

# **HISTORIA VIRTUAL DEL HOLOCAUSTO**

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***THE DEVELOPMENT OF HJ AND SS  
AS NAZI PARTY AFFILIATES***



The Hitler Youth and the Elite Echelon were overshadowed by the prominence of the Stormtroopers in the early history of the National Socialist Movement. Until the early thirties not even Hitler seems to have realized how important it would be for the HJ and SS to be formally and really

separated from the paramilitary streetfighters, whose function in theory and practice was after all in the nature of a temporary political expedient. Spreading propaganda, winning voters, and intimidating opponents were the primary activities of all party formations before the acquisition of political office. Once Hitler's charismatic appeal had been effectively used to subdue the factionalism in the party, and once political power had been attained, the resentful and frustrated dissonance of the streetfighters became a disturbing nuisance. It endangered the process of solidifying the ephemeral grasp on the levers of state power. This was the moment of opportunity for both HJ and SS. The leaders of both affiliates saw this clearly and seized it with alacrity. It becomes important then to understand how the HJ and SS developed as significant elements in the dictatorship which Hitler imposed on a nation in a state of economic and emotional shock.

## **1. ORIGINS OF THE HITLER YOUTH**

In the late summer of 1921, while the Nazi Party gradually emerged from the murky beer cellars of the Bavarian capital, Gustav Adolf Lenk, a 19 year old unemployed piano-polisher, tried repeatedly to organize a youth affiliate. He was unsuccessful until the following February when Hitler's control over the party had been established. Hitler then ordered that a Youth Association be created, carefully stipulating that it be attached to the paramilitary SA, also in the process of being formed. An independent youth association was out of the question, since Hitler was unsure of Lenk's loyalty and did not yet see the potential political utility of organized teenagers.

Although Lenk resented this tie to the SA, he tried hard to attract disaffected youngsters from all social classes, with heavy-handed publicity wrapped in crude racist slogans. These familiar techniques did not ignite much enthusiasm. Only 17 youngsters attended the first meeting in the Little Room of the Hunters of the famous Bürgerbr{ukeller, where Hitler gave a rousing speech on the importance of youth in the political resurrection of Germany.<sup>1</sup>

When Hitler's local fame as a beer-hall orator spread, and a conspiracy developed to overthrow the Bavarian government, Lenk decided to change the name to Jungsturm Adolf Hitler and to attempt recruitment outside of Munich. Other cities sprouted small youth groups patterned on this new model. Hitler consecrated their flags during the first party rally in January 1923, when Lenk claimed to have organized thirty-nine local clubs with some 1,200 members. Encouraged by this promise of success, Lenk began to travel and managed to establish tentative contacts with embryonic v|lkisch youth groups in Austria and Czechoslovakia. But Hitler's attempted putsch in November, in which Lenk and some of the Jungsturm members participated, put Lenk in jail along with his reluctant sponsor. After that most members of the Jungsturm scattered to various paramilitary youth groups, while a few continued a tenuous existence under harmless disguise.<sup>2</sup> The tenacious Lenk emerged again in 1924 as leader of the "Greater German Youth Movement," a misnamed ancillary of the left-leaning, northern party factions and proto-Nazi groups. Two more years of frustrating effort, including an unsuccessful attempt to unite with Ernst R|hm's "Front Youth," culminated in Lenk's dismissal for petty larceny. Subsequently he was disavowed by egotistical HJ leaders. The real founder of the HJ thus slid into political oblivion. He lacked the education, skill, and personality to build a viable youth movement. Like

the party itself the youth affiliate would have to be rebuilt from the bottom.<sup>3</sup>

An alternative to Lenk's organization existed in the southern Saxon city of Plauen, in the so-called "red district" of that province. Since the fall of 1922 a branch of Lenk's Jugendbund had been led there by an 18 year old law student named Kurt Gruber. After Hitler's incarceration Gruber wisely changed the name to "Sporting Club of Vogtland," thus evading prohibition and succeeding where Lenk had failed. When the latter's Greater German Youth Movement collapsed in Bavaria, Gruber, whose group had adopted the same name, was able to expand by appealing to radical and nationalist-minded youth of working-class origins. The social-revolutionary attitudes he fostered in his followers, inspired by the left-wingers in the party, led to frequent clashes with rival communist and socialist youth groups. This brought welcome publicity, which the group might not have gotten otherwise, and suggested that preoccupation with existing right-wing youth groups would not be very productive.<sup>4</sup>

Gruber terminated a temporary alliance with R|hm's Front Youth, because he feared that the inherent elitism of the latter would alienate proletarian youngsters. While personally committed to Hitler, Gruber resisted the latter's attempt to combine v|lkisch and Nazi youth groups under the leadership of Gerhard Rossbach, the well-known Free Corps commander and homosexual friend of Ernst R|hm. When Rossbach, returning from exile in Austria, himself rejected Hitler's attempt to unify sympathetic youth groups under his direct personal control, Hitler was left with Gruber's group as the only potential youth association. By the end of 1924 Gruber had already established 56 local units and collected 2,500 members in Saxony alone, and in 1925 he began to spread his influence into surrounding provinces.<sup>5</sup>

Formally the youth affiliate received its birth certificate at the second national rally staged in Weimar on July 3-4, 1926. Hitler had called the conclave to advertise the re-assertion of his authority in the movement and the miraculous rebirth of the party. After years of debate, it was finally decided to accept Gruber's group as the official youth organization, called "Hitler Youth: Association of German Workers' Youth". Gruber became Reichsführer of the HJ and party advisor on questions of youth. It constituted recognition of the socialist nationalism, which made the ideology and ethos of the HJ distinctly different from the more nationalist orientation of the party, as much as it represented a political triumph for Gruber's organizational achievements.<sup>6</sup>

The headquarters which Gruber now tried to expand into a national center, remained in his hometown of Plauen, whereas the party's strength resided in Bavaria and northern Germany. Gruber's HJ thus retained significant actual independence, despite official subordination to a refurbished SA leadership in Munich. Ernst Röhm, who could not agree with Hitler's conception of the SA, meanwhile resigned from the party and departed for Bolivia, being replaced by Franz Pfeffer von Salomon. The new chief of the SA agreed to implement Hitler's decision to follow a course of tactical legality, which meant that the SA was to de-emphasize its paramilitary function and become mainly a propaganda troop subject completely to political direction from party headquarters. Gruber, in turn, was to be subordinate to Pfeffer and the HJ generally was to be more tightly controlled by the SA and the party leadership. Yet the gap between policy and practice was wide. Party and SA leaders were too busy building their own organizations during these good years of the Weimar Republic to pay much attention. Since there was little money in the party treasury, Gruber had to

depend on modest membership dues. These factors and the distance from Munich, encouraged the HJ to pursue an independent course.<sup>7</sup>

At the time younger Germans were importuned with appeals for allegiance by some one hundred youth organizations of varied political, religious, and ideological persuasions. Within this context there were good reasons for the HJ not to allow itself to become a mere juvenile adjunct to the SA, and to declare themselves an "independent organism" in the movement. On their own initiative, Gruber and his leaders decided to add Sisterhoods and a Boys' League, for 10 to 14 year old children, to the organization. Separate departments were created for culture, sports, press, racial questions, social welfare, and foreign work. Several newspapers and periodicals attained respectable circulation figures. The territorial structure consisted of regional, district, and local centers, although repeated personnel changes, constant reorganization, and group defections to the right and the left, hindered stability.<sup>8</sup>

Gruber left a larger imprint on the early HJ than Lenk. His tactics were more appropriate and his personal qualities more pronounced. In the spring of 1929 he toured the country, speaking at 32 meetings. In September he managed to attract nearly 3,000 youngsters - almost a quarter of the total membership - to the party rally in Nuremberg. Gruber's socialist flavored nationalism and deliberately cultivated independence from effective party supervision contributed to his success. The tactical legality, which characterized Hitler's post-putsch policies, was reflected in the HJ's recognition as a "registered society" and Gruber's application for membership in the semi-public National Council of German Youth Associations. The Council nevertheless rejected the HJ because it refused to declare its loyalty to the Republic. The leaders turned this into a boon. The

surprising growth suggests that the HJ held promise as an anti-establishment protest movement. At a time when the party and the HJ found themselves under government bans in many provinces, a sense of clandestine adventure prevailed, stimulating strong elan, despite their relatively small numbers.<sup>9</sup>

After the miserable showing of the NSDAP in the 1928 Reichstag elections, Gregor Strasser took over as organization leader and built the kind of structural cadres for the party which the HJ lacked. From 1930 on the party was able to take full advantage of the economic and social disequilibrium which the depression brought in its train. Gruber and his ever-changing leaders were not able to do that; events simply overwhelmed them. The party shot into prominence by a surprising electoral victory in September, which made the defection by the radical Otto Strasser in July and the preceding half decade of party factionalism nearly irrelevant. To capitalize on that development, Hitler himself took over command of the rapidly growing SA and persuaded Ernst Röhm to return as chief of staff. Lingering left-wing radicalism and personal rivalries within the SA broke out in the Berlin-based Stennes revolt of April 1931, but Hitler's charismatic presence quelled it - at least for the important two years that led to the assumption of power. Then in May Hitler decided to move HJ headquarters from Plauen to the newly-purchased Brown House in Munich, largely because he wanted to bring the floundering and presumptuous youth affiliate under stricter party control.<sup>10</sup>

Gruber was uncomfortable in the hostile environment of the party bureaucracy. It was foreign to his impressionistic and independent style of management. He resorted to heavy drinking as his organizational and ideological shortcomings increased the number of his political enemies.

Pfeffer had been a strong supporter, but R|hm was not. The most vocal critic was Baldur von Schirach, the successful leader of the Nazi Association of German University Students. Undoubtedly reflecting the attitude of Hitler, Schirach deplored the HJ's lack of organizational effectiveness and stylistic coherence, but was probably more incensed at Gruber's persistent social-revolutionary policies. These appeared to be out of tune with the current orientation of the party. The NSDAP was beginning to get financial contributions from industry and cooperating with conservative parties. In the so-called "September Action" Gruber tried frantically to shore up his weakening position by promising to double the membership of the HJ. He promised too much. His relative success was not enough to save him. In October 1931 he was forced to resign by Hitler himself, amidst rumors of financial malfeasance. It is clear that Kurt Gruber was persona non grata primarily because he and his amorphous HJ continued to take seriously the socialist ingredients of the Nazi program. This contradicted the principles of the Volksgemeinschaft everyone talked about and had a tendency to limit the appeal of the HJ to a social class with strong youth organizations of its own.<sup>11</sup>

No one was surprised when Hitler appointed Schirach as Youth Leader of the Party and inflated the new position by subordinating the Student Association and the Pupil's League to it, thus giving him control over Nazi university students, secondary school pupils, as well as the HJ. Adrian von Renteln remained head of the Pupils' League and for a while also led the HJ. By this time Schirach had turned the Student Association into a potent force in university student politics, having grasped control over it from its left-wing founder, Wilhelm Tempel, in 1926. The Pupils' League from the start had been largely an organization for the offspring of upper middle-class families

and friction between this self-consciously elitist body and Gruber's "proletarian" HJ had escalated to crisis proportions from time to time in the past few years.<sup>12</sup> Now both of these sons of the privileged upper class - Schirach stemming from a cultured family of part Danish and American admixtures, and Renteln, the son of a Baltic German landowner - tried to steer the proletarian HJ into a socially respectable direction. They did so in part by replacing many of Gruber's leaders with former colleagues from the two organizations they had headed, although the rank and file remained largely working-class. Party and SA regulations were adhered to more closely and in general the HJ was less independent now.<sup>13</sup>

After some streamlining, the new leadership went all out to expand by appealing to the youth of hard-pressed middle class families. It is evident, nonetheless, that the economic crisis created such desperate conditions in all classes that class allegiance was not all that important, particularly to idealistic young people for whom the appeals of a nationalist movement spouting solutions which transcended class became highly attractive. Aware of the social-revolutionary ethos of Gruber's HJ, Schirach cleverly used the propaganda line "To the Nation through Socialism" with apparent success. This slogan expressed the qualified radical left-wing nationalism which continued to characterize the HJ more than any other Nazi affiliate, with the possible exception of the SA. The tactic worked, since Schirach doubled the size of the HJ in less than a year, making it finally a vital element in the movement.<sup>14</sup>

The conditions which prevailed in the early 1930s were conducive to effective recruitment for parties with extreme solutions. Unemployment among the young, unpromising prospects for secondary school and university graduates, a squabbling government in a state of perpetual crisis, an

apparently hostile outside world, and numerous other unpalatable facts of daily existence, favored both the Communist and the Nazi movements.<sup>15</sup> When the Minister of the Interior was pressured by the Social Democratic government of Prussia to ban the SA and HJ, but not the communist and socialist paramilitary and youth formations, a consequential tactical error was made. The Nazis took full advantage of this. During the prohibition, from April through June 1932, Schirach promoted the sense of a just struggle against an unfair "illegality." This attracted a host of disaffected youngsters, whom Schirach described as the "best human material." The image of personal sacrifice was made plausible by the nature of contemporary political warfare. It was conducted in the streets and alleys of urban Germany, in emotional mass meetings, and intimidating marches. The unprecedented violence of the struggle resulted in the deaths of many party, SA, and HJ enthusiasts, some of whom, like Horst Wessel (SA) and Herbert Norkus (HJ), were raised by party propagandists to the pantheon of exemplary martyrdom.<sup>16</sup>

Communist youth demonstrated heroic feats of physical courage and suffering, sustaining many deaths as well, at the hands of their political opponents. In most localities the police and courts were reluctant to defend them. Their plight was complicated by the parent party's frequent change of political line, ideological rigidity, and confusing directions. Especially in Berlin, they frequently took matters into their own hands and defended themselves aggressively against the invasions of their strongholds by the SA and HJ. Working-class districts, such as Wedding, Moabit, Kreuzberg, Neukölln, and the KPD stronghold of the Fischerkietz, were literally turned into war zones. As the conflict degenerated into a struggle for turf and who controlled what tavern, party and class allegiance became weak, with party crossovers and

the shunting aside of adult party direction creating a kind of "ideological free for all." This situation had its source in a disenchantment with all forms of adult-controlled establishments, whether party or government. The high rate of unemployment among working-class youth, and the shrinking assistance from government sources, contributed to a feeling of hopelessness and therefore led to random and arbitrary violence.<sup>17</sup>

The year 1932 was eventful for all Germans. The diminished minority which still believed in democracy, witnessed the death agonies of the Weimar Republic, punctuated by two presidential and two Reichstag elections, which benefited mostly the Nazis and, to a much lesser degree, the equally anti-liberal Communists. The venerable Hindenburg nearly lost the presidency to Hitler, and the NSDAP landslide of July, only slightly decreased in November, made the Nazis the single most powerful party in the legislature. In all four campaigns the HJ and its junior branch, the JV, as well as the NSDStB, the NSS, and the BDM, organized in 1930 from the remnants of Gruber's Sisterhoods, participated with a zest for political and physical combat that was extraordinary. Baldur von Schirach won one of the 230 Nazi Reichstag seats in July, which gave him a monthly income of RM 800 and free passage on the rails. He used this advantage in a frenetic burst of activity to recruit new members for the HJ. His claim that "the NSDAP was the party of youth" was certainly more true now than in the late 1920s when Gregor Strasser had denounced the effete men of Weimar with the slogan "Make Way, You Old Ones!" Carlo Mierendorff, a former SPD activist, had firsthand experience with Nazi youth at this time. He recognized as early as 1930 that the Nazis had succeeded in politicizing the young generation, including proletarian youth. A combination of social pessimism, chauvinist romanticism and inter-

generational hostility had created an ambience which made the young vulnerable to Nazi appeals.<sup>18</sup>

Ample proof that the Nazis had triggered a generational revolt of some significance, came in the form of a National Youth Rally during the first two days of October at Potsdam, the symbolic seat of the Prussian tradition. There had not been a party rally since 1929 and Hitler's earlier plans to stage one in 1932 had to be scrapped for lack of funds. Schirach then suggested a national youth conclave to be financed by HJ members themselves, fully oblivious to Hitler's reluctance in risking political repercussions should the event turn out to be a failure. To the very last moment Hitler warned that he would not show up unless the Potsdam Stadium were filled to capacity. Yet Schirach had traveled about the country enough to sense that the "uprising of the young nation," as one excited party leader put it, had begun. On streets, in restaurants, schools and factories, thousands of Hitler youths sold postcards, placards and billboards, announcing the Potsdam gathering. Schirach's organizer, Karl Nabersberg, set out for Berlin to arrange accommodations for some 40,000. He had fifty giant tents erected, bought tons of straw for bedding, and ordered food. Hitler himself arrived on the first of October, but holed up in Goebbel's house, nervously awaiting events. Before noon special trains and caravans of trucks began to arrive. The hostile governments of Saxony and Bavaria stopped several transports, but a young bus driver stopping on a Munich street corner was persuaded to take a load of HJ straight to Berlin when they offered to pay for the gas. Towards evening it became apparent that Schirach's expectations would be exceeded. Unannounced groups came, others occupied the wrong quarters, and the tents were soon overfilled.

Factories and empty buildings had to be commandeered to house some 100,000 young people streaming into Potsdam.19



That night a delirious Schirach introduced Hitler to the crowd in the stadium: "My Führer, your youth reports to declare a love and faith which has thus far not been accorded to any living person." The tumultuous applause brought tears to Hitler's eyes. His speech, personal and engaging, stressed the role of youth in overcoming social, denominational, and political divisions, and appealed to their idealism and fidelity. Schirach emphasized that the years of lonely battle were over and that a new community of the young was emerging. That these messages had sunk in became apparent late that evening, as the glow of the campfires died out, when someone started to sing the moving refrains of "Gute Nacht Kameraden." On the following day, after reveille at five and the laying of a wreath on the steps of the Garrison

Church of Potsdam by Schirach, the girls assembled at the Potsdam parade ground and the boys began to march past Hitler's reviewing stand. The march lasted from eleven o'clock in the morning until six that night. It left an indelible mark on Hitler, party leaders, and outside observers, including members of Chancellor von Papen's cabinet of aged and outdated barons.<sup>20</sup>

Willi K[r]ber, the HJ press chief, thought the youthful demonstrators "wanted to march in recognition of their socialism against every form of reaction. Because we are young we cannot desire reaction, and because we are young, we are socialists." A critical observer from a rival socialist youth group observed that the "NSDAP had been successful in attracting the best of the younger generation and filled it with the holy fire of faith and enthusiasm." The socialist press, perhaps stimulated by justifiable envy since their attempt to stage a similar youth rally in May had produced only 15,000 young people, berated the HJ for bad organization and reported that 120 youngsters had collapsed from exhaustion. Five youths, in fact, had been hospitalized for appendicitis and two youngsters had been injured in traffic accidents.<sup>21</sup> The Potsdam Rally has been described as "the most impressive public display of the party's political power outside the legislative hall" by Dietrich Orlow. A student of the HJ has concluded that "the psychological impact of the mass rally upon its participants cannot be overestimated." If the memory of participants and contemporary observers is reliable than this is an accurate assessment.<sup>21</sup>

One former HJ member told William S. Allen that he had decided to join the HJ on his own because he wanted to "strive towards a nationalistic ideal." His fellow club members came from "all classes of families though mainly middle class and workers." Since there had been "no social or class distinctions," he approved of the HJ and so did his cohorts, which accounted

for the spontaneous growth of his group, he thought. While they vaguely "hated the SPD," they mainly hiked, marched, enjoyed themselves and "felt important." For Melita Maschmann, who became a prominent BDM leader during the war, the motivation was much the same, although expressed with greater insight. It was the "antagonism between the generations," and fascination with the idea of the Volksgemeinschaft, which turned the scales for her. She had always wanted to attach herself to "something that was great and fundamental," a longing she believed she "shared with countless others" of her peers. It was "the 'socialist' tendency expressed in the name of the movement," which had attracted her, because it fit her revolt against the conservative nationalism of her middle class parents and their cohorts. Inge Scholl, whose older brother and sister made the supreme sacrifice in the name of a singularly courageous protest against tyranny in 1943, described after the war what attracted all of them to the HJ ten years earlier. They believed that Hitler would provide work and bread, bring national greatness, fortune and prosperity. But they were also mesmerized by a "mysterious power," expressed in "closed ranks of marching youth with banners waving, eyes fixed straight ahead, keeping time to drumbeat and song." To Sophie and her cohorts the "sense of fellowship <was> overpowering." Not only were they taken seriously, but they "sensed that there was a role for <them> in a historic process, in a movement that was transforming the masses into a Volk." Horst Kr}ger's childhood memories are tempered by the wisdom of aging survivors: "I am the typical child of those innocuous Germans who were never Nazis, and without whom the Nazis would never have been able to do their work. That's how it is....My earliest memory of Hitler is jubilation. I'm sorry about that, because today's historians know better - but I, at first, heard only jubilation....There seemed to be an indescribable exultation in the

Reich capital's street of splendor, where all well-meaning Germans, all genuine and young Germans, had flocked together to pay homage to the aged field marshal and his young chancellor."<sup>22</sup>

And so Adolf Hitler became the chancellor of Germany, crowning ten years of violent political struggle with the laurels of power. His remarkable progress from the beer halls of Munich to the chancellery in Berlin was aided in no small degree by the capture of youthful hearts and their blind enthusiasm. The proud Hitler youths, who marched with flaming torches through the Brandenburg gate on that cold winter night, believed fervently that they were riding the wave of a glorious future, while some of their cohorts hunkered back in sullen defiance, and most simply ignored events beyond their immediate daily task of growing up. The anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist ambience of the early HJ, based on the socialist planks of the Nazi program, vague as they were, was an effective recruiting tool, in part because two thirds of the HJ was in fact proletarian. Nonetheless, in an era when most youth groups adopted an anti-establishment stance, inherited from the youth movement at the turn of the century, social distinctions made relatively little difference. What counted was generational autonomy and cohort identity. The Nazis benefited from this phenomenon, since they were perceived as the party of youth.

## **ORIGINS OF THE ELITE ECHELON**

In terms of their respective origins no one would have surmised before 1934 that the HJ and SS would develop a key relationship in the complex structure of the Third Reich. Unlike the HJ, which sought to recruit the youthful masses to their banner, the SS had a limited and secret role to play,

on the face of it totally divorced from the concerns of the young. About the only thing they had in common was the mesmerizing personality of Hitler and the barroom locus of their respective births. The antecedent of Himmler's "Black Corps" is to be found in Hitler's private bodyguard, formed before the 1923 Putsch from a small clique of desperados who frequented the Torbräu near the Isartor in Munich. They were known as the Assault Squad. Like the Headquarters' Staff Guard, an even earlier, shortlived predecessor, the Assault Squad's few men, demobilized NCOs, freebooters, laborers, and adventurers, shared utter loyalty to the person of Hitler, whom they had sworn to protect at all costs.<sup>23</sup>

The Assault Squad was led by an SA man, Julius Schreck, and a stationer who worked in the party treasury, Joseph Berchtold. It was prepared to perform whatever task their Führer gave them, usually requiring muscle or a show of force. Thus 50 of Berchtold's men, already wearing black-bordered swastika armbands and black ski-caps with a silver death's head button, accompanied Hitler when he made his melodramatic entry into the Bürgerbräukeller on November 8, 1923, to announce the misadventure known as the Beer Hall Putsch. Five of them were killed during the melee with the police in front of the Odeonplatz. At the time the SA probably had about 2,000 men and the Assault Squad no more than 100, reflecting their respective importance then and later.<sup>24</sup>

The strong-arm wing of the party had a rather innocuous beginning as the "gymnastics and sport section," founded by Emil Maurice, a 23 year old watchmaker, in November 1920. After Hitler seized control of the party in the following year, and changed the name to Sturmabteilung, expansion in size and role helped to solidify his own control and create an activist core for the movement. A notorious Free Corps leader, Captain Hermann Ehrhardt,

provided recruits and money. The nascent SA was different from the numerous Free Corps, composed largely of veterans who had served the new government as a kind of counter-revolutionary force. They later created a militaristic subculture, violently opposed to the Weimar Republic. The SA, however, appealed to youth and restricted membership to those between the ages of 17 and 23. It was much younger, included fewer veterans, and gave the party much of its bravado. Battling the communist and socialist "enemy," was the main task of the SA, and helped to turn it into "the most active and radical paramilitary organization in Bavaria" already before 1923.<sup>25</sup>

During the Putsch the SA was hardly distinguishable from the other völkisch groups in the coalition Hitler put together for the coup. After its failure, Hermann Göring, the actual commander of the SA in 1923, went into exile, Hitler and other leaders were in jail, and all party organizations were outlawed. Captain Ernst Röhm, most active liaison officer of the Bavarian Reichswehr to the paramilitary organizations, had been the main organizer of the early SA. When he was released from prison in April 1924, Röhm proceeded to reactivate SA units throughout the country and organize them, along with other völkisch paramilitary groups, into the Frontbann. This organization, which acquired some 40,000 members, was a military association in the old style, whereas Hitler wanted a political combat league more appropriate to the legal course he adopted after the Putsch. When Hitler began to rebuild the party in 1925, he refused to accept the Frontbann, while Röhm declined Hitler's offer to command a new SA. Röhm could not agree - and never really did - that this paramilitary tool should be at the discretionary disposal of the political leadership and shed its purely military characteristics. Röhm then went off to Bolivia in a sulking mood, the Frontbann disintegrated, and the SA submitted to direction from local party

leaders. Significant growth began with the appointment of Captain Franz Pfeffer von Salomon as Supreme SA Leader (OSAF) in the fall of 1926. He built the SA into a disciplined and reliable party army, which fought the "internal enemy" by violent means.<sup>26</sup>

Uncertainty over the basic character of the SA, alerted Hitler to the need for a totally reliable force, a kind of praetorian guard, which would put a check on the rowdy streetfighters. In February 1925, before the SA was officially reborn, Hitler created small elite echelons (Schutzstaffeln) in various cities where SA units already existed. Two months later the miniscule SS, patterned to some degree on the extinct Assault Squad, revealed its essential future character by serving as funeral torchbearers for the former police president of Munich. But in the shadow of an expanding SA, the SS barely maintained its existence under several ineffective leaders. In July 1926, during the same party rally which recognized Kurt Gruber's HJ at Weimar, the SS was declared to be the elite organization of the party.<sup>27</sup>

In an arcane ceremony, typical of many mysterious practices with which the SS was to be associated, the "blood banner" which had been stained during the conflict with the police on the Odeonplatz in 1923, was transferred to the SS for safekeeping. The SS was not to exceed ten percent of SA strength in any one locality. Such deliberate restriction enforced its elitist feeling, while stern discipline turned the SS man into "the most exemplary party member conceivable." Neither hard-bitten party bosses, nor swaggering and uncouth SA commanders took kindly to the elitist pretensions of the SS and used them mainly to run errands, recruit party members, and sell newspapers. In January 1929, when the SS had some 1,200 members, things began to change quickly. Hitler appointed a little known and apparently unassuming 28 year old party bureaucrat

Reichsführer of the SS. His name was Heinrich Himmler, surely one of the strangest and most unfathomable men in modern history. During his short sojourn he has left a trail of blood and terror behind him which few can equal.<sup>28</sup>

At the time Himmler was hardly noticed or appreciated, having served as secretary and deputy to party propaganda chief, Gregor Strasser. Coming from a proper Catholic middle-class family, with a father who had been tutor to the Bavarian royal house and had a successful career as professor and director of several prestigious Bavarian Gymnasias, Himmler's upbringing was anything but irregular. Psychohistorians have found reason to believe that his prolonged adolescence consisted of an unsuccessful effort to master libidinal drives, forcing him to resort to obsessive repression, projection, and exaggerated self-discipline. He is supposed to have developed an inordinate identification with his tyrannical father, later replaced by surrogates, like Rohm and Strasser (both of whom he helped to murder subsequently), but the most notable of which was to be Hitler. Weak object relation and the lack of a feeling of self-worth and distinct individuality, theoretically, led him to imbibe the prevailing values of the post-war generation. These values included xenophobic nationalism, fear of conspiratorial secret societies like Freemasons, and Jews, militaristic violence and social probity.<sup>29</sup>

Although the young Himmler's conversion to the völkisch ideology was gradual, almost accidental by virtue of his random but avaricious reading habits, he developed two early obsessions, the satisfactions of a military life and the appeals of character-building agrarian pursuits. These were to find their perverse fulfillment in the Waffen-SS and a population policy based on the blood and soil ideology. While these aspects of his wartime career may have been in part the result of an unsuccessful adolescence, they were

imposed on thousands of adolescents whose formative years were probably no more successful than his and whose choices were more restricted. He also developed an early interest in spying, which he practiced on his older brother Gebhard's fiancée, alleging that she was promiscuous and hence unfit for inclusion in the Himmler family. Eventually he managed to break up the romance. In a conventional sense, the young Himmler was certainly more successful than most of his contemporaries. He completed military training as a cadet, a career in uniform being stymied by the end of the war. Completing his studies in agronomy at the Technische Hochschule in Munich, he made a career for himself as a minor bureaucrat in the Nazi Party, in part because he could not find a post as farm manager, although he was willing to go anywhere, even Russia and Turkey. At the same time he pursued his ambitions in the Artamanen, an agrarian youth movement, the paramilitary Reichskriegsflagge, and even tried his hand at scientific poultry-breeding. His marriage to an older woman was not too promising from the start, and may have had something to do with his unrealistic but conventional conception of women as weak and subordinate, fit primarily for domestic chores and childbearing.<sup>30</sup>

The SS provided Himmler with an outlet, particularly his penchant for order, detail, organizational finesse, and misplaced sense of moral and social rectitude. His father's pedantry, which went so far as to correct his son's diary entries, played a role here. The feeling of superiority, which these attitudes generated, compensated for inner emptiness, the absence of self-assurance and a satisfying sense of moral values. He naturally adopted Hitler as his superego, replacing an earlier fascination with Ernst Röhm. Himmler built up the SS, as a consequence, by assiduously appealing to old-line aristocrats and wealthy members of the middle class, making them patrons

and honorary members in exchange for financial support and transferred social prestige. This set Himmler's SS off from the SA and the rest of the party, whose misbehavior and ideological deviation the SS was, after all, to watch and report. Being a kind of party police both by precept and function, the *raison d'être* of the SS was loyalty to the Führer. The political context of the times and the projected role of the SS, led Himmler to imbue the organization with military titles, ordered hierarchy, and combative spirit.<sup>31</sup>

Both SS and SA soon experienced phenomenal growth, as the depression drove unemployed lower middle-class men and workers into the latter and middle-class intellectuals and professionals into the former. Himmler's Elite numbered 10,000 by 1931 and Pfeffer's organizational skills and training methods turned the SA into a movement in its own right by the fall of 1930, when it claimed 60,000 streetwarriors. The use of the SA as propaganda army, "a sort of permanent election campaign with terroristic methods," had much to do with the election breakthrough of the Nazi Party in the September elections to the Reichstag. But success created its own disparities and frictions which the SA-owned economic enterprises could not mitigate. Resentment of slack and corrupt party politicians, who reaped the benefits while the SA did all the work, added to impatience with Hitler's continued "legal" approach to power. It brought restlessness and buried "socialist" tendencies in the activist SA to a head.<sup>32</sup>

In the summer of 1930 Pfeffer resigned in a fit of anger. Shortly before the September election, the Berlin SA revolted against the temporizing party politicians, namely Gauleiter Josef Goebbels and his SS allies, followed by a more serious SA revolt in April 1931, led by Walther Stennes, Pfeffer's erstwhile deputy. Since the rebellion was not directed at Hitler personally, he was able to quell it by a shrewd combination of

concessions and charisma. During the episode the SS came into its own for the first time by protecting the politicians who were physically in danger and by keeping the SA rebels at bay with weapons drawn. Hitler, who had assumed overall command of the SA shortly after Pfeffer's resignation, decided to recall Röhm and make him chief of staff. Röhm was more than eager to resume the leadership over what was clearly an exploding organization with 260,000 members at the end of 1931 and over half a million men in January 1933 (Table I.1). The slower growing SS, for whom Hitler was more of a surrogate father than he was for the SA, reached a milestone with the Stennes affair. After this event Hitler gave his dependable SS the motto which was to become its most characteristic symbol until the final days of the war: "SS man your honor is loyalty!" A nearly mystical idea of loyalty expressed the core of Himmler's personality and now it was to be also the heart of the SS organization.<sup>33</sup>

It was more than fortuitous that 1931 was also the year when two of Himmler's most important associates joined forces with him to create two essential SS organizational segments with their own ideological props and pervasive activities: Reinhard Tristan Eugen Heydrich and Richard Walther Darré.

Heydrich's upbringing was both normal in the conventional sense and more privileged than Himmler's. Certainly the cultural environment was more refined, his father being the founder and director of a musical conservatory and a fairly well-known composer of operas and popular fare. The sensitive and withdrawn boy developed a certain distance from his father, being much closer to his mother, in this sense being not unlike Himmler. Unsure of himself, despite his obvious talent and intellect, he early became arrogant and cynical, jealous of his siblings greater social success. His father's

running battle against rumors of his Jewish origins, a legend never successfully quashed during his lifetime, was to have its effect on Reinhard from early youth. Even though he played the violin well and dabbled with the idea of becoming a chemist, Reinhard chose the navy nearly on the spur of the moment. His promising career in the somewhat politically suspicious service did not get very far. As a 27 year old ex-naval lieutenant, who had left the service under scandalous circumstances, Heydrich presented himself to Himmler in the fall of 1931 with plans for an SS intelligence operation. Perhaps influenced by the fact that the navy had once rejected him on physical grounds and impressed by Heydrich's quick intelligence, maybe even awed by the handsome man's reputation as chronic womanizer, Himmler gave Heydrich a virtual carte blanche. The Security Service (SD) which he created became his and Himmler's vehicle to power by acquiring exclusive intelligence prerogatives first within the SS, then within the party, and finally within the state.<sup>34</sup>

Darre was quite different from Heydrich, the cynical, pragmatic realist and political tactician with few peers in the Nazi melange. Born in Argentina and educated at King's College School, Wimbledon, Darre, the ex-official in the Prussian Ministry of Agriculture, had developed unusual theories about the nature of current agrarian problems. He insisted they were largely a matter "of blood," i.e., a hereditarily healthy peasantry alone could maintain the racial fecundity and cultural superiority of the Aryan stock. Five years Himmler's senior, the blood and soil ideologue took Himmler under his wing as a willing pupil when they met in the Artamanen, in which both were active during the 1920s. Before 1931 Darre had founded the party's Agrarian Political Office, converted himself into the party's agricultural expert, and then joined the SS as chief of the new SS Race

Office created in December 1931. Two years later it became the Race and Settlement Office, a more appropriate designation for an agency that purveyed racism, elitism, suburban housing developments and reversion to an agrarian culture all at once.<sup>35</sup>

While Himmler had adopted the prevailing culture's anti-semitism in his youth, it was Darre's agrarian racism more than Hitler's Austrian version, or the 1920 party program's anti-capitalist and anti-semitic "slavery of interest" version, which laid the basis for the racial fixation of the SS. Genetic reconstitution became the propagandistic gospel of the SS, symbolized by Himmler's notorious marriage code, suggested by Darre, a biogenetic engineer before his time, and in the view of one recent biographer the "father" of the environmentalist "Greens" in West Germany today. This code required that SS men and their prospective wives submit certified proof of Aryan ancestry and undergo minute physical examinations. Himmler, whose relationship with girls in adolescence had been stiff and distant, himself pored over photographs of SS brides in scanty apparel to make sure they met his standards of Nordic health and beauty. Here was the origin of the so-called SS Order, which later was infused with medieval pomp and arcane ceremony, inspired by Himmler's dead heroic model, King Henry the Fowler of Saxony, conqueror of Slavs and initiator of eastward imperial expansion. Himmler was to revive this imperialism with a racist vengeance, based on the "soldier-farmer" settlement notions of Darre, which actually had their antecedents in Roman and Austro-Hungarian frontier defense policies. These anachronistic preoccupations of the SS were to find at least partial implementation in the HJ Land Service and the population policies of the National Youth Directorate.<sup>36</sup>

The security functions and self-conscious elitism had a tendency to set the SS apart from the SA, illustrated by the fact that the SS had 50 percent more casualties than the SA in the street battles of 1930 to 1933. The elitist ideology, aside from its historical and racist underpinnings, its emphasis on height and presumed Aryan physical characteristics, led Himmler to be increasingly more selective in the acceptance of new recruits. His own comparative youth, his association with the Artamanen, and as a way of putting distance between his SS and the SA, Himmler insisted, particularly after January 1933, that new recruits should be under 25 years of age. This was bound to lead him eventually to view the HJ as a most significant ally.<sup>37</sup>

The suppressive role of the SS, the assignment of security duties at the new party headquarters in the Brown House, and the reservation of leadership appointments to Himmler, gave the SS distinction from the party-controlled and party-financed SA. The SS, not regularly financed through the party until 1938, was dependent on its own resources. Himmler's ingenious use of the "Sponsoring Membership" mechanism, vastly extended from Berchtold's original idea, allowed the SS to become financially independent, while at the same time adumbrating its elitist image and attraction. Honorary memberships, titles and medals, were thus bestowed on thousands of "lay brothers" who contributed a fixed number of Marks per month. Wealthier members of society could afford to make such contributions more easily than poorer ones. The proportionately large percentage of upper middle-class sponsors and the nearly negligible proportion from the working-class, had a tendency to confer old-fashioned respectability of the traditional elites to the newly proclaimed elite of the SS in the popular mind. In 1931, old-line aristocrats, who in the calculations of most sociologists no longer deserved even a separate category for purposes of structural analysis, occupied some

10 percent of the regional administrative posts in the SS. In addition to aristocrats and retired army officers, the SS was especially successful in attracting large numbers of young landowners, industrialists, professors and lawyers, the latter two being particularly prominent in Heydrich's SD.<sup>38</sup>

Using the potent appeals of social and economic elitism, biological racialism, police and espionage functions, Himmler was able to attract a solid phalanx of professionals, technicians, experts, militarists, aggressive ideologists, and rationalistic bureaucrats, to whom organizational success and achievement as such mattered a great deal. Old fashioned morality and ethical standards, for most of them, seemed to be clearly overshadowed by overweening ambition to make careers for themselves and create pockets of personal power within the larger context of the SS and Hitler's approaching regime. By January 1933 the SS with its 52,000 members was in a position to play a decisive role in the process of seizing power and encompassing a disoriented society. The HJ, with a membership twice that size, played an equally important role in "synchronizing" the youthful masses. In the course of this disruptive and murderous campaign both SS and HJ moved away from the SA, still dominant on the streets.

## **THE ACCUMULATION OF HJ POSITION AND POWER**

Baldur von Schirach and his zealous cohorts launched an ambitious project in January 1933. Since 1929, when he tried to form a right-wing youth coalition, the aim of organizing the entire younger generation in the HJ had been passionately expressed.<sup>39</sup> Now that Hitler was in power the goal appeared to be near, provided some way could be found to finesse the contradictory effort of maintaining a degree of voluntarism. The latter was

a product of the first phase of HJ history, stretching from 1922 to 1932, when the leaders saw themselves as struggling for political power and youthful autonomy. The second phase began in 1933 with a vicious campaign to eliminate every competitor and incorporate all teenagers in a single organization, governmental authority visibly overshadowing voluntary participation. During the final phase the HJ transformed itself into a self-proclaimed "war youth," since the relentless activism, reminiscent of the "time of struggle," concentrated all efforts on winning Hitler's war.

The first month of Nazi power was a time of euphoric confusion, characterized by the Reichstag fire, the establishment of Hitler's dictatorship through the Enabling Act, and a massive rush to join the Nazi Party and its affiliates. A relentless "demand for totality," brought the HJ a quarter of a million new members in thirty days, without abating its hunger for a dominant position. Contrasting with the elitism of the SS, effectively realized before the formation of SS combat units, Schirach's HJ aimed at the total organization of the younger generation, a kind of generational revolution. This meant that the unification of youth was conceived as tantamount to the unification of the nation, i.e., the abolition of party politics. Only if youth was unified could the nation be thought of as a unified whole, but this meant, apparently, two different wholes within a larger social entity, like segments in an orange. The rind was National Socialism and the segments parts of society enclosed by the affiliates of the party.<sup>40</sup>

It was an uncompromising battle, with no quarter given, even to those somewhat analogous youth groups which professed new or old sympathies for National Socialism. The great ideal of a "people's community" justified every devious and coercive method, freely employed by Schirach with the aid of a willing SS, SA, and state bureaucracy. This vague and partially

misleading vision of the classless society was a powerful magnet and called for the extirpation of liberal individualism, thus creating a young national socialist Germany where every boy and girl felt and acted "instinctively Nazi." It was not simply a matter of producing "miniature Nazis" or "SA recruits," but rather a new generation of hardened political warriors who were not afraid to "receive black eyes and bloody noses."<sup>41</sup>

The full significance of the totalitarian demand of the HJ did not penetrate the consciousness of the many competing youth groups, among whom they remained a decisive minority. Although youth leader of the party and member of the Nazi Reichstag delegation, Schirach was unknown to the general public until his appearance as official radio commentator for the ceremonies opening the newly elected legislature. His claim that the HJ found it difficult to cope with the onrushing flood of new recruits while undoubtedly correct masks the devious aim of those newcomers who tried to join with their groups intact. There was also the possibility that the leader of the huge veterans organization known as the Stahlhelm, Franz Seldte, a member of Hitler's coalition cabinet and the Commissioner of the Labor Service, or Colonel Walther von Reichenau of the National Defense Ministry, might attempt to organize an agency for pre-military training of all German youth. Schirach's response to these political maneuvers was typical of his whole approach to the process of consolidation: he adopted a carrot and stick policy towards middle class associations known as the Bünde, inviting individual members to join the HJ but vigorously denouncing the groups themselves as elitist organizations, totally out of tune with the classless music of the new order. He wrote a strongly-worded letter to party leaders, stating his position, denouncing the "insane Bünde," and indirectly attacking both Seldte and Reichenau.<sup>42</sup>

In early April Schirach decided to take forceful action against the National Commission, a semi-official agency representing all youth associations with a total membership of five million. Fifty HJ boys, one of them carrying an old carbine, led by Karl Nabersberg, himself only 25, descended on the offices of the Commission. The HJ commando intimidated the secretaries and the business manager, Hermann Maass, rifled the files and confiscated what they considered to be valuable material. An appeal to the Ministry of the Interior went unheard, encouraging Schirach and Nabersberg to continue the coercive quest for totality. Nabersberg and Hartmann Lauterbacher soon led another commando into the offices of the National Association for German Youth Hostels and the Center of German Youth in Europe. Following each of these raids, valuable property and records were confiscated, while Schirach's associates assumed actual control under his general chairmanship.<sup>43</sup>

Thousands of individual members of organized youth groups and non-organized young people continued to stream into HJ ranks, although confessional groups and most of the B}nde remained strangely unaffected by the events. Some of the larger B}nde with some 70,000 members finally coalesced to form the Greater German Youth Association (GGYA), and tried to march into the Third Reich under President Hindenburg's protection.<sup>44</sup> The threat of serious competition began to dawn on Schirach when he studied the confiscated files of the National Commission. A year later he wrote: "The position, which the HJ possessed through me, was not strong enough to overcome the last eccentricities within German youth....The F}hrer <was> convinced that the leader of the HJ would have to have the support of the state to complete his work."<sup>45</sup> Hitler issued a decree, making Schirach Youth Leader of the German Nation, with "authority over all male and female

youth associations," including responsibilities normally assumed by state and communal commissions. Within hours of the announcement, Schirach disbanded the GGYA, confiscated its files and sequestered its bank accounts. This action was followed by the dissolution of the National Commission.<sup>46</sup> Acting under his acquired authority, Schirach created a Youth Leadership Council with representatives from the various types of youth groups and with liaison men for the relevant state ministries. Deputies were also named for the provinces, government districts, and communal administrations. These agents played an important role in the continuing regional and local fight against concurrent youth groups. Within the National Youth Directorate (RJF), the headquarters now transferred from Munich to Berlin, Schirach created a Department for Youth Associations, directed by Karl Nabersberg.<sup>47</sup>

Since the beginning of May a number of isolated coercive measures had been taken against Evangelical and Catholic youth groups, in the effort to force them to submit before the Concordat with the Vatican was concluded. The HJ rightly feared that the pact might protect Catholic youth associations. When the state initiated actions against the affiliates of the Center Party on July 1, Schirach arranged to have the Gestapo search the offices of Catholic youth associations, to disband them and to confiscate their files. On the following day, Franz von Papen, who was negotiating with Cardinal Pacelli, telegraphed from Rome that the police action of the previous day was endangering the successful conclusion of the pact. The Gestapo ban was lifted and on July 8 Schirach found himself subordinated to Interior Minister Frick, actions which resulted, in part, from the conclusion of the negotiations for the Concordat. Hitler was not prepared to let the revolutionary Spielerei of the HJ interfere with efforts to secure his hold on

the government.<sup>48</sup> Frick issued guidelines to assure civil behavior on Schirach's part, but at the same time he recognized what had already happened and ordered all youth groups to inaugurate the "leadership principle". Frick's guidelines softened HJ methods and slowed the tempo, but they did not stop the incorporative campaign. The action was merely transferred to regional and local leaders, disguised as "deputies."<sup>49</sup> Within two years, when Himmler had the Gestapo and police in his grasp, coercive measures took their full toll of the resurgent youth associations.

Schirach's aim of incorporating the entire adolescent population in the HJ could not be achieved during the so-called seizure of power. Remnants of many B}nde went underground and small bands of resisters continued to plague the HJ. Catholic youth groups enjoyed the protection of the church hierarchy and the Concordat for a number of years, with official dissolution coming in 1936 and 1939.<sup>50</sup> Since the leaders were openly sympathetic to the Nazis, the Protestant youth associations were another matter entirely. With the connivance of Reichsbischof Ludwig M}ller, head of the collaborationist "German Christians," and the willing assistance of pro-Nazi Erich Stange, the leader of a large group of Protestant youth associations, they submitted to Schirach at the end of the year. That Protestant youngsters succumbed more easily than their Catholic confreres is due, at least in part, to the fact that much of Hitler's early electoral support came from Protestant quarters and that Protestant youth did not have the support a Catholic hierarchy could offer its young people.<sup>51</sup>

As the annus mirabilis of German history faded, the situation clarified itself. By the end of October 15 associations had either disbanded voluntarily or been dissolved when their sponsoring political parties were outlawed. Eleven organizations had transferred to the HJ without endangering its

control either by decision of the leadership or majority vote of the membership. Nine associations had disbanded themselves without HJ pressure, none of them very significant. But there were still 25 Catholic groups, 30 Evangelical associations and 5 B}nde. In addition to these, there were 37 youth organizations of varied affiliation or persuasion, among them 12 Jewish youth groups, with a combined membership of 30,757. The Catholic groups contained 1,286,000 youngsters, the Protestant 1,536,00, and the miscellaneous groups some 649,000 members, while the B}nde still had 9,000 under their wing. It has been estimated that there were 7,529,000 teenagers between the ages of 10 and 18 in Germany in 1933, which means that some 1,749,000 or roughly 23 percent, remained aloof to all organizational appeals. The important fact, however, was that the HJ had literally exploded from 110,000 members in January to nearly 2.3 million at the end of the year (Table I.2).<sup>52</sup> Even if allowance is made for a bandwagon psychology, which benefited the party and all its affiliates, the approximate 23-fold growth of the HJ in less than a year, suggests that the supra-class propaganda was more than wishful thinking.

Mere organizational inclusion, of course, did not fully meet the revolutionary goals of Schirach's totalitarian demand. Despite a temporary membership ban, the legions of teenagers marching under HJ banners required a comprehensive structure and a corps of reliable leaders. While repeatedly disclaiming any intention of creating a bureaucracy, Schirach soon discovered that a youthful administrative apparatus was the inevitable outcome of his inclusive policies. Early in 1933 the RJF divided itself into some twelve departments, responsible for various segments and activities of the HJ. These bureaus, perpetually changing during the period of most rapid expansion, were substantially enlarged as primary Offices. Headed by

HJ veterans from the time of struggle, they were subdivided and compartmentalized, each section handed over to so-called specialists, while technical experts were hired to keep the wheels turning.<sup>53</sup>

Between 1933 and 1936, when membership jumped from one to five million, the Organization Office played a central role. Aside from administrative detail, which HJ managers mastered efficiently, this bureau designed and purchased uniforms, flags, banners and other paraphernalia, of no little importance to adolescents. It is interesting to note that these were precisely the symbols wartime rebels pilfered, whenever they had the opportunity. External symbols helped to create a sense of social equality, giving the vaunted notion of a "national community" some semblance of truth, just as the bizarre apparel of asocial protesters gave them a feeling of communal distinctiveness from the dominant majority.<sup>54</sup>

The Social Office conducted the widest range of activity, since Germany was still battling the effects of the depression. It was directed by Artur Axmann, who began his HJ career in 1928 as the organizer of factory cells in working-class Berlin. Axmann and his associates sought to improve hygienic practices, counsel youngsters choosing careers, organize outings and vacation camps, and lobby for laws protecting young workers. Without admitting it, Axmann continued the work begun by the disbanded National Commission. The unusual National Vocational Competition, started in 1934 and involving 1.8 million participants by 1937, was a product of Axmann's organizational skill and commitment to social progress, as the Nazis perceived it. What passed for socialism in HJ ideology was symbolized by the work of the Social Office throughout the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>55</sup>

From the time of the depression the HJ lobbied for laws and regulations protecting young workers in industry by extending vacation time,

reducing daily hours of work, providing better insurance coverage, and regulating child labor. The Youth Protection Law of 1938 was a victory for the social activists in the movement. The RJF made persistent efforts to maintain the health of the young through its medical department and promote social welfare among the needy through cooperation with the Nazi Welfare Organization and the Winter Relief Project. Technical and home economics instruction, radio broadcasting, musical performances, dramatic shows, model airplane building and gliding, as well as hiking and nature exploration, were activities systematically engaged in to avoid boredom and abuse of leisure among the young. The youth hostel establishment was probably the largest in the world. During the war the RJF embarked on a large-scale children evacuation scheme to protect them from danger, involved the BDM as assistants to nurses in hospitals and the HJ as aids to fire-fighters and ordinary policemen. Thousands of boys and girls were mustered to collect discarded materials for recycling in the wartime economy. There were also major programs to aid farmers in bringing in the harvest and entertaining wounded soldiers at home and in the field.<sup>56</sup>

Much of this activity was clearly political in motivation and had a compulsive flavor. Yet the reaction against coercion expressed by wartime rebels hardly ever included these types of activities as objects of denunciation. In fact, it was precisely this kind of ameliorative social work which kept the best and most perceptive leaders - already disenchanted politically - going during the war years. Maschmann spoke to the heart of the issue: "Anyone who looks today at the training schemes, plans of action or performance reports of the HJ will gain an impression of a tremendous rigidity, uniformity and energy channelled into physical activity. To some extent this is correct, but it is not the whole picture. These documents do

not tell him that although the young people let themselves be molded into a rigidly organized movement, there were many girls and boys who remained fully alive in the process. They fulfilled with joy and tenacity the tasks that were required of them, proud of their successes and eager to prove themselves in a service which was no child's play but bitter necessity."<sup>57</sup>

Sports and physical fitness was an obsession with the HJ, affecting and infusing all of its activities with muscular competition. The Office for Physical Training under Dr. Helmut Stellrecht, offered every imaginable game and form of competition to the young as an inducement for participation. Specialized activity was conducted in separate HJ units for youngsters interested in aviation, motor cars, boating, and equestrian sports. In 1937 this office was split in two, one dealing with physical training per se and the other dedicating itself specifically to pre-military training, a primary concern after the introduction of conscription. Whether the HJ as a whole can be thought of as a "paramilitary organization," however, is debatable.<sup>58</sup>

For an organization the size of the HJ stability was of crucial importance, since the unwieldy apparatus had to be controlled and integrated if it was to function at all. The Personnel Office under Heinz Hugo John performed this duty successfully by selecting and training leaders, enforcing discipline, and supervising promotions. John planned the curriculum of the Leaders' Academy in Brunswick and after 1937, when the Personnel Office inherited the duties of the disbanded Office for Youth Associations, he established an ominous relationship with the police and the SS by overseeing the build-up of the HJ Patrol Service.<sup>59</sup>

The National Youth Directorate was the executive instrument of the Youth Leader, whose orders were enforced by a deputy and chief of staff through the offices of the RJF, their subordinate regional departments and

district stations. Throughout the life of the RJF there were only two Youth Leaders and three staff chiefs. Karl Nabersberg was succeeded as chief of staff in 1934 by Hartmann Lauterbacher, who surrendered the post to Helmut Mückel six years later. In 1940 an important change in the direction of the HJ took place with Schirach's replacement by Artur Axmann. This relatively slight turnover at the top produced a kind of continuity not found in most RJF offices or on the lower levels of administration, not to speak of other youth organizations. As professional youth managers these five men revealed quite extraordinary political talents and administrative skills, without developing any particular technical expertise, displayed by the academically trained staff of the major offices. Two of them became party Gauleiter and state administrators, Schirach in Vienna and Lauterbacher in Brunswick, where they functioned as Hitler appointees, frequently in defiance of party bureaucrats and SD detractors.<sup>60</sup>

The personal element, generally underestimated by those who like to characterize "totalitarian parties" as rigid in extremis, played an important role in the HJ, even in the overall structure, which was more flexible than one would surmise. There were four basic segments in that structure: the HJ in the narrow sense, for boys from 14 to 18; the German Young Folk (JV) for 10 to 14 year old boys; the Association of German Girls (BDM) for girls between 14 and 18; the Young Girls (JM) for female children from 10 to 14. Territorially the structure took the form of Superior Regions, of which there were 5 in 1933 and 6 after the annexation of Austria in 1938; Regions, with 28 in 1933 and 42 in 1943; and Districts, with a total of 328 in 1933 and 1,002 in 1943. The Regions were coterminous with party Gaue and the Districts followed party Kreis boundaries. A systematic grouping by age characterized the lower units, so that each Gefolgschaft, F{hnlein,

M{delgruppe and Jungm{delgruppe incorporated four different age groups (Chart I.1). At formal ceremonies on Hitler's birthday 10 year old youngsters were inducted into the JV and JM and 14 year olds into the HJ and BDM. A natural progression by age made for a simple organizational scheme and an opportunity for homogeneous grouping. Whether it failed to allow for individual differences and hindered initiative is a matter of some debate, although at least one recent student of the HJ has denied that it did. Since very few HJ activities were cancelled before 1944, there is reason to believe that a degree of initiative remained intact.<sup>61</sup>

A number of Special Formations, designed to prepare members for subsequent military careers, were organized in the early thirties. The Marine-HJ, most popular in the years before remilitarization, had 21,500 participants in 1934 and grew to 50,000 by 1938. Although there was no air force yet, 10,000 youngsters belonged to the Air-HJ in 1934 and 64,000 aviation enthusiasts joined by 1938. The Motor-HJ, taking its cue from the NSKK, recruited 3,000 teenagers in 1933 and had 90,000 five years later. The least popular was the Signal-HJ, with 400 members in 1934 and a mere 29,000 four years thereafter. The young boys of the JV were not to be outdone. Their Model Airplane Companies started with 10,000 in 1934 and expanded to 73,500 by 1938. Most important of these special training organizations in terms of the SS connection was the HJ Patrol Service and the HJ Land Service, the former with approximately 50,000 members and the latter with 26,000 participants in 1939-40. This means that less than 15 percent of the entire HJ were engaged in some form of premilitary training before the war, while less than 18 percent of the HJ proper were involved in the proto-military activities of the Special Formations. This hardly made the HJ a paramilitary organization.<sup>62</sup>

In supervising and controlling what had become the largest youth organization in history, the RJF came to act not unlike traditional government ministries. It is hardly surprising that hierarchical channels were frequently clogged or ignored. A struggle for position, and competition for the favor of the Youth Leader and his deputy, prevailed from the start. It became more intense during the war. Among the 300 to 400 leaders employed by the RJF, many were in their twenties and occupied the higher posts, while older men and women, who were needed to do the expert work of administration, held less prestigious positions. This situation, created in part by the desire to have particularly visible posts occupied by young individuals, produced strained working conditions and numerous cabals. Despite these normal bureaucratic drawbacks, a youthful energy and combative spirit generated a nervous dynamic among leaders who were proud of their new profession. Melita Maschmann was in a position, as one of them, to make sharp observations. Long after the collapse of the Third Reich, she still believed that the "young men and women in the RJF...were driven by restless motivation. The wheel of continuous action created ever renewing energy from its own motion and pulled everyone along who happened to be in its path."<sup>63</sup>

"Youth must be led by youth" was a slogan that had some basis in fact. Hitler said he believed in it and Schirach preached it endlessly, which would tend to cast doubt on its reality. Yet, homogeneous leadership, or cohort guidance, was one of the unique aspects of the HJ. It produced a sense of conviviality and high morale, at least until the military defeats began to take their toll. "The age- determined, excessive thirst for action and stress on movement," writes Maschmann, "found a wide field in the continuously demanding action programs of the HJ." In this context, the inherent conflict

between individual initiative and the "leadership principle," which some have found in the HJ, is quite beside the point. It was a matter of engaging in collective action, living a common life shared by young people of the same age, and following leaders chosen from their ranks. Before 1933, Schirach liked to believe, leaders had been chosen by a kind of natural selection. After that, they were carefully selected and trained in regional leadership schools and at the Academy for Youth Leadership. This system was slow in taking effect, and frequently failed to produce the desired quality of leadership through the mid-thirties, but it gave the HJ some 765,000 male and female leaders as of May 1939. Over 20,000 of them then served in the staffs of the various directorates and the rest functioned as "formation leaders" on the local level. Most of them served on a part-time basis. The 8,000 full-time administrators constituted the corps of professional youth leaders.<sup>64</sup>

This leadership corps was in quest of an autonomous "community of fate," whose life style, organizational structure and cohort direction were determined by the needs and aspirations of youth. This social nirvana could be attained, they believed, by satisfying the persistent "demand for totality." There was an obsession with all-enveloping collectivity, excluding any expression of individual eccentricity and asocial, egocentric behavior. This *idee fixe* drove Schirach to rely on legal means of coercion, when it became obvious that the entire younger generation would not respond to the appeals of the HJ. Back in the summer of 1934 it seemed as if all youth would join overnight, presenting the HJ with insuperable organizational problems and persuading Schirach to issue a membership ban. Seven months later his optimism proved to be a mirage and the ban was lifted. The treasured principle of voluntarism had to be abandoned, along with the RJF pretense that they had not used the power of the state to unify youth. Several

Regions reported a significant decline in membership during 1935, Berlin alone losing 23.6 percent of its members. The Berlin recession may be related to the SA purge, since the HJ still shared a revolutionary image with Röhm's stormtroopers and Schirach's attack on class-conscious proletarians in the HJ began shortly after the "night of long knives." In any case, the RJF mounted a new membership drive concentrating, in part, on the offspring of party members, many of whom were still reluctant to enroll their children in the official youth organization.<sup>65</sup>

With half of the relevant age group still outside the HJ, Schirach had no choice but to request Hitler's assistance in the form of legal sanction. The "Law Concerning the Hitler Youth," released on December 1, 1936, while it purported to "concentrate the entire German youth" under Schirach, who became responsible for their "physical, spiritual and ethical education outside of family and school," fell short of the mark. The National Youth Leader was rhetorically transformed into a "superior national authority" and subordinated directly to the Führer and Chancellor, but no provisions were made to enforce the measure. The promised "implementation orders" did not emerge from Hitler's chancellery until the spring of 1939. The HJ remained a voluntary organization, albeit with additional state support, largely of propagandistic value. Frick called for "energetic assistance of all party and state offices to produce fruitful educational efforts," but some party men questioned whether regional leaders had also acquired state power and the provincial and municipal governments were no more willing to help finance HJ units than before. Municipalities, in fact, were not compelled to build HJ Homes until 1939, a clear indication that the HJ was not yet perceived as a state organization.<sup>66</sup>

There had been nearly a year's delay in issuing the Law. Another 28 months elapsed before it was implemented. The reason for this diffidence on Hitler's part is complex and obscure. Expecting parents to submit their children under 18 to compulsion as they had those over 18, when military conscription and labor service was introduced in 1935, was, perhaps, considered excessive even by Hitler. Clearly there was resistance to the idea of the Law and to Schirach's ambitions from various quarters, including party leaders, parents and Bernhard Rust. The Minister of Education lobbied vigorously against the enactment. It was no secret that Schirach wanted to replace Rust and that their rivalry had turned to bitter enmity, punctuated by a campaign of vilification against the schools, their policies, curriculum and teachers. Members of the HJ, encouraged by their leaders, intimidated non-Nazi teachers, disturbed classes, damaged school property, and generally created an atmosphere in many schools which made normal educational activities difficult to conduct. The Nazi Teachers' Association did little to defuse hostilities and frequently contributed to them itself. A "revolution in education," Schirach called it pretentiously, but he meant no more than an anti-intellectual, anti-academic emphasis on useful knowledge, character-building, and the usual Nazi virtues of honor, "blood," loyalty, obedience, physical prowess, heroism, and national pride. Rust still clung diffidently to the educational values of the old cultural elite.<sup>67</sup>

In the spring of 1939, when certain elements in army and SA once more threatened the independence of the RJF, Hitler's caution evaporated. Schirach got his implementation in the form of the "Youth Service Law." This measure obligated all Germans between 10 and 18 to "perform service in the HJ," which thus acquired "legal educational rights" over children akin to those of the school authorities. Rust had been completely outmaneuvered and the

decline of education was certified. Schirach received the right to enforce service, and parents, who might still be tempted to keep their children out of the HJ, were threatened with fines and imprisonment.<sup>68</sup> Although it still retained some purely party functions, the HJ had become a compulsory state organization. Alongside labor and military service a third obligation was now added. All male Germans at last had become servants of state and party, from the age of ten to the end of military service, which for most meant the end of the war - provided they survived it.

After 1940 few youngsters escaped HJ membership. Schirach's totalitarian demand had finally been achieved on the eve of his departure for Vienna. A lengthy memorandum prepared in 1942, probably by Paul Wegener, a Bormann protege undoubtedly reflecting the latter's view, deplored the effects of the HJ Law. Since the 1939 implementation had abrogated voluntary membership, irreparable damage was done to an organization of "militant, idealistic activists." The HJ, Wegener thought, had been a creative "minority of naturally selected elites," very much a part of the general party organization, but the compulsory membership had substituted for close association with the party a "fundamentally false dependency" on the state. The policy of fusing party and state positions, as in the case of Schirach and Axmann, had been a failure. It inevitably led to the strengthening of the state and the weakening of the party. The HJ, in Wegener's view, could no longer be considered a party affiliate, but a hybrid of questionable effectiveness in achieving the goals of the party.<sup>69</sup> So, it seems, that generational autonomy of sorts had been achieved. Germany's younger generation had created a state within a state, although it was utterly committed to its bogus patron saint, Adolf Hitler, and was to come increasingly under the sway of the lesser false prophet, Heinrich Himmler.

## THE ACCUMULATION OF SS POSITION AND POWER

There is little question that the SS was a new type of elite within the Nazi movement, a development Himmler had carefully nurtured since 1929 by creating distinguishing external symbols and fostering a self-conscious superiority to the unemployed masses of the proletarian SA. With the incorporation of two huge veterans' organizations, the SA had become an unmanageable political force, certainly a handy instrument for consolidating power, but at the same time threatening to the regular army and to Hitler himself. In this ambiguous situation the SS once more revealed its distinctive character as an indispensable praetorian guard.<sup>70</sup> Vaguely still subordinate to the SA leadership, Himmler's technicians of power participated with R|hm's undisciplined mobs in the numerous street brawls, intimidations, illegal "arrests," tortures and outright murders designed to crush rival parties and organizations. When it came to more subtle forms of suppression and clandestine political manipulation, which accompanied the public violence and secured the real hold on the levers of power, the SS demonstrated its peculiar efficacy. The ultimate test came in June 1934, when Hitler was compelled to decapitate the SA in order to procure the allegiance of the army, halt the growing demand for a "second revolution" from SA ranks, and make his movement and the government respectable in domestic and foreign eyes.<sup>71</sup>

Special squads of Sepp Dietrich's SS Body Guard and Theodore Eicke's followers were stealthily used to murder R|hm and his immediate entourage, along with a number of innocent victims. Many members of R|hm's circle were certainly disreputable in the conventional sense, although the homoerotic

ethos of the SA leadership, so anathema to Himmler, seems not to have bothered Hitler until he saw it as an excuse for a brutal political excision designed to restore the party to full health. Heydrich, Himmler and Goring played key roles in fabricating evidence to persuade the Fuhrer that Rohm had planned a coup against him. A grateful Hitler then granted the SS complete independence from the SA, making Himmler directly subordinate to himself. Victor Lutze, the new SA chief, was forced to "clean up" the truncated SA, and to restructure the organization so fundamentally that it hardly functioned as an effective paramilitary force anymore. While the new SA, filled with simmering resentment against its blackcoated brethren, still did its share of parading, even received minor tasks from Hitler now and then, the best of its members gravitated to the SS, leaving the rest as "second class" citizens in the movement. Goring meanwhile had opened the door of his Gestapo to the SS without receiving anything in return.<sup>72</sup>

By the end of the year three distinct divisions emerged within the SS. The Special Duty Troops (SSVT) incorporated a variety of militarized units used in seizing power and including the SS Body Guard created to protect the Reich Chancellery. Another segment, now called General SS (A-SS), was composed of all non-military members or part-time "political soldiers" and administered through Main Sectors, Sectors, Regiments, Battalions and Companies, geographically distributed over the whole country. Clearly designed as a successor to the SA, this was a kind of paramilitary reserve which concentrated on indoctrination and physical training. Comprising the third division were several unique units, now called SS Guard Formations, which became custodians of concentration camps taken over from the SA in 1933-1934. Heydrich's SD, rapidly developing into a haven for intellectuals and academics, had become the party's sole information agency, and was

vaguely referred to as an "extraordinary formation" to camouflage its real functions as the spearhead of Himmler's campaign to integrate all police forces under his control.<sup>73</sup>

Himmler faced a two-fold problem after the Röhm affair. On the one hand, the SS was confronted by an avalanche of opportunists; on the other, Himmler had to develop the ways and means of recruiting suitable manpower for the proliferating activities of the SS, without sacrificing the high standards required to maintain its elite character. The first was primarily a problem of selection, organization, leadership and discipline, leading to expulsions, constant reorganization and shifting relationships within the SS hierarchy. Being entirely an internal matter, it was subject to relatively easy solution. The second problem involved direct challenges to state institutions like the army, the police, and the bureaucracy. Efficient resolution could only come by way of direct order from the Chancellor and Führer, the two-fold title Hitler assumed after President Hindenburg's death. Explicit constitutional delimitations were never set, however, and the state functions which the SS gradually acquired, although confirmed by some kind of Hitler order, were largely the result of aggressive political infighting carried on by Himmler's bureaucratic imperialists.<sup>74</sup>

In this fashion, the SS-Verfügungstruppe (SSVT), formed in the fall of 1934 with three regiments on paper, developed into an elite army of nearly one million men. Originally justified vaguely as a special force for domestic use, these units were known as the Waffen-SS (W-SS) by 1940. They virtually became a fourth branch of the Armed Forces in the end. While recruitment, training and logistical support remained under SS control, grudgingly agreed to by army authorities, in the field SS divisions came under regular army command. From the beginning their function had a quasi-state, quasi-party

quality, which made them especially well-suited to Hitler's vacillating administrative style.<sup>75</sup>

Himmler's ambitious plans expressed themselves in other ways. The enlargement of the Central SS Office seemed to anticipate rearmament and the accompanying growth of armed formations and A-SS. Under the direction of Kurt Wittje, this vital core administered an increasing number of activities. Since the spring of 1933, the Body Guard and the Political Preparedness Units - germ cells of the SSVT - were under his roof. In 1934 the concentration camp apparatus and its Guard Formations, commanded by Theodor Eicke, were added to his roster. The Auxiliary Frontier Personnel, under Central Office control since 1933, and the Frontier Control Service, within its jurisdiction since 1934, were combined into Frontier and Guard Units in 1936. Between January 1935 and the spring of 1936, the Central Office added bureaus for recruiting, welfare, security, cavalry units, motor transport, engineer and signal units. Inspectorates were created for the SSVT and the Totenkopfverb{nde (SSTV), the new name for concentration camp guards, and the Cadet Schools organized earlier.<sup>76</sup>

Mere bureaucratic expansion was only one aspect of Himmler's accelerating activities and multiple functions. During the winter of 1935-1936 his Personal Staff was enlarged, implying increasing involvement by way of Parkinson's Law. Among these arcane new pursuits were the promotion of racial antiquarianism within the Ancestral Heritage Society and the care of unwed mothers under the Well of Life Society, a curious combination of lying-in hospital and notoriously exaggerated "breeding farm." The Personal Staff also handled Four-Year-Plan projects relating to Himmler's ill-defined sphere of work. The SD office and the Race and Settlement Office (RuSA) received main office status, suggesting increasing

preoccupation with racial matters and spying, at the time already involving members of the HJ Patrol Service.<sup>77</sup> In July 1936 Hitler affixed the apex to Himmler's emerging empire by appointing him Chief of the German Police, thus initiating the silent effort to integrate the newly nationalized police forces into the SS bureaucracy. Other positions, like Reich Commissar for the Strengthening of Germandom, Minister of the Interior, Chief of the Replacement Army, Commander in Chief of the Popular Militia, and field commander - a ludicrously desperate experiment in the "Peter principle" - were to follow in the disastrous course of the war. The exercise of police power, however, always remained Himmler's most significant function (Chart I.2).<sup>78</sup>

These events should not be interpreted to mean that the SS had jettisoned its elitism. Himmler did not want a mass organization like the SA, which declined steadily after the introduction of the military draft, although an absolute membership ban never really prevailed, as some have claimed. While some 60,000 members were expelled between 1933 and 1935, young men with the right physical characteristics and political attitudes were always welcome. The numerical growth of the SS during the peacetime years was therefore measured and steady, with 196,000 members in January 1935, 230,000 in December 1938, and 250,000 in September 1939 (Table I.1). With the onset of war expansion became a reckless affair, without any significant relaxation of racial standards until the final years. Towards the end one could no longer speak of the SS as an elite body, unless Heydrich's SD can be considered a kind of residual elite within the overall structure.<sup>79</sup>

In 1944 almost four million men and women conducted the activities of what was still called an Elite Echelon: 950,000 soldiers, including 310,000 ethnic Germans and 200,000 foreigners, fought in the W-SS; 40,000 guards

terrorized and liquidated millions in twenty concentration camps and 160 affiliated labor camps; 3,000 members of the infamous Einsatzgruppen, made up of security police and W-SS personnel, murdered half a million people behind military lines; 100,000 SD informers spread a network of secret surveillance throughout the country; 45,000 members of the Gestapo investigated real or imagined opposition to the regime; 64,000 security police officers protected the state and 2,800,000 regular policemen kept order, although not all of them were formally members of the SS. The interest, interference, and terror of the SS seemed to reach into every nook and cranny of German society. It was certainly an empire, although one could hardly speak of it as monolithic in any sense of that term. What held this conflict-ridden, inefficient and competitive system firmly in Himmler's grasp was the institution of so-called Superior SS and Police Leaders, introduced in 1936. They played an important role in fusing SS and Police, in the occupation bureaucracies, in the concentration camp system and the "final solution," and became eventually some sort of "intendants of the state system." In each of these various roles they found themselves frequently in conflict with other segments of the SS, with political leaders of the party and the state bureaucracy.<sup>80</sup>

## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RELATIVE SIZE, AGE AND CLASS**

In terms of size Lenk's and Gruber's early effort had significance in that it pointed to the direction in which future success lay. Lenk's experience revealed that right-wing coalition politics was irrelevant under existing conditions, whereas Gruber showed that relative indifference to social class and concentration on generational rebellion promised more in terms of

organizational growth, especially if one concentrated on the comparatively large urban youth contingent of the working-class. Within two years of his official appointment, he increased the size from 1,000 to 10,000, while in the next year (1928-1929) the HJ experienced a 30 percent increase, followed by a 62 percent and 76 percent influx in the next two years respectively. The important breakthrough for the HJ per se and all of its affiliates, except the NSS, came during the last years of the Republic, under Schirach's leadership (Table I.1). The HJ proper experienced a 92.2 percent increase during the period stretching from Gruber's resignation in October 1931 to January 30, 1933. This was closely matched by the BDM, although it suffered from competition by other Nazi youth groups, particularly the rival organizational efforts of the Nazi League of Women. The BDM, JV, and JM were not properly organized until 1931. They were in a fluid state during this period, which accounts for the statistical uncertainty in the available sources. The nearly 40-fold expansion of the JV is hard to fathom, unless the quiet influx from the Bunde and some overlapping memberships account for it. Desertions from the small NSS alone cannot provide the answer. The 13.8 percent decline in NSS membership only amounts to 2,214 pupils and some of these may have gone elsewhere. From January 1, 1932 to January 30, 1933, the HJ proper had a less impressive influx of 49.6 percent. The overall growth of all Nazi youth groups between 1931 and early 1933 is certainly not inconsiderable since it exceeds 100 percent. The figure for university students is even higher, although they represented a mere 10 percent of the student population, which in turn was a small minority of their national age cohorts (Table I.3).<sup>81</sup>

When these figures are compared with those of its competitors, the HJ emerges as a decided minority in pure statistical terms. The combined

youth organizations of the communist and socialist parties, including all ages, had over 80,000 members in 1933. The right-wing parties had 253,000, and the Center Party youth numbered 35,000. But the KPD and SPD were irretrievably at odds and the divisions among the youth groups of the Right were so severe that no effective cooperation was possible. The semi-political bourgeois youth associations known as the Bünde, more direct descendants of the classic German Youth Movement, numbered some 70,000, but were also rendered politically impotent by virtue of factional disputes. The most effective socialist youth organization, the SAJ, which was attached to the SPD, should have been the HJ's main challenger, having had 100,000 members already in 1924, but it lost strength in the latter years of the Republic. In 1931-32 the SAJ was able to attract only some 50,000 youngsters to its ranks (Table I.4). The National Council, which incorporated all of these groups, as well as very large confessional youth organizations, had a combined membership of over four million.<sup>82</sup>

As we have seen, only about a quarter of Germany's adolescents remained immune to the appeal of organized youth life in 1933, while the HJ and its affiliates literally exploded, moving from roughly 120,000 members in January to nearly 2.3 million at the end of the year. Between 1933 and 1936, when membership jumped from one to five million, there still was no legal compulsion to join. When the HJ Law of 1936 appeared to make membership compulsory, about one half of the relevant age group was still outside the HJ. Total HJ membership increased rapidly, after a brief slow-down in 1934-1935 and 1937, but failed to reach the goal of total incorporation. Before legal compulsion was implemented, only some 1.6 million young people in the relevant age group of 8.9 million remained aloof to HJ appeals, while nearly 7.3 million (not counting nearly a half million older BDM girls) did respond.

Managing to organize some 82 percent of all youngsters in the nation within an official youth organization before legal compulsion was fully applied, suggests that Schirach's totalitarian drive was essentially successful (Table I.2).<sup>83</sup>

The hysteria about the continuing existence of "illegal" Bünde, asocial cliques, and adamant resisters was a problem only in the unrealistic view of the HJ totalizers. The fact that more than 82 percent of German youth put on the HJ uniform is impressive enough by any standard. That the Nazis managed to ignite a sense of euphoria among Germany's non-academic youth is patently obvious, even if allowance is made for a large proportion who did no more than submit lethargically or with apathetic indifference. From this perspective a number of important questions arise. Since the HJ gradually evolved as a curious mixture of voluntary and state organization, an amalgam of mass movement and officially sanctioned institution, which of the two aspects over the course of its development from 1926 to 1939 was most important in the minds of those who joined? Would the organization have disintegrated if legal compulsion had not been applied, or would it have developed into the kind of prestige organization which some party functionaries wanted it to be? More importantly, what would have happened if Himmler had not come in to prop up the RJF and to strike the alliance which sustained its continued existence as a mass organization?

The question of SS size is of a different order of magnitude, since it never sought to be a mass organization but was always meant to be an elite. The early SS never exceeded the approximate ten percent of SA strength prescribed for it by Hitler. Shortly after Himmler's arrival the SS slightly exceeded this quota, but at the time of the power seizure it was no more than seven percent of SA strength and half that of the HJ. In the early

1930s Himmler even expelled some 60,000 members, but at the same time began to build up the armed formations which reached a strength of over 9,000 by the late summer of 1936. The numerical growth of the total SS during the peacetime years was measured, reaching a size of about a quarter million on the eve of war. The question of elitism became problematic after the introduction of foreign personnel into the W-SS. By 1944 total SS membership had nearly reached four million, representing roughly 35 percent of the total HJ membership.<sup>84</sup> At that point, it no longer mattered in any respect, since Himmler's future plans for the SS, as a permanent elite replenished from the HJ, could only be realized after a military victory.

Both Schirach and Axmann were 27 when they became national youth leaders. What is more important is the fact that 69 percent of 200 prominent leaders were between 22 and 32 years old in 1932, with 27 percent of them falling between the ages of 24 and 26. Regional leaders were a little over 30 and district leaders were 25 on the average. Leaders below that level were only a year or two older than the children under their supervision. No youth group, except the communist, could match this young leadership.<sup>85</sup> The cadre of professional youth leaders was indeed very young and carried unprecedented responsibility. That a certain nervous dynamic should have prevailed not only in the offices of the RJF but all the way to the local unit, as Maschmann claims, is certainly credible by virtue of age alone. Heck's experience as a very young district leader towards the end of the war tends to confirm that judgment. The simple and uniform organizational scheme which Schirach developed clearly appealed to youngsters and could easily be grasped and understood by them.<sup>86</sup> It is a sad commentary on the state of nurture during the Weimar Republic to think that German youth

might actually have wanted the kind of structure and direction the HJ provided.<sup>87</sup>

The SS too was much younger than one would have thought for an elite which sought ultimate domination. Himmler's insistence after 1933 that new recruits ought to be under 25 was nearly realized during the pre-war period. The average age of the SS throughout the Reich on January 1, 1934 was 26 years and 8 months. While there was a not surprising aging process that occurred in the following years, with the average settling at 29 years and 4 month by September 1, 1937, it was still rather young when one considers the important functions Himmler's order was engaged in by that time. In the case of the Fulda-Werra Region of the A-SS, which will figure in this study, some 70 percent of all members were under 30; in fact 39 percent were under 25, and nearly 5 percent were below 20 years of age.<sup>88</sup> Much of the General SS thus appears to have been even younger than the HJ leadership corps.

If one looks at the pre-war SS officer corps a similar picture develops, making due allowance for more mature individuals in positions of leadership, as in the case of the HJ. The 25-34 age group made up 37.2 percent of the officers from 2nd Lieutenant on up, as compared with 29.1 percent of literate adult males, which made up roughly 63.5 percent of the entire population. Those who were between 25 and 45 years of age made up over 80 percent of the pre-war leadership in the SS as a whole, the mean age being 37.4 years.<sup>89</sup> Analysis of the W-SS officer corps of 1944 suggests a generational shift, starting at the Standartenführer rank and moving down rapidly to the Sturmbannführer rank, 90.2 percent of whom were 41 or younger, 37.9 percent of them being between 31 and 35 years old. Some 13.7 percent of the Sturmbannführer were even younger, falling between the

age of 26 and 30.<sup>90</sup> This latter group could hardly have avoided the experience of the HJ during their teens. The preceding group of 31 to 35 year old Sturmabführer most likely contained a large proportion of those HJ leaders who entered the W-SS before the war and performed well enough to get rapid promotion. Since the SS was largely interested in members of the HJ when they reached their eighteenth birthday, between 1933 and 1945, it meant that the HJ age cohort, born between 1914 and 1928, was the most likely active participant in the HJ-SS alliance. The relative youthfulness of the SS rank and file, and especially the pre-war officer corps, made the alliance about as natural in terms of age as it could be.

The official claim that 69 percent of the HJ membership in the crucial 1930-1933 period consisted of young workers and industrial apprentices on the whole has been confirmed by the research of Peter Stachura.<sup>91</sup> The two-thirds figure is persistent enough to suggest a pattern. At the end of 1930, in HJ Gau Munich-Upper Bavaria, 65 percent of the boys were industrial apprentices, factory workers, or trades employees, while 16 percent were schoolboys, 11 percent were shopkeepers' assistants, 6 percent were agricultural workers, and 2 percent were unemployed. This meant that 71 percent were manual workers, 7 points behind a similar structure in HJ Gau South Bavaria at the beginning of that year. Much the same pattern developed in Hamburg, a more industrialized region. In the industrial heartland of Germany, HJ Gau Rheinland, with its strong left-wing organizations and solid Catholic youth leagues, the lowest HJ share of manual workers (55 percent) was recorded in 1930, but this pattern changed upwards to meet the national figures later when the HJ organization there became more effective. Among 2,800 new recruits in 1930, 36 percent had working-class origins, while 18 percent were fee-paying pupils at various secondary

schools, which would have identified them as coming largely from the social elite. But the 14 percent who transferred from other youth associations, thus no doubt belonging to the same social category, and the 32 percent for whom no social locus can be determined, point to the difficulty of social categorization for adolescents and make qualified conclusions advisable. Coincidentally, among the sixteen HJ boys killed in the street brawls of Berlin, eleven came from working-class families, as did the celebrated 12 year old Herbert Norkus, son of a Berlin taxi-driver. Clearly the HJ with its continuing social revolutionary ideology was more attractive to proletarians than the parent party, 26.3 percent of whose rank and file in 1930 and 32.5 percent in 1933 was made up of workers.<sup>92</sup>

The social origin of HJ leaders follows more closely the pattern of the party, rather than that of the HJ membership, being largely middle class, of the various levels, since at least 1926 but increasingly so after 1931. Only 6.5 percent of 200 prominent early leaders were clearly proletarian in background, whereas 53.5 percent belonged to the social elite, although some of these no doubt should be classified as petite bourgeois. The remaining 40 percent cannot be classified for lack of information. Applying Kater's scheme to the HJ leadership cadre as it had developed by 1939, we find that 30.2 percent of some 765,000 leaders (both full-time and part-time) fit the category of an upper middle-class elite, 27.1 percent could be considered as belonging to the working-class, and 42.7 percent fall in the lower middle-class category (Table I.5). There is little doubt that the upper ranks of the leadership were occupied by university students and university graduates, with an occasional proletarian like Artur Axmann throwing sand into class-conscious eyes.<sup>93</sup>

The HJ as a whole, however, retained a strong working-class character during the pre-war period, even at a time when more than three quarters of all youth were incorporated in its ranks. The proletarian element at the beginning of 1939, as calculated by methods now in vogue, came within a single percentage point (53.56 vs. 54.56) of matching the percentage calculated for the adult population from the 1933 census. The HJ thus made more substantial inroads into the offspring of workers than has generally been recognized. At the least, it was more heterogeneous than one would have thought, since 21 percent belonged in the elite category made up by university students, secondary school pupils and teachers, and a mere 25.44 in social categories deemed to belong in the lower middle class (Table I.6). When this social profile is compared with that of the leadership, we find an interesting but not surprising deviation from the rank and file pattern:

Occupation	Leadership	Total HJ	Deviation
Teachers, Students, Pupils	27.7	21.0	- 6.7
White collar employees	25.5	5.0	- 20.5
Technical occupations	8.7	3.0	- 5.7
Agricultural occupations	3.4	23.0	+ 19.6
Young blue-collar workers	20.9	42.0	+ 21.1
Without occupations	13.8	6.0	- 7.8

In comparison with the leadership, the much larger percent of blue-collar workers and peasant youth in the HJ as a whole is no surprise. If Peter Stachura is correct in assuming that all of those classified as employed in

agriculture were in fact "workers," then the resulting 65 percent working-class segment in the HJ is continued from the pre-1933 period, a possibility Stachura ignores since he confuses leadership with membership statistics. The equally smaller percent of white-collar employees is arresting. It is also interesting to note that the socially elevated group of teachers, students and secondary school pupils is only less prominent in the rank and file by 6.7 percentage points, although age clearly has more to do with this than social class consciousness. Yet young workers apparently found it just as easy to move from the workplace to the HJ den as students found it to move from the schoolroom to the HJ rendezvous. The leadership was an elite but only in a functional sense, since 20.9 percent of them were young blue-collar workers, and 25.5 percent white-collar employees.<sup>94</sup>

The SS, it has been held, incorporated a large representation of the upper middle class and a notable delegation of the aristocracy in its leadership. Kater found that the more differentiated group of semi-civilians composing the A-SS in 1937 recruited 70 percent of its membership from the lower middle class and 11 percent from the upper middle class. The latter figure is three times that of the employed population and almost twice the percentage of the upper middle class membership in the party. The number of lawyers and doctors in the A-SS is seven times larger than their numbers in the general population. Lawyers, physicians and professors had a particular affinity for the SD, while the old-line nobility found the medieval pageantry of Himmler's new elite especially attractive. Kater found that 9 percent of all SS leaders from Standartenführer and up were titled aristocrats in 1938, although the average proportion of aristocrats in the total pre-war officer corps hovered around 2 percent, according to Wegner. The average income of rank and file A-SS members was nearly twice that of

the civilian population. The problem of unemployment in 1937 and 1938 no longer existed for SS members, but persisted in the general population and especially in the SA with its hordes of semi-skilled and technologically unemployable workers. In creating the SS Himmler had managed to form an enclave for the privileged upper crust, or so it seemed, at least before the war.<sup>95</sup>

A calculation, using total SS occupation figures for 1937 and Kater's scheme of vertical occupational categorization, yields results that differ somewhat from previous findings. That 28.39 percent should fall within the lower class of unskilled and skilled workers, departing from Kater's 19 percent, may be due to the fact that Kater used a sample only for A-SS. The 53.01 percent, comprising the lower middle class segment, contains heavy representation of lower and intermediate employees, but still deviates from Kater large proportion because my calculation includes military and office personnel, hence the entire SS. The 18.60 percent in the elite category, with extreme over-representation of academic professionals (tenfold), students (fourfold) and higher civil servants (threefold), makes Kater's point even more effectively by using the total membership of the pre-war SS. Surprising is the fact that farmers, skilled craft workers, master craftsmen, lower and intermediate civil servants, and nonacademic professionals follow more or less the national trends. Unskilled workers, resulting in 9.84 percent by virtue of this calculation, were under-represented by more than 27 percent as one would expect (Table I.7).<sup>96</sup>

Using a modified version of Kater's categories and a large sample which excludes the SD, Herbert F. Ziegler has found the SS officer corps of 1938 to fall into the following social classes: 29 percent in the elite class, 44.8 percent in the lower middle class, and a "surprising" 26.2 percent in the

working-class. Ziegler's results for the lower class component, however, is not that unusual when compared with the same figure for the entire SS, deviating a mere 2.19 percent. Aside from the exclusion of the SD, which he considers to be atypical, Ziegler's conclusion cannot be quarreled with. In comparison with the literate adult male population, he suggests that the pre-war officer corps had a "respectable" membership measured by "traditional German social standards." It qualified as a social elite, although as such it provided "careers open to talent," giving preference to educated professionals before and after 1939. He argues that the SS was an "open organization both in terms of access and advancement" and that the SS officer corp developed a heterogeneous social structure that was reflected in its general outlook and underlay the decision-making process.<sup>97</sup>

Together these calculations suggest an even higher representation of the traditional elite than Kater himself found, and significantly higher representation of the working-class in pre-war SS ranks than has been generally assumed. Consequently, the lower middle class element becomes less pronounced. The SS's claim to be an elite in terms of social class had plausibility before the war, although the SS leadership certainly thought of itself more as a functional and racial or "new" elite than a traditional social and economic elite.<sup>98</sup>

During the war the SS as whole underwent substantial change, although these changes for the Black Corps as a whole are not entirely clear. One could argue that it became a kind of military elite out of necessity, or that the SD became a specialized elite within the larger context of a multifaceted and heterogeneous structure. Bernd Wegner's analysis of the W-SS officer corps of 1944 suggests that one could characterize the military leadership as a "middle class elite," a term equally applicable to all

non-communist leadership groups. In contrast to Kater, Wegner believes that social mobility and incomplete social change, typical of German society as whole, was also taking place within the war-time SS. In the meticulous pursuit of factors, which determined the "social heterogeneity" Wegner finds in the W-SS officer corps, a picture emerges which defies classification in conventional terms. Changes from the pre-war social structure, shifts away from the heavily Protestant orientation of top officers towards religious indifference if not an anti-religious ethos, a generational shift toward younger officers with lack of traditional social values, the development of mixed urban-country origins for officers, developing indifference toward party membership, fewer officers with military experience in the old army, all reveal an officer corps which at the end of the war can no longer be characterized as a traditional elite in social and economic terms. Reckless expansion, concentration on military professionalization and aggressive and unrestrained combat effectiveness, became the dominant motifs of the W-SS under the constraints of wartime necessities. A similar change undoubtedly took place in the rest of the Black Corps.<sup>99</sup>

The respective organizational size of HJ and SS was a function of aim, personality of leadership, relative autonomy within the movement, and official policy determined by Hitler himself. One sought to be a mass organization, incorporating an entire age-cohort, the other aimed at creating a new elite, replacing the old elite within German society. The professional corps of HJ leaders also can be regarded as a kind of elite, separating it socially and functionally from the rank and file, but it was different from the SS in that its goals were directed towards interests specific to the HJ as a youth movement. It developed a revealing affinity for the SS, which had no mass basis, by virtue of circumstance and the shared goals of the Nazi

movement as a whole. The surprisingly high proportion of lower class elements (27.1 percent) in the HJ leadership corps and the equally arresting working-class element in the SS as whole (28.4 percent), ought to raise doubts about generalizations regarding their elitist or petty bourgeois character. A notable degree of social diversity and the overwhelming youthfulness of both affiliates made the persistent propaganda about the Volksgemeinschaft more plausible and real than has been supposed. The HJ-SS coalition was more than merely an alliance of traditional social elites.<sup>100</sup>