Youth is Not an Excuse: A Study of Young German Resisters in Nazi Germany

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From World War I to World War II, young Germans upheld certain traits and beliefs despite experiencing decades of violent chaos and uncertainty. The government during the First World War tried to instill a militaristic, obedient attitude upon the youth. The war's failure, however, taught youth to distrust authority, stand up (sometimes recklessly) for their idealistic beliefs, and strive for a life of significance and personally driven action. Years later, these beliefs continued to play an influential role in the affairs of young Germans. The National Socialists, in their quest for power, offered an attractive sense of purpose and belonging among the youth. However, as the Nazis restricted freedoms and enacted harsh discriminating measures against the Jewish people, some young people, utilizing those traits from World War I, resisted and rebelled this harsh authority and their calls for hate. Some young Germans even took the enormous risk of rescuing Jews. These rescuers also upheld a reckless, carefree typology. The German youth are a unique group considering their developmental environment. Even though they grew up in Germany, a society trying desperately to indoctrinate them into a system of hate and conformity, these youth courageous confronted and defied the Nazis head on.