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# For Want of Membership and Money: The 1936 Hitler Youth Law and the Hitler Youth’s Home Procurement Campaign

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## Abstract

This article offers a much-needed reconsideration of the Hitler Youth law’s purpose and impact. It contends that Hitler’s cabinet adopted the 1936 law for two reasons: first, to pressure boys and girls to join the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls, and second, to compel municipalities to finance the construction of thousands of new Hitler Youth *Heime* (homes). The first part of the article focuses on the drafting of the Hitler Youth law and locates the origins of the Hitler Youth’s *Heimbeschaffung* (home procurement) campaign. It argues that Nazi leaders deliberately inserted language into Article 2 of the final law that would pressure municipal and district authorities to fund the construction of new homes in their communities. The second part of the article documents Nazi leaders’ repeated efforts to persuade and compel municipalities to finance new construction, assume the costs of ongoing maintenance and, after 1939, pay rental and maintenance costs for temporary accommodations.

**Keywords:** Hitler Youth law; *Reichsjugend*; Hitler Youth homes; Hitler Youth home building campaign; Law for the Promotion of Hitler Youth Home Procurement; *vorläufige Unterkünfte*

The Law on the Hitler Youth from December 1, 1936 remains one of the Nazi regime’s most misunderstood laws. Contemporary observers detected within the law’s first article, which read “the entire youth of Germany within the confines of the Reich is united in the Hitler Youth,” an effort to make membership in the Hitler Youth and its female branch—the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls, or BDM)—mandatory. A December 3, 1936 *New York Times* article, for example, characterized the new decree as an “enforced membership law.”<sup>1</sup> In her 1938 book *School for Barbarians*, German émigré Erika Mann similarly theorized that the law gave “German youth and [their] parents... the impression that it is damaging and actually against the law to remain outside the State Youth.”<sup>2</sup> And generations of historians have erroneously maintained that Nazi leaders adopted this law to make membership mandatory and to transform the Hitler Youth into a state youth organization.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Reich Lets Catholics Retain Youth Groups,” *New York Times*, December 3, 1936, <https://www.nytimes.com/1936/12/03/archives/reich-lets-catholics-retain-youth-groups-but-under-the-new.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

<sup>2</sup> Erika Mann, *School for Barbarians: Education Under the Nazis* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2014), 114.

<sup>3</sup> For more discussion about prior scholarship, see Michael Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg. Hitlerjugend und nationalsozialistische Jugendpolitik*, Teil 2 (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2003), 250–51.

In fact, the Hitler Youth law neither made membership compulsory nor transformed the Hitler Youth into a state youth organization. Membership remained voluntary until March 1939 when Hitler's cabinet issued the *Jugenddienstverordnung* (Youth Service Regulation). And the Hitler Youth remained a branch of the Nazi Party long after the law's passage.<sup>4</sup> Yet one thing the law *did* do—something subtle yet consequential—was grant the Hitler Youth access to local tax revenues. The key provision was Article 2, which read: “The entire German youth, besides [being reared] in the family home and schools, will be physically, intellectually, and morally educated by the Hitler Youth to serve, in the spirit of National Socialism, the nation (*Volk*) and the people's community (*Volksgemeinschaft*).”<sup>5</sup> In characterizing the Hitler Youth as an educational organization equal in importance not only to families but also to schools—a public good that communities had long acknowledged as their financial responsibility—the article authorized the Hitler Youth to pressure municipalities to finance its allegedly educational work.

What if Nazi leaders adopted this law not only to coerce boys and girls to join the Hitler Youth and the BDM but also to compel municipalities to finance a national building campaign that would provide Nazi youth with thousands of new meeting spaces, or *Heime* (homes)? The building scheme at the center of this historical hypothesis is the Hitler Youth's *Heimbeschaffung* (home procurement) campaign.

On January 1, 1937, Hitler Youth leader Baldur von Schirach announced a major policy initiative for the upcoming year: the construction of thousands of “modest, purpose-built, and beautiful youth homes.” Both the Hitler Youth and the BDM had so successfully grown their membership over the prior year, he explained in a New Year's Day address, that they now had a pressing need for rooms and buildings where squads and platoons could hold their weekly *Heimabend* (membership meeting).<sup>6</sup> Schirach's ambitions for the program were massive. One of his deputies predicted in February 1937 that the plan would produce 4,000 homes in the first year alone and 52,000 new homes in total.<sup>7</sup>

This article has two goals. The first is to demonstrate the plausibility of this theory—that Nazi leaders deliberately inserted language into Article 2 of the Hitler Youth law to pressure municipal and district authorities to finance the Hitler Youth's home building campaign in order to secure a network of newly built facilities that would serve the Party, particularly should they decide to make membership in the Hitler Youth mandatory. The article's second goal is to document Nazi leaders' repeated efforts first to pressure and later to compel municipalities to subsidize the Hitler Youth by financing new construction, assuming the costs of ongoing maintenance, and after Germany's return to war in 1939, paying the costs of renting and maintaining *vorläufige Unterkünfte* (temporary accommodations).

This reconsideration of the Hitler Youth law provides further evidence that Nazi leaders sometimes prioritized concerns about money (and armaments) over questions of ideology as they deliberated and formulated policy. Although Hitler was undoubtedly more rigid when it came to issues comprising his core beliefs—such as race, antisemitism, or Germany's territorial needs—he and his deputies could be flexible on topics that lay beyond this core.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, this study underscores the regime's concerns about public perception. Instead of simply seizing municipal funds to subsidize the Hitler Youth's building needs, Nazi leaders instead crafted a law that camouflaged this money grab as an ideologically

<sup>4</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 251.

<sup>5</sup> “Gesetz über die Hitlerjugend. Vom 1. Dezember 1936,” *Reichsgesetzblatt* 1 (1936): 993, <https://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=dra&datum=1936&page=1083&size=45>.

<sup>6</sup> Heinrich Hartmann, “Neujahrsaufruf des Jugendführers des Deutschen Reichs,” in *Werkhefte für den Heimbau der Hitlerjugend*, Band I (Leipzig: Skacel, 1937), 17.

<sup>7</sup> “4000 Jugendheime sollen entstehen,” *Badische Chronik der Badischen Presse*, February 9, 1937, 7, <https://digital.blb- karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/2178698>.

<sup>8</sup> Doris Bergen, *War & Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 52.

driven effort to transform youth into stalwart Nazis and dutiful members of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (national people's community).

### The Hitler Youth Law and the Hitler Youth's Construction Plans

The Hitler Youth law of December 1, 1936 marked the official erasure of nearly every other preexisting youth group, recognized the Hitler Youth as the sole organization responsible for organizing youth, and invested it with responsibility for educating adolescent boys and girls. Schirach and his allies portrayed the 1937 building campaign as a response to this new law. Yet the timing of key events suggests that Schirach conceived of this building scheme during ongoing negotiations about a forthcoming youth law. These events also imply that Schirach collaborated with Hans Lammers, Chief of the Reich Chancellery, to shape the law with this building campaign in mind and insert key language into the final draft of the Hitler Youth law that would grant the Hitler Youth access to municipal resources.

Although Schirach and his organization ultimately benefited from the December 1936 law, the inspiration for a youth law actually originated with Bernard Rust, Reich Minister of Science, Education, and National Culture. In late March 1935, Rust's ministry proposed the *Gesetz über den deutschen Jugenddienst* (law for German youth service). This law would have obliged youth aged ten to eighteen to participate in a compulsory Reich Sports Service that the education ministry would oversee. It is notable that Rust suggested this law as Nazi leaders contemplated various strategies for introducing premilitary training for teenage boys. Historian Michael Buddrus describes the draft as Rust's "poorly camouflaged" effort to establish himself as the leader of premilitary education and thereby protect his domain against the Hitler Youth's growing influence. He was also eager, Buddrus explains, to reassert his supremacy over Schirach.<sup>9</sup>

Baldur von Schirach was certainly a formidable rival. Born in Berlin in 1907 to a German father and an American mother, Schirach joined the Nazi Party in 1924 and became a member of the *Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (National Socialist German Student League) while enrolled at the University of Munich. According to a 1934–1935 lexicon of Nazi leaders, Schirach was in "constant contact" with Hitler starting in 1925 and soon became a member of the Führer's "trusted inner circle."<sup>10</sup> This close relationship paid dividends. In 1928, Hitler named Schirach leader of the university student group. Schirach successfully grew the organization and used it to garner more attention for the party.<sup>11</sup> In late October 1931, Hitler appointed Schirach the *Reichsjugendführer der NSDAP* (Reich Youth Leader of the Nazi Party). Various Nazi youth organizations now came under his control, including the Hitler Youth, which, at this point, was still a branch of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA).<sup>12</sup> Hitler terminated the Hitler Youth's relationship with the SA in April 1932, and this separation benefited Schirach, whom Hitler elevated to the level of *Amtsleiter* (office leader) on May 13, 1932. Schirach now answered directly to Hitler.<sup>13</sup> On June 17, 1933, Hitler again promoted Schirach, now twenty-six years old, by naming him the *Jugendführer des Deutschen Reiches* (Youth Leader of the German Reich).<sup>14</sup>

Although Hitler's announcement promised the creation of a Reich agency that this Hitler Youth leader (hereafter Youth Leader) would command, it never materialized. Instead, Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick issued a directive in early July 1933 that placed the Youth

<sup>9</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 252–53, 256.

<sup>10</sup> Alessio Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man: Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 84–85; *Das Deutsche Führerlexikon 1934/1935* (Berlin: Otto Stollberg, 1934), 415.

<sup>11</sup> Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man*, 85; *Das Deutsche Führerlexikon 1934/1935*, 415.

<sup>12</sup> Ernst Klee, *Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich. Wer war was vor und nach 1945* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2007), 536; Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man*, 85–86.

<sup>13</sup> Peter D. Stachura, *Nazi Youth in the Weimar Republic* (Santa Barbara, CA: Clio Books, 1975), 157, 161–62.

<sup>14</sup> "Baldur v. Schirach 'Jugendführer des Deutschen Reiches,'" *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, June 20, 1933, 3, [https://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht?id=5363&tx\\_dlf%5Bid%5D=419328&tx\\_dlf%5Bpage%5D=3](https://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht?id=5363&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=419328&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=3).

Leader of the German Reich under the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry, the federal ministry responsible for questions related to youth education prior to the regime's creation of the Reich Ministry of Science, Education, and National Culture in May 1934. In a decree dated May 11, 1934, Hitler gave the new education minister control over *Jugendverbände* (youth groups). This decision meant that the education ministry now also exercised authority over the Hitler Youth.<sup>15</sup> Hitler loosened this control in March 1935 when he signed a decree that recognized the Hitler Youth as an independent organization within the Nazi Party.<sup>16</sup> The Hitler Youth gained its full independence in December 1936 when Hitler's cabinet adopted the Hitler Youth law.<sup>17</sup>

Schirach responded to Rust's youth service proposal in October 1935 by submitting the first draft of what would eventually become the Hitler Youth law to Hans Lammers, State Secretary and Chief of the Reich Chancellery. Titled *Gesetz zur Führung der Deutschen Jugend* (law for the leadership of the German Youth), the draft called for the creation of a state youth organization that would educate young people "in the spirit of National Socialism."<sup>18</sup> The draft would have reshaped the Hitler Youth into a state youth organization and empowered it to oversee the political and physical education of all young people.<sup>19</sup> Lammers modified the draft by replacing the words "state youth" with that of "Reich youth" (*Reichsjugend*). This modification, he explained to Schirach, paralleled language in the recently adopted Reich Citizenship Law. Lammers' draft also suggested that the *Reichsjugendführung* (Reich Youth Leadership), the Hitler Youth's administrative branch, be refashioned into a high-ranking state authority and the Youth Leader made a civil servant.<sup>20</sup> This transformation might have entitled the Hitler Youth to federal funding.<sup>21</sup>

Given the Hitler Youth's persistent financial woes, Schirach likely welcomed Lammers' proposal. Since its establishment in 1926, the Hitler Youth had lacked adequate funding. Part of the organization's financial problems stemmed from its organizational standing. Party leaders first established the Hitler Youth as a *Verein* (association), a status it retained until March 1935.<sup>22</sup> Because it was not technically a party organization, the Hitler Youth did not qualify for inclusion in the party's budget. This exclusion meant that much of the organization's operating budget came from monthly membership dues.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the Hitler Youth had acquired significant debt during the *Kampfzeit*—the years preceding the Nazi Party's political takeover. The organization's rapid growth in 1933 exacerbated its financial problems. To find another source of revenue, in April 1933 Schirach launched a lottery to raise money (net proceeds equaled 249,000 RM). In 1934, the organization's fortunes improved slightly as membership dues increased, the party provided funding for the first time (3.2 million RM), and the Reich Interior Minister instructed communities to share resources earmarked for youth welfare with the Hitler Youth.<sup>24</sup> Many communities subsequently gave the organization access to municipal buildings and sports facilities and even

<sup>15</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 953–54; see also footnote 11.

<sup>16</sup> "Verordnung zur Durchführung des Gesetzes zur Sicherung der Einheit von Partei und Staat. Vom 29. März 1935," *Reichsgesetzblatt* 1 (1935), 502, <https://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=dra&datum=1935&page=644&size=45>.

<sup>17</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 954.

<sup>18</sup> "Gesetz zur Führung der Deutschen Jugend," Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter BArch Berlin) R43-II/525, item 4, <https://invenio.bundesarchiv.de/invenio/direktlink/a7107f59-de24-403f-b2e6-1485ac153c82/>. Although this document is lacking a date, the placement suggests early October; Buddrus explains that the first draft was dated October 10, 1935. Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 256.

<sup>19</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 256.

<sup>20</sup> "Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Führung der Deutschen Jugend (Reichsjugend). Vom Oktober 1935" and "Begründung," BArch Berlin R43-II/525, items 8 and 9.

<sup>21</sup> "Gesetz über die Führung des deutschen Jugend," from the Staatssekretär und Chef der Reichskanzlei to the Jugendführer des Deutschen Reiches, October 16, 1935, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, items 10 and 11.

<sup>22</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 256.

<sup>23</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 953, 955.

<sup>24</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 955; see also footnote 20.

provided small cash subsidies. Between 1934 and 1939, the organization's budget consisted mainly of party subsidies, membership dues, and municipal contributions. The organization's financial situation improved once again in 1940 when the Nazi Party's treasurer, Franz Xaver Schwarz, assumed full responsibility for funding the organization.<sup>25</sup>

As Hitler's cabinet reviewed Schirach's "Reichsjugend" proposal in November 1935, Reich War Minister Werner von Blomberg detected an opportunity to introduce premilitary training for adolescent male youth. He successfully lobbied Hitler to reshape this planned Reichsjugend into a vehicle for premilitary training. He also convinced Hitler to authorize one of Schirach's deputies, Helmut Stellrecht, to develop a detailed plan for actualizing these ambitions. In early December 1935, Hitler directed Stellrecht to draft a plan by March 31, 1936, that would ensure the physical fitness of Germany's youth under the guidance of the Youth Leader. He also ordered Lammers to produce a companion law that would introduce a mandatory *Jugenddienst* (youth service). The law would be the lever that forced male and female youth into the Reichsjugend.<sup>26</sup> Stellrecht's charge was to create an organization that would operate under the leadership of the Youth Leader but also involve the military in decisions about premilitary training.<sup>27</sup> Schirach responded to this potential diminishment of his authority by suggesting that the Hitler Youth provide leadership for the new organization.<sup>28</sup>

Building on this suggestion, both literally and physically, in late January 1936 Schirach laid the ground stone for the first *Reichsakademie für deutsche Jugendführung* (national academy for German youth leadership), located in Braunschweig. Perhaps Schirach initiated this building project to legitimate promises that the Hitler Youth could produce enough trained leaders for the proposed Reichsjugend. In his dedication speech, he vowed that this new institution would ensure a constant supply of capable leaders.<sup>29</sup> Or maybe he discerned an opportunity to boost his reputation, especially as newspapers across Germany reported on the groundbreaking ceremony.<sup>30</sup> The Youth Leader may have also detected a chance to portray himself as a builder of both buildings and movements—a theme he returned to in later years as he stressed the similarities between Hitler and himself.<sup>31</sup>

Stellrecht submitted his plan for a Reichsjugend to the Reich Chancellery on March 21, 1936, ten days shy of Hitler's deadline. His plan called for the creation of a mandatory youth service that would henceforth be known as the Reichsjugend. This organization would "capture" youth who had not yet joined Nazi youth groups and oversee their ideological education, ensure their physical fitness, and thereby prepare them to be both "Reichsbürger" (citizens) and soldiers. Stellrecht's proposal envisioned several layers of service, including weekly meetings and fitness training, monthly excursions and premilitary training, and two-week stints in training camps during the last three years of membership. The anticipated price tag for this organization was sizeable. Stellrecht

<sup>25</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 956–58, 966–69, 972–74, 977.

<sup>26</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 257–58; "Vermerk," Staatssekretär und Chef der Reichskanzlei, Berlin, January 6, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 28; document sent by Obergerbietsführer Dr. Helmut Stellrecht to Ministerialrat von Stutterheim, February 22, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 35; "Betr. Reichsjugenddienst," sent by the Stellvertreter des Führers to the Herrn Staatssekretär und Chef der Reichskanzlei, February 6, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 34.

<sup>27</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 258.

<sup>28</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 258; "Die Hitler-Jugend führt die gesamte deutsche Jugend," clippings, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 30.

<sup>29</sup> "Grundsteinlegung zur Reichsakademie für Jugendführung," January 24, 1936, *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro*, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 33.

<sup>30</sup> "Durch Sozialismus zur Nation.' Feierliche Grundsteinlegung zur ersten Reichsakademie für deutsche Jugendführung," *Der Führer* (Karlsruhe), January 25, 1936, 2, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/page-view/3459946>.

<sup>31</sup> Baldur von Schirach, "Gedanken zum Bauen der Jugend," *Die Kunst im Deutschen Reich* 4, no. 11 (1940): 175.

projected a one-time investment of nearly 38 million RM and ongoing annual expenditures totaling 60.4 million RM.<sup>32</sup>

Schirach shrewdly chose this moment to launch an initiative to expand the Hitler Youth's inventory of newly built *Heime*. These were the spaces that local squads and platoons would use to carry out various service functions, the most important being the weekly two-hour *Heimabend*. On March 6, 1936, Schirach sent a letter to Nazi Party treasurer Schwarz explaining his intention to establish a working committee that would oversee new construction. On March 26, 1936, Schwarz issued a directive to regional party treasurers, instructing them to support this initiative. He explained that Hitler had personally asked the Youth Leader to create a "unified" Reichjugend that would enlist children and adolescents in service to the German Volk. This new organization required "healthy and worthy" spaces to carry out this work. In support of this project, Hitler had made clear his intentions to give the organization a large cash subsidy. Schwarz's directive also explained that the Youth Leader had created an oversight committee whose membership would include a representative from the party treasury (Willy Damson). This body would guarantee the "fair distribution" of funds and review and approve all proposals for new construction.<sup>33</sup>

Schirach's enthusiasm for new construction signaled a clear shift in thinking. Previously, Nazi youth groups had used a variety of spaces to meet and organize, including cellars, barns, train cars, empty factories, barracks, classrooms, attics, garages, party offices, and horse stables.<sup>34</sup> After the party's ascension to power in 1933, local units also gained access to confiscated buildings, including properties that had once belonged to Catholic youth groups and "Aryanized" Jewish properties.<sup>35</sup> Nazi publications romanticized the ability of Nazi youth to make these simple spaces into usable homes. A 1934 BDM manual, for example, promised that with the right amount of inspiration and hard work, Nazi youth could transform even the "bleakest" of spaces into a "home."<sup>36</sup> And as recently as 1935, Schirach had suggested that an old railway car or "an empty villa" would suffice for a platoon's needs.<sup>37</sup> But by 1936, he had become a proponent of purpose-built homes designed specifically for the needs of Nazi youth.

Schirach had several potential motives for launching this larger building program. Perhaps he hoped that new construction would bolster voluntary enlistment. This was a realistic expectation. Gestapo officers in Aachen noted in March 1934 that children who had once belonged to the *Deutsches Jungvolk* (the Hitler Youth's section for younger boys aged ten to fourteen) had returned to confessional youth groups during the winter months because the latter had better and warmer facilities.<sup>38</sup> This was a significant concern for an organization that, by 1935, was experiencing a substantial decline in voluntary enlistments. According to official statistics, between year's end 1932 and year's end 1934, the Hitler Youth increased membership from 107,956 to 3,577,565.<sup>39</sup> Schirach's forced dissolution and coordination of competing youth organizations, together with the introduction of

<sup>32</sup> "Die Reichsjugend," BArch Berlin R43-II/525, items 51–103, see especially items 61 and 62.

<sup>33</sup> "HJ-Heimbeschaffung," from the Reichsschatzmeister to the Reichsjugendführer, August 11, 1936, and "Heimbeschaffung für die Hitler-Jugend und die Reichsjugend," Anordnung 11/36, from the Reichsschatzmeister to sämtliche Gauschatzmeister der NSDAP, March 26, 1936, BArch Berlin NS1/2354.

<sup>34</sup> André Postert, *Die Hitlerjugend: Geschichte einer überforderten Massenorganisation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2021), 234; "Vom Pferdestall zum HJ-Heim," *Der Führer*, July 18, 1936, 7, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/3462215>.

<sup>35</sup> Klaus Mlynek, "Hannover in der Weimarer Republik und unter dem Nationalsozialismus 1918–1945," in *Geschichte der Stadt Hannover/2 Vom Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts bis in die Gegenwart*, ed. Klaus Mlynek and Dieter Brosius (Hannover: Schlütersche, 1994), 545. These confiscations provoked resistance. Catholic youth in Solingen, for example, ransacked a property confiscated by the Hitler Youth and SA leaders. Postert, *Die Hitlerjugend*, 235, 242.

<sup>36</sup> *Mädel im Dienst. Ein Handbuch* (Potsdam: Ludwig Voggenreiter, 1934), 183–84.

<sup>37</sup> Baldur von Schirach, *Youth Activities in Modern Germany* (Berlin: Reichsjugendführung, 1935), 21.

<sup>38</sup> Postert, *Die Hitlerjugend*, 238.

<sup>39</sup> Günter Kaufmann, *Das kommende Deutschland. Die Erziehung der Jugend im Reich Adolf Hitlers* (Berlin: Junker und Dönhaupt, 1940), 39.

compulsory measures (such as State Youth Day) that placed “children under enormous internal pressure to conform,” contributed to this remarkable growth.<sup>40</sup> Yet by 1935, these compulsory measures had apparently run their course. By year’s end, the organization had cumulatively added only about 366,000 new members in all of its four branches (the *Deutsches Jungvolk*, the *Jungmädelsbund*, the Hitler Youth, and the BDM).<sup>41</sup>

Or maybe Schirach wanted to enlarge his political capital by overseeing a national building project. New construction offered an opportunity to solicit party support, raise funds, work with architects, planners, and municipal authorities, and potentially build thousands of new facilities across Germany that would display the emblem of the Hitler Youth on their front facade.<sup>42</sup>

Schirach could use this political capital, in turn, to deflect Rust’s repeated efforts to weaken his authority as Youth Leader. In November 1935, Rust’s education ministry shared the draft of yet another potential law, the *Gesetz über den deutschen Jugenddienst*, or *Reichsjugendtaggesetz* (law for the German youth service, or the Reich youth day law), that would have compelled all youth—even those already employed or enlisted in the Hitler Youth—to participate in fitness training on special *Reichsjugendtagen* (Reich youth days) that Rust’s ministry would oversee. Business leaders rejected the proposal because it threatened employers who failed to give employed youth paid time off to participate with either a fine or a prison sentence. Military leaders objected to the plan because it neither anticipated their participation or addressed their concerns about premilitary training.<sup>43</sup>

This failure did not prevent Rust from challenging Schirach yet again. In April 1936, the education minister registered his objections to the proposed Reichsjugend law on the grounds that it would limit his authority and splinter the regime’s educational efforts. He also contended that the draft ignored the educational role of families. He offered an alternative law, the *Gesetz über die Erziehung der deutschen Jugend* (law for the education of German youth), that would have invested schools and the Reichsjugend with responsibility for educating youth “beyond” (*außerhalb*) the family home, placed the Reichsjugend under the auspices of the education ministry, and subordinated the Youth Leader to the education minister’s authority.<sup>44</sup> Schirach vehemently rejected Rust’s draft. In a letter to Lammers, he asserted that Rust’s draft ignored Hitler’s intentions to place Nazi youth under the authority of a Youth Leader who reported directly to the Führer. Schirach also belittled Rust’s draft as unoriginal and insufficient in its vision of premilitary training.<sup>45</sup>

Schirach must have felt some relief by early May 1936 as it became increasingly clear that Hitler would adopt neither Rust’s nor Stellrecht’s plans. In late April 1936, Lammers confidentially assured Schirach that Hitler would not entertain Rust’s objections to the circulating draft of the Reichsjugend law.<sup>46</sup> Two days later, Martin Bormann, Hitler’s personal secretary, informed Lammers that the Führer had serious concerns about current plans to create a state youth.<sup>47</sup> Hitler’s reservations likely stemmed from Reich Finance Minister Johann

<sup>40</sup> Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man*, 88–90; Dagmar Reese, *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany*, trans. William Templer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 35.

<sup>41</sup> Kaufmann, *Das kommende Deutschland*, 39.

<sup>42</sup> Ingo Sommer, *Die Stadt der 500 000. NS-Stadtplanung und Architektur in Wilhelmshaven* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1993), 277.

<sup>43</sup> Harald Scholtz, *Erziehung und Unterricht unterm Hakenkreuz* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 67; Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 260.

<sup>44</sup> “Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Führung der deutschen Jugend (Reichsjugend)” and “Gesetz über die Erziehung des deutschen Jugend (Jugenderziehungsgesetz),” from the Reich and Prussian Minister für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung, Berlin, April 18, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, items 117 and 118.

<sup>45</sup> Document from the Jugendführer des Deutschen Reiches to the Staatssekretär und Chef der Reichskanzlei, Berlin, April 23, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, items 126–28.

<sup>46</sup> “Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Reichsjugend,” from the Staatssekretär und Chef der Reichskanzlei to the Jugendführer des Deutschen Reichs, Berlin, April 25, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 129.

<sup>47</sup> “Staatsjugend,” from the Stellvertreter des Führers to the Staatssekretär und Chef der Reichskanzlei, Munich, April 28, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 130.

Ludwig Schwerin von Krosigk's estimates that Stellrecht's Reichsjugend plan could cost the regime as much as 100 million RM every year. Von Krosigk predicted that the federal government would have to reduce expenditures on armaments to afford these expenses. In a document he shared with various Nazi leaders, von Krosigk suggested the government instead find a way to educate youth without creating a new and expensive infrastructure.<sup>48</sup>

As Hitler's interest in a mandatory and expensive Reichsjugend faltered, Schirach's interest in new construction seemingly flourished. In spring and summer 1936, Schirach supported several building projects, including a sports school for BDM girls in Berchtesgaden and several local Hitler Youth homes.<sup>49</sup>

Nearly immediately, Schirach's financial missteps in managing these schemes placed him in conflict with Schwarz, the Nazi Party's treasurer. Schwarz explained to Schirach that the party was willing to allocate 850,000 RM for the construction of new Hitler Youth homes, but warned him that his mismanagement was imperiling this allocation. In letters he sent to Schirach in July and August 1936, the party treasurer identified four major problems with Schirach's leadership. First, regional Hitler Youth leaders across Germany had used donated land and money to launch home building projects that, because of insufficient funds, could not be completed. And now these local leaders were asking Schwarz's office for subsidies to finish construction. Second, instead of using the party's generous grant to complete these local projects, Schirach was spending most of this money on the BDM sports school in Berchtesgaden and another project in Upper Silesia. Third, Schirach had not yet created or convened the working committee he had proposed in March 1936, a body that would have provided crucial oversight and likely prevented this misallocation of resources. Fourth and finally, Schirach had ignored, repeatedly, Schwarz's requests for a face-to-face meeting about these funding issues. Schwarz informed Schirach that, given these accumulating problems, his office would withhold 500,000 RM of the promised subsidy.<sup>50</sup> In late August, Schwarz contacted Bormann, Hitler's secretary, and explained that the Hitler Youth was in bad financial straits and Schirach's office was initiating building projects without first acquiring the party treasurer's requisite permission.<sup>51</sup>

Schirach swiftly addressed Schwarz's concerns about the proposed committee. On September 1, 1936, Schirach formally established the *Arbeitsausschuss für Hitler-Jugend-Heimbeschaffung* (working committee for Hitler Youth home procurement) and invested it with national responsibility for overseeing the construction of Hitler Youth homes, Hitler Youth leadership schools, and similar structures. He tapped Helmut Möckel, a high-ranking Hitler Youth leader, to oversee day-to-day operations. Möckel worked with a committee that included representatives from the education ministry (Georg Usadel) and the Nazi Party treasury (Willy Damson). Hartmann Lauterbach participated as Schirach's representative and the official chair.<sup>52</sup> Schirach officially announced the committee's creation on October 2, 1936.<sup>53</sup> In establishing this organization, Schirach shrewdly dismantled one of the party treasurer's biggest criticisms just weeks before a decisive meeting with Hitler.

<sup>48</sup> Document from the Reichsminister der Finanzen to the Staatssekretär, Berlin, May 6, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 136.

<sup>49</sup> Letter from Reichskassenverwalter der Hitler Jugend Georg Berger to the Reichsjugendführer, August 27, 1936, NS1/2354.

<sup>50</sup> "Heimbeschaffung," from Schwarz to Schirach, July 16, 1936, and August 11, 1936, BArch Berlin NS1/2354.

<sup>51</sup> Schwarz to Bormann, August 31, 1936, BArch Berlin NS1/2354.

<sup>52</sup> *Hitler-Jugend 1933-1943. Die Chronik eines Jahrzehnts* (Berlin: Franz Eher, 1943), 29; "Das Recht der jungen Arbeit. Die Heimbeschaffung der Hitler-Jugend," *Das Junge Deutschland* (February 1937): 68.

<sup>53</sup> "Arbeitsrichtlinien des Arbeitsausschusses für HJ Heimbeschaffung," Sonderdruck 1/37, *Verordnungsblatt Reichsjugendführung der NSDAP*, January 7, 1937, BArch Berlin NS1/2353. The preamble explains that Schirach publicized the committee's creation in the October 2, 1936, IV/24 edition of this same *Verordnungsblatt*.



On October 19, 1936, Schirach was in Berchtesgaden for the celebration of the newly completed Adolf-Hitler Youth Hostel.<sup>54</sup> Later that same day, Schirach met with Hitler. Schirach must have shared details of this meeting with Stellrecht, who, in turn, relayed them to Lammers. Stellrecht reported that, during this meeting, Hitler told Schirach he wanted to organize all youth in the Hitler Youth and abandon plans to create a separate Reichsjugend.<sup>55</sup> Schirach provided Lammers with more details almost three weeks later. He explained that, during his visit to Berchtesgaden, he had spent two days as Hitler's guest (likely at Hitler's Berghof residence). At some point, the two men had discussed the question of a future youth law and, to Schirach's "own surprise," Hitler announced his preference for Schirach's original October 1935 draft.<sup>56</sup>

Part of the basis for this decision, Schirach explained, was the Hitler Youth's success in enlisting new members through its *Jungvolkwerbeaktion* (recruitment campaign). In early 1936, Schirach had launched an initiative to increase voluntary enrollments among younger children—especially the cohort born in 1926.<sup>57</sup> According to official statistics, the organization ultimately recruited 87 percent of ten-year-old boys and girls.<sup>58</sup> It did so using a mix of propaganda and pressure, including contacting parents of eligible boys and girls and urging them to facilitate their child's enlistment.<sup>59</sup> Yet Schirach allowed Hitler to believe that the organization had captured 95 percent of this "youngest" cohort and successfully enlisted 90 percent of all other eligible youth between the ages of ten and eighteen.<sup>60</sup> The Hitler Youth's alleged success rendered the Reichsjugend unnecessary. In truth, the organization had enlisted nearly 76 percent of children aged ten to fourteen and only 49 percent of youth aged fourteen to eighteen.<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps Schirach and Hitler also talked during this October 1936 visit about the Youth Leader's developing plans to build a network of new Hitler Youth homes across the country. And maybe they discussed the possibility of using municipal funds to build these facilities. A comment Schirach made to Lammers in a November 1936 letter suggests that a conversation of this nature did take place. Immediately after recounting Hitler's preference for the October 1935 draft, Schirach wrote, "I think the time has come to realize this former plan and thus create conditions for a generous expansion of the Hitler Youth's educational facilities, especially with regard to its leadership." With these considerations in mind, Schirach continued, he had asked Hitler to support the law's expedited passage.<sup>62</sup>

Lammers began drafting the law, using the October 1935 version as a blueprint. He made revisions to the preamble, abandoning the phrase "the youth is the future of the nation" in favor of the words "the future of the nation depends on the youth." He modified Article 1 so that, instead of reading "all German youth in the Reich is the Hitler Youth," it now decreed "all German youth inside the Reich is organized in the Hitler Youth." And he made key changes to Article 2. In nearly every draft, this article had recognized the Hitler Youth as playing a significant role in the youth's moral, physical, and intellectual development. Perhaps anticipating objections from Rust, who had suggested that the Reichsjugend law

<sup>54</sup> "40 neue deutsche Jugendherbergen. Der Reichsjugendführer sprach bei der Einweihung der Adolf-Hitler-Jugendherberge in Berchtesgaden," *Der Führer*, October 19, 1936, 1, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/3463489>.

<sup>55</sup> "Vermerk. Reichsjugendgesetz," Berlin, October 22, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 136.

<sup>56</sup> Letter from Schirach to Lammers, Berlin, November 12, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, items 157 and 158.

<sup>57</sup> "Die kommende Neugliederung der HJ," *Karlsruher Tagblatt*, February 24, 1936, 2, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/2625233>; Reese, *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany*, 36; Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 265.

<sup>58</sup> Kaufmann, *Das kommende Deutschland*, 41; Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 265n71.

<sup>59</sup> Hans-Christian Brandenburg, *Die Geschichte der HJ: Wege und Irrwege einer Generation* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1982), 178.

<sup>60</sup> "Reichsjugenddienst," from Ministerialdirektor Sommer to Staatssekretär Lammers, November 17, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 163; Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 265.

<sup>61</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 265.

<sup>62</sup> Letter from Schirach to Lammers, November 12, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, items 157 and 158.

recognize the role of schools and families, Article 2 of a November 1936 draft read: “In the Hitler Youth, the entire German youth will be physically, intellectually, and morally educated in the spirit of National Socialism to serve the Volk and Volksgemeinschaft. The educational tasks of schools and the family home remain unaffected by this.” Lammers subsequently revised this article so that the final draft read: “The entire German youth, besides (*außer*) [being reared] in the family home and schools, will be physically, intellectually, and morally educated by the Hitler Youth to serve, in the spirit of National Socialism, the nation (*Volk*) and the national people’s community (*Volksgemeinschaft*).” Lammers’ decision to use the preposition “außer” (besides) is significant, for it equated the Hitler Youth’s educational work with that of schools and parents. Article 3 entrusted the Youth Leader with responsibility for overseeing this education while Article 4 empowered Hitler to draft implementation guidelines at a later date. Hitler’s cabinet adopted the Hitler Youth law in the late afternoon hours of December 1, 1936.<sup>63</sup>

The new law did not make membership mandatory or transform the Hitler Youth into a state youth organization. Yet the law was consequential. It invested the Hitler Youth, and not the education ministry or the military, with responsibility for overseeing the intellectual, moral, and physical development of young people outside of school. And, perhaps most importantly, Lammers’ strategic insertion of “besides” into Article 2 equated the Hitler Youth’s educational work with that of schools and parents. The Hitler Youth quickly capitalized on this provision to pressure municipalities to fund its so-called educational work, most especially a national home building campaign Schirach was preparing to launch in early 1937.

### Financing the Hitler Youth “Home Procurement” Campaign

When Schirach announced the Hitler Youth’s home building campaign on January 1, 1937, he portrayed this enterprise as a response to the newly passed Hitler Youth Law. He asserted that the organization needed these homes both to absorb the “hundreds of thousands” of children and teenagers who would now join Nazi youth groups and carry out its newly assigned educational work.<sup>64</sup>

And yet, two developments imply that Hitler’s cabinet adopted the law not only to expand membership but also to facilitate a building campaign that might allow the regime, in the near future, to make membership mandatory. The first was Schirach’s readiness to deploy this scheme so soon after the December 1, 1936 cabinet meeting. The second was the extent to which the Hitler Youth and regime leaders leaned on Article 2 first to pressure and then compel municipalities to fund construction and ongoing maintenance costs. After September 1939, when the regime suspended nonessential construction because of the war, the Hitler Youth again used this article to force municipalities to pay rent for temporary spaces.

Schirach deployed this new building campaign with a speed that indicates extensive pre-planning and an expectation that the new Hitler Youth Law would give him access to a reliable revenue stream. In late December 1936, the Hitler Youth announced that, in mid-January 1937, it would launch a ten-day publicity campaign that would detail the organization’s need for new construction.<sup>65</sup> On January 1, 1937, Schirach issued his New Year’s Day announcement and proclaimed that this was to be the *Jahr der Heimbeschaffung* (Year of Home Procurement).<sup>66</sup> On January 7, 1937, his office released substantial guidelines that another publication described as the result of “lengthy preparatory

<sup>63</sup> “Reichsjugendgesetz” (file placement suggests October 1936), BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 150; “Gesetz über die Hitlerjugend. Vom 1. Dezember 1936”; “Auszug aus der Niederschrift über die Sitzung des Reichsministeriums vom 1. Dezember 1936, nachmittags 4.15 Uhr,” BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 180.

<sup>64</sup> Hartmann, “Neujahrsaufruf des Jugendführers des Deutschen Reichs.”

<sup>65</sup> “Erstellung von HJ-Heimen,” *Der Albtalbote*, December 28, 1936, 7, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/5673613>.

<sup>66</sup> Hartmann, “Neujahrsaufruf des Jugendführers des Deutschen Reichs.”

work.”<sup>67</sup> The fifteen-page document included a reprint of Schwarz’s March 1936 directive to regional treasurers, a detailed description of the Working Committee for Hitler Youth Home Procurement’s membership and duties, and a listing of the high-ranking Nazis who would serve on an additional honorary committee. This document also included guidelines for regional leaders eager to launch their own construction projects and instructions regarding design and architecture.<sup>68</sup> The Hitler Youth next launched a national advertising campaign that lasted from January 15, 1937 to January 25, 1937 and used, according to one article, every “propaganda” means at its disposal.<sup>69</sup> This multipronged publicity campaign included radio announcements, newspaper articles, and even local parades and informational meetings for parents.<sup>70</sup>

A series of high-ranking endorsements soon followed. Of greatest consequence was Hitler’s January 14, 1937 statement, which read: “The education of youth is one of the most important tasks of the National Socialist state. I therefore anticipate that all concerned party and state agencies will support the Hitler Youth in its efforts to procure suitable homes for our youth.”<sup>71</sup> That same day, Schirach, Reich Interior Minister Frick, and Reich Finance Minister von Krosigk jointly urged municipal officials to collaborate with local Hitler Youth leaders to secure new homes.<sup>72</sup> Less than two weeks later, Frick, Rust, Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, and Chairman of the German Council of Municipalities and Munich mayor Karl Fiehler issued a joint statement encouraging party and state officials at all levels to support this national campaign.<sup>73</sup>

The Hitler Youth’s rapid publication of workbooks likewise suggests significant preplanning. Heinrich Hartmann’s *Werkhefte für den Heimbau der Hitler-Jugend I* was one of the first books the regime published. The 140-page book, printed on glossy paper, is a mix of text, blueprints, sketches, and photographs. Collectively, it contains approximately a hundred images. A brief sentence, tucked into the book’s frontmatter, explains: “The NSDAP has no objections to the publication of this work. The chairman of the official party examining board for protecting [National Socialist] literature. Berlin, 26. February 1937.”<sup>74</sup> This early approval date implies that Hartmann began compiling the book months earlier.

The Hitler Youth was also prepared by early 1937 to exhibit small-scale and life-size architectural models in prominent trade shows and exhibitions. The first of these was an enormous spectacle showcasing the regime’s major accomplishments during its first four years in power. Titled “*Gebt mir vier Jahre Zeit*” (Give Me Four Years’ Time), the exhibit took place in Berlin from April 30 through June 20, 1937 and featured several small-scale models and a life-size replica of a Hitler Youth home subsequently disassembled and rebuilt in the Volkspark Rehberge in northern Berlin.<sup>75</sup> In April 1937, the Hitler Youth sent models

<sup>67</sup> “Das Recht der jungen Arbeit. Die Heimbeschaffung der Hitler-Jugend,” 68.

<sup>68</sup> “Arbeitsrichtlinien des Arbeitsausschusses für HJ-Heimbeschaffung.”

<sup>69</sup> “Das Recht der jungen Arbeit. Die Heimbeschaffung der Hitler-Jugend,” 69; “1937—Das Baujahr der Hitler Jugend,” in *Bauen, Siedeln, Wohnen* (Berlin: Verl. d. Dt. Arbeitsfront, 1937), 69–70.

<sup>70</sup> “Gebt der HJ Heime! Der Reichsjugendführer zur Heimbeschaffungsaktion,” *Bochumer Anzeiger*, January 16–17, 1937, 2, <https://zeitpunkt.nrw/ulbms/periodical/zoom/5959258>; “Rastatt um die Wochenende,” *Badische Chronik der Badischen Presse*, January 27, 1937, 9, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/2178514>; “Durlach-Land: Wöschbach,” *Der Führer*, January 16, 1937, 10, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/3258671>.

<sup>71</sup> “Die Baupläne der HJ,” *Der Führer*, January 15, 1937, 2, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/page-view/3258650>.

<sup>72</sup> “Das Recht der jungen Arbeit. Die Heimbeschaffung der Hitler-Jugend,” 69.

<sup>73</sup> “Das Heim der Hitler-Jugend: Bestimmungen des Ehrenausschusses für die Heimbeschaffung,” *Badische Chronik der Badischen Presse*, January 17, 1937, 5, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/2178368>.

<sup>74</sup> Hartmann, *Werkhefte I*, frontmatter.

<sup>75</sup> Kathrin Schmidt, “Zur Baugeschichte des Kunsthauses Flora,” Gefördert aus Mitteln der Fonds für kulturelle Bildung 2016—BA Marzahn-Hellersdorf, 4–5, [https://www.kultur-marzahn-hellersdorf.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/PDF/KH\\_Flora/b-Zur\\_Baugeschichte\\_des\\_Kunsthauses\\_Flora.pdf](https://www.kultur-marzahn-hellersdorf.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/KH_Flora/b-Zur_Baugeschichte_des_Kunsthauses_Flora.pdf); Matthias Donath, *Architektur in Berlin 1933–1945. Ein Stadtführer* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2007), 87.

and plans that were part of this exhibit to the Reich Chancellery, where a photographer snapped a picture of Hitler reviewing them.<sup>76</sup>

The Hitler Youth's home procurement campaign promised to be an expensive undertaking that the regime wanted municipalities to finance. Nazi leaders swiftly invoked Article 2 of the recently passed Hitler Youth law both to justify new construction and shift the financial burden onto municipal authorities. On January 14, Interior Minister Frick directed municipalities and municipal associations to help the Hitler Youth fulfill its expanded educational responsibilities by supporting its home building campaign.<sup>77</sup> Just days later, Frick, Goebbels, Fiehler, and Rust, all members of the honorary committee, directed public and party officials at the federal, state, and local levels to help fund the construction, furnishment, and maintenance of these homes. Their directive referenced Hitler's January 14 message, which had highlighted the Hitler Youth's new educational responsibilities.<sup>78</sup> In early February, Möckel, the director of the Working Committee in Berlin, underscored communities' financial responsibility for constructing these educational buildings. While speaking to architects in Tübingen, he pointedly said, "Just as the school building and its maintenance is the task of communities, so now too is the Hitler Youth home and its upkeep."<sup>79</sup> In early July, Frick once again cited the Hitler Youth's educational duties as he directed municipal leaders to provide administrative and financial assistance to the organization.<sup>80</sup> In March 1938, the Hitler Youth launched yet another national publicity campaign in support of this building program. Hitler simultaneously released a statement which read: "The homes of the Hitler Youth are educational sites for a generation destined to secure the future of the Reich. The state and party are therefore obliged to energetically help our youth in constructing their homes."<sup>81</sup> These directives to help and support were really orders to finance and fund.

But the Hitler Youth's vision for this project kept expanding. Schirach's initial 1937 decree had asserted only that youth needed new homes.<sup>82</sup> Within a week of his announcement, his office issued the aforementioned building guidelines that listed the architectural features moderately sized homes should possess. These included rooms where individual platoons could meet (*Scharräume*), a community room, a shower, a room to store bikes, a cloakroom, a toilet, and offices for leaders.<sup>83</sup> Within months, Schirach's office published a pamphlet that contained a revised listing of requisite spaces that now included—if resources and space allowed—a large hall that could accommodate a roll call, craft rooms, a dark room for photography, and an air raid shelter. It also directed planners to incorporate gymnasiums, sports fields, obstacle courses, facilities for special training, and shooting ranges into their plans with the caveat that if cost was prohibitive, these additional facilities could be built in stages.<sup>84</sup> By September 1937, Nazi planners had decided that these homes should also include access to swimming pools.<sup>85</sup> The list of required features soon included garden plots.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>76</sup> "4000 HJ-Heime im Entstehen," *Das Junge Deutschland* (May 1937): 231; Fritz Abt, *Heime der Hitler-Jugend. Ein Überblick über die HJ-Heimbeschaffung* (Bremen: Carl Schünemann, 1939), 18–19; Erwin Rockmann, *Schafft Heime. Wanderausstellung der HJ. Programm für die Ausstellung über den Heimbau der Hitler-Jugend* (Berlin: Westfälische Landeszeitung, 1937), 5.

<sup>77</sup> Wilhelm Frick, "Hitler-Jugend und Gemeinden," *Das Junge Deutschland* (July 1937): 290.

<sup>78</sup> "Das Heim der Hitler-Jugend."

<sup>79</sup> "4000 Jugendheime sollen erstehen."

<sup>80</sup> Frick, "Hitler-Jugend und Gemeinden," 289; "Gemeinden helfen der HJ beim Heimbau," *Der Führer*, July 5, 1937, 2, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/3264136>.

<sup>81</sup> "HJ-Heimbau-Aktion in größtem Stil," *Der Führer*, March 3, 1938, 2, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/3267322>.

<sup>82</sup> Hartmann, *Werkhefte I*, 17.

<sup>83</sup> "Arbeitsrichtlinien des Arbeitsausschusses für HJ-Heimbeschaffung," 13.

<sup>84</sup> Reichsjugendführung der NSDAP, *Merkblätter für die architektonische Arbeit in der HJ-Heimbeschaffung 1* (1937): 17–19, BArch Berlin R2/27684.

<sup>85</sup> Landrat Hasse, "Die Heimbeschaffungsaktion eines Landkreises für die HJ," *Das Junge Deutschland* (September 1937): 404–07; Helmut Möckel, F. G. Winter, A. Maier, *Das Jugendgelände* (Leipzig: Erwin Stachel, 1939), 40.

<sup>86</sup> F. G. Winter and A. Maier, "Gestaltung der Kleineheime," in *Das Klein-Heim der Hitler Jugend*, ed. F. G. Winter (Leipzig: Erwin Skacel, 1938), 11–15.

This expanding wish list of amenities sheds light on the activities that Hitler Youth and BDM leaders believed would convert youth into steadfast Nazis and ready soldiers. Platoon rooms would accommodate the all-important two-hour weekly membership meeting in which Hitler Youth and BDM leaders delivered carefully curated lessons designed to instill, as Schirach once explained, a Nazi “outlook on life.”<sup>87</sup> Race, the Versailles *Diktat*, Germany’s territorial needs, and German folk culture were frequent topics.<sup>88</sup> Youth could also use platoon rooms and, in larger homes, craft rooms to develop practical skills such as metal working, wood working, weaving, and sewing.<sup>89</sup> Squads and platoons could also use these spaces for community-oriented projects likely to nurture feelings of membership in a larger *Volksgemeinschaft*, such as fashioning Christmas toys for needy children and assembling care packages for soldiers.<sup>90</sup> Swimming pools and sports fields would help strengthen bodies, instill discipline, and nurture camaraderie while nearby fields could be used for premilitary training. Gardens, meanwhile, would impart practical cultivation skills as well as lessons about “race,” “genetics,” and the “struggle for life.”<sup>91</sup>

These growing ambitions translated into expanding building costs. New construction frequently entailed purchasing land, commissioning architectural blueprints, acquiring building materials, securing laborers and craftsmen, buying furniture, and paying the costs of long-term maintenance. In some cases, land needed to be drained and leveled; in other cases, communities had to extend water, electricity, and sewage lines. And the larger the home, the bigger the price tag. Small two-platoon-room homes (one room each for the Hitler Youth and the BDM), the type likely to be found in smaller communities, could cost 20,000 RM or more to build. In November 1937, for example, officials in the small Badish town of Baiertal asked a local architect to produce an itemized budget for a smaller home. He estimated total costs of 28,000 RM. Larger homes might cost 125,000 RM or more.<sup>92</sup>

Nazi leaders suggested various financing strategies to municipal leaders. In March 1937, von Krosigk proposed that communities repurpose funds initially set aside for youth welfare to bankroll these structures.<sup>93</sup> In July 1937, Frick similarly advised municipal leaders to redirect all local funds initially earmarked for “youth care” to the Hitler Youth and encouraged them to increase the sum they allocated annually to this category.<sup>94</sup> The author of a 1938 architectural workbook suggested municipalities redirect unspent “youth welfare” funds, create special reserve funds, and seize the funds of moribund or irrelevant charities to finance construction of a Hitler Youth home in their community.<sup>95</sup> Another official proposed that communities build new homes in phases to make construction costs more manageable.<sup>96</sup>

Local newspapers carried stories that suggested that communities across Germany were embracing this new responsibility by organizing fundraisers and donating land, resources,

<sup>87</sup> Schirach, *Youth Activities in Modern Germany*, 22.

<sup>88</sup> Toni Reinhold, “Unsere weltanschauliche Schulungsarbeit,” in *Mädel im Dritten Reich*, ed. Hilde Munske (Berlin: Freiheitsverlag, 1935), 19–21.

<sup>89</sup> Hartmann, *Werkhefte I*, 25.

<sup>90</sup> Sven Keller, *Kriegstagebuch einer jungen Nationalsozialistin. Die Aufzeichnungen Wolfhilde von Königs 1939–1946* (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2015), 69–71; Jutta Rüdiger, *Die Hitler-Jugend und ihr Selbstverständnis im Spiegel ihrer Aufgabengebiete* (Lindhorst: Askania, 1983), 301–02.

<sup>91</sup> Winter and Maier, “Gestaltung der Kleineheime,” 11–15.

<sup>92</sup> Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe (hereafter GLA) 321 Nr. 359, [https://www2.landesarchiv-bw.de/ofs21/bild\\_zoom/thumbnails.php?bestand=12786&id=9077610&syssuche=&logik=](https://www2.landesarchiv-bw.de/ofs21/bild_zoom/thumbnails.php?bestand=12786&id=9077610&syssuche=&logik=); Hasse, “Die Heimbeschaffungsaktion eines Landkreises für die HJ,” 405, 407.

<sup>93</sup> Postert, *Die Hitlerjugend*, 239n536.

<sup>94</sup> Frick, “Hitler-Jugend und Gemeinden,” 290.

<sup>95</sup> SA Gruppenführer Hasse, “Die Geldbeschaffung für HJ-Heimbauten in Landgemeinden,” in Winter, *Das Klein-Heim der Hitler Jugend*, 20–22.

<sup>96</sup> Hasse, “Die Heimbeschaffungsaktion eines Landkreises für die HJ,” 406–07.

and labor.<sup>97</sup> Yet in truth, municipal and district leaders resisted pressure to finance Schirach's scheme, partly by leaning on two federal decrees. The first, issued by the Reich Justice Ministry on May 22, 1934, regulated the transfer of resources from municipalities to party organizations. It clarified that municipalities were not obliged to subsidize party organizations.<sup>98</sup> The mayor of Remscheid, for example, challenged a 1941 request from the Hitler Youth that civic officials assume rental costs for their administrative offices by referencing this 1934 decree (to be discussed in greater detail in the following).<sup>99</sup>

Municipal leaders also pointed to Frick's January 14, 1937 decree in which he advised communities to provide financial support to the Hitler Youth's building campaign without taking on any new debts. In September 1937, authorities in the administrative district of Lüneburg, near Hamburg, challenged the Hitler Youth's expectation that the communities of Lehrte, Isernhagen, and Arpke take on loans to fund construction of three new homes. As one official explained to the Reich Interior Minister, this was an untenable plan, in part because Frick had prohibited communities from taking out loans to support this program. Moreover, Hitler Youth officials were asking Lehrte, a community already in debt, to finance a home building project that, according to estimates, would cost at least 100,000 RM to build. A month later, this same official reported that plans to build in Lehrte would have to be postponed until the city generated sufficient reserves. He also explained that construction in Arpke could move forward without the city taking on new loans and that municipal authorities in Isernhagen now planned to renovate a preexisting structure.<sup>100</sup>

Realizing that cities were reluctant to finance new construction, Nazi leaders shifted to a policy of coercion.<sup>101</sup> On January 30, 1939, the regime issued the *Gesetz zur Förderung der Hitler Jugend Heimbeschaffung* (law for the promotion of Hitler Youth home procurement). Article 1 read: "The construction and maintenance of Hitler Youth homes is the responsibility of the municipalities. The party and state will share building costs in accordance with their available resources." Article 2 directed communities unable to finance these homes through their regular operating budgets to establish special reserve funds. Article 3 instructed authorities at the district level to likewise create reserve funds by levying a tax on local communities and investing the revenue in interest-bearing assets. Article 4 directed district authorities to use these reserve funds to provide grants or interest-bearing loans to municipalities. Article 5 explained that the Nazi Party's treasury would, in select cases, provide financial assistance.<sup>102</sup> The following month, the Justice Ministry announced that the government

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, "Ettlingen Land: Völkersbach," *Der Führer*, January 30, 1937, 10, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/3258845>; "Ein Heim für die HJ," *Der Führer*, February 9, 1937, 5, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/3258970>; "Für die Heimbeschaffung der HJ," *Der Führer*, July 7, 1937, 10, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/3264168>; "Ettlingen Land: Volksfest der Gemeinde Spessart," *Der Führer*, September 7, 1937, 10, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/3264926>; "Ueberall werden HJ-Heime gebaut," *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichten*, Ausgabe A, January 22, 1937, 11, <https://zeitpunkt.nrw/ulbms/periodical/zoom/4690710>.

<sup>98</sup> "Finanzielle Leistungen der Gemeinden und Gemeindeverbände an die NSDAP und deren Gliederung," issued by the Justice Ministry, May 5, 1934, reprinted in *Ministerial-Blatt für die preußische innere Verwaltung* 22 (1934): 752.

<sup>99</sup> From the Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Remscheid to the Deutscher Gemeindetag, July 15, 1941, BArch Berlin R36/584.

<sup>100</sup> "HJ-Heimbeschaffung im Kreise Burgdorf," from the Regierungs-Präsident in Lüneburg to the Reich Minister des Innern in Berlin. Three separate letters dated September 1937, October 22, 1937, and December 31, 1937. BArch Berlin R1501/1519.

<sup>101</sup> "Niederschrift über die Sitzung des Arbeitsausschusses für HJ-Heimbeschaffung," 3, December 10, 1943, Berlin, BArch Berlin R1501/2634.

<sup>102</sup> "Gesetz zur Förderung der Hitler-Jugend-Heimbeschaffung. Vom 30. Januar 1939," *Reichsgesetzblatt* 1 (1939): 215, <https://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=dra&datum=1939&page=446&size=45>.

would soon issue implementation guidelines for this new law.<sup>103</sup> In August 1940, officials clarified that the government would not publish these parameters until after the war.<sup>104</sup>

In February 1939, a top-ranking official in the Interior Ministry, Friedrich-Karl Surén, explained the law's purpose to reporters in Berlin. He began, as was customary by this point, by referencing the Hitler Youth's expanded educational mandate as a consequence of the Hitler Youth law. By clarifying and codifying communities' financial obligation to finance these projects, he explained, this new law would ensure compliance and uniformity across the Reich and in newly annexed territories. Moreover, its directive to district authorities that they provide financial assistance to struggling communities, and its promise that the party would also provide subsidies when local resources were insufficient, would permit rural communities, many of them "kinderreich" (child-rich) but resource-poor, to build a home.<sup>105</sup> Despite promises of assistance, the message to communities remained clear: they were on the hook when it came to paying for these facilities.

Hitler Youth leaders later credited the 1939 law for boosting construction rates. During a February 1944 meeting of the Working Committee for Hitler Youth Home Procurement, Möckel reported that by September 1939, just eight months after the law's passage, the total number of finished homes had reached 1,000, construction was underway on 648 facilities, and plans for another 1,000 sites had been completed. He added that grants from the federal government, states, and municipalities totaling approximately 85 million RM, together with approximately 6 million RM in subsidies from the Nazi Party, had helped to fund these projects. Möckel attributed this "success" to the 1939 law's compulsory mechanisms.<sup>106</sup>

Germany's return to war in September 1939 saved many municipalities from having to finance new construction. Already in August 1939, Fritz Todt, the General Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Construction Industry, limited nonessential construction. In November 1939 and February 1940, Todt issued orders that restricted new building to war-essential projects.<sup>107</sup> This building freeze suspended construction on 648 Hitler Youth homes.<sup>108</sup> And yet, communities could apply for permission to complete projects that were nearly done.<sup>109</sup> Because of this exemption, the Hitler Youth was ultimately able to complete 200 of the 648 homes stalled in late 1939.<sup>110</sup> By 1943, the organization had completed 1,071 new homes in the so-called *Altreich*.<sup>111</sup> Although the organization was also able to build some new homes in the Sudetenland and Austria, new construction here slowed as well starting in late 1939.<sup>112</sup>

While the building freeze released municipalities from having to finance new construction, the regime still expected them to pay maintenance costs on completed homes. To get an accurate sense of these expenses, in early 1941 the German Council of

<sup>103</sup> "Gesetz zur Förderung der Hitler-Jugend Heimbeschaffung," issued by the Reich Justice Minister, February 24, 1939, published in the *Ministerial-Blatt des Reichs- und Preußischen Ministeriums des Innern*, Ausgabe A (March 1, 1939): 395–96.

<sup>104</sup> "Mitbenutzung von HJ-Heimen für fremde Zwecke," issued by the Reich Justice Ministry, August 6, 1940, reprinted in *Ministerial-Blatt des Reichs und Preußischen Ministeriums des Innern* 33 (1940): 1607–08.

<sup>105</sup> "Heime für die Hitler-Jugend," *Durlacher Tageblatt: Pfnztäler Bote*, February 21, 1939, 2, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/5172765>.

<sup>106</sup> "Niederschrift über die Sitzung des Arbeitsausschusses für HJ-Heimbeschaffung," 3.

<sup>107</sup> Michael Haben, *Berliner Wohnungsbau 1933–1945. Mehrfamilienhäuser, Wohnanlagen und Siedlungsvorhaben* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2017), 663–64.

<sup>108</sup> "Niederschrift über die Sitzung des Arbeitsausschusses für HJ-Heimbeschaffung," 3.

<sup>109</sup> Haben, *Berliner Wohnungsbau 1933–1945*, 664–65; Postert, *Die Hitlerjugend*, 246.

<sup>110</sup> Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg*, 1002.

<sup>111</sup> *Hitler-Jugend 1933–1943*, 30.

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, "Die Heimbeschaffung der Hitler-Jugend," *Völkischer Beobachter* (Vienna), August 3, 1940, 5, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=vob&datum=19400803&seite=5&zoom=33>. See also "Dienstplan des Standortes Znaim" *Znaimer Tagblatt*, October 6, 1943, 4, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=ztb&datum=19431006&seite=4&zoom=33>. Znaim was a community in the Sudetenland.

Municipalities asked twenty-eight mayors and ten district administrators to report how much money their communities spent annually on maintaining Hitler Youth homes. These upkeep costs typically included electricity, heat, water, building repairs, and even cleaning.<sup>113</sup> The survey revealed that some larger cities responsible for multiple homes were paying hefty sums. Authorities in Leipzig, for example, reported annual costs totaling more than 38,000 RM while officials in Munich estimated annual costs to be 34,000 RM.<sup>114</sup> Municipalities that had not built new homes reported (maybe even gleefully) no ongoing costs.<sup>115</sup>

Given the limited number of new houses completed by 1939, thousands of squads and platoons continued to meet in makeshift spaces. And Nazi leaders wanted municipalities to subsidize their rental and utility costs. On March 27, 1941, the Reich Interior Minister issued a directive that clarified this intention. The document also promised the forthcoming publication of implementation guidelines for the January 1939 Hitler Youth home building law that would standardize building practices.<sup>116</sup>

Communities frustrated by the Hitler Youth's tendency to draft expensive building plans likely welcomed this news. In July 1941, for example, the mayor of Bunzlau, a city in Lower Silesia (now Bolesławiec in western Poland), objected to the Hitler Youth's postwar plans to build two "elaborate" and expensive Hitler Youth homes that threatened to cost approximately 1 million RM.<sup>117</sup> The German Council of Municipalities sided with the community, with one official noting that Bunzlau's experience with the Hitler Youth was "typical." He suggested that the Interior Ministry's promised implementation guidelines might help "avoid similar difficulties in the future."<sup>118</sup>

But the primary objective of the Reich Interior Minister's March 27, 1941 decree was to shift the costs of renting "*vorläufige Unterkünfte*" (temporary accommodations) onto municipalities. The minister conceded that, given the slowdown in new construction, Nazi youth would have to meet in makeshift spaces to carry out their important "educational work." He therefore directed municipalities, especially those that had not yet built a Hitler Youth home, to "devote special attention" to helping Nazi youth acquire temporary meeting spaces, either by granting them free access to classrooms and community halls, absorbing the rental costs associated with leasing space within municipally owned buildings, or taking over rental contracts with third-party landlords. The decree also directed municipalities to cover the costs of electricity, heat, water, and cleaning and urged civic officials to continue funneling resources—if they could—into reserve funds so that, after the war, construction could resume. Perhaps the minister worried that this decision would be unpopular. He directed the ministry to not publish the decree. Instead, officials could inform municipalities on a need-to-know basis.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>113</sup> "Unterhaltungskosten für Hitler-Jugend-Heime," Reichsjugendführung, Berlin, December 10, 1941, BArch Berlin R36/584; "Reinigung von HJ-Heimen," from the Deutscher Gemeindetag in Berlin to the Deutscher Gemeindetag Dienststelle Württemberg in Stuttgart, August 21, 1941, BArch Berlin R36/584; draft of a survey sent by the Deutsche Gemeindetag to mayors and district officials titled "Unterhaltungskosten für Hitler-Jugend-Heime," January 2, 1942, BArch Berlin R36/584.

<sup>114</sup> "Ergebnis der Rundfrage vom 2. February 1942 betr. Unterhaltungskosten für Hitler-Jugend-Heime," BArch R36/584.

<sup>115</sup> "Unterhaltungskosten für HJ-Heime," from the mayor in Minden to the Deutscher Gemeindetag, February 11, 1942, BArch Berlin R36/584.

<sup>116</sup> "Vorläufige Hitler-Jugend-Unterkünfte," sent by the Reich Interior Minister to state officials in Germany, the Sudetenland, the incorporated territories of Danzig-West Prussia and Warthegau, and Austria, March 27, 1941, BArch Berlin R36/584.

<sup>117</sup> Letter from the mayor of Bunzlau to the district president in Liegnitz, July 7, 1941, BArch Berlin R36/584.

<sup>118</sup> Exchanges regarding "HJ-Heimbeschaffung" between the Deutscher Gemeindetag Dienststelle Osten and the Hauptgeschäftsstelle des Deutschen Gemeindetags in Berlin, July 10, 1941 and July 17, 1941, BArch Berlin R36/584.

<sup>119</sup> "Vorläufige Hitler-Jugend-Unterkünfte," March 27, 1941; Dr. Wilhelm Frick, "Hitler-Jugend, Staat und Gemeinden," *Das Junge Deutschland* (December 14, 1941): 289–91.



Although these temporary accommodations were cheaper than new construction, they saddled municipalities with administrative and financial responsibilities. According to the Hitler Youth's statistics, somewhere between 36,000 and 40,000 of these makeshift spaces were in use by 1943.<sup>120</sup> In early 1942, the German Council of Municipalities suggested that these typically smaller and improvised spaces (such as empty workshops, stores, or apartments) were imposing a unique burden on municipalities. It was no small feat, one document explained, to heat and clean rented spaces scattered across a city. To understand this burden, the organization surveyed local authorities about their experiences. Officials in Munich reported the existence of 200 temporary accommodations, many of them one-story buildings that had once housed workshops, offices, and shops. They explained that Nazi youth rarely used apartments given the ongoing housing shortage. Officials in Leipzig, meanwhile, reported the existence of seventy-one improvised meeting spaces, most of them one- or two-room facilities.<sup>121</sup>

Nazi youth in annexed territories likewise relied on makeshift spaces. According to official sources, Nazi youth in Alsace, for example, used spaces confiscated from private clubs, Jewish groups, and "enemies" of the Reich.<sup>122</sup> In Austria, local newspapers described some of the spaces that Nazi youth in and around Vienna were using to host their various activities. They included gymnasiums, schools, and municipal buildings.<sup>123</sup>

The regime's decision not to publish this decree permitted municipalities to deflect the Hitler Youth's requests for financial assistance in paying rental costs. In a previously noted example, in July 1941 the mayor of Remscheid bristled at a request from the Hitler Youth that the city pay the organization's costs of renting administrative office space. The mayor turned to the German Council of Municipalities for advice. Seemingly unaware of the March 1941 "temporary accommodations" decree, the mayor cited the Interior Minister's 1934 decree (which held that municipalities were not obliged to provide cash subsidies to Nazi organizations) as he asked whether his community must fund this request.<sup>124</sup> The council's president referenced this same 1934 decree as he explained that Remscheid was, in fact, not obligated to shoulder these costs. Furthermore, the council's president noted that the January 1939 Hitler Youth home procurement law required communities "only to build and maintain Hitler Youth homes and, when appropriate, generate reserves" for future construction.<sup>125</sup>

A year later, Hitler Youth leaders pushed the Interior Ministry to issue more explicit instructions regarding rental costs. By this point, Artur Axmann had replaced Schirach as the Reich Youth Leader. (In 1940, Hitler had named Schirach to be the *Gauleiter* and *Reichsstatthalter* of the Reichsgau Vienna.) In June 1942, Möckel, the man Schirach had selected in 1937 to oversee daily operations for the Working Committee in Berlin, asked the ministry to revise and reissue these regulations so that they were "clearer and more uniform." One area that could be improved, Möckel explained, was language regarding rental contracts involving third-party landlords. If and when the Hitler Youth had to rent rooms from private individuals, it should be the responsibility of municipalities to forge these contracts. Furthermore, municipalities should assume contracts the Hitler Youth had already

<sup>120</sup> *Hitler-Jugend 1933–1943*, 30.

<sup>121</sup> "An den Herrn Oberbürgermeister," *Deutscher Gemeindetag*, II 540/42 Berlin, February 24, 1942. Completed surveys submitted by the Jugendamt Leipzig and officials in Munich. BArch Berlin R36/584.

<sup>122</sup> Heinz Boberach, "Bericht vom 31.10.1940," *Meldungen aus dem Reich, 1938–1945. Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS* (Herrsching: Pawlak, 1984), 1722; *Hitler-Jugend 1933–1943*, 51.

<sup>123</sup> "Horn weiß sich zu helfen," *Das Kleine Volksblatt* (Vienna), May 30, 1942, 6, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dkv&datum=19420530&seite=6&zoom=33>; "HJ-Unterkünfte in allen Orten Niederdonaus," *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, October 14, 1939, 6, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nwg&datum=19391014&seite=6&zoom=33>.

<sup>124</sup> From the Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Remscheid to the *Deutscher Gemeindetag*, July 15, 1941, BArch Berlin R36/584.

<sup>125</sup> "Verwaltungskosten für HJ-Dienststellen," from the Geschäftsführende Präsident to the head mayor of Remscheid, Berlin, July 22, 1941, BArch Berlin R36/584.

concluded with private property owners. Möckel also suggested that all future agreements include language that guaranteed Nazi youth's "unrestricted use" of these spaces and allowed joint use only with the express agreement of the local Hitler Youth *Bannführer* (battalion leader).<sup>126</sup> He also asked that the ministry publish this revision.<sup>127</sup>

In making this request about exclusive access, Möckel was likely reacting to the Hitler Youth's loss of homes in the first months of the war as municipal and military officials repurposed their meetings spaces. Nazi youth in Wilhelmshaven, for example, never had a chance to use the new Hitler Youth home completed on their behalf. When the war started, local authorities confiscated the structure for the purposes of *Luftschutz* (air raid protection).<sup>128</sup> In November 1939, Hitler Youth officials in Berlin informed national and regional leaders that the military had already confiscated "many" Hitler Youth homes. They added that local squads and platoons forced out of their homes by the military sometimes endured "hateful comments" or were given less than an hour to vacate.<sup>129</sup> Yet publicly, the Hitler Youth expressed its readiness to make these homes available to the military and for the purposes of home defense.<sup>130</sup>

The Justice Ministry subsequently took steps to regulate this "joint use" of Hitler Youth homes. In August 1940, the ministry issued a decree that stipulated these homes could only be repurposed for educational use (the example provided was hosting a kindergarten during harvest season) and with the permission of local Hitler Youth leaders. This same decree also obliged organizations that used these spaces to pay cities a lump sum to cover the costs of heating, electricity, water, and cleaning.<sup>131</sup> This shifting of costs, which surely benefited communities, may have incentivized civic leaders to allow other organizations to lease these structures.

In November 1942, the Reich Interior Ministry circulated a draft for a revised decree that incorporated Möckel's suggestions. Using more explicit language, this new version once again directed communities to provide Nazi youth with free access to municipally owned spaces and assume primary responsibility for rental contracts involving private property owners. Unlike the March 1941 decree, however, this new draft prohibited the "joint use" of a "Hitler Youth accommodation." The space could be used for other purposes only with a battalion leader's express permission or if a sudden catastrophe required shared use. And while the first decree had obliged municipalities to pay for utilities, and even directed Nazi youth to be judicious in their use of water, heat, and electricity, this new version obliged communities, especially in this time of war, to ensure that Nazi youth had adequate access to electricity, water, heating fuel, and cleaning supplies.<sup>132</sup>

Allied air raids unraveled the Hitler Youth's plans to safeguard its access to usable spaces. As British and American bombers inflicted devastating attacks on city after city, destroying entire swaths of buildings as they did so, usable space became an increasingly precious commodity. Civic and municipal officials offset these losses by commandeering Hitler Youth and BDM homes and meeting rooms. For example, a BDM leader in the Bavarian city of Kitzingen noted in a 1943 operational report that the "home question remains bad." Two years later, she explained that the mayor had commandeered 50 percent of the organization's

<sup>126</sup> "Vorläufige Hitler-Jugend-Unterkünfte," sent from Möckel in the office of the Jugendführer des Deutschen Reichs to the Reichsminister des Innern, Berlin, June 18, 1942, BArch Berlin R1501/1519.

<sup>127</sup> "Vorläufige Hitler-Jugend-Unterkünfte," June 18, 1942.

<sup>128</sup> Sommer, *Die Stadt der 500 000*, 277.

<sup>129</sup> "Rundschreiben Nr. 11/39g," from the Reichsjugendführung in Berlin, to be distributed by various leadership levels, November 29, 1939, BArch Berlin NS28/34.

<sup>130</sup> "HJ-Heime und Landdienstheime im Kriege," from the Reichsjugendführung to mayors, May 20, 1941, 7, BArch Berlin R36/584.

<sup>131</sup> "Mitbenutzung von HJ-Heimen für fremde Zwecke," 1607.

<sup>132</sup> Document drafted by the Reich Interior Minister, V St 318/42 (A), Berlin, November 1942, BArch Berlin R1501/1519.

facilities.<sup>133</sup> Similar scenarios took place across Germany. In Stuttgart, for example, municipal authorities allowed a local hospital to store extra mattresses in a local BDM home. Meanwhile in Hamburg, municipal authorities used a Hitler Youth home to house Land Service youth.<sup>134</sup>

After the regime's collapse, municipalities repurposed undamaged Hitler Youth homes. Towns and cities converted these structures into apartments, school dormitories, office buildings, and housing for expellees and orphans, or made them available to youth organizations.<sup>135</sup> Some of these structures still exist today. For example, the life-size model showcased during the 1937 exhibition "Give Me Four Years' Time" and rebuilt in Berlin's Volkspark Rehberge is now a youth recreation center.<sup>136</sup> In recent years, some communities have restored these homes back to their original design.<sup>137</sup>

## Conclusion

The building program Schirach launched with his January 1, 1937 announcement fell far short of expectations. Instead of building tens of thousands of new homes, the organization he led oversaw the completion of only around 1,100 new homes by 1943.<sup>138</sup> In the end, Hitler Youth and BDM members continued to meet, as they had prior to Schirach's 1937 announcement, in tens of thousands of makeshift spaces. Hitler and his allies consistently expected municipalities to subsidize the Hitler Youth's building requirements, whether that meant financing new construction, paying for ongoing maintenance, or renting rooms from private landlords.

Nazi leaders used the Hitler Youth law to access these municipal funds. Specifically, they relied on Article 2, which asserted that the Hitler Youth, in addition to families and schools, was responsible for overseeing the intellectual, emotional, and physical education of youth. Hans Lammers' decision—likely made in consultation with Schirach—to use the preposition "außer" (besides) instead of "außerhalb" (beyond) proved consequential. This word choice permitted Nazi leaders to claim that, because Hitler Youth homes were educational sites, municipalities had a responsibility to pay for their construction and upkeep, much as they were responsible for building and maintaining public schools. This word choice also allowed the Hitler Youth to sidestep the Interior Minister's 1934 decree freeing cities from having to provide cash subsidies to Nazi organizations.

In giving the Hitler Youth access to municipal money, Lammers and Schirach found a way to grow the Hitler Youth without impacting the federal budget. They had followed the finance minister's advice to find a way to "educate" youth that would not require federal

<sup>133</sup> "Arbeitsbericht des Bannes Kitzingen (484) für das vierte Vierteljahr 1943" and "Arbeitsbericht des Bannes Kitzingen (484) für das 4. Vierteljahr 1945," Kitzingen, February 3, 1945, Staatsarchiv Würzburg NSDAP Gau Mainfranken 992.

<sup>134</sup> "Betr.: HJ-Heim Mohlstr. 20," May 10, 1943, Stadtarchiv Stuttgart 201/1 Nr. 2101; "Heim der Hitler-Jugend Kirchwärdler-Fünfhausen" to the Kämmerei-Liegenschaftsverwaltung, Hamburg, August 23, 1944, Staatsarchiv Hamburg (hereafter StAHH), 311-2 IV\_DV I D 4 i II Ag 8475.

<sup>135</sup> "Aus dem Allgau," *Südkürrier*, April 26, 1946, 7, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/6409114>; "Aus dem Südwesen," *Bruchsaler Post*, April 7, 1950, 3, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/6318715>; "Oberpleis baut für die Zukunft," *Westdeutsche Zeitung*, August 3, 1949, 8, <https://zeitpunkt.nrw/ulbbn/periodical/zoom/3936226>; "Bad Niederbreisig baut Flüchtlingshäuser," *General-Anzeiger für Bonn und Umgegend*, June 7, 1950, 7, <https://zeitpunkt.nrw/ulbbn/periodical/zoom/3940246>; "Betr.: HJ-Heim in Eppendorf Martinstr. 85," Gemeindeverwaltung der Hansestadt Hamburg, June 5, 1946, StAHH 311-2 IV\_DV I D 4 I II Q (8468); "Freiburgs Jugendorganisationen erhalten ihr Heim," *Unser Tag: Volkszeitung für Baden*, May 1, 1949, 7, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbz/periodical/pageview/6366523>; "Praktische Hilfe für die Jugend," *Mittelbayerische Zeitung* (serving Regensburg), April 16, 1946, 3, [https://digipress-beta.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb00064700\\_00033.html](https://digipress-beta.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb00064700_00033.html).

<sup>136</sup> Donath, *Architektur in Berlin 1933-1945*, 88.

<sup>137</sup> "Meerbusch: Ehemaliges HJ-Heim erhält historische Anmutung zurück," September 24, 2016, RP Online, [https://rp-online.de/nrw/staedte/meerbusch/ehemaliges-hj-heim-erhaelt-historische-anmutung-zurueck\\_aid-18410265](https://rp-online.de/nrw/staedte/meerbusch/ehemaliges-hj-heim-erhaelt-historische-anmutung-zurueck_aid-18410265).

<sup>138</sup> "4000 Jugendheime sollen erstehen"; *Hitler-Jugend 1933-1943*, 30.

investments in infrastructure.<sup>139</sup> Instead, thanks to Article 2, municipalities would bear the brunt of these costs, providing cash and in-kind subsidies that would not detract from the regime's rearmament plans. Perhaps Schirach and Hitler hoped that, after two years of municipally financed construction, the Hitler Youth would command thousands of new homes that would support the introduction of mandatory membership.

The December 1936 law—with its characterization of the Hitler Youth as an educational organization—paved the way for subsequent legislation and decrees that had the same objective: to coerce and compel municipalities to subsidize the Hitler Youth's facility costs. Particularly important was the January 1939 home procurement law, which asserted, in no uncertain terms, that it was the responsibility of municipalities to build these homes. Also consequential was the Interior Minister's March 1941 unpublished decree that municipalities were obliged to give Hitler Youth and BDM squads and platoons free access to municipal space and assume the costs of rental contracts.

The regime's use of the Hitler Youth law to fund a home building campaign that might one day support compulsory and expanded membership is an important reminder that, even in this authoritarian and deeply ideological regime, concerns about money (and rearmaments) also shaped policy. Moreover, the regime's determination to legitimate this reallocation of municipal monies by claiming that the Hitler Youth's educational work was equal in importance to that of schools and families underscores Nazi leaders' concerns about image and public approval.

The Hitler Youth Law has long been misunderstood as a membership law when, in fact, it was a law about membership *and* money. Hitler and his deputies undoubtedly wanted to recruit and indoctrinate all youth and, if possible, implement premilitary training for teenage boys. But the hard reality was that they lacked the funds they needed to make membership compulsory. The Hitler Youth law offered a subtle yet effective vehicle for accessing municipal funds, one that allowed the regime to present itself as ideologically driven rather than admit it lacked the resources to fund a national youth program.

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<sup>139</sup> Reichsminister der Finanzen, Berlin, May 6, 1936, BArch Berlin R43-II/525, item 136.

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