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Folk Festivals on the Rocks Funfairs During National Socialism

Funfairs enjoyed great popularity during the Nazi era. At the beginning of the Second World War, they provided entertainment on the "home front". It was not until 1944 that the fairs were cancelled due to the increasing war effort.

After the "seizure of power" in January 1933, funfairs initially remained permitted in Germany. However, the National Socialist regime used them for targeted propaganda. Soon, marches in uniform and with waving flags were just as much a part of the programme as entertainment provided by members of the SA. Free showmen's organisations were brought into line and transferred to the Reich Chamber of Culture (Reichskulturkammer).

From the beginning of the war in 1939, towns and municipalities were initially allowed to decide for themselves whether or not to continue their funfairs. However, the conscription of many young showmen for military service made it increasingly difficult for the fairs to run smoothly. In March 1944, all fairground companies were prohibited in order to concentrate all resources in the war economy.

Fun Fact

The National Socialists wanted to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the famous Cranger-Kirmes in Herne in 1935 and deliberately changed the founding date. The changes were reversed in 2018 and the age was corrected back by 48 years.