

STRENGTH THROUGH JOY

CONSUMERISM AND MASS TOURISM
IN THE THIRD REICH

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Introduction

Josef Nösler and Josef Amediet at first thought the news was a joke. When the two Krupp miners learned from their supervisors that they would sail to the Portuguese island of Madeira on an all-expenses paid cruise organized by the Nazi leisure-time organization, Strength through Joy (Kraft durch Freude, or KdF), they could scarcely believe their luck. After returning from their trip, the two workers contributed an article about their adventure to the Krupp newspaper, their prose conveying their enchantment with their sojourn on the island. With its bountiful banana trees, lush foliage and flowers, and the sparkling lights at night in its port city, Funchal, Madeira appeared to the authors as an exotic and pleasurable “fairy tale land.” Nevertheless, the poverty of the Madeirans disrupted the magical impression that the island had left. While the gardens and villas of the wealthy were majestic and colorful, the miners recalled, the hovels of workers, who huddled in the slums near the harbor reminded them of how much their own lives differed from the Portuguese. Such conditions could hardly be imagined in Germany, they implied. Thanks to the führer, who understood what German workers wanted – a subtle reference to the “failure” of the Social Democrats and Communists to address the needs of wage earners – Nösler and Amediet had earned the experience of a lifetime. They had won the opportunity to travel and the chance to compare their standard of living with that in a Strength through Joy port of call.¹

The miners’ report contained the customary ingredients of the tourist recollections, which Strength through Joy and industry periodicals regularly published. Few words of criticism about the trip emerged. Rather, the workers’ article expressed amazement that wage earners could enjoy a pastime once the privilege of the middle and upper classes. Moreover, it conveyed the dreamlike qualities of the voyage, especially because of

1 “Nochmals zwei Madeirafahrer. Zwei Kumpels von Hannover-Hannibal fahren zu den glücklichen Inseln,” *Krupp: Zeitschrift der Kruppischen Betriebsgemeinschaft* 27, no. 19 (1 July 1936): 19.

the cruise's "exotic" destination. And, it included the observation as to the low living standards of the workers of the host nation, in contrast to the superiority of Germany's way of life under Adolf Hitler. Although an advertisement for the harmonious "plant community" (*Betriebsgemeinschaft*) at Krupp, reflected in the management's willingness to subsidize vacation trips for its workers, the article also attested to the success of Nazi social policy and the Nazi regime's ability to deliver a high standard of living to working-class Germans. As an agency that at low cost to its consumers sold the cultural practices that signified middle-class standing – concerts, plays, the opera, art exhibits and the theater, riding, sailing, and tennis lessons, and vacation travel – Strength through Joy testified to the Nazi regime's desire to convince its racially "valuable" citizens that it enhanced their well being.

Since the 1960s the social history of the Third Reich has overturned the image of Nazi rule that emerged during the early Cold War period, especially in the West. According to that view, Nazism terrorized the majority of Germans into submission befitting a "totalitarian" regime that controlled the public and private lives of its citizens, save for the heroic few who resisted at the cost of their lives.² Although acknowledging Nazism's persecution of political and racial "undesirables" and "deviants," historians highlight the limits of the regime's ability to indoctrinate, while recognizing the unforced popularity of its policies. Periodic opposition and nonconformity coexisted with the widespread acceptance of the Third Reich, which prevented the emergence of sustained opposition to the regime's most lethal goals.³ Even renewed attempts to describe the Nazi regime as "totalitarian" – to describe its invasions of the private sphere, its abrogation of individual rights and the rule of law, and its attempts to remake civil society into a racial utopia – appreciate the support that the regime acquired from Germans regardless of class, who grasped at its millenarian solutions to contemporary crises.⁴ If the knowledge of the regime's brutality was pervasive, encouraging the majority to avoid behavior that would result in their denunciation, the collaboration of

2 For a good example of this perspective, see the work of the emigré historian, Hans Rothfels, *The German Opposition to Hitler* (Hindale, Illinois: Henry Regnery, 1948).

3 Although more inclined to stress the relative immunity of individuals and groups to Nazi ideology than active popular consent, the multivolume social history of Bavaria, Martin Broszat, et al., *Bayern in der NS-Zeit*, 6 vols. (Munich and Vienna: Oldenbourg, 1977–83), opened a new lens through which to study the regime's impact on Germans. For an analysis of the scholarship on popular opinion, see Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, 4th ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 2000), 183–217.

4 Michael Burleigh's *The Third Reich: A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000) is the most thoroughgoing attempt to reintroduce the concept of totalitarianism to the Third Reich. See also Konrad H. Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 149–62.

many Germans in the regime's criminality have been abundantly documented.⁵ For many if not most, the regime's "achievements," defined as the restoration of "order" against the parliamentary logjams and social conflict of Weimar, the rollback of the Versailles "humiliation," economic recovery, and the ostracizing of social outsiders outweighed the limitations on personal freedom and the sporadic grievances of subcultures and institutions.

Nevertheless, historians have devoted little attention to a major problem which preoccupied the Nazi leadership, that of mass consumption.⁶ The Nazi party's awareness of a nascent consumer culture in Germany drew the Hitler movement into a controversy that became especially animated after World War I, despite and even because of the Weimar Republic's continuing crises.⁷ Confronted by the emergence of the United States, which mass produced goods for private acquisition and material well

5 Emblematic of this position is Robert Gellately's *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1933–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). Even Eric Johnson, Gellately's strongest critic, denies neither the significance of popular denunciation nor the selectivity of repression. See his *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

6 This despite Timothy W. Mason's attempt in his *Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich: Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft*, 2nd ed. (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1978), subsequently translated as *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the "National Community,"* trans. John Broadwin and ed. Jane Caplan (Providence and Oxford: Berg, 1993), to analyze the regime's sensitivity to consumption and its contribution to the outbreak of war. Because Mason's argument as to the role of working-class discontent in the regime's decision to launch its Blitzkrieg was unconvincing, his awareness of the significance of consumption produced little follow through until recently. Hans-Dieter Schäfer's *Das gespaltene Bewußtsein: Über deutsche Kultur und Lebenswirklichkeit* (Munich, Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1981) and Detlev J. K. Peukert's *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. Richard Deveson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987) were exceptions to that rule. A new appreciation for consumption, however, has arisen in Hartmut Berghoff's book that incorporates the Nazi era, *Zwischen Kleinstadt und Weltmarkt: Hohner und die Harmonika 1857–1961: Unternehmensgeschichte als Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997), in the special issue of *German History* 19, no. 2 (2001), coedited by Alon Confino and Rudy Koshar, and in Michael Geyer's recent articles, which suggest the relationship between consumption and violence. See, for example, "The Stigma of Violence, Nationalism, and War in Twentieth-Century Germany," *German Studies Review* 16, no. 2 (1993): 75 ff.; "Restorative Elites, German Society and the Nazi Pursuit of War," in *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: Comparisons and Contrasts*, ed. Richard Bessel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 134–64; and "Germany, or the Twentieth Century as History," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 94, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 663–702. Nevertheless, we still lack a work that is as ambitious as Mason's, yet more successful in exploring the Nazi regime's approach to consumption in all its complexity.

7 Following Michael Geyer, I distinguish between mass consumption, which clearly existed during the interwar period, and consumer culture, which did not emerge full blown until after World War II. The ambivalence toward proliferation of goods became gradually less evident in the postwar West as consumer cultures eliminated barriers of taste in the purchase of goods, while asserting the right to consume as a badge of citizenship and consumption as a source of happiness independent of work. See "In Pursuit of Happiness: Consumption, Mass Culture, and Consumerism," in *Shattered Past*, especially 306–14.

being,⁸ and alternatively by the left's endorsement of collective entitlement that the Soviet Union newly embodied, Weimar debates on consumption exacerbated the Republic's deep political and social fissures. From the mid-twenties, as the Nazi party grew into a mass movement that sought power by legal means, its leadership rejected the socialist and American or "Fordist" routes to raising living standards through consumption. The Marxist presumption of class conflict was anathema to the Nazis, for it violated their vision of a unified racial community, while distribution according to need affronted the desire of Nazi leaders to reward "performance" (*Leistung*) in service to the nation. Fordism, on the other hand, represented commercialism, the denigration of German "quality" work, the "materialist" worship of commodities, and instant gratification of individual wants.

Yet, despite the party's suspicion of consumption, Hitler envisioned a future of material abundance once the obtaining of "living space" (*Lebensraum*) assured Germany's continental domination and biological survival. To be sure, the Nazi regime aggressively promoted production over consumption after 1933, for only rearmament and in all likelihood war would bring empire. It discriminated against consumer production and curtailed imports of consumer goods, following the führer's insistence that future prosperity derived from present sacrifice. Still, the regime needed to accommodate the party's diverse constituencies, who expected a better life after the privations of Weimar, for appeals to sacrifice would not suffice. To meet that need and simultaneously rearm, the Third Reich fashioned a paradoxical blend of belt tightening measures and foretastes of the good life for the "master race" (*Herrenvolk*).

Founded in November 1933 ten months after Hitler's assumption to power, Strength through Joy best embodied the Third Reich's attempts to improve German living standards until living space could be achieved.⁹ By

8 On this point see Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough, *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1996), 5.

9 Despite existing dissertations and articles on KdF, which include detailed analyses of the social bases of KdF's clientele and KdF's contributions to the regime's foreign policy, Strength through Joy has eluded a book-length study that links it to the Nazi regime's strategies to raise German living standards. The dissertations include Bruno Frommann, "Reisen im Dienste politischer Zielsetzungen: Arbeiter-Reisen und 'Kraft durch Freude' Fahrten" (Diss: Stuttgart, 1993); Laurence Van Zandt Moyer, "The *Kraft durch Freude* Movement in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939" (Diss: Northwestern, 1967), and the oft-cited Wolfhard Buchholz, "Die nationalsozialistische Gemeinschaft *Kraft durch Freude*: Freizeitgestaltung und Arbeiterschaft im Dritten Reich" (Diss: Munich, 1976). On KdF's relationship to Nazi foreign policy and to the Italian Fascist leisure organization "After Work" (*Dopolavoro*), see Daniela Liebscher's "Mit KdF 'die Welt erschliessen': Der Beitrag der KdF-Reisen zur Aussenpolitik der Deutschen Arbeitsfront, 1934-1939," in 1999: *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* 14, no. 1 (March 1999): 42-72, and "Organisierte Freizeit als Sozialpolitik: Die faschistische Opera

mediating between its clientele and market-based leisure to keep its costs low, KdF strove to open the cultural practices of the middle and upper classes to workers, thus ameliorating their quality of life while compensating for wage freezes, longer working hours, and the restrictions on private consumption. As much the product of the hypercompetitive environment of the Third Reich, in which KdF appropriated the space available to it, as the result of deliberate design, KdF provided leisure activities on a scale that no other party or state agency could rival. Yet Strength through Joy also submitted to the regime's campaign for higher productivity. Although acknowledging that workers deserved recreation and vacations, KdF's leaders and operatives argued that work inspired individual creativity and national resurgence, the sustenance of the harmonious racial community (*Volksgemeinschaft*). Thus they maintained that KdF was no mere leisure-time organization. Rather, its programs, which included its workplace beautification project, the Beauty of Labor (*Schönheit der Arbeit*, or SdA), embraced the totality of workers' "creative lives." They would improve the work environment, guide workers to purposeful and restorative leisure that stimulated productivity, and deepen workers' attachment to nation and race.

For KdF to have linked leisure to productivity meant that it rejected a commonplace, if increasingly contested, assumption that the "standard of living" meant exclusively the possession of economic goods, whether the basic necessities of food, clothing, and housing, or other commodities and services that satisfied individual desires.¹⁰ Adhering to the Nazi party's opposition to mass consumption and mass culture that it had articulated while bidding for power, KdF promoters expanded the definition of a "high" standard of living to incorporate the personal

Nazionale Dopolavoro und die NS-Gemeinschaft Kraft durch Freude 1925–1939," in *Faschismus und Gesellschaft in Italien*, ed. Jens Petersen and Wolfgang Schieder (Cologne: SH Verlag, 1998): 67–90. Finally, see the pioneering essays of Hasso Spode, "'Der deutsche Arbeiter reist!' Massentourismus im Dritten Reich," in *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit: Untersuchungen zum Wandel der Alltagskultur in Deutschland*, ed. Gerhard Huck (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1980): 281–306; "Arbeiterurlaub im Dritten Reich," in *Angst, Belohnung, Zucht, und Ordnung: Herrschaftsmechanismen im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Carola Sachse (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1982): 275–328; and "Ein Seebad für zwanzigtausend Volksgenossen: Zur Grammatik und Geschichte des fordistischen Urlaubs," in *Reisekultur in Deutschland: Von der Weimarer Republik zum "Dritten Reich"*, ed. P. J. Brenner (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1997): 7–47. While building on Buchholz's detail regarding the social bases of KdF tourism, Spode analyzes it better. The paucity of archival material on Strength through Joy, the result of the destruction of its headquarters by Allied bombing, has contributed to the dearth of scholarship on KdF.

- 10 For a contemporary critique of mass consumption and materialist definitions of the standard of living, see the work of the German–American rural sociologist, Carle Zimmerman, *Consumption and Standards of Living* (New York: Arno Press, 1976). This edition is a reprint of the original, published in 1936. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

satisfaction that workers derived from contributing to collective ends and the nonmaterial recognition that they obtained in return. Harmonizing the interests of employers and workers, a goal that Nazi leaders shared with conservative social theorists, the “joy” of work and the “honor” accorded to manual labor signified a “high” standard of living, which consisted of hierarchical but paternalistic shop floor “communities,” the nonalienated relationship between workers and their products, and the integration of workers in the racial community. If rearmament entailed the postponement of material reward, KdF would still give wage earners a priceless source of happiness and fulfillment, the recognition of their “creativity” as producers and their contributions to national revival. Likewise Strength through Joy used its leisure programs, especially tourism which it developed to provide respite from the workaday environment, to reward work performance and enhance productivity once the worker returned to the job. Eschewing hedonistic pleasure seeking, Strength through Joy joined the self-improving high mindedness of middle-class travel with the promotion of the racial community through package tours.

Nevertheless, KdF’s vacation trips compromised its productivism, even as KdF promoted the noncommercial goals of its leisure. Strength through Joy catered to consumer expectations as economic recovery ended unemployment and raised family incomes, recognizing that individual pleasure and autonomy mattered as much as the collective experience of cultural uplift and national renewal. While KdF directed its low-cost, noncommercial consumption toward collective ends, it simultaneously embedded visions of future prosperity in the dream worlds of the present, advertising material “luxuries” to appeal to its audience. If KdF distinguished its definition of the “standard of living” from the “materialist” hunger for consumer goods, it nonetheless delivered purchasable cultural practices with consumerist implications. Strength through Joy’s tourism, in fact, became attractive because it offered opportunities for pleasure and self-realization similar to those advertised by the promoters of commercial leisure. Its willingness to allow popular desires to seduce it enhanced its popularity and that of the regime that sponsored it.

Given the Nazi regime’s sensitivity to popular opinion, it is not surprising that Strength through Joy had to deliver more than regimentation or even cultural enrichment that KdF tourists sought along with relaxation and pleasure. Nor is it surprising that KdF evolved through the interplay of its aims and those of its clientele. Even the Third Reich’s network of repression spread its tentacles in the course of an insidious dialogue between the Nazi leadership and popular opinion.¹¹ To recognize, however,

11 See Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 2001), especially 35–69, for the compatibility between the Nazi press and popular prejudices.

that consumption emerged as a significant means of negotiation between the Nazi regime and its racially “valuable” citizens acknowledges a crucial component of the regime’s legitimacy. In a less direct but subtler way than popular denunciations to the Gestapo, KdF’s management of consumption exacerbated the exclusions that defined the Third Reich. KdF’s mélange of respite, self-discovery, and fellowship gave racially acceptable Germans positive experiences of the Third Reich, which the regime’s victims did not share.

Nazism was not unique in the industrialized world in viewing market-based consumption and the unregulated leisure that helped to sustain it as a threat to production. Nor did it stand alone in defining the “standard of living” as more than the possession of material things for personal gratification. Nor was it unusual, finally, in pursuing collective goals over individual needs, fearing that private consumption threatened social cohesion.¹² Nevertheless, KdF’s dream worlds modified its productivism, antimaterialism, *völkisch* collectivism, and gospel of delayed gratification. Moreover, Hitler’s permanent solution for guaranteeing a German standard of living suitable for a “master race” departed radically from the lamentations of conservative critics of mass consumption and mass culture in Germany and elsewhere, who sought the permanent containment of desires.¹³ Expansion and the subordination, exploitation, or extermination of racial “inferiors” would assure the racial community’s biological reproduction *and* material abundance. The good life would thrive in the New Order along with the honor accorded to labor and the provision of culture for all. As Nazi leaders availed themselves of the rewards of power in an orgy of conspicuous consumption, suppressing their pre-1933 contempt for “materialism,” KdF manufactured dreams of future prosperity for the master race, which German occupiers carried out after 1939. KdF’s noncommercial consumption provided the transition between Nazism’s condemnations of consumerism prior to 1933 and the greed mixed with violence that flourished with the expropriation of German Jewish property in 1938 and again with total war.

I have organized *Strength through Joy* to chart the evolution of its aims as they translated into practice. Opening in Chapter 1 with a discussion of the debates on consumption during the Weimar, I describe the Nazi party’s rejection of the two prevailing modes of mass consumption, the Marxist model of collective entitlement and the American, or “Fordist,”

12 Evidence of this could be found even in the heartland of mass consumption, the United States, as revealed in Zimmerman’s critique *Consumption and Standards of Living*.

13 On this topic see Wolfgang König, *Geschichte der Konsumgesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000), 441–50. On the defeat of “democratic leisure” in the West, see Gary Cross, *Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

methods of mass production and distribution to satisfy private needs. I then turn in Chapter 2 to the emergence of Strength through Joy as the Nazi regime's short-term solution to mass desires after 1933 until living space could be acquired. Strength through Joy's rise occurred in the context of the international debate on the "problems" of work, consumption, and leisure, the power struggles of the Nazi regime, and the priority that the Third Reich accorded to rearmament. As an agency that adhered to the leader principle (*Führerprinzip*) and a militarized, disciplined, and hierarchical structure, KdF stressed the indivisibility of work and leisure consistent with its productivist definition of the standard of living. It thus ruled out individualistic and autonomous leisure practices that fostered unlimited desires. Like the imperatives of the regime that spawned it, Strength through Joy believed that it "honored" workers according to their ability to produce for nation and race. By improving the conditions of their labor, affording them cultural experiences comparable to those accorded to the middle class, and integrating them in the Nazi racial community, KdF would contribute its share to eliminating class conflict and the appeal of Marxism. The range of KdF's offerings, the millions that it impacted, the social diversity of its clientele which included workers, and the international recognition that KdF acquired testified to its success in carving out a place for itself in the social Darwinian climate of the Third Reich.

Nevertheless as I make clear in Chapter 3, Strength through Joy's emphasis on the workplace as the key to regulating leisure time and disciplining consumption, most clearly illustrated by the Beauty of Labor (SdA), came under stress due to the inherent coercion of SdA's plant communities. Although solidifying the power of employers that the Weimar system had once limited and convincing many wage earners of the regime's commitment to improving conditions on the shop floor, SdA proved less able to build popular support for the regime. Thus, I then turn my attention to Strength through Joy's domestic and international tourism, devoting Chapter 4 primarily to the perspective of KdF's leaders and Chapter 5 to the perspective of its participants. Tourism became KdF's most determined attempt to create a non-Marxist, non-Fordist, and characteristically Nazi mode of consumption. By exploiting tourism's less overtly "material" character as a concatenation of images, fantasies, and experiences, it successfully purveyed the noncommercial consumption of culture, which muted the conflict between consumption and rearmament. While promoting an edifying tourism that would bind its participants to the Nazi racial community, it increasingly encouraged self-fulfillment, pleasure seeking, and individual choice, which together would be satisfied through KdF's increasing emphasis on "luxury." Especially by exposing German tourists to the lower material living standards in its southern European and North African destinations, which encouraged tourists to

compare their lives favorably with those they observed, Strength through Joy contributed significantly to the Third Reich's popular support.

Although forced to curtail its tourism during the war, Strength through Joy's civilian and troop entertainment, as seen in Chapter 6, became integral to the German war effort, reflecting the Nazi regime's fear of repeating the collapse of popular morale that took place during World War I. KdF substantially, if indirectly, contributed to the blend of racism and consumption that characterized Nazi-occupied Europe, and especially the extermination of the Jews. The defeat of the Nazi regime revitalized the competition between the Marxist and American-style roads to mass consumption, while eliminating the "German consumption" embodied in KdF. As I describe in the Epilogue, the postwar Germans became unsuitable environments for a KdF style mediation between the market and consumers, albeit for different reasons. In any case, market-based consumption ultimately triumphed over the Soviet Bloc's vision of mass entitlement, thus ending a battle that had begun after World War I.

Strength through Joy encompassed many programs besides tourism, including its effort to increase popular access to the performing and visual arts. Nevertheless for two reasons, this book concentrates on the Beauty of Labor and tourism. Those ventures provide the clearest illustration of KdF's attempt to define the standard of living as accelerated production and noncommercial consumption by recognizing work and leisure as complementary aspects of workers' "creative" lives. Arguably, the Beauty of Labor and tourism also constituted KdF's most ambitious projects. In SdA, aestheticizing the shop floor meant eliminating class conflict and creating the plant community, as well as reconstructing the identities of workers so that they would become full-fledged members of the racial community. In addition to generating most of KdF's revenue, tourism became KdF's most impressive instrument of propaganda for foreign and domestic consumption. Not surprisingly, the evidence regarding the reception of KdF's workplace aestheticization and its tourism, so crucial to assessing the manner in which Nazism's attention to consumption resonated below, is the richest for those two programs. In addition to the situation reports of the Social Democratic Party in Exile (Sopade) and other underground leftist organizations, such as New Beginning (Neu Beginnen), the surveillance reports of SD and Gestapo agents, who monitored KdF tourists, provide invaluable insights into popular attitudes.¹⁴

14 *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade) 1934–1940*, 7 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Petra Nettelbeck, 1980); *Berichte über die Lage in Deutschland: die Lagemeldungen der Gruppe Neu Beginnen aus dem Dritten Reich, 1933–1936*, ed. Bernd Stöver (Bonn: Dietz, 1996). Gestapo and SD surveillance reports on KdF vacation trips are found in the Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde (BAL), in the files of the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, or RSHA), R58 943–50 and 609.

I integrate KdF's other programs into my narrative where appropriate, not least because factory beautification and tourism are capacious enough to accommodate them.

The issues that Strength through Joy addressed – the relationship between work and leisure, the introduction of paid vacations, and the social consequences of mass production and consumption – were widely discussed throughout the industrialized world. Although the product of a chauvinistic and autarkic regime, KdF participated in the international debate regarding the “problems” of leisure and consumption during an era of social conflict, economic hardship and conservative fears of individualism, democracy, and declining work discipline. As the product of Nazism's competition with socialism and Fordism, Strength through Joy's leaders hoped to demonstrate that the Third Reich “cared” for workers. For that reason, however, KdF revealed the ugly distinctiveness of the National Socialist approach to raising the standard of living. Its noncommercial consumption protected rapid rearmament and expansion, while reinforcing and even widening the gulf between racially “valuable” Germans and persecuted minorities. Its tourism forecasted a German imperium while confirming the racism of its vacationers and the regime's own legitimacy. KdF's wartime entertainment revealed Germany's dependence on living space at the expense of Germany's neighbors to secure prosperity for the racially acceptable. Although aesthetically pleasing workplaces and smiling tourists appear tangential to emergency decrees, concentration camps, and genocide, Strength through Joy exposed Nazism's fusion of pleasure and violence.