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TITLE:

What was the impact of the ‘Strength through Joy’ and ‘Beauty of Labour’ schemes on Germany between 1933-1945?

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Section 1: Identification and evaluation of sources

The question of this investigation is: “What was the impact of the ‘Strength through Joy’ and ‘Beauty of Labour’ schemes on Germany between 1933-1945?”

The ‘Strength through Joy’ scheme (KdF) was developed by the Nazi party to increase productivity and to gain support for the party from workers by improving factory conditions. These developments were planned by the ‘Beauty of Labour’ organisation. It is important to make the distinction between the *intended* and the *actual* effects when analysing the impact these schemes had on workers between 1933-1945. The main argument is that the schemes were most successful in increasing support.

Sources of particular relevance were “Fundamente des Sieges: Die Gesamtarbeit der DAF”¹ by Marrenbach and Mason’s book “Social Policy in the Third Reich”². Equally, Baranowski’s “Strength through Joy, Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich”³ was especially useful for this investigation.

Source 1 (Appendix 1)⁴

The origin of the source is from the book entitled “Fundamente des Sieges: Die Gesamtarbeit der DAF” by Marrenbach, a politician for the Nazi party and a leader of the DAF. Thus, as this was intended to be seen by the public, the purpose of the source was to persuade people of the good work done by the KdF as part of DAF. Thus, this book has important values for this investigation. For example, it was written by Marrenbach who had access to records detailing attendance and performance at the KdF activities. Also, it shows that the number of participants increased each year, which adds value to the source because it presents the number of people receiving the Nazi party indoctrination at these events.

However, this is also the source’s greatest limitation as the statistics may have been manipulated in order to suit the KdF. Another limitation of the source in relation to my investigation is that it does not show public opinion, so does not determine the *actual* impact of the KdF on support for the

¹ Marrenbach, O. (1940) p. 334-5

² Mason, T. (1993)

³ Baranowski, S. (2004)

⁴ Marrenbach, O. (1940) p. 334-5

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Nazi party. The source is further limited as it does not indicate how much people had to contribute from private funds to attend, therefore it fails to present how far the KdF really did affected people's standard of living.

Overall, this source does present a significant value to my investigation as it provides statistics in relation to the KdF.

Source 2

Another particularly valuable source is Mason's book⁵ on the working class during the Nazi period. The origin presents its greatest value as Mason is a Historian specialising in this field, an expert of Nazi Germany. The fact that he was British adds to the value of the book as it could be argued that his nationality allowed him to be able to observe the evidence in a slightly more balanced way than a German historian perhaps could, who feels more involved in relatively recent events. However, the origin may also present some limitations. As a British historian, Mason may wish not to explicitly illustrate the beneficial effects of the Nazi schemes as Germany was Britain's enemy during the war.

The purpose of this source is to educate people about the conditions of the working class. This clearly adds to the value of the book as it was also written with the benefit of hindsight.

Concluding, this source's more critical assessment is extremely valuable to my investigation as it appears to be an impartial collation of evidence.

⁵ Mason, T. (1993)

Section 2: Investigation

The 'Beauty of Labour' scheme highlighted the need to improve the conditions within factories in Germany between 1933 and 1945, with limited direct impact on the conditions themselves. The Nazi Party launched multiple propaganda campaigns such as "clean men in a clean factory"⁶, "good lighting means good work"⁷ as well as Appendix 2 showing a propaganda poster for proposed factory improvements⁸. This led to 38,000 businesses⁹ being inspected by the scheme by the end of 1936, with the impact that "in half of those companies inspected, the proposals for improving factory conditions had been carried out promptly"¹⁰. The widespread and fairly costly nature of the improvements can be seen due to the evident increase in expenditure on factory developments from RM 80 million in 1936 to RM 200 million by 1938¹¹. However, it should be taken into consideration that it is "difficult to separate which reforms were the impacts of the 'Beauty of Labour' scheme' and which would have happened anyway as a result of a number of different factors"¹². Noakes' comment on the role of the reforms for improving the facilities for the workforce is a particularly good way of seeing how many are likely to have "occurred without the campaign, due to the existing competition between the firms for labour"¹³, thereby diminishing the *actual* impact of the scheme. Indeed, even with these industrial improvements a historian of modern German history, Berger, claims that workers were still denied their fundamental demands of reduced hours as well as increased wages¹⁴, thereby further lessening the impact of the 'Beauty of Labour' scheme in developing working conditions. Mason¹⁵ (as previously analysed in Section 1) adds validity to Berger's argument by stating that "factory inspections occurred in 1933, before the 'Beauty of Labour' scheme had even been created"¹⁶. Therefore, it has been argued that the scheme had the result of increasing awareness for the problems of the factory workers and making efforts to improve them, but real advances came from competition between firms.

⁶ Mason, T. (1993) p. 97

⁷ Mason, T. (1993) p. 97

⁸ Marrenbach, O. (1940) p. 334-5

⁹ Mason, T. (1993) p. 84

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 84

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 89

¹² Berger, S. (2000) p.49

¹³ J. Noakes and G. Pridham, (1998) p. 134

¹⁴ Berger, S. (2000) p. 57

¹⁵ Mason, T. (1993)

¹⁶ Mason, T. (1995) p.126

Similarly, the KdF had limited real impact on fulfilling its aim of “raising productivity”¹⁷, while it did highlight the need to improve the healthcare of workers. During the war, 5 million workers held a “‘Strength through Joy’ sports certificate”¹⁸. This is an especially useful detail showing that the scheme was relatively well known and widely supported, an indication of its popularity and thus that its impact was valued by the people. The large number of members participating in organised sport events also portrays how the KdF successfully reinforced the Nazi ideal that the population must be physically able in order to improve productivity in manual industry. Supporting this, is that between 1937 and 1939, the factories participating in the KdF scheme built a total of 4,600 company canteens and hired 3,400 company physicians¹⁹. Once again, this resulted in workers having better access to food and gaining regular medical examinations, ensuring their physical well-being, which in turn led to a more efficient workforce. However, as with the factory improvements, a direct link between increased productivity and the KdF should not be assumed. This is illustrated by Spode claiming that “a number of other factors were more important in affecting productivity such as technological developments in machinery”²⁰. In support of this is Ley’s criticism in 1941 of the “low educational level of events staged by the KdF”²¹, which would not have improved productivity as desired as it failed to encourage innovation or entrepreneurship from the German population, inhibiting advances. The fact that a leading Nazi member criticised the scheme is indicative of its inefficiency, as self-criticism was not a characteristic of the NSDAP regime. Indeed, Spode documents that it was not only the Nazi leaders who became disillusioned with the lack of impact the KdF had, as “Employers never ceased to complain about their workers’ diminishing joy in work”²². Thus, the KdF did not have a huge impact on increasing productivity, although it did emphasise the link between workers’ health and productivity, a factor leading to improvements.

More important to the regime than affecting productivity, the ‘Strength through Joy’ scheme impacted the growing support for the Nazi regime by introducing the possibility of equality. This was achieved through the sponsored holidays in which travel was targeted to less developed nations²³, with the effective result of making the German homeland seem more prosperous and

¹⁷ Spode, H. (2004) p. 134

¹⁸ Blackbourn, D. (2005) p.148

¹⁹ Mason, T. (1993) p. 89

²⁰ Spode, H. (2004) p. 139

²¹ Berger, S. (2000) p. 127

²² Spode, H. (2004) p.139

²³ Baranowski, S. (2004) p. 430

civilised under the Nazis. As Appendix 1 (as analysed above in Section 1)²⁴ highlights, 3/5ths of all workers took part in the KdF activities²⁵, with 9 million participating in 1934 alone. Consequently, these holidays impacted a large proportion of the population. Leading on from this, Mason illustrates the positive impact upon popular support by asserting that the tourist ships became a “gleaming symbol of the Nazi ideal of ‘Volksgemeinschaft’”²⁶ ideal by providing identical accommodation for crew and passengers²⁷. This also conveyed the idea to the workers that the Nazis sought to improve their social standing. By contrast, although holidays were subsidised, of a representative 350 workers’ families in 1937, 130 could not afford to spend any money on holiday excursions²⁸. For example, one week in the Harz Mountains would usually cost 28 marks (equal to the average weekly wage of an industrial worker) and a tour of Italy still cost 115 marks²⁹, highlighting the disparity that remained between holidays for the bourgeoisie and the workers, which is indicative that the KdF perhaps had a slightly smaller impact on breaking down social barriers. This discrepancy was heightened by the KdF sponsored holidays, causing “people to now look for places where there are no KdF visitors”³⁰, so the trips ceased to be something shared between all members of the German population. A worker directly complements this idea by claiming that the KdF program was “simply intended to look good”³¹ as the “bosses are certainly not thinking of the worker”³². This adds weight to the argument that the KdF had limited effect on increasing support for the regime from the workers as they had to construct the leisure time activities themselves for no pay. It can still be said, however, that because the KdF introduced workers to the prospect of equality, the scheme did have the desired impact by increasing support for the Nazis.

²⁴ Marrenbach, O. (1940) p. 334-5

²⁵ Mason, T. (1993) p. 50

²⁶ Mason, T. (1995) p.120

²⁷ Baranowski, S. (2004) p. 117

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 521

²⁹ Mason, T. (1995) p.20

³⁰ J. Noakes and G. Pridham, (1998) p. 285

³¹ Worker in ammunitions factory speaking in 1942 taken from the documents of Der Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (ADGB) 1942, Document 219 in J. Noakes and G. Pridham, (1998) p. 135

³² *ibid.*

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The main areas of impact of the ‘Strength through Joy’ and ‘Beauty of Labour’ schemes were to increase productivity, improve working conditions and increase support for the Nazi regime.

The primary impact of the schemes, however, was to raise mass support for the regime. This was because, although some people still could not afford to go on excursions, holidays generally became more attainable as well as initiating hope as they began to break down social barriers, even if only symbolically by providing identical accommodation for all classes on cruises. The growth in productivity cannot be said to have been a direct impact of the schemes. Although the larger number of canteens and physicians employed by the KdF in factories did aid industrial output, the “technological developments in machinery”³³ had a greater impact. Similarly, the improvements in conditions for workers can only partly be attributed to the ‘Beauty of Labour’ system as there were factory inspections previously, and only half of these institutions made the suggested changes.

Therefore, the most successful area of the ‘Strength through Joy’ and ‘Beauty of Labour’ schemes was the impact they had on increasing support for the regime. The schemes presented the workers with the possibility to experience events traditionally reserved for the nobility, which was used as an “important tool used by the regime for persuading the German public into accepting the racist and expansionist vision of the Reich”.³⁴

³³ Spode, H. (2004) p. 141

³⁴ Baranowski, S. (2004) p. 32

Section 3: Reflection

During my investigation I discovered that the approach I used did not differ as much from the methods a scientist might employ as I had expected, even though fundamentally I came to realise that history can never provide the same security of complete objectivity that science can. I gathered a wide range of 'data', taking steps to ensure that I had different perspectives by choosing a range of primary and secondary sources from different nations. Then, similar to a scientist or mathematician, I began the process of deciding upon the validity of data by cross referencing statistics and opinions. This highlighted a difference to science, as a chemist considers something true and reliable if the same result can be obtained by another person in the same conditions, with the same equipment. Clearly a historian does not have this possibility as there are an endless number of interlinking factors causing an event; German unification cannot be explained merely due to the presence of Bismarck, while the expanding of a potato in water is due to the difference in osmotic pressure. Thus, historians need to discard some sources which do not seem reliable as they were not supported by other historians. I recognise that in doing so I jeopardised the objectivity of my own investigation as I "cherry picked" which opinions or facts to include and which to discard. This perhaps is the main limitation of history; it can never claim to be fully objective. The process of selection introduces new bias at each level, providing many possibilities of interpretation. This, one could suggest, as well as being a flaw is also the greatest value of history, as multiple 'cause and effect' hypotheses can be drawn from the same event, meaning that several lessons can be learnt from history.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 ³⁵

| | 1934 | | 1935 | | 1936 | | 1937 | | 1938 | |
|------------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| | N | P | N | P | N | P | N | P | N | P |
| Concerts | 1,020 | 576,594 | 3,020 | 1,406,404 | 3,102 | 1,635,597 | 4,216 | 2,087,741 | 5,291 | 2,515,598 |
| Folk performances | 725 | 285,037 | 6,042 | 959,378 | 2,943 | 601,293 | 2,029 | 331,263 | 54,813 | 13,666,015 |
| Operas, operettas | 959 | 540,841 | 2,190 | 1,458,747 | 3,665 | 2,342,470 | 3,421 | 2,902,429 | 12,407 | 6,639,067 |
| Theater | 2,839 | 1,581,573 | 8,425 | 3,653,040 | 9,700 | 4,060,670 | 14,265 | 5,982,987 | 19,523 | 7,478,633 |
| Variety, cabaret | 1,315 | 481,855 | 5,155 | 2,394,942 | 7,146 | 2,576,800 | 6,184 | 2,551,507 | 7,921 | 3,518,833 |
| Light evenings | 3,189 | 1,228,457 | 14,506 | 4,884,761 | 13,848 | 6,396,313 | 10,954 | 4,206,172 | 10,989 | 4,462,140 |
| Films | 3,372 | 316,968 | 7,435 | 1,760,274 | 5,850 | 1,467,862 | 4,419 | 989,273 | 3,586 | 857,402 |
| Exhibits | 72 | 237,632 | 383 | 1,318,297 | 584 | 832,198 | 380 | 1,160,296 | 555 | 1,595,516 |
| Guided tours | 1,528 | 90,242 | 8,124 | 585,584 | 16,043 | 951,049 | 26,947 | 1,279,126 | 676 | 58,472 |
| Other | 9,653 | 3,772,464 | 11,811 | 5,107,327 | 23,500 | 10,333,383 | 37,695 | 16,064,510 | 15,084 | 11,118,636 |
| Autobahn entertainment | | | 2,044 | 214,462 | 4,942 | 598,566 | 6,484 | 880,359 | 13,589 | 2,658,115 |
| Total | 24,672 | 9,111,663 | 69,135 | 23,745,116 | 91,323 | 31,796,702 | 116,994 | 38,435,663 | 144,434 | 54,568,467 |

N = Number of performances.
 P = Number of participants.
 Source: Otto Marrenbach, *Fundamente des Sieges: Die Gesamtarbeit der Deutschen Arbeitsfront von 1933 bis 1940* (Berlin: Verlag der Deutschen Arbeitsfront, 1940), 334–5.

Appendix 2 ³⁶



³⁵ Marrenbach, O. (1940) p. 334-5

³⁶ Baranowski, S. (2004) p.81