

# The hitler-youth; hitler-jungen and the bund deutscher madel

[People](#), [Adolf Hitler](#)



The Hitler-Youth; Hitler-Jungen and the Bund Deutscher Madel In the period between 1925 -1945 in Nazi Germany the Hitler-Jungen was formed and developed, this group for girls, boys, and teenagers, ages 10-18 indoctrinated German youth in Nazi ideology, and trained them to function within the society of the Third Reich. This paper will outline the history of the Hitler-Jungen. The Hitler-Jungen was varied and complex ; it differed based on region, time period, class status of members, ideological beliefs, and ideas about gender, race, and goals. Because of the complexity of the history and significance of this group I will present them separately after a general introduction to the conditions that shaped the Hitler-Youth; starting with the Hitler-Jungen for boys, and then the Bund Deutscher Madel (League of German Girls). Both the Hitler-Jungen (HJ) for boys, and the Bund Duetscher Madel (BDM) for girls started in 1926 at a time when Hitler was just gaining power and trying to consolidate his control of Germany. The Hitler-Youth served as a way of indoctrinating youth into both the mental and physical/practical applications of Nazism. Youth learnt the basic ideological tenets; belief in the Fuhrer, in the racial superiority of Aryans, in the necessity of following your leaders in a hierarchical system, in the goal of a German ' World Empire,' and they also underwent all of the physical preparation and training for combat. Naturally the preparation for boys and girls differed in that girls did not undergo military training; instead they were prepared to be good homemakers and child-bearers, to be passive, and not to participate in politics. Membership in the Hitler-Youth did not become compulsory until March 25th 1939, but the unofficial pressure on youth to join, and on their parents and teachers to encourage them to join was very

great before and after 1939. If you were not a member you could not go to the University, you were denied certain jobs, could not inherit a farm, or be a member of the Nazi Party; you also risked arrest on false charges and threats from the SS, and from members of the Hitler-Youth. If you became a member and missed meetings you could also be jailed for short periods, and have other various consequences enforced. The percentage of youth ages 18-30 in 1933 was 1/3 of the total population, this meant that in a period of economic instability, (after the collapse of the Weimar Republic) competition for jobs was fierce, and many youth joined the HJ to gain the added possibilities for mobility and advancement. Generational conflict was strong in this period, as many of the youth's fathers had fought in World War One, many youth did not know or understand their fathers well, (also many of their fathers had died at the front) and the youth often rebelled from their overworked mothers. Many youth found a stable, " protective" father figure in Hitler. The youth sought independence from their families, and the Hitler-Youth movement encouraged this by describing the older generation and teachers, as old-fashioned and lacking proper authority/knowledge. The youth found security, status, power, and community by joining the HJ. Some youth even reversed their allegiances entirely, from family to HJ, and in some cases would even report their parents for suspicious activities, Bertold Brecht wrote of this in his play " Fear and misery of the third Reich." Later Orwell would also describe this in " 1984" in relation to Stalinism. (See Appendix) Uncooperative teachers were dismissed, and unsupportive parents could lose their jobs or in rare cases arrested. Germany had a long history of many types of youth groups, from radical left, to centrist, to radical right. From

1900 on they tended to be Bunde (leagues) of young, costly males. They were often apolitical and formed of the upper classes, for hiking and philosophical discussion. Many of these groups especially the "wandervogel" supported World War One as an idealist cause, and many died fighting in the war. From 1918-1933 these groups experienced instability, rifts, and changes in leadership, and many resented the fact that older adult leaders would not give up their power. The National Socialist Movement exploited this moment by using the motto, "Make way, you old ones." They also made appeals to lower class youth, promising jobs and stability. The National Socialist Students League was formed in the early 1920's, and in 1926 it was placed under SA command, and became the Hitler-Jungen for boys, and the Bund Deutscher Madel for girls. Originally Hitler did not see the importance of youth involvement but his advisors convinced him. Joseph Geobbels was an especially strong advocate, "True leaders are born. Leadership cadres, however, may be trained, to engage in politics one must be called, yet to function administratively it suffices to be drilled, trained, and bred." The HJ began as a strongly lower class group, with 69% of its members in 1931 being young proletariat workers, and 10% shop clerks. In 1931 the HJ only had 18,000 members whereas the older Bundische leagues had 50,000. The number of HJ members grew rapidly however, with strong "encouragement" methods and propaganda, such as stories for schoolchildren that teachers were "encouraged" to use in the classroom. By 1933 there were 2 million members, in 1936 5.4 million, and after 1939 98% of youth ages 10-18 were officially members. In 1932 there was the first mass rally for HJ youth, in which 70,000 boys attended. This was filmed by

Leni Riefenstahl in "Triumph of the Will," the film was later shown widely in Germany and impressed many youth into joining the HJ. Part of the "success" of the consolidation of control over German youth was the intimidation, co-optation, jailing, concentration camps, and in some cases murder, of all other youth groups, and youth leaders, regardless of the political involvement or non-involvement of these youth. This was mostly carried out by the Gestapo, the police, the SS, and a special group within the HJ called the Streifendienst (SRD) male youths between 16-18 who patrolled their regions looking for "criminal" behavior of youths. The SRD could not themselves make arrests but they reported youths to the SS. In 1933 a decree was made banning all other youth groups from meeting. For Hitler-Jungen boys there was a rigorous military training, with physical exercise, "war games," hierarchies of command (leaders would only be 2-3 years older than those they commanded) long marches, group-hazing, physical and emotional abuse, and ideological training. In the summers youth would be sent with the "blood and soil" program to work on farms along the borders of Germany. This was a tactic to spread ideology, and to familiarize the boys with the territory that might be the next battlegrounds. The idea that these youths would join the SA, SS, or Wehrmacht after leaving the HJ was taken as a fact by those in the highest Third Reich leadership positions, as Hitler stated: "After these youths have entered into our organizations at age ten and have there experienced, for the first time, some fresh air...We shall under no circumstances return them into the hands of our old champions of class and social standing, but instead place them immediately in the Party and Labor Front, the SA or SS... And then the Wehrmacht will take them over

for further treatment...And thus they will never be free again, for the rest of their lives." Another way of controlling the youth was the kinderlandvershickung (KLV) program, after the war started children in bomb-threatened areas were sent to the countryside, or to conquered or Axis countries. By the end of the war in 1945, 5 million children had been sent to 12, 000 camps for children. Communication with parents was censored, and living conditions were bad. There were also various attempts at starting Nazi run schools within Germany, but they were never very successful, mostly due to lack of funding. During the war the HJ began to falter because many of the older leaders (16-18) were inscripted in the war (60% in 1942), so that leaders were leading members of their own age, with this breakdown in hierarchy even more corruption, crimes, and abuses were committed by the HJ amongst their own members and on the general population, and often sexual abuse of BDM girls took place. A formalized training for leaders was never successful, only 16% of leaders ever received even minimal training. Interestingly the hope that the Nazi Party saw in the HJ for future Party leaders was met with skepticism by the HJ members, volunteers for the SA and SS were low. HJ members were exposed to mistreatment of Jews, and anti-Semitic propaganda at and early age. Groups were put in charge of the round-ups of Jews being sent to concentration camps, and were encouraged to harass Jews in their daily lives. Anti-Semitic slogans, jokes, and songs were very commonly used as part of HJ " education." Jews remained in the same schools until 1936, when they were forced to go to separate schools. The idea that Jews were responsible for the 1918 defeat was widespread. Now turning to the history of the Bund Deutscher Madels (BDM), The goal of

the BDM was to organize and train girls and young women in order that they would later be exemplary wives and mothers, this preparation included being well versed in Nazi ideology so that they could later teach their children "well." The ideals of beauty, grace, and passivity were encouraged. In 1933 only 5% of German women were in the Nazi Party, this continued at about the same level as the years passed. Although women were not supposed to express political opinions, they were encouraged to attend rallies, and pass out flyers, work in soup kitchens, or be nurses. The highest-ranking BDM leader however would always be subservient to even a normal member of the HJ, this is how strong the belief in women's incompetence in political/leadership roles was. The motto of the BDM was " Don't talk, don't debate, live a National Socialist life in discipline, composure, and comradeship." The BDM uniforms were designed to be attractive for possible " future husbands." BDM activities focused on singing, crafts, camping, games, folkdance, homemaking training, gymnastics, and building friendships. The highest duty of German women was seen as having children. A compulsory Pflichtjahr (service-year) was decreed in 1938, in which BDM girls went to work on farms for one year, as unpaid laborers, no one was allowed to enter the work force without having completed their one-year. An additional six months was made obligatory in 1939 for all women ages 17-25 who were single, and unemployed or not in school. This 6 months was usually in war industry jobs. Another program was sending young women to Poland in order to " re-educate" the rural people there. The women were lived with families and were supposed to teach Nazi household standards to the Polish families. A specialized program was " Glaube und

Schonheit" (Belief and Beauty) this was a program for women ages 17-21 who exemplified "Nordic beauty." They participated in sports, fashion, and home-design activities, and were meant to represent the ideal German woman. Himmler saw these women as the ideal 'mates' for the German ideal "warriors." SS and SA members were encouraged to marry women who fit these parameters, and in 1939 a "Procreation Order" was made that stated that a Party member or soldier could not be promoted if he was not married, and later if he did not have children. The ideal German BDM woman was always formed in contrast to the "evils" of foreign and impure women, such as the Roma who were seen as seducers, or the Poles who were said to be very fertile and promiscuous. German women were meant to be "guardians of racial purity." Interestingly Nazi ideology believed that women and men were equal but in different spheres, according to Hitler: "The emotional capacity of women has, since time immemorial, corresponded to the intellect of man...and this then is the miraculous effect of Providence, that no conflict between the two genders is possible, as long as each part observes whatever is its specific requirement by nature." Women's attachment to the figure of Hitler was often intense; some historians believe this is why Hitler stayed single in order to cultivate women's attraction to him, as a protector. The general climate in this period was very sexualized and violent, in most cases the high rise in sexual activity and crime among youth was blamed on the young women for being seducers, and impure. Sexual abuse by HJ members, the SS, and the SA of BDM women, and women in general was rampant. And it was mostly the women who were arrested for this, and sent to concentration camps for "fallen women." So by



looking at this brief overview of the history of the Hitler-Jungen and the Bund Deutscher Madel, it is apparent that the Hitler-Youth was not one monolithic group, but was rather divided depending on gender, position in the hierarchy of command, changes over time, from the founding in 1926 to the end of the war in 1945, and by many other factors. At times the leaders of the Nazi Party themselves had little control over the trajectory of this Youth group, especially not over the HJ. But ultimately the Hitler-Youth did serve as an effective tool of the third Reich for indoctrinating millions of German youth, and while some youth resisted the HJ, notably the Weisse Rose (White Rose- see appendix) youth group, the majority of resistance groups were overcome by the force of the HJ and by the Nazi Party that it served. Bibliography: Burleigh, Michael. The Third Reich. Hill and Wang, 2000. Kater, Michael. Hitler Youth. Harvard College, 2004. Pg. 1-166. Levi, Primo. Survival in Auschwitz. Touchstone, 1958. Rempel, Gerhard. Hitler's Children. The University of North Carolina Press, 1989. Appendix: 1) Poem by Paul Celan Oh little root of a dream you hold me here undermined by blood, no longer visible to anyone, property of death. Curve a face that there may be speech, of earth, of ardor, of things with eyes, even here, where you read me blind, even here, where you refute me, to the letter. 2) From "1984", George Orwell, chapter 1 A handsome, tough-looking boy of nine had popped up from behind the table and was menacing him with a toy automatic pistol, while his small sister, about two years younger, made the same gesture with a fragment of wood. Both of them were dressed in the blue shorts, grey shirts, and red neckerchiefs which were the uniform of the Spies. Winston raised his hands above his head, but with an uneasy feeling, so vicious was

the boy's demeanor, that it was not altogether a game. 'You're a traitor!' yelled the boy. 'You're a thought-criminal! You're a Eurasian spy! I'll shoot you, I'll vaporize you, I'll send you to the salt mines!' Suddenly they were both leaping round him, shouting 'Traitor!' and 'Thought-criminal!' the little girl imitating her brother in every movement. It was somehow slightly frightening, like the gamboling of tiger cubs which will soon grow up into man-eaters. There was a sort of calculating ferocity in the boy's eye, a quite evident desire to hit or kick Winston and a consciousness of being very nearly big enough to do so. It was a good job it was not a real pistol he was holding, Winston thought. Mrs. Parsons' eyes flitted nervously from Winston to the children, and back again. In the better light of the living-room he noticed with interest that there actually was dust in the creases of her face. 'They do get so noisy,' she said. 'They're disappointed because they couldn't go to see the hanging, that's what it is. I'm too busy to take them. and Tom won't be back from work in time.' 'Why can't we go and see the hanging?' roared the boy in his huge voice. 'Want to see the hanging! Want to see the hanging!' chanted the little girl, still capering round. Some Eurasian prisoners, guilty of war crimes, were to be hanged in the Park that evening, Winston remembered. This happened about once a month, and was a popular spectacle. Children always clamored to be taken to see it. (...) With those children, he thought, that wretched woman must lead a life of terror. Another year, two years, and they would be watching her night and day for symptoms of unorthodoxy. Nearly all children nowadays were horrible. What was worst of all was that by means of such organizations as the Spies they were systematically turned into ungovernable little savages, and yet this

produce in them no tendency whatever to rebel against the discipline of the Party. On the contrary, they adored the Party and everything connected with it. The songs, the processions, the banners, the hiking, the drilling with dummy rifles, the yelling of slogans, the worship of Big Brother -- it was all a sort of glorious game to them. All their ferocity was turned outwards, against the enemies of the State, against foreigners, traitors, saboteurs, thought-criminals. It was almost normal for people over thirty to be frightened of their own children. And with good reason, for hardly a week passed in which The Times did not carry a paragraph describing how some eavesdropping little sneak -- 'child hero' was the phrase generally used -- had overheard some compromising remark and denounced its parents to the Thought Police. 3) From the First Leaflet (1942) of the Weisse Rose (White Rose) Youth Resistance Group: Nothing is so unworthy of a civilized nation as allowing itself to be governed without opposition by an irresponsible clique that has yielded to base instinct. It is certain that today every honest German is ashamed of his government. Who among us has any conception of the dimensions of shame that will befall us and our children when one day the veil has fallen from our eyes and the most horrible of crimes - crimes that infinitely outdistance every human measure - reach the light of day? If the German people are already so corrupted and spiritually crushed that they do not raise a hand, frivolously trusting in a questionable faith in lawful order of history; if they surrender man's highest principle, that which raises him above all other God's creatures, his free will; if they abandon the will to take decisive action and turn the wheel of history and thus subject it to their own rational decision; if they are so devoid of all individuality, have already

gone so far along the road toward turning into a spiritless and cowardly mass - then, yes, they deserve their downfall. Goethe speaks of the Germans as a tragic people, like the Jews and the Greeks, but today it would appear rather that they are a spineless, will-less herd of hangers-on, who now - the marrow sucked out of their bones, robbed of their center of stability - are waiting to be hounded to their destruction. So it seems - but it is not so. Rather, by means of gradual, treacherous, systematic abuse, the system has put every man into a spiritual prison. Only now, finding himself lying in fetters, has he become aware of his fate. Only a few recognized the threat of ruin, and the reward for their heroic warning was death. We will have more to say about the fate of these persons. If everyone waits until the other man makes a start, the messengers of avenging Nemesis will come steadily closer; then even the last victim will have been cast senselessly into the maw of the insatiable demon. Therefore every individual, conscious of his responsibility as a member of Christian and Western civilization, must defend himself as best he can at this late hour, he must work against the scourges of mankind, against fascism and any similar system of totalitarianism. Offer passive resistance - resistance - wherever you may be, forestall the spread of this atheistic war machine before it is too late, before the last cities, like Cologne, have been reduced to rubble, and before the nation's last young man has given his blood on some battlefield for the hubris of a sub-human. Do not forget that every people deserves the regime it is willing to endure! The "White Rose" movement was founded in June 1942 by Hans Scholl, a 24-year-old medical student at the University of Munich, his 22-year-old sister Sophie, and 24-year-old Christoph Probst. Although the exact origin of the

name " White Rose" is unknown, it clearly stands for purity and innocence in the face of evil. Hans, Sophie, and Christoph were outraged that educated Germans went along with Nazi policies. They distributed anti-Nazi leaflets and painted slogans like " Freedom!" and " Down With Hitler!" on walls of the university. In February 1943, Hans and Sophie Scholl were caught distributing leaflets and arrested. Together with their friend Christoph, they were executed four days later. Hans's last words were " Long live freedom!"