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Source: *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 59, No. 5 (NOVEMBER 1944), pp. 932-944

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41817570>

Accessed: 21-11-2023 11:04 +00:00

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The German Labor Front

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Summary

MORE than 11 years ago, shortly after the seizure of power by the National Socialists, the German Labor Front was created as the first of their mass organizations. It consisted of a nucleus of 5 million trade-union members, who, after the storm troopers' raid on all union headquarters on May 2, 1933, and the ruthless liquidation of the labor-union officers, were forced under Nazi control. Six years later, when the second World War broke out, the Labor Front included 20 million individual members in Germany proper as well as almost 3 millions in Austria, Sudetenland, Danzig, and the western Polish territories, which had been incorporated into "Greater Germany." The Labor Front then included practically all nonagricultural gainfully occupied persons with the exception of the civil servants and members of the professions, who were assigned to other associations. The National Food Estate, the compulsory organization of the people in agricultural occupations, the Chamber of Culture, National Socialist Lawyers' Association, etc., became "collective members," bringing the total membership in the Labor Front to about 30 millions.

It carried on press and propaganda work, was responsible for certain features of industrial relations, promoted welfare work in the plants, and directed the activities of the so-called "Strength through Joy"—an organization carrying on many recreational, athletic, and other functions for workers.

After the beginning of the war the scope of the Labor Front narrowed and its activities were increasingly directed toward war aims and away from the former social purposes. Its main efforts were those of keeping up Army morale with entertainments of various kinds and of looking after German and foreign workers in labor camps.

Although its accomplishments should not be overrated, the Labor Front was nevertheless the main instrument for propaganda in Nazi Germany. Through its vast organization it was in touch with individuals throughout the country, down to the last "propaganda consumer," and all of its activities were permeated with the Nazi philosophy. For these reasons the organization is very important in any consideration of the future of free associations among the workers of post-war Germany.

Structure of the Labor Front

When the Labor Front was created, it seemed to set a pattern for the corporations, the then glorified prospective structural units of the Third Reich. The corporations of manual workers and of salaried employees each consisted of several Nazi-controlled associations which superseded the 168 former unions that had been dissolved;

¹ This article is a summary of a report prepared in connection with the Research Project on Social and Economic Controls in Germany and Russia, organized under the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research.

corporations of employers and middle-class peoples were likewise created and incorporated into the Labor Front as Nazi substitutes for former free associations.

In November 1933, however, the corporations were declared dissolved. From then on the once-praised corporate idea was alternately denounced as reactionary or as "Marxism authorized and controlled by the State." The Labor Front was eventually proclaimed by Hitler to be "the only existing corporation." Employers, manual workers, salaried employees, and urban middle-class people were reorganized into the Labor Front on an individual basis without being allowed separate organizations. The remodeling of the Labor Front, which was completed at the end of 1934, severed the old trade-union ties and loyalties and disorganized labor entirely, thus removing the potential danger of countermoves against the regime.

With the disappearance of the corporate idea, the guiding principle of Labor Front organization became that of tight bureaucratic control over the mass membership. By 1939 the Labor Front was subdivided into 41 districts (*Gaue*), 807 counties (*Kreise*) and 27,127 locals in the "Greater German Reich." In all shops with more than 5 employees, chief stewards (*Betriebsobmaenner*) were installed, who controlled the cell and block leaders (chiefs of the smallest units) and had staffs ranging up to 14 functionaries with assistants and an impressive range of activities designed for the control of workers on the job and during their leisure time. The chief stewards were also the leaders of the shop troops (*Werkscharen*)—the militarized National Socialist elite of youthful workers who assumed leadership in every campaign for political purposes, increased productivity, etc. The shop troops, "implacable adversaries of class struggle and capitalism," by 1939 numbered 340,000 in 9,500 plants.

This whole network of agencies and formations was directed from the top by Labor Front leader Robert Ley, with the aid of numerous central bureaus. Between 1938 and 1941 (the years of the greatest variety of tasks) the central office of the Labor Front was subdivided into 59 branch offices—11 for administrative tasks of the Labor Front itself, 19 for various activities, 17 to deal with specific industries and trades, and 6 to handle relationships with the Office of the Four-Year Plan and with the army, navy and air fleet; 6 others were subdivisions of the Strength through Joy department of the Labor Front.

Relation to National Socialist Party

The position of the German Labor Front in the Third Reich was characterized on the one hand by independence from the Reich administration and on the other by complete dependence upon the Nazi Party. The Party wanted the Labor Front as an instrument of its own, performing services requested by the Nazi Government but not subordinated to the national bureaucracy which the Party members never ceased to distrust in spite of its increasing nazification. The device of identical leadership over corresponding governmental and Party agencies, which was applied in many instances, was not extended to the Labor Front and the Ministry of Labor. Also, when at the outbreak of the war many bodies previously not subjected to direct governmental control were incorporated into governmental agencies in order to avoid friction and conflicts by clear subordination, the Labor Front remained untouched by these measures.

Thus, strange as it seems, the Labor Front always had only a loose connection with the Reich Ministry of Labor. There was even a ban on the name and photograph of Minister of Labor Franz Seldte. Robert Ley, on the other hand, was not only Labor Front leader but also chief of staff of the Nazi Party, a position fourth in rank in the Party hierarchy. From there on down, the closest affiliation between Nazi Party and Labor Front was ensured. The subdivisions corresponded geographically to those of the Party. The chiefs of the Labor Front offices all over the country were politically subordinated to chiefs of the Party offices and often to their deputies. The chief stewards and the cell and block leaders were representatives of the Party.

The privilege of Party membership was confined to a minority of the German people; consequently, the German Labor Front included a majority of non-Party members and the ratio might run as high as 4 to 1. The Labor Front was built, however, upon one fundamental Nazi device: the entire leadership stratum, paid leaders and sub-leaders as well as unpaid petty functionaries such as chiefs of small locals and plants, cells and blocks in shops and streets, consisted of Party members. In 1939, the Labor Front had 36,000 paid officials; in addition 2 million unpaid functionaries dedicated their spare time to its service, attracted by numerous small advantages, the prestige of belonging to the ruling Party, and the pride in being petty commanders in a militarized society. Finally, the shop troops were either members of the Party or aspirants to early admission. Thus, through this network, the governing Party held in its grip the entire gainfully occupied nonagricultural population, including wives and dependents. The petty chiefs, through day-to-day observations, denunciations, and conversations, became thoroughly acquainted with the attitudes, behavior, abilities, weaknesses, loyalties, family relationships, and other characteristics of the men in their units. With this formidable knowledge, they were capable, by the means at their disposal, of preventing the totalitarian German society from disintegrating, even in perilous moments, mostly before having to resort to the Gestapo. Innumerable loyalties, connections, and dependencies have developed in Nazi Germany through this organization. Many of them will survive a formal dissolution of the Labor Front and will arouse problems for many years to come.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

As regards finances of the Labor Front, the Nazi chiefs have always bluntly rejected suggestions, even when made by influential employers and high officials, for financial control other than that exercised by the treasurer of the Nazi Party. Although the Labor Front never published a budget it is nevertheless possible, on the basis of figures occasionally released, to estimate the amount of money available for Labor Front purposes. The monthly dues of the average member rose from 1.21 marks in 1933 to 1.95 marks in 1938. In the latter year, the revenues from membership dues were about 450 million marks. Including the dues of the Austrian and Sudetenland members, dues may have aggregated, in 1939, about 500 or 550 million marks.

This was, however, not the only source of Labor Front income. Labor Front leader, Robert Ley, following the example of other out-

standing Party bosses, built up a powerful holding organization on the "trust" principle. The assets of this trust consisted mostly of property seized from the former trade-union owners—headquarters buildings, resorts, hotels and restaurants, insurance firms, consumers' cooperatives, publishing houses and theaters, house-construction and workers' settlement companies, and the German Labor Bank.

All these enterprises were considerably enlarged and made more profitable, with the political and financial help of governmental and Party agencies. In the sickness-insurance institutions of the Labor Front, for example, 1½ million persons were insured in 1942. By 1938 the German Labor Bank had 34 branches and had become one of the greatest banking organizations in Germany. During the war, like the other Labor Front companies, it extended its activities over the occupied territories; it had its own branches in nearly all of the large towns of Europe and controlled important banks in occupied countries. The Labor Front trust was enlarged in 1937 by an automobile factory, the People's Automobile Works (*Volkswagenwerk*), in Fallersleben, in which the Labor Front invested 200 million marks.² This plant has turned out hundreds of thousands of cars for war purposes, delaying indefinitely the claims of 300,000 Labor Front members who, having paid some 200 million marks in advance installment payments, were led to believe they were entitled to the quick acquisition of a car.

A third source of revenue for the Labor Front consisted of contributions by the Reich Government. As the Government refunded to the Nazi Party and its affiliates expenditures required in the execution of a German law or decree, the Labor Front was therefore entitled to refunds of expenses made for auxiliary activities for the Trustees of Labor, the labor courts, the confidential councils, etc.

Altogether, it is probable that the income from business enterprises and refunds approximated that from membership dues. In 1939 and 1940, the total revenues may therefore have amounted to about a billion marks. Expenditures were about 300 million marks in 1935 (of which no less than 40 percent were for salaries of the Labor Front personnel), and may have slightly exceeded 400 millions in 1939. The excess of revenues, averaging several hundred million marks yearly since 1935 and more than half a billion each year from 1939 to 1941, were invested in Reich treasury bonds or Labor Front enterprises such as the People's Automobile Works, thus contributing to the financing of Germany's war preparation and the war.

Position in the Third Reich

A basic statute for the Labor Front was not adopted until October 1934. The statute defined the Labor Front as the organization of all Germans working with brain and brawn and aiming at the formation of a "people's community and a community of performance." This implied propaganda for National Socialist principles and the pursuance of social measures on the basis of a mutual understanding between employers and employees, was designed to secure industrial peace but not to determine conditions of work. The Labor Front also participated in tasks under the national labor statute of 1934, establishing the "leadership" principle in industry. Finally, the Labor Front was

² In 1944 the Volkswagenwerk became one of the main assembly plants for the flying (robot) bombs. The factory has now been destroyed.

entrusted with vocational training and the direction of the well-known organization, Strength through Joy.

The vagueness of the Labor Front statute and its failure to define precisely the relationship of the Labor Front to the administration led to a variety of interpretations. This resulted in a struggle for power between Labor Front leaders (backed by Party officialdom) and the Ministry of Labor (encouraged by the Reich bureaucracy and not least by the Ministry's regional agents, the Trustees of Labor, who were reliable Nazis but were only in exceptional cases taken from the ranks of Labor Front Officials). The employers tried to defend themselves against the violent attacks upon them as "capitalists," launched by Labor Front officials, and against the interference in employer-employee relations by shop stewards and by Labor Front officials outside the plants. They stressed their right to the "leadership" of their enterprises. They looked for help, and often found it, in the friendly Ministry of Economics headed by Hjalmar Schacht. They even bribed Nazi and Labor Front functionaries.

The struggle for power among the social forces in the Nazi State, behind the facade of enforced national unity cannot be described here. In the fields of labor relations and social structure the outcome was determined by the needs of pre-war and, later, war production. Such needs could not be met without competent national labor administration and the collaboration of the industrialists. Hitler's proclamations, calling for "collaboration of all social forces in the interest of highest productivity and efficiency," in 1935, and for "social peace," in 1936, enforced a compromise. The Labor Front chiefs had to renounce agitation, ambitions as labor leaders, etc., and be satisfied with the role of auxiliary agents of the Nazi Government. The downward trend of their aspirations is expressed in Robert Ley's resigned statement of 1939, in which he defined the Labor Front as "a great educational institution and a motor; it wants to suggest, advise and push forward, but not itself to execute matters, nor to perform economic or technical tasks."

The war contributed to a further decrease in the influence of the Labor Front, confirmed in 1942 by the appointment of Fritz Sauckel as Commissioner for Manpower. Although ranking high in the Nazi Party, he worked chiefly through the civil servants of the Ministry of Labor and the regional Labor Trustees and their staffs, utilizing the Labor Front only for secondary tasks. As a result, the Commissioner of Manpower and the Ministry of Labor administered, between them, all the vital functions of labor relations, the release of collective rules (replacing the former collective agreements), manpower problems, unemployment insurance, the traditional factory inspectorate, and social legislation in the field of sickness, old-age, invalidity, and accident insurance.

Even in the field of relief to needy members it would be safe not to overrate the importance of the Labor Front. Since the latter had acknowledged, in 1933, the rights acquired by the old trade-union members through payment of premiums, it paid some benefits. The total amount was, however, less than that granted previously by the trade-unions and in the years before the war did not exceed 3 to 4 marks yearly for the average member.

Pre-War Activities of the Labor Front

PRESS AND PROPAGANDA

The German Labor Front was the greatest organization for the domestic interpretation, distribution, and reception of Joseph Goebbels' propaganda. For purposes of organized domestic consumption, the central Labor Front press and propaganda agency performed an important political and organizational task.

Politically, the Labor Front propagandists took into account the fact that, although numerically the workers predominated in the organization, nevertheless the middle-class members were not unimportant. The output of the Governmental and Party propaganda offices was therefore cleared and prepared with both groups in mind. In dealing with labor they were inspired by three guiding principles in as many periods. In the first period the objective was to transform the worker of the "liberalistic" period into a worker of the National Socialist era, blindly obedient to the Führer, thinking politically and doing his job according to German military traditions. The annihilation of the Marxist and shaping of the National Socialist worker was considered accomplished in 1935. In the second period the purpose was to endow the emerging "soldier of labor" with the qualities indispensable for the success of the regime. He was educated for his actual and future task, especially for exemplary political and vocational behavior in his occupational surroundings, in order to improve and speed the total pre-war and war production in the service of the Führer. Since the beginning of the third period, in 1939, all propaganda has been dominated by the basic conception that the military front and the home front are one, in the defense of National Socialist Germany against its foes. The soldier of labor has constantly been reminded of the National Socialist sense of duty, discipline, obedience, comradeship, and readiness to sacrifice, as well as the necessity of supreme performance for rescuing Nazi Germany and the world from their Jewish, capitalist, and Bolshevik enemies.

The Labor Front propagandists relied first of all on the spoken word. At first, big propaganda campaigns were launched, but these became secondary in importance in comparison with the daily efforts of regional, local, and plant press and propaganda agents. These agents transmitted and interpreted the central slogans, appeals, and directives to the functionaries who were in contact with the men and women in the smallest units. The direct influence on the individual "propaganda consumer" was overwhelming, because of the supervisory and controlling position of the propaganda agents. In the zones of the new war industries established since 1936, supposedly safe from bombardment, millions of workers have lived in barracks, separated from their families, under tight Labor Front control. The mobilization of hundreds of thousands for the construction of the West Wall in 1938 and 1939 was a big dress rehearsal for the later adjustment of propaganda activities to life in soldiers' and workers' camps and in camps of foreign labor.

Means of indoctrination utilized by the Labor Front propaganda agents were various. Meetings were organized in the shops. Promising young Labor Front members received long and thorough training in 11 training centers, and employers and Labor Front functionaries

had shorter periods of training in similar centers. Community rooms, rest rooms, and "houses of comradeship" in the plants were provided with radio and abundant reading material.

In 1933 the former trade-union periodicals were transformed into ardent Nazi organs of the Labor Front. The vast Labor Front press consisted, in 1939, of about 700 periodicals with a monthly circulation of more than 35 million copies, operating for the most part under their previous trade-union title. These carried political propaganda, popularized Labor Front activities, and included sections on vocational training. There were, moreover, about 500 employees' magazines, with a circulation of about 4 million, issued in all large plants and edited under the responsibility of the employers under instructions and supervision of the Labor Front press service. These periodicals praised the National Socialist regime and the progress of the "work community" in the individual plants. Strength through Joy monthly programs, with a combined circulation of 4 million, were published in every district and carried Nazi political indoctrination intermingled with announcement of and propaganda for and by Strength through Joy activities. At the beginning of the Nazi regime almost half of the German people boycotted the totalitarian newspapers, and the daily newspaper circulation dropped from 27 million in 1932 to less than 16 million in 1934. The Labor Front organs were thus in most cases the only newspapers which entered the workers' homes and were therefore important in spite of the admittedly low interest of the majority of the workers. Their eagerness to read, indeed, cannot be measured by the circulation figures, since most of the periodicals were delivered free of charge to the members or were paid for, on subscription by Labor Front functionaries, through deduction from the pay checks of the workers.

The war put an end to most of the Labor Front press. By 1942 the press was reduced to about a fourth of its former importance, and became negligible in 1943. Important for the post-war period is the fact that the vocational press always had a large circulation and enjoyed a high reputation among the German masses. Prior to the Hitler regime, many workers who no longer subscribed for a daily paper were still reading their trade-union periodical. Therefore, the reconversion of Labor Front periodicals might offer certain opportunities for political reeducation after the destruction of National Socialism.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

As strikes and lockouts, as well as associations of workers and employers and their activities, have been outlawed, industrial peace in Germany is based upon compulsion. The Minister of Labor and (since 1942) the Commissioner of Manpower and their regional agencies have been regulating dictatorially all details of work, conditions of employment and discharge, wages, hours, and vacations, leaving some less essential questions to be covered by shop rules. The labor courts, inherited from the Weimar Republic but largely deprived of their former importance, rule on individual controversies over the labor contract. The Labor Front is supposed to watch over industrial peace in the enterprises, by maintaining and enforcing the "work community," and to this end cooperate with the Labor Trustees, the Commissioner of Manpower, and other agencies.

The Labor Front chiefs have long insisted upon their pre-eminent authority in the matter of industrial peace in the individual plants. They wanted to restrict the Reich Labor Trustees to decisions of final result only; until all Labor Front attempts to smooth the labor relations in the shops had failed, the Labor Trustees should not step in or even be approached by either employers or workers. They were defeated on this point by the Ministry of Labor in a long fight for centralized control, as against the individual arrangements that would have resulted from varying local Labor Front relationships with individual employers.

In certain fields, nevertheless, the Labor Front officials retained remarkable influence. In the first years of the regime they actively cooperated with the Reich Labor Trustees in the establishment of collective work regulations. After the incorporation of the regional and local offices for Placement and Unemployment Insurance and of Factory Inspection into the agencies of the Labor Trustees, in 1938, the influence of the Labor Front in this field declined considerably.

Labor courts.—Lay judges of the labor courts were selected from lists drawn up by the Labor Front, as were also assessors for social-honor courts which impose warnings and fines and can remove leaders of enterprises and followers from the work community for violations of social honor. Inspired by trade-union examples and enlarging them considerably, the Labor Front created regional and local legal advisory offices which gave advice to workers and employers on all questions concerning labor relations and social insurance, and might represent members, both employers and employees, in the labor and social-insurance courts. The offices tried to bring the conflicting parties to an understanding before going to court, and usually succeeded, in view of the slight prospect of a favorable court decision against the opinion of the Labor Front. As the advisory offices had to be consulted before a complaint was made, the pursuit of all legal claims was under complete Labor Front control. The continuous publication, interpretation, and criticism of labor-court rulings by the Labor Front could not fail to influence court decisions under a regime which had abolished independence of courts.

Confidential councils, established by a law of 1934 in plants and offices employing 20 or more persons, were supposed to be another instrument of securing industrial peace. Acting as a representation of labor (but with rights strongly restricted in comparison to those of the shop councils of the Weimar Republic), and intended to cooperate with the employers under whose chairmanship they met, they soon lost in importance. Nonparticipation of the workers in the votes of approval or open disapproval of the candidates presented by the employer in agreement with the chief steward of the Labor Front frequently compelled the Trustees to step in and appoint the councils. After 1935, new elections of councils were suspended and the Trustees often used their right to unseat and replace such council members as were considered uncooperative or made representations and complaints to employers and Trustees. The work of the councils was taken over progressively by the staffs of the Labor Front stewards in the plants; the members of the councils for the most part became identical with the staffs of the stewards. Since the council activities were too greatly reduced to offer useful items of discussion in their rare meetings, the

topics were routinized by official instruction and the meetings became a mere formality.

Employers' welfare work.—Between 1935 and 1938 the Labor Front launched campaigns urging the employers to translate into deeds the care for the workers with which they were charged by the law for national labor. In addition to such specific performances as were based upon law or decree, the building of dwellings for workers, shop improvements, promotion of Strength through Joy, serving of warm meals at low prices, and payment of compensation to workers and their families for participation at Party or Labor Front meetings or military exercises were urged and frequently agreed upon. In 1938, the cost of "additional social performances" was said to have amounted to 785 million marks, or an average of about 40 marks for each worker or 2½-percent of his pay. The accuracy of this figure, however, is doubtful; moreover, on the average, comparison with similar pre-Hitler figures indicates not much more than the usual advance of social spendings by companies in boom periods. After the beginning of 1939, however, when the last reserves of labor had been swept together to work for the war machine, the Labor Front had to reverse its policy. Voluntary compensation to the workers in the form of pay as well as in general social care and even increases of vacation periods were considered as unfair means of attracting workers from other factories, and were therefore prohibited. The topic of additional social care which for years had dominated Labor Front propaganda and activities suddenly disappeared. Nothing shows more clearly the compliance of the Labor Front alternately with all social and anti-social instructions of the Nazi regime and its complete lack of any moral commitment to social work.

STRENGTH THROUGH JOY

Among the numerous activities of the Labor Front, the Strength through Joy movement was the most popular. After its creation in November 1933 it was at first an affiliate of the Labor Front under Ley's leadership; in 1938 it became a Labor Front department. Strength through Joy had a monopoly on leisure-time organization, offered evening classes in most towns and rural communities, and became the outstanding Nazi agency for adult education. It introduced in all big plants sports for leisure hours; it organized hikes, promoted swimming and boating, and short and long trips in Germany and abroad; it was the largest travel bureau in the world. The organization took over, purchased, or built resort centers in the mountains and at the beaches, rented or built ships for trips to foreign countries, and promoted the small "Strength through Joy car" which was intended to become the workers' automobile in a country in which earnings were too low and car prices too high to allow the worker and lower middle classes to purchase and operate a car of the usual size.

Strength through Joy activities were for years a leading propaganda medium and were themselves permeated by Nazi propaganda: no trip to Italy without praising the Axis and its aims; no lecture omitting indoctrination of Nazism and racism; no performance without paying homage to Nazi principles; no military band concert not designed to arouse militaristic feelings. Although many of the Strength through Joy activities had previously been initiated or performed by trade-

unions, Strength through Joy was presented as a splendid manifestation of Socialism in the Third Reich, breaking the barriers which separated the underprivileged from cultural life and upper-class enjoyments.

However, even from the Nazi point of view the organization had its failures as well as its successes. Thus, although the expanding sport activities in the plants and vacation trips were highly appreciated, adult education suffered a serious setback. The installments on the "Strength through Joy car" were so large and the costs of car operation so high as to be beyond the means of manual workers.

The Strength through Joy accomplishments have been greatly exaggerated by Nazi propaganda. Retrospective Labor Front figures of 1940 invalidate previous distorted releases; they show that even in the best year the average adult German attended only one performance per year at theaters, concerts, cabarets, movies, and similar activities furthered by Strength through Joy. The average manual worker could look forward to participation in a trip exceeding a prolonged weekend excursion only about once in every 30 years, and the salaried employee once in every 8 years. Their prospects for a trip to foreign countries were about once in 200 and 75 years, respectively. Nevertheless, between 1934 and 1939 hundreds of thousands of workers were able for the first time to take a trip during vacation; and the psychological effect of such spectacular accomplishments as trips to Italy, Norway, or Africa on the youth and the majority of workers who had not been organized in free trade-unions and knew nothing of their work for the steady improvement of the conditions can be rated much higher than the above figures suggest.

Although the yearly turnover of Strength through Joy amounted roughly to a billion marks, the organization itself contributed only 15 to 20 millions, exclusive of the salaries of the 6,000 paid officials and the office expenses. The costs of the activities were covered in other ways. Shop improvements were attained in numerous cases by unpaid working hours or the work of shop troops; the employers bore at least the expenses for needed material. Costs for trips were lowered by negotiations with railroad and hotel managers on mass transport, lodging and board—devices which were not new in Germany but were now more successfully applied by wide-scale planning, more elaborate organization, and, above all, powerful governmental and Party backing. For more expensive trips, especially those to foreign countries, the Labor Front and employers gave grants to politically reliable and efficient workers.

Wartime Activities

Although immediately after the outbreak of the war the Labor Front organization and activities were largely transformed, this trend became more obvious in 1942 after the first reverses of the Russian campaign, and led to a comprehensive administrative reform in March 1943. The 59 subdivisions were reduced to 10: Organization, personnel, political training, press, propaganda, youth and social legislation, vocational training, labor research, Strength through Joy, and "enterprise organization." The last named replaced the 17 trade offices. Officers were to concentrate on greater efficiency of labor, conservation of working power, strengthening of readiness to work, and conservation

of industrial peace, while at the same time watching wages and plant discipline. Full concentration on war needs, with a total elimination of activities not related to warfare, was the guiding principle.

The two outstanding wartime tasks of the Labor Front were the work of the Strength through Joy for the army, and the work of the Office for Manpower for all German and foreign workers in camps.

Army activities.—In 1939, the Labor Front took over, by agreement with the German High Command, "the whole cultural care for the army with the exception of motion pictures." In 1940 entertainment for the army amounted to about 80 percent, and in 1941 almost 90 percent, of the total Strength through Joy work. Vacation trips for civilians had to be abandoned in 1940 and leisure-time activities were restricted to sports. Looking back at 1941 the Nazi press had to admit that "care for health in the plants suffers from lack of physicians and drugs. * * * no material is available for shop improvements and * * * construction of workers' dwellings can be considered only if new manpower has to be housed." In January 1942 Ley took the final step, ordering all Strength through Joy activities for civilian purposes to be stopped, except some performances in labor camps.

From 1940 to 1942 impressive figures were released on Strength through Joy performances for soldiers, especially the wounded and sick, intended to maintain or restore their morale. At a meeting of the Labor Front in Paris, in 1942, it was reported that hundreds of thousands of plays, concerts, recitals, etc., had been given before many millions of soldiers. Adult education was restricted to German-language courses for foreign workers in Germany and people of the incorporated western Polish and French territories. In addition, Strength through Joy ships became hospital ships or carried German families returning from the Baltic countries to settle in Germany. After 1942, however, even the work for military purposes rapidly declined. The combing out of all able-bodied men for military service and war work, the military reverses in the Soviet Union, and the air bombardments precluded activities on the former scale. Finally, in August 1944 Goebbels decreed, and in October completed, the dissolution of the Strength through Joy organization, in addition to many other Party institutions.

Camp activities.—The care for workers in camps was singled out by Commissioner for Manpower Fritz Sauckel as an outstanding part of the Labor Front's war effort. He wanted to utilize its experience in mass organization and supervision gained in dealing with the West Wall workers before the war and the labor battalions of the Todt Organization during the war.

For German workers, an activity already tested had thus to be continued on a larger scale and adjusted to new conditions. In the Polish Government General, for example, 118 camps for German labor were established under Labor Front supervision. These German workers had to serve as foremen and supervisors of Polish labor. It appeared advisable to keep them together outside working hours not only because of the difference in housing and food, but also for reasons of discipline.

The handling of foreign labor offered more complicated problems. The Office of Manpower created central and regional divisions for foreign labor. Foreign divisions of the Office were opened in the capitals of occupied territories or the countries allied with or friendly

to Germany; the Foreign Organization of the Labor Front had done a preparatory job, in pre-war times, by establishing solid footholds in every country.³ The foreign divisions were aided in their work by offices of a Dutch, Belgian, etc., Labor Front, established under German control and run by labor Quislings; the Labor Front subdivisions for foreign labor in Germany were manned by collaborators taken from their ranks.

The Labor Front started the "care" of foreign workers after they had been hired in occupied territory. Between 1940 and 1943, several million workers were conveyed to Germany and more than a thousand camps in "Greater Germany" and several hundreds in German-occupied territory were taken over by the Labor Front. It selected the administrative personnel for the camps and gave them a thorough training. They were advised to iron out difficulties with foreign labor, to promote a "community life" at the workplace and in the camps, and to do everything to strengthen the working readiness and discipline of foreign labor by propaganda, amusements, and, if necessary, compulsion. In 1942, meals for 4.2 million workers daily were provided in the labor camps by 15,000 kitchens. Libraries were created and 78 periodicals were published in 21 languages. Vocational training and re-training, based on tests of skills and aptitudes, were provided. The millions of foreign workers were expected to become propagandists of National Socialism when they returned home; they had to be "convinced of the superiority of German abilities, justice and incorruptibility."

Other wartime activities centered on war needs, too. Labor Front leaders and subleaders for the armament industry were trained to tighten the control and develop productivity there. Boys and girls working away from their homes were given care, lodged, and supervised by the Labor Front and the Hitler Youth. The number of full- and part-time physicians and of female social workers under Labor Front supervision in the enterprises increased. With 40 full-time and 395 part-time physicians and 2,000 newly hired female social workers (between 1941 and 1943), the number was still extremely low and revealed particularly a lack of interest in and care for the working women who had replaced inducted men by millions. Kitchens in the plants increased from 6,000 to 12,000 between 1939 and 1942, and workers getting their meals there rose from 1.2 to 3.5 millions; in 1942 about a third of all German industrial workers had their meals in plants or camps, a far-reaching change in German living habits enforced by Labor Front planning and organization.

Vocational training.—Participation of the Labor Front in vocational training increased in line with the manifold needs of training or re-training. The training organization of industry maintained its leading position; it created the basis for unified training aims and prepared material enabling foremen and other unschooled trainees to perform their tasks according to proven methods. The Labor Front went into training within industry by opening training shops at which 3 million workers have received training. The Labor Front press for vocational training, on the other hand, had to be greatly reduced. The yearly vocational competition, however, which was started in 1934 for youth

³ The work of the Labor Front in this field has also come to the knowledge of a larger public in the United States through the trial of the German American Vocational League (the American branch of the German Labor Front) before the Federal Court at Newark, N. J., from March to May 1944.

and extended in 1938 to the whole working population, was still held in 1943, whereas the model enterprise contest for the highest economic and social performances was last organized in 1942—a proof of the value attributed to the promotion of vocational improvements and the discovery of skills and talents, not to forget the devotion to the Nazi way of life which is a compulsory subject in all contests.

The Labor Front in the Post-War Period

What should be done with the Labor Front after the victory of the United Nations has been repeatedly discussed: whether it should be dissolved, or transformed and utilized in a new form for leading German labor back from Hitlerism to the pursuit of decent aims and honest methods of national and international labor and social policy. The organization has been suggested as one possible means of reconstituting quickly the trade-union movement (under trusted appointees of the occupying forces, including representatives of the international labor movement). Concern has been expressed with regard to the organizational vacuum that would follow the dissolution of the Labor Front. On the strength of an analysis of the present position and activities of the Labor Front, this anxiety is not shared by others who are opposed to the future utilization of this organ of Nazism with its ramifications throughout German life. They warn that an evolutionary transformation and a change in leadership would not be sufficient to prevent an organizational survival of Nazism in the cells of the Labor Front.⁴

This was also the point of view of one of the rare official utterances dealing with this problem—a resolution proposed by the International Labor Office but not adopted by the International Labor Conference in Philadelphia. The resolution recommended that the Labor Front be liquidated without delay, that any legislation or regulations incompatible with freedom of association and its effective exercise be declared invalid immediately, that under the regime of occupation in consultation with a United Nations Labor Commissioner the continuation of such activities of the Labor Front as are of genuine social value be assured, and that the property and funds of the Labor Front (to be held in trust by the Labor Commissioner) be drawn upon for the purpose of assisting the reconstitution of free workers' organizations and other appropriate purposes.⁵

In that resolution there are debatable points with regard to the immediate restoration of freedom of association and other issues. It is not intended, however, to deal in this study with the details of policy in post-war Germany.⁶

⁴ For unofficial proposals in this direction, see American Labor Conference on International Affairs, *Studies in Post-War Reconstruction No. 3: Germany in the Transition Period*, by Hedwig Wachenheim, June 1944 (p. 14). See also *The Revival of the German Labor Movement After the War*, by Hedwig Wachenheim (in *International Post War Problems*, New York, June 1944, pp. 371-386); *Plan for Reconstruction of German Trade-Union Movement* (in *Monthly Labor Review*, Washington, August 1944, pp. 337-339); *Germany After Hitler*, by Paul Hagen, New York, 1943 (pp. 127-135); *The Next Germany*, New York, Penguin Books, 1943 (pp. 45, 68); and *The Trade Union Movement in Germany. Past, Present and Future*, by Hans Gottfurcht, London, Centre for German Workers in Great Britain, 1944.

⁵ International Labor Conference, 26th Session Recommendations to the United Nations for Present and Post-War Social Policy. Report II, Montreal, 1944 (pp. 49-57; 83-84).

⁶ The code for occupied Germany established by the Civil Affairs Division of the Allied Expeditionary Forces includes a law (No. 5) providing for the dissolution of the Nazi Party and all its subdivisions, subsidiaries, offices, and institutions. All further activity of these organizations is made illegal, except as necessary to preserve property, funds, records, and equipment (all of these will be taken into custody by the Military Government). The German Labor Front, as an affiliate of the Nazi Party, is subject to these provisions.