who had followed him there, Hitler told him of the impending break with the SA leadership under Röhm and its reasons. Again, according to Hierl, Hitler stated that Röhm was planning an open revolt to continue the national revolution. He, Hitler, was prepared to suppress the planned rebellion without hesitation. According to Hierl's memoirs, which were, of course, written years after the fact, Hitler did not reveal to him the methods to be used in this action. In any case, Hierl agreed then and later that the removal of Röhm, whom he despised, was necessary. He admitted later that the executions of many of the other victims of the "Röhm putsch",

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 1304.

including his former mentor Gregor Strasser, were "political murders" and as such illegal,⁴¹ but the "Night of the Long Knives" proved nevertheless to be a godsend to him.

Only a few days later, on July 3, Hitler kept his word to him. Seldte was relieved of the responsibility for the Labour Service, although he remained Labour Minister. In his place Hierl was appointed Reich Commissar for the Labour Service. At the same time responsibility for the Labour Service was transferred from the Labour Ministry to the Ministry of the Interior under Wilhelm Frick.⁴² Frick, according to Hierl, generously left the running of the Labour Service entirely to him, confining himself to representing the Service in budget discussions with the Finance Minister.⁴³

In a decree promulgated in February 1935 the organisation of the Labour Service was described as follows:

For the management of the Labour Service there exist as Reich offices the Reich Commissar for the Voluntary Labour Service who at the same time has the position of State Secretary in the Reich and Prussian Ministry of the Interior, the Reich Leadership of the Labour Service and 29 district offices. In addition, the National Socialist Labour Service Inc. functions as the Sponsor of Service. At its head is the Reich Labour Leader; the Labour Service groups and detachments are sub-divisions of the National Socialist Labour Service Inc. The leaders, who are partly members of the Reich civil service, partly of the National Socialist Labour Service, are the executors of the state ideology in the Labour Service. The employment status of the Labour Service leaders is therefore in

⁴¹Hierl, Im Dienst, pp. 80-81, 133-34.

⁴²Benz, p. 342.

⁴³Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 81.

an administrative sense as well governed by public law.⁴⁴ The convoluted wording of the decree perfectly reflects the state of affairs at the time. Hierl probably did not like the arrangement, but for political and also financial reasons a compulsory labour service was not immediately possible.

The Labour Service remained voluntary for the time being, but Hierl continued to pursue his goal of a compulsory service for all young Germans, whatever their politics or social status. He was surely well aware of the fact that the National Socialists had done relatively poorly in the large cities in the national elections of 1932/33. Even in the elections of March 1933, after coming to power, the National Socialists had only polled forty-four per cent of the vote despite the enormous bullying of the electorate; they had done even poorer in cities like Berlin. If the coming labour service was to be truly national and include adherents of all social classes, even the socialists and communists among the young had to be won over. This may have been one reason why Hierl wanted the Labour Service to be a state organ rather than an arm of the *NSDAP*. There were probably several others. As government rather than Party employees, the *RAD* leaders were much more likely to get paid in difficult economic times; their pensions were also more secure. It is also conceivable that Hierl was not quite so certain as his master that the

⁴⁴VBl [Verordnungsblatt] 16/35 dated February 14, 1935. Text quoted by Schwenk, p. 57.

Third Reich would last one thousand years. As a government institution, the Labour Service was more likely to survive a change in leadership or political system than as a Party organ. Calculations like this may also explain his request to Hitler in 1935, after the compulsory Labour Service had been established, for permission to replace the swastika armbands worn with the *RAD* uniforms with the armed forces eagle symbol. Without explanation Hitler refused the request.⁴⁵ Judging from photographs, some *RAD* recruits wore the swastika armbands during wartime service, others did not.⁴⁶

After the accession to power by the National Socialists in 1933 there had initially been no shortage of volunteers for the Labour Service; in fact, many applicants had to be turned away. The reason for this enthusiasm was that many young people were attracted to the idea of working in the camps; high unemployment certainly also played a part. There was, therefore, no need to force anyone to join the Labour Service, as some judges had attempted. They had offered young criminals suspended sentences if they agreed to serve in the Labour Service. Other officials, much to the disgust of Hierl, had threatened to withdraw unemployment insurance benefits unless the recipients joined the Labour Service.⁴⁷ These attempts

⁴⁵Benz, pp. 344-45.

⁴⁶See Mallebrein, Männer und Maiden, pp. 128-36.

⁴⁷Schwenk, p. 55.

at coercion reflected badly on the Service; they made it appear as if membership in the *FAD* was somehow a punishment, not at all what Hierl had in mind.

In some cases, however, labour service had been compulsory as early as June 1933. Aspiring students were expected to have done a stint in the Labour Service before beginning their studies. In 1934 this demand was repeated, proving that there were difficulties in getting compliance.⁴⁸ It is interesting that the initiative for this demand came not from Hierl but from the Education Minister, Bernhard Rust. Individual cities, such as Danzig and Regensburg, also decreed compulsory labour service for their youthful citizens. This was in addition to the requirement that young members of the various Party organisations, such as the Labour Front and the *NSDAP*, were also expected to do their six-months stint in the Labour Service.⁴⁹

The first massed public appearance of the National Socialist Labour Service (*NSAD*) came at the Party Congress of September 1934 in Nuremberg. At this time the National Socialist Labour Service had about 250,000 members, most of them volunteers. In an impressive display of discipline 52,000 young men, who had come to the old city from more than 1,000 work camps from all over Germany, paraded before Adolf Hitler and

⁴⁸Benz, p. 342.

⁴⁹Köhler, p. 260; Schwenk, p. 55.

other German and foreign dignitaries at the Zeppelin Field under the leadership of Hierl.⁵⁰ These events were captured on film by director Leni Riefenstahl and widely shown throughout Germany and abroad under the title Triumph of the Will.

In his address Hitler stressed the importance of the Labour Service as an expression of National Socialism:

It is a great undertaking to educate an entire Volk in this new concept of work and this new opinion of work. We have taken up the challenge, and we will succeed, and you will be the first to bear witness to the fact that this work cannot fail!

The entire nation will learn the lessons of your lives! A time will come when not a single German can grow into the community of this Volk who has not first made his way through your community.⁵¹

From 1934 until the beginning of the war the Labour Service parades became annual events at the Party Congresses. Critics claimed that the Labour Service spent an inordinate amount of time in preparing for these events at the expense of its assigned tasks.⁵² Each year about 50,000 young men, about one-sixth of the total serving, descended on Nuremberg after months of drills in marching and, especially, in the handling of their spades. The latter they handled like rifles. The

⁵⁰Hamilton T. Burden, The Nuremberg Party Rallies: 1923-39; foreword by Adolf A. Berle (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), p. 83.

⁵¹Max Domarus, Hitler. Speeches and Proclamations 1932-1945. The Chronicle of a Dictatorship. Vol. 1: The Years 1932 to 1934 (Wanconda, Ill.: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1990), p. 531.

⁵²Benz, p. 340 cites Helmut Stellrecht as source for this claim.

appearances of the *RAD* were of course mainly for propaganda purposes. They were meant to impress domestic and foreign observers with the peaceful intentions and the social activism of the Third Reich. It is doubtful that the Nuremberg rallies succeeded in muting the criticism voiced inside and outside Germany that the National Socialist regime was militaristic in nature. However, they succeeded in impressing the spectators with the newly-found energy and strength of the social institutions of the Third Reich. More than sixty years later Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will, despite its occasional tediousness, is a fascinating record of the overwhelming effect these march-bys and parades must have had.⁵³ It is now difficult to realise that in the 1930's attendance at one of the Nuremberg party rallies was considered a badge of honour by most *RAD* men, and, after 1937, when they took part for the first time,⁵⁴ also by young women.

Among the people duly impressed by these displays and the *RAD* in general were many diplomats, including British ambassador Nevile Henderson and French ambassador André François-Poncet.⁵⁵ One British observer, otherwise not very taken with Hitler's Germany, wrote this about the Labour Service before the war:

⁵³Burden, pp. 96-99.

⁵⁴Scholtz-Klink, p. 450.

⁵⁵Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 104.

The whole experiment is a fascinating one for foreigners. One of the most typical sights in Germany is to come upon platoons of labour service men swinging along country tracks with shovels carried like rifles at the slope, or to see masses of browned boys working lustily in the fields and stripped to the waist in all weather. In the remotest woods one sees a red flag with a black spade worked in its midst and, as one approaches, a brown-clad sentry smartly springs to attention and brings his aluminiumed spade to the present, and somehow it does not seem absurd to be saluted with a spade.⁵⁶

In 1944, at the height of the war, Ewald Schnitzer, the Associate Secretary of the Work Camp Committee of the American Friends Service Committee, conceded in an article that the Labour Service "was considered one of the most successful parts of Hitler's administration by a large number of foreign observers." However, he decried the fact that the ideals of the youth movements had been converted "into effective political weapons."⁵⁷ Even William Shirer wrote after the war:

In most cases it did no harm to a city boy and girl to spend six months in the compulsory Labor Service, where they lived outdoors and learned the value of manual labor and of getting along with those of different backgrounds. No one who traveled up and down Germany in those days and talked with the young in their camps and watched them work and play and sing could fail to see that, however sinister the teaching, here was an incredibly dynamic youth movement.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Stephen H. Roberts, The House that Hitler Built (2nd ed.; London: Methuen Publishers, 1937), p. 217.

⁵⁷Ewald Schnitzer, "Work Camps in Germany: Warnings from the Past - Lessons for the Future," Harvard Educational Review XIV, No. 3 (May 1944), pp. 182-96.

⁵⁸William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. A History of Nazi Germany (A Crest reprint; Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1962), p. 353.

(ii) THE REICH LABOUR SERVICE FOR YOUNG MEN (RAD)

From the beginning of his involvement in politics, Hierl and his collaborators had wanted a compulsory labour service. They had to wait until after the military draft was reintroduced in Germany in March 1935 before their wish was granted. It is possible that the Labour Service was allowed to continue in part because its help was needed for getting additional land into production, a priority in Hitler Germany. Between 1933 and 1936 the armed forces had taken over 650,000 hectares of land for various purposes, such as air fields, tank training grounds and fortifications. The Labour Service had at the same time reclaimed 536,000 hectares which could be used for agriculture.⁵⁹

In any case, on June 26, 1935 the Reich Labour Service Law (*Reichsarbeitsdienstgesetz*) was proclaimed.⁶⁰ Many former advocates of a compulsory labour service who had seen in it a substitute for the draft considered this law and the organisation it legalised now unnecessary. In reply Hierl again stressed the educational value of his service. In his address to Hitler at the Party Congress in 1935 he stated:

⁵⁹Frieda Wunderlich, Farm Labor in Germany 1810-1945. Its Historical Development Within the Framework of Agricultural and Social Policy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 177.

⁶⁰Germany, Reichsgesetzblatt, Part I, June 27, 1935, pp. 769-71. For English text, see Appendix 1.

. . . The Labour Service law gives us leaders of the Labour Service the great and beautiful but also responsible and heavy task to lead the entire German youth through the Labour Service as a school of the nation.

We have prepared ourselves for this task during the last few years in the voluntary labour service. Because we saw in the voluntary labour service not for a moment anything but the preparation and preliminary step for the general labour service duty. In this way we have shaped in the voluntary labour service the cadre which is meant to be the skeleton for our Reich Labour Service.⁵¹

The law almost exactly reflected Hierl's ideas,⁵² although he had to make some concessions. Labour service duty for girls remained "subject to separate legislation" (Paragraph 9), meaning, it would for the time being not be compulsory, and the length of service was to be set by Hitler (Paragraph 3) who opted for six months rather than the one or even two years Hierl had advocated.⁵³ "Persons of non-arian descent or who are married to a person of non-arian descent" could not serve in the RAD (Paragraph 7). The most surprising paragraph was number 17 which forbade members of the RAD who belonged to the NSDAP to be active in the service of the Party or its affiliates. This regulation would, of course, affect mainly the cadre. In his memoirs Hierl justified this paragraph by insisting that "RAD camps had to reflect the 'whole Germany'."⁵⁴ Political leaders of the Party were not

⁵¹Hierl, Ausgewählte Schriften, Vol. 2, p. 360.

⁵²Hierl, Im Dienst, pp. 88-89.

⁵³Ibid., p. 89.

⁵⁴Ibid.

to interfere in the affairs of the RAD which, nevertheless, was "a child of the Party and proud of its mother."⁶⁵ It is somewhat of a mystery how Hierl convinced Hitler to accept this paragraph.

After the introduction of compulsory labour service for young men in June of 1935, Hitler had set the initial strength of the Reich Labour Service at 200,000 men. Its organisation reflected the NSDAP leadership principle, meaning that the power flowed from the top. At the highest level, under the Minister of the Interior, was the Reich Leadership of the Labour Service (*Reichsleitung des Arbeitsdienstes*) under Secretary of State and Reich Labour Leader (*Reichsarbeitsführer = RAF*), Konstantin Hierl. This title was insofar a misnomer as Hierl was by no means the highest German labour leader, who in fact was Robert Ley, the leader of the German Labour Front. Rather, Hierl was the leader of the *Reichsarbeitsdienst*. The Reich Labour Leader was supported in his duties by seven inspectors and the President of the RAD Law Court. Within the Labour Service Leadership at the Interior Ministry were the following departments: Service, Personnel, Education and Training, Work Output, Administration and Economy, Law Court, Health Services, Reserves and Registry, Press and Propaganda.

In 1940 the responsibilities of these departments were as

⁶⁵Hierl, "Arbeitsdienst und Partei," in Ausgewählte Schriften, Vol. 2, p. 211.

follows: The Service Department was responsible for organisation, work assignments, preparation of statistics, matters concerning mobilisation and self-defence, weapons, motor transport, communications, air raid protection, liaison with the armed forces, special occurrences and complaints, musical affairs, the issuance of basic regulations and rules, office administration, etc. Distinct units attached to the Service Department were the Legal Unit and the Enlightenment (i.e., Propaganda) and Foreign Affairs Unit. The latter was responsible for the publicity work of the Reich Labour Service. The Personnel Office had among other duties the selection of leadership candidates, career decisions, promotions, appointments and dismissals, personnel files and various insurance matters. The Education Department was responsible for political instructions, leisure time organisation, military training, and physical exercises as well as leadership training and other educational matters. The Office for Work Output looked after the preparation of work locations, work assignments, labour techniques, accident prevention, work tools and work production accounts. The Office for Administration and Economy was charged with administering the bookkeeping and cash functions, fees, clothing and equipment, provisioning and kitchens, housing, legal administration and training of the administrative personnel. The Law Court was concerned with penal matters, breaches of the law while on duty, complaints and courts of honour. The Health Services Office was charged with

preventive medicine, hygiene, looking after the sick, medical treatments including certification, and medicines and medical apparatus. The Office for Reserves and Registry was responsible for keeping draft records, calling up the drafted, keeping abreast of postings within the RAD, and assuring that the draft law was obeyed. The Press and Propaganda Office was tasked with insuring that the work and concerns of the Labour Service were kept before the public by close contacts with the press, radio and motion picture industry.⁶⁶

In the early years of the now state-run RAD Hierl continued to have considerable difficulties with Finance Ministry officials in obtaining funds to establish the number of cadre positions he considered necessary for a smooth running of the Labour Service. In a letter dated October 15, 1935 to his nominal superior, the Minister of the Interior, Hierl complained that the officials of the Finance Ministry and the Audit Bureau had proposed to reduce the number of authorised leadership positions in the budget from 28,000 to 23,300. After claiming that the higher number was absolutely necessary for achieving the tasks handed to the RAD, Hierl continued:

If those functionaries of the Finance Ministry who are not responsible for the organisation of the Labour Service and are no experts, and those of the Audit Bureau believe that they can arbitrarily cut the leadership positions demanded by me, one is reminded of the methods of the surmounted parliamentarianism with the difference that certain ministry counsellors have taken the place of

⁶⁶Germany, Reichsarbeitsdienst, Der Reichsarbeitsdienst, (Pressburg: C.F. Wigand, [1940]), pp. 16-18.

the parliamentarians.

I ask to request from the *Führer* a decision if he wants to place the organisation of the Reich Labour Service in the hands of ministry counsellors or in those of the Reich Labour Leader who is responsible to him.

I also request that the *Führer* be told that I cannot carry the responsibility for the leadership of the Labour Service if the organisational conditions for the fulfilment of the tasks of the Labour Service should be taken away from me.

I cannot believe that the *Führer* demands from me that I should destroy the work which I have erected under his protection. But to that the refusal of the necessary number of leaders would finally amount.

I am fully aware of the urgency of rearmament, but the Labour Service plays in this programme in my opinion no unessential part.

If the Labour Service is to supply the armed forces with young people who are educated in the proper spirit, physically fit and well disciplined, it needs the number of leaders which I have requested.

Should the number of leaders necessary for the training, education and supervision be reduced, then the danger exists that the labour camps which have been designated by the Communist propaganda as targets will really become places of decay.

The purpose of the Labour Service would be turned into the opposite.

I am turning to you in deepest awareness of my responsibility, Mr. Minister, and trust in this matter, which is decisive for the entire future of the Labour Service, in your active help.

Heil Hitler!⁶⁷

There is no record of a reply, but Hierl appears to have received his money. By 1939 the budget for the RAD had grown to six hundred million Marks.⁶⁸

From 1933 until 1937 the Reich was divided into thirty Gaus with some changes in their borders; after the addition of

⁶⁷Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, File "Reichsarbeitsdienst".

⁶⁸Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 87.

Austria and the Sudetenland to the Reich in 1938 there were a total of thirty-eight. As a result of territorial expansion during the war and for other reasons, some *Gaus* were later combined with others and renamed. For example, apparently to avoid confusion with Austria which under the National Socialists was officially known as Ostmark (East March), *Gau VIII* (East March) was in 1939 renamed Brandenburg-East and *Gau IX* (Brandenburg) Brandenburg-West.⁶⁹ The *RAD Gaus* were neither in size nor in name identical to the *Gaus* of the *NSDAP* which, while similar in size and number, were numbered in alphabetical order.⁷⁰

In 1936, when there were 30 *Gaus*, the Reich Labour Service had 192 Labour Service Groups (*Arbeitsdienstgruppen*) containing 1310 detachments. If one calculates each detachments at 218 men, the total camp population of the *RAD* was therefore 285,580 men. Adding to these estimates the various administrative posts in Berlin, the *Gau* administrations and

⁶⁹See Appendix 2. Map from Mallebrein, Männer und Maiden, p. 23; details from [E.F.] Berendt, ed., Reichsarbeitsdienst-Kalender 1940 (Leipzig: "Der nationale Aufbau" Verlag Günther Heinig, n.d.), pp. 706-07.

East Prussia was originally to be divided into three *Gaus*, but remained one. Danzig/West Prussia became *Gau II* and the former Prussian province of Posen *Gau III* after the Polish campaign in 1939. See Kläbe, Oerser, and Bertram, p.102. It is quite conceivable that numbers two and three were already reserved for the yet to be conquered Polish territories which until 1918 had been German.

⁷⁰Organisationsbuch der NSDAP, ed. Reichsorganisationsleiter der NSDAP (München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachf., 1938), pp. 84-85.

the personnel of the various schools one arrives at a grand total of almost 290,000 men and women.⁷¹ Since the Labour Service men served only six months, the annual figure of recruits who passed through the Labour Service in 1936 would have been about 472,000.⁷²

In 1937 the system was changed so that three-fifth of the call-ups were made in the summer; two-fifth in the winter. The reason for this was that the winter weather was unsuitable for many work projects.⁷³ As well, under this system more *RAD* men were available for harvesting. The *RAD* leadership also ordered that most young farmers should be drafted in winter-time when they could be more easily spared at home.⁷⁴ In 1936 Hitler set the average strength of the *RAD* for 1936/37 at 230,000, for 1937/38 at 275,000 men. It was to reach 300,000 men by October 1939.⁷⁵ According to Hierl, the strength of the male *RAD* had in fact grown to 370,000 by April 1939,

⁷¹Mallebrein, Männer und Maiden, p. 23.

⁷²There were usually 180 recruits who served 6 months in a Detachment: $1310 \times 180 \times 2 = 471,600$.

⁷³Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 92.

⁷⁴Erb and Grote, p. 163. Hierl states that he rejected all pleas from farmers and their backers to exempt farm youths from service in the *RAD* with the claim that "[e]specially rural youth has a particular need for education in community spirit as well as physical and mental development." Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 85.

⁷⁵Erb and Grote, p. 161.

divided into 1650 detachments.⁷⁶ Since about 650,000 boys had been born in 1921, not too many fit seventeen and eighteen-year-olds seemed to have escaped their stint in the RAD.

Each Gau was led by a *Gauarbeitsführer* who was in charge of from four to seven Groups and held the equivalent of major general's rank.⁷⁷ Groups were usually under the command of an Upper Labour Leader (*Oberarbeitsführer*), equal to an army lieutenant colonel, or Labour Leader (*Arbeitsführer*), a major. Each Group had between four and eight detachments, depending on the size of the project to be undertaken. The size of a detachment varied: For the first few years of the RAD it was about 180, later 218 men. It was commanded by a supreme fieldmaster (*Oberstfeldmeister*), the equivalent of a captain, who was assisted by three or four platoon leaders (*Zugführer*) with the rank of fieldmaster (*Feldmeister*) or Lieutenant, nine or twelve troop leaders (*Truppführer*) or lance corporals, an administrator, a supply master, a quartermaster, and a male nurse (*Heilgehilfe*).⁷⁸ These leaders over-

⁷⁶Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 92.

⁷⁷The rank equivalents noted here and below come from the endpapers of Adelheid L. Rüter-Ehlermann and C. F. Rüter, eds., Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen, 1945-1966, vol. I (Amsterdam: University Press Amsterdam, 1968).

⁷⁸The designation *Heilgehilfe* is interesting. Instead of using the usual German word *Sanitäter* for medic, the RAD opted for this archaic version to signify a desire to go back to old German(ic) roots: a hint of the *Blut und Boden* philosophy which dominated RAD thought.

saw a number of tradesmen and foremen; together they were responsible for the supervision and training of the recruits.⁷⁹

These numbers match closely those of a company in the army and seem to have been decided on during the period in which the National Socialists first began to show an active interest in a labour service, i.e., in 1932. In the state of Anhalt the National Socialists had formed the government and were able to establish an experimental training detachment for a labour service. The experiences gained by this unit, which totalled 216 men, appear to have been used by Hierl and his colleagues after 1933 when the opportunity arose to build up a much larger labour service.⁸⁰

In 1939, after the *RAD* had been in existence for four years, the organisation of the detachments was still quite similar to the one proposed seven years earlier. They now usually numbered 218 men. While the number of Groups in a *Gau* and the number of detachments in a Group could vary, the size of a detachments rarely did. Detachments were usually quartered one to a camp; the presence of several detachments in one camp was unusual.⁸¹

⁷⁹Germany, Reichsarbeitsdienst, Der Reichsarbeitsdienst, pp. 19-20; Hellmut Petersen, Die Erziehung der deutschen Jungmannschaft im Reichsarbeitsdienst (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt Verlag, 1938), pp. 44-45.

⁸⁰Köhler, p. 249.

⁸¹Müller-Brandenburg, Die Leistungen, p. 26-27.

Leadership training was provided in a number of schools. Anyone interested in a career in the RAD could, as in the German civil service generally, enter at one of three levels: the lower, middle or higher career path. The entry level depended on education and/or experience. Any recruit could apply to be considered as a leadership candidate for the lower level after serving the compulsory six months labour service stint. If accepted, he was then sent to a troop leader school (*Truppführerschule*), of which there were sixteen in 1936 and nineteen in 1940.⁸² Graduation from a troop leader school entitled the aspiring leader to rise as high as the equivalent of Under Fieldmaster (*Unterfeldmeister*) or master sergeant.

Those interested in the middle career path had to be either high school graduates or have shown exceptional abilities as troop leaders before they were eligible to attend one of the five fieldmaster (*Feldmeister*) schools. New recruits, i.e., those with a high school leaving certificate, were first required to pass through the troop leader school and to have completed their military service. Both groups of candidates next spent eight months at school from which, if successful, they graduated as fieldmasters. They then became platoon leaders or took on some administrative task. Within the middle career path they could rise as high as supreme fieldmaster. All promotions had to be approved by the Reich

⁸²Behrendt, p. 707.

Labour Leader; those to Supreme Fieldmaster depended on graduation from one of the five district schools (*Bezirksschulen*) which were spread throughout Germany. There they studied (and were studied) for three months.

Candidates for the higher (i.e., upper) career path had to attend the Reich school (*Reichsschule*) in Berlin. After graduation they attained the rank of Labour Leader (*Arbeitsführer*), the equivalent of major in the military. They went on to become leaders or administrators in *Gaus* or at headquarters in Berlin.⁸³ Reich Labour Leader Hierl had quite specific ideas concerning the leaders he wanted. In a 1936 interview with the Völkischer Beobachter he stated:

It is necessary to create a specific type, and the leader-type of the old officer is not sufficient. In the new leader of the labour service there has to be a piece of workingman, a piece of soldier, and a piece of youth.⁸⁴

Life in a *RAD* camp was not comfortable, nor was it meant to be. If not pre-military, it was certainly paramilitary. The *RAD* leaders thought strict discipline necessary because many of the young men drafted had very little of it.⁸⁵ The daily grind was somewhat alleviated by the friendships which the young men formed during their tour of duty, often with young men from other parts of Germany. Some of these friend-

⁸³Germany, Reichsarbeitsdienst, Der Reichsarbeitsdienst, pp. 21-24; Holland, pp. 108-12.

⁸⁴Hierl, Ausgewählte Schriften, Vol. 2, p. 102.

⁸⁵Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 93.

ships lasted a lifetime.

Though somewhat varying between summer and winter, the daily schedule for the male *RAD* was usually the following:

05.00 hours	Reveille
05.05-05.15	Morning sport
05.15-05.45	Getting ready
05.45-06.15	First breakfast
06.20	Flag hoisting
06.25-07.00	Marching to work site (if distance too great, trucking)
07.00-13.10	Work, exercises
13.10-13.45	Return to camp
13.45-14.00	Personal hygiene
14.00-14.30	Dinner
14.30-16.00	Bed rest
16.00-18.00	Sport or exercise; civics lessons
18.10	Receipt of Parole
18.10-18.45	Supper
18.45-21.45	Free time (used for washing, cleaning of quarters, etc.)
21.45	Lowering of flag
22.00	Lights out

In wintertime the wake-up call came one hour later. As one writer on the *RAD* has pointed out, this schedule was not in itself unique or new. It was almost identical to that used in a camp organised by the Lutheran Bethel Institute or by the paramilitary *Stahlhelm*. The theory behind the various activities was in all cases the same: the shaping of young people by means of strict discipline, and a combination of work, games and indoctrination.⁸⁶

The official day lasted from reveille until the beginning of evening leisure time. The calculations below are based on a six-day week: from Monday to Friday there were to be thir-

⁸⁶Dudek, pp. 236-38.

teen duty hours; on Saturday eleven; Sunday was supposedly free. These activities give the following weekly totals:

Work, including transport and breaks	-	35.00 hours
Morning sport 6 times @ 10 minutes	-	1.00
Gymnastics	-	3.75
Civics lessons 3 times @ .75 hours	-	2.25
Work instruction 3 times @ .75 hours	-	2.25
Military drills	-	3.75
Equipment maintenance	-	2.25
Assemblies	-	1.50
Bed rest 5 times @ .75 hours (at noon)	-	3.75
Miscellaneous (laundry, making of beds, cleaning of quarters, first breakfast, lunch, breaks, etc.)	-	20.50
		<hr/>
Total		76.00 hours ⁸⁷
		=====

The men usually slept on straw in portable barracks which had been specifically designed for the purpose and could be dismantled and reassembled in a relatively short time. The 180 recruits and the lower leaders were generally housed in four barracks, the higher leaders in a separate building. There were also buildings for administration, equipment, cooking and washing up.

The food was apparently usually nutritious and plentiful. There are reports of young men, especially those from the cities, gaining health and weight during their stint in the RAD.⁸⁸ The uniforms and other clothing were supplied by the Labour Service. For some recruits this meant that for the first time in their lives they had decent clothing.

⁸⁷From Regulation "Duty Schedule in the *Reichsarbeitsdienst*", reprinted in Kläbe, Oeser, and Bertram, p. 68.

⁸⁸Kläbe, Oeser, and Bertram, p. 72.

There was little time for leisure activities or recreation. The recruits were encouraged to make use of the library which was found in every camp. Most were not particularly eager to read political material like Mein Kampf or Rosenberg's Myth of the Twentieth Century, but there was also some lighter material available. Sometimes RAD bands would play for the men or roving theatre companies would visit the RAD camps and put on performances.⁸⁹

The cost of providing for the men was quite similar to that of the pre-1933 period. By the mid to late 1930's the break-down was typically as follows:

Daily budget per Arbeitsmann

Cash allowance	.25	Reichsmark (RM)
Food	.79	
Clothing	.21	
Shelter	.11	
Furnishings	.02	
Repairs	.025	
Laundry	.025	
Health Care	.09	
Accident Insurance	.04	
Travel	.01	
Administration of camp	.10	
Labour Service Leadership	.04	
	<u>1.71</u>	RM ⁹⁰
	=====	

Paragraph 1, Point 4 of the Labour Service Law of 1935 stated: "The Reich Labour Service is charged with undertaking

⁸⁹Grunberger, p. 375.

⁹⁰Kläbe, Oeser, and Bertram, p. 72. One RM was the equivalent of about \$0.25 in the 1930's.

work useful to society as a whole."⁹¹ According to other principles, the Labour Service was also not to compete with private enterprise. This meant in practice that the Labour Service was mainly employed in rural areas. There was nothing new in these ideas; they had been part of the regulations issued by the Weimar Republic in 1931/32 when the main purpose of the Voluntary Labour Service was the attack on unemployment, especially of youth.

What was new were the ideological underpinnings of the RAD which were based on the programme of the NSDAP. There were two to three hours per week set aside for indoctrination in the National Socialist ideology, although the official name for this was "political instructions". This task was undertaken by the RAD, although, unlike the Hitler Youth for example, it was nominally not an arm of the NSDAP.⁹² Again, nothing was left to chance; the lesson plan, together with questions and answers and recommended readings, was laid out

⁹¹See Appendix 1.

⁹²Organisationsbuch der NSDAP, ed. Reichsorganisationsleiter der NSDAP (München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., Franz Eher Nachf., 1943), p. 465: "Although the former placing of the NS Labour Service under the Party has with the creation of the Reich Labour Service superficially disappeared, . . ." Strictly speaking, the RAD should thus not have been listed in this work. The fact that it was, shows that the arms-length relationship from the Party which Hierl claimed for the RAD was rather illusory.

in detail in a separate directive.⁹³ During the first year after compulsory service was introduced, one troop leader was designated to instruct all recruits of a detachment; afterwards each leader was responsible for his own unit.⁹⁴

Prior to beginning the instructions, new recruits were first asked to write a *curriculum vitae*, then to complete a questionnaire which was mainly designed to test their knowledge of German history and National Socialism, but also their basic mathematical skills. Some of the questions were: Who is the *Führer* of the German Reich, when was he born? Where is Reich President Hindenburg buried? Which German statesman created a unified Germany in 1871? How many continents are there? What are their names? On which continent did Germany have colonies until the end of the World War? What is the name of the world enemy which is under Jewish leadership and which is mercilessly fought by National Socialism? How much is $1/2$ times $1/2$? If someone has three horses costing in total 1,200 Marks, how much does each horse cost if each cost the same?⁹⁵

The Directive stated that if an analysis of the results showed that the recruits' capacity for learning did not permit

⁹³Germany, Reichsarbeitsdienst, Richtlinien für den staatspolitischen Unterricht im Reichsarbeitsdienst. Dv. [Dienstvorschrift] 10.

⁹⁴Petersen, p. 77.

⁹⁵Ibid., pp. 10-12.

the entire teaching outline to be followed, it had to be shortened or simplified. The lessons included a history of the Labour Service, regional history, German history, which was called "ethnology" (*Volkskunde*), and "Weltanschauung". The questions which the *RAD* recruits were expected to answer after the *Volkskunde* lessons were again tendentious, those dealing with recent history more so than the ones concerned with older events.⁹⁶

Starting with the notion that serving in the *RAD* was a "service of honour for the German people", the ideology taught included anti-Semitism, egalitarianism, a stress on the "community of the people" (*Volksgemeinschaft*) and the superiority of the German race, the importance of marriage and the family, the maintenance of purity of the blood, the inferiority of parliamentary democracy, the leadership principle, and the supremacy of the Party. Also included were appeals to achieve freedom from agricultural imports (*Brotfreiheit*) by soil improvement, the strengthening of the family farm, and the duty to serve the state wherever one is placed. German and European history were taught in such a way as to glorify the deeds of the German race and to support German claims to hegemony.

⁹⁶"Party rule has destroyed Germany and made it powerless. Which parties are responsible for the decay of Germany?" "Who has timely recognized the dangers of Jewish Marxism and Communism and has gathered the constructive forces in Germany?" Ibid., p. 85.

The RAD ideology also included an insistence on quite primitive methods of work. Work with pick, spade and shovel was thought to be preferable to work with more modern tools - although these were occasionally also used, mainly later during the war - because of their educational value. In short, blisters were good for you, especially if your high-school-educated partner also got them, because they taught you the value of physical labour and of a classless society. It should be pointed out, though, that the RAD leaders tried to introduce time-motion studies and methods to achieve optimal results with the tools they had.⁹⁷ Of course, most of the ideas used in the RAD were not new, but prior to 1933 they had not been government policy.

It is difficult to gauge what lasting effect the indoctrination with nationalistic and National Socialist slogans and ideas had on the recruits. Although most RAD instructors were dedicated National Socialists and many were probably quite convincing in their presentations, could a six-month stint in the Labour Service change the outlook of a young man or woman permanently?

By the time they joined the RAD, most had already been in the Hitler Youth or the Federation of German Girls and were, thus, no strangers to National Socialist ideology and military discipline. The stay in a Labour Service camp was different,

⁹⁷Mallebrein, Männer und Maiden, p. 29.

however. The young people were forced to live together with little privacy, to listen to political lectures, to work harder than many of them had ever worked before, to adhere to strict discipline, and to do endless military drills with and without their spades for six months without let-up. On the other hand, they were relatively well fed, they experienced the happiness of comradeship, they were taught sports and survival skills, they learned songs and plays, and many gained a new appreciation for members of another social class and from other regions of Germany.⁹⁸ This last result was surely intended. Ralf Dahrendorf has pointed out that to achieve total power, "[t]he National Socialist leaders had to try to weaken the binding force of ties of region and class, . . ."⁹⁹ The *RAD* acted on this principle and sent its young recruits to different regions of the Reich.

It would thus not be surprising if under these conditions the National Socialist ideology would have gained permanent adherents. But because service in the armed forces, captivity in prisoner of war camps and life in the difficult post-war years soon followed their *RAD* stint, memories of the *RAD* experience were often quickly replaced by more pressing concerns. Many former labour men could later barely recall any

⁹⁸Willy Schumann, Being Present. Growing up in Hitler's Germany (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1991), pp. 138-39.

⁹⁹Dahrendorf, p. 408.

details of their RAD service.¹⁰⁰

Because the needs and opportunities for Labour Service employment were not equally distributed across Germany, neither were the camps and men. In 1938 the manpower distribution was as follows:

Work in fields and moors	55%
Work in forests	10%
Preparation of settlements	5%
Road construction	15%
Harvesting, natural disasters, emergencies	15%

The heaviest concentration of RAD men was along the Dutch border in the Emsland, where as many as 7,000 men worked in the moors. In the spring of 1938 they were withdrawn and used in construction work on the Westwall.¹⁰¹ Other important projects were in East Pomerania, East Prussia, south-east of Berlin (Sprottebruch), along the rivers Oder, Danube and Elbe, in the Rhön, Hunsrück, Westerwald, Eifel and Frankish Jura mountains, and on the western coast of Schleswig-Holstein.¹⁰² In many other cases one single detachment were employed.

There exist neither contemporary nor post-war studies which convincingly prove the value of the RAD to the German economy. Some writers, including Hierl, have claimed that the

¹⁰⁰Ibid; also conversations by the writer with former RAD recruits and leaders. The same phenomenon is not true to the same extent for former members of the RAD for women.

¹⁰¹Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 102.

¹⁰²See Appendix 3. Map from [Hermann] Müller-Brandenburg, ed., Jahrbuch des Reichsarbeitsdienstes (Berlin: Volk und Reich Verlag, 1940), n.p.

work of the *RAD* has undoubtedly added hundreds of millions of Marks to the value of German lands. They point to the reclamation projects in the Emsland and elsewhere, the addition of land in Northern Germany, and the river regulations in many parts of Germany as evidence.¹⁰³ Others, for example Henning Köhler¹⁰⁴ and Wolfgang Benz, have belittled the work of the *RAD*. Benz wrote:

While the female Labour Service ("Labour Maidens") also for organisational reasons got stuck in its beginnings, the tour of duty for the "Labour Men" consisted in largely senseless projects (land amelioration and the like), ideological indoctrination and pre-military training. . . . Socio-economically speaking, the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* was useless, it scarcely created economically sound values, even the "Service of honour for the German people" served like many organisations of the NS-state merely to orient people toward the National Socialist ideology.¹⁰⁵

This evaluation of the work of the *RAD* hardly seems fair. No doubt there was indoctrination, but there was also plenty of work done, as shown by the statistics on page 100. The activities by hundreds of thousand young workers must have had some effect, even if their equipment was primitive and their workday short. Because farmers harvesting on previously useless lands or forest workers using *RAD*-built roads do now

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 86-87; Kläbe, Oeser, and Bertram, pp. 101-47; Mallebrein, Männer und Maiden, pp. 30-31.

¹⁰⁴Köhler, pp. 261-63.

¹⁰⁵Wolfgang Benz, "Arbeitsdienst," in Wolfgang Benz, ed., Legenden, Lügen, Vorurteile. Ein Wörterbuch zur Zeitgeschichte (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992), p. 27.

not know from whose efforts they are benefitting; because people living near the Danube, Oder or Elbe do not realise why their properties remain dry even during high waters - this does not mean that the work done was useless. The *RAD*, and before it the *FAD*, also reclaimed land from the North Sea, built nature trails, constructed recreational facilities and helped with the restoration of historical buildings.

Many of these undertakings were at the time of their completion commemorated by small tablets or plaques, sometimes even sizable monuments. Most did not survive the Third Reich very long, especially if they contained the *RAD* crest with the swastika. But there are several hundred, mostly throughout western Germany, which still exist or have even been restored.¹⁰⁶ By examining the location and description of these silent witnesses, one can get a good idea of the geographic distribution and variety of the work projects. However, because of the disappearance of the records, if complete ones ever existed, it is now impossible to establish accurate output statistics for the male *RAD*. An official *RAD* publication contained the following numbers for the years 1934-1939:¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶Karl Lauritzen, Steine als Zeugen. Gedenksteine Gedenktafeln Gedenkstätten des ehemaligen Arbeitsdienstes (Karlsruhe: Bund der Notgemeinschaften ehemaliger berufsmäßiger Arbeitsdienstangehöriger und ihrer Hinterbliebenen, 1983).

¹⁰⁷Müller-Brandenburg, Die Leistungen, p. 20.

733,000 ha land drained (1 ha = hectare = 2.5 acres)
 266,000 ha protected from flooding through dike
 construction and river regulation
 73,000 ha moors and wasteland improved to permit use
 118,000 ha small properties consolidated through swaps
 3,000 ha new land gained from the ocean and inland
 waters
 3,100 km rural roads built
 20,600 ha reforested
 40,000 ha forests cleaned up
 38,300 ha forests drained
 2,750 km forest roads built for lumber transport

Between 1935 and 1939 preliminary work was also reportedly done to create eighteen thousand new farms and settlements.

In addition to the work done outside the camps, there were many activities inside, not the least of which were military drills with spades. These drills or *Ordnungsübungen*¹⁰⁸ which were part of the daily routine of camp life are often cited as evidence that the RAD was a military or paramilitary organisation. According to witnesses and former participants, these quite senseless exercises were sometimes conducted in a brutal manner similar to their later military experiences.¹⁰⁹ From this fact one might gather that many RAD leaders were former soldiers.

One researcher who has studied service data for Gau XXXI (Emsland) came however to the rather surprising conclusion that fewer than fifteen per cent of the 951 leaders in this

¹⁰⁸Germany, Reichsarbeitsdienst, Ordnungsübungen im Reichsarbeitsdienst. Dv. [Dienstvorschrift] 1 (Berlin: "Der nationale Aufbau" Verlag Günther Heinig, 1939.)

¹⁰⁹Schwenk, p. 103; Horst R. Wagner, "Arbeitsdienst ist Ehrendienst. Die Geschichte des Reichsarbeitsdienst." [sic] Unpublished manuscript, 1994, p. 200; personal interviews.

Gau whose personnel records he had analysed and who had become leaders prior to 1933 had received military training prior to joining the Labour Service. In his calculations he included only those leaders who had been born before 1902, since, by his reasoning, those born after that year could not have had military training, because the military draft had been abolished in Germany after World War I and they would have been too young to have served during the war. He appeared to assume that the *Reichswehr* could not have supplied leaders to the various labour services prior to 1933 because its members had signed a twelve-year commitment when joining.¹¹⁰

Other writers, often former leaders themselves, defended the exercises as necessary for the maintenance of discipline and an orderly appearance among a group of often high-strung young men.¹¹¹ In spite of their defenders, there must have been some problems with the drills. In May 1935 Labour Leader Hierl published a commentary on them. After pointing out that they were forbidden as punishment, Hierl continued:

A l l l e a d e r s a r e t h e r e f o r e p e r -
s o n a l l y r e s p o n s i b l e t h a t d u r -
i n g d r i l l s u n n e c e s s a r i l y l o u d
y e l l i n g a n d s c o l d i n g , e s p e c i a l -
l y i n s u l t s a n d d i s h o n o u r a b l e
h a z i n g b y s u b - l e a d e r s , w i l l b e
a v o i d e d ."¹¹²

¹¹⁰Schwenk, p. 65.

¹¹¹Kläbe, Oeser, and Bertram, p. 79.

¹¹²Hierl, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, Vol. 2, p. 195. Italics in the original.

Hierl would hardly have issued such a strong dictum without reason. As a former military officer he probably knew whereof he spoke.

The drills were not the only evidence of the military character of the Labour Service. From the beginning of its existence, Hierl's Labour Service, whatever its name, was in fact conceived and organised along military lines.¹¹³ The basic unit of the National Socialist Labour Service, the detachment, mirrored that of a military company in strength and organisation. After 1933 the members of the voluntary as well as the compulsory Labour Service wore uniforms, including army-type belts and shoulder straps. The fact that members of the labour services of other countries also wore uniforms, for example those of Bulgaria, Austria and Poland,¹¹⁴ does not negate the military character of the German service. The leaders in all of these services held pseudo military ranks.

In December 1934, even before labour service for men became compulsory, the *RAD* Reich Leadership in Berlin announced that the *RAD* was going to have its own penal code, and in January 1935 the details of the code were published. This unusual law, which allowed for the punishment of volunteers, including incarceration or house arrest, certainly had

¹¹³Schreiner, pp. 251-78.

¹¹⁴see Holland, pp. 45, 133, 215 for photographs.

a military flavour to it.¹¹⁵

Another indication of the semi-military nature of the RAD was the oath both male and female recruits were required to take after the establishment of the compulsory Reich Labour Service in 1935:

I swear: I will keep the Leader of the German Reich and people unbreakable faith, unconditionally obey him and all the leaders designated by him, conscientiously fulfil all my duties and be a good comrade to all members of the Reich Labour Service.¹¹⁶

By the time war began in 1939, the organisation of the RAD was pretty much in place. While conceived as an instrument for teaching young Germans the value of manual labour and the basics of the National Socialist world view, it was also able to contribute effectively to the war effort. Strict discipline and great physical conditioning were shaping useful recruits for the armed forces.

¹¹⁵Kläbe, Oeser, and Bertram, p. 73; Schwenk, pp. 54-55.

¹¹⁶Gönner, p. 153; Gertrud Schwerdtfeger-Zypries, Reichsarbeitsdienst für die weibliche Jugend ("Schriften zum Staatsaufbau. Neue Folge der Schriften der Hochschule für Politik, Teil II," Heft 17) (2nd ed.; Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt Verlag, 1940), p. 23. Maidens swore to obey "Führer und Führerinnen" and to be "eine gute Kameradin", i.e., the oath was adjusted to reflect the difference in gender.

(iii) THE REICH LABOUR SERVICE FOR YOUNG WOMEN (*RAD/wJ*)

As has been seen, the idea of a labour service for women had existed at least as long as that for men. During the First World War women had voluntarily participated in the Hindenburg Programme. After 1918, the many advocates for compulsory labour service usually considered only male service. This did not mean, however, that women were not interested. Many volunteer camps, especially those started by student groups and the various youth movements, had accepted some young women from the beginning. On average fifteen to twenty percent of a camp's population consisted of women. They usually looked after the cooking, washing, sewing and other housework, while the men worked in the fields, forests, on riverbanks and on the beaches. Although some women did not like this arrangement because it seemed to imply some kind of inferiority, most soon realised that it was not necessary to do back-breaking work in order to make a contribution to the general welfare.¹¹⁷ Camps entirely for women were set up only after the government became involved in 1931. Most of the organisers were political parties who pursued political as well as economic goals.

While the decree of 1931 did not mention women specifically, they were by the nature of the assigned work largely excluded from serving. This changed with the decree of

¹¹⁷Holland, pp. 83-84.

July 16, 1932 and its attendant regulations. The most important change from the old law was that from now on labour service was to be only for young people under twenty-five. Another was that now service by women was specifically mentioned and encouraged.

Konstantin Hierl and his colleagues in Berlin do not seem to have given the labour service for young women great priority. In a speech before delegates of the Reich Working Group for Compulsory Labour Service (*Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für deutsche Arbeitsdienstpflicht*) in 1932 he stated: "For now we will forgo a labour service for women."¹¹⁸ This relative neglect had to some extent to do with the nature of the work for which the government allocated funds during the Weimar Republic; it is also possible that as an old military officer he could not see any great role for women in the kind of regimented labour service he was planning. As well, there seems to have been some disagreement in the Reich leadership concerning the role of women in German society.¹¹⁹ Yet by July 1935 Hierl had this to say concerning a labour service for young women:

Education in the spirit of National Socialism for the community of the people and comradeship and to a high ethical attitude toward labour is no less necessary for the female youth than for the male.

Labour service duty only for the male youth would in

¹¹⁸Hierl, "Sinn und Gestaltung der Arbeitsdienstpflicht," in Ausgewählte Schriften, vol. 2, p. 57.

¹¹⁹Bajohr, pp. 331-57.

the long run be as nonsensical as for example general compulsory school attendance only for boys.¹²⁰

Nevertheless the re-organisation of a voluntary labour service for women in accordance with National Socialist principles proceeded rather slowly. As we have seen above, the first regulations dealing with labour service for women had in fact the effect of reducing the number of camps then existing. The result of this policy was that by 1939 over 90% of the work done by the female RAD was in agriculture and farm households.¹²¹ The number of members of the RAD for women shrank from about ten thousand in August 1933 to 7,300 in January 1934. In comparison with the 680,596 unemployed women in Germany at the time, this number was insignificant.¹²²

One of the most active leaders in the National Socialist women labour service prior to 1933 was Gertrud Scholtz-Klink. In early 1933 she founded the Working Group of German Women and Girls (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Frauen und Mädchen*) in the state of Baden, but even after the announcement of the establishment of a state-run labour service in May 1933 by Hitler, she recalled, "the female labour service was for the time being left to itself."¹²³ In January 1934 the female

¹²⁰Hierl, Ausgewählte Schriften, v. 2, p. 213.

¹²¹Schwerdtfeger-Zypries, p. 10.

¹²²Bajohr, pp. 337-38.

¹²³"Der deutsche Arbeitsdienst (Freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst für die weibliche Jugend)," in Scholtz-Klink, pp. 444-46.

Labour Service was separated from the male RAD and renamed German Labour Service for Women (*Deutscher Frauenarbeitsdienst = DFAD*).¹²⁴ Mrs. Scholtz-Klink was called to the Labour Ministry in Berlin to take over the organisation of a national labour service for women under the leadership of Reich Labour Leader Hierl. On April 1, 1936 she assumed the leadership of the German Women's Organisation (*Deutsche Frauenschaft*). It is indicative of Hierl's and the National Socialists' attitude toward women that both of Mrs. Scholtz-Klink's successors were men, first Will Decker and later H. Wagner.¹²⁵

Like the male service, the female service was at that time financed by the Reich Office for Labour Procurement and Unemployment Insurance. The budget was similar to that of the male service, that is, about two *Reichsmarks* per person per day. Uniformity of instructions and daily routine were considered of great importance in the labour service for young women. To solve the leadership problem, training schools were established, the first in June of 1934 in Boock/Pomerania.¹²⁶

Although the Law of June 1935 had declared that all young Germans of both genders were obligated to serve their people in the Labour Service,¹²⁷ mainly for organisational and

¹²⁴Bajohr, p. 338.

¹²⁵Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 95; Gersdorff, p. 68, footnote 26.

¹²⁶Scholtz-Klink, pp. 447-49.

¹²⁷Paragraph 1 (2), "Reich Labour Service Law", see Appendix 1.

financial reasons compulsory service for young women was not introduced until the beginning of the war in 1939. An exception were female students who had to complete their service before they could enter university. This caused an organisational problem because the *RAD* leadership did not want students to constitute more than twenty per cent of the camp membership. For this reason their service time was reduced from twenty-six to thirteen weeks. Even this measure was not sufficient to accommodate all female students in the *RAD*.¹²⁸

The Voluntary Labour Service for Women, following the lead of the male service, had in the summer of 1933 switched from thirteen districts to thirty *Gaus*. When the male labour service experienced an acute money shortage, the financing of the female service was taken over again by the thirteen government district labour offices throughout Germany and it reverted to the old system of thirteen *RAD/wJ* districts.¹²⁹ After the incorporation of Austria and the Sudetenland into the Reich, but before the annexation of Czechoslovakia and parts of Poland in 1939, the Reich was divided into twenty-three re-numbered *RAD/wJ* districts:¹³⁰ By 1940, three more districts had been added: XXIV: Bohemia-Moravia, XXV: Dan-

¹²⁸Bajohr, p. 343.

¹²⁹Marawske-Birkner, pp. 214-16.

¹³⁰For map see Appendix 4. From Schwerdtfeger-Zypries, p. 28.

zig-West Prussia, and XXVI: Wartheland.¹³¹

The initial complement of the Reich Labour Service for Women after the passage of the Reich Labour Service Law in 1935 was set by Hitler at ten thousand. The highest authority was Reich Labour Leader Hierl who reported to the Minister of the Interior but worked in practice quite independently. As we have seen, he named a deputy to look after the female RAD service.

The organisation of the Labour Service for Women differed in many respects from that of the men. On April 1, 1936, when Hierl took over the leadership of the Labour Service for Women himself, he changed its name from German Labour Service for Women (*Deutscher Frauenarbeitsdienst*) to Labour Service for Young Women (*Arbeitsdienst für die weibliche Jugend*); in 1937 it became the Reich Labour Service for Young Women (*Reichsarbeitsdienst für die weibliche Jugend* = RAD/wJ).¹³²

In 1936 the organisation of the RAD/wJ was as follows: The thirteen Reich districts were headed by district leaders (*Bezirksführerinnen*) who were in charge of an administration similar to those of the male service, i.e., it contained experts for personnel administration, education, health services, sport, home economics, and administration. Each district had between three and five camp groups. Camp groups

¹³¹Schwerdtfeger-Zypries, pp. 25-26.

¹³²Bajohr, p. 343.

were under the command of camp group leaders (*Lagergruppenführerinnen*) who were responsible for between fifteen and twenty camps. Each camp was headed by a camp leader (*Lagerführerin*); it contained either thirty-two or forty-one "maidens" divided into three or four "comradeships" (*Kameradschaften*) which were headed up by "comradeship elders". These elders were usually leadership candidates and received a salary as did the four assistants who supported the camp leaders. These assistants were responsible for office work, bookkeeping and statistics, the supervision and training of the young women in cooking, washing, sewing and gardening, and at their work sites.¹³³

The female *RAD*, not surprisingly, rarely adopted military practises to the degree the men did. This may, to some extent, have been because all the leaders, with the exception of Hierl and his deputy for women, were also women. The recruits had dress uniforms but usually wore standard work clothing. There were few if any military drills, no "standing at attention", they were addressed by their first names, leaders by their family names, not their ranks.¹³⁴ The leaders nevertheless held various ranks which had military equivalents. A district leader was usually a *Stabshauptführerin* with the rank equivalent to colonel; camp leaders were usually "maiden"

¹³³Schwerdtfeger-Zypries, pp. 20-23.

¹³⁴Mallebrein, Männer und Maiden, p. 150.

chief leaders (*Maidenhauptführerinnen*) or captains. Comradeship elders held a rank equivalent to lance corporal. Aspiring leaders had to commit themselves to a minimum service of three years. This was important because one of the most difficult problems for the female RAD leadership was the rapid turnover of leaders because of marriage. Given the isolation of the camps, most leaders who married left the service and moved back to the cities.¹³⁵

The relatively small size of the camps in comparison with those of the male labour service was due to the difference in the work the young women were doing. They usually went in small groups or even alone to the farms to which they had been assigned. Since it was desirable that the distance travelled to work was relatively short, more and smaller camps were necessary. The daily schedule was usually as follows:¹³⁶

05.55	Reveille
06.00-06.10	Morning sport
07.00	Hoisting of flag, breakfast
07.30-08.00	Singing
08.00-15.00	Practical work inside and outside
15.00	End of workday, mail call
15.15-16.15	Bed rest
16.30	Coffee break
16.40-18.00	Instructions, gymnastics
18.30	Supper
19.00-21.00	Free time
21.00	Lowering of flag
21.30	Lights out

¹³⁵Hierl stated that about eighty per cent of all female leaders left the service before the age of twenty-eight to get married. *Im Dienst*, p. 97.

¹³⁶Sopp, p. 42.

The instructions listed above consisted of both practical lessons in housekeeping, nutrition, and infant care, and in political instructions. The knowledge gained in the former field was to be put to use both in the camp in which the women lived and in the larger community in which they worked. They were understandably more receptive to this part of their education in the RAD.

Political instruction was officially as important for the RAD/wJ as for the male RAD, although in practice it was often rather perfunctory, at least in part because its leaders felt less qualified.¹³⁷ In 1940 Reich Labour Leader Hierl stressed the importance of leading the labour "maidens" to a proper understanding of National Socialism. To be effective, political instructions had to be precise and limited in scope. The content had to reflect "the life, struggle and actions of the *Führer* in connection with the struggle of the German people for its distinctive life in the time from the World War to the present."¹³⁸ Hierl's outline of the subjects to be covered by the female version of the RAD was quite similar to the one used for the male RAD.¹³⁹ The goal was to "reach

¹³⁷Elisabeth Eckert, ed., Arbeitsdienst für die weibliche Jugend. - Antworten nach 40 Jahren - . Befragung ehemaliger Arbeitsdienstführerinnen. Zusammenfassung der Antworten aus den Jahren 1971-75 (Bad Honnef: n.p., 1978), pp. 26-27.

¹³⁸Hierl, "Die Aufgaben der Lagerführerin", Ausgewählte Schriften, v. 2, p. 298.

¹³⁹Ibid., pp. 298-301.

correct political views and a correct personal, political attitude which should already in the Labour Service manifest itself by its influence on the families of the work place."¹⁴⁰ By "correct" Hierl meant, in conformance with the teachings of National Socialism. This included a belief in the value of farm work, social equality, the importance of marriage and the family, German racial superiority, the maintenance of purity of the blood, anti-Semitism, the inferiority of parliamentary democracy, the leadership principle, and the supremacy of the Party. In practice the instructions consisted mainly of listening to the radio, examining newspapers, watching films and holding brief discussions. In wartime much attention was understandably given to military events.¹⁴¹

The *RAD/wJ* was never very large. Its activities were spread throughout Germany with the largest contingent in Pomerania, near the Polish border. The reason for this may in part have been political, because Germany kept out Polish harvest workers and had thus created an acute farm labour shortage. The more important reason was very likely that in this area rural poverty and lack of social services were especially severe. One of the reasons the *RAD/wJ* had not grown faster was the lack of leaders who could teach their recruits the basics of home economics, including diet and baby

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 297.

¹⁴¹Sopp, p. 68.

care. But this knowledge was exactly what was needed.

The problem was inadvertently solved to some extent by discrimination, some of it legal, against women academics. Because "the three officially sanctioned areas of feminine activity . . . were reproduction, the home, and 'womanly work'," ¹⁴² both women doctors and lawyers from 1934 found it difficult to get permission to practise or to find employment with the state. ¹⁴³ Many who could not find private employment in their chosen professions joined the *RAD/wJ* as leaders. They gradually replaced the leaders who had grown up with the Labour Service since the early 1930's. Their arrival permitted more rapid growth, as shown by the number of camps. In April 1935 there were 382 camps holding about eight thousand young women, in April 1936 there were four hundred camps holding ten thousand, in April 1937 approximately six hundred camps holding 25,000. At the beginning of the war there were 36,200 "maidens" in 807 camps. These numbers would grow ever greater during the war.

¹⁴²Schoenbaum, p. 190.

¹⁴³Grunberger, pp. 260-61; Schoenbaum, pp. 198-99.

CHAPTER III. THE REICH LABOUR SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II

(i) THE MALE RAD ASSUMES MILITARY TASKS

The start of the war in September 1939 was a sharp dividing line for the RAD. For the female service it meant rapid growth, for the male rather the opposite. The organization again had to fight attempts by highly placed government and Party officials to disband it, at least for the duration of the war. Chief among the detractors of the RAD was the Commissioner for the Four-Year-Plan and commander of the Air Force, General Field Marshal Hermann Göring.

It was not the first time Göring had tried to do away with the RAD. According to one of Hierl's biographers, Göring, in cooperation with the *Wehrmacht*, had agitated to have the Labour Service abolished or joined to the *Luftwaffe* as a construction corps as early as 1937. Hierl took the occasion of his speech to the assembled dignitaries at the 1937 Party Congress in Nuremberg to defend his RAD and to challenge his critics. After reciting the various successes, as he saw them, of "his" creation, he exclaimed in a melodramatic passage:

And just as a faithful sharp watchdog would rather be beaten to death before he would allow a break-in in the farmhouse which has been assigned to him for protection, so I place myself before the preservation of these ideo-

logical foundations of a National Socialist labour service.¹

Whatever the merits of the simile, Hierl managed to convince many of the leaders present, but, most importantly, Hitler, that the RAD should for now not lose its independence, a feat which did not endear Hierl to Göring, at this time still the second most powerful man in Germany.²

However, it soon appeared as if Göring would have the last laugh. Six months after the Party Congress, in the spring of 1938, the RAD was assigned duties on the construction of the Westwall.³ By June 1938 78 RAD detachments were reported to be working on front-line construction projects in the West, with 190 more detachments to come.⁴ They were, however, still under the direct command of the RAD leadership in Berlin. Because the army command wanted some RAD units to conduct armed border patrols, it was for the first time necessary to train the young men in the use of firearms. This training, however, was discontinued as of September 20, 1938, at least until the outbreak of the war.⁵ Hierl later claimed

¹Hierl, "Rede auf dem Parteikongreß am 11. September 1937," in Ausgewählte Schriften, vol. 2, p. 393.

²Mallebrein, Hierl, pp. 7-10.

³Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 104.

⁴Document 388-PS, in International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals, Vol. XXV, p. 443.

⁵Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, RH 19/III/52 (microfiche).

that he had opposed such training. According to him, the task of the RAD was to develop healthy, hardy, disciplined young men in the spirit of National Socialism. The training in the use of arms should be the responsibility of the armed forces.⁶

The RAD could not escape involvement in the activities of the armed forces for long. In connection with the planned occupation of the Sudetenland, Hitler issued the following directive on September 1938:

- 1) The entire organisation of the RAD is as of September 15 transferred to the command of the High Command of the Armed Forces [*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht = OKW*].
- 2) The Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces determines the first use in consultation with the Reich Labour Leader and the respective allotment to the supreme commands of the branches of the Armed Forces. In questions of jurisdiction he makes the final decision according to my instructions.
- 3) This order is for now to be made known only to the offices and persons immediately concerned.⁷

On the same day General Wilhelm Keitel enlarged on Hitler's decree, detailing the various units which would be placed under army command and listing the *Gaus* which were exempt from supplying manpower. These latter units could continue to work on their land reclamation and other peacetime projects.⁸

If the RAD critics thought that this was the end of the disliked rival, they were mistaken. On October 10, 1938 the High Command of the Armed Forces requested Hitler's per-

⁶Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 105.

⁷Document 388-PS, in International Military Tribunal, Vol. XXV, pp. 469-70.

⁸Ibid., pp. 471-72.

mission to issue a decree releasing the RAD from the control of the OKW, thus restoring its independence except for those units still engaged in the construction of the Westwall.⁹ Why the High Command would initiate such a request is unclear; it is quite possible that it was made at Hierl's insistence. In any case, Hitler appears to have approved the decree.

By the summer of 1939 numerous units of the RAD were also working in the East along the Polish border, engaged in the construction of fortifications. As well, about 23,000 RAD men arrived by ship in East Prussia, which was separated from the rest of Germany by the Polish Corridor. They were to help with the harvest which was endangered because Polish transient harvest workers had not been allowed into Germany as a result of the political situation. A partial mobilisation in the Corridor had also deprived many farmers of their most skilled workers.¹⁰

Once war started, the RAD was immediately faced with a severe shortage of junior and senior officers. 60 per cent of the leadership cadre had been called to arms, necessitating the closing of numerous camps. As a result fewer young men were drafted into the RAD and the service time was steadily reduced until by 1944 it was as little as two months. Young RAD recruits who volunteered for military service were exempt

⁹Ibid., p. 528.

¹⁰Mallebrein, Männer und Maiden, p. 71.

from *RAD* service altogether.¹¹ However, on orders from Hitler a tour of duty in the *RAD* prior to entering military service remained mandatory.¹² To make up somewhat for the loss of many of his officers, Hierl came to an agreement with the High Command of the Armed Forces to the effect that some draftees could remain in the *RAD* for up to one year as auxiliary trainers.¹³

After the outbreak of the war, the Army High Command had initially ordered the formation of mixed construction units, consisting of military draftees without *RAD* experience and at least somewhat experienced *RAD* recruits. According to Hierl, this system was not successful and the *RAD* was allowed to form and run its own units under its own leaders who, however, reported to military officers. To coordinate the work and to avoid unnecessary friction, the *RAD* also stationed liaison officers at the various important field headquarters. As before, the *RAD* leaders were responsible for the training, ideological schooling and discipline of the recruits. Hierl claimed that this arrangement served to maintain the character of his organisation as a "social school of the nation" even in wartime.¹⁴

¹¹Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 106.

¹²Ibid., pp. 105-06.

¹³Ibid., p. 106.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 107.

Not all RAD members were employed on military projects from the beginning of the war. After the end of the Polish campaign in 1939, recently formed units of the *Gaus Danzig-West Prussia* and *Posen* undertook the traditional tasks associated with the RAD, such as flood control and river regulation as well as the restoration of damaged roads.¹⁵ As well, there were still sixty thousand RAD men employed on farms as harvest helpers. According to a senior officer in the Labour Ministry, "the work in agriculture which is done by the farmer's son and the young farm worker is, at least in war time, more important than work in the Labour Service."¹⁶ It is doubtful that Hierl shared this sentiment.

As the war continued, however, even the groups which had not been sent into occupied Europe were employed on military objects in Germany. Attached to the *Organisation Todt*, the huge government construction conglomerate established by Hitler, they built air raid shelters, airport runways and worked on various road construction projects. A listing of all RAD units, dated August 20, 1940, shows that 906 detachments were then in existence. They were deployed, mostly in construction projects, as follows:

¹⁵Kläbe, Oeser, and Bertram, p. 155.

¹⁶Walter Stothfang, Der Arbeitseinsatz im Kriege. (Schriften für Politik und Auslandskunde, Heft 53.) (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt Verlag, 1940), p. 17.

Army:

Belgium	53	detachments
Westwall	189	"
East Prussia	54	"
Poland	46	"
Norway	<u>10</u>	"
Total	352	"

Navy:

North and East Friesland	6	detachments
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Air Force:

(Mostly airfield construction in France)	360	detachments
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Home front:

(Military con- struction and traditional tasks)	<u>188</u>	detachments
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Total	906	detachments ¹⁷
=====	=====	=====

Most recruits who served behind the front with the army were now trained in the use of light firearms to enable them to defend themselves. Until just before the end of the war, in the spring of 1945, no RAD military units were formed for the purpose of direct contact with the enemy. However, from late summer 1943 on RAD units composed of new recruits were ordered to serve with anti-aircraft gun units throughout Europe.¹⁸ According to Hierl, 400 anti-aircraft batteries were eventually operated by the RAD.¹⁹ The exact number is

¹⁷Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, RW 19/2087, p. 204.

¹⁸Circular letter issued by Bormann, dated August 3, 1943. See Document 190 in Gersdorff, pp. 397-98.

¹⁹Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 110.

not certain, but a listing of anti-aircraft units from which RAD men went missing, compiled by the Red Cross after the war, shows about 175 different units. The list includes locations in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and throughout Germany.²⁰

RAD construction battalions were employed behind the front from the start of the war. In the Polish campaign they followed in the wake of the assault troops to repair bridges and roads, build shelters and runways, gather surplus or discarded weapons, and help move supplies. Their efforts were appreciated even by their usual detractor, Göring. In a letter dated October 6, 1939 he thanked Hierl and his men for the help the RAD had provided in guarding airports, repairing airfields, and building supply roads in support of his *Luftwaffe*, all in the spirit of true National Socialism.²¹

In the war against France the RAD performed similar tasks. In addition it was partly responsible for the transport, storage and distribution of gasoline and ammunition for the army. Behind the front the RAD men removed obstacles, levelled no longer needed fortifications, and recovered surplus telephone wires. In general, according to the RAD

²⁰Wagner, Appendix.

²¹[[Hermann] Müller-Brandenburg], "Der Reichsarbeitsdienst im Kriege," in Jahrbuch des Reichsarbeitsdienstes 1941, ed. [Hermann] Müller-Brandenburg (Berlin: Volk and Reich Verlag, 1941), pp. 17-18.

leadership, they did an excellent job.²²

After the end of the French campaign, some RAD units were stationed near the Spanish border in preparation for improving the Spanish roads in the direction of Gibraltar and North Africa prior to a German assault on these targets. Since Generalissimo Franco's permission for this project never came, the units were eventually employed on the Atlantic Wall.²³

Not surprisingly, the RAD was involved in the campaign against the Soviet Union from the beginning. Again, it repaired and built roads, a task more daunting but nevertheless necessary in a country which was then without a modern infrastructure. The labour men also again built airport runways and shelters, managed munitions depots and performed other work behind the front. Occasionally they apparently also guarded prisoners of war, although Hierl denies this in his memoirs. "In an agreement with the OKW I have as a matter of principle prevented a use of RAD units for the guarding of prisoner-of-war camps or similar tasks which were detrimental to the educational purpose of the young workmen."²⁴

This may well have been the general policy, but Hierl's statement is apparently at least once contradicted by an entry

²²Ibid., p. 28. This portion of Müller-Brandenburg's article is a reprint of an article by Karoly Kampmann, Press chief of the RAD, in Arbeitsmann, July 20, 1940.

²³Information from personal interview.

²⁴Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 107.

in the war diary of Colonel General Franz Halder who under August 21, 1941 wrote: "84 RAD [Reichsarbeitsdienst] detachments are being made available by the OKW for the guarding of prisoners."²⁵ Calculated at peacetime strength, these detachments would have amounted to more than eighteen thousand men, a figure RAD leader Hierl could not easily have overlooked or forgotten.

RAD construction battalions were now employed throughout Europe in all major theatres except Italy.²⁶ By the spring of 1942, two hundred detachments or about forty thousand RAD men were working in the eastern theatre.²⁷ Some were motorised, most were not. Because of the enormous distances they were expected to cover, especially in Russia, many were outfitted with bicycles. A member of one of those units has preserved a diary which records the movements of his detachment in the summer and fall of 1942.²⁸

The men left East Prussia at the end of May 1942 and went by train, truck, and bicycle via Brest-Litovsk, Kiev and Kharkov all the way to the river Don near Stalingrad. During the entire march the young men stopped as required to repair

²⁵Halder, Vol. III, p. 191. Brackets in the original.

²⁶Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 107.

²⁷Halder, Vol. III, p. 432.

²⁸"Einsatz-Tagebuch. RAD.-Abt. K 6/14." Unpublished typescript of war diary kept by RAD unit during assignment in 1942 in Russia. Made available by H. Minde, Benthe, Germany.

roads, build new ones, build or repair bridges, construct aircraft runways and dig shelters and bunkers. The weather was often inclement. Tremendous heat with accompanying dust storms alternated with mighty downpours which left the men drenched to the skin and the soil a sea of mud. Sometimes the roads were so muddy that the men had to carry their bicycles on their backs, together with their backpacks and light equipment. They were strafed and bombed by Russian aircraft and came under artillery fire. A few times they were attacked directly by Russian infantry and returned fire. They suffered casualties, both wounded and dead.

Their bicycles and accompanying trucks frequently broke down. Spare parts were not available; stragglers were left behind to fend for themselves until they could rejoin their unit. Throughout, the higher military command often failed to assign them proper work; food supplies reached them late and they had insufficient shelter. Contrary to Hierl's claim that the armed forces were responsible for their provisioning and work assignments,²⁹ they had to look after their own supplies. Often, their kitchen unit could not keep up with them, however, and they were forced to ask nearby military units to help out with emergency supplies.

Finally, at the end of October, they were taken to a railway station and shipped back to East Prussia, where,

²⁹Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 107.

except for thirty volunteers who had left them earlier, they were taken over by the Army. They had covered almost 3,700 kilometres by bicycle and on foot. On average they had lost ten kilogrammes weight.³⁰

Occasionally, young *RAD* men were inadvertently involved in combat. On a large scale this happened mainly in Russia, when the German front-line was overrun. The best known and frequently cited such occurrence happened near the city of Rshew to the west of Moscow. Between July 30 and September 7, 1942 about three thousand lightly armed seventeen and eighteen year-old members of the *RAD* took part in the fighting. Initially they had been behind the main battle line to provide support, but after Russian tanks broke through the German lines, they were thrown into battle themselves. Although only lightly armed and poorly trained as soldiers, they apparently fought with great valour and were able to hold their section of the front against the advancing Russian infantry. For their valour they were awarded three iron crosses first class and 240 iron crosses second class.³¹

Another place where young *RAD* recruits performed well under brutal weather conditions was in Northern Norway and Northern Finland near the Barents Sea. For a while their

³⁰"Einsatz-Tagebuch", p. 19.

³¹[?] Bothmer, ed., Feldpostbrief für die Rshew Kämpfer des Arbeitsgaves VIII (N.p., n.p., 1942), p. 11.

one thousand-man-strong group was the only construction unit available to the German command there. From June 1941 to June 1942 they worked on a twenty-five kilometre long road near the Finnish (now Russian) town of Petsamo (Pechenga) which was being built to the Russian border towards Murmansk. Several times the workers were ambushed by Russian commandos; quite routinely they were hit by Russian artillery and aircraft fire. More than two dozen RAD men were killed; hundreds wounded. The arctic winter was especially trying; for several months the men lacked proper clothing, and housing was either non-existent or insufficient, forcing the men to construct igloos from their tents. Food supplies were often inadequate.

In October the group was withdrawn from the front and used to cut and transport wood for a sawmill. The temperature dropped to as low as 53 degrees below zero. Finally more adequate clothing arrived and most RAD men survived the winter without permanent health problems.

In May 1942, during a Russian offensive, the same group was again rushed to the front. Their task was to transport ammunition with sleds and on skis; returning from the front they would bring back wounded soldiers. Finally, in July 1942, as a result of an order by Hitler,³² they returned to

³²An entry in the War Diary of the High Command of the Armed Forces reads under May 31, 1942: "The deployment of the RAD in the Supreme Army Command Lapland is being stopped." Kriegstagebuch, Vol. II, p. 398.

their base in Austria, 4500 kilometres away.³³ The return journey took thirty days. Instead of the usual six months in the *RAD*, the men had spent one and one half years in the Labour Service.³⁴

One of the first instances in which the *RAD* was used to perform armed duty was in the southernmost part of Austria in the mountainous region along the Yugoslavian border. Its task was the protection of a camp of the female Labour Service whose members were helping out on the various farms. Yugoslavian partisans were making the area insecure and had many times attacked isolated farms and even some local police stations. For reasons of morale, the *Gau* leadership considered it important that the farmers continued to get the help of the young *RAD* women and in the summer of 1943 ordered an armed platoon of fifty *RAD* men to the area as protection. This unit continually patrolled the area, was ambushed a few times and repeatedly engaged the partisans in firefights, suffering several dead and wounded casualties.³⁵

Throughout the war, efforts by the armed forces to have the *RAD* abolished, its mandate changed, or at least placed under direct military control, failed. Documentation re-

³³One writer, himself a former member of the *RAD*, claims that in 1973 he had met a former Labour Service man in northern Finland who had deserted from his unit in 1942 and had remained in Finnish Lapland. See Wagner, p. 4.

³⁴Mallebrein, Einer für Alle, pp. 42-82.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 104-86.

garding the relationship between the *Wehrmacht* and the *RAD* is sparse, but some exists. In a letter to Hierl dated October 1, 1940, the Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces requested that the *RAD* suspend its educational efforts during the war. In his reply of October 6, acting Reich Labour Leader Busse promised full support for the war effort, but continued: "The education and training of the men and women are already severely restricted. To restrict them further would take away the purpose of the *RAD*."³⁶

Other information concerning the relationship between the *RAD* and the armed forces exists mainly in the entries of the War Diary of the High Command. It shows that Hierl often opposed measures suggested by the armed forces, and that he was supported in this by Hitler. The fact that the *RAD* was allowed to continue to exist in wartime in the first place is surprising, and not everyone believed that it would in fact survive. An entry in Halder's War Diary for April 26, 1940, a few weeks before the attack on France, indicated that the army was supposed to receive 120 *RAD* detachments for special assignments. Halder felt that these units might not arrive because their leaders may have to be drafted into the army to compensate for losses sustained during the coming campaign. If that happened, the continued existence of the *RAD* would be

³⁶Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, RW 19/2087, p. 219.

put in question.³⁷

The RAD was almost like a fourth service, with all the administrative and financial problems this implies. Its continued existence constituted a serious drain on the stretched resources of the country. For example, the RAD had its own uniforms, its own financial, medical and legal administration, its own training schools, its own supply operations. There can be no doubt that without Hierl's special relationship with Hitler the RAD would have disappeared as a distinct organization soon after the start of the war, if not sooner.

One telling instance of Hierl's stubbornness and standing occurred in March 1943. An entry under March 3, 1943 in the War Diary of the High Command stated that on February 13 Hierl had sent the Chief of the OKW for his information a copy of his letter dated February 12, addressed to the Chief of the Reich Chancellery, in which he rejected the proposal by the Reich Chancellery to transfer the duties of the RAD draft offices to the *Wehrmacht* or police. "He has stated that in that case he could not carry the responsibility for the RAD one day longer." The War Diary continued that the *Wehrmacht* command staff had recommended dropping the matter, since the drawbacks cited by Hierl could not be contradicted, "and the *Führer* would not make any decision against the RAD." The best the Chief of the High Command could think of was to offer to

³⁷Halder, Vol. II, p. 271.

speak to Hitler concerning this matter himself, unless the Chief of the Reich Chancellery wished to do so.³⁸

Another entry in the War Diary the High Command of November 22, 1943 reads:

The WFSt [*Wehrmachtsführungsstab* = Armed Forces Operations Office] has requested information from the Reich Labour Leader about the country-specific Labour Services which have been established by him in non-German countries in order to give it [the WFSt] an idea about the units which have been put in readiness there. The request had been directed to the RAF [*Reichsarbeitsführer* = Reich Labour Leader] once before half a year ago; insisting then as now that he reports about these matters to the *Führer*, he has consequently not complied with the request.³⁹

It is true that the units of the RAD were more and more drawn into the orbit of the armed forces, but Hierl always insisted on being involved in order to preserve the integrity of "his" service. The decision-making power was, however, more and more taken away from him. On September 1, 1944, Hitler issued a directive which placed RAD construction units under the command of the local *Gauleiters*, although these had to release the men for duty in the armed forces after their RAD stint.⁴⁰

By 1944, members of the Labour Service were officially considered combatants by the definition of the Hague Con-

³⁸Kriegstagebuch, Vol. III, p. 184.

³⁹Ibid., p. 1302.

⁴⁰Walther Hubatsch, ed., Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegsführung 1939-1945. Dokumente des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard & Graefe Verlag für Wehrwesen, 1962), p. 281.

vention.⁴¹ It took until January 1945, however, before the *Wehrmacht* agreed to count service in the RAD, even by those who were operating anti-aircraft guns, as war service. Hierl had requested this measure as early as October 1943.⁴²

The relative independence of the RAD lasted until almost the end of the war. Finally, on March 31, 1945 Hitler ordered the formation of three RAD infantry divisions in northern Germany. Two, "Albert-Leo-Schlageter" and "Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn" were to be formed immediately; the third, "Theodor-Körner", would be established separately. According to the order issued by Hierl, the divisions had to be established by April 8. Each division was to be provided by the RAD with officers, the number of which was yet to be determined. The RAD was also to supply up to 1,500 lower ranks, 2,500 auxiliary trainers and 3,500 Labour Service recruits for each division. The auxiliary trainers would have been former RAD recruits who after their initial tour had stayed for six months to one year longer. Most would have been seventeen or eighteen years old (born in 1927 and 1928). Senior officers and specialists for planning, weaponry and communications were to be provided by the regular army. Hierl then listed the

⁴¹Announcement by the Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces, August 28, 1944. Reprinted as Document 215 in Gersdorff, p. 438. This announcement covered only the male members of the RAD, both recruits and leaders.

⁴²*Kriegstagebuch*, Vol. III, p. 1164; *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 1300.

Gaus from which the junior ranks and the auxiliary trainers were to be drawn and the numbers required. Some of the *Gaus* listed were already either partially or totally occupied by enemy troops. Either the *RAD* leadership in Berlin had lost contact with its units and reality throughout the Reich, or it was merely playing games to satisfy Hitler, or the men had been moved to other *Gaus*.⁴³ The former *RAD* members, who had in a quick ceremony been transferred to the army, continued to wear *RAD* uniforms; they received military rank, however, and were addressed by it.

The divisions had been organised to aid in the defence of Berlin. "Albert-Leo-Schlageter" was set up too far from the capital and was not able to assist in any meaningful way in the fighting; its members surrendered to the British. "Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn" was still stationed at its base camp when it was surprised by a Russian tank column which scattered the inexperienced troops. What was left of the division, about one battalion in strength, joined the third, "Theodor Körner". The latter performed very credibly, covering for several days the general retreat of the Twelfth German army toward the West and American-held territory. One of the hardest-fighting units was apparently a *RAD* anti-aircraft battery which was successfully used against Russian tanks. On May 7, 1945

⁴³Wagner, pp. 363-66 and Appendix. The document, "Aufstellung von *RAD*-Infanterie-Divisionen" is probably from the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, RH 21/1123, pp. 27-29.

"Theodor Körner" surrendered to American troops.⁴⁴

Because of their surprising bravery it is easy to forget that the young *RAD* soldiers were practically still boys. By 1945 they were usually sixteen or seventeen years old. They lugged heavy machine guns and ammunition and many faced enemy fire and death with astonishing calm. Nevertheless many of these boy-soldiers had not entirely lost their juvenile habits. The chronicler of the *RAD* divisions reported that some of the young recruits declined to eat the good food provided by their field kitchens for days, opting instead to gorge themselves on the tonnes of candy they had discovered in an army depot nearby.⁴⁵

One unit, consisting of twelve *RAD* detachments and thirty *RAD* anti-aircraft batteries, which had been assembled under the command of General Labour Leader Will Decker, fought with great courage until the very end in the defence of Berlin. Decker himself died in this battle in early May 1945.⁴⁶ The fate of many of his men is not known. There are also reports of *RAD* units being disorganised and apparently leaderless. Another problem for the *RAD* was the colour of their uniforms,

⁴⁴Werner? Nestler, "Die *RAD*-Divisionen," pp. 3-5. Appended to Wagner, op. cit. (Possibly from Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, MSg 2/1512.)

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁶Peter Gosztony, ed., Der Kampf um Berlin 1945 in Augenzeugenberichten (Düsseldorf: Karl Rauch Verlag, 1970), p. 309; Mallebrein, Hierl, p. 83.

which was brown. On several occasions they were mistaken by German soldiers for Russians and fired upon. This showed one of the drawbacks of allowing the RAD to co-exist beside the regular army near the front.⁴⁷

Reich Labour Leader Hierl left Berlin and "spent the last days of the war in the area of the two RAD mountain brigades in Styria on the Eastern front."⁴⁸ There is no evidence that these two units actually existed. To be called "Steiermark" and "Enns", they had been ordered established by the RAD leadership in Berlin only on April 25, 1945, five days before Hitler's suicide. Their officers were to be provided by the regular army. The timing of this order shows again that either Berlin had become completely isolated from events or that someone there merely played games in a sandbox to satisfy Hitler and his entourage.⁴⁹ Hierl himself crossed into American-held territory and surrendered to US forces in Austria.

⁴⁷Georg Gunter, Letzter Lorbeer. Vorgeschichte. Geschichte der Kämpfe in Oberschlesien von Januar bis Mai 1945. 39. Veröffentlichung der Oberschlesischen Studienhilfe e.V. (Darmstadt: J.G. Bläschke Verlag, 1974), pp. 200, 363.

⁴⁸Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 112.

⁴⁹Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, RH 2/1162 (microfiche).

(ii) LABOUR SERVICE FOR YOUNG WOMEN BECOMES COMPULSORY

Compulsory war service for German women had been legally established in May 1935 with the passage of the Defence Law. "In wartime every German man and every German woman is obligated to service for the fatherland beyond the military service."⁵⁰ Although compulsory labour service for young women had been announced in June 1935 as part of the Reich Labour Service Law,⁵¹ it had still not been introduced in 1939. The change from voluntary to compulsory service took place in early September 1939, shortly after the start of the war.

In the summer of 1939 Hierl had proposed an increase of the *RAD/wJ* to 100,000 in case of war. This increase was strongly opposed by the High Command of the Armed Forces and Göring, but they protested in vain against the removal of valuable personnel from the war economy. Hierl had been able to convince Hitler of the "ideological, educational and also practical value" of the *RAD/wJ*.⁵² On September 4 the Ministerial Council for the Defence of the Reich issued a decree which announced the measure. The *RAD/wJ*, including the cadre, was to become compulsory and increased to 100,000 young women.

⁵⁰Gersdorff, p. 49.

⁵¹See Paragraph 1 (2) of the "Reich Labour Service Law," Appendix 1.

⁵²Dörte Winkler, Frauenarbeit im "Dritten Reich" (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1977), p. 129.

The Reich Labour Leader was authorised to draft single girls between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five who did not hold full-time jobs or receive occupational training or schooling or who were not needed to help on family farms.⁵³

The reason for these substantial exemptions from *RAD* service was the severe manpower shortage on both farms and in industry caused by the call-up of the men. Since the group to be called, those born in 1920/21, numbered over 600,000 girls, the *RAD/wJ* recruitment was rather modest. Another reason for the relatively slow build-up of the *RAD/wJ* was the lack of qualified leaders and facilities. The leadership in Berlin continued to insist that young *RAD* women be housed together and supervised by their own leaders. Despite these difficulties 25,000 new recruits had been drafted by October 1; this number was supposed to be increased to 100,000 by 1940 and 130,000 by the fall of 1941, but in fact even at the end of 1943 there were still only about 100,000 young women in *RAD/wJ* service because there was still a lack of qualified leaders and suitable accommodations.⁵⁴ There was also some resistance among the draftees who often found ways of avoiding unpaid service in the Labour Service, and instead volunteered for office jobs in the war industry.

For the first few years of the war most "maidens" con-

⁵³Schwerdtfeger-Zypries, p. 17.

⁵⁴Gersdorff, p. 68 and Document 208, p. 424.

tinued to be occupied as before: in accordance with the "blood and soil" philosophy of the NSDAP they worked mainly in rural districts as mother's helpers, agricultural labourers and kindergarten teachers. As Reich Labour Leader Hierl had reiterated in his commentary justifying compulsory labour service for young women in 1939: "The Labour Service of the female youth is meant to assist the German housewife and mother, especially the heavily burdened wife of the farmer and the settler."⁵⁵ This often inefficient employment of young women badly needed in the armament industry and in the offices of the armed forces caused friction between the leadership of the RAD and the armed forces and the various ministries which were charged with administering the supply of workers.⁵⁶

The lack of cooperation by the RAD apparently had mainly ideological origins. Hierl, at least silently backed by Hitler, considered the education of the young women as National Socialists and future mothers and homemakers of the greatest importance. He also felt, probably correctly, that the presence of these young, often enthusiastic girls on the farms could be a morale booster in times when the rural population felt otherwise neglected by the authorities. There was resentment, however, among some regular farm workers at the shorter work hours of the RAD "maidens." This dissatis-

⁵⁵Hierl, Ausgewählte Schriften, vol. 2, p. 283.

⁵⁶Jill Stephenson, Women in Nazi Society (London: Croom Helm, 1975), pp. 105-06.

faction went apparently so far as to place in doubt to whole RAD/wJ farm assistance programme in some areas, for example, in Bavaria.⁵⁷

Against the protests of the High Command, the Labour Minister and even Göring, the status of the RAD/wJ remained unresolved throughout 1940. Hierl continued to reject every request for at least some help for the armament industry with the claim that the young women were needed in the newly incorporated eastern territories where they helped recently settled ethnic Germans.⁵⁸ Finally, on July 29, 1941 Hitler issued a decree which announced the creation of the Auxiliary War Service of the Labour Service for Women (*Kriegshilfsdienst des Reichsarbeitsdienstes der weiblichen Jugend*). Rather than its replacement, this service was to be an extension of the regular RAD/wJ. It was to begin its activities on October 1, 1941, also last six months and be served immediately after the usual tour of duty in the Labour Service. The introduction of this measure also meant that the Labour Service for Women was to be continued during wartime.

The young women were to be housed in camps near their places of employment and work in government and armed forces offices, in hospitals, for transport companies, and for large families. Unlike the RAD/wJ "maidens", the young women had to

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 106.

⁵⁸Bajohr, pp. 351-54; Winkler, pp. 129-30.

be paid a clothing allowance and pocket money. In some cases they could be housed privately at the expense of the employer. They remained under the jurisdiction of the RAD/wJ and could be called back to their base camp "if for educational reasons this should prove necessary."⁵⁹

By the winter of 1941/42 nearly 47,000 young women were doing their War Service stint. More than half, sixty-one per cent, worked for the armed forces, government offices and public transport companies; thirty-five per cent in military and civilian hospitals as well as with children; the rest as mothers' helpers. The administration of such an effort proved to be quite difficult.⁶⁰

Hierl continued to balk at RAD support for the armament industry, but by December 1941 he had to give in to the pressure by a number of government departments. Responding to a threat by Göring that he would ask Hitler to disband the Auxiliary War Service because it had failed to fulfil its mandate, Hierl finally agreed that 25,000 to 30,000 members of the female RAD could work in the armament industry. By 1942 the majority of the eligible young women were working for the armament industry or as office or switchboard operators in the *Luftwaffe*. The RAD/wJ had survived intact, but its function

⁵⁹Document 152 in Gersdorff, pp. 339-40.

⁶⁰[?] Eberbach, "Kriegshilfsdienst des Reichsarbeitsdienstes der weiblichen Jugend," in [Hermann] Müller-Brandenburg, ed., Jahrbuch des Reichsarbeitsdienstes 1943 (Berlin: Volk und Reich Verlag, 1943), p. 45.

had changed considerably.⁶¹

On August 3, 1943 Hitler ordered that both male and female members of the RAD be used in air defence. Male recruits were to operate anti-aircraft guns within and outside of Germany; "maidens" to work in the communications arm of the *Luftwaffe*.⁶² The purpose of this directive, of course, was to free regular soldiers for front duty. The young RAD women were to serve only within Germany. As before, they continued to be under the command of their own RAD leaders. In a message dated August 12, 1943 Hierl stated: "By this action the educational mission of the RAD/wJ has not changed. Only the kind of use is different."⁶³

In the fall of 1943 about four thousand female members of the RAD were employed as communications operators. By the end of the war this number had risen to about thirteen thousand.⁶⁴ From the spring of 1944, they were also operating anti-aircraft guns and searchlights under the supervision of regular and non-commissioned officers. The composition of the units had also changed. Where there had initially been, for example, 140 soldiers and only thirty "maidens" as helpers, by September of 1944 the ratio had been reversed, i.e., there

⁶¹Bajohr, pp. 354-57.

⁶²Document 190 in Gersdorff, pp. 397-98.

⁶³Document 194 in Gersdorff, p. 400.

⁶⁴Gersdorff, p. 69.

were up to 130 female RAD recruits and only a few male officers and men.⁶⁵ By the spring of 1945 the number of RAD women working on anti-aircraft guns and searchlights has risen to about 25,000.

On April 8, 1944 the length of service for young RAD women who had volunteered for service in the *Luftwaffe* was extended from twelve to eighteen months; in November it was announced that their term was to last to the end of the war. Many of them had university-entry level education; they had relatively little trouble with the technical aspects of their work. Even under bombing attacks they apparently performed courageously, earning high praise from their supervisors.⁶⁶

The young RAD women did not always escape death and injury. After the destruction of Dresden, RAD/wJ units from the outlying districts were brought to the city to help with the rescue and clean-up operations. According to David Irving, about 850 Auxiliary War Service girls who had been working as street-car conductors and on similar tasks in Dresden were killed. In one basement RAD/wJ rescuers found the bodies of ninety of their suffocated colleagues.⁶⁷

When the eastern front moved ever closer to the borders

⁶⁵Document 217 in Gersdorff, p. 440.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 70-71.

⁶⁷David Irving, The Destruction of Dresden. With an Intro. by Ira C. Eaker, Lt. General USAF (Ret.) (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), pp. 210-11.

of the Reich, the members of the female RAD who had remained as agricultural workers and in other civilian occupations were often pulled back very late. In some instances the order to withdraw never arrived. It was left to local leaders to make the necessary decisions. If they hesitated, they and their units were liable to be caught in the numerous treks of civilians fleeing from the advancing Russians. On the other hand, their departure was - correctly - taken by the local population as a sign that the enemy was not far away and danger imminent. The RAD leaders thus had the difficult task of trying to protect their charges without creating panic among the rest of the population.

The winter 1944/45 was particularly severe, and the weather imposed extraordinary hardships on the retreating population. In many cases there was neither food nor shelter available for days. Despite their own critical situation, members of the RAD/wJ helped as much as they could. They looked after orphaned or deserted infants, the old and sick, and wounded soldiers and civilians. They helped out at railway stations and seaports and in general tried to be of use.⁶⁸ Those who were not fortunate enough to keep ahead of the advancing Russian troops sometimes experienced murderous

⁶⁸ Lotte Goetze and Inge Mütze, eds., Damals in Weser-Ems; G. Schröder-von Metzsch and I. von Boehn, eds., "Mein Herz war in Pommern". Weiblicher Arbeitsdienst: Entstehung-Entwicklung - es war eine Herausforderung (Witten: Selbstverlag, 1980); Lilo Walendy-Schmeidler, ed., Arbeitsmädchen im Kriegseinsatz.

treatment.⁶⁹

On March 19, 1945, Bormann wrote to the *Gauleiters* of the areas in the West directly endangered by the enemy, requesting them not to make difficulties for the young Labour Service women being pulled back. "The young 'Labour Maidens' have been entrusted to the *RAD* which has a responsibility towards their parents and the People to ensure their safety as much as it can do so."⁷⁰ There is no record of a similar request for the eastern war theatre, where it would have been much more appropriate. With the end of hostilities in early May, the activities of the *RAD* also came to an end.

Those men and women of the *RAD*, both cadre and recruits, who had not been discharged before the end of the war or whose units had not been scattered or captured before May 1945 were, together with their comrades in the *Wehrmacht*, taken prisoner at the end of hostilities. Most were soon released and returned to their homes if these could be reached, i.e., if they were not in areas of Germany which had been taken over by her neighbours. As for most Germans, their future looked bleak.

⁶⁹"Im Entsetzen waren alle gleich. Ostdeutsche Passion zum Thema 'Kriegsverbrechen'", Der Freiwillige, 6/95, pp. 10-11.

⁷⁰Document 265 in Gersdorff, p. 519.

(iii) THE HIERL-HITLER RELATIONSHIP

Hierl's relationship with Hitler seems to have been very good, although not particularly close. He was not part of the "table talk" coterie. Unlike many other leading officials of the Reich, such as his nominal superior until 1943, Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick,⁷¹ however, he apparently had little difficulty gaining access to the *Führer* whenever he wished, although he does not seem to have made use of this privilege to any great extent. For example, when in September of 1943 he had the rather quaint idea of drafting his views on the war situation for Hitler's perusal, he chose not to seek an interview with Hitler, but instead sent the brief to the Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Office (*Wehrmachtsführungsstab*) with the request to show it on occasion to the *Führer*.⁷² There is no indication in the War Diary that this was ever done. Had the request for such a brief come from Hitler himself, Hierl would presumably have taken it to him personally.

It is not clear from the record why Hitler seemed to like and respect Hierl. One can speculate that one reason may have been that Hierl, a retired General Staff colonel, unlike many other German military leaders, was neither a member of the nobility nor was he Prussian. Having grown up in the

⁷¹Ann Tusa and John Tusa, The Nuremberg Trial (New York: Atheneum, 1984), pp. 328, 330.

⁷²Kriegstagebuch, Vol. III, p. 1072.

Bavarian towns of Regensburg and Burghausen, his dialect was not much different from that of Hitler. Hitler probably felt more at ease with Hierl than with most of the other military men he dealt with regularly. He could be sure of Hierl's unquestioning loyalty and gratitude for having allowed him to fulfil his life's ambition, the leadership of the Labour Service. Another reason for Hierl retaining Hitler's trust was that he in no conceivable way presented any danger to Hitler's position in Party or state. He had no higher ambition than to serve his *Führer* and apparently was never involved in any intrigues against him. His high regard for Hitler was still apparent in his post-war memoirs, although he admitted that during the last years of the war too great a reliance on "intuition" replaced Hitler's "clear, sober judgment and led to disastrous illusions."⁷³

In his memoirs Hierl was not exactly remorseful for the part he played in advancing and sustaining the brutal Hitler dictatorship:

I was allowed to put a great, fruitful idea, which had sprung from the spirit of the era, in the right light and to participate in its realization. I had the good fortune to be allowed under a chief of state who fully recognised the importance of this idea and who protected and promoted my work while at the same time leaving me full freedom in its management and leadership, to create a work which cannot be erased from the history of the time. A cruel fate has then smashed this work again just as it neared completion.⁷⁴

⁷³Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 159.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 112-13.

During the war access to Hitler by non-soldiers depended more and more on Martin Bormann's approval, and Hierl seems to have had that as well. His good rapport with Bormann may have had its origin in the fact that Bormann, like Hierl, had been a follower and associate of Gregor Strasser and his socialist ideas in his early days as a Party member.⁷⁵ As noted before, neither appears to have suffered recrimination by Hitler for this association. In any case, without Bormann's goodwill Hierl would likely not have enjoyed easy access to Hitler.

Bormann's good opinion of Hierl is evident in a cable Bormann sent to Goebbels, who was by then in charge of the total war effort, in November 1944. In the cable Bormann berated Goebbels for negotiating behind his back with Hierl concerning the possibility that the *RAD/wJ* would look after the care of women working for the *Wehrmacht*. Bormann told Goebbels that he regretted that circumstance very much "in view of the especially good relationship which exists between the Party Chancellery and the Reich Labour Leader Hierl."⁷⁶ It is not known whether Hierl also received a scolding. In the same cable Bormann stated that the Labour Service for women would continue to exist in the future.

There are few references to the Hierl-Hitler relationship

⁷⁵Jochen von Lang, The Secretary. Martin Bormann: The Man Who Manipulated Hitler. With the assistance of Claus Sibyll. Trans. Christa Armstrong and Peter White (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 43.

⁷⁶Document 235 in Gersdorff, p. 467.

in the writings of their contemporaries. Speer does not mention Hierl at all in his memoirs.⁷⁷ Goebbels refers to him in connection with a scandal involving the illegal purchases of food without ration coupons by party bigwigs. "Even Hierl," he laments, participated.⁷⁸ He is mentioned only once in Picker's "Table Talks," and then Hitler refers to him only by title, not by name. In one of his lengthy discourses Hitler had praised the leadership of the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* as well as that of the *SS* and the *NSKK* (National Socialist Motoring Corps) as being "first-class".⁷⁹ Most of what we know about Hierl's relationship with Hitler comes from Hierl himself; and he cannot be considered an impartial witness. One may, for example, be somewhat sceptical about whether Hitler really told him in 1929 that his joining the *NSDAP* was Hitler's best birthday present.⁸⁰ But Hitler certainly seemed to like and trust him, and Hierl adored his leader. It was reportedly Hierl who in 1931 originated the address, "Mein

⁷⁷Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich. Trans. from the German by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970).

⁷⁸Louis P. Lochner, ed., The Goebbels Diaries. Trans and ed. Louis P. Lochner (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1948), p. 234.

⁷⁹Henry Picker, Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier. Vollständig überarbeitete und erweiterte Neuausgabe mit bisher unbekanntem Selbstzeugnissen Adolf Hitlers, Abbildungen, Augenzeugenberichten und Erläuterungen des Autors: Hitler, wie er wirklich war (Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1976), pp. 264-65.

⁸⁰Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 63.

Führer," which from then on was in regular use.⁸¹

One example of Hitler's high regard for Hierl occurred in June 1934. There was little practical reason for Hitler to tell Hierl on the eve of the Röhm massacre of his plans to eliminate the SA leadership.⁸² Hierl and his Labour Service were neither armed nor numerically very significant and could thus be used neither to assist Hitler nor to offer any potential opposition. Of course, we will never really know what was said between the two men at the time. Hitler may merely have been seeking approval from a man he considered morally upstanding.

Other signs of appreciation Hierl received from Hitler were his appointment as a *Reichsleiter* of the NSDAP during the party congress of 1936, and the awarding of the golden party badge in November of the same year.⁸³ In 1943 Hierl's nominal superior, Interior Minister Frick, was shunted aside to become Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia and Himmler took over as Minister of the Interior, a development Hierl could not have wished. At his request the Reich Labour Service was promoted to a supreme Reich authority which reported directly

⁸¹J. A. Turner, Jr., ed. Hitler aus nächster Nähe. Aufzeichnungen eines Vertrauten, 1929-1932 (Berlin: Ullstein, 1978), p. 462. The "confidant" of the title was Otto Wagener, former SA leader and director of the economics department of the NSDAP. In 1933 he had a falling out with Hitler.

⁸²Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 133.

⁸³Erb and Grote, p. 161.

to Hitler. Hierl was given the rank of a Reich Minister.⁸⁴ On February 24, 1945, on the occasion of Hierl's seventieth birthday, Hitler awarded him the "Golden Cross of the German Order with Oak Leaves and Swords", the highest award of the Third Reich. Hierl was apparently the only person to receive the order at this level, a fact noted by Goebbels in his diary.⁸⁵

From the evidence available it is quite certain that no one wanted to replace Hierl as the leader of the RAD after 1934. Many supporters of the Voluntary Labour Service thought its usefulness had ended when the military draft was reintroduced in Germany in 1935, and expected its quick demise.⁸⁶ Once it became clear that Hitler's support for Hierl had not waned, there does not seem to have been much debate on the future of the RAD in the ranks of the NSDAP; still it is quite certain that most opponents of the RAD would have preferred to eliminate it as a step between the Hitler Youth and the Army. Membership in the Hitler Youth was compulsory in any case until age eighteen. Once the young men had reached that age, they could easily have been drafted immediately into the army, or into some type of cadet service or militia.

⁸⁴Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 108.

⁸⁵Hugh Trevor Roper, ed., Final Entries 1945. The Diaries of Joseph Goebbels. Trans. from the German by Richard Barry (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1978), p. 323; Mallebrein, Hierl, p. 108.

⁸⁶Köhler, p. 267.

What the critics of Hierl and the *RAD* overlooked was that for Hierl, and apparently for Hitler, military drills were only a part of the *RAD* programme. There is ample printed evidence that Hierl took the professed goals of the *RAD* seriously, that is, "to educate the German youth in the spirit of National Socialism for the community of the people, and the true perception of labour, especially proper respect for manual labour."⁸⁷ These goals included principally an appreciation of the worker and the farmer, and a breaking-down of class barriers.⁸⁸ As part of the "blood and soil" philosophy, farm work and the improvement of the soil were considered one of the noblest tasks a man or woman could perform. According to Hierl, the Labour Service as the "social school of the nation" was ideally suited to impart this appreciation to the young. The *RAD* was also a good place to teach the youth of the Reich the National Socialist ideology which lay behind the existence of the Reich Labour Service and was the foundation of the new state.

Hitler seems to have agreed with Hierl that physical labour was very educational for the young, but because he went beyond what was necessary to achieve these objectives in his retention of Hierl and the *RAD*, the ideological component would seem to be the decisive one. Hitler's support certainly

⁸⁷Paragraph 1 (3) of *Reich Labour Service Law*. See Appendix 1.

⁸⁸Schoenbaum, p. 48

did not originate from any sense of powerlessness in the face of the *RAD*: Hierl and the *RAD* were no danger to him; he had no other power base and was completely loyal to him.

Hitler allowed Hierl to continue "his" somewhat anarchistic organisation during the war and until the very end of the Third Reich in May of 1945, but he did not comment at great length either publicly or privately on his reasons for doing so. The "Table Talks" are of no great help. Most of his publicly expressed thoughts on the Labour Service were pronounced at the Party Congresses in Nuremberg. On those occasions he was full of praise for Hierl and his "soldiers of the spade."

There is little doubt that without Hierl's special relationship with Hitler the *RAD*, if it had existed at all, would have had an entirely different organisation. As Martin Broszat has aptly put it:

. . . the ambiguous position of the *RAD* as an official state organization for Labour conscription and for pre-military training, in which, however - unlike the armed forces - National Socialist principles of leadership and National Socialist schooling played a major role, made it into a model for the merger of state and Party which was always to be the precondition for real independence in the Hitler state.⁸⁹

⁸⁹Broszat, p. 268.

CONCLUSION

The Reich Labour Service or *RAD*, like all organisations associated with the National Socialist regime, was disbanded at the end of the war in May of 1945. Reich Labour Leader Hierl was subject to automatic arrest as a former *Reichsleiter* and Minister of the Third Reich. Neither he nor the *RAD* was charged with any crimes by the allies. At the War Crimes Trials in Nuremberg the *RAD* played a very minor role, and was at one point even confused with the Labour Front.¹ Hierl appeared merely as a witness at Nuremberg. He was later sentenced by a German de-nazification court to five years heavy labour and loss of his property. Because of ill health and his advanced age he did not serve his sentence. As well, opponents of the National Socialist regime had in numerous petitions and personal testimonials pleaded for him.²

Hierl continued to promote the idea of a Europe-wide voluntary labour service until his death in 1955.³ He apparently hoped that the idea which gave "his" *RAD* life would

¹International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals, Vol. VI, p. 398; Index entries, Vol. XXIII, p. 592 under REICH LABOR SERVICE.

²Mallebrein, Hierl, pp. 112-13.

³Hierl, "Idee und Gestaltung eines Jugendarbeitsdienstes. (Mein Arbeitsdienst-Testament)," Im Dienst, pp. 203-08.

survive into the democratic age and that it would be brought back in a new form.⁴ Although he did not live to see it, he would probably have claimed some spiritual part in the creation of the American Peace Corps and the German *Zivildienst* in which conscientious objectors do two years of community work in lieu of military service. Hierl would presumably have been pleased by a resolution adopted by the European Parliament on December 16, 1984 in which a feasibility study concerning the establishment of a European voluntary labour service was recommended,⁵ even if no subsequent action was apparently taken on the matter.

The idea of a labour service for the young did not originate with the National Socialists, but had existed for some time previously. Some of the original reasons for such a service, for example the fight against youth unemployment and the perceived lack of discipline among the young, disappeared when the employment situation improved and the draft was re-introduced in Germany. Few beside Hierl in the leadership of The National Socialist Party were interested in a labour service after 1935, but Hierl had an important ally in Hitler who supported the idea for the opportunities it offered for indoctrination and for demonstrating to the German public and observers abroad how "German socialism" worked in

⁴Hierl, Im Dienst, p. 113.

⁵European Union, Amtsblatt der Europäischen Gemeinschaften, January 16, 1984, pp. Nr. C 10/286-287.

practice. All evidence points to ideology as the chief interest for Hitler.

A successful and representative service was predicated on it being compulsory. There could be no exemptions from participation in the "social school of the nation" for other than health reasons. Only if youths from all social strata were made to live, work and play together could there be a narrowing of the class differences. Hierl prided himself on being firm in this matter in the face of considerable pressure by Party officials, parents and employers.⁶ Judging from the available evidence, this aspect of the system was a success.

After initial hesitation about continuing the existing voluntary labour service for young women, Hierl began work on making it, too, compulsory. He realised that there was a genuine need among farm families for household help. The ideology-based idea of introducing young women to work outside their own families merged here with the "blood and soil" philosophy and autarchy vision of the Party. Because of financial and leadership problems, the *RAD/wJ* was not made compulsory until the beginning of the war in 1939.

The type of work assigned to the male *RAD* in peacetime was determined by the principle that it would not do anything to compete with the private sector or government agencies, and that the work camps should be situated away from the large

⁶Hierl, Im Dienst, pp. 86, 90.

cities, preferably in isolation, to minimise distractions and to maximise control. Economic considerations were secondary. High productivity was merely a possible byproduct of the ideological dimension of the work. According to Hierl, it was an educational institution which included productive labour.⁷

The value of this labour is in dispute. Obviously the *RAD* achieved tangible results. Some visible evidence of its work still exists. Further study is needed to determine the value added to agricultural land in the Emsland region of Germany, for example. The men of the *RAD* and its predecessor, the *NSAD*, are said to have worked a total of two hundred million days between 1933 and 1942.⁸ There are no recorded complaints in this regard by Hitler.

The value of the work of the female *RAD* to German society during peacetime is even more difficult to determine than that of the *RAD* men. After it became compulsory, the *RAD/wJ* grew much faster, but its peaceful activities were soon overshadowed by the military tasks it was assigned. Here there can be no doubt as to the usefulness of the young women. As communications operators they performed as well as the soldiers they replaced; but even on searchlights and anti-aircraft guns by all accounts they did a creditable job.

The war obviously put an end to the regular activities

⁷Op. cit., p. 87.

⁸Op. cit., pp. 86-87.

of the *RAD* for young men. According to Hierl, "[w]hoever got to know the Reich Labour Service only at this stage has not really got to know it."⁹ He stated that during the war the organisation little resembled its peacetime namesake. He also insisted that he resisted the attempts by various Party officials, including Göring, to disband the *RAD*, because he was determined to return it to its peacetime tasks once the war was over.¹⁰

It seems clear that from the point of view of efficiency and economy, the *RAD* should have been dismantled in 1939. In terms of money, personnel and materiel its continuance was quite costly. Its construction tasks could have been assumed by the *Organisation Todt* and other agencies. The indoctrination with National Socialist ideology of the youths could have been and was undertaken by the Hitler Youth and later, the armed forces. The latter had begun the process of politicization soon after the National Socialist take-over.¹¹

The "service of honour to the nation" was now mainly the domain of soldiers, farmers and factory workers. Hierl's reasons for continuing the *RAD* are obvious: despite intense demands for his cadres and difficulty in retaining control against the pressure of the armed forces and industry, he had

⁹Hierl, *Im Dienst*, p. 111.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Matthew Cooper, *The German Army 1933-1945* (Chelsea, MI.: Scarborough House/Publishers, 1990), pp. 32-36.

a personal stake in "his" service. Hitler's reasons are less apparent. He always hesitated to give up something to which he had taken a fancy or to disappoint someone he liked. It is also conceivable that he hoped the RAD would survive any political changes or military defeats and that his "soldiers of the spade" would keep the National Socialist ideology alive. Another possible reason is that the RAD was a pawn in his "feudal" leadership game. Ian Kershaw speaks of a "deliberate blurring of lines of command and creation of a duplication or triplication of office."¹² The RAD was not the only organization used for indoctrination. In addition to the Hitler Youth and the armed forces, as pointed out above, schools were also charged with propagating the National Socialist philosophy. The Labour Service seemed to accomplish this task quite efficiently. This was probably the additional reason Hitler needed to allow it to continue its existence, albeit in much altered form, until the end of the regime.

¹²Kershaw, p. 69.

REICH LABOUR SERVICE LAW
JUNE 26, 1935¹

The Reich Government has passed the following law which is herewith proclaimed:

Part I

The Reich Labour Service

Paragraph 1

(1) The Reich Labour Service is a service of honour for the German people.

(2) All young Germans of both genders are obligated to serve their people in the Reich Labour Service.

(3) The Reich Labour Service is meant in the spirit of National Socialism to educate the German youth for the community of the people and the true perception of labour, especially proper respect for manual labour.

(4) The Reich Labour Service is charged with undertaking useful public works.

Paragraph 2

(1) The Reich Labour Service reports to the Reich Minister of the Interior.

Under him the Reich Labour Leader exercises the executive power over the Reich Labour Service.

(2) The Reich Labour Leader is in charge of the Reich Leadership of the Reich Labour Service; he determines the organisation, orders the work assignments and leads training and education.

Part II

Labour Service duty for male youth

Paragraph 3

(1) The Führer and Reich Chancellor determines the number of the draftees who are to be called up annually and he decides the length of service.

(2) The duty to service begins at the earliest on completion of the eighteenth and no later than the completion of the twenty-fifth year.

(3) Those subject to compulsory Labour Service will normally be called to the Reich Labour Service during the calendar year in which they complete their nineteenth year. Voluntary entry in the Reich Labour Service is possible at an earlier time.

(4) Jail terms of more than 30 days duration have to be served by those subject to compulsory Labour Service and by Labour Service volunteers afterwards, unless they leave the Reich Labour Service in accordance with paragraph 16.

Paragraph 4

Those subject to compulsory Labour Service will be drafted by the draft boards of the Reich Labour Service.

Paragraph 5

(1) Excluded from the Reich Labour Service is whoever

¹Germany. Reichsgesetzblatt, Part I, June 27, 1935, pp. 769-71.

- a) has been in prison,
- b) has lost his citizenship rights,
- c) is subject to the regulations for security and improvement according to paragraph 42a of the penal code,
- d) has been expelled from the National Socialist German Workers Party because of dishonourable conduct,
- e) has been punished by the courts for anti-state activities.

(2) The Reich Minister of the Interior may allow exceptions for (1) c and e.

(3) Those subject to compulsory labour service who have been sentenced to loss of their ability to hold public office can only be called up after serving the term of the sentence which was decreed for this dishonourable punishment.

Paragraph 6

(1) Persons who are completely unsuitable for the Reich Labour Service will not be drafted.

(2) Those subject to compulsory labour service who live abroad or want to move abroad for a longer period may be excused from doing their labour service for up to two years, in exceptional cases permanently, however at most as long as they are living abroad.

Paragraph 7

(1) Those who are of non-arian descent or who are married to a person of non-arian descent cannot be accepted in the Reich Labour Service. The guidelines of the Reich Minister of the Interior, paragraph 1a, section 3 of the Reich Civil Servants Law of August 8, 1933 (Reichsgesetzblatt I, p. 575) determine who is to be regarded as person of non-arian descent.

(2) Non-arians who according to paragraph 15, section 2 of the Defense Act have been declared worthy of military service, may be admitted to the Reich Labour Service. They cannot, however, become superiors in the Reich Labour Service.

Paragraph 8

Those subject to compulsory Labour Service may be excused from the draft for the Reich Labour Service for up to two years, for urgent professional reasons for up to five years.

Part III

Labour Service duty for female youth

Paragraph 9

The regulations for Labour Service duty of the female youth remain subject to separate legislation.

Part IV

Duties and rights of the members of the Reich Labour Service

Paragraph 10

(1) Members of the Reich Labour Service are

- a) the cadre,
- b) those subject to compulsory Labour Service who were drafted,
- c) the Labour Service volunteers.

(2) For specific assignments in the internal service persons can be engaged by means of a service contract.

Paragraph 11

(1) The cadre consists of permanent leaders and administrators as well as candidates for these positions. The permanent leaders and administrators are employed in the Reich Labour Service on a

fulltime basis.

(2) The leadership candidate has to commit himself in writing to an uninterrupted service term of at least ten years before his promotion to permanent troop leader and he has to provide proof of arian descent; also he must have done his active service in the armed forces.

(3) Permanent leaders and administrators leave as a matter of course when reaching certain age limits.

(4) Civil servants of other administrations who transfer to the Reich Labour Service retain their financial claims.

(5) The Führer and Reich Chancellor appoints and dismisses the members of the Reich Labour Service from the rank of Labour Leader [*Arbeitsführer*] and up. The Reich Minister of the Interior appoints and dismisses the other members of the cadre on the recommendation of the Reich Labour Leader. He may transfer this authority to the Reich Labour Leader.

Paragraph 12

(1) A permanent leader or administrator can be released from his service contract at any time,

- a) in justified cases on his own application,
- b) when he does not possess the physical and mental strength necessary to continue his occupation and according to advice by Labour Service medical personnel a restoration of his service capacity within one year is not to be expected,
- c) when according to the judgment of his superiors he does no longer possess the skills necessary for his official duties.

(2) A dismissal must take place when after the fact a reason which prevents his membership in the Reich Labour Service

according to paragraphs 5 or 7 is discovered.

(3) In cases involving section 1, letters b and c, the intention of dismissal is to be transmitted to members of the cadre with more than five years of service three months in advance, to the other members of the cadre one month in advance with an explanation for the reasons. In all other cases dismissal does not need any timed notification.

Paragraph 13

Membership in the Reich Labour Service lasts from the day one joins or is drafted (*Gestellungstag*) until the day of discharge.

Paragraph 14

Membership in the Reich Labour Service does not constitute any work or service contract according to the Labour Law and paragraph 11 of the Decree for Welfare.

Paragraph 15

Members of the Reich Labour Service are subject to the Penal Code of the Reich Labour Service.

Paragraph 16

(1) Those subject to compulsory Labour Service and Labour Service volunteers may be released from the Reich Labour Service prematurely

- a) on application, when, after being drafted, paragraph 8 has become operational,
- b) when they do no longer possess the physical or mental qualities necessary for doing their job.

(2) A premature dismissal of those subject to compulsory Labour Service and Labour Service volunteers has to occur if a reason which prevents his membership in the Reich Labour Service according to

paragraphs 5 or 7 is subsequently discovered.

Paragraph 17

(1) Members of the Reich Labour Service who belong to the National Socialist Workers Party are not permitted to be active in the service of the Party or its affiliates.

(2) The members of the Reich Labour Service are required to obtain permission for becoming members of or to be active in associations of whatever nature as well as for forming associations within or without the Reich Labour Service. The acquisition of membership in the National Socialist Workers Party is permitted without approval.

Paragraph 18

The members of the Reich Labour Service have to get approval for marriage.

Paragraph 19

The members of the Reich Labour Service need for themselves and the members of their household permission to take over a trade business as well as to accept part-time work which is remunerated.

Paragraph 20

(1) The members of the Reich Labour Service are entitled to decline acceptance of the office of a trustee, opposing trustee, guardian, supporter or of an honorary office in the service of the Reich, state or municipality or in the Party.

(2) For the acceptance of such an office permission is necessary. It may be refused only in exceptional cases.

Paragraph 21

In case of illnesses or accidents, members of the Reich Labour Service

are entitled to free medical care and nursing in accordance with special regulations.

Paragraph 22

The salaries of members of the Reich Labour Service are regulated by the salary regulations for the Reich Labour Service.

Paragraph 23

(1) For financial-legal claims based on membership in the Reich Labour Service the corresponding regulations which are valid for Reich civil servants apply.

(2) The decisions of the offices of the Reich Labour Service concerning induction (Paragraphs 5, 6, 7), postponed induction (Paragraph 8) and dismissal (Paragraphs 12 and 16) are binding for courts of law. The same is true for temporary suspension.

Paragraph 24

The pension rights of those incapacitated in the line of duty and of the cadre who leave after at least ten years of service and of their families are regulated by the Reich Labour Service Pension Law.

Paragraph 25

(1) The Führer and Reich Chancellor or the office authorised by him may give the departing members of the Reich Labour Service the right, subject to recall, of wearing the uniform of the Reich Labour Service.

P a r t V

Final Regulations

Paragraph 26

The Reich Minister of the Interior issues the legal and administrative regulations which are necessary for the execution and completion of this Law.

Paragraph 27

(1) This Law comes into force on the day of proclamation.

(2) The Reich Minister of the Interior is empowered to designate a later date for the coming into force of some regulations of this Law.

Berlin, June 26, 1935.

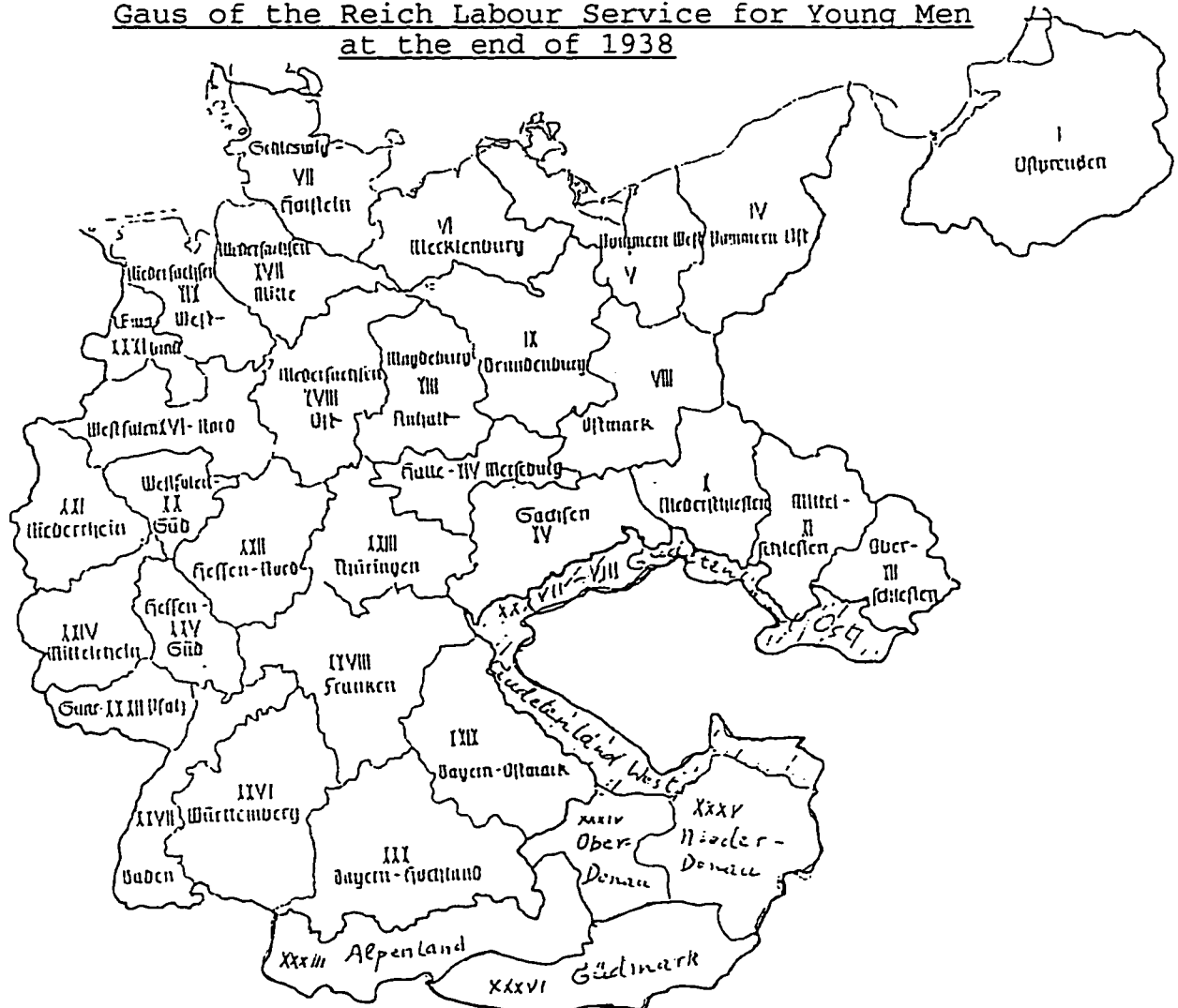
The Führer and Reich Chancellor

Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior

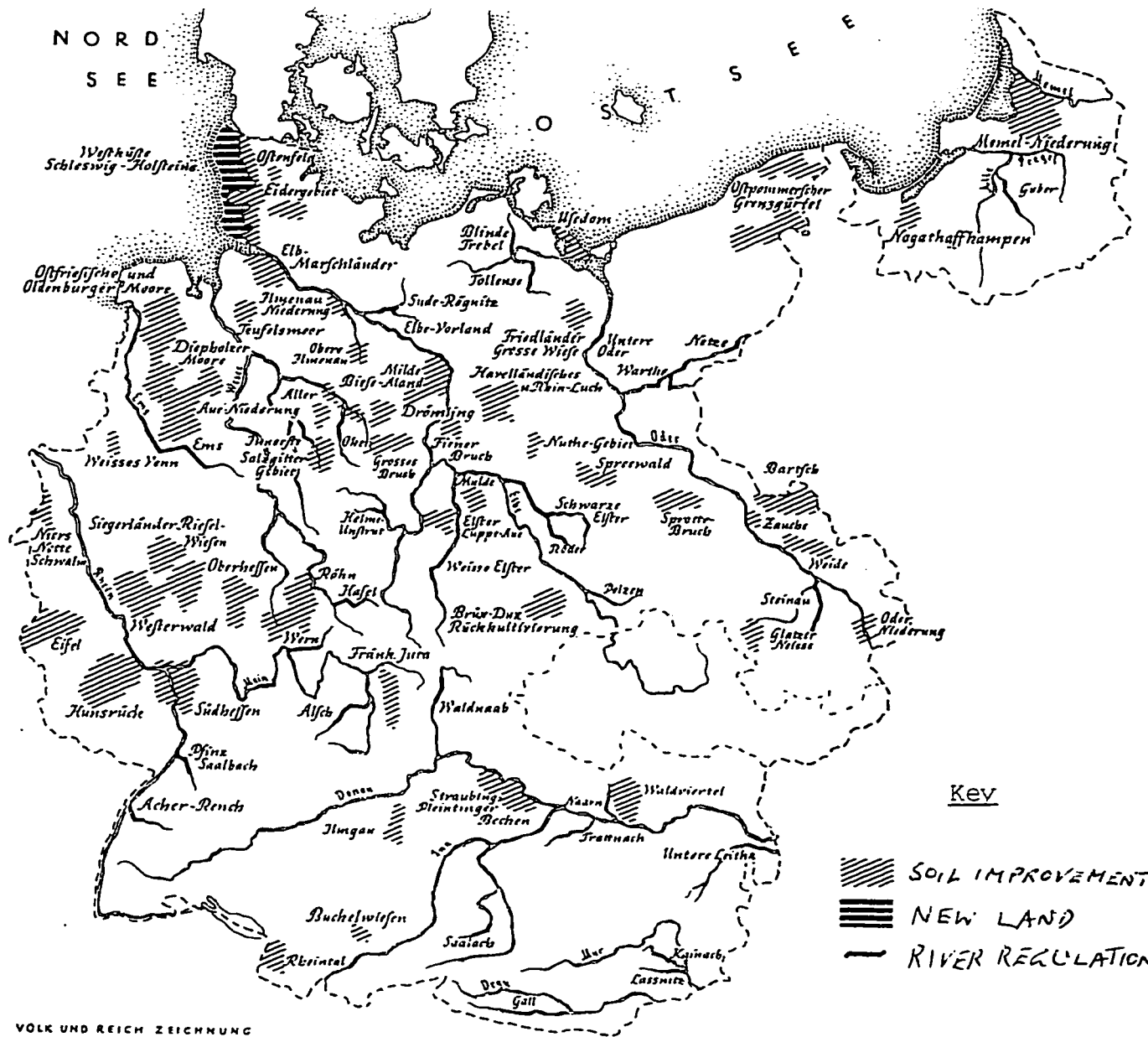
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Gaus of the Reich Labour Service for Young Men
at the end of 1938



I-III	East Prussia	XXI	Lower Rhine
IV	Eastern Pomerania	XXII	Hesse North
V	Western Pomerania	XXIII	Thuringia
VI	Mecklenburg	XXIV	Middle Rhine
VII	Schleswig-Holstein	XXV	Hesse South
VIII	East March	XXVI	Württemberg
IX	Brandenburg	XXVII	Baden
X	Lower Silesia	XXVIII	Franconia
XI	Middle Silesia	XXIX	Bavaria-East March
XII	Upper Silesia	XXX	Bavaria-Highland
XIII	Magdeburg-Anhalt	XXXI	Emsland
XIV	Halle-Merseburg	XXXII	Saar-Palatinate
XV	Saxony	XXXIII	Alpenland
XVI	Westphalia North	XXXIV	Upper Danube
XVII	Mid-Lower Saxony	XXXV	Lower Danube
XVIII	Lower Saxony East	XXXVI	South March
XIX	Lower Saxony West	XXXVII	Sudetenland West
XX	Westphalia South	XXXVIII	Sudetenland East

Map of the major work sites for the Reich Labour Service for Young Men as of the end of 1938



Districts of the Reich Labour Service for Young Women
at the end of 1938



- | | | | |
|----|-------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 1 | East Prussia | 12 | Wurttemberg |
| 2 | Pomerania-West | 13 | Old Bavaria |
| 3 | Mecklenburg | 14 | Pomerania-East |
| 4 | March Brandenburg | 15 | North March |
| 5 | Silesia | 16 | Lower Silesia |
| 6 | Middle Germany | 17 | Weser-Ems |
| 7 | Saxony | 18 | Baden-Saar-Palatinate |
| 8 | Hanover-Magdeburg | 19 | Franconia |
| 9 | Westphalia | 20 | Alpenland |
| 10 | Rhineland | 21 | Danube-Land |
| 11 | Hesse | 22 | South March |
| | | 23 | Sudetenland-West |

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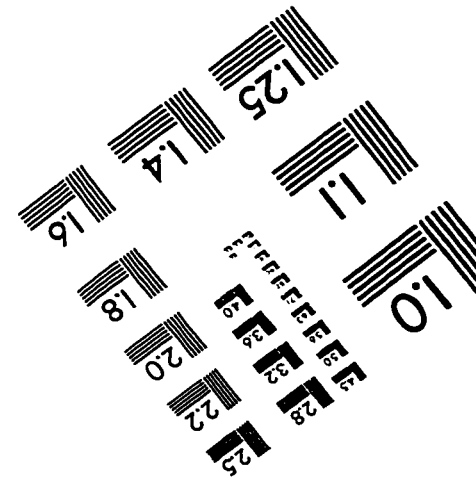
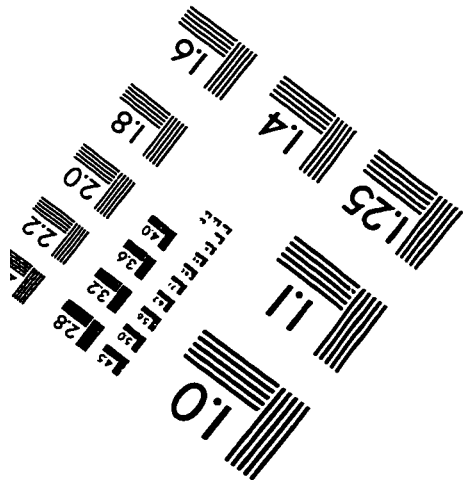
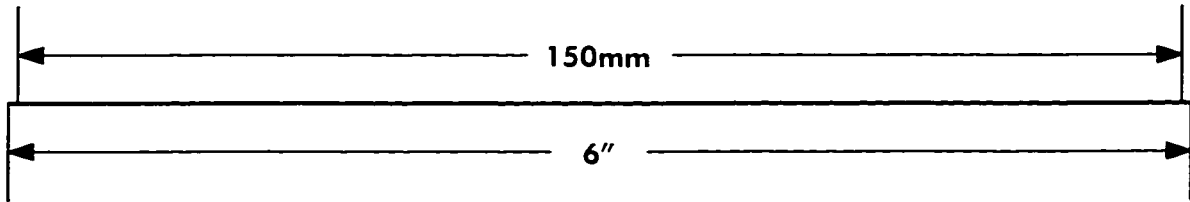
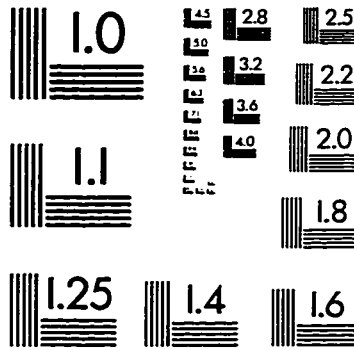
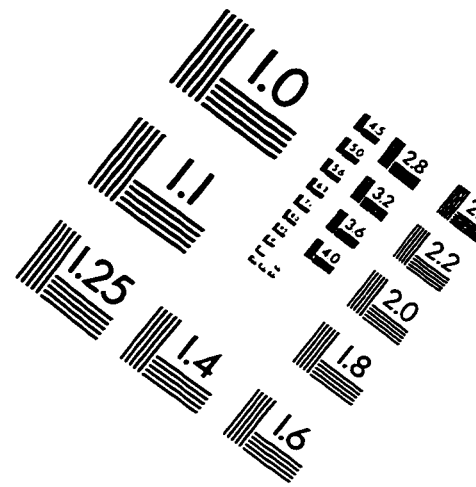
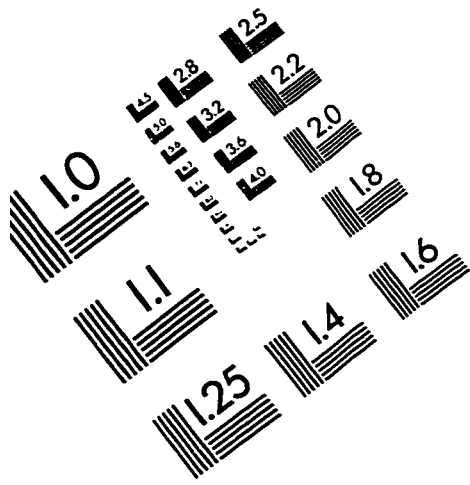
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