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**A Youth in Upheaval!**

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**University Honors Thesis**

**Dr. Thomas F. Thibault**

**May 10, 2006**

## Introduction

The trouble started for the undesirables when the public systems started being filtered. Jewish and other non Aryan businesses were being boycotted. The German people (not including Jews and other non Aryans) were forbidden to use these businesses. They could not shop in their grocery stores. Germans could not bring their finances to their banks. It eventually seemed best not to even loiter around these establishments of business. Not stopping there, soon Jewish people could no longer hold occupations at German establishments. Little by little, the Jewish citizens started losing their rights, some even the right to citizenship. They were forced to identify themselves in every possible way, wherever they went, so that they were detectable among the Germans. The Jews were rapidly becoming cornered.

These restrictions and tragedies did not only affect the adults. Children were affected as well, if not more. Soon, they were not allowed to go to the movies, own bicycles, even be out in public without limitations. They eventually were not allowed in German schools in addition to their teachers' counterparts. It would not matter after long, because soon they would be out of all schools. The Jewish people were starting to get rounded up into ghettos, and sent off to work camps or concentration camps. In these camps, children were often separated from their parents. They were worked and starved to the point of emaciation and/or death. Some children were allowed some extra time to live, but at a terrible cost. These were twins who had life and death experiments operated on them daily. They were called Dr. Mengele's twins. Some children did not even make it to the concentration camps. Children (along with adults) who had hereditary or genetic defects were automatically euthanized. Some children were able to escape the horrors, and some survived to tell their story. However, all of them had paid terrible costs.

Being undesirable was not the only problem the youth had to face. There was another side to the youth of this nation; a counterpart to the youth Hitler tried so hard to get rid of. This was a youth that was considered ideal. True German, non Jewish, healthy boys and girls made up this population. These people were not sent to ghettos. They did not go to concentration camps. They did not need to run off to other countries to avoid persecution. They did not have to find new homes after the war due to their whole family perishing (however some had to be returned to their original families). They did not have gruesome experiments performed on them. They were never face-to-face with corpses of children of their own age. They did not worry about being exterminated for their weaknesses like an insect. They were able to go to school. They could go to the theaters and to the cinema. They were allowed to live. But was that enough? They may not have been persecuted like the others, but they still did not get to live a normal life similar to the lives that we live today. They, like any other child during a war, had to live in fear of bombs and fire, air raids and capture. They were highly protected by their parents and did not have the freedoms normally enjoyed by people their age. Also, they lived under the reign of Hitler, who was very strict about the activities the youth participated in.

Hitler monitored his people very well, which included his youth. He also wanted their help in the effort of the war. The group he made the boys join was called Hitler Jugend, Bund der Deutschen Arbeiterjugend. He had the girls join Bund Deutscher Mädel (a female Hitler youth). There was also the group called Reichsarbeitsdienst where they helped out with farm labor.

Hitler also knew that youth meant future. He wanted as many trained (in his way) "Aryan" youth as he could get. Since he was exterminating many of the nation's youth (Jews) already, he knew he would need more. He had an idea of creating masses of Aryan babies to

make up for the lacking German youth. He wanted millions to grow up to fight for him. This led to the Lebensborn movement. Also, near the end of the war he started ordering to have children kidnaped who fit the physical description of his race from other countries.

One thing that all of these youths had in common was something that we could not even begin to comprehend ourselves. This was a consuming fear that, for over a decade, never left them. This was the fear of death. These young people were not sick; they were the prisoners of a corrupt government. And all they could do to survive (if they were allowed to survive) was comply. However, some, even though extremely young and afraid, chose to fight back. The resistance groups did many things to stir up the government. They gave the youth something to embrace, enjoy, and look forward to (underground dancing groups), which in a way, messed up Hitler's plan. Hitler would not have wanted people of any sort (youth included) to unite in any way against him. The youth that were the most threatening to Hitler were the ones who went deliberately against him to provide information to the masses. There were also young people who avoided the military and more. Every minute they had to (they needed to) fear for their lives so they could survive defying Hitler. Some even died resisting. These were not your normal kids. They showed bravery beyond their years.

All of these young people had a journey to endure. They all had a story.

## A Youth Unwanted

A March to Death

“On January, 20, 1942, Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler’s second in command of the SS, convened the Wannsee Conference in Berlin with 15 top Nazi bureaucrats to coordinate the Final Solution (Endlösung) in which the Nazis would attempt to exterminate the entire Jewish population of Europe, an estimated 11 million persons” (The History Place, 1). Even before this date, the Jewish people were being rounded up into ghettos and being prepared for deportation. The children were left to play in the filth. These children often had to steal food to feed their starving families, since they were small and fast enough to fit through tight spots and out run any predators. This had put their lives at great risk. Many children were left alone when their parents and older siblings were killed or taken away to concentration camps. They were left on their own to fend for themselves in the midst of dirt and disease until they were found and sent to the camps themselves. (Children, 1).

When the children finally did go to the camps, they were either crammed with the adults into train cars, carts, trucks, or marched to the camps. The conditions of their transport were horrible. They usually traveled many days with little or no food and water (and if they received water, it was usually from diseased sources). They had to urinate and defecate wherever possible, because they were not allowed to stop. They could not bathe and were exposed to the elements. Some died of disease, dehydration, exposure, or exhaustion. In contrast to those who died during the transport to the camps, some started their lives there because their pregnant mothers had no where else to give birth. They barely had room to sleep and by the time they got

to the camps they were exhausted. When they got to the camps, the children would often go with their mothers, or be completely separated from their family. The very young and sick would usually go directly to the gas chambers. They were always on alert and never knew from moment to moment whether or not they were safe. Elie Wiesel remembered what his experience was like. Before he even entered the camp, he was unsure of his safety. "Not far from us, flames were leaping up from a ditch, gigantic flames. They were burning something. A lorry drew up at the pit and delivered its load - little children. Babies! Yes, I saw it - saw it with my own eyes . . . those children in the flames" (Night, 30). These were the visions that children had to see. These were the nightmares that they did not have to fall asleep to see. Elie Wiesel did not know whether or not he was in the line to go into the camp or the line to go into the crematory. He, a child, had actually contemplated suicide to escape the horrors of the concentration camp. "I don't want to wait here. I'm going to run to the electric wire. That would be better than slow agony in the flames" (31). He had actually survived that night, and many nights to come for that matter, but he was completely changed after that night; changed in ways a child should never be. "Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget these flames which consumed my faith forever" (32).

Once inside the camp, the children along with the adults, were stripped of their last belongings. Their heads were shaved, and they were tattooed with their identification number. Most were forced into slave labor. Some children had experiments performed on them. All had too little to eat. There was a period of waiting when the people had to be inspected for health issues and wait to be assigned jobs. There were many different kinds of jobs, too many to mention in fact. Some of the lucky children received easy jobs. Many factory jobs consisted of

counting items or putting things together and the children who had these jobs were able to save their energy. Other jobs that went to the strong, young, and healthy were more tiresome and required heavy labor, like carrying heavy objects or digging. Sometimes heavy physical labor was not the only issue for these children. Elie Wiesel recalls one boy's account. "Bela Katz - son of a big tradesman from our town - had arrived at Birkenau with the first transport, a week before us. Having been chosen for his strength, he had himself put his father's body into the crematory oven" (33). If that was not the only inhumanity these children had to suffer, the children were also in danger of their innocence being punctured. Wiesel remembered a time he had moved into a new area in the camp and remembered a man that was in charge of the area. "He loved children. As soon as we arrived, he had brought [the children] bread, soup, and margarine. Actually, this was not disinterested affection: there was considerable traffic in children among homosexuals here, I learned later" (46).

Once the children were completely broken down to nothing (most had endured loss of property, parents, siblings, dignity, health, and emotions) all they had left was to wait. Wait for liberation, or to die. Most, along with everything else had lost hope for the first. Selection was a common way to determine if the children were healthy enough to go on, or if it was time to exterminate them. If chosen, they went to the gas chamber, a big room reminiscent of a shower. Once locked inside naked, gas would leak into the sealed chamber. Sometimes, exhaust would be used. Other times Zyklon B was used. Zyklon B is a "cyanide - based insecticide [that] consists of hydrocyanic acid. When exposed to air, the substrates evolved gaseous hydrogen cyanide" (Wikipedia - Zyklon B, 1). Inhalation of high concentrations of hydrogen cyanide causes a coma with seizures, apnea and cardiac arrest, with death following in a matter of minutes" (Wikipedia - Cyanide, 4.3). Some who did not make it to the gas chambers died in a shooting range or were

hanged. Others died of diseases such as typhus, dysentery, and tuberculosis. Babies born in the concentration camps were usually killed shortly after birth. And many children died during the death marches near liberation. Children that did make it to the liberation still had to suffer hunger, lice and fleas, dehydration, and emaciation, before they were free. They had much to endure after their departure from the concentration camps as well. Most had nowhere to go, and no one to go with, being the sole survivor of their families. Many still perished afterwards because the physical damage had spread too far. Many had permanent health problems. Fortunately, some were strong enough to share their story, like Elie Wiesel. Many of these newly homeless children had to completely relocate. They learned to live with new families and in new places. Many had grown up to discover they did not really know who they were, or where they belonged. Some were able to make peace, while others had a hatred burned inside them.

### The Tortured Treasures

Some Children in the concentration camps had a chance. Whether it was a chance to live or to merely exist, was the real question. These children were considered special though. And they were singled out. A certain person had a spot in his heart for twin children, or maybe it was a spot in his estranged mind. When they would first come into the camp, he (or one of his assistants) would single them out and inform the parents of his wish to have them with him (although the parents did not really have a choice). He favored these twins. He gave them extra special attention. He gave them extra food, brought them sweets, and talked softly to them. He gave them coffee and made sure that they were protected. He told everyone not to harm them.

Everyone stayed out of their way. Unfortunately, these children were not any luckier than the other children. In fact, in a sick and twisted way, they were much, much worse off.

Dr. Josef Mengele was a renowned doctor at Auschwitz. After the camp he mainly worked at (a gypsy camp at Birkenau) was liquidated, he became the Chief Medical Officer of his infirmary (the main one at Birkenau) and was under the Chief Medical Officer of Auschwitz (SS - Standortarzt Eduard Wirths). The medical experiments he conducted had earned him high status in the Nazi hierarchy. Adolf Hitler himself held him in high respect. "I feel that I owe my life to him. Certainly all German people do owe their lives to him until the war ends" (Wikipedia - Josef Mengele, 3). This was a statement directly from Hitler.

Mengele had a belief that identical twins were ideal to experiment on because one could be the control while the other would be the test subject. This way he could see the differences and compare them. In fact, they were morbid, extremely painful, inhumane, dangerous, and most of the time - lethal. One of the experiments he was known for performing was attempting to change the color of the children's eyes. He would inject chemicals and dyes into their pupils. Dr. Mengele had a certain fascination with genetics and was always trying to see if there was a frontier in altering them. This would have been very useful in helping Hitler create his "Aryan" world. This may have been why Hitler held him in such high esteem. Another experiment he would perform would be to submerge these children into boiling water. He wanted to see how much heat their bodies could withstand without dying. More common operations were amputations and other unnecessary surgeries. In one case he tried to "create an artificial conjoined twin by sewing the veins in two twins together; this operation was not successful and only caused the hands of the children to become badly infected" (3). He also performed specialized experiments on females, including sterilization and shock treatments. The majority of

his experiments did not have any scientific value and all of them defied the Hippocratic Oath and ethical practice. He did not even use anesthesia during these surgeries. "Most victims died either due to the experiments or later infections" (3). Usually when one died, the other would be killed for autopsy comparison. "Dr. Mengele had always been more interested in Tibi. I am not sure why - perhaps because he was the older twin. Mengele made several operations on Tibi. One surgery on his spine left my brother paralyzed. He could not walk anymore. Then they took out his sexual organs. After the fourth operation, I did not see Tibi anymore. I cannot tell you how I felt. It is impossible to put into words how I felt. They had taken away my father, my mother, my two older brothers - and now, my twin . . ." (Auschwitz, 1).

Some of these children did survive and are still alive today. One of these twins established a memorial to these children with her twin sister. Eva Kor and her sister Miriam (who died in 1993 from cancer that may have been caused by the experiments) constructed a memorial, a museum called C.A.N.D.L.E.S. which stands for Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiment Survivors. Eva Kor remembers her experience well, almost too well. She had described how an SS guard had been yelling for twins. He had asked their mother if she and her sister were twins. When her mother said yes, he took them away from her. Her last memory with her mother was of them all crying. "I remember looking back and seeing my mother's arms stretched out in despair as she was pulled away. I never even got to say good bye to her because this was the last time we saw her" (I was a guinea pig, 1). She recalled Dr. Mengele being known as the "Angel of Death." She remembered what was done to her. "They would tie both of my arms, and take a lot of blood from my left arm, on occasion enough blood until I fainted. And that was, they wanted to know how much blood a person could lose and still live. At the same time I was given a minimum of five injections in my right arm" (1). She was sure she was

injected with either germs or chemicals. “That night I developed extremely high fever. I was trembling. My arms and legs were swollen, huge size” (Victims of Mengele, 1). Dr. Mengele and two other doctors came in and, within hearing distance of Eva, laughingly foretold her death in a couple of weeks. She did not only suffer physical pain. She had to witness things that no adult, let alone a child her age, should ever have to endure. “The first time I went to use the latrine, located at the end of the children’s barrack, I was greeted by the scattered corpses of several children lying on the ground. I think that image will stay with me forever. It was then that I made a silent pledge - a vow to make sure that Mirium and I didn’t end up on that filthy floor” (1). Eva had to show courage beyond her years to survive this ordeal. She often had to risk her life to smuggle food (mere potatoes) for all the children. Only a handful of these children survived these horrible experiments.

### Mercy Killing . . . Or Merciless Murder

Another group of children that were undesirable in Hitler’s eyes were among a bigger group of people of all ages. These were groups of people with mental, physical, and hereditary disabilities and diseases, and the extremely ill. Hitler’s plan was to get rid of these people through the T-4 euthanasia program. The program was started in 1939. Unlike the name of the program (which is supposed to mean mercy killing, similar to what is done to put animals down) the operation showed very little mercy. The people being euthanized by the program were the “mentally defective, severely handicapped, the incurably insane, and the incurably sick” (The T-4, 1). This was for the purpose of enhancing the racial purity of the German nation. A person with a disabling disease that could be passed down his/her lineage was a candidate for the

program. If they could prove that their disease was not hereditary and could not pass it on, they could be spared. "To implement the euthanasia program, special carbon - monoxide chambers were constructed" (1). This foreshadowed the concentration camp gas chambers. Another method of euthanasia was by lethal injection. Thousands died as a result of this program. Many of these people were children.

One reason Hitler wanted this program initiated was because he felt these people were not real citizens. He felt they took up space and were using up all of the economy (for all the care they needed) that was meant for hard-working Germans. "A person with a hereditary illness costs the state 5.50 Marks a day. For 5.50 Marks a healthy (without hereditary illnesses) family can live for one day" (The cost, 1). Hitler felt that people with these diseases were unworthy of life. He felt that in nature, they would be naturally filtered out, so he was going to play God and filter out Germany.

### Those Who Escaped

Of the millions of children who had to suffer and perish, there were some that escaped the horrors. Some children were sent to hide with other families. Some were sent to churches to hide. Others were sent to other countries. Some were able to hide right in the midst of the chaos during the Third Reich. One boy named Solomon Perel managed to survive and hide in the gravest of circumstances. In 1935, his family's business (which was also their home) was invaded by Nazis and as a result, his sister was killed. His brother Issak and he had tried to escape to Poland but only he made it. He stayed at an orphanage in Soviet occupied Poland for a while until a German invasion of the Soviet Union separated him from them. He stayed in the

Army as an interpreter. He then got sent to a Hitler Youth school where, under the alias Josef Perjell, he was able to fool them. Toward the end of the war he surrendered himself to the Soviet Army and later he ironically found his brother Issak again, after all those years. He went on to write a book about his experience. The book was later used for the basis of the film "Europa, Europa." He still gives presentations on his time during the war. He was extremely lucky to survive the circumstances that he did. However, with high intellect, in addition to common sense (actually much more than common sense), and being at the right place at the right time with the right people (luck), he was able to survive. But, his luck came with a cost. He had to live with, and pretend to be, his enemy. He had to turn against his own values, morals, ethics, and worst of all, his own people to survive. And he had to live with the decisions he made. It is hard to say who had it worse, he or his brother who had survived the concentration camp. (Wikipedia - Solomon Perel, 1)

## A Youth Over Wanted

### Little Nazis

The Hitler Youth was lightly based off an already existing youth group. It was called Wandervogel and it consisted of boys following the lifestyle of simple, rural times. However, these groups were quite different from each other. Some ideals of the Hitler Youth were borrowed from Wandervogel. One incorporated ideal was physical activity. He also liked the idea of Jugendkultur, which meant youth led by youth. However, unlike the Hitler Youth's ideals, the Wandervogel members "rejected [the] modern, big city era and took a dim view of its

predecessor, the industrial revolution, which had been started by their fathers and grandfathers. They scorned greed and materialism, and the new emerging corporate mentality. They found strict German schooling oppressive and rejected parental authority. They saw hypocrisy in politics and the social class system of Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany, which was based entirely on birth and accumulated wealth" (The History Place, 1).

Many youth groups started emerging during the youth group movement between 1900 and 1914. There were the Boy Scouts, the Catholic Youth Organization, sports, military - like, and political groups. During World War I, many of the members of these groups went off to war. Millions were killed. New groups emerged. Among these groups was Hitler's "German Workers Party" which was renamed the "National Socialist German Workers Party" (National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei or NSDAP) in 1920 along with the "Youth League of the National Socialist Workers' Party." This early version of the Hitler Youth had no fees, idolized patriotism, and nationalism, valued physical activity along with combat, revered ethics and spirituality, and rejected Jewish ideals. They held meetings for discussions, took hikes, and dressed like the SA. The group was disbanded a few years after it was formed when Hitler was arrested. When Hitler was released from jail, he reorganized the group (with 21 year old Kurt Gruber). This new group was named Hitler Jugend, Bund der Deutschen Arbeiterjugend (this was the official Hitler Youth). There were new rules for these new youths to follow. Now there was a monthly fee. Also, "Hitler Youths turning 18 had to be Nazi Party members, appointments to high-ranking positions required Party approvals, Hitler Youths must obey all commands issued by any Nazi Party leader, and wear standardized uniforms. By the end of 1927, a further requirement was that Hitler Youths turning 18 had to join the storm troopers" (2). Their uniforms consisted of brown shirts and black shorts, and an armband similar to the Nazi Party's, but

distinguishable from them as well. Eventually, these youths had to start collecting money as part of their duties. The group continued to grow and by 1928, a new section that allowed boys age 10 - 14 was created. Also formed was a female branch called the "Bund Deutscher Mädel" (League of German Girls). This group will be discussed later. During the Great Depression, these youths started campaigning for Hitler. They got into fights with other groups (using fists and firearms). "Between 1931 and 1993, twenty three Hitler Youths were killed in the streets. The best known case involved twelve year old Herbert Norkus" (2). This boy got stabbed while posting flyers. When he came to a house for help, the door was slammed in his face. He was continually stabbed afterwards and died after leaving blood all over the side of the house as he was trying to pull himself up. After this incident, the government tried to ban the Hitler Youth, but the new appeal to this forbidden group grew and through Hitler (he pulled some strings), the group ban was lifted. On April 30, 1933, the youth stormed the Berlin offices of German Youth Organizations. As a result, nearly all of the six million youths involved in several groups represented in that building went over to the Hitler Youth. On July 17, 1933, all other organizations had to be placed under direction of the Hitler Youth. After this, boys aged 6 - 10 were allowed to hang around these youth and join in on the activities. Competition was encouraged in these groups. Many of the younger members would be beaten up by the older, stronger members. By 1934, leadership schools opened up which taught the youth to be leaders, engaged them in heavier physical activities, and instructed them in rifle shooting. They were also being taught different trades. By October of 1934, they were expected to put forth hard labor in farmlands. This was known as the National Labor Service (Reichsarbeitsdienst or RAD). Soon they were expected to act as police, and were expected to turn in critics of Hitler, even their own family members and friends. By 1935, Hitler had already insisted that physical qualities in his youth far surpassed

intellectual qualities, and education consisted of “teaching them to be ready to sacrifice themselves for the Fatherland” (3). In the classroom the Hitler Youth learned how to distinguish German features from Jewish ones. Songs that they would sing were highly anti-Semitic. Hitler expected the boys to leave these schools “violently active, dominating, brutal youth, . . . indifferent to pain, without weakness and tenderness” (3). By December of 1936, all children that were ten and older would join the Hitler Youth. Parents who tried to prevent their children were threatened with prison. Before children were initiated into the group, they had to pass obstacles like physical and courage (Mutprobe) tests (example: jumping from a one or two story building onto a canvas held by older group members). Hitler also started training his youth more in a military style.

Starting on Kristallnacht (the night of Broken Glass), in which Jewish businesses were destroyed, the Hitler youth started participating in voluntary violence. Hitler described their behavior as living and acting as Germans. He then went on to describe that from the time the youth enters his program, they will stay there for as many years as it takes for them to become complete National Socialists. “And they will never be free again as long as they live” (3). By 1942, well into the war and many youths already drafted into the military, boys aged 16 - 18 had to participate in mandatory war training in which they learned how to operate infantry weapons. “Starting on January 26, 1943, anti - aircraft batteries were officially manned solely by Hitler Youth boys. In 1943, a search light battery received a direct bomb hit, killing the entire crew of boys, all age 14 and under” (4). Children were forced to live in KLV (Kinderlandverschickung) camps. Life in these camps was hard and military - like. Weakness was not tolerated. Smaller, weaker boys were picked on and bullied. They were often humiliated and even suffered sexual abuse. The boys that did go to war showed signs of being raised completely under Hitler’s

schools. "Youth in battle astounded the British and Canadians who fought them. They sprang like wolves against tanks. If they were encircled or outnumbered, they fought on until there were no survivors. Young boys, years away from their first shave, had to be shot dead by Allied soldiers, old enough, in some cases, to be their fathers. The fearless, cruel, domineering youth Hitler had wanted had now come of age and arrived on the battle field with utter contempt for danger" (4). Hitler had turned his nation's youth into machines, mechanisms to do his bidding. By the end of the war, Americans recalled fighting eight year old boys too small even for their uniforms. Hitler even started using girls armed with guns right beside the boys. By the end of the war, the majority of the Hitler Youth (which itself had been more than 85% of the nation's youth) were killed or wounded. The fact that remains is that this was what these youths were conditioned to do. They wanted to give their lives for Hitler. The last time Hitler was seen in public, little boys were looking up at him in admiration as he congratulated them and sent them back out to war.

These youths may not have been in concentration camps. However, they had their whole life controlled by Hitler. They were conditioned to the point of believing that they existed to fight for him, a man who only saw them as weapons of destruction. If this was not all they had to endure, at the end of the war these children were forced to bear witness to and bury the many corpses scattered about the camps. Afterwards, the survivors lived in poverty, scavenging the streets for a bit of food or coal using the "survival skills they had learned as young Nazis to stave off starvation" (5).

Young Nazi Misses

The boys were not the only Germans involved in a youth group. In 1928, a new branch of the Hitler Youth was established for girls. This group was called Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of German Girls or BDM). Girls age 14 - 18 were allowed to join. In 1933, a new section was established for 10 - 14 year olds. It was named Jungmädel. The BDM's uniforms consisted of skirts and blouses (very similar to school - girl uniforms) and Army style hiking boots. Girls were made to know that they were different from boys. It was clear that women's activities in these groups ranked below the male activities. The role of women during this period was explained by the slogan: Kinder, Kirch, Kurch (Children, Church, Kitchen). The primary role of young females in Nazi Germany was to give birth to healthy, racially pure (according to Nazi standards) boys" (4).

Activities they performed were in the form of care giving. In hospitals, they would take care of the soldiers that were wounded. Regina Shelton recalled her memory of an experience in one of these hospitals. "Suffering and mutilations all around us, I find myself standing next to an elderly couple at the foot of one of the beds. In it lies what is left of a very young man, his face suffused with a translucent pallor and his head attached to what appears to be a rectangular package under the sheets. In a matter - of fact voice, the group leader introduces to us the first quadruple amputee we have seen, expounding to us and his parents on the capabilities of military medicine. Revolted by her callousness as much as by the sight of the barely living wreckage, I must turn away with an explicable sense of shame and guilt. The picture of the dying soldier remains before me, superimposed on the glorious face of war and distorting it into a terrifying grimace" (To Lose a War, 35). One day, while performing her civilian duties with the BDM, she

came across several concentration camp inmates. "Their heads are shaved and their faces are haggard. A group of Jewish women, some of them not older than we, is denied the time to relieve themselves. They are herded back to work without mercy or dignity. The scene, which we weren't meant to see, remains etched in our minds, raising terrifying questions about rumored inhumanities, about frightening stories that from time to time one hears whispered" (47). They also encouraged the army troops heading for the front and served them refreshments on the railway platforms. They helped in kindergartens, and assisted in the houses of big families. Along with these activities, all girls were expected (along with the boys) to participate in the land service program, known as Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD). Girls were required a year of service. They helped out families with farmlands. Sometimes they were lucky and were sent to wealthy farms to work. Most of the time, however, was filled with scary evacuations and bad news from home (including family death). Girls also, along with the boys, helped the Nazis' repopulation program in Poland by monitoring Polish families leaving their homes and making sure they only took basic essentials with them. The Poles were being evacuated to make room for ethnic Germans. Most of the Poles possessions were left for the Germans. They helped to make these new Germans into Nazis. They taught them the language and enrolled the new youths into the Hitler Youth. This was mainly what the girls did. Their place was not in combat. They initially were never intended to pick up a weapon. However, during the end of the war, Hitler grew desperate. Along with very small boys, he started placing girls on the front with the same weapons meant for the older boys. "Girls were also used now, operating 88 mm anti - aircraft guns alongside boys. They, like the boys, were ultimately used as Hitler's weapons.

Baby Factory

Hitler wanted millions of “Aryans” to populate his nation. In December of 1935, Heinrich Himmler created the Lebensborn program to achieve that goal. Its full name, the Lebensborn Eingetragener Verein or Registered Society Lebensborn was designed to give young women the chance to give birth to their children in secret. It was disguised as a program to help out young mothers in need of help. But, in reality it enticed these women to become pregnant. These women had the idea that they were serving Hitler, producing for his future Army. These young women had to be racially pure (no Jewish ancestry and preferably blue eyes and blond hair). This is described in an article by the Jewish Virtual Library. “In the beginning, the Lebensborn [was] SS nurseries. But in order to create a super race, the SS transformed these nurseries in meeting places for racially pure German women who wanted to meet and make children with SS officers. The children born in the Lebensborn were taken in charge by the SS and it is important to know that most of them were also victims of the race policy” (The “Lebensborn”, 1). This race policy involved selection of the children born in these facilities. The children were not exterminated until later, when it was evident that they had “undesirable” qualities. Some of these qualities included children who were weak, physically disabled or mentally disabled, and ill. The children who were selected had to grow up in other homes and some even questioned their past. Helga Kahrau was one of those children. She had memories of grandeur and lavish living. But after her mother died, she started looking into her past because she always had a sense that she was different. She discovered that after a one night stand, her mother was sent to live in a Lebensborn unit, where she gave birth to Helga. She found out that after six months, she was sent to a foster father who was a Nazi policeman who was in charge of gassing Jews. She finally was able to put

early, packed away memories together of being raised by the Nazis, and felt hatred toward herself. "I was involved, in a fundamental way, with murderers" (Hitler's Children, 1).

Another action of the Lebensborn involved taking children who fit the physical description of racially pure children from Eastern occupied nations. Members of the SS took these children by force away from their horrified parents. "Thousands of children were transferred to the 'Lebensborn' centers in order to be 'Germanized'. In these centers, everything was done to force the children to reject and forget their birth parents. As an example, the SS nurses tried to persuade the children that they were deliberately abandoned by their parents. The children who refused the Nazi education were often beaten. Most of them were finally transferred to concentration camps (most of the time in Kalish in Poland) and exterminated, the others were adopted by SS families" (The Lebensborn, 1). In 1946 alone, more than 250,000 were estimated to be kidnaped. After the war, only about 25,000 of the entire amount kidnaped (the total is unknown) were returned successfully to their original families. Many German families kept the children. In fact, many of the children were so brainwashed to believe that they were pure German blood, that they refused to go back to their families. "It is also known that thousands of children not 'good enough' to be Germanized were simply exterminated" (1).

### School Systems

Children going to school in Germany had to go through many changes. What used to be top - notch education in Germany (in the world as well) quickly deteriorated during Hitler's reign. Traditional subjects, like math and science, were not taught to the children anymore. These subjects were replaced by National Socialist spirit. They also taught Nazi propaganda and left no

room for questioning or debating. “Biology, for example, had been completely corrupted to advance Nazi racial doctrine” (Hitler Youth, 3). In a way it backfired for Hitler because new graduates could not keep up with the Nazi scientists who were educated before Hitler’s reign. They could not develop new and better weapons because of this. The main truth, however, is the fact that children that grew up during Hitler’s reign lacked the fundamental education that Germans had once had. In actuality, it was not uncommon to see older teenagers in elementary schools after the war due to the lack of education they had received during the war.

### A Youth that Didn’t Want it

#### The White Rose

“The White Rose” was possibly one of the biggest organized youth resistance groups. Sophie Scholl was one of the members. She was the daughter of Robert Scholl who was the mayor of Forchtenberg. Sophie Scholl was born the 9<sup>th</sup> of May in 1921. In 1933, after moving to Ulm, she joined the Hitler Youth. Even though she was interested in being a member at first, her father helped her understand that she did not agree with Hitler and his government. She became a kindergarten teacher at the Froebel Institute after her schooling ended in 1940. Afterwards, she helped out in the war by being a preschool teacher in Blumberg. She attended the University of Munich as a student of biology and philosophy in 1942. She started taking part in political speeches where she stated that Germany had lost the war. She also helped out her brother (Hans Scholl, founder of “The White Rose”) by making and passing out pamphlets (debunking Hitler and his Nazi government and arming the citizens with knowledge against them) that made people

aware of the resistance in 1943. She did this by assisting him in the composition of the leaflets. She also helped buy the paper, envelopes, and stencils, which was hard to come by back then, especially in bulk (the act of purchasing many paper supplies was also very suspicious and drew dangerous attention to the purchaser). Then, she helped type and duplicate the pamphlets, distribute them, put them in mailboxes, and place them randomly around the university. She was eventually caught and “arrested on February 18, 1943, while distributing the sixth leaflet at the University of Munich” and sent to court (Sophie Scholl-The White Rose, 1). There, she was sentenced to be executed. She died by guillotine February 22, 1943. Her last recorded words before she was executed were: “It is such a splendid sunny day, and I have to go. But how many have to die on the battlefield in these days, how many young, promising lives. What does my death matter if by our acts thousands are warned and alerted? Among the student body there will certainly be a revolt” (Sophie Scholl-Spartacus, 1). She wasn’t yet 22.

Sophie’s brother Hans was also a member (and founder) of “The White Rose”. Hans Scholl was born on September 22, 1918. He went to school in Kunselsau before moving to Ulm in 1932 with the rest of his family. In 1933, along with his sister, he joined the Hitler youth. He was also influenced by his father to be very critical of Hitler. In fact, he was sent to jail after being arrested for noncompliant activities in 1937. He was forced to become a member of the German Labour Service, also known as the “Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD), where [most students] worked for the government for 6 months”, so that he could later join the German Army (Wagner, 1). After starting college in 1939 at the University of Munich, his teacher Kurt Huber inspired him to resist the government and he formed “The White Rose” along with sisters Sophie and Inge; colleagues Christian Probst who died at age 23 (“soldier, a young husband and father of 3”), Alexander Schmorell who died at age 25 (“soldier and medical student, talented artist and

musician, cherished his Russian ancestry”), Willi Graf who died at age 25 (“soldier and medical student”), and Eugen Wittenstien (“medical student and close friend of Hans Scholl and Alex Schmorell”); and teacher Kurt Huber (“professor of philosophy, attracted students to his lectures with his biting remarks against Hitler”) (The White Rose, 1). “The White Rose” was a group that resisted Hitler’s reign. They felt that they “want[ed] to try and show that everyone is in a position to contribute to the overthrow of the system. It can be done only by the cooperation of many convinced, energetic people – people who are agreed as to the means they must use. We have no great number of choices as to the means. The meaning and goal of passive resistance is to topple National Socialism, and in this struggle we must not recoil from our course, any action, whatever its nature. A victory of fascist Germany in this war would have immeasurable, frightful consequences” (Hans Scholl, 1). They published six pamphlets before they were caught. At first they sent them to specific people, but eventually they just started throwing them around whenever they got the chance. That set their demise into action. After throwing the sixth pamphlet, they were caught and Hans (along with his sister Sophie and Kurt Huber) was beheaded on February 22, 1943, exactly seven months before his 24<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### The Helmuth Huebener Group

Another group of resisters was the “Helmuth Huebener Group”. Helmuth and his friends, Karl Heinz Schnibbe, Rudolf Wobbe, and Gerhardt Duewer, resisted Hitler and his regime by passing out information they heard on the BBC. They knew that what they heard on the approved radio stations was not always the whole truth. It all started with an illegal radio. Helmuth and

Karl were at a meeting for the younger age group at their Mormon church, when Helmuth told Karl he wanted to show him something at his grandparents' apartment later that evening. There was the radio, and even though Karl anticipated, they listened to the forbidden stations that night. The stations' views were much different than what they had been hearing on German radio. They realized that it was not only the Russians (but the Germans as well) that were being killed every day in the war. They realized that Germany might be headed for a very dismal end. Helmuth felt that they needed to arm the German people with the truth. That night, Helmuth asked Karl to help pass out some leaflets he had already made. The leaflet stated, "Who is Lying??? The official report of the German High Command of the Armed Forces. Quite a while ago they claimed the roads to Moscow, Kiev and Leningrad were opened and today – six weeks after Germany's invasion of the USSR, severe battles are still occurring Far from these places" (Rogow-The Helmuth Huebener Group, 1). Helmuth explained to Karl that if they were careful, they could pass this information out without being caught, and then the people would be warned and could possibly stand up together against Hitler. Karl agreed, however reluctantly, to discreetly hand out the fliers. Karl lived in fear every day, especially whenever he encountered a Nazi. He later found out that Rudi and Gerhardt were involved. The president of Helmuth's church (who happened to be a Nazi) gave Helmuth a typewriter and stationary to write to the soldiers on the front line. Helmuth, however, saw this as a faster way to distribute the knowledge to the masses. He was able to put out more fliers and chain letters so that his word could spread farther. As youth, they were forced to become members of the Hitler youth, however, they would either avoid the meetings or not be a practicing member at all. Often times they had to encounter other Nazis and Hitler Youth, who would enforce Hitler's rules on them and each time bring them

one step closer to their fear of being caught. They did not agree with the way the Jews were being mistreated, and even Rudi's parents refused to find someone other than their Jewish doctor. However, they did realize that their Jewish friends were disappearing left and right. Then in 1938, on Crystal Night (Krystallnacht) they witnessed brutalities beyond belief and swore to fight against everything the Nazis stood for. Then the Hitler Youth started getting closer and coming into their church. That is where Helmuth knew that everyone needed to be informed that there was opposition to Hitler out there and that they would always be ready to deliver the news. They also made a pact that, whoever was caught, if they were caught, would be the soul barer of the blame. This went on for two years before Helmuth was arrested after being reported to the Gestapo by a man he had asked to translate the fliers into French. A few days later, they came for Karl. Helmuth was black and blue in the face from all of the torture he endured. He was finally sentenced to death, and became the youngest resistance member to die at Ploetzensee. He was 17 years old. The others were sent to forced labor camps. (1)

### Dancing Defiance

Before Hitler came to power, kids from all over Germany listened to American Jazz and swing. They listened to artists like Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Django Reinhardt, and danced openly in public places. Then, in the 1930s Hitler started to realize that Jazz and swing were enemies that he needed to get rid of. It was offensive to the National Socialist ideology because it was American (and America was a big enemy) and was mainly comprised of musicians who were minorities like African Americans and Jewish people. It was considered

part of Entartete Kunst or degenerated art and was often referred to as Negro music. Also, the very ideas that the songs were about were promiscuous and sexual, which went against the National Socialist ways. Some of the Hitler Youth reported that the dances (like the jitterbug) and the parties showed that the kids seemed to take pleasure in their sexuality. In fact the swingsters even described themselves as “lottern” (sleazy) in response to the repression of sexuality during the time. (Swing Kids). Joseph Goebbels was hired by Hitler (who was also his good friend) to be the head of “The Reich Radio Chamber, which censored radio, theatre, film, the press, creative writing, and music” (The Real Swing Kids, 1). He wanted to spread the National Socialist ideal of superiority and the negative attitude toward the minority races throughout German culture. For you see, Goebbels believed that the Americans were not sophisticated, were corrupting, and treated minorities better than he felt they should be treated. He thought swing was “the rot of a decaying society” (1). Hitler did allow some Jazz, but it was Jazz developed for Germany: slow, mild, and created under very strict rules. For the youth who did not comply with the Regime’s standards, there were violent consequences involved, including Gestapo repression. Also, youth under the age of 18 were not allowed in dance bars. On August 18<sup>th</sup> of 1941, over 300 Swingsters were arrested with violent force. They were forced to cut their hair and go back to school under supervision. However, this action led to more opposition to National Socialism. They passed out materials that went against fascism. They even gained slight recognition and sympathy from “The White Rose”. On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1942, it was recommended that the swing clubs be infiltrated and the ring leaders be seized and brought down. It was suggested that they should spend at least a few years in a concentration camp and forced to endure hard labor and severe physical punishment. In the words of Henry Himmler, “it is only through the outmost brutality that we

will be able to avert the dangerous spread of anglophile tendencies, in these times Germany fights for its survival" (Swing Kids).

The Swing kids in the beginning basically had one intention, to listen to good music and dance and have fun. They did not have any political intentions. However, it eventually evolved into a "nonviolent refusal of the civil order and culture of National Socialism" (1). They developed a counter-culture through their music and apparel. They wore things like umbrellas and hats and wore their hair long. They behaved exactly the opposite of what Hitler wanted his youth to act like (effete). They entertained with parties and contests, which included live jazz bands. They mocked the Nazis by calling themselves Swingjugend (swing youth), which made fun of the youth groups that Hitler set up. They also made fun of "Sieg Heil" by using the parody "Swing Heil"! They even developed their own terminology, which was based off of English and American terms.

Participants of the swing youth were mostly middle class. Since swing was banned on the radio, the adolescents needed to have access to phonographs. They also needed to understand basic English so they could understand the songs. Wealth also helped define the style that they shared. The boys wore long checkered jackets, dancing shoes, and scarves, along with an umbrella (as mentioned earlier) and a gem for a dress shirt button. Girls wore loose, long hair and a large amount of makeup. "The Swing Kids" got their ultimate revenge on Hitler when swing continued to exist. In fact, swing still exists today.

The Edelweiss Pirates

“Hitler’s power may lay us low, And keep us locked in chains, But we will smash the chains one day, We’ll be free again. We’ve got the fists and we can fight, We’ve got the knives and we’ll get them out. We want freedom, don’t we boys?” (Rogow, The Edelweiss Pirates, 1). This is an anthem of “The Edelweiss Pirates”. “The Edelweiss Pirates” were a group of youth that were against the Hitler Youth. Hitler’s idea of his youth was a youth that was fearless and ruthless. He wanted them to be brutal and dominant. They could not show any sort of weakness or sympathy. He planned to use them for his future reign. “The Edelweiss Pirates” opposed all of that. These were groups, or gangs, of boys between the ages of 16 and 18. There were usually up to 15 boys, and even a few girls in some of these gangs. These youths would either not participate in Hitler youth activities or even refuse completely to be a member. They were a youth group that was just that, a group of adolescents that wanted to express their true youth. They did not want to succumb to complete obedience. They wanted to be allowed to express their own feelings and be true to their own moral values. They did not want to be a part of the cruel events that took place under the noses of the Hitler youth. Most of “The Edelweiss Pirates” tried to avoid them altogether.

These groups had separate names depending on where they were from. However, they had the same ideals. Their apparel consisted of “checkered shirts, short dark trousers and white stockings” (1). These groups were sort of like fraternities, sharing beliefs, a strong sense of solidarity and even wore the same pin. In the daytime they held jobs as unskilled workers and during the nights and at the end of the week they had meetings. They had carefree meetings

where they hiked to the country with their meager rations or rode their bikes (even though the National Socialist rules forbade it). Since they made little money and were usually hiding, they had to find places to sleep out of the way (usually in tents, barns, or abandoned bombed out houses). Sometimes they felt it appropriate to fight with the Nazi Youth, but most of the time they made their best attempt to stay out of the way. When it got deeper into the war, many of the Pirates established themselves with the underground resistance movement. In a few years leading up to 1945, Pirates in Cologne provided living assistance to Germans who escaped the army and the prisoners who escaped the concentration camps and labor camps. They also tried to actively stop the war effort. This increasingly drew the Nazis' attention toward them.

Members who were caught were generally incarcerated, either sent to prison, concentration camps, labor camps, mental wards, or reform schools. Many died in the effort. In December 1942, the police and the Gestapo arrested more than a thousand Pirates. The Nazis beat, threatened and shaved their heads. (1) Bartholomaus Schink (November 27, 1927 – November 10, 1944) was a member of the Ehrenfelder Gruppe (Ehrenfeld Group) in Cologne. On November 10<sup>th</sup> 1944 he and 12 other members of that group were made an example of and were publicly hung by the Gestapo. (Barthel Schink, 1). He was only 16 years old.

### Conclusion

The youth of this nation suffered many hardships. The children whom Hitler did not want had to endure many things. They were taken from their families, left alone to suffer, cry, and die. They did not get to play outside, go to school, or practice any of the normal childhood rituals.

They were lucky if they could make it to the next day, and that was only because they were one day closer to freedom. However, each day closer was another day to suffer, and many suffered many days and still did not make it to freedom, except in death. Of the ones who did make it to the end of the war, they suffered from underdeveloped organs, permanent disease, and psychological tortures daily. Many never saw their families again and had to learn to live with strangers (be it a new family or an orphanage). Some had to go to new countries or to families with different backgrounds, so they had to learn an entirely new culture. Many grew up with a hard time of trusting people; constantly looking over their shoulder, and had to deal with fear, anger, and constant nightmares. Worst of all, they had to grow up thinking that they were supposed to be dead. Friends and family were dead and yet they were the ones who got to live. Some felt extremely guilty because they knew they should be dead too. After all, in their minds, the whole nation wanted them gone.

The Jewish and undesirable youth during Hitler's reign did suffer. However, Germany's own children (as Hitler would have described them) suffered as well. For one, their education alone suffered greatly. Indeed, they were much more physically fit, which is one good point. However, they did not properly learn many subjects, such as math, science, and art. These youths also had much of their childhood controlled. They were forced to join the Hitler Youth or the BDM and become pawns in Hitler's war. They were forced to perform community service instead of volunteering on their own. They were bullied by older members of their groups. Some of these children were stolen from their families and placed into strangers' homes. Many were never allowed to see their family again. Some did not even know where they came from, and probably had many siblings that they would never meet due to the rapid repopulation of the

Lebensborn program. So many children were killed due to the war that they were mandated to fight in. They were also killed if they were not racially pure ( the children of Lebensborn). They were not allowed to live the normal lives of children. They had to grow up too fast. And even the ones that did not die were still forced to live in a way that they were never meant to live.

The resistance fighters among the youth new there was suffering and they did not want to be a part of it. They wanted to stop it. These young people endured pain and torture and they did it to help others. “The White Rose” and the “Helmuth Huebener Group” wanted to keep other people informed at the risk of their own lives. “The Swing Kids” wanted to provided entertainment in the midst of the war “The Edelweiss Pirates” wanted to protect others from the brutality of people (especially the Hitler Youth) in power. They are held in high honor above many others. They wanted to make a difference.

All of these youths made a difference. They all wrote a piece of history.

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BDM Member with Hitler  
(Sports School, 1)



Hitler Youth  
(Adolf Hitler, 1)



Babies!  
(Bergen Belsen, 1)



Similar to what Eva Kor woke up to  
(Auschwitz, 3)



Mengele's Children  
(Auschwitz, 1)



The Edelweiss Pirates  
(Wikipedia - The Edelweiss, 1)