

READING 5

Legalizing Racism

The boycott set the stage for yet another step in carrying out Hitler's "racial" policies. People were whispering about those plans long before they were made public. President Paul von Hindenburg was among those who heard rumors of anti-Jewish legislation. On April 4, he asked Hitler to exempt Jewish veterans, their fathers, and sons from the new laws. Over one hundred thousand Jews had served in the German army during World War I and twelve thousand had died in the line of duty. About thirty-five thousand had been awarded medals. Mindful of that record, the president noted, "If they were worthy to fight and bleed for

Germany, then they should also be considered worthy to continue serving the fatherland in their professions."

Hitler responded to Hindenburg's letter with praise for his "noble motives." He promised to incorporate the president's suggestions into laws under consideration. But he did not back down from his position. Instead he reminded the president of why the laws were needed:

The first is the glaring wrong created by the incredible discrimination against the German element that supports the state. For there are a whole number of intellectual professions today – medicine and the law, for instance – where in several places in Germany, in Berlin and elsewhere, the Jews hold up to 80 percent and more of all positions. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of German intellectuals, including countless war veterans, subsist on unemployment insurance, or are being ruined by finding themselves in some entirely subordinate position.

The second is the great shock to the authority of the state which is being caused by the fact that an entirely alien body, which has never really become one with the German people, and whose talent is primarily a business talent, is pushing its way into government positions and providing the mustard seed of a kind of corruption of whose extent people to this day are not even approximately aware. One of the major reasons why the old Prussian state was such a clean one was that the Jews were granted only a very limited access to the civil service. The officer corps kept itself almost entirely pure.¹⁷

On April 7, a new law known as the "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" went into effect. It removed non-Aryans from their jobs in order to "restore" the civil service to "true Germans." The only Jews to keep their positions were Jewish veterans, their fathers, and their sons. Another law, proclaimed the same day, dismissed Jewish prosecuting attorneys. Before the month was over, Jewish doctors who worked within the National Health System also lost their jobs. At about the same time, the government sharply limited the number of Jews who could attend a public high school or teach in one. As a result of these decrees, 20 percent of all German Jews lost their jobs. In the months that followed, the laws were expanded to include more and more people. By the end of the year, one-third of all Jews in Germany did not earn enough money to pay taxes. The new laws marked the beginning of the economic isolation of German Jews.

READING 6

Dismantling Democracy

German Jews were not the only ones affected by the “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service.” The government could now dismiss any civil servant who was politically undesirable or who would not “support the national state at all times and without reservation.” Indeed the government no longer needed a reason to dismiss a worker. It could now do so without cause.

In the everyday practice of law, genuine National Socialism is certainly best represented where the idea of the Fuehrer is silently but loyally followed.

The law had other effects as well. Judges were no longer expected to be impartial. Instead they were to approach a case with “a healthy prejudice” and “make value judgements which correspond to the National Socialist legal order and the will of political leadership.” The message was clear: “In the everyday practice of law, genuine National Socialism is certainly best represented where the idea of the Fuehrer is silently but loyally followed.”

Bernhard Rust, the new minister of education, argued that “it is less important that a professor make discoveries than that he train his assistants in the proper view of the world.” Other officials agreed. Hans Schemm, the

Bavarian minister of culture, declared that the value of study lay not in a dedication to truth but in an adherence to “the spirit of the National Socialist revolution.” Civil servants had to accept the new rules or lose their positions. Very few resigned. Horst Krueger’s description of his father’s response was typical of many bureaucrats.

All his life he left home for the ministry at 8:23 A.M., traveling second class. At home, he read the old-line newspaper and the local daily, never joined the party, never knew anything about Auschwitz, never subscribed to the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, the Nazi party organ – but for twenty minutes, until the train pulled into Friedrichstrasse Station, he held it up before his face so that others might recognize his loyalty to the new people’s state. At Friedrichstrasse he left the paper behind...

All his life he came home at 4:21 P.M., always on the same train, always in the same second-class compartment, if possible always at the same corner window, always holding a briefcase full of work in his right hand, with his left showing his monthly commutation ticket – he never jumped off the moving train. He had achieved his goal; he was a German civil servant. And no matter whether the government was headed by Noske or Ebert, Scheidemann or Bruening, Papen or Hitler, he was obligated to faith and loyalty. His office was his world.¹⁸

READING 7

Turning Neighbor Against Neighbor

An aide to Hitler once expressed the new government's attitude toward its opponents. "The government will brutally beat down all who oppose it. We do not say an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. No, he who knocks out one of our eyes will get his head chopped off, and he who knocks out one of our teeth will get his jaw bashed in."

According to Rudolf Diels, the chief of the political department of the Berlin police, that attitude could clearly be seen on city streets. "Every SA man was 'on the heels of the enemy'; each knew what he had to do. [The storm troopers] cleaned up the districts... Not only Communists but anyone who had ever expressed himself against Hitler's movement was in danger." Some were confined to concentration camps like the one at Dachau. Others found themselves in "private prisons" that Diels described as "hellish torture."¹⁹

Although the storm troopers operated outside the law, they encountered very little opposition. Indeed, many openly supported their efforts. In a short story, Christopher Isherwood, a British writer, described the way the Germans he met responded to the Nazis.

They smiled approvingly at these youngsters in their big, swaggering boots who were going to upset the Treaty of Versailles. They were pleased because it would soon be summer, because Hitler had promised to protect the small tradesmen, because their newspapers told them that the good times were coming. They were suddenly proud of being blond. And they thrilled with a furtive, sensual pleasure, like schoolboys, because the Jews, their business rivals, and the Marxists, a vaguely defined minority of people who didn't concern them, had been satisfactorily found guilty of the defeat and the inflation and were going to catch it.²⁰

The government will brutally beat down all who oppose it. We do not say an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. No, he who knocks out one of our eyes will get his head chopped off, and he who knocks out one of our teeth will get his jaw bashed in.

By April 26, the Nazis felt confident enough to take their campaign of terror and intimidation one step further. They created a special bureaucracy that would be responsible for all executive actions against their political enemies. Under the leadership of Hermann Goering, the Gestapo (an acronym created by the initial letters of *Geheime Staatspolizei*, or Secret State Police) was authorized to "protect public safety and order" by using methods that ranged from interrogation to consigning individuals to "private prisons" and later to concentration camps. According to historians Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, neither practice was "based upon judicial decisions or subject to judicial review."²¹

READING 10

Teaching a Lesson

By late spring, some Germans were openly turning on their neighbors. American journalist Quentin Reynolds reported a disturbing incident that took place in the “new” Germany:

It happened when Bill and Martha Dodd, the son and daughter of our Ambassador, invited me to drive to Austria with them to attend the Salzburg music festival. We stopped in Nuremberg to spend the night. I had been there once before and knew it as a town that went to sleep early. When we arrived at our hotel on the Koenigstrasse about midnight, and found the street filled with an excited, happy crowd, we wondered if we had stumbled into a toymakers’ festival.

“Is there going to be a parade?” I asked the hotel clerk as we registered.

He was a pleasant fellow, and he laughed until the tips of his mustache quivered. Then he said, “It will be a kind of parade. They are teaching someone a lesson.”

Martha and Bill and I walked out and joined the crowd. Everyone was keyed up, laughing, talking...

We began to hear music, loud and brassy. The people around me pressed to the curb, laughing in anticipation. We could hear the roar of the crowd three blocks away, a laughing roar that swelled toward us with the music.

The band, I now saw, was one of Storm Troopers, not doll makers. Preceded by torchlights and swastika banners, it marched past. Behind it came two six-foot troopers, half supporting, half dragging a human figure. I could not at first tell if it was a man or a woman. Its head had been clipped bald, and face and head had been coated with white powder. Even though the figure wore a skirt, it might have been a man dressed as a clown. The crowd around me roared at the spectacle of this figure being dragged along. And then, as the SA men suddenly lifted it to its full height, we could read the placard hung around its neck: I wanted to live with a Jew.

I still could not be sure if it was a man or a woman, and the people around me were too busy laughing to hear my questions. After the figure had passed, I was propelled into the street with the crowd. A two-decker bus lumbered up and got stalled in the crush, the driver good-naturedly holding up his hands in surrender. Faces poked from the windows of the bus. On the upper deck people laughed and pointed. The SA men lifted their toy so that they could see it better.

Then someone got the idea of marching the thing into the lobby of our hotel. In it went, followed by part of the crowd. In the street the band played on. By now I had learned that the thing was a girl, and that her name was Anna Rath. The troopers brought her to the street again, and the mob surged forward, toward the next hotel.

Then, suddenly, everyone seemed a little tired of the fun. It was getting late. There were toys to be made tomorrow. The band began to play the Horst Wessel song. Up and down the Koenigstrasse perhaps five thousand people stood at attention, with right arm thrust out, their voices massed. Then the party was over. The banners and the band and the marchers disappeared down the street.

In the bar attached to our hotel, after the late drinkers had left, the Dodds and I asked the bartender about Anna Rath. He whispered her story and the part played in it by Herr S. “You have heard of Herr S., whose home is here?” he asked.

We nodded. He was speaking of Julius Streicher, Hitler’s circus master of anti-Semitism. In Berlin it was said that Jews and other undesirables were tortured in the basement of the police building, near the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. If so, their cries did not reach the street. In Nuremberg, the astute Streicher gave the people the entertainment they wanted.

Anna Rath, we learned, had made the mistake of attempting to marry her Jewish fiancée after the ban on Aryan-Jewish marriages.

I went up to my room and telephoned Hawley in Berlin. The Nazis had all along been denying the atrocities that were occasionally reported abroad, but here was concrete evidence. No other correspondent had witnessed any atrocities. Hawley agreed that I had a big story but doubted that it would be allowed to go out on the wire. He recommended that I mail it. Further, he suggested that I should leave out mention of the Dodds, so as not to involve the Ambassador.

Writing the story, I found myself trembling. The grotesque white face of Anna Rath haunted me. In the morning, I posted the story to Barry Faris.

We drove on, then, and had our week in Austria. Among the messages waiting for me when I returned to Berlin was a cable from Barry saying that my story had received a big play. There was also a request for me to report immediately to the office of Ernst Hanfstaengl [Known as Putzi, he was a Harvard-educated Nazi].

Putzi, not to my surprise, was furious. "There isn't one damned word of truth in your story!" he shouted at me. "I've talked with our people in Nuremberg and they say nothing of the sort happened there."

This was a moment to enjoy. I grinned at Putzi. "You're dead right," I said. "I just wanted to impress my New York office so I faked that story from beginning to end."

Putzi began raving the way he played the piano – loud. I stopped him with the announcement that I had watched the affair in the company of two unimpeachable witnesses. When I told him their names, Putzi looked stricken. He slumped into his chair and clutched his head, grumbling that I should not have led him on. When I asked if he wouldn't like to telephone the Dodds and confirm it, he said it would not be necessary.

A few days later, Dr. Goebbels held a press conference. It drew at least forty reporters. Goebbels, who could be very disarming when he wanted to make the effort, himself brought up the question of atrocities against the Jews, saying that they were only isolated examples of behavior by irresponsible individuals.

In the front row of reporters I saw Norman Ebbutt, the head of the *London Times'* Berlin bureau, a mild-mannered man but relentless at follow-ups. "But Herr Minister," I heard him say, "you must surely have heard of the Aryan girl, Anna Rath, who was paraded through Nuremberg just for wanting to marry a Jew?"

Goebbels smiled. "I know that the Hearst Press and your paper, among others, has been interested in that story. Let me explain how such a thing might occasionally happen. All during the twelve years of the Weimar Republic our people were virtually in jail. Now our party is in charge and they are free again. When a man has been in jail for twelve years and he is suddenly freed, in his joy he may do something irrational, perhaps even brutal. Is that not a possibility in your country also?"

"If it should happen," Ebbutt said calmly, "we would throw the man right back in

Goebbels' face clouded. Then he smiled again and asked, "Are there any more questions?"

That was the end of the press conference, but not quite the end of the Anna Rath story. Norman Ebbutt gave me that when he told me that one of his men had gone to Nuremberg and found her confined in a hospital for the insane.²⁷

Killing Ideas

By May, the Nazis were burning books. The first book burning took place on May 6, 1933. Students from the Berlin School of Physical Education demolished the Institute of Sexual Science, one of the first scholarly groups to study homosexuality, ceremonially hung a bust of the institute's founder, and then burned twelve thousand books as they sang the nation's anthem. Four days later, the Nazi German Students' Association set up more bonfires, this time to burn books written by Jews and other "undesirables." At one gathering, Joseph Goebbels told a cheering crowd, "The soul of the German people can again express itself. Those flames not only illuminate the final end of an old era; they light up a new!" Lilian T. Mowrer, an American who lived in Germany, described what happened next:

The books we were reading – whether by Thomas Mann, Bernard Shaw, Stefan Zweig, Werner Bergengruen, or Paul Claudel – like modern art – turned into bills of indictment against society. They made us confront National Socialism. They mobilized our defiance.

I held my breath while he hurled the first volume into the flames: it was like burning something alive. Then students followed with whole armfuls of books, while schoolboys screamed into the microphone their condemnation of this and that author, and as each name was mentioned the crowd booed and hissed. You felt Goebbels's venom behind their denunciations. Children of fourteen mouthing abuse of Heine! Erich Remarque's *All Quiet On The Western Front* received the greatest condemnation... it would never do for such an unheroic description of war to dishearten soldiers of the Third Reich.²⁸

Of all the events that took place in Germany in the spring of 1933, the book burnings made the greatest impression abroad. Helen Keller, an American writer, sent the organizers of the event a letter. "History has taught you nothing if you think you can kill ideas. Tyrants have tried to do that often before, and the ideas have risen up in their might and destroyed them. You can burn my books and the books of the best minds in Europe, but the ideas in them have seeped through a million channels and will continue to quicken other minds."²⁹

Others quoted the words of the great German poet, Heinrich Heine, whose family was Jewish. Referring to book burnings in the nineteenth century, the poet had said: "Where they burn books, they will soon burn people." Yet even those who quoted Heine could not truly believe that anyone would go that far.

did indeed keep tens of thousands of confessions and biographical letters, does it make sense to assume that they were all thrown into the fire? Is it not rather more likely that they were saved for use by the Gestapo? Indeed, is it not possible that the entire event was staged to deceive, and that the apparent destruction of Institute was really a cover operation to retrieve Hirschfeld's case histories and other incriminating evidence against prominent Nazis and their opponents?³² What do you think? Was the Institute targeted because it was associated with homosexual activity? Because the doctors knew too much? Or to acquire evidence that could be used against opponents?

READING 12

Whenever Two or Three Are Gathered

Throughout the spring and early summer of 1933, the Nazis terrorized one group after another in Germany. By May, they had eliminated the nation's trade unions. Workers now had to join a new organization called the Nazi Labor Front. It was to integrate workers, many of whom had supported the Social Democrats or the Communists, into the Nazi state. Then in June, Hitler outlawed the Social Democratic party. By mid-July, the Nazi party was the only political party in a country where the Reichstag no longer passed laws and the constitution no longer protected civil rights. These changes did not take place behind closed doors. They were loudly proclaimed and celebrated.

The desire to live one's life as best one can, to do one's own work and raise one's own children, is not a contemptible emotion. And to understand the ordinary Berliner in 1933, one can only try to imagine what one might do in a similar situation.

Other organizations were also brought into line. Not even special interest groups – glee clubs, soccer teams, historical societies, and so on – were allowed to function independently. As historian William Sheridan Allen put it, “Whenever two or three were gathered, the *Fuehrer* would also be present.” Not everyone accepted the changes. Over twenty-seven thousand people went to prison. Thousands of others, including sixty-three thousand Jews, left the country by 1934. But most of the nation's sixty million people stayed and adapted to life in the “new Germany.”

READING 13

Breeding the New German “Race”

In July of 1933, the Nazis moved against yet another group. They announced the “Law for the Prevention of Hereditary Diseased Offspring.” It permitted the government to sterilize anyone who suffered from such “genetically determined” illnesses as feeble-mindedness, schizophrenia, manic-depressive illness, genetic epilepsy, Huntington's Chorea, genetic blindness, deafness, and some forms of alcoholism. The purpose of the law was “to have at all times a sufficient number of genetically sound families with many children of high racial value. At the core of the idea of a healthy race is the notion of breeding. Future upholders of the law must be clear about the breeding aims of the German people.”

The law was an attempt to create a racially pure society of “Aryans” by isolating and eliminating Germans the Nazis considered inferior. As Hitler stated in *Mein Kampf*, “Everything we admire on this earth today – science and art, technology and inventions – is only the creative product of a few peoples and originally perhaps one race (the Aryans). On them depends the existence of this whole culture. If they perish, the beauty of this earth will sink into the grave with them.” To accomplish that goal, the Nazis planned to sterilize women “tainted” by the blood of an inferior race. That is, they planned to make it impossible for the daughters of mixed marriages – marriages between “Aryans” and Jews, Africans, or “Gypsies” – to

have children. The Nazis also wanted to sterilize “Aryan” women who had disabilities or deformities. The idea was not a new one. A 1929 work of “scientific racism” stated that “the number of degenerate individuals born depends mainly on the number of degenerate women capable of procreation. Thus the sterilization of degenerate women is, for reasons of racial hygiene, more important than the sterilization of men.”

The Germans modeled their new sterilization laws after similar laws in the United States. Between 1907 and 1930, twenty-nine states passed compulsory sterilization laws and about eleven thousand people were sterilized. Many states also had laws that banned marriages between whites and blacks, Native Americans, and Asians. Both sets of laws were prompted by a desire to eliminate “strains that are a burden to the nation or to themselves, and to raise the standard of humanity by the suppression of the progeny of the defective classes.” The Nazis now took that goal much further than the Americans ever did.

Gregor Ziemer, an American educator, observed the results of the law when he toured a German hospital where sterilizations took place. A guide informed him that the patients were “the mentally sick, women with low resistance, women who had proved through other births that their offsprings were not strong. They were women suffering from defects... some were sterilized because they were political enemies of the State.” He was told, “We are even eradicating color-blindedness in the Third Reich...

Eugenics is not a panacea that will cure human ills, it is rather a dangerous sword that may turn its edge against those who rely on its strength.

We must not have soldiers who are color-blind. It is transmitted only by women.” When Ziemer asked who made the decision, the guide boasted: “We have courts. It is all done very legally, rest assured. We have law and order.”³³

To enforce the law, the Nazis created a Department for Gene and Race Care and “genetic health courts.” There doctors and lawyers worked together to decide who would be sterilized. The individual had no say in the decision. Between 1933 and 1939, about 320,000 German women, some as young as fourteen, were sterilized under the law. By 1945, the number may have grown to as many as three million.

The Nazis, like the Americans, regarded sterilization as “negative eugenics.” They also encouraged what they called “positive eugenics” – breeding a superior race. Heinrich Himmler, as head of the SS, was particularly concerned about the “racial quality” of his men. Each recruit was carefully screened. He had to prove that his family was “Aryan” dating back to at least 1750. In addition, Himmler and “the chiefs of the race offices inspected photographs of every applicant to make sure his face bore no sign of taint, such as ‘orientally’ prominent cheekbones, ‘mongolian slit eyes, dark curly hair, legs too short in relation to the body, a body too long in relation to the arms, a bespectacled Jewish intellectual look.” They were seeking “genuine descendents of the Indo-European tribes that had emigrated from Jutland (Denmark) and been settled in Germany since the third century B.C. These were to be the stock from which the new Teutonic race was to be bred and the SS to be recruited.” Not only did every member of the SS have to pass the test but so did his prospective bride.

READING 14

"One Nation! One God! One Reich! One Church!"

As the Nazis increased their control over the German people, they targeted the nation's religious groups. National Socialism would have no competition. Among the first religious groups to be singled out were the nation's Catholics. They made up about one-third of the population. As a minority in a country with a Protestant majority, Catholics had always felt vulnerable to accusations that they were not "true Germans" because they "took orders from Rome." Over the years, they had protected their rights by organizing and supporting the Catholic Center party. Now Catholics, individually and as a group, had to decide whether to support the Nazis.

As early as 1931, a number of bishops warned Catholics that "what the National Socialists describe as Christianity is not the Christianity of Christ." Others urged a boycott of Nazi activities. But by the spring of 1933, such attitudes were changing. Some Catholic leaders now seemed to admire Hitler's call to "overcome the un-Germanic spirit." Others continued to oppose the regime but urged caution. That July, Hitler and Pope Pius XI signed a concordat. Historian Fritz Stern said of that agreement:

On the face of it, the Vatican had scored a great triumph. No government under Weimar had been willing to sign such a concordat, which would recognize the principal rights of the church – rights that presumably would render it immune from the kind of persecution it had suffered [in the past]. By the terms of the concordat the church renounced all political activities and in turn the state guaranteed the right to free worship, to circulate pastoral epistles, to maintain Catholic schools and property. The Vatican had reason to be satisfied: Catholic rights had been put on a new basis and at the same time a regime had been strengthened that seemed to correspond to the Vatican's sense that Mussolini and Hitler were indispensable bulwarks against Bolshevism.

Hitler had even more reason to be satisfied. The concordat was his first international agreement, and it vastly enhanced his respectability in Germany and abroad. A great moral authority had trusted his word.

But did the Vatican... really believe that National Socialism would abide by the concordat, was there really much likelihood that the regime would leave untouched a rival organization with its own dogmas and with such sweeping power over education?³⁴

Ten days after the agreement was signed, the Nazis set out to destroy the Catholic Youth League. In the months that followed, a number of Catholic leaders were arrested and several murdered. Yet the pope did not openly criticize the Nazis until 1937. By then it was too late. Roman Catholic opposition was limited to isolated individuals who could easily be removed from their positions.

Catholics were united into one church. Germany's forty-five million Protestants were not. They differed not only in their religious practices but also in their political views. A few openly opposed the Nazis, while others saw themselves as neutral. Still others actively supported fascism, even going so far as to call themselves "storm troopers of Jesus Christ." Hitler encouragement of these "German Christians" led to conflicts with a number of Protestant ministers.

The first conflict arose when Hitler urged that Germany's 28 regional Protestant churches be united into one Reich church. Many church leaders supported the idea but did not approve of the man Hitler wanted to head the united church. The ministers preferred Freidrich von Bodelschwingh, the director of a large institution that served the mentally ill and the disabled. Hitler and the "German Christians," favored Ludwig Mueller, a little known pastor and a long-time member of the Nazi party. When Muller was defeated, the Ministry of Culture ordered the firing, suspension, or arrest of a number of pastors. Soon after, Bodelschwingh was forced to resign.

A new election was held in July 1933. This time the Nazis took no chances. When Protestants entered their church to elect representatives to a regional synod, or church assembly, they found themselves face to face with SA members wearing sandwich boards that bore the names of "German Christian" candidates. The intimidation worked. "German Christians" won two-thirds of the vote in regional assemblies, thus paving the way for Mueller's election.

By January of 1934, Mueller was vowing to purge Christianity of all Jewish influence and foster the growth of the "German Christian movement." He claimed that "the eternal God created for our nation a law that is peculiar to its own kind. It took shape in the Leader Adolf Hitler, and in the National Socialist state created by him. This law speaks to us from the history of our people... It is loyalty to this law which demands of us the battle for honor and freedom... One Nation! One God! One Reich! One Church!"

To a number of Protestants, Mueller's words were blasphemy. They were also alarmed by the state's growing involvement in church matters. It now required that churches ban all Christians of Jewish descent. In protest,

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Niemoeller and other ministers started the Confessing Church. It taught that Jewish Christians had an "inviolable" right to remain in the church.

Soon after the group was formed, Niemoeller and three other leaders met with Hitler and his top aides. Hermann Goering, the head of the Gestapo, opened the meeting by revealing the details of a telephone conversation that Niemoeller had had earlier that day. He then divulged the contents of the Gestapo's files on all four ministers and their associates. The religious leaders responded by reaffirming their support for Hitler's domestic and foreign policies. They asked only for the right to dissent on religious matters. Furious, Hitler screamed, "You are traitors to the *Volk*. Enemies of the Fatherland and destroyers of Germany!"

Hertha von Klewitz, Niemoeller's daughter, later said that Hitler's outburst should have led to open resistance, but it did not. Although 7,000 of the nation's 16,500 clergymen openly supported the Confessing Church, they limited their opposition to defending Protestant teachings against Nazi influence. Klewitz noted sadly, "It was a church resistance and not political."

Only one group of Christians firmly opposed Hitler from the start. Members of the Jehovah's Witnesses refused to cooperate in any way with the new regime. Even after the Gestapo destroyed their national headquarters and the sect itself was outlawed, they refused to compromise their beliefs by even saying "Heil Hitler." Nearly half of the group's members ended up in concentration camps. Yet those same beliefs that fostered such firm opposition to the Nazis did not permit them to even vote during the years of the Weimar Republic. Their opposition was limited to witnessing for their faith.