

## “Members of the *Jungdeutschland-Bund* during Field Exercise” (1912)

### Abstract

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In January 1911, the Prussian government issued a *Jugendpflegeerlaß* [youth welfare decree] that laid down guidelines for state-funded youth work. According to this decree, the aim of public youth work was to promote physical activity, moral behavior, and patriotic sentiment. Several of Wilhelmine Germany's middle-class youth organizations (such as gymnastics clubs and the *Pfadfinder*—the German variant of the Boy Scouts) had set themselves the goal of providing pre-military education to boys in order to prepare them for military service and cultivate a patriotic mindset years before these official guidelines were issued. Organized leisure activities such as hikes and camping trips routinely included elements of pre-military education. This film from 1912 documents a military-style field exercise organized by the *Jungdeutschland-Bund* [Young Germany League], an umbrella organization of militarist, patriotic youth organizations that had been formed in 1911 on the initiative of the Ministry of War. By 1914, the organization could count more than 750,000 members spread among their various organizations (or 1 in 5 boys ages 14-20). In this clip, boys from various member organizations, some in uniform, are filmed taking part in a field exercise at the military training ground in Zossen (Brandenburg). The Maggi Soup company provided food for the event (4:49). As the film shows, military authorities (likely reserve officer volunteers) supported and guided the work of these youth organizations. While the boys captured on camera seem to enjoy the camaraderie of the exercise, the intertitles leave little doubt about how these activities were framed in militaristic ways. Many of the boys in this film would be called up to fight in the First World War (with many of them killed).

### Source

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Intertitles:

Loading the troops.

At our destination.

Army command.

Invasion into enemy territory.

On patrol. The first clash.

Establishing lines of communication.

Occupying a key position.

On outpost.

On the shooting line.

On the attack.

The medics at work.

Halting the maneuver.

Lunch break.

Assembling for departure.

Distributing of the war-rations.

The post-mortem.

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Source: *Jungdeutschland bei der Geländeübung*, Eiko-Film AG, 1912. Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv Filmwerk ID: 19253. <https://digitaler-lesesaal.bundesarchiv.de/video/19253/662382>

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