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The Analysis of the Artaman League and
its Worldview under the Context of the
War Youth Generation, 1923-1929

By

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Abstract: This research primarily concerns the Artaman League (Bund Artam), the organization established in 1923 with Volkish (Völkische) Ideology. Founded by the union of several Bauernhochschule (Farmer’s College) and Eagle and Falcon (Adler und Falken), the league sought to expel Polish workers entering Germany by recruiting volunteer laborers for Volunteer Labor Service (Freiwilligearbeitdienst) to work in the estates under the Artaman sponsor. At the same time, it sought to instill the league’s Volkish ideology into the minds of youths through the lectures in Bauernhochschule. The research argues that the programs in the league reflected the programs and institutions that drew support from the youths, particularly the war youth generation, in World War 1. Such programs include Wandervogel, the youth movement established in the late 19th century that eventually became the hub for military training and the youths supportive of the German cause; Jungmannen program, the youth conscription for working at farms, and Freikorps, the paramilitary group where its military ethics and tradition influenced the league. Then, the paper explores the worldview of the Artaman League, especially with the religious context within the league and the perception of the world heavily based on racial hierarchy.

Introduction

In the summer of 1923, Bruno Tanzmann, a headmaster of the Deutsche Bauernhochschule (German Farmer's College) in Dresden-Hellerau, and William Kotzde, the leader of right-wing youth movement Eagle and Falcon (Adler und Falken) from Wandervogel e.V., and August Georg Kenstler, the publicist and a former Freikorpsman, started the Artaman Movement (Artamanenbewegung).¹ Reorganizing into the Artman League (Bund Artam) in 1926, The league was the union of several Bauernhochschule with a hellbent dedication to rooting out Polish seasonal workers out of Germany and replacing them with German youth farmers instead. As a report from the Reich Ministry of Interior on February 24th, 1923, indicates, this union of Bauernhochschule was a part of the Völkish (Völkische) Movement that sought to wipe Polish populations and laborers out of German soil from the very beginning.² The league expanded further with the establishment of Bundschuh, the ideological "Squad forge" (Kaderschmiede), and the beginning of cooperation with the Young German Order (Jungdeutscher Orden) in 1926.³

Despite the continued monitoring by the Reichs Ministry of Inner Affairs (Reichsministerium des Innern), the Prussian State Commissioner for Public Order (Reichskommissar der Weberwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung), and Police Department of Dresden and Leipzig, the league successfully survived and even expanded, until 1929 when its members were absorbed into the Nazi Party.⁴ Some prominent figures of Schutzstaffel (SS), such as Rudolf Höss, the commandant of Auschwitz Concentration Camp from 1944 to

¹ Michael H. Kater, „Die Artamanen: Völkische Jugend in der Weimarer Republik,“ *Historische Zeitschrift* 213, no. 3 (December 1971): 577.

² BArch, 1507/478, 5.

³ Stefan Brauckmann, „Die Artamanen als völkisch-nationalistische Gruppierung innerhalb der deutschen Jugendbewegung 1924–1935,“ *Jahrbuch des Archivs der deutschen Jugendbewegung/ Historische Jugendforschung* 2, no. 5 (2006): 180.

⁴ BArch, 1507/478, 17-19.

1945, were recruited by Heinrich Himmler.⁵

The research specifically on the Artaman League is rarely conducted outside Germany. As for German Academia, scholars such as Stefan Brauckmann and Michael H Kater have thoroughly researched the league. In addition, Ulrich Linse and Christian Niemeyer, who is among the leading scholars in the history of the German youth movement, provided crucial insights into the nature of Volkish Ideology.

Even though their research provides deep insight into the league and has inspired me to write this paper, their works also deal with the league as a part of a more extensive milieu, namely the German youth movement or Nazism. For instance, one of the main interests shown in Michael H Kater's work titled "Die Artamanen: Völkische Jugend in der Weimarer Republik," one of the earliest analyses of the Artaman League, is how the ideology of the Artaman League influenced that of Schutzstaffel.⁶ Likewise, Brauckmann's "Die Artamanen als völkisch-nationalistische Gruppierung innerhalb der deutschen Jugendbewegung 1924–1935." defines the league as a German youth movement, while also giving details on the league's influence on later Nazi regime, particularly with the establishment of Reichs Labor Service (Reichsarbeitsdienst) in the 1930s.⁷

This research seeks to provide a different perspective on the Artaman League. This research argues that the Artaman League was the product of the era, that is, World War 1, the war youth generation, which consisted mainly of the organization experienced. Thus, the Artaman League was the first ever social experiment of Volkish ideology that sought to realize its vision by incorporating the precedents above, which are Wandervogel, war

⁵ Heinrich Himmler, *The Private Heinrich Himmler-Letters of a Mass Murderer*, ed. Kartin Himmler and Michael Wildt, trans. Thomas S. Hansen and Abby J. Hansen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014), 64-65.

⁶ Michael H. Kater, „Die Artamanen,“ 638.

⁷ Stefan Brauckmann, „Die Artamanen als völkisch-nationalistische Gruppierung,“ 191.

pedagogy, and the Jungmannen program, which proved to be successful in turning the youths, particularly the cohort of the war youth generation, into the fervent fighters for the fatherland. The two programs this research regard reflecting the programs and institutions in World War 1 are Volunteer Labor Service and Bauernhochschule.

To realize the goal of rooting Polish out of German soil, the Artaman League utilized the two programs. One was the Volunteer Labor Service in agricultural estates, mainly throughout the eastern regions of Germany, such as East Prussia, Saxony, Pommern, and Mecklenburg.⁸ The volunteers of men and women over 17 years old were sent to the Artman League's estates, referred to as 'reaper's barracks' (Schnitterkasern), in the Eastern rural region. There, the volunteer laborers performed every agricultural task in place of the Polish workers.⁹ The heads of the league hoped that the new young German farmers could replace the Polish workers through the program.¹⁰ The Volunteer Labor Service continued to grow, with over 2000 members and 300 estates at its peak in 1929.¹¹

At the same time, the ideologues within the Artaman League held lectures and special courses in the Bauernhochschule that were part of the league. The lectures had little to do with agricultural practices but were charged with political teachings and Volkish discourses. Through the courses, the ideologues of the league wished to awaken the German national community (Voksgemeinschaft).¹²

Volkish ideology stems from the tradition of Romanticism, which idealized nature

⁸ BArch, 1501/125673, 2

⁹ Ulrich Linse, „Völkisch-jugendbewegte Siedlungen im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert Was bedeutet völkisch-jugendbewegt?“ in *Jugendbewegung, Antisemitismus und rechtsradikale Politik*, ed. Gideon Botsch und Josef Haverkamp (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, 2021), 44.

¹⁰ Ibid, 44.

¹¹ Michael H. Kater, „Die Artamanen,“ 578.

¹² BArch, 1507/478, 6-7.

and the German past, particularly the pre-Medieval period.¹³ From such a romanticized version, the longing for racial purity exalted the German Volks as the descendent of the pure Nordic race.¹⁴ The ultimate goal of the ideology is to revive the good old German past and racial purity to resolve the contemporary crisis. The glorification of the past and the German race existed even by the foundation of the Second Reich. For example, Heinrich von Treitschke noted the crumbling of the thoughtful ancient world by the spread of shallow culture during his speech in 1895.¹⁵ Yet, the Volkish ideology remained among the small circle of right-wing scholars, that is, until when an innocuous youth movement became the hub for the students of war youth generation eager to be put into action in World War 1: Wandervogel.

Wandervogel was founded by Hermann Hoffman in a Grammar School of Stieglitz as the after-school hiking club.¹⁶ The activity later developed into the movement fostering educational reform and Students' health, and then an asylum for students, mostly the sons of middle-class parents, who opposed the Bourgeoisie's 'asphalt society' and thus sought refuge in the alternative communal life.¹⁷ Due to its trait as an extracurricular activity involving hiking and the composition of its members, the whole of Wandervogel came to adore nature and the rural lifestyle as an alternative to the urban one. The movement itself sought to remain opposed to war. However, the outbreak of World War 1 wrought unconditional support, regardless of class and political affiliation, for the national cause, thus creating a sense of social jubilation for war, known as Burgerfrieden today. Wandervogel was also

¹³ Michael H. Kater, „Die Artamanen,“ 591.

¹⁴ Stefan Breuer, „Der völkische Flügel der Bündischen Jugend,“ in *Jugendbewegung, Antisemitismus und rechtsradikale Politik*, ed. Gideon Botsch und Josef Haverkamp (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, 2021), 114

¹⁵ Heinrich von Treitschke, *Zum Gedächtniss Des Grossen Krieges* (Leipzig: S.Hirzel, 1895), 15-16.

¹⁶ John Neubauer, *Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 190.

¹⁷ Hagen Schulze, *Kleine Deutsche Geschichte*, trans. Sung-wan Ban (Jiwa Sarang, 2011), 196.

swept in the tide of the national fervor and began their support for the war.

What transpired then was the movement's gradual transformation into the harboring ground for fostering militarism. The groups within the Wandervogel circle began adopting military training in their program. By the end of the war, about one-third of the members became active participants in the training.¹⁸ Consequently, the youth movement became a favorable phenomenon for the spread of Volkish ideology, particularly to the newer recruits of the movement, the war youth generation.¹⁹

War youth generation, used by Andrew Donson, refers to the people of the middle-class upbringing who were born after 1900 and therefore were too young to join the army for the German cause in World War 1.²⁰ Thus, many from the youth generation could not wait for their turn to serve but put themselves into action, as they gathered in youth movement groups and agricultural labor organized by War Office (Kriegsamt)²¹ during World War 1. Many who were not conscripted in World War 1 due to their young age found ways to prove themselves in Freikorps, and many former Freikorpsmen and women later joined the Artaman League as a haven for people sharing the same ideal.

This research argues that the implementation of war pedagogy in public education was the cause. The war pedagogy refers to incorporating a new education based on visual materials and freer expression of thoughts through means including essays and open discussion.²² Unlike the previous authoritative education that severely punished a student

¹⁸ Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 218.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 221.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

²¹ Established in 1916 under the Hindenburg Program, the War Office managed the economic and supply-related matters during World War 1 until October 1st, 1919.

²² Carolyn Kay, "War Pedagogy in the German Primary School Classroom During the First World War," *War & Society* 33, no. 1 (February 2004): 6.

when not following the hierarchical order, the war pedagogy urged instructors to freely discuss with students how to contribute to their fatherland's war effort. Through the discussion, the teachers invited the students into the war fantasy and successfully dispersed the notion that a man must prove his worth by serving his country on the battlefield.²³

The youths who embraced the fantasy became anxious to prove themselves by contributing to Germany. Thus, they did not hesitate to participate in any activities that contributed to the fatherland, namely Jungmannen, the program which sent students to aid farmlands to combat food shortages in 1917, and military training. Then, the War youth generation's support for the movement was so firm that they eventually replaced the old members of youth movements such as Wandervogels and gradually swayed the movement's tendency towards the radical right.²⁴ As they gradually replaced the old members within Wandervogel, they altered the nature of the youth movements and embraced its pre-existing tradition, namely the romanticization of pre-modern Germany and the emphasis on nature.

Thus, this research first examines the factors behind the battlefield of World War 1, namely Wandervogel, war pedagogy education, Freikorps, and Jungmannen program, and then explains how they proved to be successful in turning those in the war youth generation to become the patriots. Then, the paper explores the programs within the Artaman League, volunteer labor service, and Bauernhochschule to argue how they were inspired or at least resemble the Jungmannen program and war pedagogy. Finally, the paper delves deeper into the worldview of the Artaman League, which was imbued with its sense of religiosity and racial hierarchy.

²³ Andrew Donson, "Why Did German Youth Become Fascists? Nationalist Males Born 1900 to 1908 in War and Revolution," *Social History* 31, no. 3 (August 2006): 340.

²⁴ Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 217-218.

Method

Since the Artaman League's foundation in 1923, several bureaus within the Weimar Republic, particularly the Reichs Ministry of the Interior (Reichsministerium des Innern), Prussian State Commissioner for Public Order, and the Police departments in Dresden and Leipzig, kept close monitoring of the league. In the process, the offices exchanged documents, either reporting an event associated with the Artaman League or warning other bureaus about the organization's potential threat. At the same time, the offices also collected newspaper columns promoting the Artaman League's ideology or supporting the league's cause. Occasionally, the departments conducted investigations on the league whenever there was a report, particularly from the parents in Rüstringen, the modern-day's eastern end of Friesland, in 1927. In the process, the investigators interviewed the parents of their children who left them to join the Artaman estates as volunteer laborers, resulting in the documents with details about the members and the league itself. All files are currently categorized into three separate files and reserved in the Bundesarchiv of Germany, available online.

The official reports about the Artaman League show the perception of the bureaus in the Weimar Republic on the league. Furthermore, the analysis of the league included in the documents provides valuable facts for this research. Notably, the investigation conducted in 1927 gives interviews with the former and contemporary Artaman's volunteer laborers, their parents, and prominent figures within the organization, thus providing the needed details to understanding life in the Artaman League's agricultural estates and camps.

What is more important than the official reports for this research are the news columns collected by the bureaus. What the columns convey is that they show the league was not as secretive as I hypothesized; it was open and eager to reach out to a broader audience, thus showing how quite a handful of Germans who were living in the era contemporary to the

league did not mind its explicit messages or were supportive of its cause. As for the content of the columns, they show the ideas and goals of the league. Furthermore, it must be noted that the columns were, both as promotion for recruitment or manifesto, primarily targeting the audience tacitly agreeing or openly supportive of the Volkish ideology. Thus, the columns were a type of communication within the large circle of the contemporary and prospective Artaman members. These traits of the columns allow the research to explore the inner world view of the league and the large circle related to the Volkish ideology.

Thus, the paper analyzes the official reports and newspaper columns collected by government bodies. Through such a process, the research introduces programs in the league, Volunteer Labor Service and Bauernhochschule, and shows what the Artaman League hoped to achieve through the programs. Furthermore, I will delve deeper into the texts of the columns to show what their worldview was like, which incorporated religiosity and the hierarchy based on race.

I. The Experiences of War Youth Generation

Those in the war youth generation were the recipients of the changes in education and government programs caused by World War 1. The renewed educational curriculum based on war pedagogy encouraged free thinking about and active engagement with the war fantasy for the fatherland. The Jungmannen program was founded to resolve the food shortage due to the war expense. The program satisfied the students' urge to contribute war effort for Germany while also fostering cynicism toward those skeptical of the war. Even though it started as a non-militaristic program, Wandervogel gradually became the hub for those in the war-youth generation who wished to train themselves free of their parents in nature. Amid burgeoning militaristic sentiment in the war youth generation, the tradition of Freikorps could have also contributed to exacerbating the league's militaristic trait.

The curriculum before World War 1 incorporated various philosophical approaches, particularly that of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.²⁵ No matter how tedious a student may find, memorizing German philosophy and classic German pieces of literature was crucial for a successful career and being acknowledged as a member of Bildungbürgertum.²⁶ The promise of becoming a successful member of Bildungbürgertum resulted in the peculiarly high enrollment in philosophical faculty (over 2/5 of all students) in universities during World War 1.²⁷ In other words, the education system in secondary education was geared toward intensive training for getting admitted into prestigious universities.

Therefore, extracurricular activities were discouraged, as the students were urged to

²⁵ Klaus Vondung, *Das Wilhelminische Buldungsbürgertum Zur Sozialgeschichte seiner Ideen* (Göttigen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 38-39.

²⁶ Ibid, 27.

²⁷ Konrad H. Jarausch, "German Students in the First World War," *Central European History* 17, no. 4 (December 1984): 311.

study most of the time.²⁸ Furthermore, strict rules resembling a military drill were placed to keep students in order. Consequently, the class was the reenactment of a gloomy barrack, with teachers as students' military officers.²⁹ In secondary school teachers' defense, such a way was the best for their students, who were also from educated middle-class (Bildungsbürgertum) families like themselves, to succeed. The one-year volunteer program offered them the chance for promotion to a higher rank in the army, which was usually off-limit for those from ordinary middle-class origins. Furthermore, it also increased the likelihood of appointment as an imperial civil servant (Kaiserbeamten). Therefore, joining the army was undoubtedly better than graduating from a university.³⁰

As much as it was successful in inserting militarism into students' consciences, it also generated dissent from students and some progressive teachers.³¹ Furthermore, the strict environment in a classroom was the primary reason many of the students became the dissenter of bourgeoisie authoritativeness and adults' domination over their lives.³² Such students later formed youth movements free of adult dictation.³³

The dissent over the Wilhelmine period's education wrought two distinct reform movements. On the one hand, the emphasis on nature and body through extracurricular activities took place. However, on the other hand, the demand for freer classrooms with open discussion and hospitable relationships with teachers also gained ground. Both demands became visible in a middle-class movement before World War 1: Wandervogel. First created

²⁸ John Neubauer, *Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence*, 189.

²⁹ Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 88.

³⁰ Peter Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics: Visions of the Future in the Weimar Republic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 23.

³¹ Andrew Donson, "The Teenagers' Revolution: Schülerräte in the Democratization and Right-Wing Radicalization of Germany 1918-1920." *Central European History* 44, no. 3 (August 2011): 442.

³² Peter D. Stachura, *The German Youth Movement 1900-1945: an interpretative and Documentary History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 14-15.

³³ *Ibid*, 18.

by a few students and Hermann Hoffman, an afterschool teacher, in Steglitz, the initial Wandervogel movement started as a hiking club that planned regular mountain excursions.³⁴ In 1900, Karl Fischer, a student at the time, took charge of the club in place of Hoffman, who expanded the movement in Northern Germany.³⁵ Wandervogel often showed the rejection of urban society and praise of nature. Their hiking activities, which accompanied occasional naked exercise under the sun, were the enactment of their desire to get out of their urban life and return to nature. The youths of the Wilhelmine Period saw German society as a hypocritical and hollow one, thus feeling lost and hopeless.³⁶ Therefore, they sought an alternative life by rejecting the urban middle-class values, such as civic culture or liberalism, and ultimately escaping into the rural and natural life in hopes of finding an inclusive community in which these youths are accepted.³⁷ Such a romanticized reinterpretation of utopian nature and past before the era of modernity became the source of ‘Germanness,’ the central concept within Volkish ideology.³⁸

The rather naturalist Wandervogel incorporated the militaristic trait when Karl Fischer in 1900 in place of Hoffman, who temporarily left the club due to military service. Fischer and other members sought to increase the number of clubs similar to theirs by founding the Committee for School Excursion (Ausschuss für Schüleifahrten), which proved successful.³⁹ Under Fischer’s leadership, the club became a more significant movement that expanded in Northern Germany.⁴⁰ However, Fischer altered the movement’s activity. Members of Wandervogel still hiked mountains. However, during the excursion, members

³⁴ John Neubauer, *Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence*, 190.

³⁵ Peter D. Stachura, *The German Youth Movement 1900-1945*, 20.

³⁶ Hagen Schulze, *Kleine Deutsche Geschichte*, 196.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

³⁸ Clifton Greer Ganyard, “Rebels and Revolutionaries: Artur Mahraun and The Young German Order,” Ph.D. diss., (University of New York, 2000), 76.

³⁹ John Neubauer, *Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence*, 190.

⁴⁰ Peter D. Stachura, *The German Youth Movement 1900-1945*, 20.

were expected to submit to their adult group leaders (führers) and greet each other with a loud “heil!”. Such alterations resembled that of military conduct.⁴¹ The incorporation of military traits wrought an argument between Hoffmann and Fischer, resulting in Fischer’s formation of his own smaller sect called Alt-Wandervogel in 1904, where the militaristic culture was primarily contained within the caucus.⁴²

The militaristic nature within Wandervogel, however, would re-emerge as a significant component of the movement by the end of World War 1. The age group of Wandervogel as a whole shifted toward the younger ones, the war youth generation, because of the conscription for World War 1.⁴³ Gradually, the movement as a whole transitioned from a non-militant hiking group into a patriotic youth movement filled with youths waiting for their chance to serve.⁴⁴ Thus, the military training regime became part of the movement.⁴⁵ Among the sub-group from Wandervogel that continued this new passion for militaristic goals was the Eagle and Falcon, which played a massive role in forming the Artaman League in 1923.⁴⁶ Consequently, the militaristic nature was also incorporated into the league.

War pedagogy originates from the school reformers who joined the youth movement in protest of the conventional education system. The reformers urged for a renewed atmosphere in the classroom, where everyone could freely express their opinion while training their mind and body via extracurricular activities. For them, the best example was the American ‘school city’ model, where the teachers and students freely debated and thus formulated ‘public opinion.’⁴⁷

⁴¹ Ibid, 20.

⁴² John Neubauer, *Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence*, 192.

⁴³ Peter D. Stachura, *The German Youth Movement 1900-1945*, 44.

⁴⁴ Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 217-218.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 218.

⁴⁶ Michael H. Kater, „Die Artamanen,“ 610.

⁴⁷ Andre Donson, “The Teenagers’ Revolution,” 424.

Their goal would be realized only when World War 1 broke out in 1914, as the need to propagate Germany's justification of engaging in the war. On August 7th, August von Trott zu Solz, the Prussian education minister, laid the foundation for the new curriculum by issuing a decree asking teachers "to make room everywhere to exploit the great events of the times for education and instruction." The decree gave teachers wider leniency in promoting the German cause in the war. However, there was no clear message of what educational method should be pursued, and it was not a forceful instruction. At first, the Ministry of Education did not provide special instruction because they expected the war to end within months.⁴⁸ However, as the war prolonged much longer than initially anticipated, the ministry acknowledged war pedagogy's usefulness in promoting students' nationalistic sentiment. Therefore, the ministry approved teaching and giving assignments done in the past three months on November 6th, thus starting the implementation of 'War pedagogy.'⁴⁹

Along with much more variant use of visual means for teaching, a class based on the war pedagogy contrasted conventional education with active engagement in free expression. Teachers held a class discussion about the war effort and encouraged them to express themselves freely via various means, such as speech, essays, and discussions.⁵⁰ Such a method created an atmosphere where students gleefully imagined militaristic fantasy.⁵¹ The war pedagogy's invitation to war fantasy led students to fight for a higher cause. In the narrative of war pedagogy, the best men prove themselves in trenches, and the best death is dying for their fatherland.⁵²

⁴⁸ Eberhardt Demm, „Deutschland Kinder im Ersten Weltkrieg: Zwischen Propaganda und Sozialfürsorge,“ *Militaergeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 60, no.1 (2014): 53.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 53.

⁵⁰ Carolyn Kay, "War Pedagogy in the German Primary School Classroom During the First World War," 6.

⁵¹ Andrew Donson, "Why Did German Youth Become Fascists?" 339.

⁵² Carolyn Kay, "War Pedagogy in the German Primary School Classroom During the First World War," 6-7.

The war pedagogy's discussion-based nature brought two effects that made the war youth generation much more susceptible to nationalism and militarism. First, the permission to freely express their feelings about the war provided a steam hole for their dissatisfaction to be released. Within the mechanism, students remained faithful to the strive for the fatherland's victory while honestly conveying their hardship without facing their teacher's scolding.⁵³ In other words, war pedagogy was exceptionally successful in turning many students into a nationalist and militarists. The conversion was detrimental to the war against the Second Reich's enemies, France and Britain. When the war ended, so did the hostility against the two empires; however, the former recipients of war pedagogy now had to find their new enemy to prove their valiance and worth to their fatherland.⁵⁴

What made the cohorts susceptible to the war fantasy fostered by the war pedagogy-based education? Among many possible explanations, the experience during the Burgerfrieden of World War 1 period is certainly one of the most important reasons. The period of Burgerfrieden was a time of jubilation after decades of political and class conflict.⁵⁵ Amid the happy mood, the youths' patriotic actions were largely appreciated, while military training and war games were encouraged among their peers.⁵⁶ At the same time, anyone opting out from such violent games or military training was ostracized and shamed, thus devoting themselves to the patriotic cause to save their face, if not willingly.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the elementary teachers used the child-centric approach not as their instructors but as mentors engaging in the war pedagogy curriculum together, forming a solid bond between teachers

⁵³ Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 88.

⁵⁴ Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and violence through the German dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 68.

⁵⁵ Dietrich Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*, trans. Su-hyeon Moon (Mizi Books, 2019), 214.

⁵⁶ Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 9

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 11

and students.⁵⁸ In this new relationship, teachers did not scold them harshly but approached them with compliments and approval of their deeds whenever they completed the school work.⁵⁹ Through this new approach, the teachers of the war pedagogy successfully internalized the support for Germany and war fantasy in the hearts of their students.⁶⁰ In short, the experience of approval and peer pressure in one of the most harmonious periods in modern German history constituted the ‘good old time’ of German engraved in the hearts of the students from the war-youth generation.

As the war youth generation became accustomed to war fantasy, those in the cohort became active participants in the governmental programs for the war. Whereas the military training in the Wandervogel was voluntarily managed without government funding, other military training, such as Jugendwehren and vormilitärische Jugendbereitung, was sponsored by the Reich.⁶¹ Under the program, those between 16 and 18 revisited the fantasy they were taught in school while the press praised their patriotism. In other words, the nationwide support for war and the consequential approval of students’ war play incentivized them to indulge themselves in the war fantasy even further.⁶²

Another program that the war youth generation actively engaged in was the Jungmannen. The War Office of Germany organized thousands of youths to be dispatched to rural areas to help farmers and combat the ever-worsening food crisis.⁶³ The volunteers had to halt their education and perform hard labor on farmlands. Nonetheless, they were delighted to do something for their fatherland finally and willingly served for a long time with their

⁵⁸ Ibid, 88.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 87-88.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 87.

⁶¹ Ibid, 116.

⁶² Ibid, 116.

⁶³ Ibid, 196.

fellow volunteers while isolated from their families and relatives.⁶⁴

The two programs sponsored by the Second Reich during World War 1 formed the reciprocal process; their eagerness to participate in the programs resulted from their anxiety to join in the glorified World War 1. At the same time, the programs further augmented the war fantasy discourse by reaffirming their cause to be righteous and providing a sense of relief that they are contributing to the war effort.⁶⁵ The success of the two programs became the model for the latter youth movements, one of which was the Artaman League.

While the militaristic trope within the Artaman League is the direct result of Wandervogel's internal militarization and social context, another factor for the transition can be argued: Freikorps. First suggested by Georg Maerker on December 2nd, 1918,⁶⁶ Freikorps refers to the paramilitary group of roughly 250,000 men, many of whom were from middle-class backgrounds, formed in response to the sudden surge of communist threats, particularly from the Spartacus League.⁶⁷ Freikorps continued fighting in Germany, the Baltic region, and Upper Silesia, wherever their enemies were. Even though the enemies mostly referred to the Bolsheviks, Freikorpsmen's pray was much broader. Spartacists, laborers, and women, regardless of whether she was the rifle woman (Flintweib), fell dead under their boots.

The paramilitary group's hostility was not limited to individuals. The Weimar Republic was also the target of their wrath because the republic was created by the disgraceful November Revolution and traitors who agreed to surrender.⁶⁸ Aware of Freikorps' hostility against the Weimar Republic, Friedrich Ebert, the Chancellor at the time,

⁶⁴ Ibid, 197.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 197.

⁶⁶ Nigel H. Jones, *A Brief History of the Birth of the Nazis* (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2004), 51.

⁶⁷ Benjamin Zimmerman, *War Experiences in Rural Germany 1914-1923-The Legacy of the Great War* (Oxford: Berg Publisher, 2006), 229.

⁶⁸ Robert G.L. Waite, *Vanguards of Nazism-The Free Corps Movement in Post War Germany 1918-1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 48.

began the disbandment process of Freikorps after signing the Versailles Treaty, which reduced the number of troops for the Weimar Republic to 100,000.⁶⁹ Fumed by the decision, Walther von Lüttwitz gathered the angered Freikorpsman and sought to overthrow the Weimar Republic, the coup attempt known as Kapp-Putsch. The coup, however, ultimately failed, and most of Freikorps was disbanded as planned.⁷⁰

After Freikorps's disbandment due to Versailles Treaty, the paramilitary groups transformed into labor communities, working on agricultural labor, just as they had before.⁷¹ Within such communities, the close comradeship between the members lived on.⁷² The best example showing the surviving comradeship is the job application as the leader of the Mückenburg labor community by a certain lieutenant named von Anlock. In the application, he emphasized the importance of trust as the essential component that brought the rise of Freikorps in Germany after noting a deep trust (Vertrauen) between him and the members of the Mückenburg labor community.⁷³

Such labor camps consisting of former Freikorps were under the influence of the Young German Order, founded and led by Arthur Mahraun in 1920.⁷⁴ While fostering military training even after World War 1, the organization sought to create a young labor force to establish a 'people's state (Volksstaat),' with over 200,000 laborers, many of whom consisted of war veterans and Freikorpsmen.⁷⁵ The Young German Order eventually became the most prominent partner of the Artaman League. For example, the Young German League

⁶⁹ Ibid, 183.

⁷⁰ Nigel H. Jones, *A Brief History of the Birth of the Nazis*, 158.

⁷¹ Robert G.L. Waite, *Vanguards of Nazism*, 189.

⁷² Ibid, 192.

⁷³ BArch, R.601/1293, 21.

⁷⁴ Gideon Botsch and Christoph Kopke, „Jungdeutscher Orden,” in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 5, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter Saur, 2012), 343.

⁷⁵ Hartmut Heyck, “Labour Services in the Weimar Republic and Their Ideological Godparents,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 2 (April 2003): 227-228.

gladly accepted the invitation to the ‘German Farmer’s College Week (Deutsche Bauernhochschul woche)’ held in Meissen in July 1923.⁷⁶ Even within the Artaman’s own labor camp, several members were former Freikorpsmen. According to Rudolf Höss, an Artaman league’s estate included former Freikorpsmen.⁷⁷ Even though indirect, the sources indicate that Freikorps could have provided the model for the Artaman League or, at least, influenced the league, particularly in its militaristic culture and training.

From these contexts, the Artaman League became the organization that sought to better the youths through labor experience and embrace nature with the stints of militaristic nature. Ultimately, the league became the hub for several students of the war youth generation and former Freikorpsmen, who were later recruited as new members of the Nazi Party by Heinrich Himmler.⁷⁸ To truly understand what ideal youth the league sought to create and how it reflected the Volkish tradition that is apparent even in Nazism, a deeper analysis of the programs within the league is important.

⁷⁶ BArch, 1507/478, 37.

⁷⁷ Rudolf Höss, *Commandant of Auschwitz*, trans. Constantine FitzGibbon (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959), 62.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 64-65.

II. The Programs of the Artaman League:

In Volunteer Labor Service

Throughout its existence in the 20s, the Artaman League's constantly criticized education in Germany, where students still lacked extracurricular activities. The promotional article included in *Das Landvolks* on October 17th, 1929, contrasts the contribution of the Artaman League to youths' education with the public German education system's ongoing problem. The article first draws concern over the lack of outdoor activities, which, according to the article, allows a student to receive sunlight crucial for 'spiritual vitamins.'⁷⁹

Insufficient exercise leads to the degeneration of German youths into inferior to 'even a Pole and a Serb.'⁸⁰ Then, the article's author laments that German students are forced to stay in the classroom until they are exhausted, preventing them from experiencing nature and the world.⁸¹ Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of experiencing the real world via volunteer service or employment, as done in the US.⁸² As the article reveals, the Artmanen League recognizes the issues first addressed by the youth movements of the 19th century. Consequently, the programs in the two stressed the significance of physical activities.

Within the league, two separate programs, Volunteer Labor Service and Bauernhochschule, assumed different roles in training youth. Volunteer Labor Service recruited the new volunteer laborers with the promise of adequate payment and sought to train them with actual labor. The members were mainly brought from urban areas, as the league proudly advertised in *Deutscher Zeitung*.⁸³ Then, the newly recruited laborers were

⁷⁹ BArch, 1507/479, 18.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 18

⁸¹ Ibid, 18

⁸² Ibid, 18

⁸³ BArch, 1507/478, 24.

sent to the estates owned by the league, which were either agricultural land with camps or forests to be cleared for a new settlement.⁸⁴ Each volunteer laborer was assigned to Artamanenttroops (Artamanentrupp), consisting roughly of 100 men, each under the Artaman Leader's (Artamanenführer) leadership.⁸⁵ Within an Artamanen Troop, about 15 members were assigned to one order brother (Ordenbruder), who assumed the role of keeping discipline among the members.⁸⁶ In the first two years, they were accustomed to the heavy agricultural work on large estates. In the third and fourth years, they were trained to be made familiar with the various individual tasks in agriculture on smaller farms so that they could later independently cultivate a settlement area acquired through voluntary work.⁸⁷

Payment comprised of the providence of food and cash. In a camp, the ration of 25 pounds of potatoes, 7.5 bread, 0.5 meat (or fat), and some Legumes per week, along with 0.5 liters of milk per day, were provided.⁸⁸ As for the cash payment, a salary between 20-25 Marks was promised for the labor program within camps, while the labor within the forest supposedly earned the workers 35-40 Marks after the deductions within the program.⁸⁹ However, the accounts of the participants indicate otherwise. For instance, Wilhelm Meyer, an 18-year-old Artaman League recruit who worked outside the camp, told during his testimony to city police that he received 1.6 Marks for his from March 18th to 21st, 1927, which was below his expected income. When all the deductions are taken into account, the total monthly revenue, which was paid on a 2-weeks basis, for an Artmanen member is between 30 to 35 Reichsmarks.⁹⁰ Even so, the actual payment was dismal as the participants

⁸⁴ Ibid, 51.

⁸⁵ BArch, 1507/479, 2.

⁸⁶ BArch, 1501/125673, 5.

⁸⁷ BArch, 1507/478, 50.

⁸⁸ BArch, 1501/125673, 5.

⁸⁹ BArch, 1507/478, 51.

⁹⁰ BArch, 1501/125673, 5.

had to pay for the cost of a fare to the estates, equipment, and uniforms.⁹¹ A report from *Volkswille* about a letter from a recruit of the Artmanen in August 1930 gives further details on the dismal living condition. The meal was minimally provided, as they mostly consisted of oatmeal, some bread, and rice.⁹² Additionally, the furniture, including the bed, was of a primitive quality.

One peculiarity with the labor camps is that they did not specify permission from students' guardians. According to the official application form for the Artaman League's volunteer labor in March 1925, a police registration form indicating the previous place of residence, dismissal notice from the late place of work, and disability card (Invalidenkarte) is required.⁹³ As for the minors, an additional parent obligation form was required, but it does not seem to be in practice, as the youths left before the signature under the arrangement by a staff of the league. Josefina, the mother of Oskar Wachowisk, who joined the volunteer labor at 17, testified to the police department of Dresden that her son left her without her knowledge, saying, "I can't say what my son signed in the obligation slip." Parents of Heinz Kröhnert, 16, said that they didn't want their son to join the volunteer labor but couldn't stop him while still oblivious to what was written in the form.⁹⁴ From the parents' accounts, it can be assumed that the parents' approval did not matter as much as the other forms. Perhaps, the disregard for parents' consent could be purposeful, as the league's purpose is to lure as many urban youths as possible from the cities.

Gustav Treptow, a former grandmaster of the Young German Order, who was responsible for recruiting new volunteers, revealed the reason behind the lower payment

⁹¹ Ibid, 5.

⁹² BArch, 1507/479, 15.

⁹³ BArch, 1507/478, 50.

⁹⁴ BArch, 1501/125673, 4.

during the interrogation by the State Police Department of Leipzig; the deduction is due to the insurance fee and the food ration mentioned above.⁹⁵ Furthermore, demand for material compensation was, for the leaders of the Artaman League, a despicable quality. Their goal was to rescue youths from the treacherous cities and train them into true Germans who are held together not by material urges but by “national consciousness of its self-empowered in leadership and soul.”⁹⁶

Thus, the improper payment for their labor was justified as a means of educating the youths into true Germans. Tanzmann affirms the league’s idea about labor as he notes that the movement is more than driving Polish laborers out of Germany and is “about the soul of young people finding life in the country, the joy of healthy work for the limbs, courage, and determination to give up a career beyond work, the clarification of the senses regained through the scent of fields and meadows.”⁹⁷

Within the camps, military elements seemed to, at least according to the police, have existed. According to the Police Sergeant who was part of the investigation on the Artaman League in 1927, the company was a disguised organization on a military basis, the effects of which could lead to differences in domestic and foreign policy.⁹⁸ The culture within the labor camps seems to have adopted cultures from the military, particularly the culture of addressing each other with casual pronouns regardless of age or status. In the exchange of letters between Treptow and Kröhnert, they referred to one another as ‘brother (Bruder),’ which was, according to the interrogator, a common way of addressing one another in the Artaman League.⁹⁹ Moreover, the expression ‘heil’ was also used amongst the league members, just as

⁹⁵ Ibid, 6.

⁹⁶ BArch, 1507/479, 18.

⁹⁷ Michael H. Kater, „Die Artamanen,“ 590.

⁹⁸ BArch, 1501/125673, 6.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 8.

in the league's rally in Berlin on January 24th, 1928.¹⁰⁰ From the sources, it is unclear whether his account refers to an actual military drill or a plan for insurrection. What is clear is that the military culture that persisted within certain caucus of the right-wing youth movement, which were visible in a few Wandervogel groups and Freikorps, reappeared in the league as well.

In Bauernhochschule

While the Volunteer Labor Service sought to enlighten the youth of the national consciousness through real labor, the Bauernhochschule took the form of a session school. Through the institution, the Artaman League sought to develop strong-willed people leading faithful Germans, train leaders (führers) for smaller rural communities, and eradicate selfishness and the petty sense of peasantry while promoting Volksgemeinschaft as the noble goal.¹⁰¹

The academic plan was constructed as a course, mostly 4-5 weeks long.¹⁰² The courses consist of lecturers invited to the program to hold a class that consists of roughly 20 students each.¹⁰³ After an hour-long morning exercise, the students took 3-4 courses daily from early morning to evening.¹⁰⁴ The programs were established with the thousands of financial aid of patrons through Deutschschriftenverlag, the far-right press which aided the publication of Anti-Semitic works.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 14.

¹⁰¹ BArch, 1507/478, 5.

¹⁰² Ibid, 5.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 12.

Despite the name, the contents of the schools held little relevance to agricultural practice or science. Instead, it was an educational school for preparing the senses and awakening the German national community.¹⁰⁶ In the process, the students were expected to “feel his world-historical responsibility for the nation as a whole and understand the task, which he must have at the spiritual and economic reconstruction of the people.”¹⁰⁷

The actual course of a Bauernhochschule can be found in the guide course conducted in Freiburg from December 10-20, 1929. Some of the lectures include ‘On the Concept of Work in Town and Country and local history’ by Dr. Scheifer, about Volkstum by Dr. Hans Hahne, about the basic idea of socialism by Ernst Nietisch, about Western German questions by Dr. Walter Neusch, ‘Basic concepts of German culture’ by Dr. Ziegler, on the nature and tasks of the Artaman movement by Dr. Georg W. Schiele, and so on.¹⁰⁸ As for the content of the courses, the board put extra effort into tailoring it easier for the students to understand regardless of one’s educational background.¹⁰⁹ As the titles of the courses indicate, they bore little relevance to the actual agricultural knowledge. Instead, a political lecture based on the Artaman League’s agenda comprises most of the course list.

Along with their irrelevance to the actual agriculture, the curriculum of Bauernhochschule’s lectures stood out on its emphasis on free expression and critical thinking, which departs from the conventional Wilhelmine period’s educational curriculum. Students were strongly encouraged to express their opinion during the lecture.¹¹⁰ The lectures were expected to gear toward inner feelings and experiences, develop people’s inner

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 26.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 12.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 3.

values , and encourage them to become creative.¹¹¹ For instance, an Artaman League conference held in Freiburg from December 10th to 20th, 1929, was dedicated to, along with further education and community strengthening, the exchange of practical thoughts and experiences.¹¹² Even though not for male students, a knitting course in the Bauernhochschule for Women and Girls in April 1923 also reveals the leniency in students' take on lessons, as every student knitted in their own pattern without a scolding from the instructor.¹¹³ Furthermore, the contents of the lecture were constructed easily for the students to understand regardless of one's educational level.¹¹⁴

From such construction of the contents, two outcomes were expected from the students. First, they had to formulate a clear image of the Volksgemeinschaft (national community) and the 'Old German life.'¹¹⁵ Second, they had to aspire to become rural community leaders who pursue religious free-thinking (religiösen Gedankenfreis), freely feeling godliness and using various expressions such as 'ironic humor alongside the deep earnestness and warmth of feeling.'¹¹⁶ Such encouragement of free thinking is a massive departure from the conventional Wilhelmine Period's education. This kind of curriculum was not implemented in Germany until the beginning of World War 1 when war pedagogy was implemented in a school.

Other than a five-week course, another type, of course, was a week-long course. One such program is "German Farmers' College Week," one of which took place at Castle Proschwitz near Meissen from July 1st to 6th, 1924. With participants of about 500 men,

¹¹¹ Ibid, 5.

¹¹² Ibid, 25.

¹¹³ Ibid, 11.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 12.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 3.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 23.

mainly from the affiliates of the Young German Order, the lecture consisted of two parts. While the first part consisted of lectures, the latter incorporated more ceremonial elements. The folk songs were sung, ceremonial lectures were given, and the members marched together with a Crusade flag (Johanniterkreuz).¹¹⁷

The “German Farmers’ College Week” in Meissen reveals that the program often incorporated activities that seemed irrelevant to agriculture. One such activity was hiking in the mountains. Every morning, the students jogged to the mountain.¹¹⁸ From the morning exercise, the board of the Artaman League wished its student to absorb the sunlight and the necessary vitamin C.¹¹⁹ Even at night, the students marched to the peaks of the mountains with torches and flags, occasionally bearing the swastika sign.¹²⁰ While in the wilderness, the students sang folk songs, which became an important part of the program and ceremonies.¹²¹ As singing folk songs shows, having fun and expressing emotion freely was strongly encouraged by the league, as long as the medium of fun was of German origin.

Interestingly, both Bauernhochschule and labor camps incorporated military training into the program. On March 24th, 1923, the Police Department Dresden reported a Bauernhochschule in Berffiesshübel for incorporating military education and training in the school curriculum.¹²² The board of the Bauernhochschule was also open to the idea. An article titled “Artam!” from Deutsche Zeitung in 1924 promoted its organization as the best substitute for missing out on military service.¹²³ The inherent militaristic tendency within the institution indicates two factors. First, the training served to enhance the physical well-being

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 37.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 12.

¹¹⁹ BArch, 1507/479, 18.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 3

¹²¹ BArch, 1507/478, 12.

¹²² Ibid, 22.

¹²³ Ibid, 24.

of a healthy youth farmer, similar to the Wandervogel program incorporated by Karl Fischer. Second, the article's appeal to those who missed out on military service indicates that it was aware of who would be most willing to join its cause, the war youth generation who could not take part in World War 1. Lastly, as Chapter III will show, the training was crucial for turning the students into the ideal young German farmers, who were also to be fighters.

The blatant Anti-Semitism context from the league and military training drew the attention of various state bureaus, including the Police Department of Dresden and the Prussian State Commissioner for Public Order.¹²⁴ The police department was even aware of the organization's true nature as Volkish and Anti-Semitic since its foundation from the Bauernhochschule in Hellerau in 1923. Thus, the government bodies kept their eyes closed on the league for almost a decade until the league was gradually absorbed into the Nazi Party.

In the face of the Weimar Republic's scrutiny, the Artman League used two tactics. First is the constant denial of any political involvement. For example, the report to the Prussian State Commissioner for Public Order in March 1923 indicates that the organization denied pursuing any political goal, despite the governmental organization's doubt for its rampantly visible Anti-Semitism.¹²⁵ In fact, the league did not make itself visible in political events or gatherings, with few exceptions, such as the march in Berlin in 1929.¹²⁶

Second, it complied with the police force without causing a scene. For example, during the college week in Meissen, the participants marching toward Castle Proschwitz immediately disbanded the march when police officers confronted them.¹²⁷ Moreover, the program was held within Castle Proschwitz, just as the police demanded.¹²⁸ The Artaman

¹²⁴ BArch, 1501/125673, 6.

¹²⁵ BArch, 1507/478, 9.

¹²⁶ BArch, 1501/125673, 17.

¹²⁷ BArch, 1507/478, 35.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 35.

League successfully hid its intention and portrayed itself as a social group through the two tactics.

III. The World View of the Artaman League

The Artaman League in a Religious Context

In essence, the Artaman League was the realization of the Volkish ideals in the real world, using the means proven effective in turning the war youth generation boys into the renewed men during World War 1. Volkish Ideology was the glorification of natural and pure Germans of Nordic blood. The Artaman League was among the early, perhaps the first ever, social experiments for helping the German youth from cities to realize their true nature through voluntary labor and education that fostered more independent and creative thinking.

Their agenda sought to awaken the consciousness through the rejuvenation of German soil that transcends to spiritual and religious (religiöser) transition towards the unwavering German spirit in the minds of young German farmers.¹²⁹ Thus, the foundation of the Bauernhochschule curriculum is established on two cradles, the significance of German soil and its specific religious concepts.

German soil serves a double purpose: the cradle of the German state and a connection to the German Volk's glorious past. Furthermore, the German soil connects the nation to the source of German people, the Germanic primeval times; it allows the spirit of 1807 to be inherited to be realized in 1914.¹³⁰ In other words, 'Blood and Soil' is the glorification of the soil where the memory of the German Volks of pure 'Nordic-Blood' lies.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 23.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 23.

Thus, working on German soil is not mere labor but devotion and religious rediscovery of spiritual value.

When a young German farmer is learned of the German soil thoroughly, he then learns to value the German essence in its opposition to the ‘Westerners’ and other civilizations in the alternation of centuries of German soil, its holiness, and ultimately the power to preserve the people and the duty for serving the purpose.¹³¹ Only by then the young German farmers will be able to retain the good ‘old Germanic way of life and thinking.’¹³²

What constitutes the ‘old Germanic life’? It involves strict restraint on one’s life. In particular, an abstinent lifestyle was strongly encouraged. Smoking and drinking were strongly discouraged within the school.¹³³ Along with the set of lifestyle expected of young German farmers includes abstinence from drinking and smoking, dressing modestly, not gambling money in the stock market, and not carelessly flirting with women.¹³⁴ The organizers constructed and advertised the Artaman League as a community where self-discipline is fostered.¹³⁵ Interestingly, the discipline was to be maintained ‘religiously (religiös) and ‘piously (from).’¹³⁶ By such religiosity (Religiosität) and worship (Gottesdienst), an Artaman member was to give himself to the world where the god exists at the center.¹³⁷ Thus, the ‘religious’ practice within the league consists of twofold. One is the observance of abstinent life. Another is the arduous labor on German soil, where god exists through ‘God-worshipping (Gottesdienstes).’¹³⁸

¹³¹ Ibid, 12.

¹³² Ibid, 12

¹³³ BArch, 1507/479, 4.

¹³⁴ BArch, 1507/478, 12

¹³⁵ Ibid, 24.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 12

¹³⁷ Ibid, 24.

¹³⁸ BArch, 1507/478, 23.

Who was the god in the Artaman league based on the Volkish ideology? Given the emphasis on the abstinent lifestyle,¹³⁹ which was prevalent in the Protestant tradition, one might argue that the god refers to the Judo-Christian one. However, as Ulrich Linse notes, the details of the Artaman movement and the members themselves showed an Anti-Christian element, let alone Anti-Materialistic and Anti-urbanity aspects.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, the Artaman League itself affirmed that it is a ‘non-church’ organization through the article published in *Deutsche Tageblatt*, written by Hans Schoenfeld.¹⁴¹

The introduction of religiosity to the Artaman League started when August Georg Stammler, an author of the youth movement and fervent supporter of communities, joined the Bundschuh as an ideological circle of intellectuals in 1926.¹⁴² Among the various publications he made, *You and It (Du und Es)*, published in 1917, stems far from his previous works in his constant highlights on god. Throughout the book, Stammler speaks about the importance of submitting oneself to the world of gods.

“Personal revelation begins with the task it has for you or me - for the soul of the moment and at the same time for the soul (Seele) of a specific person or a people’s community. In doing so, it actually becomes a god among gods (Gott unter Gottern); a god, of course, who receives his life only from the depths of divinity, and who is also alive only for his determination that he is to lead to the depths of divinity.”¹⁴³

What does Stammler mean by the soul becoming the god among gods? The article published by *Deutsche Zeitung* on May 9th, 1923, provides an insight into how Stammler’s discourse of religiosity came to be understood by those within the league.

Religiosity is the deep subsoil, fines, from which a strong will to help arises, and

¹³⁹ George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality-Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*, trans. Im-sook Gong (Western Female Western Feminism Literature, 2004), 40.

¹⁴⁰ Ulrich Linse, „Völkisch-jugendbewegte Siedlungen im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert,“ 43.

¹⁴¹ BArch, 1507/478, 12.

¹⁴² Stefan Brauckmann, „Die Artamanen als völkisch-nationalistische Gruppierung,“ 179-180.

¹⁴³ Georg Stammler, *Du und es-Vom Wesen zu von der Geinschaft* (Leipzig: Hans Christopher Scholl, 1917), 22.

conscious thinking points in the direction. This is how a personality grew up here. Who, with their reticence, seems predestined to become a spiritual leader, especially since they have recognized the spiritual damage of our time just as clearly as they feel that in this knowledge, god has given her a task whose solution must not escape, especially the time-critical talent one full creative balance.¹⁴⁴

In other words, the participants of the Artaman League were expected to feel the god through their souls by rigorously engaging themselves in the old Germanic life. By working in the Germanic soils, connected to the Medieval legacy before modernity, they could attain a sense of godly presence through their heart. By doing so, Tanzmann believed that they could become the leaders (führers) of the Artaman estates and, ultimately, of the Volk, who helped spread the German power of god a thousandfold by strengthening himself and the invulnerability of the German people.¹⁴⁵

Therefore, the new men working on German soil imagined by the league possessed a godly presence worthy of reverence and the military quality required for a fighter, as they were the closest to German soil and also a warrior ready to serve.¹⁴⁶ Because of the Artaman League's goal of rooting out the invasion of Polish workers, the league understood its historical role as borderland fighters.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, youth league members saw themselves as activist shock troop with the concrete program.¹⁴⁸ Such rationale lured many applicants from the war youth generation who were already familiar with military training for a great cause, such as protecting the fatherland, or for making up for missing out on the real war experience. Thus, the league had to construct military training in both of its institutions, the labor estates and Bauernhochschule.

¹⁴⁴ BArch, 1507/478, 23.

¹⁴⁵ BArch, 1507/478, 57.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 24.

¹⁴⁷ Michael H. Kater, „Die Artamanen,“ 606.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 603.

To put it differently, any German farmer/member of the Artaman League who lived by the ‘old Germanic way of life’ and fierce bravado like a warrior was worthy of praise and glorification. The most symbolic case of deification within the league is the funeral of Hans Holfelder. In 1929, the Artaman League published the obituary in *Völkischer Beobachter* of Hans Holfelder, who died in a motorcycle crash. His grave later became the site of worship, where Heinrich Himmler also paid a visit.¹⁴⁹ What is peculiar about the article is its emphasis on his bravery. According to the article, Holfelder ‘endured his suffering like a hero despite the terrible agony,’ a somewhat abnormal condolence to give to a victim of a traffic accident.¹⁵⁰ The eulogy implies two undertones. First is the emphasis on his bravery as a ‘loyal fighter,’ implying that the league saw its members as warriors.¹⁵¹ Second, the deification of a member as the hero to be worshiped is witnessed by Himmler, as his party would mimic the worship culture with Horst Wessel.

Through the glorification of an inanimate object (German soil) and exaltation of a person (German farmer/the Artaman League members), the Artaman League successfully transformed itself into a life-performing reform religion.¹⁵² The transition allowed the league members to become emotionally attached as if they were devoting themselves to something sacred, regardless of the illogicality within the context. That is what allowed the Artaman League Movement to thrive until the emergence of Nazism instead of falling out of favor as a mere territorial movement.

¹⁴⁹ Heinrich Himmler, *The Private Heinrich Himmler-Letters of a Mass Murderer*, 114.

¹⁵⁰ BArch, 1507/479, 5.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 5

¹⁵² Ulrich Linse, „Völkisch-jugendbewegte Siedlungen im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert,“ 43.

Where the Young German farmer comes from: the salvation from Urbanity

In the Artaman League's view, as explained above, the foundation of the German nation for the Artaman League was German farmers, as they were the closest to German soil and also a warrior ready to serve.¹⁵³ The farmers were the candidates for the new men of the Volksgemeinschaft.¹⁵⁴ As they practice the labor that existed before the despicable modernity, their labor revives the communion to the German soil to the glorious premedieval legacy.¹⁵⁵ Thus, an important task of the Artaman League is to bring the youths in the city to the farmland and purify their mind and body with nature and honest labor.¹⁵⁶

According to the Volkish ideology, urbanity weakens the German spirit. In the imagination of the Volkish groups, the city corrupts the body and spirits of German youth. Stemming from the romanticization of rural life in contrast to the urban one, the German youth movement since the late 19th century envisioned an escape from time and led close to a romantic glorification of the peasant, the natural and 'Volkish' way of life, which contrasted with the bourgeois 'state' of the present have received.¹⁵⁷ From such a legacy, the negative perception of urbanity within the circle of the Artaman League's board was exacerbated, as they saw the cities as the centers of degeneracy. For them, a city was a despicable place for smog, a horrible smell, and the rotting extensive city civilization.¹⁵⁸

Eventually, the ethic became the basis for despising anything unnatural and artificial, namely urban society and class, and even personal emotions like pain. At the same time, the yearning for the supposedly unwavering natural values, namely masculinity,

¹⁵³ Ibid, 24.

¹⁵⁴ Peter Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics: Visions of the Future in the Weimar Republic* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 78.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 78

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 50.

¹⁵⁷ Michael H. Kater, „Die Artamanen,“ 590.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 591.

Volksgemeinschaft, and nature, became the antonym of urbanity and even the subject of worship.¹⁵⁹ While so, the Volkische wing of the youth movement equated the city with the Jew;¹⁶⁰ they were accused of being a cause of ‘Un-German’ elements such as materialism, communism, unmanliness, and class distinction such as the working class.¹⁶¹ The association clearly indicates the league’s Anti-Semitism and dichotomy between good (natural Germanness) and evil (Urbanity/Jews) that persisted since the formation of Volkish Ideology, resulting from the romanticization of nature and rural areas.

Thus, urbanization was the root of the impoverishment in Germany and, most of all, the degradation of German youths.¹⁶² Therefore, the league needed to rescue the German youths from the cities. Converting the city dwellers back to German soil, the origin of the pure pre-medieval spirit, was the merit the league advertised in the newspapers, as the article titled ‘Artam!’ in *Deutsche Zeitung* published on December 28th, 1929. In the article, the author proudly states that the Artaman Movement ‘has not only succeeded in retraining young German people, who are tired of the city, as farm workers and preparing them for the job of settlers but also in raising young farmers.’¹⁶³

In short, the Artaman League saw urbanity as the root of every problem in Germany. By luring the youths back to the natural rural areas, it hoped that the youths strengthen their bodies and accumulate real-life experience as in the school villages in the US. Most of all, the youths were to transform themselves into German youth farmers by regaining their Germanness through laboring on German soil where god exists through ‘God-worshipping,’ thus becoming warriors against the racial invasions.

¹⁵⁹ Peter Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics*, 104.

¹⁶⁰ Ulrich Linse, „Völkisch-jugendbewegte Siedlungen im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert,“ 43.

¹⁶¹ Peter Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics*, 33-35.

¹⁶² BArch, 1507/479, 18.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 24.

Racial Worldview of the Artaman League

An ideal German farmer suitable to become the leader (führer) had to be racially pure, ideally possessing pure Aryan blood within three generations.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, a perfect youth farmer had to be driven not by material urges but by a national consciousness of self-powerful in leadership and soul, thus overcoming urbanization and transcending toward civilization and nature.¹⁶⁵ After all, German soil, a sacred mediator between German people and the glorious past, was only for such young German farmers from cities to find work and livelihood opportunities.¹⁶⁶

Therefore, allowing their sacred soil to be fondled by the ethnics inferior to the German nation and the group hostile to or rejecting the ‘German values’ could not be tolerated. For instance, the recruitment pamphlet for “Pommersche Bauernhochschule” indicates that the organization keeps its distance from party-political and denominational endeavors.¹⁶⁷ At the same time, however, it also urges a person applying for the membership to prove that he/she is free from Semitic or ‘colored blood stains (farbigen Bluteinschlag)’ and that they do not belong to an organization hostile to ‘Germanness (Deutschtum).’¹⁶⁸ Such an outlandish racist statement would have been, again, deemed unpolitical for the Artamanen Leaguers, as the probation against the ‘Un-Germans’ should have been ‘natural’ for them.

Once proven of his racial purity, he, the young German farmer and future führer of Volk, were assigned two tasks. First was working arduously while retaining his abstinent old Germanic life. Another was the repopulation of the land with racially pure children.

¹⁶⁴ Ulrich Linse, „Völkisch-jugendbewegte Siedlungen im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert,“ 45.

¹⁶⁵ BArch, 1507/479, 18.

¹⁶⁶ BArch, 1501/125673, 4.

¹⁶⁷ BArch, 1507/478, 17.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 17.

Therefore, a young German farmer's sexual intercourse was not discouraged, contrasting with old Germanic life's censure on flirting with women. However, he should also be able to conceive healthy peasant children with their Artaman wives, not with "sensual pleasure" (like in the big city), but with responsibility before the people and race.¹⁶⁹ One of the agendas the league members publicly pushed forward, such as in the news column 'the March of the League (Der Vormarsch der Bünde)' on January 19th, 1929, was the provision of financial support, such as farm labor houses (Land Arbeiterhaus), for the married Artaman leader from the unemployment welfare fund.¹⁷⁰

Within the Artaman League's blatant racist worldview, there's a sense of hierarchy. At the top, there's obviously the German Volks. However, Anglo-Saxons stand beside the Germans, and their very existence becomes the subject of comparison as a rival. For example, Dr. Schiele Raumberg-Saale, a member of the Artaman League, asks if the Germans cannot build such a value out of free self-help as the Anglo-Saxons do while urging their fellow Germans to pursue a self-sustaining life free of bureaucracy.¹⁷¹ At the same time, it is worth noting that the model for Artaman Movement's education was American, which encouraged youths for extracurricular experiences and exercise.¹⁷² Thus, the Anglo-Saxons were not only the enemy but also the model Germans can take examples of.

While deeming Anglo-Saxons as the rival race the Volks had to surpass, the Artaman League did not shy away from expressing Anti-Semitist messages, particularly from the intellects of Bundschuh, who praised the Artaman League's settlement project as the alternative for 'International Jewry.'¹⁷³ The perception is likely to be originated from the

¹⁶⁹ Michael H. Kater, „Die Artamanen,“ 603.

¹⁷⁰ BArch, 1507/479, 2.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 2.

¹⁷² Ibid, 18.

¹⁷³ Michael H. Kater, „Die Artamanen,“ 599.

overall Volkish rights. In such a worldview, Jewish people were imagined to be the enemy of German Volks. Jewishness was equated to materialism, class-conflict hoax, and even Bolshevism, whereas Germanness was the synonym for spirit, might, and nature.¹⁷⁴ Unironically, the Volkish ideologists saw urban culture as a Jewish consequence.¹⁷⁵ In short, every modernist tendency and cultural tendency, which those of the Volkish movement sought to overcome, were held responsible to Jews.¹⁷⁶ In short, Jewishness was an amorphous concept of everything a German should aspire not to be, and any German thinking like a Jew ought to be executed.¹⁷⁷

While Jewishness existed as the contrast and antonym of Germanness, the other races, particularly Slavs, including Polish, were at the lower tier of the Artaman racial hierarchy. The significant consequence of not strengthening one's body and mind is the degeneration into a state worse than 'even Polish and Serbs,' implying that the Slavic people are at the very bottom of the hierarchy.¹⁷⁸

Despite the assumed inferiority of the Slavic people, including Poles, the league's fear of Polish laborers' takeover of the Germanic 'motherland' persisted and served as another rationale behind the league's Anti-Slavism. On August 30th, 1923, A.G. Keustler, leader of the 1st Artaman team (Artamanenschaft), published an article in Reichswart, which asserted that the employment of Polish workers was dangerous because they were "foreign workers hostile to us and therefore (the employment) offer them the opportunity to raise funds that are used to drive out the last remnant of Germanness from the true-color German

¹⁷⁴ Peter Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics*, 34-35.

¹⁷⁵ Benjamin Maria Baade et al., *Jewish Masculinity: German, Jews, Gender, and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 82-83.

¹⁷⁶ Ulrich Linse, „Völkisch-jugendbewegte Siedlungen im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert,“ 44.

¹⁷⁷ BArch, 1507/478, 5.

¹⁷⁸ BArch, 1507/479, 18.

lands.¹⁷⁹ What is apparent in his baseless claim is that all Polish workers were hostile to Germans and thus would collectively invade their homeland for occupation. Furthermore, it indicates that the Poles were seen as a national threat that had to be eradicated.

The obsession with the presence of Un-Germans on German soil is perhaps best explained by a doctor in the intellectual Volkish circle: Hans Harmsen, a former member of Wandervogel in Stieglitz who later supported Nazism. During his tenure as a senior physician for the Health Department of the Inner Mission (Gesundheitsweisen der Inneren Mission) in 1929, Harmsen emphasized the “threatening seriousness of the German population question in the European one Space.”¹⁸⁰ He then added that “all protective work is in vain if it is not possible in the foreseeable future [...] to finally oppose advancing Slavs with a border wall through a resident, high-birth peasant population.”¹⁸¹ His remark reveals two facts about where the fear of the Polish laborers. First, the settlement of foreign races not German on German soil was equivalent to the invasion and threat to the German Volks. Second, the very plan of populating the Eastern region with the children of racially pure Artaman leaders was a defensive act against the invasion.

The enemies, however, were not limited to the non-Germans mentioned above. Even the Germans, those obsessed with materialistic gains, namely proletarians, were assumed to be unable to realize racial justice for the German Volks.¹⁸² The Despise for proletarians as someone below the German standard has been widely found throughout groups associated with the members’ middle-class background and right-wing upbringing. The distraught for

¹⁷⁹ BArch, 1507/478, 40.

¹⁸⁰ Christian Niemeyer, „Jugendbewegung, völkische Bewegung, Sozialpädagogik Über vergessen gemachte Zusammenhänge am Beispiel der Darstellung der Artamanenbewegung in der Kindt-Edition,“ in *Jugendbewegung, Antisemitismus und rechtsradikale Politik*, ed. Gideon Botsch und Josef Haverkamp (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, 2021), 198.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 199.

¹⁸² BArch, 1507/478, 11.

the hostile proletariats is summed up by the former Freikorpsman Rudolph Berthold's account, which notes that the cursing and spitting protesters are the "worst of all," particularly against the female laborers.¹⁸³ The despise of non-Germans and proletarians perhaps stems from their lack of accordance with their 'religious' adherence to continent life. Ironically, the Social Democratic Party itself sought to enforce the abstinent lifestyle upon the socialist youths, stemming from the class difference between the intellectual party members and proletarian laborers. For instance, adult socialists were recommended by the party to scold the youth socialists for their misdemeanors, such as talking too loud and smoking.¹⁸⁴

Thus, the racist worldview imagined by the Artaman League outside their estates was a very lonely and hostile one. The very existence of every foreigner outside Germany was considered a threat to the Volk. Even among fellow German citizens, only a handful was qualified to become part of the Volksgemeinschaft, where everyone has to be disciplined and unconcerned with materialistic gain, like those in the middle class. Unironically, this sense of insecurity caused by the idea of being surrounded by hostile forces had been a common concern among middle-class people.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, the worldview of the Artaman League was a fantasy created in part inspired by the middle class exacerbated by the predicament of the post-war Weimar Republic in the 1920s.

¹⁸³ Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies-Vol. 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. Stephen Conway (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 65.

¹⁸⁴ Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 204.

¹⁸⁵ Peter D. Stachura, *The German Youth Movement 1900-1945*, 14.

Conclusion

This research has shown how the programs within the Artaman League, particularly voluntary labor service and the lectures in Bauernhochschule, functioned to create the ideal young German farmers envisioned by Volkish Ideology. At the same time, I also argued that the programs were the result of factors formed in World War 1, which were adopted into the program to appeal to the recipients of the elements, the war youth generation.

The Artaman League sought to restore the German Volk to its natural form as its member envisioned, with the German soil as the mediator between their natural pre-Medieval German past and the reality. To achieve this, the Artaman League sought to raise healthy German youth farmers via Volunteer Labor Service and Bauernhochschule. In the process, the two institutions adopted the best means known to their potential members, the war youth generation. Thus, the programs incorporated the tradition of Wandervogel, war pedagogy, experience in government programs, and potentially Freikorps culture.

Then, the research also showed a glimpse of the worldview of the Artaman League, particularly about the religious context and racial conception of the world. The study shows how it adopted the concept of an abstinent lifestyle and hard labor as a religious practice. Furthermore, it is also explained how the young German farmers were expected to be the leaders and fighters who could feel the godliness of the natural Germanic past that lies on German soil. Following the findings were the origins of the candidates for the young German farmers: the cities the league's founders despised for their depravity and corruption of German youths. Thus, luring the youths from the cities into their Artaman estates was a rescue for the youths and Volksgemeinschaft for those in the league despite dismal working conditions and low wages. Moreover, the racial world the league members imagined conveys the anxiety stemming from the fear of imminent racial invasion and the predicament of being

surrounded by the enemy.

Through the research, I described the Artaman League as not merely a part of proto-Nazism nor the German youth movement. Instead, I sought to explain the league as the result of the programs in World War 1 that proved successful in obtaining support for the war from the war youth generation. Nonetheless, denying the league's connection to the two bigger topics would be impossible, particularly for Nazism, as many of its members transferred to the Nazi Party. What is noteworthy, however, is the Artaman League board's reluctance and resistance to being absorbed into Nazism and Hitler Jugend. For instance, the board of the Artaman League and the Eagle and Falcon resisted being absorbed into the Nazi's Hitler Jugend, while other similar circles agreed on the 'greater harmonization of National Socialist youth work' in November 1929.¹⁸⁶ The source indicates the league's reluctance to total assimilation into Nazism. It could be due to the board's fear of losing their organization and seats. Or, it could be due to different values the two organizations could not consent on. A deeper analysis of the difference between Nazism and the Artaman League would contribute further to the history of Nazism and Volkish ideology.

¹⁸⁶ BArch, 1507/479, 17.

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