



### **original Kraft durch Freude (KdF) literature and memorabilia**

Offered in this category is original Third Reich literature and memorabilia from and about the Kraft durch Freude (KdF or Strength through Joy) organization.

KdF was a large state-controlled leisure organization in the Third Reich which was part of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF German Labor Front). Originally set up as a tool to promote the advantages of National Socialism to the people, it soon became the world's largest tourism operator of the 1930s. Head of the KdF was also Reichsorganisationsleiter and leader of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront, Dr. Robert Ley. The organization's goal was the National Socialist Volks-gemeinschaft (People's Community) and the "perfection and refinement of the German people." The KdF organized tight and thoroughly structured recreational programs following a direct order of the Führer: "I wish that the worker is granted a sufficient holiday and that everything is done, in order to let this holiday as well all other leisure time to be truly recreational. I wish this, because I want a determined people with strong nerves, for truly great politics can only be achieved with a people that keeps its nerves." Another goal was to boost the German economy by stimulating the tourist industry which was down in the 1920s, and it was quite successful up until around the outbreak of World War II. By 1934, over two million Germans had participated on KdF trips, by 1939 the reported numbers lay around 25 million people. The KdF provided affordable leisure activities such as concerts, day-trips and holidays.

Large 25,000 ton ships, such as the Wilhelm Gustloff, were built especially for KdF cruises and workers were taken on ocean cruises at bargain prices to places that were far out of reach to the normal worker in the past, such as a cruise through the fjords of Norway. A cruise to the Canary Islands for example cost 62 Reichmarks - about two weeks wages! The Wilhelm Gustloff can be considered the first true cruise ship, it was sunk by torpedoes fired from a Russian submarine on January 30, 1945. Originally designed for 1,800 passengers the vessel was jammed with over 10,000 German refugees, naval personnel and wounded soldiers who tried to escape from the advancing Russian Red Army. Three out of four fired torpedoes hit the ship, about 9,000 people lost their lives in the ice-cold Baltic Sea, making it the greatest disaster in naval history.

#### **The Volkswagen (The People's Car)**

According to Hitler, in the summer of 1932, at a time when only rich people could buy a car, Hitler stated that all people should be given the opportunity to own one. It is said (true or not?), while at a restaurant, he sketched a prototype for a car which eventually became the Volkswagen Beetle, at that time named KdF-Wagen (KdF Car). Other sources say that an Austrian (Jewish) engineer came up with the original design, that his designs were confiscated and Hitler's version of the prototype became the 'official' history. But whatever the origin of the idea, Hitler ordered that a People's Car (in German 'Volkswagen') should be built which would be affordable to anyone. The car was designed by Ferdinand Porsche, an Austrian engineer. It was officially unveiled on May 26, 1938 and heralded as a triumph of Nazi Germany. The price of a KdF-Wagen was set at 990 Reichsmark which was equal to about 35 weeks wages. To help workers buy a car, Dr. Ley started a hire-purchase scheme where workers paid RM 5.00 a week until the amount of RM 750.00 was accumulated (see page 153). Then they would be given an order number entitling them to a car as soon as it was built. No customer ever received their car, even though workers paid millions of RM into the hire-purchase scheme because the Volkswagen factory was turned into a weapons factory as soon as World War Two started in 1939. The factory was heavily bombed during the war, reopened by the British in 1948 and the production of what became the world's best selling production car officially began.