



Wilhelm Gustloff



unknown



history



sinking



stories



facts



gallery



community



resources






achtung!




organizations

2nd Submarine (U-boat) Training Division	See '2. Unterseeboots-Lehrdivision'
2. Unterseeboots-Lehrdivision (U.L.D.)	The 2nd Submarine (U-Boat) Training division of the Germany Navy based in Gotenhafen between November 1940 and March 1945. It was comprised of two battalions (i.e., sections), I and II. The <i>Wilhelm Gustloff</i> provided floating barracks for battalion II, commanded by Wilhelm Zahn starting in summer 1942.
American 8th Air Force	<p>Established in January of 1942, the American 8th Air Force was one of the largest air forces ever assembled in the history of warfare. Operating in the European theatre during World War II, over 350,000 officers and men served before Germany surrendered in May 1945.</p> <p>In one of the many operations conducted by the 8th AF, the port of Gotenhafen (modern day Gdynia) was bombed on October 9, 1943 by approximately 150 planes (B-24's and B-17's). In this attack, which occurred soon after 1PM, the <i>Wilhelm Gustloff</i> narrowly escaped disaster when a bomb exploded in the water just off its starboard side, creating a gash 1.5 metres long in the hull. Several other ships in the harbour were sunk, including the hospital ship <i>Stuttgart</i>, another former <i>KdF</i> cruise ship.</p> <p>See a record of the bombing attack from the 8th Air Force archives (scroll down to October 9, 1943): http://www.8thafhs.org/combat1943.htm</p>
BdM	see 'Bund deutscher Mädel'
Blohm & Voss	The German shipbuilding company founded in 1877 that designed and built the <i>Wilhelm Gustloff</i> - based on specifications provided by the <i>KdF</i> (Strength through Joy) organization.

 (modern-day logo)	<p>Blohm & Voss was completely dismantled after World War II and it took years to re-establish itself as a world-class shipbuilding organization. Although not the primary source of its revenue, B+V still builds passenger ships today.</p> <p>www.blohmvooss.com</p>
Bund Deutscher Mädel (BDM)	<p>The "Federation of German Girls" was an organization integrated into the Hitler Youth during 1931. Membership was made "officially" compulsory by December 1936 - although it took additional laws in 1939 and 1941 to effectively 'enforce' membership.</p> <p>Young, pretty and sociable girls from the <i>BDM</i> were often used for propaganda purposes in the Third Reich. For example, 300 <i>BDM</i> girls accompanied the <i>Wilhelm Gustloff</i> on its maiden voyage in March 1938. They were also present on the <i>Gustloff</i> for numerous photo opportunities when it anchored near London England in April 1938 to serve as a floating polling station.</p> <p>The official task of the <i>BDM</i> was to "educate" young women in the ways of National Socialism (Nazism), promote physical fitness, and ultimately motherhood. As Germany entered the war, activities inevitably changed as young women in the <i>BDM</i> were earmarked for war relief, hospitals, air raid support, and other non-arms bearing activities.</p> <p>Members had to be at least 10 years of age, of German citizenship and prove that they were not more than one-eighth Jewish. Finally, they were required to be in good mental and physical shape. An age limit was not imposed, but once a woman was married or pregnant, she was required to withdraw her membership.</p> <p>See more about the <i>BDM</i> at www.bdmhistory.com.</p>
Condor Legion	see 'Legion Condor'
DAF	See 'Deutsche Arbeitsfront'
Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF)	<p>Founded in 1934, the <i>DAF</i> (German Labour Front) was decreed as the only legal trade union in Nazi Germany. Hitler empowered it to replace all other trade unions through intimidation, confiscation of funds and arrest of union leaders.</p> <p>The <i>DAF</i>, headed by Dr. Robert Ley, was the parent organization of the popular <i>Kraft durch Freude (KdF)</i> 'Strength through Joy' division - responsible for leisure, tourism and</p>

	commission of the <i>Wilhelm Gustloff</i> .
Hamburg-South America Line	See ' <i>Hamburg-Südamerikanische Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft</i> '
Hamburg-Südamerikanische Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft (AKA: <i>Hamburg-Südamerika</i> or <i>Hamburg-Süd</i>)  (modern-day logo)	<p>Shipping company founded in 1871 that owned and/or managed many of the ships of the <i>KdF</i> fleet. In the case of the <i>Wilhelm Gustloff</i>, the <i>KdF</i> owned the vessel while <i>Hamburg-Süd</i> managed it.</p> <p>The company still operates today (despite the complete loss of its fleets after both world wars), but is primarily engaged in the business of cargo transportation.</p> <p>www.hamburg-sued.com</p>
Ingenieurs-Kantoor voor Scheepsbouw	Company that ironically designed the <i>S-13</i> submarine which eventually torpedoed the <i>Gustloff</i> . Set up in Holland to avoid the restrictive clauses of the Versailles Treaty, it was owned primarily by German interests and was the product of illegal cooperation between Germany and Russia before World War II.
International Central Bureau for Joy and Work	see " <i>Internationale Zentralbüro Freude und Arbeit</i> "
Internationale Zentralbüro Freude und Arbeit	Created by Robert Ley following a 1936 congress, the Berlin-based IZFA was a permanent organization dedicated to assuring Germany's stature as a leisure promoter. Intended to rival the International Labour Organization (ILO), it distributed its magazine <i>Freude und Arbeit</i> (Joy and Work) to promote the <i>KdF</i> 's accomplishments.
KdF	See ' <i>Kraft durch Freude</i> '
Komsomol	The Soviet Union's Young Communist Organization. Alexander Marinesko joined in 1935 coinciding with his transfer to the Navy.
Kraft durch Freude (KdF) 	The Nazi organization responsible for leisure and tourism (and integration with the workforce). Translated as "Strength through Joy", the <i>KdF</i> was a sub-organization of the German Labour Front (DAF), headed by Dr. Robert Ley. It enjoyed popularity with citizens of the Third Reich because of its overt agenda. By 1939, it engaged over 7,000 paid employees and

<p><i>logo of the KdF</i></p>	<p>over 135,000 volunteers.</p> <p>More ominously, the <i>KdF</i> played an important role to the Nazis in raising the average German's perceived standard of living before "living space" could be attained and rearmament policies were implemented. Once the war started, the role of the <i>KdF</i> was adapted to provide entertainment and leisure for troops and abroad.</p> <p>The organization was responsible for commissioning the <i>Wilhelm Gustloff</i> and the ship that bore its leader's name - the <i>Robert Ley</i>. In 1936, Ley announced that 20 new liners would be built - one per year for the next 20 years. The first to be ready in 1938 was of course the <i>Gustloff</i>. Only two of the twenty would ever be built.</p> <p>The following ships were controlled or owned by the <i>KdF</i> at some point during their lifetime: <i>Berlin</i>, <i>Der Deutsche</i>, <i>Milwaukee</i>, <i>Monte Olivia</i>, <i>Monte Rosa</i>, <i>Monte Sarmiento</i>, <i>Robert Ley</i>, <i>St. Louis</i>, <i>Sierra Cordoba</i>, <i>Stuttgart</i>, and finally the <i>Wilhelm Gustloff</i>.</p> <p>Unknown to most in the world, the first Volkswagen "Beetle" was created under the auspices of the <i>KdF</i> - based on crude drawings provided by Adolf Hitler to Ferdinand Porsche.</p>
<p>Kriegsmarine</p>	<p>Name of the German Navy between 1935 and 1945. Literally means "War Navy" in English.</p>
<p>Krupps Germania-Werft</p>	<p>German company and co-owner of "Ingenieurs-Kantoor voor Scheepsbouw" - which designed the submarine <i>S-13</i> in 1933 when Russia and Germany cooperated in violation of the Versailles Treaty.</p>
<p>Legion Condor</p>	<p>A unit of Nazi Germany's armed forces, sent to fight in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) to support Franco's nationalists. When the war ended victoriously for Franco, the <i>Wilhelm Gustloff</i> was diverted from its cruise duties in May 1939 to pick up over 1,400 soldiers from the notorious unit. They sailed to Hamburg and received a triumphant welcome upon their return.</p>
<p>Marinehelferinnen</p>	<p>The Women's Naval Auxiliary of the <i>Kriegsmarine</i>. On the night the <i>Gustloff</i> was torpedoed, almost all 373 women of the <i>Marinehelferinnen</i> were instantly killed. The below-deck emptied swimming pool area had been converted as lodging for the young women, and unfortunately received a direct hit from the second torpedo.</p>

Nazi Party	See ' <i>NSDAP</i> '
NKVD	Soviet secret/military police in World War II and precursor to the infamous KGB.
NSDAP	<p>The fascist government headed by Adolf Hitler that ruled Germany between January 1933 and May 1945. An acronym for <i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> (National Socialist German Workers Party), it is better known in its short form - <i>Nazi Party</i>.</p> <p>The Nazi Party was responsible for creation of the peacetime flagship <i>Wilhelm Gustloff</i>. It was commissioned through its leisure and tourism organization <i>Kraft durch Freude</i> under the guidance of Nazi leader Robert Ley of the German Labour Front. The <i>Gustloff</i> was viewed by the Nazi organization as an important propaganda tool both within and outside of Germany's borders.</p>
Strength through Joy	see ' <i>Kraft durch Freude</i> '
Volkssturm 	<p>Created through Hitler's orders in the dying months of World War II, the <i>Volkssturm</i> (meaning "People's Storm") was a German national militia with the intent of defending the 'Fatherland'. Although conscription was for men between the ages of 16 to 60, battalions were filled mostly with either the very young, very old, or those previously deemed unfit for military service.</p> <p>There were no official uniforms, just a red and black armband with white lettering to identify members. After sparse training and an oath to Hitler, inexperienced <i>Volkssturm</i> members were thrown into battle - including the Eastern Front as it closed in on the Danzig area which held the remaining German ports.</p>
Wehrmacht	Name given to the German armed forces between 1935 and 1945. Literally means "defense force".
Women's Naval Auxiliary	see ' <i>Marinehelferinnen</i> '

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