

INOCULATING THE FUTURE GENERATIONS: A LOOK AT THE NAZI EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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INTRODUCTION

There has been a lot written on and taught about the era of Nazi rule in Germany. Many areas of Nazi rule have been looked at rather extensively. Many people know of the racist policies of the Nazis. Many have also learned of the systems of propaganda used by the Reich. One aspect that has been talked of less is how the government went about convincing the German youth of their policies. Through an educational system revamped under Nazi rule, the Reich turned schools into factories of indoctrination. The sole stated purpose of schools was to convince the youth of National Socialist ideology. Within that ideology are teachings on German racial superiority. Science was used to "prove" such theories. The educational rhetoric also stressed uniformity among all students in the framework of the ideology. Perhaps most pervasive in the schools was the preparation of the youth to die for the German cause. All throughout schooling, and the supplementary Hitler Youth Group, there was a constant reminder that everything the students did was for Germany and for Hitler. By looking at several accounts of people who went through the schooling at this time we can see that the education system did have an effect on the children.

OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

When the Nazi party came to power there was a reorganization of the state educational system. This was achieved through a series of laws and decrees. One notable aspect of the education system was the rigid separation of genders in schools. There were separate schools for boys and girls, and very few exceptions were granted. This was affected because there were separate goals for men and women. German boys were being raised to be soldiers for Germany. German girls were being raised to be mothers and homemakers. Accordingly in girls' schools classes like home economics were being stressed.¹ In boys' schools German character and physical exercise were being stressed. This separation of sexes was not entirely new for Germany. In fact, different educational goals for the two sexes were a theme throughout German history. "One fact is strikingly evident in the early history of women's education in Germany – that women were educated always (when they were educated at all) merely that they might be a more efficient helper of man."²

¹ Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Vol. V. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1946 p 190-91

² Dane, Anna. "The Education of Nazi Women." Australian Educational Studies. Toronto, ON: Melbourne UP, 1940. p 177.

Traditional schools were divided into Kindergarten schooling, elementary schooling, high schooling, and university schooling. Children from two to six were enrolled in Kindergartens. These children, even at such a young age, were given systematic training in the ideology of the Nazi party. In elementary schools physical training, history, and German racial culture were emphasized. In history topics such as the shame of the Treaty of Versailles and German rejuvenation under the Nazi's were taught. In high schools many of the same subjects were emphasized. In high schools there were a series of decrees issued with the intention of making the schools "instruments for the teachings of Nazi doctrines." Again universities stressed similar topics (physical education, history, racial sciences). Beginning in the early 1930's the colleges of physical education and politics became the largest at the universities. Also around this time all the textbooks used were re-written to fit the message of the National Socialists.³

As a supplement to the formal education system there were mandatory youth groups for young Germans. These groups also progressed with age like formal schooling. First up for German youth was the stage of the *Pimpf*, or little fellow. A Nazi youth was a *pimpf* from the age of six to ten. In this stage of youth group the groundwork for later youth group stages is laid. As part of this stage all youths were given a record book. In this book physical and ideological developments are tracked. Before moving on to the next level a *pimpf* had to pass a rigorous test.⁴ If that test was passed the youth became a *Jungvolk*. The *Jungvolk* stage saw a child from the age of ten through fourteen. The initiation into the *Jungvolk* involved swearing to give up their lives for Hitler. *Jungvolk's* also had to continue tracking their progression as they did as *pimpfs*.⁵ After being a *Jungvolk* the German boy became a member of the Hitler Youth. This saw the child from the age of fourteen through eighteen. In the Hitler youth German children became the secondary army of the German state. The Hitler youth had an internal hierarchal system. Nazi leaders were constantly reminding the Hitler Youth of their importance to the state. In essence the Hitler Youth operated like its own army, preparing the youth to once and for all die for Hitler and the Reich.⁶

Through this framework we can now look at the different methods used to teach students. Although the individual lessons changed, the subjects that were emphasized stayed largely the same throughout the educational process. Further, the same things were taught in both the schools and in the youth groups. Learning about physical education, German history (insofar as history could be used to justify German expansion), and racial sciences were the foci of the two. As will be shown these

³ NCA, Vol I, p 313

⁴ Ziemer, Gregor. Education for Death. New York: Oxford UP, 1941, p 55

⁵ Ziemer, Education, p 103

⁶ Ziemer, Education, p 145-6

subjects were used not only to justify many Nazi policies, but to prepare the younger generation to be the next generation of Nazi soldiers, and be the next generation to die for the German state.

REJECTION OF CLASSICAL METHODS

It is clear the Nazi aims for an educational system do not fit in with traditional ideals. A classical educational system calls for students to question claims and actively involve themselves in the educational process. In questioning claims classical education also involves testing those claims to verify, or disprove, them. In Nazi Germany this kind of educational system was not the case. Dr. Bernhard Rust of the Ministry of Education said:

“Class discussions too often raise the egos of some, and make others inarticulate...consequently the lecture is the only safe method of instruction. Youth too often abuses freedom; hence there should be less freedom.”⁷

The manual for high school teachers gave a rhetorical justification for rejecting classical methods. It reads “such form of education is not aimed at man with all his realities but is aimed at some purely rational being.”⁸ In other words a classical education neglected to take into account what young German’s truly needed to learn. This is in essence a policy of anti-intellectualism. Gregor Ziemer was an American educator at the American school in Berlin. Ziemer was granted permission to observe German education in action. Observing the schools he said of them “every phase of culture aside from political culture remains a mere abstraction and a chimera, because it makes appeal only to the intellect.”⁹ The Reich rejected a well balanced education and favored a different kind of education. The education used in Germany more resembled propaganda.

The aim of the Nazi educational system was largely to promote state ideology. “National socialistic ideology is to be a sacred foundation. It is not to be degraded by detailed explanation or discussion.”¹⁰ By promoting a single ideology the Reich wanted to indoctrinate the German youth to believe in their political point of view. Alfons Heck was a student at the time of the Nazi rule. He writes of the penetration of the ideology into his psyche.

“When I was sworn into the *Jungvolk*, I had been thoroughly conditioned, despite my Catholic upbringing, to accept the two basic tenets of the Nazi creed: belief in the innate superiority of the Germanic-Nordic race, and the conviction that total submission to the welfare of the state...was my first duty.”¹¹

⁷ Ziemer, *Education*, p 22

⁸ NCA, Vol V, p. 195

⁹ Ziemer, *Education*, p 19

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ Heck, Alfons. *A Child of Hitler*. Frederick, CO: Renaissance House, 1985. p. 8

The same aim was reached for at the university level. In *Education for the Greater German Reich* Dr. Rudolph Benze wrote, “the party demands that institutions of higher learning should become, more than in the past, places of indoctrination for the coming generation.”¹² Gregor Ziemer observed, “all classes have the same ultimate purpose – to create National Socialists. This can be affected in one class as well as another. Students are to be discouraged from departmentalizing knowledge.”¹³ This goal was enacted through a series of reforms. One of these reforms was executing national control over who could teach. “Nazi conspirators thoroughly [reexamined] all German teachers and [removed] all ‘harmful and untrustworthy’ elements.”¹⁴ Ziemer further observed “Hitler and his instructors know boy psychology; they avail themselves of every instinct, every budding emotion to pour the souls of Nazi boys that are soon set for life.”¹⁵ In a speech delivered by Adolf Hitler in 1937 the intention of the education system was made clear.

“The youth of today is ever the people of tomorrow. For this reason we have set before ourselves the task of inoculating our youth with the spirit of this community of the people at a very early age, at an age when human beings are still unsophisticated and therefore unspoiled.”¹⁶

In rhetoric the promotion of state ideals was sold as a benefit of the new educational system. The manual used for high schools said the Reich’s system “molded the strength of [Hitler’s] people into one single political will, one single penetrating ideology, thus making great and sensible education again possible.”¹⁷ The system was so pervasive in indoctrinating youth, and the Reich so confident in its results, that challenges to the system were flatly ignored. In a speech, Hitler described his reaction to such opposition.

“When an opponent declares, ‘I will not come over to your side, and you will not get me on your side’, I calmly say ‘Your child belongs to us already’...In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community.”¹⁸

Perhaps most indicative of just how different the Nazi educational system was from the traditional educational system came from the observations of Gregor Ziemer. Ziemer wrote, the schools “have produced a generation of human beings in Nazi Germany so different from normal American youth that mere academic comparison seems inane.”¹⁹ In order to further look at the treatment of subject matter in

¹² NCA, Vol V. p 178

¹³ Ziemer, *Education* p 22

¹⁴ NCA, Vol I, p 313

¹⁵ Ziemer, *Education* p 103

¹⁶ NCA, Vol V., p 196

¹⁷ NCA, Vol V., p 194

¹⁸ NCA, Vol. V, 198

¹⁹ Ziemer, *Education*, pp. 193-4

Nazi Germany it is important to understand how different educational theories were from that of contemporary America.

TEACHING RACE

Theories of race were central to the Nazi ideology. If ideology was at the center of the schools, then, by transitivity, teachings of race would be at the center of education. *The Nazi Primer* was a text used in the Hitler Youth groups as an educational tool. The opening sentence of the primer reads "the foundation of the national socialist outlook on life is the perception of the unlikeness of men."²⁰ Thus, a large part of education, both in schools and in the Hitler youth, was teaching the differences among different races. The textbooks take a rather subdued, scientific tone to this pursuit. *The Primer* discusses differences in races based on such details as sizes and shapes of skulls. It also matter-of-factly points out differences in character among the races. It does this by alluding to scientific reasoning without actually justifying the reasoning. In discussing the Nordic race, considered the purest of the German races, the Primer reads "there are, for example, differences in the structure and size of the brain and the bodily glands. Mental and spiritual difference are naturally related thereto."²¹ This matter of fact approach appears throughout. It treats a statement as evidence. Then it makes a conclusion based on that evidence. However these conclusions are often a *non sequitur* from the evidence. Or, at the very least, no valid explanation of the connection from evidence to conclusion is offered. This appears to be at the design of the ministry of education. In a memo Bernhard Rust wrote that in teaching race teachers should "impress the pupils with the importance of the science of heredity and race."²² Clearly the overuse of supporting facts and the clumsy connection to a conclusion is designed to impress the impressionable youth. Further evidence of this comes later in the same memo. Rust writes that the teaching "is to be accomplished early enough so that no child shall leave school without a conviction of the necessity of pure blood."²³ One reason for wanting to educate at such an early age would be that the students would be more apt to buy into the party line being fed to them. Another example of the oversimplification comes with a discussion of the Mendelian laws. The Mendelian laws, still taught in schools today, deal with the laws of heredity. The Primer has a factual discussion based on the laws. It then follows this discussion by using it as a justification for racist laws. It reads "We, however, shape the life of our people and our legislation according to the verdicts of the teachings of genetics."²⁴ It makes no effort to connect the discussion of heredity with the proposed claims of German genetic superiority.

20 Childs, Harwood L., trans. *The Nazi Primer*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938, p. 13

21 Childs, *Primer*, p. 19

22 Mann, Erika. *School for Barbarians*. New York: Modern Age Books, 1938. p. 78

23 *Ibid*

24 Childs, *Primer*, p. 48

While subtleties may have existed in the texts teaching race, intra-party rhetoric was not so subtle. The same memo from Rust written about above said of racial teachings "the German schools consider no method that may carry out this wish of the Fuhrer too superstitious, too brutal or clumsy."²⁵ The attitude espoused by teachers in classrooms was also slightly different than that in the texts. They were still committed to the absolutism of German racial superiority. As shown in a previous section, there was no room for questioning or discussion in German schools. However, the German teacher was more adamant than the subdued tones of the texts. This was true both in style of lecturing and in the messages brought forward. Ziemer tells one story of a particularly vibrant history lecture on a German figure from World War I. The figure, Albert Leo Schlageter, was executed by the French. Ziemer writes of an impassioned lecture on the character, very different from the tone common in the German texts. Of the reaction Ziemer wrote "concentrated fury was written on the faces of the youngsters. They expressed the desire to hang all Frenchmen, to go to Paris and drop bombs."²⁶ A similar example relating to race was witnessed by Ziemer. Going beyond the rather straightforward messages of superiority contained in the texts one reading teacher offered a poem. The end of the poem read:

'Please,' begged the victim, 'let me go,
For I am such a little foe'
'No,' said the victor, 'not at all,
For I am big and you are small!'²⁷

The message to the students was clear. Germany was stronger and thus would be the victor, and could not show mercy. The straightforward scientific discussion in the texts combined with the impassioned pedagogy of the teachers made for an effective way to teach racial superiority to young Germans.

When it came to teaching race, even in cases where it was disguised, the message that Germans (specifically the Nordic Germans) were of a superior race was clear. The characteristics children were taught belonged to Nordics ranged from the physical to the emotional. In comparing Nordics to other races the matter-of-fact approach typical of texts shows itself. "[The Nordic] has, according to our discoveries, limbs which are large in proportion to the body. That suits our sense of beauty. Peoples with another racial makeup apparently have quite another ideal of beauty."²⁸ By not explicitly stating Nordic superiority the text is implying the superiority should be assumed. When read by a child already pre-indoctrinated to believe in racial inequality they will then thus assume Nordic superiority must be assumed. In other

25 Mann, *Barbarians*, p. 78

26 Ziemer, *Education*, p. 65

27 Ziemer, *Education*, p. 67

28 Childs, *Primer* 18

words, texts dealing with race don't explicitly make the argument for racial superiority, but rather treat it as an assumed fact. There is further evidence of such racial teachings. As seen in the previously discussed poem a position of leadership was closely related with ideas of racial superiority. Therefore children would be trained to view people in position of leadership as being superior. So, saying "[Nordics] are predisposed to leadership by nature"²⁹ is equivalent to saying the Nordics are of superior makeup to other races.

With all the discussion of the Nordic race it is interesting to point out that not only are other races discussed, but other German races are discussed in the educational system. Nordic was considered to be superior to other German races, however as many as 6 different races were to be considered German. Discussion in the Primer says half of the German racial identity is Nordic.³⁰ This is not to say half of all Germans are pure-bred Nordic, but half of German genes are Nordic. This discussion leads into the previously mentioned discussion of the findings of Mendel. The findings of Mendel involving dominant and recessive characteristics had significant consequences on Nazi policy. Firstly it leads to a conclusion about how important heredity should be viewed. The Primer says the evidence concerning genetics leads to the conclusion that "all arguments and political demands which are founded on the belief in the power of environment are therefore false and weak."³¹ This is significant in that it establishes the principal that non-Germans can never become equal to Germans.

Another consequence of applying Mendel to German racial views involves German ideas about procreation. By showing that one can appear to be pure German but have recessive genes that are not German means people should be vigilant about making sure no future infiltrations to the gene pool occur. The Primer says "it is important for us to remove those injuries we know about from the heritage of our people."³² A guide of "racial science" used in medium level schools has a section on "racial hygiene." In that section students are told of the German ideal "when choosing a mate, for marriage, we also take the obligation, to keep in mind the racial composition of our national substance."³³ The implication here is clearly keeping breeding within the race. After establishing the superiority of the Nordic race the discussion shifts to breeding.

"Today, we have relatively many Nordic people among the leading strata of our people. If, therefore, an increase of these strata is helped along, the share of Nordic blood within, it will become a greater one. But it is very

29 Childs, *Primer* 20

30 Childs, *Primer*, p 34

31 Childs, *Primer*, p 59

32 *Ibid*

33 NCA, Vol V, p 177

essential, that we avoid, as best as we can, the penetration of elements of alien races into our national body."³⁴

In other words, by encouraging people of the highest social order to breed only with each other, future generations will have a larger and stronger highest order. The consequence of this understanding was German policies that proactively tried to prevent procreation by less than desirable members of society. These policies were justified to the children in a different section of the same book.

"These measures, of course, cannot show their results immediately, but in the course of many years, the health of the heritage of our people will improve, and the tremendous burden, which is placed today on the community by taking care of the inferior ones, will decrease more and more."³⁵

This is a clear example of a direct policy consequence of German teachings of race.

Another consequence of racial teaching was the convincing of the youth of the German right to expand their territory. In schools students were taught of the holiness of German soil. They were further taught that other countries have stolen their land and that German's must reclaim it.³⁶ Being of a superior racial makeup, of course, they could take their land back and expand. Looking back at the poem previously referred to, teaching students of their position of superiority along with the wrongs done to Germany had a significant effect in convincing the youth of the need for German expansion. In observing a class lectured on the need for German expansion – a lecture containing discussion of German racial superiority – Ziemer observed an overwhelmingly convinced class. "I scrutinized the faces of the boys. The teacher had been remarkably successful. The lads stood there with eyes bright and shining. Their faces were glowing. Their souls were hero-worshipping."³⁷ This is another example of how racial discussions had consequences on what the German teachers were able to convince the youth.

Attempts to trick young students were no accident. German educators were well aware of the effect their tactics had. Further, they were aware that what they were doing was, in fact, a trick and not just a regular teaching method. One German educator in a handbook used to instruct teachers wrote of a method of teaching racial superiority over the Jews. In it, Professor Ernst Dobers suggests showing pictures of prominent German figures, such as athletes, next to prominent Jews of a less celebrated status (such as Bolshevik leaders). The idea was to get the children to asso-

34 *Ibid*

35 *Ibid*

36 Ziemer, *Education*, p 106

37 *Ibid*

ciate good things with the Nordics and bad things with the Jews. Dobers writes "it will naturally result that the children will feel kinship with the one side, and, quite naively passionate rejection on the other."³⁸ The reference to the children's naïveté shows the educators were well aware the arguments did not truly hold water, but that young students could be fooled into believing in them. Heck writes of similar tactics being used in a class of his. He writes of his "racial science" instruction how to be able to identify a Jew by sight. "'Just observe the shape of their noses,' he said. 'If they are formed like an upside-down 6 that's usually a good indication of their Jewishness.'"³⁹

While the previous examples show they were discussed in class, Jews are conspicuously absent from the texts used. Although mentioned the Jews were not a featured part of the German education on race. This is not to say they were absent from discussion. At university there was a class offered called "History of the Jewish Menace."⁴⁰ As shown, teachings of race are central in convincing the younger population of German policies. This raises the question of how a policy like the Holocaust could be justified with out much discussion of the Jews. One possible explanation for this is that education was in fact priming the German youth to accept the Holocaust. But, something like the Holocaust could not be directly justified without significant indoctrination happening first. A clue that this might be the case can be found in earlier writings of Hitler. The Holocaust is often referred to as "the final solution." In *Mein Kampf* Hitler wrote of using education to ready the population for such a solution. "The racial state will have to see to it that there will be a generation which by a suitable education will be ready for the final and ultimate decision on this globe."⁴¹ This at the very least shows Hitler thought it necessary for educational systems to convey racist messages to the younger generation.

While discussion of the Jews was not featured in textual discussions, superiority over the Jews was brought up in classrooms. We know this from the observations of Ziemer. Ziemer writes of an encounter with a German school teacher. The teacher says to Ziemer in the encounter "we teach our students that the Jews are our greatest enemies."⁴² This lesson was not lost on the children. Another scene observed by Ziemer was a teacher talking about America. Firstly, he blamed America's shortcomings on a "lack of racial purity."⁴³ Then, after explaining the evil status of Democratic government he asks the class what a Democracy was. One of the first answers from the class was "a democracy is a government by rich Jews."⁴⁴ This

38 Mann, *Barbarians*, p 79

39 Heck, *Child* p 13

40 Ziemer, *Education*, p 190

41 NCA, *Vol I*, p 316

42 Ziemer, *Education*, p 6

43 Ziemer, *Education* p 69

44 *Ibid*

response shows an equation of Jews to Democracy. Democracy was fundamentally opposed to National Socialist ideals. So, by transitivity Jews were opposed to National Socialist ideals. Further connections were made between Jews and established enemies of the German state. In a handbook for high school teachers, teachers were told to teach of "Jewish world-domination in Germany and in Bolshevistic Russia" during the period since World War I.⁴⁵ This draws upon German hatred toward the way they were treated after World War I, and on the stated enemies of the Bolsheviks in Russia. From these comparisons we can see the groundwork being laid for acceptance of racist policies towards the Jews. With young Germans being taught of their superiority, the natural laws dictating superior people overtake inferior people, and the enemy status of Jewish people, there is evidence that young Germans were being primed to accept something along the lines of the Holocaust.

CREATING THE NEXT GERMAN ARMY

Ziemer wrote it in its simplest terms. "Education is training for a life of might."⁴⁶ The education system in Nazi Germany, in addition to its ideological purposes, had one clear practical purpose. That purpose was to raise the next generation of soldiers that would fight and die in the German army. Preparation for this began at an early age in the schooling.

The first evidence of this is the heavy emphasis placed on physical training and education. A German commissioner of education went so far as to say physical training was the most important subject in the upbringing of a German youth: "Physical education, education for action, is alone worth of the Nazi teacher's attention. All else can be dismissed as non-essential."⁴⁷ He also said, "the education of the body must be paramount."⁴⁸ We already know from earlier discussions that the emphasis on physical training began with elementary school. Elementary school began at six years old, so rigorous physical education started as early as six years old for German youths. Further, in boys' high schools, physical education was one of the three classes all students had to take.⁴⁹ In the youth groups that children had to belong to there was perhaps even a heavier emphasis on physical training. Long marches were the norm, even for the pimps who were also as young as six years old. For a pimp graduation (at age 10) the children hiked 50 miles to get to the ceremony. This served as part of their final examination to graduate to a Jungvolk.⁵⁰ Once in the Jungvolk the children are exposed to more rigorous, and longer, marches. They also have more stringent overall requirements.⁵¹ Again, once promoted to a Hitler Youth,

45 NCA, *Vol V*, p 196

46 Ziemer, *Education*, p 17

47 Ziemer, *Education*, p 15

48 *Ibid*

49 NCA, *Vol V*, p 191

50 Ziemer, *Education*, p 56

51 Ziemer, *Education*, p 103

the physical requirements were increased. Ziemer writes of a Hitler Youth "Jambo-ree" where Hitler Youth had to hike to a historic site from all across Germany.⁵² It is clear the heavy emphasis on physical education fit into Nazi plans to use the schools to create the next generation of the Nazi army.

The classroom and youth group structure also promoted ideas of the military. In the Hitler Youth this structure was obvious. "The Hitler Jugend, HJ, as it is known, has its own system of ranks and promotions. It maintains its own leadership schools and camps. The uniforms resemble those of regular storm troopers."⁵³ Rituals of the Hitler Youth also pointed toward training for the military. The Hitler youth anthem contained ample militaristic imagery:

Forward, forward call the bright fanfares...
We march for Hitler through night and suffering with
The banner for freedom and bread...
Our banner means more to us than death⁵⁴

Furthermore, demonstrations put on by the Hitler Youth were largely militaristic in nature. Heck describes one such demonstration on the "Day of the Hitler Youth":

"It began early in the morning with a carefully timed march into the Stadium. There was a march-past by hundreds of flag bearers and a precision presentation...they now fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. Their grand finale was a drill in the grandstand, spelling out the name 'Adolf Hitler'"⁵⁵

In the Hitler Youth, as well as throughout German rhetoric, emphasis was placed on the importance of being a leader. In the Hitler Youth the emphasis is placed specifically on being a military leader. A song recited by the Hitler youth reflects this:

"The world belongs to leaders,
They alone command the world.
And we are marching, marching
No one can stop our flag unfurled."⁵⁶

There were also structural biases toward a military structure in the schools. The first of these biases involve the way a teacher is viewed in the school. By looking at the names used for German teachers under the Reich we can see a shift toward the military structure of the schools. "A teacher is not spoken of as a teacher (*Lehrer*) but an *Erzieher*. The word suggests an iron disciplinarian who does not instruct

⁵² Ziemer, *Education*, p 147

⁵³ *Ibid*

⁵⁴ Heck, *Child* p 9

⁵⁵ Heck, *Child* p 21

⁵⁶ *Ibid*

but commands, and whose orders are backed up with force if necessary."⁵⁷ This was intended to simulate an army-like atmosphere. In addition the absence of the ability to question the education, discussed earlier, contributes to this feeling. The idea that a teacher was an absolute leader, who could not be questioned, trained the student to be submissive. This would further prepare the student to be a good soldier. Further structural bias existed in what segments of education the children were told to pay more attention to. Teachers were told activities including military parades were more important than class:

"All classes must be flexible in their schedules. Should military parades or Party duties take students out of class, they are not to be molested with any form of review or make-up work later; teachers are not to stress class attendance."⁵⁸

All of these schooling structures helped prepare the young generation to be in the army.

In addition to conditioning children to be submissive to leadership they were also conditioned to suppress any sense of individualism. This was also taught in the context of being a good soldier. Ziemer observed "The chief purpose of the school is to train human beings to realize that the State is more important than the individual, that individuals must be willing and ready to sacrifice themselves for nation and Fuehrer."⁵⁹ This kind of uniformity was supplemented by the way ideology was taught. As already pointed out, National Socialism was taught as a "single, penetrating ideology." Students were told to accept this ideology, and were not allowed to question it. Through this they were taught to put state above self in all respects. Throughout the youth groups students were instructed to wear matching uniforms. By the time they got to the Hitler Youth these uniforms were similar to that of a fully outfitted Storm Trooper. Uniformity was stressed across all aspects of school and youth life. This emphasis was initiated in order to prepare children to be good soldiers for the state. Without a de-stressing of individualism it would be impossible for teachers to convince the children "that they had to be hard, ready to fight and die for Hitler at any time."⁶⁰ Throughout the youth programs, repeated pledges to die for Hitler and Germany were required to advance through the stages of the youth groups.

Perhaps the most telling sign that schooling was primarily for military preparation was the way in which military ideals permeated into all different kinds of subject matter. This comes first in the teachings of history. History was not only used to raise German anger at the rest of Europe by discussing the Treaty of Versailles. In

⁵⁷ Ziemer, *Education*, p 15

⁵⁸ Ziemer, *Education*, p 17

⁵⁹ Ziemer, *Education*, p 20

⁶⁰ Ziemer, *Education*, p 6

history classes there was an emphasis placed on the "glorification of German war heroes."⁶¹ In fact it was legislated that certain figures be taught in classes.⁶² Stories of German soldiers dying in war were often fancifully told to the children. This glorification of dying for the state was intended to prepare the youth to be willing to die for Germany. This permeation went beyond history as well. Geography classes were constantly changing in curriculum throughout the course of Nazi rule. The classes were changed based on what area of the world the Germans wanted to invade next. "The schedule in a geography class must be so adjusted that new parts of the globe can be discussed as they become objects of interest subsequent to new conquests."⁶³ In these ways traditional subject matter was used to express the ideas of a German military state. Through methods both overt and thinly disguised the education system was turned into a breeding ground for German military fervor. Ziemer made an observation summing this point up. He wrote, "On the whole, student life in Nazi Germany is more military than academic."⁶⁴

TREATMENT OF HITLER IN EDUCATION

It is worth discussing the way in which Adolf Hitler was treated in educational settings. From a young age reverence toward Hitler was taught. In an elementary school reading book stories were told of Hitler's youth. He was presented as a model for what students should aspire to be. This highly fanciful story speaks of Hitler as a pedagogue. "But [Hitler] rather played around with the other boys in the meadows and the forests. They liked to obey him, and he frequently was the gang leader in their games."⁶⁵ Hitler was also portrayed as being interested in history. Specifically Hitler loved learning about war heroes. "During history classes, his eyes shone with enthusiasm during the teaching periods. That was something for him, to hear about war and heroes."⁶⁶ Perhaps most importantly in the context of education, Hitler looked forward to one day being a soldier for Germany. "[He] was glad that he was a boy and could also become a soldier one day."⁶⁷ These three ideals were clearly three of the ideals espoused by the educational system. This combined with the reverence directed at Hitler would mean that such a reading in an elementary school book would have an undeniable effect on the youth. In addition to stories about Hitler taught in schools, Hitler himself spoke to youth gatherings. In these speeches Hitler's status as a pedagogue was used to rally the youth. In an impassioned speech Hitler declared to a group of young Germans "You are Greater

61 NCA, Vol I, p 313

62 NCA, Vol V, p 195

63 Ziemer, *Education*, p 17

64 Ziemer, *Education*, p 190

65 NCA, Vol V, p 181

66 *Ibid*

67 *Ibid*

Germany!"⁶⁸ He went on to say "when I see you my faith in the future of Germany has no bounds."⁶⁹ This kind of rhetoric would surely instill a German pride and sense of duty in German youth.

Beyond direct stories of and speeches by Hitler, rhetoric involving Hitler was frequently brought up. In youth organizations children were required to swear to give up their lives for Hitler. The pledge was not to give up their life for the state, but rather for Hitler himself.⁷⁰ Throughout texts and classes and youth groups references to giving one's life for Hitler were made. Students were also taught of all the great things Hitler had done for Germany. He led them out of the period that came as a result of the Treaty of Versailles. Students were taught "'Stability which in reality can be obtained only through the political deeds of a great personality.' These deeds, of course, are conquests, the great personality is Hitler."⁷¹ The effect this Hitler rhetoric had on the children was best described by Heck. He wrote about a rally where Hitler spoke: "we shouted at the top of our lungs, with tears streaming down our faces: 'Sieg Heil'...From that moment on, I belonged to Adolf Hitler body and soul."⁷²

It wasn't just the students who were supposed to model themselves after Hitler. The teachers, too, used Hitler as a model. This fit into the authoritarian class structure desired by the Nazis. "The teacher is to be a miniature Hitler and Fuehrer in his own classes. He is to brook no opposition, and must demand blind obedience."⁷³ Teachers were supposed to be the authority in their class. This characteristic of them was to be drawn from Hitler's example in German society. By looking at the way Hitler was dealt with by both students and teachers in education we can see the spot Hitler held in Reich rhetoric. Hitler was a model for all Germans to aspire to be. He had all the characteristics that a Nordic German should have. Hitler was eager to be a soldier, he was a leader, and he loved all things German.

EDUCATION V. PARENTING

Regardless of the tactics used in education, they would be relatively meaningless if they had no impact. But, from looking at memoirs of the time there is evidence the education system worked. Furthermore, it appears the uniformity preached created an equality among classes in the educational system. This equality created a real sense of separation from the generation in school and the generation of their parents. The ability to create this very real disconnect shows the educational system had an effect on the youth. Further, it shows the educational system was more re-

68 NCA, Vol I, p 197

69 *Ibid*

70 Ziemer, *Educational*

71 Ziemer, *Education*

72 Heck.

73 Ziemer

sponsible for instilling ideals in the young generation than their parents or societal changes as a whole.

Even a superficial reading of Alfons Heck's memoir shows that Heck truly bought into the ideology of the time. What is not so clear is if it was the educational system that resulted in it. By looking at Heck through the lens of breaking down social distinctions we can see he was more affected by his education than by his family values. Heck writes of the breaking down of class distinctions in the youth groups:

"Ironical as it may seem, a youth movement spawned by one of the most intolerant ideologies the world has ever known, was surprisingly democratic in the treatment of its members, in that most had an equal chance to succeed regardless of family background. One of my first leaders was the son of day laborers."⁷⁴

By doing this children associated with other children they otherwise wouldn't have in their family life. Another child at the time, Melita Maschmann, talks of the National Socialist ideology in these terms. "No catchword has ever fascinated me quite as much as that of the 'National Community'...I felt it could only be brought into being by declaring war on the class prejudices of the social stratum from which I came."⁷⁵ The new ideal of class equality, which was affected in the schools and youth groups, was a serious shift from the Germany just a generation before.

This shift created more than just a disconnect between the generation of the children and of their parents. It can be argued the shift created a tension between the two generations.

"Many of our parents did not like the idea of that all-encompassing camaraderie with social inferiors; but that only heightened our sense of alienation from our elders, who eventually became afraid of us, or more correctly, of the power we wielded."⁷⁶

"Maschmann also talks of this tension between the generations. For me [the Nazi's taking power] turned the scale. I wanted to follow a different road from the conservative one prescribed by my family tradition."⁷⁷

This is clear evidence that the National Socialist education being given to the youth was having an effect on the attitudes of the children. Moreover, it shows this effect outweighed the effects of their family upbringings.

⁷⁴ Heck, *Child*, p 10

⁷⁵ Maschmann, Melita. *Account Rendered: a Dossier on My Former Self*. Trans. Geoffrey Strachan. New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1964. p 10.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*

⁷⁷ Maschmann, *Account* p 10

It was more than just the stressing of class inequalities that serves as evidence the educational system was replacing parenting as the major source of values for the children. The stressing on the importance of leadership in the youth groups also created this effect. Jurgen Herbst, an 11-year-old at the time the war broke out, talks about this conflict.

"As I grew older and rose in the Jungvolk...I found it increasingly difficult to steer my way between what appeared to me as ever-growing, conflicting demands...I had war duties to carry out, I told my mother, such as standing fire watch during air raids and helping with clean-up work thereafter. Such tasks made I seem somehow inappropriate that I ask her for permission or promise to be back home at a certain time in the evening."⁷⁸

It is clear from these examples that when we talk of the educational system having this effect on the youth that the Youth Group separated the children from their parents more definitively than formal schooling did. However, since we are considering the Youth Group as part of the education received by young Germans the analysis holds water. Herbst put the sentiment best about the role of the youth group in the lives of the children. "This was our world," he wrote, "and not school nor church nor home could offer competing alternatives."⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

From this look into the educational system we can derive several conclusions. First, the educational system was an extension of the Reich. It was used as a tool to implement National Socialist policies among the youth. First among these ideas was that of a German racial superiority, and all the policies associated with this. Second, the schools were a breeding ground for the next generation of the Nazi army. The main focus of the school, after indoctrinating youth with Nazi ideology, was to prepare them physically to fight and psychologically to die for Hitler. These aims were achieved through the use of schools and the supplementary youth groups. They were also achieved through the use of a glorified Adolf Hitler as a pedagogue and a model for all the German youth. Perhaps most important is the conclusion that the aims of indoctrination really did work. There is ample evidence from memoirs that children of the time bought into the National Socialist ideals with enthusiasm. The combination of formal schooling, youth group activities, and German rhetoric created a generation ready to live and die for the Nazi cause. The world will never know what would have happened had the Reich stayed in power long enough for this generation to be given that opportunity.

⁷⁸ Herbst, Jurgen. *Requiem for a German Past*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin P, 1999. p 89

⁷⁹ Herbst, *Requiem*, p 95

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