

Losing Minds and Hearts: Ideology, Education, and the Development of Youth Nonconformity Under European Fascisms

In the years preceding 1933, the mean age of affiliation to the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*¹, the Nazi Party, was thirty-one years, far below that of most German political organizations and second only to the Communist Party. From 1925 on, the young face of Nazism became increasingly important for the party's propaganda at the same time that it developed a more cohesive ideological line. During those street fighting years, when National Socialism was in its infancy, war cries such as "Make way, you old ones!" accompanied the marches of still young but battle-hardened Great War veterans and the many boyish faces with whom they shared their brown uniforms. Not far to the south, Benito Mussolini's *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (National Fascist Party, PNF) had already mastered youth-oriented propaganda by portraying itself as a movement of the daring and the audacious, ready to use the youth's vitality to lift Italy above the old and failed European nations. From the *squadrista* period up to the late 1920s, the new regime saw the high point of youth political involvement and support.²

As Europe went through the social, economic, and political convulsions of the interwar period, fascist parties emerged all over the continent as a new alternative for modernity, opposing the "dangers" of Soviet communism or the "failed" western liberalism that had resulted in the 1922 and 1929 crisis. At the dawn of the twentieth century, traditional collective allegiances based on family and community were giving way to new forms of identification that

¹ National Socialist German Workers' Party, also known as NSDAP

² Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 10-2; Tracy H. Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), xvi-xix. *Squadristo* was the name given to the Fascist militia action, organized into *squadres d'azione*, that is, action squads.

powerfully reshaped political and social life. Prime among them were nationalism and age-group identification, both of which had been consolidated by the Great War; in the same way that the veteran generation identified itself in relation to its shared experiences at the front, the next one defined itself around issues of nonparticipation, irredentism, and disillusion with the old. When the fascist movements of Europe then promised to give youth a leading role in the political drama, allowing young people to define their nations' futures through a complete national rebirth, they found many willing cadres. Unlike the old nobilities, liberal plutocracies, or Bolshevik working-class rule, the new fascist elite would consist of bright nationalist youths. And young people across borders and social classes were listening.³

As these movements achieved and consolidated power, however, the many and grandiose promises of fascism to its youth failed to realize. As militarized youth groups and traditional education merged into all-encompassing, party-controlled spaces of socialization, youths responded in several different ways to their disillusionments with their respective regimes. The “total education” models of fascist pedagogues intended to raise the next generations in isolation from the “decadent” influences of the past by combining traditional education, military discipline, youth groups, and the monopoly of extra-curricular activities, all under party control. However, the generations growing up under fascism faced growing military demands as expansionist and imperial plans unfolded. The ideological irregularities and increasingly clear dissonance between propaganda and reality generated responses that ranged from unquestioning loyalty to political apathy, nonconformity, and outright opposition.

³ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy 1922-1945* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001), 93-4.

Outside of the Rome-Berlin axis, the two Iberian fascist regimes that survived the Second World War experienced the same problems throughout their existence. The Portuguese *Estado Novo* (New State) and the Francoist regime in Spain were gradually abandoned by their youngest generations, who turned to the widespread pluralistic and democratic ideas of even younger populations. These ideas, and the aversion to the colonial conflicts underway in the 1970s, clashed with the imperialistic, Catholic-traditionalist, and authoritarian character of the Portuguese and Spanish state machines.⁴

Since the 1960s, several books and articles dedicated to understanding education in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy have appeared, normally focusing on either education or the youth groups.⁵ Rarely were both topics explored as complementary subjects until the late 1980s and early 1990s. Tracy H. Koon's *Believe, Obey, Fight* and Lisa Pine's *Education in Nazi Germany* are prime examples that combine the two topics.⁶ However, little attention has been given to young resisters. For a long time, most youth resistance was disregarded as naïve, lacking relevance in the broader study of fascism. The camp has significantly expanded since Daniel Horn's 1970s research on the topic and Detlev Peukert's groundbreaking 1980 and 1982 books *Die Edelweißpiraten* and *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, but youth resistance remains a neglected subject. More recently, Brooks,

⁴ Louie Dean Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain: Clashing with Fascism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 14-28; 146; José Medeiros Ferreira, "O Movimento Estudantil como Motor da Democratização da Universidade e da Liberdade em Portugal", in *Ler História* (62), 2012, 173-178.

⁵ Michael A. Ledeen, "Italian Fascism and Youth," *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 3, (July 1969): 137-154. H.W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development, 1922-1945*, (New York: Cooper Square Press, 1975); Daniel Horn, "The Hitler Youth and Educational Decline in the Third Reich," in *History of Education Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1976): 435-447; Tracy H. Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

⁶ Heinz Sünker and Hans-Uwe Otto, *Education and Fascism: Political Identity and Social Education in Nazi Germany* (London and Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press, 1997); Lisa Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany* (New York and Oxford: Berg, 2010).

Geerling, and Magee's article *Faces of Opposition* refreshed the idea that juvenile resistance should not be, as it had previously been, dismissed as exceptional, naïve, unorganized, and pointless, but instead studied more deeply as a broader phenomenon. Even when youth resistance is the main theme of research, though, studies are most often geographically narrow, focusing on the Third Reich, and tend to overlook class divisions. That focus may be a consequence of the larger effort of scholars and institutions in Germany and abroad to preserve the memory of resisters and victims of Nazism, making many more such sources available. For both these reasons, recent works like Louie Dean Valencia-Garcia's *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain* have added much to this still underdeveloped camp.

Setting out to reassess the successes and failures of fascist regimes in implementing their methods for the total education model, with a special focus on the German case, this paper explores the challenges and contradictions of fascist education and the emergence of dissent among youths, as well as the development of nonconforming subcultures opposed to the hegemonic official ones. Due to the current availability of sources, it focuses on urban youths, but I find important to highlight that this was not an urban exclusive phenomenon. I conclude that the structural failures of fascist educational models, rooted in ideological irregularity, contradictory and decentralized policy, and the attempt to control all aspects of youth socialization in ways that conflicted with generational and universal youth values, inevitably created nonconformity. This nonconformity came in several forms and was shaped by social context and class divisions. At times, group behavior developed into broader subcultures that, by rejecting official and doctrinaire youth values, assumed political meaning.

Before Power: Creating a Mass Youth Movement

Fascism is a malleable ideology, capable of adapting to different political contexts and national narratives. The importance of youth, however, was a key element of all early twentieth-century fascisms. Children and adolescents promised national redemption, a cure for the supposed “degradation” and “decadence” caused by the forces of modernity. In Italy, Fascists believed that their youth would continue the Fascist revolution and return the nation to its Roman glory. In Germany, they would avenge the Great War by rebuilding an idealized Reich and perpetuate a new communal order free of the moral and racial “corruptions” of Weimar. In Portugal, they would preserve the Catholic-traditionalist regime and defend the country against its real and perceived enemies. In Spain, they would rebuild a nation destroyed by civil war to its renaissance glory, purging the “corrupt” forces and ideas that had given birth to the second Spanish Republic. At the same time, however, untamed youth posed a potential existential threat to fascist regimes. If young people could not be fully indoctrinated, the regimes would be unable to perpetuate their existence. Youth were the future, and they could not be poisoned by hostile ideologies, delinquency, and counter-narratives.⁷

Appealing to the Young

If the fascisms of Europe had initially presented themselves as mass movements, by the mid-1920s they had assumed the identity of mass *youth* movements. Echoing the notion of *tabula rasa*, they saw in their youth projects a chance to create the new *übermensch* of Europe,

⁷ Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. Richard Deveson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 145; Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight*, xvi; Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 312-314; Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 15-16.

raised to embody, physically and mentally, ultranationalist ideals and unconditional loyalty to their national community. Eventually, all these fascisms understood the need to win over youth, even if some took longer than others, as was the case of the Portuguese regime.⁸ António de Oliveira Salazar's *União Nacional* (National Union) had first bet in a demobilized youth, believing that a politically uninvolved population would smooth the regime's rule.⁹ Always refusing to politically define the New State as "fascist", he had called Mussolini's Italy a "pagan Caesarism" and condemned the largest Portuguese fascist movement, Rolão Preto's National-Syndicalism, for its agitation of the national youth, among other things. By 1935, however, the model was beginning to show its weaknesses, and Salazar finally learned from Hitler and Mussolini that, if he wanted the social and political institutions of the New State to be self-perpetuating, he would need to indoctrinate the next generation accordingly. This change came at the same time that splinter factions of Preto's movement joined the governing coalition, and the civil war in Spain dragged the regime further to the right. As for the NSDAP, PNF, and the Spanish *Falange* (Phalanx), the appeal to different groups of youths was achieved through different means, and in different ways before and after taking power.¹⁰

Fascism mobilizes masses through othering, playing off the fear of the "other" while creating a homogeneous cultural identity for "us" that embraces chauvinist and exceptionalist narratives.¹¹ For young people, however, there were many other attractions. Initially, as these

⁸ Goran Miljan, "The Brotherhood of Youth: A Case Study of the Ustaša and Hlinka Youth Connections and Exchanges," in *Fascism Without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation Between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945*, ed. Arnt Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2017), 119.

⁹ Simon Kuin, "A Mocidade Portuguesa nos anos 30: Anteprojetos e Instauração de uma Organização Paramilitar de Juventude", in *Análise Social* (xxviii:122): 555-88, 563.

¹⁰ Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 315-6.

¹¹ Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 14.

movements emerged, their appeals rested on ideas of independence, belonging, and power. For upper-class adolescents who joined movements early on, fascism embraced their longing to rebel. Seeking autonomy from their families and change, they joined the ranks of paramilitary organizations that promised to give youth the lead in politics, a way of declaring independence from the home and boring bourgeois circles while feeding the dream of changing the world. At the same time, working-class and lower middle-class cadres saw in fascism the opportunity to lead, to have access to power, and to be part of a cause worth fighting – and dying – for. Uniformed blocs of men and boys marching through the streets chanting nationalist songs and revolutionary slogans promised some of the things underprivileged teenagers were most eager for: a greater purpose, comradeship, and the limited authority derived from uniforms.¹²

Mass mobilization, in fact, remained a key element of appeal during and after the transition to power. Among hundreds of examples, the torchlight ceremony in commemoration of Hitler's appointment as Reich chancellor in 1933 is noticeable because it gave youth a place of prominence, where other youngsters could see them. Their slogans, the exaltation of their dead comrades of the *Sturmabteilung* (Stormtroopers, SA) and *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth, HJ) who had perished during the street fighting years, all was architecture to attract the young. The dead would never grow old, and their youthful sacrifice had to inspire the new generations. The mystique of mass mobilization, as Mussolini and Hitler had found early on, was in the creation

¹² Wayne Geerling, Gary B. Magee, and Robert Brooks, "Faces of Opposition: Juvenile Resistance, High Treason, and the People's Court in Nazi Germany," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (44:2), (Autumn 2013): 209-234. Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 139.

of a sense of belonging, of unity as opposed to individualism, and in conveying the idea that action was being taken and those sitting out would miss the opportunity to mold the future.¹³

Creating Fascist Education

Mussolini did not trust those born before the “Fascist Revolution” to live up to their potential. He believed they had been “poisoned” by the liberal, socialist, or communist ideals of pre-Fascist Italy, and thus, their conversion to Fascism could never be fully completed. Only those educated after the 1922 March on Rome had the potential to become the new Italian men and women who would carry the fascist torch once the old guard was gone.¹⁴ This was the common view among fascist leaders. The pre-fascist state, as Hitler put it, was not “inculcating in the youth a lively sense of their German nationality” instead making them “the devotees of such abstract notions as ‘Democracy’, ‘International Socialism’, ‘Pacifism’, etc.”¹⁵ The only way to guarantee the perpetuation of their regimes, then, was to focus on the total education of youth raised under fascist control. As Lisa Pine explains, fascist pedagogy centered on the use of both in-school education and party-controlled spaces of socialization to create a national identity, self-perception, and a perception of others congruent with fascist ideals. In this way, fascists believed they could build upon the generational breaks with the old by “eroding traditional loyalties,” changing the way the future generation thought about themselves and the collective. Education could then move away from the needs of individual development and in the direction of the

¹³ Lisa Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany* (New York and Oxford: Berg, 2010), 1-2; Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth 1875-1945* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007), 256-7.

¹⁴ Alessio Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man: Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 4-5.

¹⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 97-98.

needs of the national community, creating not autonomous citizens but extensions of their states.¹⁶

Identity Building: Molding the Future of Fascism

If participation of the younger generations, who had not had any contact with the pre-fascist institutions and could fully embody the values of the new regimes, was essential for the fascist project, then all sorts of incentives for joining the party-controlled education spaces had to be created. Initially, membership in a party or state youth group was generally not mandatory, but once power was in the fascist movement's hands, all types of incentives and disincentives could be offered for young people to join. In Spain, for example, participation in the *Frente de Juventudes* (Youth Front) was supposedly voluntary, but all children attending school were to be enrolled in the organization if they wanted to participate in extra-curricular activities.¹⁷ Both Hitler and Mussolini advocated for the prominence of youth groups, gradually diminishing the importance of formal schooling until it became secondary. Youth, they thought, should be taught, trained, and led by youth. By having older boys and girls leading younger children in the Hitler Youth or the *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, Fascist Italy's first youth group named after a 18th century infant hero, they aimed at creating a feeling of empowerment. For many, seeing people not much older than themselves in leading positions was proof that their time to write the future had come, and served as a stimulus to join.¹⁸ As Hitler wrote, "the ties that unite ten-year old boys to one another are stronger and more natural than their relationship to adults." This idea

¹⁶ Pine, Education in Nazi Germany, 1-3

¹⁷ Manrique Arribas, "Actividad Física y Juventud en el Franquismo (1937-1961)", in *Revista Internacional de Medicina y el Deporte* (14:55), 427-441: 431.

¹⁸ Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth 1875-1945*, 269-70.

was then translated into one of the Hitler Youth's mottos "*Jugend von Jugend geführt werden soll*" – youth should be led by youth. Hitler believed this would also ease the process of selecting the future party and state leadership, as indicated by his 1942 remark that "in this way, I have set up in their very early years a process of selectivity amongst young people, whereby the little group leaders soon select themselves."¹⁹ The same idea can also be found in the 1926 law creating the Balilla, where it was established that educating the *Balillas* (eight- to fourteen-year-olds) was the role of the *Avanguardistas* (fourteen- to eighteen-year-olds).²⁰

After the war, collective memory drew upon concepts of a Nazi or Fascist "normalcy" and the victimhood of young children, easier to pressure and incapable of discerning good from bad, to soften individual choices on education and joining youth groups. In Germany, specifically, where the stigma of Nazism loomed large over the post-war lives of former Hitler Youth and *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls, BDM) members, memoirs tend to emphasize the victimhood of children and adolescents, disregarding their power of choice. For example, Helga Brachmann, born in 1928, remarked in her memoir that she would respond to questions about her time in the BDM by saying "that I was eleven years old by the time war broke out, and that I didn't hear about the concentration camps or the other things that happened until after the war was over and everything came to light."²¹

¹⁹ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. James Murphy (London, New York and Melbourne: Hurst & Blackett LTD, 1939), 323; Adolf Hitler, *Hitler Table Talks, 1941-1944*, ed. and trans. Norman Cameron and R.H. Stevens (New York: Enigma Books, 2000), 523.

²⁰ Regno d'Italia, "Law Creating the Balilla Youth Organization (April 3, 1926)", in *Mediterranean Fascism, 1919-1945*, ed. and trans. Charles F. Delzell (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 142.

²¹ Tiia Sahrakorpi, "Memory of the Third Reich in Hitler Youth Memoirs", PhD diss., (University College London, 2018), 101; Helga Brachmann, 'Wie ich den Nationalsozialismus erlebte: Ein Bericht von Helga Brachmann, Leipzig', cited in Tiia Sahrakorpi, "Memory of the Third Reich in Hitler Youth Memoirs", PhD diss., (University College London, 2018), 111.

Unclear Instructions: The Theoretical-Methodological Chaos of Fascist Education

In the late 1980s, Detlev Peukert argued that the vague character of fascist ideology and the contradicting sources of information from which children would learn it – at schools, home, church, and the different youth groups within the same town, which at times worked independently from one another – allowed them to pick and choose what values to hold in accordance with personal preferences. In this way, the Nazi regime failed to create universal generational tendencies.²² Moreover, the *Führerprinzip* (“leader” or “leadership” principle) that guided fascist hierarchical structures created room for internal competitions within the party and state machine, and thus, a decentralized and confusing educational policy. It is a counter-intuitive thought, but one that explains much of the coherence problems within fascist policymaking: the reactionary character of Nazi policy allowed different ministers, ideologues, officials in the inner leadership circle, and even bureaucrats, all to compete for the favor and attention of the leader. Seeking power and influence, they acted competitively to undermine one another, sometimes acting only to later seek retroactive recognition if their ideas proved fruitful. Policy, then, emerged from several different centers of power, and actors competed for approval. This framework, which scholars continue to employ today, was developed in the study of the German context but can also be applied to other fascist regimes as well.²³ This is especially true in cases where the hegemony of the local fascist party was disputed or shared with other interest groups in the dictatorship’s coalition, such as in Spain and Portugal. The Catholic Church’s influence in the Mediterranean countries, for example, called for ideological compromises that further mutated the information absorbed by youth. Faced with several competing narratives, incoherent

²² Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. Richard Deveson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987): 145-6.

²³ Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 3; 21-2.

in crucial points, children and adolescents were left to believe in the values they held dearest, creating divergent worldviews that reflected their own backgrounds.²⁴ The churches were not the only contenders for the monopoly of education, and even – or rather, especially – within the fascist parties themselves, constant conflict about who controlled which aspects of educational policy was common.

In Italy, the ascension of the Fascist regime was built upon a coalition with traditional Italian economic elites, the political power structures, and Catholic institutions. Mussolini, as the leader, was also the mediator between the Church, the monarchy, big capital, landowners, and the army. To that was added the PNF, although Mussolini's growing importance tended to overshadow its role. From 1929 on, the fascistization of education escalated quickly, creating conflicts between traditional education, historically controlled by religious institutions, and the youth groups. The growing militarization of both youth and society also clashed with traditional interests, as fears of power concentrated in the hands of the top Fascist officials plagued relations with the political and economic elites.²⁵

Internal tensions within the PNF for the control of educational policy were also high, never more so than in 1937, when the Balilla was replaced by the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* (Italian Youth of the Lictors, GIL). It began with the escalation of tensions between PNF Secretary Achille Starace and *Opera Nazionale Balilla* leader Renato Ricci. These two high-ranking Fascists clashed constantly between 1935 and 1937, which stoked fears among the leadership that Ricci might have been nurturing separatist tendencies, and could even attempt to

²⁴ Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 1-3; Pamela B. Radcliff, *Modern Spain: 1808 to the Present* (La Jolla: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 210-11; Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 143.

²⁵ Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight, 1922-1943*, 13; 34.

use the ONB in a coup d'état. The Duce, holding the ultimate power to decide the dispute, took too long to act. He was a long-time friend of Starace, with whom he had marched on Rome in 1922, but he was also a firm believer in Ricci's educational policies. Moreover, he feared any move against Ricci could ignite riots among the Balillas and *Avanguardisti*. Their dispute did not regard philosophical or pedagogical differences – both were committed Fascists with the highest party credentials. It was purely a struggle for power. Both wanted to be in the forefront of education and youth policy, one of the most powerful roles in any fascist state. By playing off the weariness of Ricci's image after eleven years as the Balilla's head, Starace was able to turn Mussolini to his side and take over the organization, making it his own by rebranding it the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*.²⁶

In Germany, several individual actors and organizations struggled over the control of areas of responsibility in education policymaking. Hitler's loose ideological guidance served as the backdrop for educational policy, but competition for the power to mold the future of Germany (and for the Führer's attention) brought some of the top NSDAP members into conflict. Besides Reich Minister for Education and Science Bernhard Rust, several high-ranking Nazis had their own ideas about education, including Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, the two *Reichsjugendführers* Baldur von Schirach and Artur Axmann, Martin Bormann, Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, head of the Labor Front Robert Ley, SS leader Heinrich Himmler, and others. Even the bureaucrats and civil servants serving under Rust at the Education Ministry often undermined his authority. Prime among his competitors were Bormann, von Schirach, and Axmann. Bormann, as head of the Party Chancellery, had to approve all of Rust's decisions,

²⁶ Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man*, 152-5.

while the Hitler Youth leaders often contended with him, demanding exceptional treatment for their cadres.²⁷

Soon other party leaders were carving out new educational institutions outside of Rust's ministry and sphere of influence. Elitism was essential for the new National Socialist order, but the new elite class was to be different from the old one. Through loyalty and racial purity, the Nazis' new class organization was to determine who was valuable, and thus at the top, and who was expendable. It was a system that disproportionately benefitted the middle and upper classes though, especially for its loyalty and time dedication requirement. The *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten* (National Political Institutes of Education, commonly abbreviated as Napolas) were the first elite schools of the Nazi state, placed initially under direct control of the Education Ministry upon their creation in 1933. However, in 1937, Labor Front leader Robert Ley reached an accord with Baldur von Schirach to establish their own "Adolf Hitler Schools" (AHS), party institutions that did not respond to the state ministry. Soon, the AHS and Napolas became competitors, following their leaders' rivalry. Working to undermine Rust's power over youth policies, they joined forces with Himmler in getting the Napolas under SS control, while also establishing their own parallel path for future Party officials through the AHS and the SS's *Ordensburgen* (Order Castles). The future Nazi elite were to be selected in the *Deutsche Jungvolk* at the age of fourteen through the evaluation of physical, academical, personality, and racial standards. As they grew up in the Hitler Youth and Adolf Hitler Schools, they would work in several party offices, jobs they might take in the future. After finishing their secondary education, the future party elite would spend six months in compulsory labor service, then two

²⁷ Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 3; 21-22.

years in the army, until they finally joined the workforce in their desired profession. After that, they could be selected for higher studies at the SS *Ordensburgen*, where they would spend four years undergoing all sorts of physical, political, ideological, and practical training.²⁸

In Spain, during the later years of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the rebel forces organized around General Francisco Franco began the process of reorganizing their loose alliance into the working governing coalition that would rule the country for almost forty years. Although scholars continue to debate whether Francoism itself should be labeled as “fascism,” the Falange remained a central part of the ruling group even as its influence diminished in the post-WWII era. Within an environment where traditional conservatism and fascism had to work in conjunction, what really changed from the 1940s on was the balance of power within the coalition. The constant shifts caused ideological and structural contradictions that directly affected education and official youth policy. In fact, as the Axis powers were defeated in the aftermath of the war, the Catholic Church regained much space in the realm of educational policy, even establishing its own parallel youth group in direct competition with the Youth Front. By 1946, the *Acción Católica* (Catholic Action) had over 400,000 members, and education would become even more Christian-centered during the Cold War, although it never lost its fascist roots.²⁹ A similar development occurred in Portugal, where the many small and ill-defined radical-right, military, and religious groups that came together under the umbrella of the *Liga Nacional 28 de Maio* (May 28th National League) had in common only that they wanted to perpetuate a new traditionalist and authoritarian system. Salazar, like Franco, became the

²⁸ Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 71-83; H. W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922–1945* (London: Cooper Square Press, 1975), p. 182-5.

²⁹ Radcliffe, *Modern Spain*, 210-3.

indispensable administrator of all these interests. During the late 1930s, the fascist pressure group within the governing coalition monopolized education, but increasing Catholic prominence during and after the war led to a redistribution of power. As time went on, attempts to coopt the *Mocidade* organization to enforce more Catholic values began to achieve increasing success.³⁰

The Church and the Home: Cooperation and Competition

The first task of the new fascist pedagogy was to move education away from the family and towards party-designated spaces for socialization. For fascist pedagogues, especially Italian education experts, the family was too rooted in the old social traditions and thus could not be trusted to educate children alone. Even schools, which had their content set by the regimes, had their roles reduced to *teaching*, while *educating* became the responsibility of the youth groups.³¹ The primary and secondary teachers for whom Hitler and Mussolini (a former teacher himself) held so much contempt, were to be replaced by “people’s educators,” both within the school environment and in the youth groups. Instead of teaching through the traditional methods, they were tasked with educating through action and the “experience of community.”³² However, acquiring total control of children’s education was not an easy task. Prime among the state’s competitors for the hearts and minds of youngsters were the churches, and the Catholic Church in particular. In Italy, Portugal, and Spain, the Roman Catholic Church had its deepest roots. In

³⁰ Kuin, “A Mocidade Portuguesa nos anos 30: Anteprojetos e Instauração de uma Organização Paramilitar de Juventude”, 558; Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 312-5.

³¹ Ponzio, “Shaping the New Man”, 34.

³² Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 1-4; 21.

these countries, the Church was a strong part of the governing coalitions and embodied some of the main ideological points of Mediterranean fascisms, so compromises were essential.

In Italy, the Balilla had initially been held as complementary to religious education. Its creation charter established that “religious instruction shall consist in the teaching of Catholic ethics, Christian doctrine, the Old Testament and the Gospels. [...] The form of worship is that practiced by the Roman Catholic Church.”³³ In 1931, the Catholic Action youth group was dissolved, despite the Pope’s complaints and the Lateran Treaty of 1929, largely due to the institution’s attempt not only to influence but to monopolize education. The Church was allowed to keep operating smaller youth groups in the country, although their membership never surpassed that of the official Fascist ones. As New York University Education professor Philip W. L. Cox noted during his 1935 trip to Rome to study the Balilla, the youth organization was “accepted originally by [Fascist ideologue Giovanni] Gentile and by the Catholic Church, without enthusiasm, as potentially valuable supplements to the school and to the church” but was then “largely replacing them both.”³⁴

In Portugal and Spain, the support of the local Catholic churches was a pillar of the regimes’ power. The New State in particular had a hard time penetrating the familiar environment, where most early education took place, despite its deep Catholic roots and especially due to its initial resistance to mobilizing youth, and so it focused on other forms of creating consent. In the Iberian countries, the role of women and mothers as educators was

³³ Regno d’Italia , “Law Creating the Balilla Youth Organization (April 3, 1926)”, in *Mediterranean Fascism, 1919-1945*, 143.

³⁴ Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1992), 140-142. P. W. L. Cox, “Opera Nazionale Balilla – An Aspect of Italian Education”, in *Junior-Senior High School Clearing House* (9:5), 1935: 267-70, 268.

especially emphasized, and the Salazarist regime attempted to use that to its advantage. By focusing on the indoctrination of women through its own official organization for mothers, the *Obra das Mães para Educação Nacional* (Mother's Project for National Education), they hoped that children would receive at home the bases of the new Portuguese ideology. The organization, however, never achieved the size of similar institutions in Italy and Spain. After several failed attempts to create engaging spaces for the Portuguese youth and their parents to voluntarily participate, the regime finally settled for the creation of its own youth group for children over the age of seven in 1936, the *Mocidade Portuguesa* (Portuguese Youth). Membership was initially optional, becoming gradually mandatory through the end of 1937, and by 1942, all other legal youth associations had been either dissolved or absorbed. The Catholic influence on all matters related to youth was evident, as clergy members were in charge of censoring juvenile literature and had to be consulted about youth group activities and relations to other youth organizations. Church officials even successfully pressured the government into cancelling joint activities with the Hitler Youth and a visit from the German *Reichsjugendführer* (National Youth Leader) Baldur von Schirach to some *Mocidade* youth camps in 1938 due to the Nazi's "pagan orientation."³⁵

In Germany, the situation was quite different regarding religious influence. Religious instruction was reduced drastically after the Nazi ascent to power, and even the Catholic schools, protected by the 1933 Concordat with the Vatican, were gradually replaced through legal mechanisms alongside private institutions. In some cases, religion was completely removed from

³⁵ Kuin, "A Mocidade Portuguesa nos anos 30: Anteprojetos e Instauração de uma Organização Paramilitar de Juventude", 555-7; 568; 572; Ricardo Leite Pinto, "Salazar Contra Superman, Banda Desenhada e Censura Durante o Estado Novo: O Caso das Publicações Periódicas Infanto-Juvenis e o Papel da Comissão Especial para Literatura Infantil e Juvenil e a da Comissão da Literatura e Espetáculo para Menores (1950-1956)", in *Revista da FLUP* (IV:3), 2016: 289-321.

the curriculum. Nazi authorities found it more difficult to implement these measures in rural areas, where Catholic teachers made the new rules less efficient. Moreover, the limited authority offered by the Hitler Youth uniform allowed for confrontation with traditional figures of power, such as teachers, parents, and priests. This was especially true when it came to overlapping Hitler Youth and religious or school activities, in which claiming youth group obligations would alleviate students from other matters. Having *Hitlerjugend* marches happen on Sundays was common, as to purposely conflict with Christian church services so that religious influences became secondary.³⁶

In contrast, the Spanish regime fully embraced Catholicism. During the Republic (1931-1939), the Catholic Church had been in constant conflict with the secular educational model, at times accusing the state of trying to “deatholicize” Spain. By 1936, Falangist ideologue José Permatín already had the basis for post-war education laid out. Charged by Franco with the planning of secondary and higher education, he wrote in 1938 that “because our fascism is eminently Catholic” its educational model should be different from “other fascist states.”³⁷ Baptizing its ideological orientation as “National-Catholicism,” dictator Francisco Franco created a dogmatic ideology that united fascism and Roman Christianity under his figure. Franco himself was presented to children as the only one capable of holding together the cohesion of *Dios y Patria* (God and Fatherland). Children’s books, approved by church censors, made Christianity the central theme of school life, in accordance with the directions of the “17 July 1945 Law for Primary Education,” which established “Family, the Church, and the State” as the

³⁶ Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 28-9; Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 151; Sahrakorpi, “Memory of the Third Reich in Hitler Youth Memoirs”, 103.

³⁷ José Permatín, *Qué es lo Nuevo... Consideraciones Sobre el Momento Español Presente* (Santander: Aldus, 1938)

main concerns of Spanish education. Lessons on the Christian faith and its nationalist ties were covered in every textbook approved, and some of the main lessons were never to challenge authority, be it from parents, educators, religious figures, or the state.³⁸ In time, the internal balance of power between the Falange and the Church for the control of education completely shifted to the Catholics' side, as will be explored in the following section.

Educating Through Action: The Youth Groups

The content of fascist education varied greatly according to nationality, but some underlying concepts appeared consistently. At the top of the list were ultranationalism and the prominence of youth groups over formal education. These went hand-in-hand as the youth groups became the main tool for the political education of children and adolescents. Nationalism could assume various forms, and by the 1930s, the ethnic component of a nation was as emphasized as its common cultural traits, especially in Italy and Germany. According to the Fascist School Charter, approved by the Italian Grand Council of Fascism in 1939, the role of the school was to “bring into reality the principle of popular culture that finds inspiration in the eternal value of the Italian race and its civilization.” That same document made Italy's second youth group mandatory for all children and adolescents under twenty-one.³⁹ In Germany, the official handbook for Hitler Youth leaders opened with a restatement of the “foundation of the National-Socialist outlook on life [...] the perception of the unlikeness of men”.⁴⁰ The Nazi

³⁸ Estado de España, “Ley de 17 de Julio de 1945 sobre Educación Primaria”, in *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (18 July 1945): 385-416; Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 42-3; 49-54.

³⁹ Regno d'Italia, “The Fascist School Charter (February 15, 1939)”, in *Mediterranean Fascism, 1914-1945*, ed. trans. Charles F. Delzell (New York: Macmillan, 1970): 148-55, 149.

⁴⁰ *The Nazi Primer: Official Handbook for Schooling the Hitler Youth*, trans. Harwood L. Childs (Harper & Brothers, 1938), 9.

regime's enactment of the December 1936 "Law on the Hitler Youth" gave a step forward on the road to absorbing all of the country's "ethnic German" youth. "Non-German" children were excluded from the organization, defined by purely eugenicist standards and not by culture or place of birth. At this point, most children and adolescents were already part of the group, but the new law established that "besides being reared in the family and school, *German youth* shall be educated physically, intellectually, and morally in the spirit of National Socialism to serve the people and the community" and so "*all German youth in the Reich* will be organized within the Hitler Youth."⁴¹

Similar language can be found in laws and decrees of all case studies, especially in relation to Jews and the subjects of colonial empires, but in the Iberian countries, race and ethnicity were not as central to nationalism. These regimes focused much more on forcibly homogenizing cultural traits within their borders to create unquestioning loyalty than excluding and expelling ethnic minorities, doing so through the prohibition of languages and independentist symbols. The law that established the Portuguese Youth organization also mandated that teachers' selection for all levels was to rank the candidates' commitment to the national spirit higher than their formal education, and that the *Mocidade's* goal was to guarantee "the full development of physical capacity, character formation, and devotion to the patria."⁴² In establishing the *Frente de Juventudes*, the Spanish regime made clear that the institution's duties included "the political education in the spirit of the Traditionalist Spanish Falange's doctrine" and the mandatory enlisting of all primary and secondary students.⁴³ Besides being a space

⁴¹ Deutsches Reich., "Law on the Hitler Youth, 1 December 1936", in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook*, ed. trans. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London and New York: Routledge, 2002): 204-5. Emphasis added.

⁴² República Portuguesa, "Lei No. 1:941", in *Diário de Govêrno I Série* (84: 11 April 1936): 411-413, 412.

⁴³ Estado Español, "Ley de 6 Diciembre de 1940 Instituyendo el Frente de Juventudes", in *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (7 December 1940): 8392-8394, 8393.

where children and teenagers were supposed to be completely inoculated against foreign and subversive ideas, the youth groups were the tools for the realization of two important and correlated aspects of fascist educational policy: physical education and military training.

Training the Body to Discipline the Mind: The Role of Sports

Using sports to attract and keep children and adolescents was a point of convergence for the fascist regimes. By improving the physical health of the youth, the fascists simultaneously created spaces for political socialization. Sports events became massive rallies of patriotic propaganda and a showcase for the fascist ideals of discipline, service, endurance, unity, and strength. Outdoor activities, physical education, and massive sports events became hallmarks of the fascist youth program. Hiking and camping trips were designed to attract children and adolescents and to devise some of the ideal fascist values, applying them to action and not only thought. All these youth organizations eventually acquired a monopoly on sports competitions and festivals. But while boys trained to be soldiers, girls had to strive for ideal health conditions that, in the fascist rationale, would allow them to give birth to healthy children.⁴⁴

In the memoirs and reports of several Hitler Youth members, gymnastics and sports are said to have been one of the most successful aspects of the organization's program. Walter Meyer, in a 1996 interview, recounted that he joined the *Deutsches Jugendvolk* (Hitler Youth chapter for children between ten and fourteen years) at the age of ten because he preferred to be marching, singing, or playing instead of going to church. By the time he had to move on the

⁴⁴ Arribas, "Actividad Física y Juventud en el Franquismo (1937-1961)", 428; 434-5; 437-9; 442; Sydni Zastre, "'Get Yourselves Under Control': Youth Sexuality in the Third Reich" in *Central European Yearbook* (2), (2020): 38-51, 41.

Hitler Youth, though, participation was already mandatory, and he had grown to resent the organization. What kept him there a little longer before defecting was the possibility of swimming competitively, something impossible to pursue outside of the group. His status as a competitive athlete allowed him to skip some of the Hitler Youth's otherwise mandatory chores, and he and the other swimmers were assigned to the naval branch of the organization.⁴⁵ In his memoir, Peter Brücker, likewise notes that gymnastics and sports were where the National-Socialist ideology reached him and other skeptical peers, saying that "young people's pleasure in using their bodies, in fending off their sexual instincts, their liking for physical competition, and the ideology of the Nazi state all came naturally together in the playing fields of the Third Reich."⁴⁶ This observation was consistent with the objectives of Nazism for its youth, and unlike several aspects of education, was applied to both the male and female youth groups, as laid out by Hitler in these two passages of *Mein Kampf*:

The extravagant emphasis laid on purely intellectual education and the consequent neglect of physical training must necessarily lead to sexual thoughts in early youth. Those boys whose constitutions have been trained and hardened by sports and gymnastics are less prone to sexual indulgence than those stay-at-homes who have been fed exclusively with mental pabulum.

The People's State will have to consider the physical training of the youth after the school period just as much a public duty as their intellectual training; and this training will have to be carried out through public institutions.⁴⁷

In Italy, both the Balilla and its successor, the Italian Youth of the Lictors, had been implementing the same education-through-action model early on. "After school, Saturdays, Sundays, and holydays [...] the Balilla activity is continuous, varied, and intensive" wrote Dr.

⁴⁵ Walter Meyer, "Oral Interview with Walter Meyer", interview by Katie Davis, *The Jeff and Toby Herr Oral History Collection*, August 2, 1996, Audio and Video, four videocassettes.

⁴⁶ Peter Brücker, "Memoir of Peter Brücker", in Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. Richard Deveson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 147-8.

⁴⁷ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 200; 321.

Cox in 1935, “extra-school activities are chiefly athletic and cultural.”⁴⁸ Fascist pedagogues believed that education through physical activity was the best way to learn the new ideological compass of the Italian nation. In 1926, they had established that “the Balilla was intended to give moral and physical training to the young” as to “make them worthy of the new Italian standard of living.”⁴⁹ In 1937, the so-called *Sabati Fascistas* (Fascist Saturdays) were introduced, in which school children participated in special athletic events.⁵⁰

In Spain, physical education was made mandatory for all teachers’ curricula as a means to advance the political and ideological training of their pupils. For the Francoist regime, sports were a way of mobilizing the masses and a key part of the pedagogical plan of formation through action. In 1941, a National Sports Delegation was created to coordinate educational and athletic goals. Its first director, General José Moscardó, declared at the agency’s creation that “for its extraordinary educative powers [sports] have become the weapons of governments, which all peoples consider when they think of their youths’ formation.”⁵¹ Sports were, for the Falange, a matter of political action, integration of youth into the National Movement, and a diversion from other matters. The post-war period in Spain would be one of extended crisis, and sports were commonly used as a way of distracting youths from the hardships of everyday life, especially because all athletic clubs and delegations were under state control of either the National Sports Delegation or the Youth Front. This fact, though, also created conflict between these two organizations, as well as between the female *Sección Feminina* and the many religious elements that composed important governing institutions. All wanted a say on the form and content of

⁴⁸ Cox, “Opera Nazionale Balilla – An Aspect of Italian Education”, 269.

⁴⁹ Regno d’Italia, “Law Creating the Balilla Youth Organization (April 3, 1926)”, 141.

⁵⁰ Charles Delzell, *Mediterranean Fascism, 1919-1945*, ed. Charles F. Delzell (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 148.

⁵¹ Arribas, “Actividad Física y Juventud en el Franquismo (1937-1961)”, 434.

sports and extra-curricular activities, and their competing pedagogical approaches led to poor investments and political decisions as the government had to work on compromises. Sports and physical education administrators were appointed not according to their expertise but rather according to political negotiations, which led to several consecutive failures for the regime's political goals for sports.⁵²

Military Training: When War was the Norm and Peace the Exception

Hand-in-hand with sports, military training occupied an important role in the physical and ideological education of male children and adolescents. Much more than just the principles of Fascism or National Socialism, education was aimed at preparing boys for war. For those educated in the 1930s in Italy, Portugal, and Germany, peace was not the standard state of affairs. Instead, children were taught that the time of peace they were growing up in was an exception, and that war was the inevitable natural state of nations. The Great War loomed large in the classrooms of the fascist-educated generations, and the coming of a new conflict was considered certain.⁵³ Nowhere was the reality of war more immediate than in Spain, where the Falange and its allies spent most of their formational decade fighting the Republican forces in a bloody civil war. But it was in Germany and Italy where creating soldiers instead of citizens found its highest priority.

Karl-Heinz Schnible, who would later be arrested for distributing anti-Nazi pamphlets alongside Helmuth Hübener, grew up believing that war was an inevitable part of life. Looking

⁵² Arribas, "Actividad Física y Juventud en el Franquismo (1937-1961)", 433-4; 436-7; 441.

⁵³ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 148-9.

back, he wrote that everything he learned in the Nazi youth organizations was to prepare him to be a soldier.⁵⁴ Others who grew up under Nazi rule reported similar views, as was the case of Günter Lucks who later wrote “everywhere we had been warned of the awful ‘Bolshevik danger.’ And we wanted to help to defend Germany against that. When young people today idolize celebrity foot ballers or youth bands, our idols were Werner Moelders, Guenther Prein or Otto Skorzeny, these were legendary fighter pilots.”⁵⁵ As part of their Hitler Youth education, they were taught about the concept of a German *Lebensraum* (living space) and patterns of Aryan migration, relating that to the Germans’ purported “natural ties” with the lands of central and eastern Europe. There was also in the handbook for youth leaders of the Third Reich a whole section on the German “right to colonies,” supposedly unfairly taken from them by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. The booklet closed with the promise that “the German Reich will at all events never cease to demand the restoration of its colonies.”⁵⁶

In Italy, the expansionist model of the Roman Empire required the training of generations of soldiers. By law, the president of the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* had to be “chosen from among officers of the militia ranking not below *console generale*”, and the Avanguardisti were structured as a paramilitary organization directly under the control of the Prime Minister.⁵⁷ If Italy was to become the new Roman empire, it would need loyal, disciplined, and well-trained soldiers. The concept was later well translated in the Italian Youth of the Lictors’ motto,

⁵⁴ Karl-Heinz Schnible, Blair R. Holmes and Alan F. Keele, *When Truth was Treason, German Youth Against Hitler: The Story of the Helmuth Hübener Group Based on the Narrative of Karl-Heinz Schnible with Documents and Notes* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 17-18.

⁵⁵ Günter Lucks, “Ich war Hitlers letztes Aufgebot: Meine Erlebnisse als SS-Kindersoldat” (Reinbek bei Hamburg:rororo, 2010), in Tiia Sahrakorpi, “Memory of the Third Reich in Hitler Youth Memoirs”, PhD diss., (University College London, 2018), 117.

⁵⁶ *The Nazi Primer: Official Handbook for Schooling the Hitler Youth*, 63-70.

⁵⁷ Regno d’Italia, “Law Creating the Balilla Youth Organization (April 3, 1926)”, in *Mediterranean Fascism, 1919-1945*, 139-40.

“Believe, Obey, Fight!”, and its official oath of membership: “In the name of God and Italy, I swear to carry out the orders of the Duce and to serve with all my strength, and if necessary my very blood, the cause of the Fascist Revolution.”⁵⁸

In Portugal, the necessity of training boys to be soldiers became evident for the regime in 1936 as civil war erupted in neighboring Spain. Fearing that the conflict would spill over into the Portuguese borders, especially because the regime openly supported the rebels’ side, two supposedly complementary youth organizations were established, the *Mocidade Portuguesa* for children between seven and seventeen and the *Legião Portuguesa* (Portuguese Legion), a paramilitary organization for those eighteen and older. Their main goal was to guarantee that youths were “in capacity of defending [the country] if needed.” In time, the military training provided by these organizations was so advanced that graduates from the *Mocidade* could skip the first cycle of classes in the military academy for officials and sergeants, which created several conflicts between the youth organization and both the military components of Salazar’s coalition and the paramilitary Legion. Instead of working as complementary organizations, they behaved much more like rivals, a symptom of the individual interests present in the leadership of each group. During the early 1940s, a push for further integration resulted in better relations between the Portuguese Legion and Youth, but friction with the military remained.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Regno d’Italia, “Law Creating Italian Youth of the Lictors (October 27, 1937)”, in *Mediterranean Fascism, 1919-1945*, ed. and trans. Charles F. Delzell (New York: Macmillan, 1970): 143-7, 143-4.

⁵⁹ Kuin, “A Mocidade Portuguesa nos anos 30: Anteprojetos e Instauração de uma Organização Paramilitar de Juventude”, 574; 578.

Youth, Gender, and Sexuality in Fascist Education

Fascism proposed to shape a new society through a new generation. It was, however, an inherently gendered endeavor. While boys were trained to become the next fascist elite and soldiers of the national revolution, girls had the incompatible tasks of becoming both submissive, abnegating wives and mothers, and politically active nationalists involved in the public life.⁶⁰ This was evident in the laws and decrees directed at educating girls, as well as in the social expectations of the girls themselves. The Italian Fascist School Charter addressed this issue in its twenty-first article, establishing that “the destination and social mission of women, which are quite distinct in Fascist life, have as their foundation different and special educational institutes. [...] The Order for Girls’ Schools will prepare [girls] spiritually for home management and for teaching in the nursery schools.”⁶¹ This traditionalist gender ideology was also shared by the other fascist regimes.

A Gendered Worldview

“I accepted that being a housewife like my mother was my life’s goal,” wrote Ursula Marten in her memoir. She was born in 1929 and grew up to become a youth leader in the Third Reich’s *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (Organization of German Girls). Marten was an example of educational success for the Nazi state, but also of the profound contradictions of its gender policies. Her desire was to become a perfect housewife, and her loyalty was to the party and the party alone. But her profound dedication to National Socialism and the successful Nazi subversion of traditional allegiances also allowed her to assume the role of a soldier when the necessity arose. Her refusal to admit defeat in 1945, when her grandfather refused to let her join

⁶⁰ De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*, 116-7.

⁶¹ Regno d’Italia, “The Fascist School Charter (February 15, 1939)”, in *Mediterranean Fascism, 1914-1945*, 153.

other armed civilians in the street battles against the Red Army during the fall of Berlin, illustrates the paradoxical behavior rooted in the ideological confusion of National Socialism. “Here I was,” she later wrote, “a member, a leader really, of the Hitler Youth and someone lowly like my grandfather was telling me what to do. Didn’t he realize how important I was to the cause? That I was becoming a grown woman and could think for myself? Mostly though, I thought, there he goes again. He’s not willing to fight for this country to win this war.”⁶² Not only she understood herself as part of the vanguard of National Socialism, a young leader of the new German order, but the passage also exemplifies her definite break with the “old” in the figure of her “unpatriotic” grandfather.

The BDM was underdeveloped if compared to the male Hitler Youth. Although the basic structure of both organizations was the same, education and activities were highly gendered. Both focused on hierarchy and sports, but while these features served the formation of boys as soldiers, for girls they were aimed at creating attractive, submissive, and healthy wives who could bear many children. This principle of *Glaube und Schönheit* (Faith and Beauty) was made into the name of the organization for girls between seventeen and twenty-one, which young women were supposed to join once they reached the maximum age for the BDM. There were no female elite schools besides three Napolas created for war necessities, and the Gymnasiums, where Latin was taught, were male-only, which also prevented girls from entering most courses at higher education institutions. In 1933, the government had capped the number of young women entering colleges and universities at one for every ten boys, but the war effort called for ideological compromises, and so this imbalance changed as more young men left for the fronts.

⁶² Ursula Martens and Mark Shaw, *Stations Along the Way: Spiritual Transformations of a Former Hitler Youth Leader* (Xlibris Corporation, July 31, 2014), 33; 114.

In 1939 the number of female students enrolled in universities was 6,342, but by 1942, that number had risen to over 42,000, or 64 percent of the student population.⁶³

The training received by girls focused on their future role as child bearers, caretakers of the home, and at times, agricultural workers. Their function in a fascist society was to serve and reproduce.⁶⁴ According to another BDM youth leader, Ursula Söllner, girls received and taught courses consisting of “various topics such as sports, gymnastics, dance, sewing, cooking, art and of course political education — in preparation for the ‘marriage of the German woman.’”⁶⁵ This was consistent with the educational goals of other fascist states. In Italy, the presence of women in important academic positions was perceived as problematic, as was the overreliance on female teachers. The Fascist pedagogues believed this could create pacifist and passive students, incapable of virile behavior and competitiveness. For this reason, the educational prospects of women had to be curbed early on, limited to traditional “womanly” professions such as nursering.⁶⁶ The gender barriers created by early Fascist policies remained in place even as broader educational values changed and adapted. Giovanni Gentile, the pedagogue and early Fascist ideologue tasked by Mussolini with molding Fascist education in the 1920s, famously believed that women were inherently different from men, and could only truly begin to learn once they had accepted their inferior nature. During his time as Minister of Public Education, women were prohibited from teaching several “intellectually sophisticated” subjects, such as

⁶³ Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 28; 78-9.

⁶⁴ Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth 1875-1945*, 269; Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 73; Günter Kaufmann, “Source 115: Faith and Beauty”, in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, eds. Sander L. Gilman and Anson Rabinbach (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 262-3. First published as “Glaube und Schönheit”, in *Wille und Macht* (6:3), (February 1938): 1.

⁶⁵ Ursula Söllner, “Glaube und Schönheit”, in Tiia Sahrakorpi, “Memory of the Third Reich in Hitler Youth Memoirs”, PhD diss., (University College London, 2018), 109.

⁶⁶ De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*, 150; Regno d’Italia, “The Fascist School Charter (February 15, 1939)”, in *Mediterranean Fascism, 1914-1945*, 153.

literature, Latin, Greek, History, Philosophy, etc. The elite *Liceo Feminini* (female finishing schools) were reserved for the daughters of the elite, and at the time were denounced by Italian feminists as a machine for creating luxury “servants” who would marry the “masters” of the boys’ elite schools.⁶⁷

Nowhere, though, was the gendered educational division as clear and ideologically important as in Spain. The *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS* (Traditionalist Spanish Falange of the National Syndicalist Offensive), the main fascist element of the Francoist ruling coalition, was itself divided according to gender. Women were organized in a separated wing of the organization named the *Sección Feminina* (Female Section, SF), and its youth group followed suit. The Female Section was led by Pilar Primo de Rivera, daughter of ex-dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera and sister of Falange’s founder and early martyr, José Antonio⁶⁸. Her role in Spanish society during the whole of Franco’s regime is interestingly contradictory: she was both the model of a pious, submissive daughter and sister, who never married so she could serve her father and brother long after their deaths, and the ideological successor to José Antonio, a central political figure who held immeasurable influence and power. Under her command, Spanish girls were raised in subordination to men, following a radical understanding of Catholic patriarchy. She monopolized Spain’s Social Services through the SF-controlled *Servicio Social*, held immense power over Spain’s foreign policy through both her own role as diplomat and the selection of SF members as Spanish representatives to the United Nations, and

⁶⁷ De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*, 150-3.

⁶⁸ José Antonio Primo de Rivera, or simply José Antonio, was the founder and first leader of the Falange from 1933-36. He was a son of dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera, who ruled Spain from 1923-30. José Antonio was arrested before the insurrection of the Army and the Falange in 1936, for illegal possession of firearms, and executed on charges of conspiracy by Republican forces when the Civil War broke out. After that, his death and image, as well as his “eternal youth” as a martyr, became an essential part of Francoist propaganda. During the entirety of the regime, José Antonio and Pilar were put forward as the models for Spanish boys and girls, respectively.

was the architect of Francoist education, merging religious, nationalist, and fascist values to create new Spaniards. In 1961, she was even able to secure the passage of a law guaranteeing protections for women at the workplace, including married women. The idea of married women taking on jobs was so contradictory for the ultra-conservative Spanish regime that Pilar had to reassure lawmakers in a public speech that she proposed such thing out of “a sense of justice, never of feminism,” as “a cultured, refined and sensible woman [...] is a much better teacher for her children and companion for her husband.”⁶⁹

The Education and Sexuality Paradox

For much of the twentieth century, fascist concepts and ideals regarding sexuality were misremembered. This is due, mainly, to three correlated factors: first, the different ways in which these themes were addressed by the various fascist regimes; second, because of the stereotypical image of sexuality in popular media during the 1930s and 1940s; and finally, due to the contradictory nature of official legal and ideological policy on sexuality within each regime, which was also hard to enforce. This last point was especially true in Italy and Germany, where populational growth according to set expectations was an absolute priority, and where the predominance of the racial factor in social relations was especially exacerbated when it came to sex. Mass media and official education did not allow sexuality, and especially female sexuality, to be openly addressed. Nevertheless, propaganda and education emphasized the importance of

⁶⁹ Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 33-5; Estado Español, “Ley de 6 Diciembre de 1940 Instituyendo el Frente de Juventudes”, 8393. Jessica Davidson, “‘Never of Feminism’: Pilar Primo de Rivera and the Spanish Right,” in *World History Connected* 7, 1, 2010, at <https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uillinois.edu/7.1/davidson.html>

healthy reproduction. In Italy, teenagers were offered neither courses in sex education nor biology, while in Germany these subjects were replaced by genetics.⁷⁰

In gathering support to achieve power, fascists claimed to be upholding bourgeois traditionalist values, especially in regard to institutions that they perceived as being under attack by liberals and Marxists: marriage and family. But while they reinforced taboos consonant with upper-class values about sexuality, measures were also taken to guarantee a constant growth of population in accordance with the Fascist and National Socialist “natalist” goals. This was a time when female sexual pleasure was no longer denied, but because the Christian traditionalist understanding of female sexuality was prevalent, that only made the necessity of early marriage all the more urgent. In Italy, the legal age for marriage was lowered, disproportionately so according to gender, to fourteen for girls and sixteen for boys. Having affairs after marriage, however, was socially acceptable for both sexes; after all, they were born to procreate. In Germany, sexuality was perceived pretty much in the same way as youth: if left unchecked, it constituted an existential threat to the racial state, but the Nazis could not achieve their goals without it. Their solution rested on ideologically contradictory policies that would fulfil their empirical needs. It is safe to say that, although many times officially discouraged in order to please the traditionalist elements of the governing coalitions, sexuality itself was not repressed indiscriminately in these two regimes. Instead, heterosexual, “racially pure” sexuality with the goal of reproduction was incentivized while all other forms were constrained.⁷¹

⁷⁰ De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*, 135-6; “Conference Minutes from Horst Wessel School in Kassel (1933)”, in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, eds. Sander L. Gilman and Anson Rabinbach (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013): 243-7; Zastre, “‘Get Yourselves Under Control’: Youth Sexuality in the Third Reich”, 39.

⁷¹ De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*, 137-9; Zastre, “‘Get Yourselves Under Control’: Youth Sexuality in the Third Reich”, 39. Dagmar Herzog, “Hubris and Hypocrisy, Incitement and Disavowal: Sexuality and German Fascism”, in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* (II:1), (2002): 3-21.

In a 2005 publication, Dagmar Herzog argued something similar. For her, the fascist – and in this case, the Nazi – goal was not to suppress sexuality completely, but instead to “reinvent it as the privilege of non-disabled, heterosexual ‘Aryans.’” It had to stimulate and validate young people’s sexual desires at the same time that it insulated youth from “deprived” behavior associated with “lesser” races. It was politically easier to rhetorically condemn all sexual behavior outside of the moralistic Christian discourse while encouraging “Aryan reproduction.”⁷² This is consistent with the curricular changes implemented by the Nazi regime, both in schools and in the Hitler Youth. While adolescents had to be shielded from sexual themes, it was essential that they knew that, if they were to have sex, it should be with another “pure Aryan” with whom they could generate offspring. Like Nazi policy more generally, the regime’s policies regarding sexuality were inherently contradictory. If following these directives, “promiscuity” could be overlooked even within the Hitler Youth and the BDM.⁷³ In 1933, sex education was banned from the Third Reich’s classrooms, and just a few weeks later, it was stipulated that “more emphasis shall be placed on the study of genealogy,” as expressed in conference minutes of the Horst Wessel High School of Kassel at the time, named after the Nazi young martyr.⁷⁴ The same process can be observed in the HJ and BDM official material, which prepared youth leaders to tackle questions about genetics, pregnancy, and *Rassengesetzen* (race laws), but not sexuality.⁷⁵

In this sense, Geoffrey Giles has characterized sex in a fascist society not as a source of pleasure but a duty. In contrast to the Marxist and liberal slogans that promised youth – and

⁷² Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 4; 18-9.

⁷³ Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth 1875-1945*, 273.

⁷⁴ “Conference Minutes from Horst Wessel School in Kassel (1933)”, in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 243-7.

⁷⁵ *The Nazi Primer: Official Handbook for Schooling the Hitler Youth*, 63-70.

especially girls – that “your body belongs to you,” fascist education insisted that their bodies belonged to the national community.⁷⁶ Contradictions aside, reproduction was a tool of empire-building for fascists, and a healthy expanding nation required many children. The incompatible ideological paths to achieve and justify that line of thought were present not only outside but also within the fascist parties themselves. In 1938, for example, Nazi physician Dr. Ferdinand Hoffmann claimed that “depraved Jewish sexual behavior” was infecting the National Socialist regime, and a deeper turn to traditional marital values was essential to guarantee the survival of the *Volk*. He blamed decades of “Jewish media” for the epidemic of “libertine” behavior in the Third Reich. Three years later, in a 1941 lecture to high-ranking party officials, Nazi race theorist Dr. Hans Endres argued that it was in fact the “Oriental Christian mentality” that was responsible for suppressing “our healthy Germanic instincts in sexual matters,” and thus a turn away from those values was the path that would guarantee Aryan supremacy.⁷⁷

These conflicting ideas affected youth more than any other strata. The liberal governments that preceded all the studied fascist regimes had seen plenty of advancements in sexual freedom, which were promptly curtailed by the new social-conservative coalitions that lifted fascist leaders and parties to power.⁷⁸ But youth, especially in the elite and working-class circles as opposed to the middle classes, interpreted the mixed messages about sex according to their own backgrounds and desires. For the upper-class adolescents, ideas of independence and breaking with the old that had moved so many in the direction of Nazism in the 1920s continued to be prevalent after the Nazi ascent. Having the privilege of access to foreign culture, they were

⁷⁶ Geoffrey J. Giles, “Straight Talk for Nazi Youth: The Attempt to Transmit Heterosexual Norms”, in *Pedagogica Historica* (32:1), (1996): 305-18, 312-3.

⁷⁷ Herzog, “Hubris and Hypocrisy, Incitement and Disavowal: Sexuality and German Fascism, 7-9.

⁷⁸ Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 4.

able to consume literature, music, and movies that dealt with sexuality more openly. In Italy, by the late-1930s, books about sex education became more widespread as curious pieces of amusement among upper-class urban circles, but they were never made available for the general population. In Germany, a similar thing happened with English, French, and American films and songs, which allowed youths to misinterpret these countries' cultures as overly sexualized. Access to these amenities, however, was an upper-class exclusivity.⁷⁹

For the working-class youths, the imposition of traditionalist bourgeois values was much more problematic. The Nazi attempt at creating a homogenized national culture centered on bourgeois-nationalist morality simply clashed with several working-class values, including sexuality.⁸⁰ The lack of sex education also contributed to exploration and the creation of an aura of curiosity around these issues, which lower-class teens had to inquire by themselves. For example, Walter Meyer commented that his sources for information about sex were other teenagers and an older mailwoman with whom he developed a relationship. Nevertheless, at the age of thirteen, he had to seek his father's help to arrange an illegal abortion for his same-age girlfriend.⁸¹ Despite the stereotypical image of sexuality under fascism, it is clear from both memoirs and official regime documents that teenagers and adolescents engaged in sexual experimentation, both within and outside the fascist ideal of behavior.

⁷⁹ De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*, 135-6; Michael H. Kater, "The Impact of American Popular Culture on German Youth", in *The Arts in Nazi Germany: Continuity, Conformity, Change*, eds. Jonathan Huener and Francis R. Nicosia (New York and Oxford: Bergan Books, 2006): 31-62, 45-6.

⁸⁰ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 169-70.

⁸¹ Meyer, "Oral Interview with Walter Meyer"

An Educational Failure: The Development of Dissent

Despite all the tools and mechanisms employed in their pursuit of the total education of youth, fascist regimes witnessed the gradual erosion of their capacity to control their younger citizens. Consensus seems to reign among historians that fascist education failed in its ultimate goals in all places where it was implemented.⁸² This was already noticeable to the exiled German Social Democrat Party members who, in a 1938 Sopade report,⁸³ noted that winning over youth was easier than keeping them. By that point, they could already observe that “youth have been particularly disappointed by the current regime. They were made big promises, and only a very few of them have been fulfilled.”⁸⁴ This development was common to all the studied fascist regimes: as the new governments consolidated their rule and new power structures matured, it became clear that youth mobilization did not necessarily translate to faith and support.

The revolutionary character of fascism that had attracted so many young people in its early years withered away once it became the status quo. After fascist movements achieved power, the battle had been won, the street fighting years were over, and the revolutionary discourse had failed to materialize. The life experiences of youth were simply not what had been promised by propaganda, and the political influence they thought they would have never come to exist.⁸⁵ By the mid-1930s in Italy and Germany, the disjunction between the revolutionary rhetoric and the normalizing reality had become clear to the point where youths began seeking

⁸² Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight*, xx; Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 2-3; 137-40; Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 170-4; Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 1-5; Arribas, “Actividad Física y Juventud en el Franquismo (1937-1961)”, 439-43; Kuin, “A Mocidade Portuguesa nos anos 30: Anteprojetos e Instauração de uma Organização Paramilitar de Juventude”, 558.

⁸³ *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*, or ‘Germany reports by the Social Democratic Party of Germany’, commonly called SoPaDe. These were written by the exiled Social-Democratic Party members, first in Prague (until 1938), then Paris (until 1940), and finally London (until 1945).

⁸⁴ “Sopade Reports on Germany Youth (1938)”, in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, eds. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2013): 252.

⁸⁵ Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth 1875-1945*, 274; Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 171.

new forms of revolutionary political participation.⁸⁶ As Tracy Koon points out, the base plan of creating an environment of total dedication to the cause could never be realized, and as reality dawned upon fascist youths, it generated all sorts of responses ranging from fervorous orthodoxy that simply ignored the contradictions between ideology and reality, apolitical behavior, and outright opposition.⁸⁷ If these issues were already apparent in peace time, they were only aggravated when fascism went to war. Be it the Second World War or the colonial wars of the 1970s, the toll of expansion and empire fell disproportionately upon the young, and as the end of the regimes approached, harsher repression to dissent backfired by generating even more grievances.

As we have seen, new forms of elitism, constantly-mutating and ideologically incoherent policy, compromises and disputes for power, failures to make good on their grandiose promises, and the imposition of cultural principles incompatible with working-class and universal youth values, were all common features of the new fascist order. In time, different types of dissidence appeared, guided by social and historical context and cultural values. Some developed into outright political opposition, while others assumed an apolitical character. Some were ephemeral actions of small groups, sometimes connected to larger networks, while others developed into fully-fledged subcultures with hundreds or even thousands of members.

The development of dissent, however, was largely shaped by two underlying factors: social class and political, or ideological, reasoning. For this reason, I separate my discussion of the development of dissent not by nationality or timeframe, but by class and political or ideological considerations. I have found that working-class and upper-class youths had different

⁸⁶ Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 97.

⁸⁷ Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight, 1922-1943*, xviii-xix.

motives, means, and objectives when engaging in nonconforming behavior, and that the comparative potential of the topic is better employed when these groups were matched with similar cliques, both within and across national borders, against youths in different social contexts. The same applies to cases where ideological or political reasoning informed nonconformity and those where there was none. In the latter case, however, political motivations were routinely attributed to apolitical behavior by the fascist regimes, independently of the self-understanding of members. For this section, the current availability of sources demands that my focus be on urban youth, especially from Germany and Spain.

Rebellious youths from the middle classes present an interesting development, though. Their loose identification as a class and relative gains from fascist, and especially Nazi, policy, when compared to others, prevented these youths from establishing broader rebellious tendencies of their own. Adults from this stratum remained the most consistent Nazi supporters throughout the Third Reich, and similarly, their children did as well. The character of Nazi educational policy disproportionately benefited them, as can be seen by the numbers of middle-class and petit-bourgeois representatives in the regime's elite institutions: 64.3% of students in the *Napolas* and 76% on the Adolf Hitler Schools were the children of civil servants, white-collar workers, and small business owners. Prioritizing middle-class youths does not seem, though, to have been a deliberate decision. The deeply stratified society of 1920s and 1930s Europe, the material and economic disparities at its root, as well as the differences in upbringing of working and middle-class children, all contributed to this development.⁸⁸ Instead of developing a subculture of their

⁸⁸ Daniel Horn, "Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait", in *Journal of Social History* (7:1), (Autumn 1973): 26-50, 30; 32.

own, select youth dissenters from the middle classes more commonly joined working-class and upper-class circles, whose groups, actions, and motivations I examine below.

Working-Class Apolitical Nonconformity: Pirates, Punks, and Rebels

Throughout the 1930s, the elitism of the new Nazi order and the increasingly coercive character of the Hitler Youth alienated many young people, especially in the working-class. The petit-bourgeois and, more generally, middle-class character of the Nazi youth project made it so that most youth leaders and students of elite institutions came from these strata, despite the majority of cadres coming from the working-class. Most leadership positions required additional devotion of time and preparation, understood by the Nazis as a sign of loyalty, which were simply not available for the lower classes that composed the rank-and-file of the organization. While middle-class youths were taught to be ambitious, to plan ahead, and to accept the highly controlled environment of Nazi education, working-class youths, and especially working-class boys, were raised in a system where immediate needs were much more urgent than long-term ones. They provided for themselves and family members, apprenticed in shops and factories, and had to attend mandatory Hitler Youth service. Their time and resources, requirements for leadership positions, were much more limited.⁸⁹

On top of that, the leisure activities that had attracted so many to the Hitler Youths in its early days were gradually replaced as the organization was made mandatory. Instead of hiking trips and sports, paramilitary training and exercises of obedience became the norm. According to a study conducted after the war, 46.4 percent of former rank-and-file Hitler Youth members said

⁸⁹ Horn, "Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait", 30-2; Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 71.

that what they disliked the most about the organization were the military features. By the time Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, harsher regimentation and punishments began to be implemented, which only escalated the paranoia caused by the fear of fifth column actions in the later years. Temporary imprisonment and disciplinary punishments became common ways of putting perceived slackers in their place. The older youth leaders were also replaced; Germany needed soldiers, and so increasingly younger youth leaders had to be selected. Younger leaders, sometimes even younger than their cadets, were left to apply tougher training routines and punishments. Chores were much more energy and time-consuming, as Hitler Youth members took on the work left by conscripted soldiers. All of these factors, Daniel Horn argues, show that the Hitler Youth was effectively creating its own opposition.⁹⁰

The reflection of stratification in the selection of the new youth leaders was also a point of discontent; as in other spheres of education, middle-class youths were disproportionately represented, and their social origin could be seen in both their behavior and relationships with other cadres. Because they were selected based on loyalty, they lacked experience and leadership skills and had to assert their power in other ways. In a Düsseldorf Gestapo interrogation file, a boy identified as G.G. explained why he had left the HJ two years prior: “the leadership of our motor-HJ was primarily composed of higher [education] students, the majority of whom were younger than I. On the basis of their acquaintance with the top HJ leaders and through favoritism these higher students became unity leaders.” G.G. was reported to have worked as an auto mechanic, and claimed that, despite the fact that he knew much more about cars and

⁹⁰ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 155; Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 29-33.

motorcycles, his unity leaders insisted in “bossing him around.”⁹¹ Something similar happened to Walter Meyer and his unity comrades. He explained that “we resented those punks who wanted to tell us what to do and what not to do and we were supposed to salute them.” One day, they had had enough: “We all got together and said ‘did you see Fritz? You see he’s got a star now? We are supposed to salute him! Let’s make life difficult for him.’”⁹²

The story of Meyer and G.G. is a common one. Young boys bullied by their superiors, resenting their abuses, decided to do something about it. In time, skipping Hitler Youth duties with their friends became a habit; they preferred to be spending their time enjoying whatever break they had from work away from the coercive environment of the HJ.⁹³ Gradually, small circles of friends grew into larger groups of like-minded children and adolescents, who would meet in parks, cafes, taverns, by a corner or square, or anywhere far away from the Nazi sphere of total authority, to drink, sing, play, and engage in all types of behavior that the Hitler Youth denied them. These groups became known as the *Edelweißpiraten*, the Edelweiss Pirates. “It was nothing but a gang. Not more and not less,” explained Meyer,

we were much too young to have ideological convictions. We just didn’t like these guys, [...] that they became leaders and they told us what to do and they forced us to salute them. [...] We used to put condoms on their bicycles, on the little reflector. We used to deflate their bikes, steal their saddles. We did everything that would bring them physical and mental harm of some sorts. Then I think I went too far.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 31; *Gestapo Akt 3,693, HStAr. Düsseldorf*, cited in Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 33. “Motor-HJ” were the *Motor-Hitlerjugend*, the Hitler Youth’s automotive training section.

⁹² Meyer, “Oral Interview with Walter Meyer.”

⁹³ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 154

⁹⁴ Meyer, “Oral Interview with Walter Meyer.”

According to the Gestapo records, G.G. became one of the leaders of a gang of Edelweiss Pirates in Krefeld, and Meyer in Düsseldorf.⁹⁵ The name “Edelweiss Pirates” was not their invention, though. As several gangs of “Pirates” appeared throughout the Reich, many adopted the name of the Edelweiss, a flower of the Alps that only grows in the mountains, or Kittelsbach, a brook in-between Düsseldorf and Duisburg. On weekends, they joined together with other gangs and traveled as large groups through the country, hiking or cycling for dozens of kilometers. In this way, they met others who enjoyed the same activities in nearby towns, camped below the stars away from any figures of authority, shared songs and stories, and had the chance to mingle with kids of the opposite sex, something denied to them by the Nazi youth group. By themselves, they could enjoy all the things that had initially attracted so many youths to the HJ in the early 1930s, but now charged with a new, rebellious meaning. Their nearly daily after-work meetings helped to consolidate what became effectively a whole working-class subculture completely unlike the official one. Much of their expression as a group came in the form of songs, in which they expressed their hatred for Hitler, the HJ, and the regime, as well as common themes of contempt for work, complaints about low wages, or simply their desire to have fun. Most of these gangs were concentrated in the highly industrialized Rhineland-Ruhr region, and as the war progressed, their childish pranks evolved, as they made good on their slogan “eternal war on the Hitler Youth.”⁹⁶

Emboldened by their numbers and capacity to disappear into the crowds, the Pirates’ clashes with the Nazis evolved into violent confrontations, especially against the *HJ*-

⁹⁵ *Gestapo Akt 3,693, HStAr. Düsseldorf*, cited in Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 33; Meyer, “Oral Interview with Walter Meyer.”

⁹⁶ Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 33-4. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 156-160.

Streifendienst, the Hitler Youth patrols tasked with policing the streets as the soldiers and police officers of the Third Reich were needed at the front. They ganged up on the patrols, beating them up while chanting subversive songs and slogans, and venting their contempt for the authoritarian presence in their lives on the members of an organization that frequently humiliated them, before disappearing into the night or crowds.⁹⁷ By 1940, Gestapo reports mentioned complaints from youth leaders about violent beatings from wild gangs.⁹⁸ In 1941, a Mühlheim SA unity reported that “The HJ are taking their lives in their hands when they go out in the streets.”⁹⁹ By 1943, the Gestapo was being informed that wild youth cliques were painting anti-Nazi slogans all over Grafenberg, and a Duisburg party official wrote that the rebellious youths “ruled and terrorized” the outskirts of town, so much so that “the majority of the HJ and Jugendvolk” in the area no longer wore their swastikas.¹⁰⁰

In Spain, the 1960s and 1970s saw a period of economic boom as the Spanish state gave up on its autarkic ambitions. At the same time, the country witnessed the rebirth of several popular pre-Francoist traditions. Economic growth did not greatly transform the conditions of the Spanish working-class, but it allowed working youths for the first time to acquire the money and the ability to enjoy regular time off. The weekends became a universal refuge from the capitalist reality and the perfect moment for working and lower-middle class youths to come together and develop their own ideas of leisure away from the authoritarian control of the regime. Moreover, greater access to products, tourists, and ideas from other European states brought with them some of the pluralistic, liberal, and socialistic values that the regime had struggled so much to

⁹⁷ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 155-6.

⁹⁸ Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 34.

⁹⁹ *Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf, RW 58, Bd.9212, Bl.40*, cited in Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 160.

¹⁰⁰ *NSDAP Ortsgruppenleiter Meiderich-Berg to Kreisleitung NSDAP Duisburg*, 20 October 1943, cited in Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 35.

control. As Valencia-Garcia has argued, the surveillance and censorship apparatus of the dictatorship led young people to search for spaces where their growing pluralistic ideas could be expressed, creating counter-publics eager both to consume and create new cultural productions.¹⁰¹

Drinking from long-forbidden cultural traditions as well as the new international trends brought from abroad by increasing economic integration, especially the deep working-class-rooted tradition of the Carnival and the English Punk scene, Spanish youths began to develop their own counterculture. Carnival, forbidden in the early days of Francoist rule for its “libertine” traditions, was known for its subversion of gender norms and satirical critiques of figures of authority, especially in the form of *Coplas*, satirical songs with religious and political themes. The English Punk culture gave the old traditions a new, rebellious spin, becoming common on the underground scenes of urban and industrial centers such as Madrid and Barcelona. These clandestine gatherings were surrounded by the themes youth wanted to engage with but had no spaces to do so in the Francoist society, like sex, alcohol, foreign culture, rock, and punk. Influencing one another, bourgeois youths brought foreign music and styles to Spain while working-class youths adopted and adapted them. These working-class punk and rock groups were at the heart of what slowly developed into a cross-class working subculture, known at first as the *Nueva ola Española* (new Spanish wave) or *el rollo*, but that after the end of the regime developed into the broad cultural movement known as the *Movida Madrileña* (Madrid’s Scene).¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Radcliffe, *Modern Spain*, 222; Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 25; 63-4.

¹⁰² Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 25; 136-41.

Politically-Ideologically Motivated Working-Class Youths: The Bolsheviks are Coming!

In the early years of fascist governance, a repeated problem faced by different regimes was the so-called “lost generation” that came of age just as fascism arose; they were too young to be out of school, but too old to be inoculated against pre-fascist values. Among the bourgeois and upper-middle classes, this was not as much of a problem, since these were the strata where the fascists initially found their largest political support. But the working-class youths, where the Social Democratic and Communist ideas that fascists were determined to purge found their strongholds, proved to be a problem. The German author Wolfdietrich Schnurre, born and educated in Weimar Germany, was thirteen when the Nazis took power. Born to a poor family in Frankfurt, he later wrote that he considered himself psychologically shielded from National Socialism: “Because you were constantly condemned to listening to Nazi speeches, your disgust, mercifully, kept on being reinforced; at the same time, your skepticism and self-imposed distance made you anxious and alert enough to pick up what was going on.”¹⁰³ Facing the changing reality around them, youths who came from working-class families with Communist or Socialist backgrounds experienced some of the most brutal actions of the early years of the Third Reich. Friends and family members with SPD (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, German Social Democratic Party) or KPD (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, German Communist Party) connections were detained, arrested, or disappeared daily, and the Communist and Socialist youth groups were quickly disbanded.

¹⁰³ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 146. Wolfdietrich Schnurre, “Meine Schulzeit im Dritten Reich,” in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (31), (6 February 1982), cited in Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 146-7.

One such youth was Hanno Günther, born in 1921, and a member of the Communist Boy Scouts and Young Pioneer organizations before their prohibition by the Nazis. In 1940, as Germany declared victory over France, Günther organized a small circle of resistance around himself and his friends, communist nurse Elizabeth Pungs and the young Jewish communist Wolfgang Pander. Their meetings to read and discuss illegal Marxist literature continued until July 1941, when several members of their growing group were arrested, including the original trio, who had been writing and distributing anti-Nazi literature. In 1942, Günther and Pander were sentenced to death by the Third Reich's People's Court alongside five other friends.¹⁰⁴ Their leaflets, named "The Free Word" (*Das Freie Wort*), denounced Hitler's warmongering as the interest of "the gentlemen of coal and iron," who profit out of conflict and thus "want war, now and in the future." For them, even if Germany could defeat the Allied nations, it would only benefit "the major industrialists who win every war."¹⁰⁵ They praised the Soviet social advances, comparing them to the consequences of war on the German population, accusing the Nazi leadership circle of "[making] us into slave laborers and cannon and bomb fodder with no will of our own."¹⁰⁶

As previously discussed, working-class youth felt increasingly alienated from the regime as time went on, and the war only aggravated tensions. New working-class, politically motivated groups appeared, some even out of the Edelweiss Pirates culture. That was the case of the

¹⁰⁴ "Hanno Günther" and "Elizabeth Pungs", in Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, accessed at https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/index_of_persons/

¹⁰⁵ Hanno Günther and Elizabeth Pungs, "The Free Word, Issue 1", (1940), in *Bundesarchiv, R3018/NJ 1705 bd. 5*, trans. Katy Derbyshire, available through the German Resistance Memorial Center at <https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/offers/publications/online-publications/faksimiles/>

¹⁰⁶ Hanno Günther and Elizabeth Pungs, "The Free Word, Issue 4", (1940), in *Bundesarchiv, R3018/NJ 1705 bd. 5*, trans. Katy Derbyshire; Hanno Günther and Elizabeth Pungs, "The Free Word, Issue 6", (1941), in *Bundesarchiv, R3018/NJ 1705 bd. 5*, trans. Katy Derbyshire, available through the German Resistance Memorial Center at <https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/offers/publications/online-publications/faksimiles/>

Leipzig *Meuten* (packs). Inspired by the region's working-class roots and left-wing political organizations, these youths shared many characteristics with the Pirates, such as their territorial gang organization, love for trips through the countryside, strong relation to music, larger exploration of sexuality, and violent clashes with the Hitler Youth. But because of their Communist and Socialist roots, these youths were more receptive to Soviet propaganda, adapted popular communist and Soviet songs to their own realities, eagerly accompanied the developments of the Spanish Civil War, and created a much more politicized class identity. Similar gangs also existed in Dresden, Halle, Erfurt, Hamburg, and Munich, and the struggle against them mobilized even Heinrich Himmler, who in 1944 gave instructions on how to deal with these types of gangs¹⁰⁷

A centralized organization does not, in general, exist. [...] Membership dues are usually not collected, but in some cases identification badges are issued. [...] Formation of a gang usually involves common affiliation in a factory, school, some other organization, or simply [through] residing in the same district. [...] It is not unusual to be able to trace the activity back to a single antisocial or criminally inclined fellow who knows how to bring the others to heel and can direct their harmless desire for adventure instead towards dangerous avenues.¹⁰⁸

Himmler's description of a single politically informed individual influencing others into Socialist and Communist ideas had its basis, although the Nazis tended to exaggerate the role of "ringleaders" and minimize the effects of their own policies on the emergence of dissent. In a 1944 Ministry of Justice report about "youth gangs," the ironic remark that "they follow a leader

¹⁰⁷ Heinrich Himmler, "Decree on Youth Gangs", in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, eds. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2013):860-1, 860; Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 165-6; Horn, "Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait", 37-8.

¹⁰⁸ Heinrich Himmler, "Decree on Youth Gangs", 860.

uncritically, to whom they sometimes submit themselves totally” shows just how blinded by ideology were the Nazis tasked with combating youth rebellion.¹⁰⁹

In the case of Helmuth Hübener and the resistance group that developed around him in Hamburg, however, they were partially right. Karl-Heinz Schnible, one of the young boys who was later arrested and put on trial with Hübener, exhibits in his memoir many of the characteristics of a potential Edelweiss Pirate; Schnible complained about the harsh treatment he received from his Hitler Youth unity leader “who was not any older than I was” and yet “wanted to drill me terribly with push-ups, crawling, and all of that nonsense.”¹¹⁰ One day, after getting scolded for not wearing his Hitler Youth uniform, he got into a fight with the HJ leader and beat him up in front of the whole unit, which resulted in his expulsion from the organization. His friend Rudolph Wobbe had also been involved in a fight with some Hitler Youth members, and both sometimes got into brawls with *Streifendienst* patrols at night. But they had not thought of themselves as resistors until their Mormon friend, Helmuth Hübener, invited them to illegally listen to the allied transmissions on his shortwave radio. Hübener was an extraordinary young man. In their circles, he would always conduct the conversation, making remarks about politics and even preaching about communism and revolution. When he invited them to distribute the anti-Nazi leaflets he had been writing, based on the BBC’s broadcasts he listened to, their reluctance was easy to overcome.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ “Reich Ministry of Justice Report on the Emergence of Youth Cliques and Gangs and the Struggle Against Them (Early 1944)” in *German History in Documents and Images Volume Seven: Nazi Germany, 1933-1945*, translation in *Nazism, 1919-1945, Vol. 4: The German Home Front in World War II*, ed. Jeremy Noakes (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998): 450-55.

¹¹⁰ Karl-Heinz Schnible, in Blair R. Holmes and Alan F. Keele, *When Truth was Treason, German Youth Against Hitler: The Story of the Helmuth Hübener Group Based on the Narrative of Karl-Heinz Schnible* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 19.

¹¹¹ Holmes, Keele, and Schnible, *When Truth was Treason, German Youth Against Hitler*, 24-6; 35-7.

The pamphlets they distributed called on “German boys” to abandon the Hitler Youth, exploiting the resentments that they knew personally from their time in the organization. “They feel very much in their element when they can tyrannize intimidated young boys,” Hübener wrote, “when they can tyrannize you. Or do you deny that they want to bend your will with all the means at their disposal?”¹¹² He also denounced the war as the fruit of the profit-driven Nazi elite’s class interests, as in his piece about Hermann Göring: “The Nazi’s air marshal may well still be drawing a horrendous dividend from his ammunition factories – he is a wily war profiteer and businessman.”¹¹³

In the People’s Court verdict and sentence, Hübener was described as “[demonstrating] an intelligence that stands far above the average for youths of his age,” affirming that, upon reading the leaflets, “no one would guess, even if he knew that their contents were composed from transcripts, that they were written by a youth of only 16 or 17 years.” For the Nazis, though, this also meant that “consequently, the defendant was to be sentenced as an adult.” While Schnible, Wobbe, and another one of the group’s members, Gerhard Düwer, were all sentenced to time in prison, Hübener was sentenced to death.¹¹⁴

Decades later, in the same way that groups like the *Meuten* or Hübener’s developed out of the Edelweiss Pirates, in 1970s Spain politically charged music, comics, texts, and activist groups developed out of the proto-*Movida* movements. In this case, however, the influence of the

¹¹² Helmuth Hübener, “Hitler Youth”, (1941), in *Bundesarchiv, R 3018/NJ 113, Bd. 1*, trans. Katy Derbyshire, available through the German Resistance Memorial Center at <https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/offers/publications/online-publications/faksimiles/>

¹¹³ Helmuth Hübener, “The Nazi Reichmarshall”, (1941), in *Bundesarchiv, R 3018/NJ 113, Bd. 1*, trans. Katy Derbyshire, available through the German Resistance Memorial Center at <https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/offers/publications/online-publications/faksimiles/>

¹¹⁴ “52 – Verdict of the People’s Court”, in Karl-Heinz Schnible, in Blair R. Holmes and Alan F. Keele, *When Truth was Treason, German Youth Against Hitler: The Story of the Helmuth Hübener Group Based on the Narrative of Karl-Heinz Schnible* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995): 219-31.

debates going on at the centers of higher education also had a lot of influence, especially because the spaces created by the *New ola* and *el rollo* were shared across the class barrier. Socialism and Communism were very much present and alive in the Spanish academic debate by the 1970s, further propelled by Franco's death, with the Republican memory of the Civil War being slowly revived and the influence of the Cold War in the worldview of young Spaniards. As censorship relaxed due to both outside and inside pressure, the political ideas that Franco had tried to purge now permeated Spanish society once again.¹¹⁵

Political-Ideologically Motivated Upper-Class Youths: Fascism Against Higher Education

In the mid-1930s, the so-called *problema dei giovani* (problem of the youth) became a common theme for Fascist Italy's press. Increasingly, educated youths from the urban centers of Italy demonstrated disillusion with the Fascist regime. At the time, the reasons were not clear enough for the Fascists to respond effectively; after all, these were generations completely raised under Fascist rule. Analyzing the question more deeply, historians have come up with fitting explanations. Italian Fascism had a clear class bias towards the urban elite youth, despite its working-class rhetoric. Educating the next batch of Fascists was always a priority. For this reason, the young intellectuals of Italy had a privileged place in Fascist society and were the focus of educational, physical, and creative incentives. As in other fascist societies, they enjoyed relaxed censorship that supposedly allowed for a better academic development. Opposition among some of these bourgeois, well-educated youths had the interesting characteristic of having a self-understanding as the "pure Fascist" ideology, opposed not to Fascism itself but to the way

¹¹⁵ Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 141-6.

it was being implemented. Because the regime's ideological rhetoric regarding youth was much related to the themes of war and the 1922 "revolution," by the 1930s, young academics felt disconnected from the promised opportunity of contributing to change. They became one of the groups that demonstrated more dissatisfaction with the status quo, alongside urban workers. They had been allowed to learn and experiment with concepts of modernity outside of the fascist scope, but not to make their ideas into reality.¹¹⁶

The Fascist regime's response was partially successful but was still a long way from resolving the issue. First, it came up with policies that prioritized young people in civil service and post-graduate academics, as well as patronage programs for young intellectuals and artists. This was especially well-suited due to the late-1930s economic problems that Italy was undergoing. It was a male-centered response, though, relying heavily on the deliberate exclusion of women as to create room for more attention and resources for the males. This generated a stronger gender identification among young female intellectuals that sometimes surpassed any generational understanding of self, as the Fascists had intended. Their other partial solution came in the form of the 1935 Ethiopian War, propagandized as the opportunity for action that youths had awaited. It was sold as the next step of the Fascist revolution: expansion. This ploy worked for many who were anxious for the feeling of agency, but not for all. At best, disillusion grew into political apathy, a general disinterest for politics and the party. At worst, it grew into criticism of the regime, then into agitation against it, until finally becoming antifascism. As young university students, a position reserved for the children of the elite, realized that change could not come from within, they began looking elsewhere.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight, 1922-1943*, xx; 14; Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 94-5; 119-120.

¹¹⁷ Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 95-6; 121-2; Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight, 1922-1943*, 218-220.

In Germany, by the start of the Second World War, a similar problems arose. As in Italy, access to higher education outside of the elite party schools was a privilege for the few. Having access to knowledge otherwise inaccessible to others, and to spaces where a limited political debate could happen, it made sense that youths in this group developed more complicated political and philosophical understandings. The prime example of this development is the *Weißer Rose* (White Rose) students. Composed initially of petit-bourgeois students at the University of Munich, the White Rose developed its own network of like-minded resistance actors springing from Munich to Cologne, Essen, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, and Nuremberg.¹¹⁸ Most well-known among its members were the siblings Hans and Sophie Scholl and their friend Christoph Probst, all of whom were prosecuted, sentenced, and executed on February 22, 1943. According to their sentence, the feared People's Court, in the form of Chief Justice Roland Freisler, found that they had "called for the sabotage of the war effort and armaments and for the overthrow of the National Socialist way of life of our people, have propagated defeatist ideas, and have most vulgarly defamed the Führer, thereby giving aid to the enemy of the Reich and weakening the armed security of the nation."¹¹⁹ Like their Italian counterparts, the core Munich group was composed of youths who had previously been enthusiastic Nazis. Sophie had even been a BDM leader before university. Disillusionment, aggravated by the war, changed their perspectives on National Socialism.¹²⁰

The White Rose leaflets reflect their class biases as well as their shift away from Nazism. Idealizing Germany's recent liberal democratic experience, they did not relinquish patriotic

¹¹⁸ Horn, "Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait", 30; Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 109.

¹¹⁹ "Sentence of Hans and Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst" in Inge Scholl, *The White Rose: Munich 1942-1943*, trans. Arthur R. Schultz (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1983): 114-8.

¹²⁰ Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth 1875-1945*, 429-31

values, but instead denounced Nazism in ways that would not attribute blame to those who followed it blindly in the hopes that it would save Germany from decay. For them, the Nazis were “an irresponsible clique of rulers driven by dark desires.”¹²¹ National Socialism was an “unintellectual” ideology without a coherent theoretical base that did not represent Germany, “the nation of poets and thinkers.” They excused those who supported Nazism before, claiming that “up until the outbreak of war, the majority of the German people were blinded, the National Socialists did not reveal their true nature,” an assertion that is doubtful at least. They also aimed for a reticent neutrality that validates some Nazi rhetoric in order to reach out to a people deeply indoctrinated with Nazi propaganda. An example of that can be observed in the excerpt from the group’s second leaflet that reads “the Jews are people too – no matter what position one takes on the Jewish question.”¹²² Nevertheless, they call Germans to action, incentivizing them to engage in passive resistance through

sabotage in companies vital for armaments and the war, sabotage in all meetings, rallies, festive occasions, organizations initiated by the Nazi Party, prevention of smooth running of the war machinery (a machine that works only for the Nazi Party and its dictatorship) [...] Sabotage of all scientific and intellectual areas active in continuing the present war – be it universities, higher education institutions, laboratories, research institutions, technical bureaus. Sabotage in all events of cultural nature [and] all branches of the fine arts, in all writing, all newspapers.¹²³

¹²¹ Hans Scholl and Alexander Schmorell, “First White Rose Leaflet”, in *Bundesarchiv R3018/NJ 1704 bd. 32*, (June 1942), trans. Katy Derbyshire, available through the German Resistance Memorial Center at <https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/offers/publications/online-publications/faksimiles/>

¹²² Hans Scholl and Alexander Schmorell, “Second White Rose Leaflet”, in *Bundesarchiv R3018/NJ 1704 bd. 32*, (June 1942), trans. Katy Derbyshire, available through the German Resistance Memorial Center at <https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/offers/publications/online-publications/faksimiles/>

¹²³ Hans Scholl and Alexander Schmorell, “Third White Rose Leaflet”, in *Bundesarchiv R3018/NJ 1704 bd. 32*, (July 1942), trans. Katy Derbyshire, available through the German Resistance Memorial Center at <https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/offers/publications/online-publications/faksimiles/>

“Military victory over Bolshevism”, they wrote in another of their leaflets, should not be a priority over “the defeat of the National Socialists” because “our current state [...] is the dictatorship of evil.”¹²⁴

After the deaths of the main Munich group, other White Rose members who had found ways to copy and distribute their leaflets became much more active. The Hamburg section, led by Heinz Kucharski, Hans Leipelt, Greta Rhoté, and Traute Lafenz, had been distributing leaflets before, but saw a period of radicalization after 1943. They expanded their circles by recruiting *ex-bündische* youths and some “swing kids,” especially followers of local jazz bands resentful of the Hitler Youth. These were rebellious teens, mostly coming from elite and upper-middle class circles, whom the White Rose members thought they could organize into a structured resistance movement, and whose case I will tackle in the next section. Unfortunately, their resistance project came to a premature end in October and November of 1943, when most members of the Hamburg White Rose were arrested.¹²⁵

While Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Franco declared victory over the Spanish Republic, and his regime faced broad university-based resistance from its outset. Many university students took over the job of turning the civil war’s resistance movements in the rebel-controlled universities into oppositional ones. The now illegal *Federación Universitaria Escolar* (University School Federation, FUE) went underground to become the main university resistance to the Falange’s *Sindicato Estudiantil Único* (United Student’s Union). Violence and repression, which were normally concentrated in the factories and the lives of the working class, were

¹²⁴ Hans Scholl and Alexander Schmorell, “Third White Rose Leaflet”, in *Bundesarchive R3018/NJ 1704 bd. 32*, (July 1942), trans. Katy Derbyshire, available through the German Resistance Memorial Center at <https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/offers/publications/online-publications/faksimiles/>

¹²⁵ Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 43.

present daily in the educational institutions of Spain, affecting students across the class barrier. Throughout the 1940s, opposition was more veiled, especially because a large part of students were Falangists collecting their benefits for service during the Civil War and as part of the volunteer Nazi Blue Legion in the Second World War. Those caught for subversive activity, such as holding illegal FUE meetings or painting anti-Francoist and republican slogans in university buildings, could expect imprisonment, torture, and forced labor in the Francoist war memorial Valley of the Fallen. Other anti-Francoist student organizations appeared, mostly directed by the Catalan, Basque, or other nationalist regional movements that were at the time becoming the main enemy of the homogenizing regime. After the fall of Berlin in 1945, the Falange watched in disarray as youths moved away from fascism and went in several directions; some became apolitical, some based their pro-regime identity on Catholicism, and others joined the opposition. By the mid-1950s, the anti-Francoist student movement gained steam and came to control university spaces. Influenced by Communists and Socialists, they led massive demonstrations uniting nonconforming youths across classes and clashing with the Francoist youth and student organizations.¹²⁶

In 1956, Madrid students published a historical manifesto denouncing the regime's "monopoly over thought" and its control over universities through "an artificial structure that does not allow for the authentic manifestation and representation of the students." Moreover, they demanded "the formation of a *Congreso Nacional de Estudiantes* (National Students' Congress) that guarantees a representative structure," with democratically elected representatives

¹²⁶ Miguel Ángel Ruiz Carnicer, Marc Baldó Lacomba and Elena Hernández Sandoica, *Estudiantes Contra Franco (1939-1975): Oposición Política y Mobilización Juvenil* (Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2007), 13-15; 92-4; 102-3

protected by the Education Ministry.¹²⁷ In that same week, law students tried to hold an election for their representatives but faced repression from the Falange's *Centuria 20* and *Guardia de Franco* (20th Century and Franco's Guard). The next day (February 8), student organizations all over Madrid manifested their condemnation of the repression. On February 9, they took to the streets to disrupt a Youth Front parade in honor of Falange students who had died in the Civil War, which ended in violent clashes. Although several students identified as "leaders" of the demonstrations were arrested and accused of serving foreign communists in a plot against the regime, most were quickly released due to their wealthy or even important Falangist families. The notoriety they gained in the Francoist media backfired, allowing the opposition movement to grow and spread during the next decade.¹²⁸

Apolitical Upper-Class Youths: From Swing to Superman

Classified by the Nazis as "liberal-individualistic gangs," apolitical, upper-class nonconforming groups were one of the first symptoms of the larger issues with Nazi education.¹²⁹ Resenting the military escalation of the Hitler Youth, its coercive character as participation became increasingly mandatory, the regimentation and escalating repression that came with war, and what they perceived as the low level of the National Socialist cultural production, some upper-class youths rejected the organization's values and activities, instead turning to other lifestyles and products from abroad. Hamburg, as Daniel Horn has argued, was particularly suited for this type of nonconformity due to its cosmopolitan composition, patrician

¹²⁷ *Manifiesto a los Universitarios Madrileños del 1 Febrero de 1956*, accessed at <https://archivodelatransicion.es/>

¹²⁸ Carnicer, Lacomba and Sandoica, *Estudiantes Contra Franco (1939-1975)*, 124-30.

¹²⁹ "Reich Ministry of Justice Report on the Emergence of Youth Cliques and Gangs and the Struggle Against Them (Early 1944)."

tradition, and anglophile culture.¹³⁰ Unlike other youths, the money and status of upper-class adolescents allowed them access to foreign clothes, literature, cinema, and music, as well as to private spaces such as exclusive night clubs and spacious private houses. Away from the public sphere, parents, and authority figures, they enjoyed free leisure time engaging with these foreign cultural products outside of the Nazi-controlled spaces of socialization. They refused to listen solely to “Germanic” *völkisch* (popular) music and ballads, instead enjoying jazz and swing music imported from the United States and England, and their widespread colloquial use of English slangs and catchphrases as well as Weimar mannerisms were a source of horror to the Hitler Youth leaders.¹³¹ This very factor was the source of their nicknames, *swingjugend* (Swing Youths) or *Schlurfs*.¹³² Swing youths dressed expensively, attempting to mimic American Hollywood vestments and English aristocratic styles. Union Jacks and star-spangled pins were a common lapel accessory, according to their idealized ideas of these countries.¹³³ But their main characteristic, much to the disgust of the NSDAP, was their love for swing music.

The swing movement quickly spread through upper-class circles from Dresden to Vienna, and even occupied France, where the *Zazous* or *Petit Swings* had given the Nazis a hard time since 1940. The success of the swing kids, though, was due in large part to the lack of entertainment diversity in National Socialist society. Their ever-growing parties attracted other rich kids, who in turn spread the movement to other parts of the country.¹³⁴ Initially, these live

¹³⁰ Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 39.

¹³¹ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 166-7.

¹³² *Schlurf* seems to be a word deriving from the oral Viennese *Schluaf*, used to describe boys and men who prefer fun to responsibility. See <https://libcom.org/history/schlurfs-%E2%80%93-youth-against-nazism>

¹³³ Kater, “The Impact of American Popular Culture on German Youth”, 45.

¹³⁴ “Reich Ministry of Justice Report on the Emergence of Youth Cliques and Gangs and the Struggle Against Them (Early 1944)”; Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 39-40. Ralph Willett, “Hot Swing and the Dissolute Life: Youth, Style and Popular Music in Europe 1939-49,” *Popular Music* (8:2), (May, 1989): 157-163.

dances had been allowed to happen publicly, until all public dances were banned. In October of 1940, the police broke into an event attended by over 400 youths, arresting sixty-three people as “ringleaders.” Still, internal documents show that large events were also happening privately, as was the case of dance parties in 1939 and 1940 organized by the “Flotbeck group,” attended by over 500 youths and, according to undercover Nazis, were “marked above all by sexual promiscuity.”¹³⁵ During one of the last publicly held Swing Festivals in Hamburg in 1940, an internal Hitler Youth report noted that “the participants accompanied the dances and songs, without exception, by singing the English words. Indeed, throughout the evening, they attempted only to speak English; at some tables even French.” But despite the treasonable elevation of the Reich’s enemies’ cultures, for the Hitler Youth member who wrote this report, the worst element of the swing festival was the dance itself. It was described as “a swing of the worst sort,” in which “sometimes two boys danced with one girl, sometimes several couples formed a circle, linking arms and jumping, slapping hands, even rubbing the backs of their heads together. [...] They all ‘jitterbugged’ on the stage like wild creatures” and “several boys could be observed dancing together, always with two cigarettes in the mouth, in one corner.”¹³⁶

Nazi officials were scandalized by their swinging, complaining in official communication that “hot and swing music demonstrations of young anglophile circles in Hamburg” were “treasonable and reactionary-disruptive” events promoted by “degenerate and criminally inclined, racially mixed youths.”¹³⁷ When informed of the situation, Goebbels recommended that

¹³⁵ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 166; Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 40; “Reich Ministry of Justice Report on the Emergence of Youth Cliques and Gangs and the Struggle Against Them (Early 1944).”

¹³⁶ “*Reichsjugendführung Report*”, in Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 166-7.

¹³⁷ *Scheffler to Minister of Culture*, 18 August 1941, NA T-81/675/5, 484, 203f, cited in Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 40.

all involved youths be enrolled immediately in the labor service, while SD reports worried that the swing boys were opposed to the war, possibly even kin to the enemy, and that the girls seemed to “flit from bed to bed.” They related that “their [the youths] obsession for modern, Anglo-American dance music” was “nearly psychotic,” and that the “sole bond that holds many of these youngsters together is their addiction to this music.”¹³⁸ Because the words and descriptions of the Nazi reporters in these documents are completely shaped by their own ideological pre-conceptions of these youths, it is safe to assume that much of the behavior they attribute to the swing boys and girls were actually exaggerated projections of the things repressed by National Socialist norms, especially when it came to sexuality. They alleged that “even the youngest of female members indulged in sexual intercourse with several partners consecutively” and that “these parties were marked by alcoholic excesses at which people ‘swung’ and ‘hotted.’”¹³⁹

In the end, the harsher Nazi crackdown on these groups drove them to the private sphere, contributing to the development of the Swing movement into a viable subculture among upper- and upper-middle class youths. It also ensured the radicalization of its members as clashes with the regime became more frequent. As Throsten Müller, a young jazz musician engaged in the Hamburg resistance movement alongside the local White Rose chapter put it, “it was not that we were opposed to the Nazis, rather that the Nazis were against us.”¹⁴⁰ In 1942, Himmler responded to the appeals of Hitler Youth leader Axmann to end the movement by ordering “the

¹³⁸ Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 40; and “Vorlage für Reichsleiter Bormann,” 22 August 1941, NA T-81/675/5,484,203f, cited in Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 40-41. SD was the acronym for *Sicherheitsdienst*, or Security Service, the Nazi intelligence agency under Himmler.

¹³⁹ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 168; “Reich Ministry of Justice Report on the Emergence of Youth Cliques and Gangs and the Struggle Against Them (Early 1944)”

¹⁴⁰ Cited in Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 43.

radical extermination of the whole infestation,” placing the “ringleaders” in concentration camps and revoking their right to attend institutions of higher education once they were out. He closed his letter to Reinhardt Heydrich by stating that “only by acting brutally shall we be able to avert the dangerous spread of this anglophile trend at a time when Germany is fighting for her life.”¹⁴¹ A wave of arrests followed, with the Gestapo and Hitler Youth first dissolving the Hamburg Curious-Haus Fête and the Frankfurt Jazz group “Harlem Club,” considered priority targets.¹⁴²

By the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, when Portugal and Spain watched in disgust as their own upper-class youths consumed foreign culture and turned away from the ultranationalist values of their regimes, Swing was not the problem anymore. Instead, the Cold War alignment with the United States had brought the unexpected consequences of economic and cultural imperialism, dreadful for the pseudo-autarkic Iberian regimes which wished to develop their own mass culture. The enemy proved to be resilient: Rock, Punk, and Superman. While Rock and Punk were brought to Spain by upper-class youths but developed locally by the working-class, comic books and other foreign medias such as movies and novels remained a bourgeois exclusivity. American comic books had failed to gain a large public when they were first introduced in the 1940s, but by the 1950s publications boomed. In both Spain and Portugal, Superman was by far the most popular character. In Spain, a special youth censorship commission was brought together, composed of church, education, and youth officials, and tasked with ensuring that youth literature was compatible with the regime’s ideals.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 167; Himmler to Heydrich, 26 January 1942, T-175/20/2,525,081-083, cited in Horn, “Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait”, 42.

¹⁴² Kater, “The Impact of American Popular Culture on German Youth”, 47.

¹⁴³ Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 97-100; Pinto, “Salazar Contra Superman, Banda Desenhada e Censura Durante o Estado Novo,” 292-4

In 1964, after years trying to make the DC superhero as “clean” and Spanish as possible, Superman was banned. The character’s stories represented not only the American liberal-democratic values but also pluralistic ideas that the regime sought to purge. As Louie Dean Valencia-Garcia argues, reading and collecting illegal Superman comics, an expensive hobby fed by international travel only available for a moneyed few, became an act of dissent. The Francoist regime tried to promote its own comic books, but none were as popular. Secret trading groups were common, and the use of nicknames to mark comics demonstrate that youths knew that what they were doing was illegal. In Portugal, Ricardo Pinto observed a similar process: American culture was perceived by censors as full of “vice, sensuality, and scandal.” They capped the publication of foreign literature at 25 percent and ruled that all morally “good” characters that might serve as inspiration to children had to be rebaptized with Portuguese names.¹⁴⁴

But what was it about Superman that made him so dangerous to the Iberian regimes, even after the censorship the comic suffered in its own country of origin through the Comic Code Authority? According to data from the justifications for the censorship of Superman comics, two aspects of the comic book especially worried the censors: Superman was a false idol god-like character, and his relationship with Lois Lane represented a socially unacceptable inversion of gender roles. The idea of treating Superman as a false messianic figure, propelled by the Church censors, is a twisted one but makes sense within an understanding of fundamentalist Christianity. The inversion of gender roles rationale demands a better explanation. For the censorship commissions, these comics presented a “submissive” Superman dominated by an adventurous, working, and independent woman. Lois Lane challenged gender roles not only in her profession,

¹⁴⁴ Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 100-2; Pinto, “Salazar Contra Superman, Banda Desenhada e Censura Durante o Estado Novo,” 294-8.

but also in her clothing and relation to “weak” Clark Kent. She acted as a hero of her own, going on adventures and performing heroic deeds that, in American, Francoist and Salazarist culture, were reserved to men. Her character also echoed the Republican women heroes of the Spanish Civil War, a memory both regimes wanted to avoid. In Spain, the witch-hunt against Superman was headed by Alfonso Alvarez Villar, the head of the Spanish Journal of Public Opinion. In justifying his position, he wrote “the relations between the protagonist and Lois Lane reveal a terror on the part of Superman towards an authentic sexual bond” which he believed “negatively influences the long-term sexual formation of boys and adolescents.”¹⁴⁵ Just as the swing kids before them, young Spaniards who consumed this “dangerous” foreign culture were engaging in an otherwise completely apolitical behavior that, by defying the regime’s positions, acquired political meaning.

Conclusion

In November of 1975, Francisco Franco died. One year prior, the Carnation Revolution had toppled the *Estado Novo* regime, which had been slowly crumbling since Salazar’s death in 1970. Thirty years after the deaths of Mussolini and Hitler, and the end of Fascist Italy and the Third Reich, the last far-right fascistic dictatorships of Europe finally underwent a process of democratic transition. Unlike Germany and Italy, where war and foreign intervention curtailed the regimes’ lifespans, Portugal and Spain saw a relatively peaceful process of democratization. It was not the case that high-ranking figures in the power structure decided to open the country’s

¹⁴⁵ Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 102-108; Pinto, “Salazar Contra Superman, Banda Desenhada e Censura Durante o Estado Novo,” 312-4; Alfonso Alvarez Villar, quoted in Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 105.

economy and politics, though. In both these cases, the transition from autocracy began from below, propelled by students and generations of fascist-educated people who took advantage of the regimes' moment of weakness. By creating new spaces where they could safely subvert the seemingly universal authority of the regimes, these youths developed entire nonconforming subcultures that spread the pluralistic ideas that allowed for a democratic transition.¹⁴⁶

The end of Europe's longest experiences with fascism had at its foundation a flawed educational model, incapable of realizing the all-encompassing and homogenizing character it strove to achieve. This model's attempt to undermine class identifications and produce uniform cultural values through the creation of a synthetic sense of national community never succeeded in extinguishing the diverse cultural movements inherent to every stratified society. Beyond the failure of the total education model, the patterns of ideological irregularity, escalating militarization, and internal competition for the control of education that led to contradictory educational policy, all contributed to the alienation of children and adolescents. Although fascism grew and ascended to power as a youth movement, the life experiences of young people growing up under it proved inconsistent with what they had been promised. Nonconformity then developed in various forms, with different cultural tendencies and patterns throughout social classes. Many engaged in resistance out of a political understanding that led them to opposition, but for those otherwise apolitical youths who ended up clashing with fascism, resistance arose from necessity, and evolved at the same pace that it became clear that the survival of their subcultures depended on a limited political opposition that could even evolve into direct confrontation. At the same time, while working-class teens struggled to adapt to the new social

¹⁴⁶ Radcliffe, *Modern Spain*, 226-8; Miguel Cardina, "Movimentos Estudantis na Crise do Estado Novo: Mitos e Realidades", in *E-Cadernos CES*, (1 September 2008): 57-76, 70.

structures of the fascist order, seeing the bulk of cultural and political repression, upper-class youths grew disillusioned with the course of their national revolutions.

Although the reasons and tactics for rebellion varied, these youth movements distinguished themselves from the regimes' official values through their behavior, dress, ideas, leisure activities, music, and demeanor.¹⁴⁷ Many of the rebellious young people who dared to express their contempt and their revolt paid for it with their lives, but the acts of resistance they performed were the first step in the birth of a new democratic order. By the time all these regimes had come to an end, large parts of their youth had already begun transitioning into the plural-minded citizens needed for enacting larger and democratic social change.

¹⁴⁷ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 169-70; Valencia-García, *Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain*, 14-28.

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