

PERSECUTION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

There are numerous people and groups Hitler didn't like. He was very hypercritical and specific about what he required. Chances are, today many of us wouldn't have fit in his ideal person, especially if we have different skin color, our eyes and hair were dark, if a person wore glasses or braces, or any other physical disabilities. In Germany, those people couldn't help who they were and what they were born as. As we know, physical appearances have nothing to do with our personal worth. There is a group that could have fit in with Hitler's picture of the master race, because most of them were German. They made a choice not to fit in and are known as Jehovah Witnesses. They are Christians who believe in the entire bible, and worship only Jehovah. There are four main points why Hitler went after the Jehovah Witnesses.

They refused to hail Hitler from the beginning, which brought them to his attention very quickly. Hitler didn't like that one bit! He wanted everyone to look, act and think alike. He had brain-washed many young ones to think that Germany was above all, and how disabled kids should be sent to death. Hitler brain-washed many young ones, because they were the next generation. Hail means salvation. The Nazis wanted everyone to think Hitler would be the salvation of Germany, because it had many problems. Jehovah Witnesses could not say hail Hitler, because they believe salvation only comes from God, according to the Bible. The Witnesses didn't enter into armies or show obedience to any government by saluting the flag. In Germany, the Witnesses didn't raise their arm in the hail Hitler's salute either. Soon after Hitler took power, Witnesses were sent to concentration camps. First, they took men who were Jehovah Witnesses to tell Hitler who the other Witnesses were. They refused to tell him, even through beatings and suffering. Those who stayed home lost jobs, social welfare benefits, and all civil rights. Never less, they still sustained to preach door to door and enlighten people about Jehovah.

The concentration camp guards used badges as markings on the people's uniforms to identify a prisoner's category. So ask yourself, don't some of us kids today label other kids with inappropriate names? When people are labeled by someone else, it's usually something mean, and changes how people look at your appearance. Jews wore the Star of David. The Jehovah Witnesses were the only Christians that wore a purple triangle mark. The clothes that they had to wear were made out of a cotton fabric

material, which indeed they had to wear in the winter. The purple triangle on their clothes was visible to see, so it was perfect.

The game Monopoly is a good explain of the declaration. When you were sent to jail, there was a bonus card that could bail you out. The Jehovah Witnesses were the only group offered a declaration. If they signed it, they had to give up everything they believe in, and that was important to them, which included the Bible. They also had to turn in any of their friends or family who were Jehovah Witnesses. Also obey Adolf Hitler, and agree to fight for Germany, by joining the army and taking the weapons. So an estimated less than two dozen signed it. Some Jehovah Witnesses were so scared that they signed it. But many of them that did sign it, their life became worse. The Nazis had put the Jehovah Witnesses in the front of the line, when they went to war so they may be killed first. Many Jehovah Witnesses that signed it went back and told the Nazis to take it back. Many of us today do that, because we have been under pressure or scared, but then realize it was a mistake. So of course they did and put them back where they came from. The Witnesses believed that no matter what happened, they'll be resurrected in the new paradise that Jehovah promised.

You couldn't stop Witnesses from preaching, through word or mouth. Even the Gestapo (secret police) formed to stop them, but the Witnesses would go underground and continued to get the word to the outsiders on what the Nazis were doing to them. Another way the Jehovah Witnesses would get the word out is by baking cookies! The Jehovah Witnesses that were at home baked cookies to send to the families and people in the concentration camps. It had to pass through the guards, so they tried to make it taste horrible or look disgusting. Once the people in the concentration camps received them, a scripture would be stuffed in the middle of the cookies when they had bit into it. Another brilliant way is that some Jehovah Witnesses that worked on the farm, gather the eggs to sell in the village or up town. Many of the Jehovah Witnesses knew each other, so they bought eggs from them. Underneath each egg was a scripture too! The Bibles that they had were miniature, so they could rip a page or two and tuck it in their towel. When everyone went to go take a shower, everyone would exchange their pages. The Jehovah Witnesses had many great ideas to still get the word out. Sometimes if they got caught, they thought it was worth the risk because it was so important to them.

Many Jehovah Witnesses died during the Holocaust, but there were several that survived. One is a lady name Simone Arnold Liebster. She was born the month of August in 1930. Simone was an only child and was taught to listen to her conscience, even when it meant being unpopular with others. Her life before the Holocaust started was normal. Simone's father was a musician and an artist, and they loved taking walks through the woods together because they both enjoyed seeing the nature. In 1938 her mother became a Jehovah Witness, and her father got baptized shortly after. In 1941, Simone decided to become a Witness too.

Three weeks after Simone got baptized the Nazis marched down to Germany, they took Simone's father. "They arrested my Dad the day he had his monthly pay packet in his pocket. They closed our bank account and refused my mum a working card, telling her that there was neither work nor help for vermin" (Arnold Liebster) Then they sent him away, and marked him as "whose behavior would damage German authority" (Arnold Liebster) Later Simone went to a home, where she had to work, be disciplined, and there was no talking at all. The food that they served them was miniature amounts. Usually it was a soup that was made out of flour, water, and potatoes. They also may have given them half of an apple. One of Simone's jobs was to clean under a mattress, which she hid her Bible underneath. She would read little by little everyday, and all the other kids would think she was the slowest. Simone never tried to run away because if she had, that would have caused her parents to be beaten at the concentration camps. She didn't want that, so she stayed and did what she was told. "Hadn't dad once told me. My dear parents had put so many good things into my heart. I could draw on my own treasures" (Liebster)

Through all the gruesome things that happened, Simone survived. Her mother had gone to the home to sign Simone out. At first, Simone didn't recognize her own mother because her face was all scarred, bruised, burnt, and even teeth missing. This was not the mother she remembered. Later on when her mother was fighting for her, she knew it was her mother then. Simone and her mother received a note that her father was dead, but later he returned home with no teeth and all worn out. Then the family all got back together. After Simone's parents passed she attended art school, like her father did. She attended a Watchtower Bible study in the USA where she had learned English. In 1956 Simone got married to Max, and they went on preaching door to door, and lived in peace. Simone has spoken to audience at schools, universities, museums, events in over 60 European and North

America cities. Simone and her husband both aim to help young people recognize and reject racism, hatred, bullying, violence. They both also try to tell kids to listen to their trained conscience.

It is important to learn about the Holocaust, because one may happen again. Many kids are being bullied today, because other kids have labeled other kids with names as the guards did to the prisoners. When bullying has been active anywhere, do you step in and help, or stand back and watch? Well it is very dangerous to stand there and watch the bully pick on their target. Even if one person stood up and helped the target, it could make a big difference. Don't be like the Germans, and stand back and watch the prisoners be put in the concentration camps. They didn't want to get involved, because they knew the consequences. If no one helps, the target will get crazy thoughts and try to do something that could hurt even innocent people. For example, Ohio had a kid that brought a gun to school, because he was being bullied to the point he wanted to shoot people. Well we saw that the Jehovah Witnesses stood up for their faith, because they believed deeply in it. But not only Jehovah Witnesses stood up for what they believed in, many other people in the concentration camps did too.