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Introduction

While walking alone through the streets of Berlin, I tried to picture myself standing in that same spot seventy years prior. Traveling through the stark, desolate Holocaust memorials, I encountered reports of abhorrent suffering that sparked an unfamiliar interest in not only the catastrophe itself, but the few who resisted and saved the Jews from their tragic fate. Their mission was to rescue those persecuted by the ruthless, unjust Nazi rule. I have been on a mission of my own, as well; a journey to deepen my understanding and thrive on a motivation to show the better side of humanity even in the darkest of times. As Rabbi Harold Schulweis eloquently said, “In unearthing the crimes of villainy, the virtues of humanity must not be buried.”¹

The Holocaust, the systematic murder of millions of Jews, has been studied extensively for decades. The years of persecuting Nazi rule and the victimization of Jews is usually the main focus of abundant works, and understandably so. The Nazis committed incomprehensible mass crimes that shocked the world then and continue to do so now. I, by no means, try to belittle the tragedy of the Holocaust. I strongly advocate for the education of this dark time in humanity in order for people to see what horrors man is capable of. However, I do wish for those same learners to realize that righteous behavior and actions did indeed exist in this seemingly overwhelmingly evil time. People today, young ones especially, should not lose hope in mankind or believe that evil always overcomes good. Such downcast views demoralize the populace, and consequently lead them into a constant feeling of indifference and hopelessness. To learn these acts of resistance and rescue during a time when impassivity and hate seemed to reign more supreme than any other time in modern history gives the reader a sense of empowerment and

¹ Eva Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: Anchor, 1994), 12.

confidence in the actions of humanity.

The following work concerns the youth of Germany from 1913-1945. These generations grew up in perhaps one of the most hostile and violent years in modern history. Their country engaged in two world wars, faced severe economic depressions, and changed systems of government. Throughout all this chaos and uncertainty, young Germans upheld certain traits and beliefs that became more visible during and after World War I. The war taught youth to distrust authority, stand up (sometimes recklessly) for their own beliefs, and strive for a life of significance and action with their own idealistic goals guiding them. Hitler and the National Socialists, knowing full well these characteristics, exercised a great deal of energy in their pursuit to convince the youth to join their cause. They presented themselves as new and exciting, trying to convince and entice the curious youth into being a part of something historic. The Nazis, however, hoped to channel their rebellious nature into a system of strict obedience to Hitler.

The National Socialists put forth great effort towards winning over the youth, being that the party's future and its success lay in their hands. They created youth organizations, parades, and rallies in the hope to convince these Germans of their sense of belonging and historical significance as the nation's defenders and protectors. While mesmerizing the youth to the possibility of living such meaningful lives, the Nazis restricted their rights and the rights and liberties of Jews. They changed the laws and societal structures in the hopes of eradicating the Jews from German life. These restrictions and attacks upon the Jews and non-Jews alike, along with the defining traits from World War I, motivated young Germans to resist against the regime's threatening forces.

A caveat does deserve to be said, however. Those that resisted the Nazis in homeland

Germany were few in number compared to the large amount of ordinary Germans influenced by Nazi ideology.² Moreover, thanks to plunder from the war and the revamping of the economy under the Nazis, most Germans “really were better off under the Nazis,” adding to their support and acceptance.³ Thus, I do not attempt to magnify praise towards the majority of German people, especially those that remained indifferent or even contributed to the Jewish destruction. Instead, this work focuses on the *few* resisting and rebelling Germans and discusses their common journey from World War I to World War II.

There are numerous types of both active and passive resistance and rebellion covered in this work. The types of resistance discussed include attempts to oppose or stop the course of the Nazis. Through these acts, these young Germans refused to comply with the foreign and domestic policies of the State. Their actions included producing pamphlets, refusal to join Nazi organizations, refusal to take oaths, refusal to fight, refusal to conform to certain Nazi rules and lifestyle demands, and even refusal of Nazi anti-Jewish rhetoric through the rescue and assistance of Jews. The actions of the German youth ranged far and wide, all being significant. These young Germans stood up selflessly for their own values and for the values of civilized man.

The acts of resistance by the German youth were unique and noteworthy due to the events surrounding them and their environment. These Germans grew up in a society glorifying violence and obedience. Living through years of uncertainty and hopelessness, these few young resisters successfully denied the false promises that the Nazis directed towards them. Thus, they rebelled against their own leaders and laws, a brave decision the youths of other nations were not faced with. Young people recklessly dove into action in the face of extreme risk. Moreover,

² Devin O. Pendas, “Explaining the Third Reich: Ethics, Beliefs, Interests,” *Modern Intellectual History* 5,3 (2008): 575.

³ *Ibid.*, 588.

rebellious against Nazi organizations and helping Jews in Germany meant acting against the moral and legal framework laid down by the regime. These few had to depend on their personal convictions and values instead of the State's. For rescuers in particular, to save Jews meant (according to Nazi moral framework) committing a crime against one's own blood. These resisters acted alone and thus isolated themselves from society. Despite such overwhelming pressure to conform, strictly enforced laws, and the risk of losing one's own life, these young resisters listened to their inner desires to live freely, distrust authority, and adhere to idealistic beliefs that included treating all humans as equals.

So many examples of resistance exist from this tumultuous time period. Despite each resister's own unique set of complex motives, their moral legacy shines bright. These German youth mustered the courage to do right regardless of the risks. Their individual consciences won against a domineering authority.

The title of my work, "Youth is Not an Excuse," is a quote told to me by my adviser, Professor Bernauer. It is attributed to Traudl Junge, Hitler's young secretary during the war. Years after the war, she realized her mistake in not listening to her conscience:

But one day I went past the memorial plaque which had been put up for Sophie Scholl in Franz Josef Strasse, and I saw that she was born the same year as me, and she was executed the same year I started working for Hitler. And at that moment I actually sensed that it was no excuse to be young, and that it would have been possible to find things out.⁴

Traudl compared herself to Sophie Scholl, a member and martyr of the White Rose youth group in Germany. These two, like all of Germany's youth, chose between two paths: resistance or compliance/indifference. The today's youth, too, must choose between these same paths. We

⁴ André Heller. *Im toten Winkel - Hitlers Sekretärin* [Blind Spot: Hitler's Secretary]. Directed by André Heller. Dor Film Produktionsgesellschaft, 2002.

must not become discouraged in the face of powerful foes. Instead, we can now look to these young Germans who defied insurmountable odds and forces to righteously fight for their beliefs.

Abraham Foxman, a rescued Jew during the war, gave a particularly powerful and motivating speech that I encountered in my research. He said:

The Holocaust survivors bore witness to evil, brutality and bestiality. Now is the time for us, for our generation, to bear witness to goodness. For each one of us is living proof that even in hell, even in that hell called the Holocaust, there was goodness, there was kindness, and there was love and compassion.⁵

My goal in producing this work is to show my generation that good existed in Nazi Germany despite the overwhelming campaigns of hate, fear, and destruction. Being young was not and still is not an excuse to remain indifferent or insignificant. These young Germans threw themselves into the affairs of the nation and rebelled despite insurmountable odds and risks. Their inspiring stories deserve to be told and recognized.

⁵ Martin Gilbert, *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust* (New York: Holt, 2004), XVII.

Chapter 1: The Legacies of World War I

The consequences of World War I extend far beyond the Treaty of Versailles. The war socially transformed people throughout Europe and changed their perceptions of their surroundings. In the case of Germany, young citizens took on new roles, as their views of themselves and of an ideal German citizen changed. In the following two decades, these alterations became fundamental characteristics and attitudes that shaped how such youths determined and thought of their future roles. Thus, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the motives and mindsets of those involved in both the resistance and support of Nazism, one must understand the environment in which they were brought up before and during World War I. From this war, the younger members of German society were surrounded and shaped by a violent culture and a propagandist education system that glorified a life revolving around the military, chauvinism, and dominance. While authors such as H.W. Koch, John Gillis, Peter Lowenberg, and Andrew Donson emphasize these facets of the war, they neglect to fully explore pivotal features and legacies that were eventually used to combat regimes emphasizing these prevailing mentalities. The distrust of authority, a willingness to die for a certain cause, a strong idealism, and the desire to live a life of significance characterized the future young resisters and rescuers during the Nazi reign.

Surroundings inevitably shape an individual, regardless of age. The environment in which young people grow up helps determine their experiences and motives throughout history. To more clearly convey such an account, one must give at least some thought into what the term “youth” encompasses. Sociologist F. Neidhardt defines “youth” as those members of society who “with puberty have reached biological sexual maturity, without having gained possession, through marriage and employment, of the general rights and privileges which allow or require

responsible participation in the significant fundamental processes of society.”⁶ An important modification in this definition for the purpose of this study is the inclusion of “employment.” Young people during the First World War did in fact participate in German society by holding jobs usually reserved for adults. Since many older men were off fighting, the youth had to increase their role and contributions in society. Thus, younger members of society held some significant positions in industry. With that in mind, the youth in this study will be those aged from around twelve-years-old to the early twenties, during which time individuals attempt to find and cement their identity and create their own unique selves. Those in this generation (born on or near 1900) and beyond saw such individualization as being increasingly important to shape their existence.⁷ The First World War, along with parenting and the surrounding forces of society, helped to initiate and shape the kind of person these youths sought to be. Several authors have discussed the effects of the war and the environment surrounding it, with each exploring a unique contributing facet.

John. R. Gillis focuses primarily on the educational influence on the German youth during and before the war. He notes the distinct educational systems between the different social classes. Middle-class Germans preferred the academic secondary school, the Gymnasium, while the aristocracy held onto the traditional military school education. The education system for the middle-class created a “much more troubled adolescence.”⁸ Such trouble was caused by the fact that the Gymnasium split its tasks of education and socialization with the home, thus creating, in Gillis’ view, an “arid brain factory” that proved “unable to meet the emotional needs of the

⁶ Michael Mitterauer, *A History of Youth* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1986), 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸ John R. Gills, “Conformity and Rebellion: Contrasting Styles of English and German Youth, 1900-1933,” *History of Education Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1973): 250, 255.

young.”⁹ Gillis explains how educators oppressed the majority of youth in the sense that they provided no opportunity for social learning and engagement, thereby creating “an extraordinarily lonely, disturbing experience.”¹⁰ This lifestyle conditioned youth to easily embrace opportunities that allowed them to break free of such constraints, such as joining the war effort.

H.W. Koch, contributing more to the overall discussion, states that Germany’s youth portrayed a “generous” idealism leading up to 1914.¹¹ They (in the middle-class specifically) rushed to join the war effort because they hoped that the old, bourgeois society would be eliminated and replaced by a new society in their own image. A proclamation read by a youth group at the Hohe Meissner in 1913 exhibited such a mentality. The German youth, it read, “is attempting, independently of the dull customs of adults and of the constraints of hateful convention, to shape its own life.”¹² It continued, “But youth distances itself from all forms of cheap patriotism.... We are all united in the endeavor to create a new, noble German youth culture.”¹³ Thus, a culture shrouded in hateful violence or patriotism was not the cause of the youth’s vigorous excitement for the war, but rather idealism and independence were main contributing factors. Their motivation was to shape their own lives and have a hand in creating a new society.

Koch postulates that the youth exhibited a traditional political activism focusing on an “unquenched desire for political unity” for Germany.¹⁴ Characterized as an idealistic group, young Germans searched for a more meaningful existence for themselves and their country.

⁹ Ibid., 256.

¹⁰ Ibid., 256.

¹¹ H.W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945*, (New York: Dorset Press, 1988), 2.

¹² Die Freideutsche Jugendbewegung, *Padagogisches Magazin* no. 597 (1915), found in Peter Stachura, *The German Youth Movement 1900-1945* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), 169.

¹³ Idem.

¹⁴ Koch, *The Hitler Youth*, 16.

They were not shaped by their educators, but instead tried to free themselves from this oppressive atmosphere.¹⁵ In not providing a freethinking, active schooling life, educators engaged in the kind of oppression Gillis discusses. Such a background and characterization explains, in Koch's view, why the youth gave wide support for the war effort at the start of the First World War: they saw the war as providing that sought-after opportunity for national unity and destruction of the old order.¹⁶ The "pursuit of a dream" of political unity was the main motive for the support of the war and a characteristic seen in the following decades.¹⁷ As the war eventually lost momentum and the Germans were defeated, the youth, surrounded by mass death, became reluctant to support a country that failed its mission and did not fulfill their ambitions of unity. Thus, many youths after the war joined radical right-wing organizations that fought against the restoration of a society supporting the continuation of the old, bourgeois ways.¹⁸ Furthermore, the war created a "myth of obedience" that placed strong emphasis on obeying those in power and glorified self-sacrifice for the greater German cause.¹⁹ Koch thus states that the subsequent culture of obedience and sacrifice led these ideological youths to strive to build a new unified society.

Peter Loewenberg takes a psychoanalytical approach in studying the effects of the First World War that extends beyond the oppressive education system. He explains how there existed more factors than just education and idealism that influenced youth. The stress of war, the absence of fathers, deprivation, and a culture surrounded by violence all impacted the young. The anxiety-inducing situation of the war itself brought about feelings of helplessness and

¹⁵ Ibid., 24.

¹⁶ Ibid., 33.

¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ Ibid., 36.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2.

“political irrationality” that showed up in full force years later.²⁰ Loewenberg points out how character formation and the development of social values take place during the childhood, and that each social event carries a certain impact on that child.²¹ The events these children in particular experienced ranged from months without food to the traumatizing realization that their father may be dead. With that being said, Loewenberg does not disagree that this generation of German youth was more inclined towards violence and aggression than previous generations. He does, however, point out that this generation was unique in that it was surrounded by other tragedies and events besides violence from war.²²

One such additional traumatic instance for the youth occurred during the winter of 1916-1917, known as the “turnip winter.” The German civilian population suffered immensely during this time of severe food shortages caused by the Allied blockade.²³ The youth in particular suffered great damages to physical health, fertility, and emotional well-being.²⁴ This deprivation was especially significant for the shaping of their futures because it impacted their decision-making and outlooks. Another factor was the increase in young workers and in mothers who left the house for employment. Though Loewenberg briefly discusses this factor, he explains that an influx of youth started to take on adult jobs (in heavy industry) during the war due to shortages in labor. These jobs, mostly unsupervised, resulted in numerous scarring injuries.

The frightening labor conditions and food shortages combined with the increasing absence of mothers (symbols of comfort and ease) often left an injured young person parentless and vulnerable. With no parent figures present, the morality of the child became severely

²⁰ Peter Loewenberg, “The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort,” *The American Historical Review* 76, no. 5 (1971): 63.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

²² *Ibid.*, 73.

²³ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

damaged.²⁵ This injured individual, ignored by a government preoccupied with war, fatherless, and now motherless, was utterly alone. The child was exposed to the danger of “helplessness and longing, with consequent anxiety” that was threatening in part because of his own “acute ambivalence.”²⁶ From these feelings and the negative consequences surrounding them came an aggression toward their former objects of love. The absence of both parents “made critical difference in the constellation of the child’s view of the world.”²⁷ Another damaging factor was that of the aforementioned persistent hunger. These combinations of events helped shape the child’s view that neither his father nor mother were able to protect the family in the face of military defeat, hunger, and political upheaval.

A father away at battle remained a mysterious, idealized figure for the child. He had been “honored and admired” and the object of “extreme hopes and expectations upon his return.”²⁸ Germany’s highly charged war-hungry atmosphere glorified the soldier as the supreme citizen in society. The child realized, as his father returned home, that such hope and idealism often differed greatly from reality. His “hero” of a father was truly a “defeated, insecure man breaking into a heretofore fatherless family.”²⁹ For those still fighting in the progressively worsening, depriving years, the children increasingly saw their fathers as dangerous alien figures who wielded great unknown power. With such power to punish and control, the threatening fathers induced fear among their offspring.³⁰ One man, then a youth during the war, reflecting on that time said, “All family life was at an end. None of us really knew what it meant- we were left to

²⁵ Ibid., 79.

²⁶ Ibid., 82.

²⁷ Ibid., 80.

²⁸ Ibid., 92.

²⁹ Idem.

³⁰ Ibid., 95.

our own devices...So we grew up, amid hunger and deprivation, with no semblance of decent family life.”³¹

The bleak war effort, breakup of family life, deprivation, and a “national atmosphere highly charged with unmitigated expressions of patriotism, hatred, and violence” all distorted the emotional and mental development of children.³² With particular emphasis, Loewenberg asserts that a parentless household created a “deficit in self-esteem” in which the child viewed himself as “unlovable and worthless.”³³ This damaging blow came to a group of individuals usually prized as carriers of idealism and hope. Moreover, the author concluded that this experience in weakened character structure “manifested itself in aggression, defenses of projection and displacement, and inner rage that may be mobilized by a renewed anxiety-inducing trauma in adulthood” that was attracted to programs based on violence and hate, a foreshadowing of what was to come in the future.³⁴

Andrew Donson deals with the years leading up to the war during which excitement and propaganda buildup created a war-hungry atmosphere for young Germans. He delves deeper than other authors into investigating the educational and societal impacts on the youth, but does not stray from the parentless and deprivation factors. While Koch argues about the schooling system’s oppressive atmosphere, Donson writes that it was not a system of oppression but instead one reinforcing patriarchal societal values and obedience.³⁵ Nearly 80 percent of the secondary school teachers were male, and many of them were reserve officers who emphasized the history of war in Germany. German schools acted as “pep rallies” to increase war excitement

³¹ Ibid., 99.

³² Ibid., 80.

³³ Ibid., 82.

³⁴ Ibid., 150.

³⁵ Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 24.

and involvement.³⁶ Donson postulates that the youth widely supported the war effort not for ideological reasons as Koch says but because of fervent war mongering. The Prussian education minister, for instance, aspired to lead young Germans to “witness this glorious time sympathetically and to ingrain it perpetually in their memories.” His goal was to plant “the seeds of patriotic enthusiasms into the souls of youths.”³⁷ The Germans painted the war as an extremely important matter of life or death for the entire country’s existence. For them, it posed the question of whether Germany’s culture and characteristics would be destroyed or spread throughout all of Europe.³⁸ The soldiers, then, were given the utmost praise, because they acted as the saviors of Germany. With that in mind, the youth greatly anticipated the day they could be such heroes.

Donson reinforces his argument by showing how many teachers allowed for and encouraged free compositions (or accounts) on subjects usually pertaining to the war. These documents reflect the powerful influence of the war-mongering propaganda. In one instance, a seventh grade boy from Nordhausen wrote how, if in the infantry, he “would most like assault attacks. You can call out firm hurrahs during attacks. I would plunge into everything that came in my way with my bayonet.”³⁹ The young boy here openly wished for violence to just charge at him so he can crush it with his own, independent force. Another boy from Breslau in the eighth grade wrote how his only wish was “that I could be a soldier...the skulls I would smash.”⁴⁰ His *only* wish was to become a soldier. To him, such a position was the most important and worthy

³⁶ Ibid., 45.

³⁷ Ibid., 63-64.

³⁸ Nathan Stoltzfus, “Witness in Spite of Himself: Victor Klemperer’s Diaries of 20th Century Germanies,” in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide Volume I*, ed. John K. Roth et al. (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 543.

³⁹ Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 82.

⁴⁰ Idem.

member of society. Many students identified themselves as striving to be these fearless, merciless, invincible fighters.

In their attempts to prove their masculinity and readiness for the military, young German males were labeled as “smug” as they paraded around flaunting their overinflated sense of importance. A police officer bystander wrote how these youths “fe[lt] themselves called upon to be saviors of the Fatherland.”⁴¹ The voluntary military youth companies and patriotic organizations that started at the onset of the war added to this pompous behavior. These groups offered sixteen to eighteen-year-old boys the chance to partake in marches and drills to be just like their soldier heroes, further exciting them about their future roles.⁴² By taking part in these military groups and living out a fantasy, these future soldiers more easily saw themselves becoming the heroes they always dreamed of. The war’s progression and failures soon brought great negative change for youth, however.

By 1916, as food was becoming more and more scarce, hunger, fear, trauma, and the worry of the war “enervated” the children and made them more “oversensitive, sluggish, and absent minded.”⁴³ Having their father or family member off at war, which was increasingly becoming violent and utterly destructive, caused many children to suffer some emotional trauma and grief. The father was the “most potent authority” in the family.⁴⁴ Since Germany was a patriarchal society, and the father determined a wide range of family actions (especially discipline), many children were left without authority figures. Similar to Loewenberg’s account, Donson touches upon how the war’s subsequent deprivation had a great emotional impact on the youth. However, Donson does not dwell on the trauma of the situation, but rather writes how

⁴¹ Ibid., 121.

⁴² Ibid., 116.

⁴³ Ibid., 132.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 138.

these circumstances increased the youths' longing for independence and glory. Their fathers remained their mysterious hero figures, fighting the good fight and living the sought-out dream. The children of these soldiers glorified their opportunity and role. One son said, "So now we began, but with far more intensity [than the Homeric Age], to transform ourselves symbolically into the ideal figures of our fathers."⁴⁵ To be an authority figure and a soldier fighting for one's country was *ideal* and the main goal of a son. Thus, those fathers away from home became their sons' "imaginary idols."⁴⁶

Donson concludes that Germany taught its youth that their superior nation was on a clear path to victory and that they too would one day engage in the fight for glory. Teachers read heroic tales of soldiers sacrificing themselves for the good of Germany, and the students longed for their day to fight. When the war took a turn for the worse, Germany's young people, deprived and shaken, ended up deeply disappointed. Humiliation, hunger, and a thirst for violence replaced the glory and wonder they hoped to experience in war.

Donson, Loewenberg, Gillis, and Koch all discuss in one way or another the conditions facing young Germans during the World War I years. Gillis explains that the inefficient education system, specifically in secondary schools, oppressed the Germans in the sense that it did not allow them to fully develop socially. He believes that such oppression led many youth to be attracted to the idea of war and being a part of something significant. Koch writes that these young Germans steered away from the oppressive education system and followed their own generous idealism in support of the war. They hoped to one day unite Germany and rid the old ruling power. By war's end, however, they were carried into a culture of obedience and distrust that, in his view, geared them towards Nazism. Loewenberg takes a more psychoanalytical

⁴⁵ Ibid., 139.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 140.

approach in shaping his view of the war's legacy. He believes that the deprivation and the loss of parents distorted the emotional and mental development of children. This deficiency made them more prone to aggressive behavior and attraction to programs based on violence and hate.

Donson believes education, instead of oppression, had a large impact on the formation of violent, pro-war attitudes. Along with intense government warmongering, the formation of youth military organizations, and a newfound involvement in society, young Germans became more accustomed to and disposed towards violence and the need to fight. All authors point out that the end of the war heavily disappointed, disheartened, and angered the youth. From these feelings and attitudes, the young Germans, in these scholars' views, geared themselves into supporting the violent, obedient, and patriotic calls of the Nazis. Despite such analyses, all authors do not mention (or at best briefly indicate) a very important legacy of the war that proved influential in later years.

The distrust of authority was a major outcome of the First World War, and while some of these authors mention that such an attitude further inclined these young Germans to give their future allegiance to Adolf Hitler, the scholars fail to reveal that such an outlook also predisposed some youth to resent him and his ideology. Donson writes how the winter of 1916 and the shortages of food that followed left many hungry and angry. These citizens blamed the State for possibly withholding food from them.⁴⁷ Additionally, the bleak outlook on the war turned some against the government. One German youth, Otto Haase, wrote near the end of the war:

The old German State has collapsed in a heap of ruins....The authoritarian State has fallen....It is no longer good enough for Free German Youth to hide behind questions of secondary importance.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 126.

⁴⁸ 'Im deutschen Volksstaat', *Rundbrief für Freideutsche in Niedersachsen*, 1918, no. 8, in Peter D. Stachura, *Nazi Youth in the Weimar Republic* (Santa Barbara, California: Clio Books, 1975), 170.

Hatred of failed, controlling authority, in this case the government, became a defining characteristic for many German citizens. Many strove to take matters into their own hands. As the war's hardship increased and patriotic activities decreased, shortages of food and resources caused many to steal. Consequently, adults quickly lost the ability to control their young.⁴⁹ Without their main authority figures home along with the desperation created by the war, youths had to live and fight for themselves, thus becoming more independent in the process. Donson explains that by war's end, some young Germans turned this anger and disappointment toward the government by joining right-wing military organizations, which eventually formed a strong base for the Nazis.⁵⁰ These members did indeed have a distrust of authority, but that doubt only extended toward the ruling German government at the time. Donson devotes a mere few sentences to those who joined leftist organizations that were flat-out opposing war and a government that embraced and called for violence.⁵¹ This group, although given little attention, contributed to a tradition of anti-authority against military rule and overuse of power that remained in the consciousness of future young Germans.

While Donson discusses the anti-authoritarian discourse among those young Germans that were to one day support the Nazis, Loewenberg also touches upon the subject. He states that, in light of a fatherless (authoritarian) society, the youth no longer respected the state, which was another form of authority. The disappointment from the war added to youth's contempt for authority.⁵² They continued to desire independence in their idealistic quest to create a better world. Yet Loewenberg believed that a fatherless society caused the youth to follow and idealize a figure (Hitler, for instance) that embodied their ideal father "in order to again relate as a son to

⁴⁹ Donson, *Youth in a Fatherless Land*, 155.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁵¹ *Idem.*

⁵² Loewenberg, "The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort," 89.

him.”⁵³ What Loewenberg fails to mention is that not all young Germans welcomed the idea of praising Hitler and the Nazis.

Koch makes a significant observation when he says how these youth of the “front-line generation” learned to put their lives at risk for their cause, and they “were prepared to do it again.”⁵⁴ Here, Koch is alluding to those young Germans who later became members of right-wing militant units like the Freikorps, which housed many future Nazis. Koch emphasizes that these people were prepared to give their lives for the betterment of Germany, and they indeed did. However, what these members saw as right was usually in the best interest of the authoritarian right-wing. Koch fails to take into account that it was not only the right-winged militant youth that were ready to die for a cause. Future authors, when studying young Germans after the First World War, would find themselves exploring legacies from the past that helped shape their subjects’ actions. In studying those later young Germans resisters against the Nazis, distrust of authority, idealism, and a strong fighting spirit were significant beliefs from World War I that influenced their actions.

⁵³ Ibid., 107.

⁵⁴ Koch, *The Hitler Youth*, 37.

Chapter 2: The Theme of Resistance in the Decisive Decades Between 1918-1938

After World War I, the then-current and next generation of young Germans identified themselves with the legacy of distrusting authority, a life surrounded by militarism, and a characteristic idealism that hoped to play a role in unifying the country. This “conscious or unconscious struggle for emancipation” remained engrained in young Germans’ minds for years.⁵⁵ Political organizations tried to capitalize on this enthusiastic spirit by presenting them with opportunities to join and have a significant hand in shaping society. The Nazis, for instance, took great care in devising their indoctrination strategies in hopes of controlling the youths’ fighting, idealistic nature. At the same, however, the Nazis created additional measures that destroyed the youths’ personal freedoms and eliminated the rights and liberties of Jewish Germans.

The Weimar Republic formed soon after Germany’s signing of the brutal Versailles Treaty. Throughout this new government’s fourteen-year existence, however, came very tumultuous and politically and economically unstable times. For young Germans in particular, an extremely unstable and polarized society shrouded in a pro-militaristic attitude continued to engross their lives. Donson, for example, asserts that World War I and its propaganda made youths susceptible to violent right-wing movements. This war’s glorification of conflict and violence was still fresh in their minds, and leaders used that to their advantage.⁵⁶ Such a mentality, combined with a broken economy that included massive inflation in 1923 and depression in 1929, made joining these radical organizations an attractive idea. As Donson describes, the shift from being the main breadwinners in the family during the war to unemployed after frustrated the youth so greatly that thousands continued their disrespect for

⁵⁵ Yisrael Gutman. “Youth and Resistance Movements in Historical Perspective,” in *Yad Vashem Studies XXIII*, ed. Aharon Weiss (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1993), 1.

⁵⁶ Donson, *Youth in a Fatherless Land*, 236.

adult and government authority in the post-war period.⁵⁷ It is unsurprising, then, that the popularity of youth clubs and groups grew during the Weimar Republic. In fact, Michael Mitterauer calls this time the “golden age of organized youth clubs.”⁵⁸ Without their fathers home, without a sense of direction, and disillusioned from the war and broken economy, these young Germans turned to these groups for comfort, loyalty, and a place of belonging. The new government, unlike the one during World War I, did not attempt to collectively mobilize these younger members of society to make them in tune with national goals. It was not until 1930, when the problem of the dissatisfaction and radicalism among the youth became more apparent, that the government began to move towards implementing a more concrete youth policy.⁵⁹ However, such a move came too late. Weimar failed to establish a functional democracy. Young Germans still lacked inner stability and exhibited a demoralized attitude from a worsening economy. They sought a stable life in one of volatility, a secure sense of being in a world of uncertainty. Demoralized, but with a strong fighting spirit longing for excitement and opportunity, this young generation was “ensnared by unscrupulous demagogues” from both the radical right and left during this precarious time.⁶⁰

The short history of the Weimar Republic is marked by poverty and despair. The radical left and right manipulated such disheartenment and tried to muster support for their ideologies. The right in particular emphasized the importance of having the younger generation’s support and encouragement in their quest for power. For example, Fascists believed that focusing on the young was an essential priority. For the Italian Fascist regime, they portrayed themselves

⁵⁷ Ibid., 228

⁵⁸ Mitterauer, *A History of Youth*, 219.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Harvey, *Youth and the Welfare State in Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 266.

⁶⁰ Annedore Leber, *Conscience in Revolt: Sixty-four Stories of Resistance in Germany, 1933-1945* (Mainz: Hase & Koehler, 1968), 5.

as a “movement of the young, the daring, the audacious.”⁶¹ Fascists hoped to create a youthful nation in order to destroy the decadent and “fossilized remnants of the old Europe” that created this mess of a world.⁶² Thus, the young were the regime’s best hope for the future of Fascism and the country, and accordingly much focus and attention was placed on them. Hitler and his National Socialist Workers Party (NSDAP) likewise recognized the importance of having the youth on their side.

Hitler exploited the antipathy to the Weimar years, which, near the end of its existence, extended far and wide among the population. For instance, by 1932, six million Germans were unemployed. Due to this colossal figure and the ill feeling towards their own leaders and the Allies (victors) from the war, Hitler attracted a large following with his promises for a better life.⁶³ Among the youth specifically, the NSDAP heavily emphasized attempts to make the movement seem like a struggle between the young, new ideals of the time against the decrepit, corrupt Weimar Republic.⁶⁴ For this group, there existed a fighting spirit despite the “never-ending coercion exerted upon them” in the past.⁶⁵ Their lives lacked career prospects and felt empty, and the Nazis tried to change that. The Hitler Youth (*Hitler Jugend*), established in 1926, characterized itself as revolutionarily nationalistic and radically committed to a social revolution in which these youth played a pivotal part. Members gained attention for their passionate commitment, idealism, and intense activism.⁶⁶ They were a part of a larger national community that emphasized their importance and role in the future. Kurt Gruber, the early leader of the

⁶¹ Tracy H. Koon. “Believe, Obey, Fight,” in *Voices and Views: A History of the Holocaust*, ed. Deborah Dwork (New York: Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, 2002), 101.

⁶² *Idem.*

⁶³ Peter Hoffmann, *The History of the German Resistance, 1933-1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 5.

⁶⁴ Stachura, *The German Youth Movement*, 114.

⁶⁵ Leber, *Conscience in Revolt*, 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 114

Hitler Youth, described the youth as “chained to the destiny of the nation...in order to emancipate the State and economy from the bonds of capitalist, anti-national forces.”⁶⁷ Before Hitler’s chancellorship, the Hitler Youth existed primarily as a junior branch of the Storm Troopers through supporting its paramilitary activities. Here the Nazis took advantage of the legacy of World War I in which the model of a young German comprised of their soldier father figure on the front lines. Nonetheless, the Hitler Youth was not yet the main organization of Germany. In fact, there existed over one hundred youth organization in Germany before 1933, numbering nearly six million members in total.⁶⁸

The Nazis, however, offered these young Germans something new- a chance to be active participants in the State and its affairs. In the *Law for the Hitler Youth* in 1936, Hitler stressed, “The future of the German nation depends on its youth. The whole of German youth must therefore be prepared for its future duties.”⁶⁹ He promised to give the youth an active role in German affairs. Moreover, it was difficult to be opposed to this right-wing movement when just years prior a liberal democratic government caused mass inflation and depression. The lack of a positive and successful democratic tradition in Germany undermined any attraction towards liberalism for many Germans.

The appeal of this new movement reached schools as well as youth groups. Aside from being raised in a school system emphasizing an obedient, violent lifestyle (one witness, for instance, writes how in 1930 students were “spanked by the teacher nearly every day”), young Germans expressed unfamiliarity in regards to general government operations.⁷⁰ A student wrote,

⁶⁷ Ibid., 115.

⁶⁸ Michael Balfour, *Withstanding Hitler in Germany 1933-45* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 24.

⁶⁹ *Reichsgesetzblatt Teil I* no. 113 (3 December 1936), found in Stachura, *The German Youth Movement*, 180.

⁷⁰ Blair R. Holmes and Alan F. Keele, *When Truth was Treason: German Youth Against Hitler: The Story of the Helmuth Hübener Group* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 5.

“We were not taught civics or government...many of our teachers were Social Democrats, but no attempt was made at school to teach us about politics.” When the Nazis came to power, he wrote, “everyone was indoctrinated in their version of civics,” because that was the only version which they learned.⁷¹ The National Socialists thus made it their goal to familiarize and convince their ideology to the youth throughout all parts society. These young Germans had important roles for the future survival of the Nazi way of life. In fact, Annedore Leber describes the youth as the National Socialist regime’s “heaviest burden.”⁷² From the environment they grew up in, these young Germans were the ones most easily influenced in Hitler’s “monstrous game” of power and persuasion.⁷³ However, as the Nazis gained power and strengthened their stranglehold on Germans, especially the Jews, some youth started to notice the regime’s empty promises and dangers.

At the end of January 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany. He and the NSDAP soon thereafter began passing laws that slowly but steadily decreased the power and freedom of a number of ethnicities and organizations, including diverse and popular youth organizations. His rule soon became based on forced acceptance and conformity. On 4 February 1933, based on Article 48 of the Weimar constitution, the Nazis forbade all open-air meetings or parades “which might endanger public security.”⁷⁴ Designed ostensibly to protect the German people, this restriction covertly sought to keep the German people in line and in control by the party. Later that month, the Nazis expanded police powers. Called the “Shoot to Kill Decree,” police had the authority to take persons into “preventative custody” for an unlimited period.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Idem.

⁷² Leber, *Conscience in Revolt*, 5.

⁷³ Idem.

⁷⁴ Hoffmann, *History of the German Resistance*, 6.

⁷⁵ German Historical Museum. Unter den Linden 2, 10117 Berlin. 29 June 2011

Just days later, on 27 February 1933, a fire damaged the Reichstag, creating fear and uncertainty in Berlin. Hitler, seizing the opportunity and just four weeks into his chancellorship, urged President von Hindenburg to pass an emergency ordinance to confirm the Communist act of terror (believed by Hitler to be the cause of the fire). The decree allowed the State to “restrict the rights of personal freedom, freedom of expression, including the freedom of the press, the freedom to organize and assemble, the privacy of postal, telegraphic and telephonic communications.” This ordinance abolished civil liberties and rights that were previously established under the Weimar constitution.⁷⁶ The Nazis thus had a relatively free reign to arrest suspected communists and criminals of the State.

No more than a month later, the iron hand of oppression grew heavier. On 23 March, the Nazis passed the *Enabling Act*, legally giving Hitler dictatorial powers over Germany. Article 3 of the Act stated: “Law enacted by the Reich government shall be issued by the Chancellor and announced in the Reich Gazette. They shall take effect on the day following the announcement.”⁷⁷ Hitler and the State now had complete freedom to act without considering constitutional limitation or setbacks. In April, the Nazis created their secret police, the Gestapo, with the task of combating all subversive endeavors that could endanger the State. No more than one month later, the government abolished trade unions and replaced them with the German Labor Front. By July, all political parties with the exception of the National Socialists ceased to exist.

Despite these restrictions on freedom, the German people showed little resistance. In fact, according to Saul Friedlander, popular support for the Nazis during their “surge of activity...snowballed.” The German people believed that the country underwent a “national

⁷⁶ Hoffmann, *History of the German Resistance*, 7.

⁷⁷ “The Enabling Act,” German History Documents, accessed February 24, 2012, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1496

revival” in terms of job creation, growth in culture, and improvement in the overall quality of life, and they supported such a move forward.⁷⁸

As Hitler provided himself with more power in 1933, he never lost sight of the importance of the young generation and their need to join the Hitler Youth. The regime wanted these members of society to know that the party’s victory was also their victory. At a rally in Nuremberg in September 1933, Hitler announced to a crowd of young Germans:

You are the Germany of the future...on you are now set all our hopes, our people’s confidence, and our faith....My youths, you are the living guarantors of Germany, you are the living Germany of the future...upon you depends the continued existence of our people.⁷⁹

The Hitler Youth became a more legitimate organization once the Nazis won the elections, growing to well over 100,000 members by 1933, while soon after the Nazis outlawed other youth organizations (with the exception of ecclesiastical ones) or absorbed them into the Hitler Youth.

The youth gladly accepted this image of supreme importance. One observer wrote, “By and large, we children were excited by the Nazis. They were excellent propagandists.”⁸⁰ They had a pivotal place in the future of Germany and of the world. With this sense of pride in knowing their special role called upon them, these young Germans were indoctrinated with an ideal of service to Hitler for the sake of Germany. Nazis emphasized heroic idealism, militancy, excitement, and novelty - opportunities the German youth desired for years. Hitler was the center of this excitement and hope. The youth were so entranced by the Fuhrer, their father figure, that, according to observer Franz Josef Heyen, “The swearing of the first oath to der Fuhrer was

⁷⁸ Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews 1933-1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 6.

⁷⁹ Schirach, *Hitler-Jugend*, in Stachura, *The German Youth Movement*, 122.

⁸⁰ Holmes and Keele, *When Truth was Treason*, 8.

supposed to represent the holiest hour of their lives.”⁸¹ These young Germans had long searched for such a belonging and purpose behind a cause.

In their quest to win over the young members of society, the Nazis used traits traditionally identified with youth – a desire for purpose, belonging, and idealism – in order to gain their alliance. Eberhard Weinbrenner, a southern German born around 1925, reflected on the 1930s by saying:

It was a youth full of intense experiences and dramatic events. The party recognized early on that the most efficient way to bind youngsters to the Nazi state was to provide them with the kind of experiences that would guarantee loyalty.⁸²

Weinbrenner mentioned the glory and excitement of parades, marches, and sporting events, thus giving the youth a long-desired “life that seemed free and full of exciting diversions.”⁸³ One observer of the events wrote:

Marching uniformed troops of boys in closed, disciplined ranks... Standing and marching in rank and file is for all of them an expression of their most powerful sense of vitality, for all it is an elementary experience, to all it is intoxicating.⁸⁴

In their early years of rule, the Nazis impressed idealistic young Germans through their efforts to fight unemployment and poverty. From these valor acts and attempts to unite a nation, young Germans believed that better days were ahead of them and, furthermore, in their own control. While Hitler instilled this sense of empowerment and importance in Germany’s young people, he simultaneously increased his hand of power and persecution and, according to some, his terrorizing.

⁸¹ Frederic Tubach, *German Voices: Memories of Life During Hitler’s Third Reich* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 43.

⁸² Tubach, *German Voices*, 2.

⁸³ Idem.

⁸⁴ Mitterauer, *History of Youth*, 216.

With these new ordinances and laws passed by Parliament solidifying Hitler's grasp of dictatorial power, the question of whether or not young Germans remained largely indifferent comes into mind. The author Hoffmann believes that Hitler's rise, obtainment of dictatorship power, and establishment of a totalitarian state was something completely new to Germans. According to him, the problem of this acceptance without any opposition was not the lack of will to resist but the "lack of comprehension of the nature of Nazism."⁸⁵ The testimony from the German child (from page 26) at school explaining how they were not taught civics or government does indeed show that Germans did not know what this type of government was or how to handle it. In addition, youth found themselves perhaps naively and irresistibly drawn to the intoxicating promises of the party. Terence Prittie characterizes young Germans in 1933 as "astonishingly ignorant" and "totally lost... forced to fall back on selected slogans."⁸⁶ The Nazis had taken advantage of this disillusionment as well as their inherited nationalistic tradition and enthusiastic support for a rightful cause from World War I. For the National Socialists, the young Germans had "something terribly attractive" about them: they possessed a gigantic "animal energy" and a "tremendous sense of comradeship" that would easily help the Nazis spread their ideology and achieve their goals.⁸⁷

This wave of hope and promises seemingly caught the whole country by storm. In schools, for instance, many teachers soon joined the Nazi party and threatened to beat (or even send to jail) dissenting students. Some forced students to listen to Hitler's speeches. Others, governed by fear, kept quiet. According to that one witness, "We had social democrats, but never a teacher who made public that he was anti-Nazi."⁸⁸ However, this was not true for all Germans.

⁸⁵ Hoffmann, *History of the German Resistance*, 16.

⁸⁶ Terence Prittie, *Germans against Hitler* (Boston: Hutchinson, 1964), 154.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁸⁸ Holmes and Keele, *When Truth was Treason*, 6.

There indeed existed opposition to this growing control and power of Hitler. Not all people supported his power concentration or the diminution of youth organizations other than the Hitler Youth.

Leber writes that from 1933 onward the youth of Germany largely displayed an “outward industriousness and blind obedience.”⁸⁹ Instead of being individualistic, free, and their own person, the youth of Germany, especially the Hitler Youth, slowly turned into Hitler’s mindlessly obedient servants without an individually unique identity. However, H.W. Koch posits that dissent within the Hitler Youth before 1933 turned out to be “very frequent.”⁹⁰ Reasons for leaving ranged from personal rivalries to opposition towards the Nazi ideology. Thus, even before 1933, some young Germans opposed the controlling ideological aspect of the Nazi party.

After the Nazi party became Germany’s ruling party, however, dissent from the Hitler Youth became a traitorous offense. Yet, to be of a government’s authority was a legacy that reached back to World War I. Nevertheless, Prittie explains that a young German resisting Hitler seemed “inexplicable” at the time. This leader, according to Prittie, simply offered too much hope and promise.⁹¹ Nevertheless, some like Carl von Ossietzky, writer for the journal *Weltbuhne* (World Stage), saw past the Nazis’ goals and the pledges even in 1930. He wrote, “At least National Socialism provides the last hope of those who are starving: cannibalism...that is the terrible attraction of this doctrine of salvation.”⁹² Those few youth who did outright oppose the Nazis were the minority. Ridiculed as fools and traitors by their friends, these resisters placed their individualism and personal freedom before obedience to the State. Thus only a few of these

⁸⁹ Leber, *Conscience in Revolt*, 6.

⁹⁰ Koch, *The Hitler Youth*, 204.

⁹¹ Prittie, *Germans against Hitler*, 154.

⁹² Wolfgang Benz, *Encyclopedia of German Resistance to the Nazi Movement* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 4.

young resisters opposed Hitler early on, especially during the late pre-war years. However, there did exist those few who openly and ferociously tried to resist the Nazis.

Looking back in 1939 on the events that occurred during 1933, Sebastian Haffner reflected on, what he believed as, this most difficult time imaginable. He wrote:

It reflected our sense of having been completely overwhelmed without the possibility of escape... The Nazis had a merciless grip on us. All fortresses had fallen... individual resistance was merely another form of suicide.⁹³

Just like Haffner, few youth came to the realization that the Nazi seizure of power, growing influence, and increasing restrictions endangered their livelihoods rather than opening up a new opportunity for freedom. In addition, the large military personnel and violent Nazi gang presence in the streets added chaos, fear, and even more restrictions upon the youth, a group that historically sought freedom and individualism. One witness to Nazi chaos and violence was the mother of Karl-Heinz Schnibbe (born in 1924), who had a “shocking experience” in 1934. While shopping, this mother witnessed a civilian shot down by two storm troopers.⁹⁴ With the legacy of distrusting authority from World War I, few Germans, like Anton Schmaus, born in 1910, decided to listen to his conscience to act. He joined the Socialist Workers Youth Organization in his teenage years, and in 1933 Schmaus decided to stand up to the Nazis corruption of power and violent means. He wrote how he was “tired of the lawlessness” and the Nazis’ ability to terrorize as they wished.⁹⁵ He killed three Nazi officials that year and eventually was jailed and executed.

As Koch points out but failed to expand upon, these resisters were like their violent right-wing counterparts in the sense that they were willing to die for their cause. World War I taught the German conscience that if something was worth believing in and fighting for then it was worth dying for. Groups other than right-wing ones were relatively popular in the 1920s and 30s.

⁹³ Tubac, *German Voices*, 1.

⁹⁴ Holmes and Keele, *When Truth was Treason*, 17.

⁹⁵ Leber, *Conscience in Revolt*, 8.

For instance, the German Communist Youth Organization (KJVD), with 55,000 members in 1932, adhered the idea of a “new heroic age of socialism.”⁹⁶ However, with the formation of the Gestapo, these organizations came under intense fire and soon broke apart. Nevertheless, some courageous young members did not surrender their beliefs and membership. Erich Hanke, in his early twenties when interrogated by the Gestapo, experienced traumatic beatings in the hopes that he would release German Communist Party information. He wrote of his thought process at the time: “If you answer this question, then the Gestapo will take the Party organization apart from top to bottom. And once you testify, your powers of resistance are broken!”⁹⁷ Edith Walz (born in 1911) belonged to the left-wing Socialist Youth League when she was arrested in 1933. In jail she witnessed some of the horrors of the Gestapo. She recalled seeing bashed up faces: “you can’t forget it, those pictures never leave you... Even today I am still trying to understand how a human being is capable of that.”⁹⁸ These and others showed feelings of opposition and anger towards the Nazis’ overwhelming power and chaos.

With newfound power and control, Hitler and the Nazis decided to start pushing towards concrete anti-Jewish measures - a racism located at the heart of the Nazi ideology. The National Socialists sought to restore Germany’s status as a world power by cleansing it of those believed to have scarred it - the Jews. They, the Nazis believed and propagated to those around them, were vile, subhuman filth undeserving of German citizenship. In April 1933, the Nazis carried out their first instance of state-sponsored anti-Semitism when they called for a boycott of Jewish businesses. Most Germans did not react to such a move, but rather most simply stayed away from the affairs of the State. According to witness and Berlin’s preeminent leader of the Liberal

⁹⁶ Benz, *Encyclopedia of German Resistance*, 68.

⁹⁷ Topography of Terror Foundation, *The ‘House Prison’ at Gestapo Headquarters in Berlin. Terror and Resistance 1933-1945* (Berlin: Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, 2007), 52.

⁹⁸ Idem.

Jewish Community Leo Baeck, it was a “day of greatest cowardice. Without that cowardice, all that followed would not have happened.” He continued, “The universities were silent, the courts were silent; the President of the Reich, who had taken the oath on the Constitution was silent.”⁹⁹ A country exposed to anti-Semitism for years showed little interest in these affairs. One victim, Hanne Hirsch Liebmann, only nine-years-old at the time, later said in an interview, “windows were plastered with ‘Don’t Go to the Jew!’ ... You were insulted in the street many times.” She admitted that she had Gentile friends, but “under that pressure of the Nazi time they could no longer associate with me.”¹⁰⁰ While the indifference and fear seemed to be the overwhelming response of the German people, there indeed existed opposition to these harsh Nazi measures.

Saul Friedlander explains that this early Nazi boycott ran into “immediate problems.”¹⁰¹ Some Germans, for instance, continued to buy goods from Jewish stores. In fact, in Munich, many Germans rushed to Jewish-owned stores in the final days before the boycott. Thus there was widespread passivity but little active and open hostility towards the Jews from the German people, something Nazi officials did not expect when dealing with the perceived enemies of the State.¹⁰² Nevertheless, Hitler and the Nazis continued producing mass propaganda and passing more anti-Jewish measures in the Reich.

A month after the boycott, the Nazis, geared towards cleansing and reshaping the government bureaucracy, passed the *Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service*. Civil servants of “non-Aryan origin,” like Jews, forcibly retired.¹⁰³ Two weeks later, on April 25, the newly passed *Law Against the Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities* stipulated:

⁹⁹ Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, 24.

¹⁰⁰ “Personal History of Hanne Hirsch Liebmann,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed 10 March 2012, http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_oi.php?MediaId=1143

¹⁰¹ Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 10.

¹⁰² *Idem*.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 11.

The number of non-Aryan Germans, within the meaning of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, of 7 April 1933...must not exceed a number proportionate to the Aryan students in each school, college or university compared to the percentage of non-Aryans within the entire German population, This proportion is fixed uniformly for the whole Reich.¹⁰⁴

The law subsequently limited the enrollment of new Jewish students to 1.5 percent of the total applicants. Jewish children and students were thus targeted and limited from the schooling environment, consequently separating them from Germans.

For non-Jewish German children and their Jewish peers, such a law had a significant impact on their schooling atmosphere. Not all children blindly followed suit in the hatred professed by the Nazis. Instead, some young Germans feared acting against these Nazi measures. For instance, young Hilma Geffen-Ludomer said, “Suddenly, I didn’t have any friends...Some of the neighbors that we visited told me: ‘Don’t come anymore because I’m scared. We should not have any contact with Jews.’”¹⁰⁵ Another witness, Lore Gang-Salheimer, eleven-years-old in 1933, said, “It began to happen that non-Jewish children would say, ‘No, I can’t walk home from school with you anymore. I can’t be seen with you anymore.’”¹⁰⁶ Even teachers chose to remain idle in their fear and did not openly oppose the discrimination. Jurgen Herbst recalled:

Our teachers did not tell us because fear, fear for themselves and fear for us, closed their lips. That fear took on many shapes. It was the fear to betray your friends and to be betrayed by them. I and all my friends had to find this out for ourselves alone...fear to have to choose between the ways of the past and the promises of the future.¹⁰⁷

To try to stand up to such laws risked isolating oneself from all of society; it was incredibly risky. The Nazis coerced and threatened Germans into performing these

¹⁰⁴ “Law Against Overcrowding of German Schools and Higher Institutions of 25 April 1933,” accessed 10 March 2012. <http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/genocide/schools.htm>.

¹⁰⁵ Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 14.

¹⁰⁶ *Idem*.

¹⁰⁷ Jurgen Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past: A Boyhood among the Nazis* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 66.

discriminating actions instead of acting favorably towards their fellows, and some did not stand for it. The sympathy and support for their Jewish friends' suffering under Nazi economic and social prejudice was widespread enough that Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, felt the need to verbally attack those Germans, saying that they "shamelessly" believed that the Jew was their fellow equal human being.¹⁰⁸ Acts of resistance overall remained sporadic and individualistic. However, there was one youth group, the Quaker youth group, that openly defied such laws and discriminations as early as 1933.

In May 1933, Quakers in Berlin began planning to form a youth group with the goal to "invite regularly to a private evening tea persons whom we know personally to be endangered, such as Socialists or those who are adversely affected by racial decrees."¹⁰⁹ Aryans, Jews, and Socialists all participated in these activities. One participant said, "Our ideals were bound to concrete social action promoted by examples of great personalities who struggled with non-violent means for freedom of the slaves and against racial barriers."¹¹⁰ This group of young Germans, albeit religiously centered, rebelled against the controlling Nazi racial decrees and welcomed every person into their group. Each one of them shared the belief that all human beings deserved respect, equality, and simply an accepting hand. To mirror Jesus by being a friend to their fellow man defined the incentive for the Quakers. The 11th epistle of the German Yearly Meeting in 1936 stated:

[We are called] to the task before which we have been trembling: to carry the little child on our shoulders through the floods of our time to the other shore. The meaning of the word 'Friend' has never appeared to us more tender, more beautiful, more binding than today.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 40.

¹⁰⁹ Anna Sabine Halle, *Thoughts are Free: A Quaker Youth Group in Nazi Germany* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1985), 4.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

Their motivation included a reverence for life and an idealistic commitment to religious brotherhood and love, and they did not let authoritarian laws stop that pursuit. There existed, especially later into the Nazi reign, other motives towards resisting the Nazi policies.

By the end of 1933, despite numerous anti-Jewish measures, only about 40,000 out of the 500,000 Jews living in Germany left. Many believed that the hate and chaos would soon subside. The year 1935, however, saw an increase in attacks against Jews, anti-Jewish measures, and fear. Victor Klepper wrote in his diary that, “Nobody came to their help, because everyone is afraid of being arrested.”¹¹² By this time, the Nazis had banned political parties, created the Gestapo, separated Jews from society, and moved non-Jewish Germans all under one single banner. To resist the Nazis carried the profound risk of opposing the will of the State. However, the truth of the matter was that, despite what many people believed, people resisted Nazi measures and came to help the Jews.

Hitler, while creating the infamous *Nuremberg Laws* of 1935, waited until the last moment to submit the final draft so that his opponents did not have a chance to react and confront the terms. According to Friedlander, “surprise was of the essence” for Hitler.¹¹³ Hitler’s conniving and the care he took with the law demonstrates that some Germans still showed hesitation and even opposition towards the harsh measures against the German Jews. Finalized in September, the law defined what constituted a person as Jewish and a Reich citizen (one of German blood). A month later, the *Law for the Protections of the Hereditary Health of the German People* stated that those suffering from an “inheritable disease may be surgically sterilized if...it could be expected that his descendants will suffer from serious inherited mental

¹¹² Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 44.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 49.

or physical defects.”¹¹⁴ This law openly aimed towards removing less valuable and inferior groups from German society. Moreover, from 14 November onwards, Germany abolished the voting rights and civil rights for Jews: “A Jew cannot be a Reich citizen. He has no voting rights in political matters.”¹¹⁵ On that same day, the *Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor* openly forbade marriages between Jews and Germans. The law further discriminated and isolated Jews when it forbade them to “hoist the Reich and national flag and to present the colors of the Reich.”¹¹⁶ A month later, the State dismissed Jewish professors, teachers, physicians, and lawyers.

For one young Jew in Berlin, the 1935 *Nuremberg Laws* legalized the “gross injustice” of anti-Semitism: “We were no longer allowed to go to a movie house, theater, and most restaurants. We were forbidden the use of public transportation and telephones. Public facilities were off limits to us.”¹¹⁷ These laws severely restricted Jews from participating in everyday activities and freedoms. Thus, the Jews were forcibly becoming invisible and isolated from German society.

While Jewish freedom and civil rights eroded in 1935, Germans largely acquiesced in the laws. According to Friedlander, Germans happily witnessed these laws passed, because they thought that these orderly rules and enforcements would end the ongoing chaotic acts of terror and vandalism against the Jews. Most Germans had been appalled by the violent and chaotic attacks against the Jews. Germans wanted calmness, stability, and order. They believed that

¹¹⁴ “Law for the Protections of the Hereditary Health of the German People, Article I,” accessed on 10 March 2012, <http://frank.mtsu.edu/~baustin/nurmlaw1.html>.

¹¹⁵ Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, Abraham Margaliot, *Documents on the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem in cooperation with the Anti-Defamation League and Ktav Publishing House, 1981), 80.

¹¹⁶ Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, Section 4, <http://frank.mtsu.edu/~baustin/nurmlaw3.html>

¹¹⁷ Ralph Neuman, *Memories from My Early Life in Germany 1926-1946* (Berlin: Gedenkstätte Dt. Widerstand, 2006), 11.

tranquility would return and “with it the good name of Germany in the eyes of the world.”¹¹⁸

Some, albeit not many, expressed absolute disgust towards the discriminating laws. One German wrote:

Today a German might well consider suicide and leave the following note behind: ‘Since I have realized that the German people have taken leave of their senses and succumbed to savagery because of people like Streicher, and have dishonored Germany and consequently are disdained by other nations, I prefer to end my life, because I am ashamed to be a German.’¹¹⁹

The Nazis showed no overly clear plan on what the future may have held for the Jews, and the German people thought this was the worst to come and thus complied. Nevertheless, some did not accept the Nazi abuse of power and intense persecution.

While not necessarily opposing the persecution on humanitarian grounds, Hjalmar Horace Greeley Schacht, President of Reichsbank and Minister of Economics, recommended trying to prevent damage to Jewish-owned businesses in June 1935. He wrote to the Minister-President of Bavaria:

I have seen from the daily papers that the leaders of the ‘Terror Gangs’ who have caused an impermissible boycott of Jewish stores in the past weeks have been arrested. In view of the *anxiety* caused by these incidents...I will take this opportunity to request you to ensure that any further breaches of the law will be dealt with most severely [emphasis added].¹²⁰

Although Schacht seemingly opposed the chaos more than the persecution, he nonetheless expressed unease towards the terror happening against the Jews.

Revisiting the young Quaker group in Berlin, one member wrote in 1935 that they “deliberately defied Gestapo injunctions by fostering friendly associations among Jews, Aryans,

¹¹⁸ Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 52.

¹¹⁹ Berger, “Lebenssituationen unter der Herrschaft des Nationalsozialismus,” 92, in Tubach, *German Voices*, 62.

¹²⁰ Arab, Gutman, and Margaliot, *Documents on the Holocaust*, 72-73.

and Political.”¹²¹ They defied Nazi rule for religious and humanitarian reasons. Moreover, their self-professed “youthful carefree spirit” allowed them to take such a risk with relative ease.¹²²

After the installation of the *Nuremberg Laws* that year, they realized that persecution would continue and that all Jews would be treated with harsh brutality. Thus, these Quakers organized relief work to help those in danger. However, that same youthful risk-taking spirit showed a desire for more active means of participation. One member wrote:

We were denied the attractions of dangerous adventure, the satisfaction of fighting our opponent somehow by printing and distributing leaflets, by painting walls at night, or by engaging in any other kind of ‘illegal activity’ available to other groups.¹²³

These Quaker youths displayed the historical characteristics of a German youth wanting action, participation, and meaning but lacked the actual physical rebellion that many wanted to express. Other youths would eventually indeed express themselves in such a manner. The Nazis knew of these wants throughout their reign, and in 1935-6, they attempted to solidify their grasp upon youth through these routes.

Hitler wanted to continue persuade young men and women that their loyalty was of utmost importance. Jurgen Herbst recalled the emphasis on the magnitude of the State as a member of the *Jungvolk* in 1937. He wrote, “We listened to our leaders telling us over and over again of the history of the Nazi party, of the exploits of its heroes...and asking us to memorize the life of Adolf Hitler.”¹²⁴ Moreover, the Nazis showed an overbearing and extremely passionate attitude in their attempts to indoctrinate the youth to believe in Germany’s racial superiority and the threatening presence the free-roaming Jews caused. Jurgen Herbst experienced such racial emphasis as a youth: “We soon learned that the blond, tall, slender, and

¹²¹ Halle, *Thoughts are Free*, 18.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹²⁴ Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past*, 44.

straight figures were the Nordic, Aryan types that we all were supposed to be. The dark, small, thick, and bent bodies, on the other hand, belonged to undesirable...races. We should look down on them as inferior beings.”¹²⁵ Children’s books like Ernst Heimer’s *Der*

Pudelmopsdackelpinscher wrote:

As long as the Jewish world plague infects the peoples, youth’s strivings will be in vain. From the beginning, the Jew was the incarnation of filth and ugliness, of depravity and decay...It wants to drag humanity into the swamp.¹²⁶

Nazis tried to convince the youth that their idealistic hopes and aspirations would be taken away by the Jew.

This superiority, the Nazis taught, prevailed not only over Jews but also over all of Europe. Joseph Biela, a student during the 1930s, explained, “When we saw maps of Germany our country was always in the center of it....They would say that Germany was surrounded by enemies that were eager to humiliate us. That was the impression we got as young people and students.”¹²⁷ These other countries were painted as untrustworthy and threatening enemies from the previous Great War. In fact, Hitler persuaded many young Germans to be the protectors of the Reich against these powers. He said that the army will “defend the freedom of their people with bravery and honor...It has been formed not to wage wars of aggression, but to guard and protect our people, so that Germany may not again suffer the tragic fate.”¹²⁸ Germans believed that their goal was not to start a war but to protect Germany from the aggressive neighboring countries. Fighting for their homeland was the greatest of honors, and they were prepared accept such a challenge.

¹²⁵ Idem.

¹²⁶ Ryan Russell Hunt, “The Making of Young Nazis: The Impact of Propaganda on German Girls and Boys, 1933 to 1945” (M.A., California State University, Fullerton, 2011), 98.

¹²⁷ Ryan Russell Hunt, “The Making of Young Nazis,” 80.

¹²⁸ Adolf Hitler, *Nuremberg Speech*, N.p. September 14, 1935, in Hunt, “The Making of Young Nazis,” 78.

With that emphasis on fighting for Germany, however, came immense efforts to indoctrinate youths about Jewish inferiority. While literature, films, posters, pictures, and reels, all conveyed these feelings, some young Germans simply did not apply it to their everyday lives.

Kurt Schulze, one Hitler Youth member, said in an interview:

[In school] we had several Jewish friends...I never detected any hatred or feelings against the Jews. But the propaganda went against the Jews...I played with a young Jewish kid who lived around the corner from me.¹²⁹

Schulze recognized that the Nazis portrayed the Jews as evil and against the Nazi ideals, but he did not take it directly to heart. Many young Germans had Jewish friends throughout their schooling before the Nazis came to power. They experienced difficulty in accepting such an abrupt separation from their Jewish friends. Moreover these young Germans had trouble picturing these companions as subhuman and vile. For them, the early to mid-1930s was a time of a rising utopia - a new Germany with more jobs and a better lifestyle. Thus, the German youth during this period did not focus greatly on hating the Jews or readying for war.

All the glorious talk of a better Germany changed in 1938. One young Jew (born in 1926) living in Berlin demonstrated in his testimony that 1938 for the Nazis was a year of increasingly harsh and brutal anti-Jewish measures:

I think it was early 1938, the hate campaign against the Jews was in full force. Anti-Semitism, with its absurd and terrible racial laws, was running rampant by then. It reached into every community in Germany, fanned by Nazi propaganda.¹³⁰

After flooding Germans with anti-Jewish propaganda for years, the Nazis saw 1938 as a time for more concrete action. Moreover, after the annexation of the anti-Semitic Austria in February (*Anschluss*), Germany had more Jews under its rule and felt the need to deal with them. With the

¹²⁹ Kurt Schulze, an interview recorded by Robert Mulcahy, July 22, 1992 and April 8, 1993, OH 2280, transcript, Center for Oral and Public History, California State University, Fullerton, 2; in Hunt, "The Making of Young Nazis," 102.

¹³⁰ Neuman, *Memories from my Early Life in Germany*, 7.

discriminating laws already passed, the next step for the Nazis was to force the Jews out of German society through deportation, emigration, or ghettoization. In Austria, the arrest and maltreatment of Jews inspired some to assist and help them escape. The public sight of Jews being treated as subhuman animals opened up awareness about the ongoing injustices. Teenage Wendelgard von Neurath, for instance, saw a group of Jewish prisoners begging for food. Looking at them, she horrifyingly heard the guard say, “They’re no longer human beings.”¹³¹ She then “heard a man’s [prisoner] voice behind us. The voice itself was low and soft, speaking in good, clear German, but there was an undertone of almost menacing fury. ‘It’s you who’ve made us into animals, and you’ll pay for what you’ve done to us.’”¹³² This daunting and first-hand experience gave Wendelgard a “heightened awareness that those people were not madmen or subhuman.”¹³³ Rather, they were human beings reduced to this state by their rulers. She realized first hand that these people needed help. With the escalation in violence and persecution, more and more Germans realized the real danger Jews faced and the extent of Hitler’s control.

November 9-10 verified the Nazi radicalization of anti-Semitic policy on the eve of war. *Kristallnacht*, the Night of Broken Glass, was a pogrom of countrywide attacks against the Jews. Nazi gangs destroyed Jewish stores, burnt down synagogues, and vandalized Jewish property. Johanna Gerechter Neumann, eighteen-years-old in Hamburg at the time, wrote:

So many people were there and were screaming and shouting and, and throwing stones into the, uh, stained glass windows was enough to make us run...I mean it was a, a total chaos, a total destruction.¹³⁴

With ninety-one Jews murdered and at least twenty thousand thrown into concentration camps, this “unprecedented outburst of savagery” by Nazi officials and civilians impacted the

¹³¹ Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, 40.

¹³² *Idem*.

¹³³ *Idem*.

¹³⁴ “Personal History of Samuel Gruber,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed 10 March 2012. http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_oi.php?MediaId=1213.

whole country.¹³⁵ While author Deborah Dwork admits that some Germans displayed “contradictory behavior” by showing “occasional kindness” towards the Jews, most Germans joined in on the attacks and chaos.¹³⁶ Other Germans simply turned the other cheek and remained indifferent or afraid to act. Years of intense propaganda and a traditional anti-Semitism displayed its influence during *Kristallnacht*. One SA officer recalled participating in destroying a synagogue:

Only when asked by another comrade to take part in pushing over the heating stove [in the synagogue] did I attempt to do so. If I had known before this action began what it would entail, I would have pretended to be sick...because I never cared much for demolishing.¹³⁷

His focus on materials and not humans is evident: “I’m no great friend of smashing and destruction. In my eyes, objects are just too valuable.”¹³⁸ Most unsettling here is the complete indifference regarding personal grievances during these operations of destruction. This German was entirely concerned about the chaos and destruction of material goods, not people, showing there was more attention paid towards the event’s chaos rather than the Jewish affliction. Jews became the scapegoats, which the German people were well aware of and used to. Regardless, to say this was true for all Germans is an overgeneralization. Indeed, some helped their fellow Jews for the sake of it.

One example of that kindness is provided from the testimony of Mally Dienemann of Offenbach am Main. Her non-Jewish landlady helped clean up her apartment. She wrote of the event, “Her devotion and guilt...knew no bounds. These simple people...brought me flowers

¹³⁵ Deborah Dwork, *Voices and Views: A History of the Holocaust* (New York: Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, 2002), 135.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹³⁷ Franziska Becker and Utz Jeggle. “Memory and Violence- Local Recollections of Jewish Persecution during the *Reichskristallnacht*,” in *Yad Vashem Studies XX*, ed. Aharon Weiss (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990), 111.

¹³⁸ *Idem.*

when I was alone...and other Jews must have also known such people in one form or another. For officially we were all supposed to starve during these November days.”¹³⁹ Germans felt guilty in the sense of their shame in light of the state-sponsored barbarism and the chaos the pogrom created. Shards of glass lay in the streets, buildings in ruin, and thousands of dollars in property damage scattered throughout the country, but the non-Jews only had so much freedom to act. The Gestapo’s constant and constraining eye was intent on making sure that Germans did not show any kindness towards the Jews.

Scholar Eva Fogelman admits that “no” German organizational voice or public figures openly condemned the barbarity of *Kristallnacht*.¹⁴⁰ For instance, most churches did not overtly confront the violence. At least one pastor, though, did stand up. Julius van Jan, a pastor in the Wurttemberg region, strongly denounced the November events in a passionate sermon. He asked his congregation, “Where is the man who, in the name of God and all of justice, will cry like Jeremiah, ‘Maintain righteousness, rescue, those deprived of their rights out of the hands of the transgressor?’” The Gestapo soon arrested him after delivering such a oration.¹⁴¹ This lone but significant response provides proof that at least some Germans became aware of the impending doom of their Jewish neighbors and the need to try to stop it.

Individuals helped by giving shelter to Jewish friends, assisting in cleaning and repairing damage, and providing monetary support. Others felt shame at the fact that their own government performed such acts of chaos and hate. Albert Schatzel, a young German, witnessed the Night of the Broken Glass first hand in Frankfurt. Volker, his son, remembered exactly what

¹³⁹ Ibid., 147.

¹⁴⁰ Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, 27.

¹⁴¹ Mordecai Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews: Stories of Holocaust Survivors* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 32.

his father said: “We have to be ashamed to be Germans.”¹⁴² Schatzel tried to instill a belief of responsibility and respect for all humans to his son, and indeed it remained with Volker for the rest of his life. In 1943 an eighteen-year-old Volker abandoned the German army after he grew tired of the war. The helping and assisting actions seen during these November days and in the future make these Germans unique - despite constant displays of state-run propaganda to hate and discriminate against the Jews, some provided assistance and care to their Jewish neighbors.

For young Germans in particular, the Night of Broken Glass marked the end of their summers of innocence and the beginning of worry, uncertainty, and political awareness.¹⁴³ The terrible acts committed against the Jews became more and more evident and visible. One German wrote:

The other segment of the population – and they represent the majority by far – believe that this kind of destruction was inappropriate. In this connection it might be worth noting that the population frequently raised the question of whether the people who had actively participated would be subject to prosecution.¹⁴⁴

Young Germans were used to Jewish discrimination and verbal abuse, but they had not witnessed such wide-scale extremes.

After witnessing some of the chaos of that day, young Jurgen Herbst imagined his family being the ones experiencing such destruction: “I was stunned. I did not know what to think. I could not get the picture out of my mind, the picture of my parents and me being pushed down the stairs.”¹⁴⁵ Karl-Heinz Schnibbe, later a member of the resistance, wrote how the Nazi had not gone to such violent extremes before *Kristallnacht*: “We thought the hazing would have passed,

¹⁴² Tubach, *German Voices*, 113.

¹⁴³ Tubach, *German Voices*, 61.

¹⁴⁴ Martin Broszat and Hartmut Mehringer, “Bayern in der NS Zeit” (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1983), 1:123, in Tubach, *German Voices*, 62.

¹⁴⁵ Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past*, 73.

but it had gotten much worse.”¹⁴⁶ These events taking place were visibly seen by the German youths. They saw the vandalized buildings, the physical attacks, and the verbal abuse.

Harassment took place towards their old friends, the same people with whom they walked to school and shared memories. Schnibbe gives his own account of the matter. One day while walking home with his Jewish friends, he witnessed his Jewish companions being spat upon and laughed at on the street by members of the SS and SA. The jeering and derision made the spectator “terribly upset.”¹⁴⁷ Although his parent, thinking this was now the way things were, told him to simply forget what he saw. However, Schnibbe was unable to remain indifferent. Years later during the war, he joined the resistance and distributed anti-Nazi leaflets.

Jurgen Herbst’s piano teacher was Jewish and in danger in 1938. He expected all Jews, after years of indoctrination, to be these weak, inferior creatures. However, he wrote of his teacher, Mrs. Lerner, “[she] looked like all the other middle-aged women I knew....To make matters even more perplexing, I liked her as a person and as a teacher as well. That she might have been Jewish had never occurred to me.”¹⁴⁸ He, along with other young Germans who knew Jews, became confused and unsure of the validity of Nazi doctrine. To be suspicious of their own friends and neighbors was unexpected and unwanted. “I wasn’t ready to hate anybody,” Herbst wrote. It did not make sense to them. He wrote later on, “The business of hating enemies struck me and my classmates...as rather unsoldierly.”¹⁴⁹ The disastrous acts taking place against the Jews, some his friends and others just fellow humans, prompted him to take a stand to the evil and to the indifference. Some young Germans became more and more active in resisting the

¹⁴⁶ Holmes and Keele, *When Truth was Treason*, 21.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁴⁸ Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past*, 74.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

Nazis and caring for the Jews during the war when increasingly strict and severe Nazi measures geared the Jews toward death.

The pre-war years of the Nazi reign saw an ever-escalating attempt to portray the Jew as the enemy of the state. While stripping German Jews of civil liberties and abilities to function in an everyday society, Hitler and the Nazis increased their stranglehold on the German people and tried to indoctrinate and gear the youth toward war. Yet, while trying to convince the youth of these beliefs, the Nazis inadvertently stripped the young Germans of their independent, idealistic, and active spirit. Such a move along with increasingly open and violent acts of persecution, forced some youth to take action and stand up against the Nazis, something unique for World War II. These members of society were alone in their quest to rid Germany of hate and of Hitler's abuses of power. They stood against the laws, the state, and the nation as a whole. No other European country saw such inherent rejection and pressure. With their institutional values declining and a totalitarian society forming, these German resisters and rescuers acted individually in accordance with their personal beliefs.

Chapter 3: Into the Darkness of War: Harsher Measures and Increased Resistance

Entering the 1940s, the ruinous nature of the Nazi regime was in full swing. It decimated not only the rights and liberties of the Jewish people, but also German society's moral fabric. The Nazi state, having control over the legal code, implemented a new value system that limited personal freedoms of thought and action and sought to destroy the Jewish race. Many Germans supported, remained indifferent, or feared to act against the events occurring around them. Scholars like Hoffmann usually take the route of characterizing the Germans as "ambivalent" or uninterested to the fate of the Jews and themselves.¹⁵⁰ However, some Germans, realizing the destructive nature of such thought processes, followed their consciences and took a stand. As one young soldier phrased it, the Nazi "outrage against humanity" needed to be stopped.¹⁵¹ The youth in particular, labeled as the National Socialist regime's heaviest burden, recognized the state's restricting nature and its mistreatment of the people. Relying on the historic fighting spirit that the Nazis tried to manipulate, these brave, isolated young Germans listened to their humanity-oriented conscience and thirst for liberty instead of an ardent, restricting nationalism.

Sprouting from a growing unease toward the coercions and restrictions occurring before the war, German youth increasingly resisted Nazi efforts of control. With the World War I legacy of anti-authority and the desire to live a significant, action-filled life in their minds, German youth during World War II decided to take their lives into their own hands regardless of the risks. Such a choice was extremely remarkable considering what occurred during their short lives; they grew up in an atmosphere of authority, fear, propaganda, economic and political instability, frenzy, and constant bombardment of radical ideologies geared towards building them into objects of the State. Understandably, some scholars like Annedore Leber, while

¹⁵⁰ Hoffmann, *History of German Resistance*, XIV.

¹⁵¹ Leber, *Conscience in Revolt*, 7.

acknowledging resistance, postulate that, overall, the youth of Germany fell under the Nazi spell of obedience. They were “confused by callous invocation of freedom, patriotism and social justice.”¹⁵² However, this statement does not fully suit the young Germans. Thrown into a chaotic world at a young age, these young men and women had to mature quickly and make significant decisions - to resist and thus risk their own lives.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, engulfing the world in another war. During and after the country’s occupation, special units made up of security police and soldiers called the *Einsatzgruppen* killed thousands of Jews as well as members of the Polish clergy and intelligence.¹⁵³ With the start of this new enormous war came a struggle for existence within the German nation itself. The Nazis further restricted both Jewish and German freedoms. For Jews, the Nazis inaugurated the next steps in their war against them – deportation and mass murder. Meanwhile, the Hitler Youth tightened its grasp on its members. However, some young Germans recognized that the group’s call to action and offering of a life of significance that originally attracted them soon faded. Instead of a life manifested in action, the Nazis turned the youth into blindly obedient puppets. These young Germans craved self-proclaimed action. In his autobiography, G.R. Halkett wrote in 1939, “There was still the idea of Shaping your Life, Responsible to Your Conscience Only, an ideal which does not seem to fit in with the system of rigid, state-dictated mentality introduced by National Socialism.”¹⁵⁴ The legacies of World War I, idealism and a desire to play a significant role in history, never left the youth; these remained strong in their minds and motivated them to resist.

¹⁵² Ibid., 1.

¹⁵³ German Historical Museum. 29 June 2011.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Tyldesley, “The German Youth Movement and National Socialism: Some Views from Britain,” *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 41 No. 1 (2006): 30.

In March 1939, membership in both the Hitler Youth (*Hitler Jugend*) and the German Girls' League became compulsory for all young non-Jewish Germans. Consequently, nearly 90 percent of the young population eventually belonged to these organizations.¹⁵⁵ The Hitler Youth and *Jungvolk*, the youth organizations for boys, intensely indoctrinated these boys with Nazi ideology. The Nazis required mandatory membership for boys ten to fourteen-years-old in the *Jungvolk*, and boys fourteen to seventeen-years-old in the Hitler Youth.¹⁵⁶ During the war, the organizations started to focus more towards preparing boys for their future roles as soldiers. The 1940 *Hitler Youth War Service Plan*, for instance, stipulated:

The Hitler Youth will also continue to carry out 'Youth Meetings'. These events which, in contrast to the Youth Film Hours are not ceremonial in character but rather are modeled on the 'time of struggle' [i.e. pre-1933], are intended to articulate the political and combative will of youth.¹⁵⁷

With mandatory attendance, these meetings attempted to indoctrinate German youth and turn them into violent and thoughtless fighting machines by emphasizing their combative will.

The organization ordered youth leaders to "give your units a lasting impression of the historic mission and task of our nation."¹⁵⁸ The Nazis continued in their attempt to instill a sense of importance in the youth and their "historic" role in the regime. Moreover, their tasked paralleled that of the State with Hitler their guiding force. The oath of the Hitler Youth portrayed that emphasis in nationalistic unity and allegiance to the State:

I swear that I will serve the Fuhrer Adolf Hitler faithfully and selflessly in the Hitler Youth. I swear that I will always strive for the unity and comradeship of German youth. I swear obedience to the Reich youth Leader and to all leaders of the Hitler Youth. I swear on our holy flag that I will always be worthy of it, so help me God.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Hunt, "The Making of Young Nazis," 1.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁵⁷ Jeremy Noakes, *Nazism: A Documentary Reader Volume 4* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 400.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 402, cited from the Indoctrination Service Manual for 1942.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 405, cited from the Study of Nazi education published in 1943.

Young Germans swore to God and to themselves to selflessly obey Hitler and act as a single cohesive unit, thus abandoning their individuality and sense of self. The leaders of the Hitler Youth ventured to abolish the liberal and pro-individualistic traditions from German past. Reich Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick emphasized this mentality when he said:

The time when the cultivation of the self-centered individual personality was seen as the most essential task of school is over. The new school is based fundamentally on community ideals...schools are to serve the national interest.¹⁶⁰

The Nazis thus assaulted a defining trait of the German youth, and to restrict and even attempt to eliminate such an identifying quality carried consequences.

As the war continued, the Hitler Youth increased attention on paramilitary and military training in order to prepare youth for war. In 1942, the organization established military training camps for young adults to acquaint themselves with army life.¹⁶¹ Moreover, literature became more violently oriented. A Nazi children's literature book from 1940 by Ernst Heimer, *Der Pudelmopsdackelpinscher*, represents the kind of literature printed:

Just as the snake's bite poisons the blood of its victims, the Jews poison the blood of their host peoples. People who let the Jews in lose the purity of their blood. At first they hardly notice as the Jewish poison infects their bodies and souls. But slowly they decline. Their children are half-breeds who bear the physical and spiritual characteristics of the Jewish race. These Jewish half-breeds further poison their people's blood. Once the majority of the people carry the Jewish poison, there is no saving them any longer.¹⁶²

This example's sensationalist and fear-mongering rhetoric aimed to dehumanize the Jews and portray them as the dangerous enemies of the State. Nazi literature highly discouraged even going near Jews, or else their bodies and even their souls would be ruined. Such propaganda depicted the Jewish people as pests or other invasive, poisonous animals that needed to be

¹⁶⁰ Stachura, *The German Youth Movement*, 144.

¹⁶¹ Noakes, *Nazism: A Documentary Reader*, 409.

¹⁶² Ernst Heimer, "Der Pudelmopsdackelpinscher" (Nuremberg: Der Sturmer-Buchverlag, 1940, in Hunt, "The Making of Young Nazis," 34.

exterminated. Even the younger Germans in the *Jungvolk* read textbooks that said, as Jurgen Herbst recalled, “The Jews are parasites... The Jews are our misfortune... There is no room for Jews in our Fatherland.”¹⁶³ Moreover, these young ones sang intensely violent songs about sending all the Jews back to Jerusalem, and “by chopping off their legs, making sure they could not come back.”¹⁶⁴ However, while the Hitler Youth increased its compulsory measures and violent rhetoric, it continued to worry about some youth growing tired of the restrictions, the hate, and the forced obedience control. Understandably, the Nazis’ worry was justified.

The Hitler Youth’s leaders, being no strangers to the lasting consequences of World War I, produced major concerns over the possibilities of young people “running wild” during this new war.¹⁶⁵ Their preoccupation with such a possibility manifested before the war even started. On May 24, 1939, the Nazis created the *Reich Headquarters for the Combating of Juvenile Delinquency* in the Reich Criminal Police Office. Soon thereafter, the headquarters produced the *Decree for the Protection against Hardened Criminals*, which allowed young people over sixteen-years-old to be charged with adult penal law.¹⁶⁶ In addition to mandatory attendance, Nazi leaders wanted to keep a very close eye on these younger members of society. In 1940, the Field Marshal for the Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich emphasized that during the war, youth needed to be watched and looked after “particularly well in every respect... Extensive measures must, therefore, be introduced; they should not be restricted to superficialities.”¹⁶⁷ In March, the *Reich Police Order for the Protection of Youth* passed, establishing a national curfew for those under eighteen. Moreover, this law placed restrictions on

¹⁶³ Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past*, 76.

¹⁶⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁶⁵ Noakes, *Nazism: A Documentary Reader*, 440.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 440.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 441.

alcohol consumption for youth.¹⁶⁸ Leaders feared for the manifestation of the young Germans' habit of restlessness, curiosity, independence, thirst for action, and importantly, distrust of authority. The Nazis utilized all these characteristics and legacies of the Great War in their own quest for power. Their attempts to quell these feelings turned out to be a double-edged sword, however. As they constrained these young Germans and forced certain beliefs and habits down their throats, these youth felt more and more repulsed by the regime.

One teenage member of the Hitler Youth came to a realization that some others around him shared. He wrote, "Pressure and coercion did not appeal to me."¹⁶⁹ The Nazis' paranoid efforts to control youth started having a negative impact. Another young German, Jurgen Herbst, recalled the "poison of fear and suspicion" starting to grow more and more pervasive in German society.¹⁷⁰ Many Germans joined the Hitler Youth because they answered Hitler's call to action. With the belief in having a hand in changing history and entrusted with having a role in the greater future of Germany, some young Germans faced disappointment in the coming years at the reality of the situation- indoctrination, militarization, and a pressure to conform engrossed their lives. Instead of playing a major role in the policies and events of the nation, the youth of Germany constantly prepared themselves for war. They craved for purposeful action. Even those outside, whether by choice or not, of the Hitler Youth sought to be a part the exciting world of events going on around them and in stopping the atrocious abuse of power by the Nazis. Case in point, the Quaker youth group in Berlin. This group of young Germans, while religiously pacifists, expressed their desperate desire to fight for something. One member said:

¹⁶⁸ Stachura, *The German Youth Movement*, 162.

¹⁶⁹ Holmes and Keele, *When Truth was Treason*, 14.

¹⁷⁰ Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past*, 63.

We often cannot stand by and watch with the thought of being condemned to passivity. And to so we have to work on ourselves, as the smallest ‘cells’ of the community, to bring a new spirit into the world.¹⁷¹

The characterizing idealism of the youth was present in this young Quaker’s statement. He and those around him desired to have a hand in changing the world for the better.

Other youth groups took more active and even violent paths in their quests to resist the Nazis. The Edelweiss Pirates, for instance, emerged out of a strong hatred of the rigid indoctrination and discipline implemented by the Nazi regime. Formed during the late 1930s in western German towns like Cologne and Essen, the group comprised of boys aged from twelve to eighteen with no particular political ideology but “great antipathy towards the grim uniformity of the Hitler Youth and the lack of freedom in Nazi Germany.”¹⁷² As one member said, “We were very opposed to the Nazi state and its *crimes*, and we just acted together as things came up” [emphasis added].¹⁷³ While identified as a group of young men seeking freedom and free spirited individuality, the Edelweiss Pirates boldly exhibited an objective to defy the Nazi laws and crimes by helping victims of the regime, the Jews. Such a defiant stance proved that, despite the tireless efforts to indoctrinate all young Germans into killing, Jew-hating machines, the Nazis failed.¹⁷⁴

Throughout their existence, the members of the Edelweiss Pirates possessed the same free-spirited individuality and youthful rebellious nature against authority that young Germans had three decades prior during the Great War. The Nazis failed to take full advantage of such legacies. With their chief slogan as “Eternal War on the Hitler Youth,” the Pirates risked

¹⁷¹ Halle, *Thoughts are Free*, 36.

¹⁷² Frank McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance in Nazi Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 15.

¹⁷³ Pearl Oliner, *Saving the Forsaken: Religious Culture and the Rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 115.

¹⁷⁴ Idem.

committing treason by opposing a state-run organization. Nevertheless, they continued to grow in popularity during the war years. Emphasizing their membership and the freedom that they stood for, members wore checked shirts with a badge of the edelweiss flower on it, dark short trousers, a scarf, and flashy white socks.¹⁷⁵ Their carefree youthful spirit sought not to hide their beliefs but to proudly spread them. More and more young Germans seeking freedom flocked to the Pirates in hopes of breaking free from Nazi constraints and discipline. Aside from group hikes, meetings, and the occasional scuffle with members of the Hitler Youth, Pirate members engaged in the (Gestapo-labeled) “subversive” activities of writing slogans such as “Down with Hitler,” “We Want Freedom,” and “Down with Nazi Brutality” on subway walls.¹⁷⁶ Near the war’s end, the Pirates took an even greater risk and engaged in acts of industrial sabotage and shielded army deserters.¹⁷⁷ Not surprisingly, the Gestapo kept a close eye on the group’s activities and even compiled a list of fashions worn by the members in order to seek them out and arrest them.¹⁷⁸

Claiming the Edelweiss Pirates as hostile towards the Hitler Youth and to other young Germans, the Gestapo arrested scores of Pirates during the war. In December 1942, for instance, they arrested nearly eight hundred and placed them in a re-education camp.¹⁷⁹ The Pirates must have created significant tumult, disturbance, and annoyance to get hundreds of them arrested within a month. A report by Reich Ministry of Justice from 1944 postulated that the Edelweiss Pirates were a part of larger youth movement that sought to “provide youth with a real experience through nature. As time went on, this basically good idea was overlaid by a desire for

¹⁷⁵ McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance in Nazi Germany*, 16.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁷⁷ *Idem.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

an autonomous youth, which soon separated youth off from the nation as a whole.”¹⁸⁰ The Pirates, the report declared, “have an anti-Hitler Youth attitude, hate all discipline and thereby place themselves in opposition to the community.”¹⁸¹ According to Nazi officials, these young Germans wished to disassociate themselves from the nation, thereby showing treasonous and unpatriotic attitudes that posed a danger to society. Outsiders, especially youth still in Nazi organizations, noticed the commotion. Jurgen Herbst, while a *Jungvolk* member, remembered how he and other members “stared mesmerized at the small group” as they played music and engaged in dance in 1944.¹⁸² While first seeing them as a nuisance and “contrasting unfavorably with us boys in the *Jungvolk*,” Jurgen admitted the enticing and mystifying attraction of the group.¹⁸³ The Nazi officials also realized the danger of having such a group run amok in wartime.

In 1942, a Nazi report from Düsseldorf claimed that the group “represent[s] a danger to other young people” due to their “hostile attitude” towards the Hitler Youth.¹⁸⁴ Member Walter Meyer, born in 1927 and in Düsseldorf at the time the report was written, gave his own account regarding the “dangerous” activities taking place there:

Uh, we used to play pool, and we had our little meetings there and one would say, "We have a new member," and, uh, we would ask him questions, test him, and "Why do you like to join us?" and, you know, wanted to have some assurance. And, and, uh, then we, we pro... "What are we going to do next?" and maybe one would say, "You know, the Hitler Youths, they all, uh, store their, uh, equipment at such-and-such a place. Let's make it disappear." "Okay, when are we going to meet?" Such-and-such a time. And that's what we did. It became, uh, it came to the point where we became enemies and people began to look for us because we went a little too drastic, we, you know we started maybe by deflating the tires,

¹⁸⁰ Noakes, *Nazism: A Documentary Reader*, 450.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 452.

¹⁸² Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past*, 175.

¹⁸³ *Idem.*

¹⁸⁴ Noakes, *Nazism: A Documentary Reader*, 450.

then we made the whole bicycle disappear, so it came to the point where too many complaints.¹⁸⁵

Playing pool and taking some equipment seemed to be the extent of the so-called “dangerous” activities that worried the Gestapo. Nonetheless, it was indeed a form of revolt and resistance (and simply an inconvenience), and the Nazis did not tolerate any insubordinate behavior no matter how insignificant. From Meyer’s account, the Edelweiss Pirates provided youth with a sense of belonging, freedom, and a chance to express themselves and their anti-authority attitude. As a child, Meyer grew up questioning the German self-proclaimed superiority and anti-Semitism surrounding him. His anti-Nazi father further instilled a sense of anti-authority into his conscience. As a result, Meyer grew up a very rebellious teen. He went through great lengths to defy the Nazis and their cries of hate. For instance, he hid a Jewish friend in his basement for a time period.¹⁸⁶ During the war, in 1943, the Gestapo arrested Meyer after being caught looting. While on trial, the state attorney advocated the death penalty for the young boy. Meyer recalled:

The state attorney said, uh, "I would call it theft, but this man, having had intimate contact with our enemy, and being the leader of, uh, the *Edelweisspiraten* [Edelweiss Pirates], having destroyed, uh, state goods, state property, does not deserve any kind of consideration." Well, when the judge came back and said, on the grounds of his outstanding, uh, involvement in, in athleticism, and considering, uh, the age and the circumstances, I condemn you to one to four years in prison.¹⁸⁷

On trial for just stealing shoes, Meyer nearly received the death penalty because of his involvement in the Edelweiss Pirates, an “enemy organization.” Just associating with that group created great risk for the young members. Nevertheless, their rebellious nature and ravenous desire for freedom and action prevented them from complying with the Nazi state.

¹⁸⁵ “Personal History of Walter Meyer,” United States Holocaust Museum Archives, accessed 10 March 2012, http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_oi.php?MediaId=1236.

¹⁸⁶ Idem.

¹⁸⁷ Idem.

Another small group of youthful resistance that caught the attention of Nazi officials was the Swing Youth. This group grew not primarily as a resistance to Nazi power or control but as a group seeking the American way of life with an emphasis towards jazz appreciation and swing music, which the regime strongly opposed. Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, sent a letter to Reinard Heydrich expressing his anger towards the group in 1942:

But it is now my opinion that the whole evil must be energetically eradicated. I am against taking half measures. All ringleaders, male and female, as well as teachers who are dissident-minded...are to be sent to concentration camps.¹⁸⁸

In addition, Himmler ordered for the families of these young Germans to be investigated. The Nazis brutally tried to completely eradicate any sources of these resisting acts. Himmler ended the letter saying, “Only if we attack this problem in a brutal fashion can we avoid this dangerous anglophile tendency from spreading during a time when Germany is fighting for its existence.”¹⁸⁹ Consequently, the Gestapo arrested hundreds of Swing Youth members were arrested in 1941 and 1942.

According to scholar Frank McDonough, the “normal” and powerful youthful desire for personal independence provided a strong motive for resistance.¹⁹⁰ McDonough’s use of “normal” signifies that such a feeling and want for personal liberty was an enduring and expected quality for young Germans. To seek a better, more self-determining life had been a young person’s goal for generations. That desire, along with their persistent idealism, motivated them enough to rebel against the State and its value system in order to form a more open, free society for themselves. The Reich Ministry of Justice report from 1944 discussed reasons why the youth revolted. The report attributed young Germans’ resistance to the “urge to independence, which is naturally

¹⁸⁸ Stachura, *The German Youth Movement*, 182, cited from the National Archives (Washington), T-175/20/2525.

¹⁸⁹ *Idem.*

¹⁹⁰ McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance in Nazi Germany*, 17.

present in certain age groups, [and] cannot be sensibly channeled by the parents.”¹⁹¹ Nazi officials, admitting its natural occurrence, were unable to deny the power of certain youthful desires that had been around for decades. Another vital characteristic and motivation for at least some Pirates (Meyer and Ernst) was the disgust towards the crimes against the Jews. While not their defining incentive, such an acknowledgement and motivation demonstrates the awareness of events around them and care for their fellow human being, even after years of propaganda saying otherwise.

Another major youth group during the war displayed similar desires to free itself of authority and to advocate protection and safety from destruction for all citizens of Europe. In 1935, a sixteen-year-old Hans Scholl participated as a standard-bearer in the Nuremberg Party Rally. He expressed a “disgusted” attitude towards the “high-flown” talks of honor and loyalty instead of “genuine principles of conduct” throughout the Hitler Youth.¹⁹² Raised by a liberal father opposed to Nazism, Hans possessed a fondness for freethinking and liberty since childhood and continued to do so for the rest of his life. A few years after the rally, his awareness and disgust increased, and in 1937 the Nazis arrested him for partaking in “loose” talk.¹⁹³ His sister Sophie, born in 1921, was greatly distressed by the November events in 1938. The open attacks against the Jews proved to be too much for her.¹⁹⁴ By 1939, Hans and his sister became increasingly agitated with the aggressive Nazi policy. To add, Hans fought on the Eastern Front and witnessed the horrific atrocities committed by the German army against Jews and Russian prisoners of war. The violent actions as well as the hate filled rhetoric of the Nazis constantly bombarding Hans made him determined to resist. The two decided to produce some newsletters

¹⁹¹ Noakes, *Nazism: A Documentary Reader*, 454.

¹⁹² Prittie, *Germans against Hitler*, 162.

¹⁹³ Idem.

¹⁹⁴ McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance in Nazi Germany*, 19.

to advocate their stated goal: “the end of the war, even if it only came about by the gradual restriction of fighting and of the war effort.”¹⁹⁵

In the summer of 1942, Hans, Sophie, and four others formed the White Rose, a student run non-violent resistance group at the University of Munich. They were motivated to influence their fellow Germans to oppose Nazism. Stressing the importance of morality, individuality, and freedom to act on one’s accord, these students produced six pamphlets seeking to educate the Germans.¹⁹⁶ While McDonough cites the lack of personal freedom as the White Rose’s primary motivation, their concern for Jewish suffering and danger is evident in much of their writings.¹⁹⁷

The desire for more personal freedom, the distrust and hatred of authority, and an idealistic spirit is represented in the writings of the White Rose. Hans wrote in his diary what he ultimately wanted to accomplish:

I want to create a Utopia...I am obsessed with the strange thought that the day might come when war is completely forgotten, because a kind fate has eliminated all memory of it from all books...Peace on earth and good will to all men throughout all countries under the sky.¹⁹⁸

Hans’ passionate youthful idealism and hope for a better future, and the immense danger of the Nazi criminal power, fed his motivation to rise up and act.

The first leaflet of the White Rose addressed the urgent need to end these restrictions on the freedoms and criminal acts against the Jews. The year previous, *Einsatzgruppen*, extermination units, marched into Russia with the explicit task to kill Jews and political opponents. Covered by the Commissar Decree, which secretly authorized their actions, these

¹⁹⁵ Prittie, *Germans against Hitler*, 165.

¹⁹⁶ McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance in Nazi Germany*, 21.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

units murdered countless Jews, Russians, and Poles.¹⁹⁹ By December 1941, the Nazis moved further with the start of the systemic gassing of Jews in the east in the Chelmno extermination camp near Lodz. Other extermination camps began operations soon thereafter. The first White Rose flyer tried to muster up a sense of dire need to no longer remain indifferent in the face of such events. It wrote, “Nothing could be worse than that a civilized nation, without any show of opposition, be ‘governed’ by an irresponsible clique given over completely to their own lusts for power.”²⁰⁰ To simply continue ignoring and allowing the Nazi lust for power grow to destructive proportions seemed unthinkable. The leaflet continued:

And who amongst us has any idea of the extent of the outrages which we and our children must one day bear witness to when finally the shades are lifted from our eyes and we will behold in broad daylight all the...monstrous crimes?²⁰¹

Here the leaflet explicitly mentions the occurrence of “monstrous crimes” that were becoming more known in Germany. Instead of living with the guilt of having done nothing, the White Rose called upon people, for their children’s sake, to try to stop these crimes.

The second pamphlet continued its call to recognize the Jewish suffering and the need to stand up against the Nazis. Hans and other members of the White Rose witnessed first hand the suffering of Poles, Russians, and Jews in the east. Germans needed to learn of these atrocities. Hans told the Germans, “300,000 Jews have been murdered” in Poland in the “most bestial fashion.”²⁰² These murders were, in fact, the worst crimes “in the whole history of mankind.”²⁰³ Hans emphasized that the Jews were indeed human beings, not death-deserving vile animals. He then again brought up a universal guilt and shame amongst the German people:

¹⁹⁹ German Historical Museum. 29 June 2011

²⁰⁰ Leber, *Conscience in Revolt*, X.

²⁰¹ Idem.

²⁰² Noakes, *Nazism: A Documentary Reader*, 458.

²⁰³ Idem.

It appears so and will certainly be the case if the Germans do not at last rise up out of their lethargy, if they do not protest wherever they can against this gang of criminals, if they do not share the suffering of these hundreds of thousands of victims. And it is not only compassion that they must feel; no, it's much more: a shared guilt. For it's only through their apathy that they give these men of darkness the opportunity to act in this way.²⁰⁴

Hans suggested that Germans were in fact aware of the murders but were action-less. It is because of the common citizens' apathy that these men were allowed to commit these crimes. He thus called upon Germans to stop the "madness" lest share in the enormous guilt.

Hans and the White Rose urged Germans to regain their individual identities and once again think for themselves. After being indoctrinated to collectively support the State and become one conformist body, Germans needed to be reminded of their responsibility as human beings to care for others. Inge Scholl wrote, "Therefore every individual, conscious of his responsibility as a member of Christian and Western civilization, must defend himself as best he can at this late hour, he must work against the scourges of mankind, against fascism."²⁰⁵

Germans had unsuccessfully relied on their leaders or superiors for action. Instead, to achieve their pro-social, pro-freedom desires, they needed to rise individually in opposition to the new regime.

One of their last pamphlets, produced in February 1943, continued attacking German indifference. In this pamphlet, the members of the White Rose mimicked the hateful rhetoric of the Nazi propagandists. This time, though, they labeled the National Socialists as the "subhumans," whose behavior did not match the responsibility or dignity of human beings.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Idem.

²⁰⁵ Inge Scholl, *The White Rose: Munich, 1942-1943* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), p. 74., cited in John J. Michalczyk, *Resisters, Rescuers, and Refugees: Historical and Ethical Issues* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Wards, 1997), 50.

²⁰⁶ Noakes, *Nazism: A Documentary Reader*, 457.

The pamphlet addressed whether or not the German citizens wanted to be viewed in the same light as their evil “seducers”:

Germans! Do you want your children to suffer the same fate as the Jews? Do you want to be judged in the same category as your seducers? Are we to be forever the nation that is hated and spurned by the rest of the world? No! So break with the national socialist subhumans. Show, through your deeds that you think differently! A new war of liberation is about to start. The better part of the German nation is fighting on our side. Tear off the cloak of indifference with which you have covered your hearts. Decide before it is too late.²⁰⁷

With the war worsening, the White Rose warned Germans to act or face maltreatment and unbearable guilt. These members of the White Rose decided to stand up in the face of great risk.

The Gestapo eventually arrested, tried, and executed these young members. Huber, the teacher of the group, explained his goal in publishing these pamphlets:

What I intended to accomplish was to rouse the student body, not by means of an organization, but solely by my simple words; to urge them, not to violence, but to moral insight into the existing serious deficiencies of our political system. To urge the return to clear moral principles, to the constitutional state, to mutual trust between men.²⁰⁸

Compassion for his fellow human beings, a recognition of life-threatening danger, and an idealistic hope to defeat forces of hate with words and love motivated Huber’s decision to be a part of the White Rose. They did not seek to kill or motivate others to kill. Instead, the White Rose sought personal freedom, an end to abusive powers, and an end to criminal behavior by the State.

Reflecting on these resisters lives, Inge Scholl pointed out a very significant mentality of many resisters, shared especially among the rescuers of Jews. She wrote:

But were they heroes? They attempted no superhuman task. They stood up for a simple matter, an elementary principle: the right of the individual to choose his

²⁰⁷ Idem.

²⁰⁸ Scholl, *The White Rose*, 63, in Michalcyk, *Resisters, Rescuers, and Refugees*, 54.

manner of life and to live in freedom...They wanted to make it possible for you and me to live in a human society.²⁰⁹

Inges recognized that the White Rose consisted of no special race or group of humans. They were simply ordinary people fighting for what was, in their eyes, their responsibility— to care for their fellows in danger; it was merely the right and decent path to take. To individually act according to one's will and to realize the value of all human life characterized the mentality of the members of the White Rose. Other Germans and Europeans shared this vision. Some took their action a step further and rescued Jews. These young Germans, few they may be, who accomplished such an act of resistance were distinctive and valiant.

After being surrounded by hate-filled texts, images, and repeated calls to obey for the whole country's apparent betterment, some German youth became aware of their restricted freedom, indoctrination, and the danger facing their fellow humans. In the hope of regaining their personal freedom and resisting the government's growing totalitarian control, these audacious young Germans risked friendships, their identities, and their lives. By rising to the occasion, these German youth not only defied a system of government that went to great lengths to subdue them, but they also defied the majority of their peers. However, these motivating factors – personal freedom, distrust of authority, idealism, and risk taking – had been parts of their collective lives since World War I. Thus, recklessness and rebellious attitudes were seen as simply normal youth behavior by the 1940s. Dr. Karl Vossler spoke of this characteristic when he said, “It is the privilege of young people to dare the impossible and shun no danger.”²¹⁰ Their path was a lonely one, for they seemed to be traitors to their peers and to their country, but enough youth stood up to grab the attention of the State. For the government, the German youth's anti-Nazi activities warranted the organization of a separate youth department of the

²⁰⁹ Scholl, *The White Rose*, 4, in Michalcyk, *Resisters, Rescuers, and Refugees*, 52.

²¹⁰ Prittie, *Germans against Hitler*, 177.

Reichshauptsicherheitsamt (the State Security Headquarters) in Prinz Albrechtstrasse in Berlin, and the opening of a concentration camp for youth in Neuwied, designed specifically for boys under twenty-years-old.²¹¹ These young resisters impacted the larger society by showing their intense desire for freedom and their hope for the survival of those being oppressed. There existed another group of resisters, rescuers, who not only impacted those around with their words but also through their selfless, life-saving actions.

²¹¹ Ibid., 160.

Chapter 4: Reacting to the Anti-Jewish Measures: Acts of Rescue

While numerous acts of passive resistance attracted the attention of Nazi officials and displayed an awareness of the dangers at hand, some Germans went further. Each having their own set of motives, these young Germans all displayed the common trait of living a meaningful life. For these young rescuers of endangered Jews, their youthful, reckless, and life-risking spirit and their intense desire for personal freedom and responsibility allowed them to defy the odds by rejecting an overbearing authoritarian state's influence. Their consciences won over the ardent nationalism of the ruinous Nazi regime.

The start of the Second World War ended the era of innocence and pleasant times for German youth. By 1939, the intentions of the regime and the fate of the Jews became more and more apparent to Germans and those in surrounding countries. Chaim Kaplan, for one, a director of a Hebrew school in Warsaw, wrote, "As for the Jews, their danger is 7-times greater. Wherever Hitler's foot treads, there is no hope for the Jewish people."²¹² Kaplan turned out to be right. The conniving and gradual process of Jewish discrimination accelerated during the war. After being denied economic and civil rights before the war, the Jews soon faced complete segregation from German society. Having the war mask their harsh measures, the Nazis still had to move carefully for the public did not fully support this fight. On November 26, 1939, a southern German town conducted a report regarding the mood towards the new war: "The mood of the population at large about the war is with few exceptions not very good."²¹³ Thus the Nazis had to continue moving silently but nonetheless used fear and threats in their destructive path against the Jews. No less than two weeks after the invasion, the *Ordinance Against Parasites of the People*, produced by the Ministry of the Interior in Berlin wrote, "Germany stands in a battle

²¹² Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 144.

²¹³ Broszat and Mehringer, *Bayern in der NS Zeit*, I: 138, in Tubach, *German Voices*, 70.

for honor and right. The model for every German today more than ever is the German soldier. Whoever wrongs the people instead of living up to that example no longer has a place in our society.”²¹⁴ The government threatened its people to act only the way a German soldier would. Germans had to show no mercy in their full devotion to the State and war, which was a fight for survival. That same month, the Nazis started to deport Jews from Vienna, Mährisch Ostrau, and Katowice to Nisko.²¹⁵ In Poland, SS *Einsatzgruppen* commenced murdering Poles and terrorizing Polish Jews.²¹⁶ In Germany itself, Jews started falling out of public sight, and consequently, out of many Germans’ thoughts.

Ian Kershaw explains that once war broke out, Germans “appalling[ly] lack[ed] reaction” to the Jewish issue.²¹⁷ Their exclusion and dehumanization in Germany took place in “full view of the public” without protest.²¹⁸ The apathetic German people gave the Nazi party the approval to continue their Jewish programs. Kershaw writes, “It [Jewish extermination] would not have been possible without the apathy and widespread indifference which was the common response to the propaganda of hate.”²¹⁹ However, the wartime actions of both Nazi officials themselves and the German people prove that neither entirely thought that was the case.

The war intensified in the summer of 1941 when the blitzing Nazi machine invaded the Soviet Union. War actions and tactics turned more violent and merciless in this quest for total destruction. Following the army came the murdering *Einsatzgruppen*. Moreover, at the same time, Nazi propagandists increased their efforts to portray the war as the Jews’ war, and to lose

²¹⁴ Ministry of the Interior, Reichsgesetzblatt (Berlin: Reichsverlagamt, 1939), 1: 1679; in Holmes and Keele, *When Truth was Treason*, 146.

²¹⁵ Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 153.

²¹⁶ *Idem*.

²¹⁷ Ian Kershaw, “Popular Opinion,” pp. 364, in *Yad Vashem Studies XVI*, ed. Aharon Weiss (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1984), 429.

²¹⁸ *Idem*.

²¹⁹ *Idem*.

against them, the subhuman filth that had been targeted by the Nazis for the last decade, meant death. The Nazis believed that they had to destroy or else be destroyed. Thus, they escalated anti-Jewish measures and attacks against the Jews in Germany.

The conditions of the Jews still living in Germany during the summer of 1941 turned worse. In September, Nazis required Jews to wear a yellow Jewish star patch while in public. One Jew recalled, “The ultimate in intimidation was when in September 1941 we were issued bright yellow patches in the shape of the six-pointed Star of David with the word ‘Jew’ in the center.”²²⁰ Jews became easily identified and physically a distinct, separate group in German society. During this time, the Nazis forced nearly thirty thousand Jews in Berlin to labor service. The rest of Germany had about an equal number of Jews conscripted in forced labor. These labor services involved mostly work in German industry, however, the Jews, required by law, did not have contact with Germans.²²¹ Restricting them even further and in essence trapping them in Germany, the Nazis banned Jewish emigration by late summer/early fall of 1941. On October 23, 1941, the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police in Berlin announced that Jewish emigration was to “be prevented, taking effect immediately.”²²² Trapped in their own country and with little freedom to act, Jews had little choice but to turn to Germans for help.

Anti-Jewish propaganda turned more and more violent in conjunction with these measures. Since this war was a Jewish war, the Nazis advocated that the Jews deserved the ultimate punishment. Joseph Goebbels’ editorial entitled “The Jews are Guilty!” alluded to the Final Solution of the Jews (the systematic murder of the whole population) in June 1941. His excerpt in *Das Reich* is full of sensationalist and hateful language towards the enemies of the State:

²²⁰ Neuman, *Memories from my Early Life in Germany*, 11.

²²¹ Arad, Gutman, Margaliot, *Documents on the Holocaust*, 150.

²²² *Ibid.*, 153.

The historic guilt of the Jews for the outbreak and expansion of this war has been sufficiently proved to need no further elaboration. The Jews wanted their war and now they have it. But the prophecy uttered by the Fuhrer on January 30, 1939 at the Reichstag is coming true, namely that if Jewish international finance should succeed once again in plunging the nations into a world war, the result would not be the Bolshevization of the earth and hence Jewry's victory, but the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe. We are just experiencing the fulfillment of this prophecy and thus a fate though hard but more than justified is overtaking Jewry.²²³

In order to not repeat the Great War's awful outcomes, Goebbels explicitly called for the destruction of the Jewish race throughout all of Europe. Such an act was merely a defense of Germany, something Germans, especially youth, had been indoctrinated to believe was their main goal as soldiers and citizens. A few months before, Goebbels explicitly warned the German people not to help the Jews. In November 1941, Goebbels declared, "Every Jew is a sworn enemy of the German people... Anyone who still deals with him privately is one of them and must be judged and treated as a Jew."²²⁴ Goebbels rightfully acknowledged the fact that some Germans felt the need to help the Jews in their time of stress. For instance, soon after being issued the yellow star, one Jew recalled, "Many of the Aryan employees know of our food restrictions and secretly give us some fruit."²²⁵ Nazi officials wanted such showings of pity and humanity stopped immediately. Germans thus faced the prospect of not only societal isolation and humiliation, but of being labeled as an enemy of the state if they associated themselves with the Jews.

Most German youth fell victim to hateful Nazi indoctrination. Prince Ferdinand von der Leyen provided an example of such violence-obsessive behavior by Germany's youth in his

²²³ Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, "The Holocaust in National-Socialist Rhetoric and Writings," in *Yad Vashem Studies XVI*, ed. Weiss, 105.

²²⁴ Beate Kosmala and Gerogie Verbeeck, *Facing the Catastrophe: Jews and Non-Jews in Europe During World War II* (New York: Berg, 2011), 120.

²²⁵ Ilse Rewald, *Berliners Who Helped us Survive the Hitler Dictatorship* (Berlin: Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, 1990), 1.

memoirs. While witnessing the Hitler Youth members singing, the Prince saw the truth of the matter and wrote, “A people who’s Staatsjugend sang ‘When Jewish Blood Squires from the Knife’ can hardly claim belief in the harmlessness of this organized rabble-rousing. Even the most naïve could hardly have failed to see that it did not stop with this song.”²²⁶ The Hitler Youth’s increased paramilitary training during the war showed its influence and impact. This time, though, that violence was aimed towards the Jews specifically.

In these attempts to amplify Jewish persecution, additional Nazi measures restricted contact with non-Jewish Germans in order to maintain a hateful, dehumanizing viewpoint. Thus, the Nazis were aware that not all Germans possessed indifferent feelings towards the harsh treatment of the Jews. A piece of evidence proving such uneasiness is the German decree issued by Governor General Frank in Poland on October 15, 1941. Those leaving the ghettos without authorization risked facing the death penalty. Moreover, the decree wrote, “People who knowingly offer hiding to Jews of this kind are also subject to the same penalty.”²²⁷ Nine days later, on October 24, the Nazis produced a police ordinance directed at Germans in their homeland. The widely disseminated decree threatened those of “German Blood” who “continued to maintain friendly relations with Jews” with so-called “protective custody” in a concentration camp “on educational grounds” for a duration of up to three months.²²⁸ Germans had some sort of sense of the immediate and impending danger the Jews were in. If they did not (or if they simply did not care), then such an ordinance would have had no need to be produced.

Some Germans grew increasingly weary towards reports of the bloodiness and brutality of the war against Russia. Swedish banker Jacob Wallenberg, upon his return to Berlin in 1941,

²²⁶ Kosmala and Verbeeck, *Facing the Catastrophe*, 99.

²²⁷ Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, 30.

²²⁸ Marnix Croes and Beate Kosmala, “Facing Deportation in Germany and the Netherlands: Survival in Hiding,” in Kosmala and Verbeeck, *Facing the Catastrophe*, 120.

exemplified such feeling when he wrote in a memorandum, “There was much talk in Germany about the starvation which would ensue in Russia as a result of the scorched earth policy and that it was estimated that between ten and twenty million Russians might die of hunger.”²²⁹

Furthermore, Jurgen Herbst overheard his mother and doctor discussing and disapproving of the criminal deeds perpetrated by the Nazis on the Eastern Front.²³⁰

With that knowledge lingering in their minds and with the increased ferocious nature of the Jewish deportations (Nazis radicalized the deportation procedure during the war, using the Vienna method- seal off the street, search house to house without warning), some Germans wondered and even worried about the fate of thousands of German Jews headed east. In fact, a memorandum produced that same month by the Foreign Office for the Political Intelligence Department expressed the outrage felt by some Germans in regards to the treatment of their Jewish neighbors, proving that not all Germans appallingly lacked reaction. The report wrote:

Many Germans were disgusted at the way which Jews were deported from German cities to Ghettoes in Poland. Several begged to put a word with the Swedish government to get visas for Sweden for some of their acquaintances who otherwise would be sent to Poland to a lingering death.²³¹

Thus some Germans realized the tragic fate in store for the Jews. Few Germans, like the Scholls and other members of the White Rose, tried to make such tragedy public knowledge. Others continued ignoring events around them out of fear. For these Germans, mentioning the annihilation from the Eastern Front was a “taboo topic to mentioned only in family circles or

²²⁹ David Bankier, “The Germans and the Holocaust: What Did They Know?”, in *Yad Vashem Studies XX*, ed. Aharon Weiss, 78.

²³⁰ Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past*, 63.

²³¹ Weiss, *Yad Vashem Studies XX*, 79; found in Memorandum prepared by the Foreign Office for the Political Intelligence Department, November 1941, PRO, FO 371/26515.

among close friends in order to maintain a ‘normal life.’”²³² However, as the war grew bleak and Jewish extermination accelerated, more Germans stopped ignoring their conscience.

Young German soldiers, witnesses to some of the worst acts of violence and murder, returned to Germany telling others of their scarring experiences. Rosel Bibo, one young soldier on the Eastern Front, warned those in Germany about the mass murder of Jews taking place in gas vans. Compelled to share his story, Rosel demonstrated the mentality other young soldiers felt when he said, “We gathered all our energy to shake ourselves from our lethargy and decided to act.”²³³ Another soldier, while traveling through Ukraine in 1942, wrote to his friend, Hans, about his terrible experience:

There are things here that make you ashamed of being a German. What one finds out about what we have done to the “chosen people”! That has nothing to do with anti-Semitism; that is inhumanity that one would have thought impossible in the enlightened modern age of the 20th century. How will it ever be atoned! When you hear such stories (and here you hear them from eyewitnesses), you must sink into despair over the meaning of our battle.²³⁴

Germans continued to feel guilt and shame throughout the war’s progression. Instead of fighting a defensive war for the greater good of Germany, these Germans discovered their beloved country was instead murdering millions of innocent people, the “chosen people” no less. In an age of modernity and heightened civilization, systematic murder happened before their eyes. Hans wrote back to his friend saying, “All of this makes me very sad. How brutally cruel is man, and often how cool and horribly matter-of-fact.”²³⁵ Another young soldier, Hans-Bernhard Bolza-Schunemann, born in 1926, recalled witnessing a firestorm in Hamburg that killed

²³² Ibid., 77.

²³³ Croes and Kosmala, “Facing Deportation in Germany and the Netherlands: Survival in Hiding,” in Kosmala and Verbeeck, *Facing the Catastrophe*, 121.

²³⁴ Tubach, *German Voices*, 252.

²³⁵ Idem.

thousands of civilians. Heartbroken he said, “I saw an entire hospital explode...I was furious.”²³⁶
The misery and inferno of war broke his spirit.

Klaus Tiedje, born in 1926, provides an example of how one young German, entrenched in war propaganda throughout his life, eventually grew disgusted by the obsessive Nazi violence. Klaus, like many other young Germans, enjoyed the 1930s, calling them “the summers of our innocence.”²³⁷ The Nazis won the hearts of many by improving the quality of life, creating jobs, and ending the poverty plaguing millions. Klaus fell victim to the Nazis’ attractive display of great power and honor. He recalled:

I remember – I was approximately eleven years old at the time – when I sat in a streetcar opposite a youthful, blond, very elegant SS officer. His legs, clad in stylish boots, were crossed casually, and he stared absent-mindedly into the distance. He was quite aware of the impression he made. The cold distance coupled with elegance was fascinating and captivating. At the same time, it also signaled an indistinct danger. This uncanny feeling has stayed with me to the present day.²³⁸

Klaus openly admits his youthful curious nature and the attraction to this new, unusual group, the Nazis. Young Germans, educated about the greatness of war and its glory, believed fighting would be a time of excitement and honor. Even at a young age, however, Klaus also sensed a feeling of danger towards the young Nazi. He and other curious young Germans fell victim to this spell- the opportunity hold some importance in society. The young boy eventually joined the army, claiming, to no surprise, “I wanted to be a soldier.”²³⁹ However, at eighteen in 1945, he criticized the overabundance of Nazi control and constant emphasis towards war and violence.²⁴⁰ Moreover, he, along with other young Germans, felt disappointed towards the lack of enthusiasm, marching music, flags, and celebrations that they expected to see constantly after

²³⁶ Ibid., 192.

²³⁷ Ibid., 186.

²³⁸ Ibid., 186.

²³⁹ Idem.

²⁴⁰ Idem.

exposure to war propaganda. Some chose to simply leave the army dispirited and broken. The war-tired Klaus, for example, abandoned the army in 1945. These images of war and destruction against the Jews infuriated and disheartened many German soldiers like these four. Some felt the need to do more to stop such injustices.

Some young soldiers resisted Nazi murder attempts courageously and valiantly, risking their own lives in the process. Michael Kitzelmann, born in 1916 on a farm in Allgau, completed his compulsory military service after studying three terms at St. Stephan's Theological School in Augsburg. From as early as 1938, he began to realize the danger of the Nazi individualist-destroying nature. He wrote, "So for two years I must submit to this horrible joke of ridiculous and dreary military drill, which I find quite soul-destroying after only a few weeks."²⁴¹ From this strong focus on violence and obedience, Kitzelmann recognized the regime's transforming and destroying nature. Nonetheless, when the war started, he traveled to Poland with the invading army. There he witnessed some of the horrors of the war. He wrote, "Never will I tell anybody what I have seen and experienced here."²⁴² A soldier trained for years for war was so shocked that he vowed to never repeat it again. In 1942, after calling the Nazi government "criminals" for their inhumanity and monstrous actions, Kitzelmann was sentenced to death. He listened to his conscience and spoke out against the army's criminalist and brutal nature. He died a convinced and passionately committed pacifist.

Eberhard Weinbrenner went through a similar experience. He recognized how the Nazis knew of young Germans' needs for a "life that seemed free and full of exciting diversions." The party was able, through these actions, to "shape a generation into conformists." However, experiencing life on the front changed Eberhard. He told his friend, "We are doing terrible things

²⁴¹ Leber, *Conscience in Revolt*, 27.

²⁴² Idem.

in the East, horrible acts. I cannot talk about them. I cannot put these things out of my mind. They depress me. I have lost all my ideals.”²⁴³ The Nazis, while not allowing Eberhard to live out his dreams and ideals, crushed his young spirit. Near the end of the war he decided to take a stand and volunteered for a sabotage mission in the German navy. He sought a life of thrill and adventure in order to fully live out his remaining hopes and dreams for freedom.

Friedrich Karl Klausing, born in Munich in 1920, served in the Polish, French, and Russian campaigns until he sustained an injury in 1943. While home Friedrich reflected and realized the war’s futility. Moreover, he understood more fully how the Nazis trampled on the ideals of youth in their lies and false promises.²⁴⁴ With that youthful thirst for a life of thrill and fight, Friedrich joined Claus von Stauffenberg’s resistance group. The Gestapo caught Friedrich soon after the failed July 20 plot. He was executed on August 8, 1944.²⁴⁵

Heinz Bello, born in 1920, was religiously opposed to the militarism of the Nazis. A sergeant in the medical corps, Heinz told those around him about his feelings against the regime. He wrote in his diary, “How helpless we human beings are in the face of death. What would life be without faith? We should have to despair if we expected merely to revert to dust and ashes.”²⁴⁶ For Heinz, faith accounted for everything; not even the State came before faith. The Nazis refused to accept such a position, but Heinz nevertheless continued despite knowing the risk. He displayed such realization in a later diary entry: “I will die for a Christian Germany. I want to die for the reunification of the Churches in Germany so that all people can live in peace again.”²⁴⁷ Eventually, officials heard of this young soldier’s viewpoints and decided to arrest him. Charged with undermining moral, Heinz was sentenced to death. Jonathan Stark provides

²⁴³ Tubach, *German Voices*, 109.

²⁴⁴ Leber, *Conscience in Revolt*, 18.

²⁴⁵ Idem.

²⁴⁶ Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, 20.

²⁴⁷ Idem.

another example of a German youth killed for speaking out against the evils of the German military and government. When he was seventeen he refused to take the oath to Hitler or to carry out military service.²⁴⁸ The Gestapo sent him to a concentration camp in Sachsenhausen where he died in October 1944. He could not submit himself and surrender his individuality to the controlling State.

Other young German soldiers disobeyed years of training and indoctrination by taking the ultimate risk of rescuing endangered Jews. In Poland, Hugo Armann, a young sergeant in the Wehrmacht, helped Jews escape from a ghetto into a nearby forest.²⁴⁹ Heinz Drossel, born in Berlin in 1916, refused to pledge himself to the Nazi party but fought as an officer during the war. In 1941, after his unit captured a Russian officer, Drossel disobeyed his superiors' orders to kill him. Instead, Drossel led the Russian into the woods and said to him, "I am no killer. I am a human being," and let him run off.²⁵⁰ Impacted by the horrors of the war and of the army's barbaric actions, Drossel returned to Berlin. By 1942 he felt the need to continue to help those impacted by such violence. In one instance he saw a Jewish woman on a bridge readying herself to commit suicide. Instead of just watching, he convinced her to get off the bridge and provided her money and shelter in his apartment. These soldier resisters and rescuers witnessed first hand the war horrors and the reality of the Nazi plans to exterminate the Jews. Those young Germans on the home front would too find out about the exterminations and witness injustices, and they too risked their lives to rescue Jews.

²⁴⁸ Prittie, *Germans against Hitler*, 159.

²⁴⁹ Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews*, 100.

²⁵⁰ "Heinz Drossel," The Wallenberg Medal & Lecture, accessed 15 March 2012, Wallenberg.umich.edu/drossel.html.

While scholar Daniel Fraenkel attempts to explain that the low turnout of resistance and rescue of Jews in Germany was due to the “fact that Germans inside Germany were geographically, hence experientially and emotionally, removed from the sites of torture and mass-killing in the east,” the truth is that Germans still knew of the exterminations and even witnessed brutal acts on their own soil.²⁵¹ A Nazi report from October 9, 1942 provides an example of such knowledge. The report stated, “In the course of the work on the final solution of the Jewish question, the population in various parts of Germany has recently begun to discuss the ‘very harsh measures’ against the Jews, especially in the eastern territories.”²⁵²

Some Germans, knowingly isolated, criminal (against Nazi law), and at risk of losing their lives, decided to direct their energies towards saving the remaining endangered Jews. They all had their own motives - whether they witnessed the deaths, had strong parental influence, were religious, or personally knew those in danger. Nevertheless, these Germans ardently shared the belief that these Jews, like all humans, deserved life. Young Germans especially encountered great risk. Being indoctrinated for years, they were surrounded in an environment of war and hatred. Resisting meant going against the norm and risking their membership within Nazi society, one where nearly all their peers belonged to and identified within the government-sponsored organization. Embodying the reckless, fighting spirit and distrust of authority that characterized them since World War I, these young Germans chose to listen to their own conscience and instead blindly following their Nazi masters’ orders.

Like the young German soldiers, some young Germans and young people in surrounding countries witnessed and reacted to the Jewish suffering. They grasped the immanent danger of

²⁵¹ Daniel Fraenkel, “The German Righteous Among the Nations: A Historical Appraisal,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (2003) 48(1): 226, accessed 15 March 2012, doi:10.1093/leobaeck/48.1.223.

²⁵² Bankier, “The Germans and the Holocaust: What Did They Know?”, in *Yad Vashem Studies XX*, ed. Aharon Weiss, 76.

their peers and empathized with their suffering, which was a common characteristic of the rescuers. Berthold Beitz, a young industrialist during World War II, witnessed first hand the murder of Jews while visiting Boryslaw in 1942. The SS evacuated the city's Jewish orphanage while Beitz watched the brutal scene nearby. He saw infants thrown out of windows and children, under orders from the SS, forced to run barefoot to the railway station in the freezing weather.²⁵³

Beitz, severely moved by these scenes, used his position as director of an oil company to inspect rounded up Jews and pick the "qualified" workers, thus ensuring their survival by preventing their transport to death camps. In August 1942, using this strategy, he extricated two hundred fifty Jewish men and women from the transport train headed to the Belzec extermination camp by claiming them as "professional workers."²⁵⁴ He did not seek to acquire cheap employment for his own material gain. Instead, Berthold Beitz rescued Jews in poor physical condition not nearly fit for industrial work. Moreover, his selfless, brave actions continued into his private life when he and his wife hid Jews in their own home, increasing their risk and endangering their own lives. Beitz denied his motivations were political. Instead he said:

We watched from morning to evening as close as you can get what was happening to the Jews in Boryslaw. When you see a woman with her child in her arms being shot, and you yourself have a child, then your response is bound to be completely different.²⁵⁵

He acted not out of political resentment for the Nazi regime but in natural reaction to save endangered lives. Jews were life-deserving human beings just like all others. Beitz's was nominated as a "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, for his selfless courage in a dangerous German society.

²⁵³ Silent Heroes Memorial Center in the German Resistance Memorial Center Foundation, Rosenthaler Straße 39, 10178 Berlin, 30 June 2012.

²⁵⁴ Idem.

²⁵⁵ Idem.

Margarete Daene, born in 1919, and her husband witnessed the harsh working conditions of Jews in an armament factory in Berlin. Moved by such maltreatment, the couple provided food and other goods to some of the women in the factory. Seeing such suffering and noticing the increasing danger of deportation facing the Jews, the couple took an even greater risk when they hid three women in their home in 1942.²⁵⁶

Another example of a young person saving Jews occurred in neighboring Poland. Irene Gut Opdyke, born in 1921, was a nineteen-year-old nursing student living in Radom when the Germans invaded. She soon began working as a waitress in the town's hotel that hosted Nazi officers. During her first day there, Irene witnessed Gestapo guards shooting at men, women, and children. Deeply shocked, she said, "The earth was shaking with the breath of those who had been buried alive." She then recalled how she "asked God to give me responsibility, to bring me the opportunity to help, even if my own life should be taken."²⁵⁷ Realizing the extreme danger the Jews faced, Irene wanted to help in any way possible. Subsequently, she started to sneak food to the outskirts of a Jewish ghetto right near the hotel.²⁵⁸ Her sense of empathy and humanist conviction compelled her to act. She later witnessed a death march and gave an account of the brutal procession:

If I close my eyes I can still see them. It was a horror... Then with one movement of his arm, the Gestapo officer pulled the baby from its mother's arms, took it by the feet, and threw it with the head to the ground. The baby was instantly quiet. I will never forget the inhuman, shrill scream that the mother let out as she jumped to reach her child.²⁵⁹

Witnessing such hateful and destructive acts scarred Irene's consciousness. She did not care whether these people were Jewish or what Nazi law dictated, she just listened to her own

²⁵⁶ Idem.

²⁵⁷ Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, 165.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 49.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 50.

self. She continued working for the German unit when they transferred to Ternopol. There, she overheard plans for a raid to capture and transport Jews. Seizing the moment and realizing she had no time to think, Irene hid six people in a forest. As for others, she hid them behind a false wall in a laundry room on the night of the raid. The next night she led them to their next hiding place - a heating duct.²⁶⁰ In total, Irene saved sixteen Jews. After seeing first hand Jewish maltreatment, Irene, out of the simple belief that human beings all deserve life, took great selfless risk and defied authority. Looking back on her actions and the tragedies she witnessed, Irene said, "I could not understand. But later on I realized that God gave us free will to be good or bad. So I asked God for forgiveness and said if the opportunity arrived I would help these people."²⁶¹ Irene felt responsible to act for the good of those around her. She did not allow herself to be controlled by a mindless, hatred filled ideology.

Teresa Prekerowa, another young Pole (born in 1921), witnessed her brother's execution by the Nazis. Seeing the suffering in a nearby ghetto, Teresa hid a little Jewish girl in 1942. She sought desperately to conceal this secret; she did not even tell her parents. She knew of the danger surrounding her actions, but she, in her youthful reckless spirit, did not care. Years later she reflected: "I...had to help her, but I knew that was terribly dangerous and I was afraid. It was only a little question in my mind."²⁶² Teresa, like other youth resisting the Nazis, exhibited a wiliness to take risks and a respect towards all lives despite what the overbearing Nazi presence dictated. Eventually, she sent the hiding Jew to a convent.

²⁶⁰ "Irene Gut Opdyke: She Hid Polish Jews Inside a German Officers' Villa," accessed 15 March 2012, www.holocaustforgotten.com/opdyke.htm.

²⁶¹ "Irene Gut Opdyke," PBS Rescuer Biographies, accessed 15 March 2012, pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shtetl/righteous/Irene.html.

²⁶² Toby Axelrod, *Rescuers Defying the Nazis: Non-Jewish Teens who Rescued Jews* (New York: Rosen Pub. Group, 1999), 23.

Another non-German but praiseworthy example of young courage was Marion van Binsbergen Pritchard of Amsterdam. While walking to school in 1942 Marion, then twenty-two years old, saw the forcible evacuation of a Jewish children's home. The children cried and looked frightened as she witnessed the infuriating and shocking scene. This young adult decided to do anything possible to prevent additional Jewish children from suffering. She agreed to care for a Jewish infant for several months until a safer place was found. She continued to shelter and hide Jews for the rest of the war, cumulating to at least one hundred fifty people.²⁶³ In a later interview Pritchard expressed that witnessing the atrocities was not the only motivating factor to rescue:

It was my parents' unusual way of child-rearing that provided the motivation for me to behave the way I did during the war. I was never punished and always encouraged to express my feelings, both the negative and positive ones, in words. I was treated with respect and consideration from the time I was born. I grew up treating people the same way.²⁶⁴

Pritchard was not the only rescuer to be influenced by her family.

The upbringing of rescuers played a significant role for some in motivating their altruistic saving actions. For instance, Esther Warmerdam's father told about the murders committed by the Nazis when she was eleven, which motivated her to assist her parents in helping more than two hundred young Jews escape deportation from Holland.²⁶⁵ Another example of familial assistance was German Eva Heilmann, born in 1920, and her brother. These two developed their

²⁶³ Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, 58.

²⁶⁴ "Pritchard, University Wallenberg Lecturer, Became a Rescuer in 1942," *The University of Michigan Record*, October 22, 1996, accessed on 15 March 2012, http://www.ur.umich.edu/9697/Oct22_96/artcl05.htm.

²⁶⁵ Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, 222.

family's underground contact network that provided food and lodging for numerous Jews in hiding.²⁶⁶ They enjoyed a risky life of significance while helping others.

Gitta Bauer, born in Berlin in 1919, grew up in a household opposed to Nazism. Her father, a pharmacist, voted for the Social Democrats and adhered to liberal beliefs. He told Gitta that the "Jews are people like you and me only with a different religion. And that's it."²⁶⁷ Such humanism embodied the central rule in their family. In 1944 her aunt's Jewish friend approached her and requested help for her endangered young daughter. Gitta recalled the experience:

What else could I say but 'I'll take her into my home'? This was no big moral or religious decision. She was a friend and she needed help. We knew it was dangerous, and we were careful, but we didn't consider not taking her.²⁶⁸

Even without notifying her parents Gitta, without hesitation and aware of the risk, accepted Ilse Baumgart into her home and hid her for nine months.

The parents of Ruth Winkler-Kuhne, another familial influenced youth, formed the resistance group the Association for Peace and Reconstruction, which printed leaflets opposing the Nazis.²⁶⁹ Born in 1931 in Trebbin, Germany, Ruth and her brother Horst protected and hid a young Jewish boy named Eugene Herman-Friede. Just a teenager, Ruth was forced to make extremely risky and mature decisions with the great responsibility entrusted to her. She knew of that danger: "We were not allowed to go against the stream, openly."²⁷⁰ Ruth went up against a very powerful stream considering her membership in the indoctrinating League of German Girls. Despite being taught to obey Hitler, Ruth nevertheless engaged in these rescue activities. While in the League, she recalled having to "be good Germans. The Fuhrer, Hitler, came first. Even

²⁶⁶ Silent Heroes Memorial Center in the German Resistance Memorial Center Foundation, Rosenthaler Straße 39, 10178 Berlin, 30 June 2012.

²⁶⁷ Gay Block and Malka Drucker, *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992), 136.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

²⁶⁹ Axelrod, *Rescuers Defying the Nazis*, 42.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

before family. We had to believe in him more than in our parents.”²⁷¹ Ruth acknowledged the Nazi obsession with indoctrinating the youth. She, like others, chose not give up their personal freedom in exchange for such beliefs.

The youth of these nations lived for that feeling of action and thrill when resisting the Nazis. Stefan Raczynski, born in 1921 and raised in a Catholic household, experienced those exciting feelings through his resistance. He was taught by his father to respect the Jews as his fellow human beings.²⁷² During the war, Sefan witnessed the murder of Jews near his farm in Lithuania. He recalled of the scarring event: “I remember seeing them [their bodies] falling like matches.”²⁷³ Such a tragedy caused “terrible anxiety that cannot be described” and a great angst to act.²⁷⁴ Stefan wrote, “I only wanted to clean the land of the murderers. I was ready to do everything to remove from the neighborhood people who were denouncing the Jews to Lithuanians and Germans.”²⁷⁵ He did what was more practical- he fed hiding Jews in the forest. Despite the risk, Stefan believed “it was a natural thing to do, like when you see a cat on the street, hungry, you give it food... We didn’t think anything of it.”²⁷⁶ He recalled the great thrill of it all: “It was like gambling for us. That’s how we felt about it. Risking our lives. We only lived until tomorrow.”²⁷⁷ He lived day to day but for a purpose, something all youth hoped to have in their young lives.

Zofia Baniecka, born in 1917, exhibited the youthful craving for action. Influenced by her father, she wrote, “[he was] my greatest love. We spoke often and, of course, he was against it

²⁷¹ Ibid., 44.

²⁷² “Stephan Raczynski,” PBS Rescuer Biographies, accessed on 15 March 2012, Pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shtelt/righteous/Stephan.html.

²⁷³ Ibid., 2

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 3.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 4.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 5.

[anti-Semitism]. My father often went into the ghetto to take food and books to friends.”²⁷⁸

Despite seeing her father murdered by the Nazis in 1941, Zofia continued working as a liaison for the underground. She needed to try to make a difference. She said, “I was itching to do something,” and helping Jews underground gave her a purpose.²⁷⁹

Some young rescuers and resisters emphasized their strong religious backgrounds as motivations to save others. Hella Gorn, born 1917, was a housekeeper and active participant in the Quaker youth group in Berlin. During the war she supported Peter Heilmann, a young half-Jew that arranged lodging and forged IDs for Jews in hiding.²⁸⁰ While not actively fighting the Nazis, the Quaker youth group continued to defy the Gestapo during the war by welcoming Jews and other “enemies of the state” to their meetings. A significant characteristic for the group was the “reverence for [all] life.”²⁸¹ One member wrote:

I still am convinced that Truth, Love, Gentleness, and Kindness constitute the power that is above all power. The world will belong to them, if only enough human beings think and live out thoughts of love, truth, peacefulness and gentleness with sufficient purity, strength and constancy.²⁸²

Before the Nazi regime secured power and passed discriminatory measures against the Jews, young Germans went to school with Jews, formed friendships, and saw them in their everyday lives. Hitler and the Nazis soon restricted such relationships from forming and continuing. Some Germans, however, simply did not forget their friends nor did they stop making Jewish friends. One example of a formation of a friendship under Nazi rule involved Frieda Adam. In 1938, this teenage seamstress in Berlin met a Jewish girl named Erna Puterman.

²⁷⁸ “Zofia Baniecka,” PSB Rescuer Biographies, accessed on 15 March 2012, pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shtelt/righteous/zofia.html.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁸⁰ Silent Heroes Memorial Center in the German Resistance Memorial Center Foundation, Rosenthaler Straße 39, 10178 Berlin, 30 June 2012.

²⁸¹ Halle, *Thoughts are Free*, 9.

²⁸² *Idem.*

They quickly befriended each other and stayed friends even after Erna forcibly changed jobs. Four years later in 1942, Erna's mother was sent to Auschwitz. Frieda's response was "immediate," and she took Erna and her brother into her home for hiding. She told Erna, "As long as there is food for us, there will be food for you, too."²⁸³ Erna and her brother hid for the next two years. Thanks to Frieda's care and respect for her friend, Erna and her brother's lives were spared.

Kudolf Kopp, born in 1920, worked as a technician for a major radio company in Berlin. Seeing his friend Konrad Friedlander in danger in 1939, Kudolf gave him his ID card so that he was able to navigate through society freely.²⁸⁴ Another young German, Eugene Kahl, born in 1927, helped his Jewish friends in Frankfurt by bringing them food while in hiding. Though on the surface a small act, Eugene risked disobeying strict laws to help his friends out any way he could.²⁸⁵ Knowing the person in danger gave the rescuers a more personal feeling and urgency to save.

Some young Germans, like those in the White Rose, politically and ideologically opposed the Nazi regime and its restricting nature against individual rights. Other Germans, however, saved Jews as their method of resistance in addition to producing politically charged leaflets. One such resistance group was the European Union. Formed in 1942, the politically motivated group advocated for the return of democratic rights and individual freedoms to Germany. One of the founding members, Robert Havemann, worked as a young physical chemist in Berlin during the war years. There, he protected Jews from deportations by arranging lodgings, giving food, and forging ID papers. Dr. Anneliese Groscurth, another young founder, hid Jews in her

²⁸³ Dwork, *Voices and Views*, 109.

²⁸⁴ Silent Heroes Memorial Center in the German Resistance Memorial Center Foundation, Rosenthaler Straße 39, 10178 Berlin, 30 June 2012.

²⁸⁵ *Idem*.

apartment in Berlin.²⁸⁶ The Gestapo arrested many members of the group near the end of the war. Nevertheless, these politically motivated rescuers knew of their risks and still went forward with their acts.

Ruth Schneider provides another example of a politically opposed rescuer. An active participant in the Socialist Workers' Youth party in Berlin, Ruth rescued and sheltered at least one Jew during the war.²⁸⁷ Their thirst for justice and a return to the freedoms of all triumphed over the intimidation of the Nazi regime.

Another motive for rescuers and resisters was the simple yet formidable humanitarian outlook on life. These altruistic rescuers saved Jews because it was the normal, right path to take. Jaap van Proosdij, born in 1921, rescued and saved about two-hundred-fifty Jews in 1942.²⁸⁸ Only a twenty one year old, Jaap forged marriage certificates, counterfeited papers, and forged baptismal certificates from a non-existing Dutch Ecumenical Council of Churches. Jaap van Proosdij exemplifies a youth resister who, despite being Dutch in this case, paints a picture of the youth movement as a whole that sought to hinder Nazi policy and save Jews. His motives were complex. Noting an influence by his parents, Jaap said in a later interview that he was "brought up with high ethical standards, which together with your religion, I believe, contribute to you acting righteously."²⁸⁹ He humbly acknowledged his righteous acts:

Why did I do it? How could you not do it? If I see you drowning, I would get you out. Any decent person with the imagination to do something to help would have helped. If you did not help, you were not decent.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ Idem.

²⁸⁷ Idem.

²⁸⁸ Agnes Grunwald-Spier, *The Other Schindlers: Why Some People Chose to Save Jews in the Holocaust*, (Stroud: History Press, 2010), 91.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 91.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 95.

His reaction was simply automatic; someone was in life-threatening danger, so he saved him or her. He continued:

It was the only normal thing to do. One can't sit and watch when people are in mortal danger even when you do not know them. While working we got to know more and more Jews and many became friends. Yes, it also became more risky.²⁹¹

He was no hero in his own eyes. He simply saved friends and his fellow human beings. He was only being “normal” by doing what was decent.

Another worthy point of consideration is that Jaap believed his actions were “useful.” He said, “. . .that I did not live just to enjoy myself. Nothing else I ever did was important. A friend of mine said to me that the war was the first time he really lived. For me, it was the time I lived the most intensely.”²⁹² This is a great irony for the Nazis who, in their grandiose rhetoric and parades, attempted to express that all citizens had specific roles and uses. Some people, however, did not heed to the Nazi calls for a life of intensely living. Instead, people like Jaap preferred to carve their own paths and have their own roles in their lives of action. Jaap made a difference by living recklessly in pursuit of his own wants.

Ilse Sonja Totzke, born in the 1910s in Germany, opposed the Nuremburg anti-Semitic laws in her core belief that all people are equal. Kept under strict surveillance by the Gestapo for years, Ilse expressed her values during an interrogation in 1941: “I find the measures against the Jews not right. I wish to emphasize I am not a communist. For me, every decent person is acceptable, irrespective of his nationality.”²⁹³ Ilse continued having friendly relations with the Jews regardless of the laws forbidding it and the constant surveillance she was under. Sensing

²⁹¹ Ibid., 94.

²⁹² Idem.

²⁹³ Mordecai Paldeil, *The Righteous Among the Nations* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007), 486.

impending danger, Ilse fled in 1943. She took along with her Jewess Eva Basinsky. Ilse's recalled:

I already thought for a long time of fleeing from Germany, since I did not feel comfortable under the regime of Adolf Hitler. Above all, I found the Nuremberg laws unacceptable, and for this reason I considered my relations with the Jews I have know to be right.²⁹⁴

Jews were human beings and deserved equal treatment; they did not deserve to have their rights restricted. Ilse and Eva were eventually caught before escaping to Switzerland. Ilse tried to save Eva from a dark fate while risking her own life. She wrote, "I was not asked by anyone to take the Jewish woman along. I only felt compassionate for her and wished to save her from deportation."²⁹⁵ Thus, Ilse was motivated by her compassion towards Eva and the feeling that Jews did not deserve the discrimination put forward by the laws of Nuremberg.

Hildegard Knies, born in 1915, rescued and sheltered a young Jewish girl named Evelyn Goldstein in 1943. Taught by Elizabeth Abegg, a left-liberal teacher at a Berlin secondary school for girls, Hildegard believed in the universal rights of humans, and therefore resented the Nazis onslaught and decimation of Jewish rights. Since she resided in Berlin, Hildegard's rescuing actions entailed great risk. While in public, Hildegard masked Evelyn's identity, saying she was her foster child. The burdensome task and constant need for an alertness of her actions did not stop Hildegard's resistance. In fact, she continually welcomed and hid Jews into her one room apartment in Berlin throughout the war.²⁹⁶ Others, like Willy Vorwalder, born in 1915, helped Jews through other means. In 1943, Willy helped guide Jews to Switzerland to their escape.²⁹⁷ Marion Fuerst, nineteen-years-old in 1939, worked as a department store cashier in Stuttgart

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 487.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 488.

²⁹⁶ Silent Heroes Memorial Center in the German Resistance Memorial Center Foundation, Rosenthaler Straße 39, 10178 Berlin, 30 June 2012.

²⁹⁷ Idem.

while simultaneously engaging in underground activities. She stuffed forged documents, travel tickets, and money into her clothes to later put them in packages of Jewish customers.²⁹⁸ Another contributor, Cato Bontjes van Beek (born in 1920) refused to join the Hitler Youth out of disgust towards the Nazi treatment of Jews. Years later while in Berlin, she helped smuggle food to Jews in hiding. She even went so far as to buy non-rationed food on the black market to help a starving Jewish woman. As a teenager she said, “Adults talk, children must act.” That quote embodies the feelings of those young Germans who felt the need to do something around them for the betterment of humanity. They did not allow themselves to remain uninvolved in the face of such tragic crimes. She felt compelled to do even more in 1941 when the Jews in Berlin were rounded up for deportation. She soon assisted others in writing, typing, and circulating flyers urging the German people to overthrow the Nazis. Her reckless but brave actions caught up to her in 1942 when she was arrested and killed.²⁹⁹ All these young Germans lived and strove for a life of significance by saving their fellow brothers and sisters.

While examples of such rescue and assistance are lacking, it is evident that Nazi officials saw the issue as problematic. On March 6, 1943, Josef Goebbels angrily reported his knowledge of “regrettable scenes” taking place in Berlin.³⁰⁰ While the deportation of Jews from a Berlin old age home carried underway, he wrote, “a large number of people gathered and some of them *even sided with the Jews*” (emphasis added).³⁰¹ Goebbels, the Nazi official responsible for the barrage of propaganda throughout German society for the last decade, heard first hand of these non-Jewish Germans defying his own proclamations right in the capital. Noting in his diary days later, Goebbels wrote of the incident, “the scheduled arrest of Jews on one day failed because of

²⁹⁸ Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, 28.

²⁹⁹ Michalczyk, *Resisters, Rescuers, and Refugees*, 72-73.

³⁰⁰ Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 187.

³⁰¹ Idem.

the shortsighted behavior of industrialists who warned the Jews in time.”³⁰² To Goebbels, the behavior of those saving industrialists was narrow-minded instead of humanitarian. They disobeyed the State by warning and helping Jews, and to Goebbels and to those he tried to indoctrinate, the State’s interests exceeded those of individuals regardless of their danger.

Germans knew full well of the Jewish predicament- the restricting laws, the separation and isolation from society, the forced labor, the deportations, and the murders. From 1941 onward, thousands of German Jews tried to escape the danger, but Nazis prohibited emigration that same year and increased their persecution. The only alternative was to go underground and hide. The harried Jews were left to the mercies of the German people, and some did answer their conscience and save them. While the number of Jewish sympathizers and helpers is unknown, it must be significant: five-thousand Jews, seventeen hundred of them in Berlin, who went into hiding survived in Germany. Scholars Marnix Croes and Beate Kosmala claim that seven thousand people from Berlin were in hiding at least for a time throughout Nazi reign. Calculating approximately seven helpers per one Jewish person, they determined that there were nearly thirty thousand helpers for Berlin Jews alone.³⁰³ Konrad Latte, to give one example, claimed to have been saved by fifty non-Jews in Germany at different points throughout the war.³⁰⁴ Moreover, three million non-Jewish Germans were held at some stage in a concentration camp or prison between 1933-1945. Nearly one million of them were held for active resistance against the regime.³⁰⁵ Those figures show that a significant portion of the German population certainly did not remain apathetic.

³⁰² Idem.

³⁰³ Kosmala, 124.

³⁰⁴ Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 188.

³⁰⁵ Hoffmann, *History of the German Resistance*, 16.

These rescuers, like the other resisters, openly defied Nazi doctrine and law. They grew tired of the violence, the coercion, and the restriction in their lives. Rescuers, knowing of the Jewish danger, decided to show their resistance to the Nazis by saving the country's "enemies." Moreover, they believed it was only the natural action to take- a life was in danger and needed help. While risking their lives, isolation, and disobedience, these rescuers nonetheless recklessly and defiantly decided to live a life of significance by saving another's.

Chapter 5: The Uniqueness of the Young Rescuers and Resisters

The rescuers of Jews shared numerous qualities in their audacious efforts against the Nazis. They recognized the imminent danger and decided to act. Instead of indifference, they practiced compassion and love; instead of conforming to a hateful ideology buttressed by a powerful police force, these rescuers disobeyed and thus preserved their individual freedom and humanitarian beliefs. Astonishingly, many saw their actions as merely normal. To them, saving a human life was an easy decision. For the youth, their actions were remarkable because they risked facing harsh isolation from their peers, the lives of their entire families, and proved that a powerful police state's decade-long efforts towards indoctrination failed. Their craving for living a self-determined life of action allowed them to recklessly defy the odds.

Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, honors the non-Jews who risked their lives saving Jews during the years of persecution. The memorial has four basic criteria for awarding such a title. They are:

1. Active involvement of the rescuer in saving one or several Jews from the threat of death or deportation to death camps
2. Risk to the rescuer's life, liberty or position
3. The initial motivation being the intention to help persecuted Jews: i.e. not for payment or any other reward such as religious conversion of the saved person, adoption of a child, etc.
4. The existence of testimony of those who were helped or at least unequivocal documentation establishing the nature of the rescue and its circumstances.³⁰⁶

Called the "Righteous Among the Nations," these rescuers thus saved Jews not for financial gain or outside pressure, but instead out of their core beliefs in humanity and equality of all. Truly unique and courageous, rescuers risked their own lives (and the lives of their whole families in some cases, especially the young rescuers) to save Jews. As of 2010, nearly twenty-four thousand Righteous Among the Nations from forty-five countries have been recognized.

³⁰⁶ "The Righteous Among the Nations," Yad Vashem, accessed 3 December 2011, <http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/faq.asp#criteria>.

According to Elizabeth Midlarsky and Stephanie Jones, approximately 0.5 percent of the occupied populations participated in rescue activities.³⁰⁷ While these numbers seem low, one must realize that some have refused to be acknowledged for their activities because they either saw it as their simple human duty or that they did not want to be labeled as a “Jew lover” in an overwhelmingly anti-Semitic society.³⁰⁸

Those that stood idle, the bystanders, comprised far greater numbers of the populations. These onlookers were “significantly” younger than the rescuers (an average four year difference in age).³⁰⁹ While observing this statistic, though, one must consider the environment the youth were surrounded in. Raised in a society shrouded in war, destruction, and hate for the last two decades, young Europeans grew up knowing only conflict. Germans especially were indoctrinated to praise the soldier and wish to participate in the glory of war. Nazis made countless efforts to carve the young German into the future ideal Nazi soldier. Society demanded that they submit to the government’s organized patterns and law requirements or else face harsh punishments. Despite such domination, rescuers and resisters proved that not all could be made powerless by the State. Thus, to realize that young rescuers and resisters did exist is remarkable considering the environment surrounding their lives.

The young rescuers of Jews in Germany displayed a keen awareness regarding their life-threatening predicament. Germans on the home front both heard of the army’s criminal acts on the war front and witnessed first-hand the imminent dangers and crimes facing the Jews. Scholar Eva Fogelman believes that such awareness was an “essential first step” towards deciding to

³⁰⁷ Elizabeth Midlarsky, Stephanie Fagin Jones, and Robin P. Corley, “Personality Correlates of Heroic Rescue During the Holocaust,” *Journal of Personality* 73 (2005): 908, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6494.2005.00333.

³⁰⁸ Samuel Oliner and Pearl Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1988), 1.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 926.

rescue.³¹⁰ By seeing such images of suffering and possibly death, the German increased his or her ability to empathize with the sufferers, and thereby gave him or her motivation to act.

Fogelman, continuing her attempt to characterize the youth, writes how some young rescuers were naïve to the dangers of their actions.³¹¹ Considering that many young rescuers witnessed firsthand the accounts of suffering and murder, it seems that many did indeed display an awareness of the grave situation. Young German soldiers like Hugo Armann and Heinz Drossel (page 77) witnessed the establishment and escalation of anti-Jewish measures in the East, and consequently refused to obey orders to kill. Young German industrialist Berthold Beitz witnessed Jews being transported and murdered. His reaction was an empathetic one: “When you see a woman with her child in her arms being shot, and you yourself have a child, then your response is bound to be completely different” (found on 79).

The ability to empathize, a trait common among rescuers, is not fully developed until late adolescence, which can explain the older average of rescuers.³¹² However, when presented with a unique situation, such as witnessing a murder, the youth needed to mature quickly. Teens under the Nazis were unable to live a normal life. Scholar Toby Axelrod recognizes this phenomenon:

Instead of worrying about what class to take in school or which movie to see, teen witnesses were faced with deciding which authorities to heed: their parents and their own consciences, or the commands of a totalitarian dictator. They had to grow up quickly.³¹³

Scholar Daniel Frankel focuses on explaining that the “vast majority” in Germany were unaware of the Jewish danger. Since the Nazis isolated the Jews through restricting laws and ghettoization, he writes, “The Jews had become aliens, in this sense literally beyond the pale of

³¹⁰ Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, 41.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

³¹² Paul A. Miller, “Relations of Moral Reasoning and Vicarious Emotion to Young Children’s Prosocial Behavior Toward Peers and Adults,” *Developmental Psychology* 32 (1996): 210.

³¹³ Axelrod, *Rescuers Defying the Nazis*, 11.

ordinary human solidarity.”³¹⁴ One must recognize that, although there did exist many Germans unaware of or indifferent towards the danger facing the Jews, Germans, both civilians and military members, knew these threats existed. Unique and significant for Germans was the isolation they faced in their resistance activities. They lived in a country that controlled, enforced, and indoctrinated these laws against the Jews for years, and to resist that meant secluding themselves from society.

Young Germans faced enormous pressure to conform in Nazi society, meaning to join and participate in the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls. From a psychological standpoint, children and adolescents increasingly evaluate their own behavior in light of their peers’ performance.³¹⁵ The self-esteem of adolescents and young adults in particular is “highly dependent” on how their peers view them.³¹⁶ Disobeying the Hitler Youth, then, meant separating from most, if not all, of their peers, and thus they risked damaging their social standing and image. To fit in with others, young Germans needed to exert a positive image, and resisting the Nazis meant rejection from peers. In fact, their fellows labeled young people who opposed the Nazis as “fools” or “knaves.”³¹⁷ Charles Maier writes how this unique aspect of Germans was “characterized by an existential loneliness, a conviction that even if successful, the collaborators would be despised for treason.”³¹⁸ What other young Europeans lacked was a system of laws and newly defined morals that explicitly labeled the Jews as the enemy of the state. Unlike other countries, the youth had to act on their own accord and according to their own

³¹⁴ Fraenkel, “The German Righteous Among the Nations,” 227.

³¹⁵ Marta Laupa, *Rights and Wrongs: How Children and Young Adults Evaluate the World* (San Francisco, California: Joseph-Bass, 2000), 78.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

³¹⁷ Prittie, *Germans against Hitler*, 157.

³¹⁸ Charles Maier, “The German Resistance in Comparative Perspective,” in *Contending with Hitler: Varieties of German Resistance in the Third Reich*, ed. David Clay Large (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 142.

conscience and beliefs against an inscrutable authority. For a young German to do that, at an age where their identity and image was so important, was an extraordinary feat.

A vital characteristic of rescuers was their an altruistic personality. Sam and Pearl Oliner define the altruistic personality as the “relatively enduring predisposition to act selflessly on behalf of others, which develops early in life.”³¹⁹ These self-sacrificing individuals exhibited a “stronger sense of attachment to others and their feeling of responsibility for the welfare of others.”³²⁰ With such a predisposition, these rescuers believed that saving others in danger was simply natural and normal; there was no other choice but to rescue. Marina N., a Pole who sheltered thirty Jews during the war, expressed these thoughts of normality when she said, “Helping to give shelter was the natural thing to do, the human thing...how could I not care...to do the only decent thing.”³²¹ To be human and natural for rescuers was to care for those around you, especially when in danger.

Stefan Raczynski (page 84) believed rescuing Jews was “a natural thing to do...we didn’t think anything of it.” His altruistic personality did not let the fear of punishment freeze his personal belief to be responsible for others. German soldier Karl Pragge provided another example of this personality. He saved more than one thousand Jews by transporting them over from the Vilna Ghetto in Lithuania to a safe work camp. He, like other rescuers, acted according to his conscience. He recalled, “There is no one either above me or below me with whom I can speak my mind.” He refused to be subject to the whims of the State. Instead, he thought for himself: “They [his saving actions] are built upon my humanity, my care, my thoughts about human coexistence. They are part of my nature, a piece of fulfillment in my life...I feel

³¹⁹ Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality*, 3.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 249.

³²¹ Midlarsky, Jones, and Corley, “Personality Correlates of Heroic Rescue During the Holocaust,” 908.

responsible for all that happens.”³²² As seen with the White Rose members and others, rescuers like Karl Prage felt responsible to act in the face of such danger. Irene Gut Opdyke promised herself that if the opportunity arrived, she would help the persecuted Jews, and she did (page 80). She felt responsible for others; it became the central reason for her existence. She risked her life while hiding Jews right under the noses of Nazi officials. The numerous rescuers and resisters covered in this work sensed that it was their duty to produce some sort of reaction to the Nazi evils. Credited to being simply a part of their existence and humanity, rescuing Jews was merely the normal route of action.

For German youth, displaying altruistic traits while just finishing or still growing mentally and physically was a notable accomplishment. Psychologically, as children grow older they experience an increase in perspective taking and reflective abstract cognitive skills. Thus during adolescence, moral judgment increasingly develops and matures.³²³ During the war and the years leading up to it, many young people faced for the first time the decision to help others at some cost to themselves. Since young humans are usually still unaware or unsure of formal external guidelines when put into this situation, their decision is very difficult to reach.³²⁴ This, in essence, is what Toby Axelrod means when he writes that youth had to “grow up fast.”³²⁵ They witnessed around them the dangers occurring and decided on their own to help others.

With the altruistic personality governing some of their saving actions, young rescuers believed themselves to be merely fulfilling their duties and listening to their consciences; they did not believe themselves to be heroes of any sort. Preben Munch-Nielson, born in 1926, expressed such an outlook. In 1943, Preben helped hide refugees in Denmark and led them in

³²² Silent Heroes Memorial Center in the German Resistance Memorial Center Foundation, Rosenthaler Straße 39, 10178 Berlin, 30 June 2012.

³²³ Laupa, *Rights and Wrongs*, 56.

³²⁴ Idem.

³²⁵ Axelrod, *Rescuers Defying the Nazis*, 11.

boats to Sweden. He believed he simply had to save the Jews; there was no way around. In an interview:

You couldn't let people in...in need down. You can't turn the back to people who need your help. There's...there must be some sort of decency in a man's life, and that wouldn't have been decent to turn the back to people in need. So, there's no question, uh, of why or why not. You just did. That's the way you're brought up. That's the way of the tradition in...in my country. You help, of course. And therefore I don't think it's...I...could you have remained your self-respect if you knew that these people would suffer and [you had] said, "No. Not at my table"? No. No way. So that's not a problem of...of--you just have to do it. And nothing else.³²⁶

Preben's conscience could not fathom turning back people in need. "Of course" someone helped another in need, Preben believed. Preben did not allow himself to sit back and watch people suffer. Andr e Geulen-Herscovici, born in 1921 in Belgium, sheltered and hid children in her own home after seeing their persecution in the streets. She believed nothing was extraordinary about her actions: "I deserve nothing for what I did. I am not a hero. It is true, that at the war's end I relished with satisfaction what I did. At the same time, I did not seek recognition and medals."³²⁷ Other rescuers like Andr e likewise displayed bewilderment regarding the attention and glorification of their deeds. Miep Gies, the rescuer of Anne Frank and her family, wrote, "I have never wanted special attention. I was only willing to do what was asked of me and what seemed necessary at the time."³²⁸ These rescuers had the interests of humanity above their own.

Eva Fogelman attempts to categorize all young rescuers into a single category. She acknowledges that the younger ones differed from older ones, however, the difference according to her was that the young "rescuers self was launched as a result of his or her parent's actions...They were enlisted in a cause; they did not volunteer. Their initial motivation was to

³²⁶ "Preben Munch-Nielson: Personal Histories," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed on 15 March 2012,

http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/phistories/viewmedia/phi_fset.php?MediaId=1193.

³²⁷ Paldiel, *The Righteous Among the Nations*, 137.

³²⁸ Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, 6.

please their parents.”³²⁹ While undoubtedly many young rescuers expressed a familial influence as one motivating factor for their actions, it was neither the only one nor sometimes even a factor. Teresa Prekerowa (page 81), for instance, kept secret from her parents that she rescued a young Jewish girl. Other rescuers and resisters mentioned being raised in a liberal household, but that did not mean their future actions were geared towards gaining their parents approval. Irene Gut Opdyke, for example, acted alone in her rescuing actions. The White Rose or Edelweiss Pirates acted against the Nazis because they had a longing for personal freedom and felt Nazi criminal acts towards the Jews had to stop. These groups, like the other young German resisters and rescuers, had diverse motives and influencing factors. However, they all displayed contempt towards coercive powers, a need to live a life of significance supported by their idealistic beliefs, and a reckless and rebellious attitude toward achieving their goals.

Even under the watchful eye of the Gestapo and well aware of the risk carried with rebellion, these young resisters displayed significant courage and recklessness in achieving their goals. Hitler promised millions an opportunity to fulfill their inner desires, but they became disappointed by the regime’s restrictive efforts to turn them into obedient puppets of hate and destruction. Numerous young Germans chose personal liberty and the freedom to think as they so chose over the forced nationalism of the Nazis. Victor Klemperer regretted exchanging his sense of self for identification with Hitler and of Germany. He wrote in his diary, “[I] imagined myself to belong to Germany...I myself have had too much nationalism inside me and am now punished for it.”³³⁰ Members of the White Rose, the Edelweiss Pirates, Swing Youth, and individuals acting on their own resisted the Nazis as part of upholding such a reckless and fierce thirst for freedom.

³²⁹ Ibid., 222.

³³⁰ Stoltzfus, “Witness in Spite of Himself,” 544.

Helmuth Hubener's (born in 1925) young curious nature and yearning for freedom led him to be arrested after he listened to Allied broadcasts and produced pamphlets against Nazis. Since the summer of 1941, after being forcibly transferred into the Hitler Youth, he made these leaflets, some containing vile insults against Hitler. When asked what motivated him to produce such writings, Helmuth said, "I was dissatisfied with the newscasts which German radio reported and wanted to furnish other people with newscasts."³³¹ He continued, "Curiosity motivated me to listen."³³² Helmuth wanted to simply quell his curiosity by hearing other perspectives on the war. The regime's restricting nature motivated Helmuth to produce pamphlets targeted towards other German youth even after he was questioned and under suspicion by the Gestapo. In one leaflet directed to the Hitler Youth, Helmuth wrote:

Therefore we are calling out to you: Do not let your free will, the most valuable thing you possess, be taken away. Do not let yourselves be suppressed and tyrannized by your leaders – high-handed kings in miniature- but rather turn your back on the Hitler Youth, the tool of the Hitler regime for your destruction. We are with you and you can always count on our help! Endure to the end, Germany's awake!³³³

This young German received the death sentence in 1942. Helmuth, as other young resisters, rebelled against the oppressive nature of the Nazi regime and warned their fellow members about the dangers of an authoritarian government. Some produced pamphlets, others refused to join Nazi organizations, and some defied Nazi law and rescued Jews. One German simply stated the obvious when she admitted, "I was by nature rebellious – against the established order."³³⁴ These Germans were predisposed to distrust authority and rebel from the legacy of World War I. In addition, however, young Germans and young people in general, were psychologically prone to rebel against restricting authority.

³³¹ Holmes and Keele, *When Truth was Treason*, 159.

³³² *Ibid.*, 160.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 203.

³³⁴ Paldeil, *The Righteous Among the Nations*, 137.

A unique aspect regarding the German youth resisting authoritarian regimes in the twentieth century was their rebellious attitude, even in the face of compulsory measures and fearful consequences. While an enduring legacy of World War I, the rebellious nature of youth can also be explained in psychological terms. Growing adolescents start to desire and appreciate their own sense of individuality. In their identity formation, young people yearn to have their individuality respected and their lives be given a certain sense of autonomy.³³⁵ In pursuit of such autonomy, youth sometimes rebel against authority figures, especially when these strict figures try to manipulate them into complying with their own intents.³³⁶ The Nazis and the Hitler Youth were no strangers to manipulation, and eventually some youth rebelled, and in the process took great risk in the actions that followed.

The youthful reckless spirit and the need for action exhibited by these young Germans allowed them to risk their own lives for their beliefs, and that sense of such thrill reassured them that they were living significant lives. Adolescents in general experience an increase in sensation seeking that is psychologically linked with the changes during puberty.³³⁷ Lauren Steinberg writes that sensation-seeking and reckless behavior spike in youth because of the start of puberty and newfound need to reproduce. She writes:

Such risk-taking may be necessary in order to survive and facilitate reproduction. As Belsky and I have written elsewhere, ‘The willingness to take risks, even life-threatening risks, might well have proved advantageous to our ancestors...’³³⁸

Thus that youthful reckless spirit, while explained in psychological terms, was nonetheless a tradition and enduring identification for the German youth in the early twentieth century.

³³⁵ Laupa, *Rights and Wrongs*, 140.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

³³⁷ Laurence Steinberg, “A Social Neuroscience Perspective on Adolescent Risk-Taking,” *Dev Rev.* 28 (2008): 5, doi:10.1016/j.dr.2007.08.002.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

Yad Vashem has recognized nearly five hundred Germans as Righteous. Among those recognized are Ilse Sonja Totzke, Gitta Bauer, Irene Gut Opdyke, and Berthold Beitz. While this figure may seem low compared the population, one must bear in mind the numerous factors limiting this number from rising. Rescue activity was extremely secretive- numerous lives were at great risk. Some sheltered Jews for a night, others provided food only once, others, recognizing the extreme risk of the situation, remained anonymous in their saving efforts while they were under the vigilant eye of the Gestapo. Many rescuers left Jews by saying, “Promise me that you will never tell anyone my name. Don’t ever write to me. Good luck.”³³⁹ Moreover, the thousands of Jews that survived in Germany after the war indicates that most, if not all, received aid by non-Jews in some way. Thus, one must not rely solely on statistics in judging the prevalence of rescue activities in a country. Holocaust historian Martin Gilbert, in quoting Peter Schneider, expresses how numbers should not be primarily relied upon. He writes:

We will never know how many Berliners had the decency and courage to save their Jewish co-citizens from the Nazis- 20,000, 30000? We don’t need to know the number in order to pay homage to this untypical, admirable minority. While many individual Germans have been honoured for protecting Jews, thousands of ordinary Germans have remained generally unrecognized in the city where many of them did their good deeds.³⁴⁰

German rescuers accomplished incredible saving acts in their country. Living in a country that created and obliged to laws against Jews, these isolated rescuers relied on their own morality, their own courage, and their own sole actions in confronting the destructive forces of Nazism. Young Germans had to quickly mature and think for themselves while the State ardently tried to shape and determine their thoughts and morals for them. Instead of conforming to the popularly-accepted, main pillar of Nazism, anti-Semitism, rescuers viewed Jews as fellow members of the human race. This humanitarian response sprang from a core of firmly held inner

³³⁹ Paldiel, *The Righteous Among the Nations*, xvi.

³⁴⁰ Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 188.

values, which believed that one's actions made a difference. In the face of the great fear of capture and death, these altruistic rescuers isolated themselves from the anti-Semitic populous and repudiated Nazi authority to save those facing even greater danger than themselves.

Conclusion: From pre-World War I to World War II, the Legacy Endured

When teaching a room full of about forty adults and their teenage children on this topic, I asked if the audience knew any examples of German resistance. After a few moments of silence, both groups shook their heads in bewilderment. I then asked how many people they believed have been recognized as a “Righteous Among the Nations.” Not one person, adult or teenager, believed that more than five hundred possessed such a title worldwide. Even from this small sample I realized the importance of my work.

My aspiration in writing this thesis is to educate those on the unknown acts of humanity and righteous rebellion exhibited by some Germans in their homeland. Throughout these five chapters, I traced how the German youth exhibited certain unique traits from World War I to the end of World War II. These characteristics included wariness towards authority, a need for purpose, the love of personal freedom, a strong idealism for a better society, the thrill of excitement, and the inclination to take risks. These enduring legacies of World War I provided the backdrop for the youthful resistance during the twelve-year Nazi reign. The regime devoted enormous amounts of energy toward indoctrinating young Germans and forming them into ideal members of Nazi society. In this quest however, the Nazis stripped the youths’ personal freedom, encouraged strict obedience, and preached a dialogue of hate, something some young Germans could not tolerate. The German youth were a distinctive group of Germans because they engrossed themselves into the affairs of the county and were able to strip away the gauze of Nazi euphemisms despite overwhelming forces.

Chapter One deals with the years of World War I and the war’s impact on young Germans. In describing the legacies of World War I, scholars Donson, Koch, Gillis, and Loewenberg all correctly examined the numerous factors, both psychological and societal, that

help explain Germany's transition from the depressed Weimar Republic into a violent National Socialist state. Each author greatly contributed to the argument that the emotionally damaged German youth were conditioned to be violent and independent power-seekers ready to die for their cause. With that in mind, these authors conclude that it is because of these conditions that the young Germans were so embracing and attracted to the ideals of Nazism. However, in their work, the authors failed to closely examine the additional legacies of the war. In particular, the First World War implanted an anti-authoritarian outlook. Moreover, the desire to freely will and control one's life as well as the hope of helping shape historical events instead of standing idle remained common characteristics of young Germans for years.

Chapter Two focuses on the tumultuous interwar years. During this time, antipathy, uncertainty, depression, and anger governed many Germans' thoughts. German youth, especially disheartened, sought to live and create a better, more worthwhile existence. Radical political groups tried to capitalize on such feelings. The National Socialists, for example, proclaimed themselves as a party of youth seeking to replace the decrepit, broken system of government. With Hitler at the helm, the Nazis tried to convince the youth of their supreme importance in the future affairs of Nazi Germany. Many young Germans, striving for that life of significance, answered that call and joined the Nazi party. After their acquisition of power in 1933, however, the Nazis passed restricting measures against the German people. To add, the Nazis' harsh and discriminating actions against the Jews further disappointed some of the idealistic youth. They followed Hitler in hopes of having a hand in changing history, but instead their livelihoods revolved around a controlling government.

The third chapter discusses the blossoming resistance during World War II as a result of the increase in restrictions and harsh measures by the Nazis. Compulsory membership in Nazi

youth organizations, increased military emphasis, and compulsory attendance for meetings repulsed some youth. Instead of a self-determining life of action, these young Germans became the State's puppets. The legacies of World War I started to show themselves as some young Germans became determined to rebel against authority. For instance, in an effort to display their rebellious, anti-authority attitude, some of these Germans formed and joined the Edelweiss Pirates. These youth, determined to live freely, flaunted their carefree and rebellious spirit through refusing to join the Hitler Youth, hosting their own meetings and activities, and wearing their own unique uniforms. Another young resistance group, the White Rose, expressed strong idealistic spirits in their pamphlets. Significantly, these members openly called for an end to German indifference in the face of the Nazis' murdering of the Jews. These two examples of groups resisting the Nazis serve as evidence of the extreme courage and risk some young Germans took in letting their traits and legacies shine bright.

The fourth chapter, while dealing with the same time period (World War II), focuses on acts of rescue. In providing numerous accounts of testimony and examples, this chapter presents the complex motives surrounding rescuers. As the war continued in the Soviet Union, numerous reports from the front about the Jewish atrocities reached the homeland. Reports from young soldiers mention these ghastly scenes. Meanwhile, Nazi discrimination and violent deportation of Jews inside of Germany grew crueler, as witnessed by fellow Germans. Unable to ignore their consciences any longer, some young Germans rebelled in the face of great risk. In their efforts to rescue Jews, these Germans displayed the same characteristics seen with the other resisters and with the young Germans from World War I: strong idealism, reckless need for action, and a hatred of authority. Additionally, however, many rescuers showed signs of an altruistic personality, which attributed their saving actions were merely normal and undeserving of any

recognition. To them, saving a life in danger was the obvious path of action to take, regardless of what the law said. While diverse in motivations and experiences, the young German rescuers and resisters shared numerous unique qualities.

These young resisters performed an astonishing feat in their acts of rebellion. The German environment between the world wars was shrouded in violence, obedience, chaos, instability, and fear. The youth of Germany, in particular, was a center of intense focus and attention for the Nazis. Hitler believed that having the youth on his side ensured the survival of the Nazi Party and its ideology. Nevertheless, the Nazi efforts to indoctrinate the youth failed. The youthful reckless and carefree spirit of rebellion seen even during World War I glimmered in the darkness of war and hate. While one may attribute the youth's rebellious nature and reckless risk taking as simply part of normal adolescence, these young Germans' valiant actions should not simply be belittled as a matter of physiology. The resisting young Germans showed heroism in the face of great threat and broke the bonds of a restrictive state that devoted much attention to brainwashing them. Youth never lost sight of their distrust of authority, idealism, and a need to live a significant life.

My generation and the students of history in general must know of these brave and righteous examples during the Nazi years. We must remember them not only to honor our past, but also to have examples and models to aspire to for the present and future generations. This time period in history showed us that we must be prepared for anything. The Nazis shocked the world through their atrocious actions. People assumed that an educated and civilized society would not be able to produce such murderous madness. Germany, the country leading human endeavors in just about all the fields of science, seemingly suddenly turned mad. Today, youth

must never expect for events to simply return to normal on their own or to be taken care of. We must always remain vigilant and true to our defining characteristics and values.

I hope to have proven to these readers that in the very midst of the catastrophe of World War II and the Nazi reign, there were exemplars of great humanity. If the Nazi perpetrators and collaborators constitute the tragedy of this human experience, the resisters and rescuers constitute its hope and prove that a man's spirit cannot be easily quelled or defeated.

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