Extracts from the Manual of the Reich Chamber of Culture (1937)

Abstract

The mightiest instrument of Nazi cultural policy was the Reich Chamber of Culture [*Reichskulturkammer* or RKK], which was founded by Joseph Goebbels on September 22, 1933. The "nature and functions" of its various sub-chambers are described in the Manual of the Reich Chamber of Culture (1937), which is excerpted below. The RKK led and controlled the National Socialist "coordination" [*Gleichschaltung*] of culture by making membership in its organization mandatory for anyone active in any cultural field and by engaging heavily in censorship. Artists who were deemed racially or politically undesirable were barred from membership and were thus effectively prevented from working. Particular attention was given to new media, meaning radio and film, for they had great potential with respect to propaganda.

Source

The Nature and Functions of the Reich Chamber of Creative Art

The Reich Chamber of Creative Art was established as a professional body of public law on grounds of the law of the Reich Chamber of Culture. Membership in the Chamber is a prerequisite, for the members of the following professions, in practicing their professions:

Architects, interior decorators, horticulturists, sculptors, painters, engravers, commercial engravers, designers, fine art craftsmen, copyists, restorers of works of art, dealers in works of art and antiques, fine art publishers, dealers in prints.

All artists' associations, art associations, associations of fine art craftsmen, and institutes for creative art and their departments must also be members of the Chamber.

The first problem confronting the Chamber following its establishment was to locate and organize all professionals required to join the Chamber and to unite them in an organization in conformity with the new principles. In the course of these measures, all former associations which were backed by some interests were discontinued without exception, and each member obligated to become a member of the Reich Chamber without fail. […]

The Nature and Functions of the Reich Chamber of Music

[…]

The Reich Chamber of Music has been called upon to keep alive the fundamental idea of professional progress by organizing, with due consideration for the character and activities of the musician, the cultural, economic, and legal conditions of the music profession, or by protecting existing conditions in such manner that music will be preserved for the German people as one of its most precious possessions.

[…]

The Nature and Functions of the Reich Chamber of Literature

[…]

The Reich Chamber of Literature comprises as members all persons who are connected with German literature, whether they are the authors of the original literature or just commercial dealers. It keeps the profession free from undesirable elements and the book market free from un-German books. […]

It is the function of the Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (Department VIII) to exert political influence on German literature and especially to influence the policy of libraries. […]

The Nature and Functions of the Reich Chamber of Motion Pictures

[…]

The National Socialistic State had to intervene at once in his field. It had to lift motion pictures out of the sphere of influence of literalistic economic thinking, give them a sound economic foundation, and assign to them political and cultural missions to be fulfilled within the National Socialistic State. […]

The great significance of the motion picture in pointing the way to our people towards the creation of a national will, requires of all those who are active in the motion picture industry to become bearers and conveyors of culture. It is one of the most important duties of the Reich Chamber of Motion Pictures to see to it that the entire motion picture profession will become cognizant of this mission.

[…]

The Nature and Functions of the Reich Chamber of Broadcasting

[…]

Another aspect, however, now steps conspicuously into the foreground in the field of broadcasting: campaigning for broadcast reception! Until the time of the seizure of power by National Socialism, Germany had considerably fallen behind several great civilized nations in the number of its radio listeners. Causes for this backwardness undoubtedly were: inefficiency, lack of ability and above all lack of resourcefulness and aggressiveness on the part of the broadcasting authorities of the time of the Weimar Republic [*Systemzeit*]. National Socialism effected thorough changes in that respect, and in due recognition of the necessities, initiated a strong propaganda which appealed to the people. […]

It was inevitable that the Chamber had to become a factor in various aspects of the broadcasting economy, so that the goal of total dispersion of broadcasting among the German people could be approached as closely as possible. Department III—Economy and Technical Science—concerns itself with an immense number of problems arising in this connection. This is the most important one: the design of devices. Results include, among others: the creation of the “People’s Receiver” [*Volksempfänger*], which because of its technical features and price level, started its triumphant career which has no comparison, in spite of all kinds of obstacles, with a total sale of 2 ½ million pieces, thus contributing considerably to the attainment of the high number of listeners today. […]

Source of English translation: Extracts from the Manual of the Reich Chamber of Culture (1937). In United States Chief Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Volume V. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946, Document 2529-PS, pp. 262–67; also reprinted in Benjamin Sax and Dieter Kuntz, eds., *Inside Hitler’s Germany: A Documentary History of Life in the Third Reich.* 1st edition. Lexington, MA and Toronto: D.C. Heath & Company, 1992, pp. 232–34. Edited slightly by GHI staff.

Source of original German text: Hans Hinkel, ed., *Handbuch der Reichskulturkammer*, bearbeitet von Gerichtsassessor Günter Genz. Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft GmbH, 1937, pp. 41, 92, 136, 273–74, 304–05.

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