

Summer 2016

# The Watch Tower Bible and Tract society: How Jehovah's Witnesses denounced and resisted the Nazi regime

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The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society:  
How Jehovah's Witnesses Denounced and Resisted the Nazi Regime

Elena Sorchiotti

A research project submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

August 2016

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## Acknowledgments

This thesis and the related website have been a year-long project, that required extensive research and continuous effort. Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany is a delicate theme that needs to be considered with extreme care and sensitivity, without affecting the accuracy and the objectivity of the topic. I would like to thank many people who had a share in this project for their constant support and practical help.

First of all, I would like to thank the professors and historians who, with their comments and ideas, contributed to the development of this thesis. Dr. Galgano and Dr. Gubser's perspectives on the topic, along with their comments, improved the final draft of the thesis and project. I would also like to give special thanks to Dr. Lanier, who, as my thesis director, guided me through the whole process of researching and writing, giving me regular feedback on the various drafts of the project. Her expertise on public history helped me to achieve a more successful and engaging website.

I would also like to thank the North Harrisonburg congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. Not only did they support and encourage me, but they also provided practical help, going through the thesis and website to make sure my analysis and factual information were accurate.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to Mara Giannini, my dear friend who specializes in the German language, and helped me translate a variety of primary sources; Zach Einstein, who constantly kept me motivated and on track, regularly reading my thesis and providing comments to improve its quality and comprehensiveness; and my parents, as without them this thesis and website would not even exist. Their constant

efforts to instill in me the love of studying, reasoning and reflecting hold a crucial role in reaching this academic achievement.

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## **Abstract**

The present thesis aims to reveal the stance of the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, towards the oppression and persecution of its members - examined in the accompanying website - perpetrated by the Nazi regime in Germany, from 1933 to 1944. Unlike the majority of Christian denominations, Jehovah's Witnesses from all around the world took a firm stand against Hitler's political agenda and against the actions carried out by the Nazi authorities. Through the use of diplomatic means, publication of articles, special campaigns, and letters addressed to government officials, the world headquarters of the religious organization publicly denounced the Nazi regime and helped support the Jehovah's Witnesses who, in Germany, were under attack for their beliefs and preaching activity.

As religious denominations first welcomed, then silently feared Hitler's regime, the religious group of Jehovah's Witnesses stood out for its public and fearless denunciation of the crimes committed by the Nazis.

## Introduction

On October 7, 1934, Adolf Hitler, while in the company of other politicians and Nazi leaders, jumped to his feet, and screamed: “This brood [i.e. the Jehovah’s Witnesses] will be exterminated in Germany!”<sup>1</sup> Ten years after Hitler’s death, on August 14, 1955, 107,423 Jehovah’s Witnesses were gathered to attend a special convention, “World Conquest Soon - By God’s Kingdom,” held at the same stadium where the German Chancellor delivered his political speeches: the Zeppelinwiese stadium of Nuremberg.<sup>2</sup> The stadium was the same, but two things had changed: Hitler was not a threat anymore, and the number of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Germany had quadrupled.

Hitler’s government relentlessly persecuted Jehovah’s Witnesses, who, at the time, were also known as International Bible Students.<sup>3</sup> In reference to Hitler’s aforementioned assertion, a German political adviser stated: “Hitler’s outburst of anger was not just an idle threat. No other group of prisoners ... was exposed to the sadism of the SS-soldiery in such a fashion as the Bible Students were.”<sup>4</sup> Considering the hostile environment that Nazi Germany created for Jehovah’s Witnesses, some questions arise: What was the stand of the religious organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses on the actions pursued by the Nazi government in Germany? To what extent did the leaders of the religious group fight against Hitler’s government, and through which means? The present

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<sup>1</sup> Karl R. A. Wittig, Statutory Declaration, doc. no. 778/13 November 1947 by notary Otto Ludwig, Frankfurt am Main. Quoted in *Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1959), 142.

<sup>2</sup> *1956 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1955), 43.

<sup>3</sup> During the Third Reich, Jehovah’s Witnesses were also known as International Bible Students and Earnest Bible Students. The German designation was ‘Bibelforscher,’ term used by Hitler and other German politicians to refer to Jehovah’s Witnesses.

<sup>4</sup> Wittig, Statutory Declaration, November 13, 1947.

paper aims to unravel the role that the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, the legal name of the religious organization, had in fighting against the persecution of its members in Hitler's Germany.<sup>5</sup> In today's society, religions are sometimes blamed for, and are often guilty of, fomenting terrorist acts and provoking wars. For this reason, the way the Watch Tower Society, with its headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, reacted to the growing threats posed by Hitler's government has significant contemporary relevance.

Along with the written section, the present research project also includes a complementary digital component. As the written part is focused on the increasing persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany between 1933 and 1937, the digital part aims to examine the experience of Jehovah's Witnesses after 1937, the year in which the number of Jehovah's Witnesses sent to concentration camps reached its peak. The project, therefore, has been divided as follows: the first part of the present thesis is a background paper that analyzes and interprets what the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses did to protect its members and to speak up against the injustices perpetrated by the Nazi government. The second part collects and describes the personal experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses, whether they were victims or survivors, as they were arrested, imprisoned, and sent to concentration camps. Since the primary aim of this historical study is to bring to life stories that for too long have been left aside, a website featuring maps, audio files, photographs, and original documents, among other digital files, proved

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<sup>5</sup> 'Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society' and 'Watch Tower Society' will be used interchangeably for the purpose of this thesis.



to be the most effective way to achieve this goal, helping its visitors to feel a sense of personal connection with the victims.<sup>6</sup>

The history of Jehovah's Witnesses during the Nazi regime is rich with thought-provoking facts and events that demand historical analysis. Nevertheless, the 'purple triangles,' a symbol that identified Jehovah's Witnesses in the Nazi concentration camps, have been largely disregarded for decades. As historian Sybil Milton stated, "the fate of Jehovah's Witnesses has been neglected, fragmented, and rejected."<sup>7</sup> During the 1990s, however, more historians, museum professionals, and other scholars dedicated increased attention to the fate of Jehovah's Witnesses between 1933 and 1945 in Nazi Germany.<sup>8</sup>

German historian Detlef Garbe, acknowledging the existing gap in the historiography, wrote his 1993 Ph.D. dissertation on Jehovah's Witnesses in the Third Reich. His book, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom: Jehovah's Witnesses in the Third Reich*, is still considered the most comprehensive work on the topic, two decades after its first publication. Beginning with the origins of the religious group, Garbe retraces the history of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany, focusing on their identity as martyrs during the persecution perpetrated by the Nazi authorities.<sup>9</sup>

Another pillar of the existing historiography is *Persecution and Resistance of Jehovah's Witnesses During the Nazi Regime*, published in 2001. This book, edited by

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<sup>6</sup> The link to the website, the digital component of the present research project, is: <http://helenbrown369.wix.com/jwpersecution>.

<sup>7</sup> Sybil Milton, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Forgotten Victims," in *Persecution and Resistance of Jehovah's Witnesses During the Nazi Regime, 1933-1945*, ed. Hans Hesse (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2001), 142.

<sup>8</sup> One of the first historians to focus on Jehovah's Witnesses was German historian Friedrich Zipfel, whose book *Kirchenkampf in Deutschland 1933-1945*, published in 1965, included the religious group of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany in its analysis.

<sup>9</sup> Detlef Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom: Jehovah's Witnesses in the Third Reich*, trans. Dagmar G. Grimm (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).

German historian Hans Hesse, is a compendium of symposia that were presented at several conferences held in Germany in 1997. Hesse, acknowledging the lack of published sources on the topic, decided to collect and publish the various articles written by scholars who took part in the conferences.<sup>10</sup> Essays such as “Jehovah’s Witnesses in Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp,” “Jehovah’s Witnesses as Forgotten Victims,” and “Resistance and Persecution of Female Jehovah’s Witnesses” provide a focused, in-depth analysis of several aspects of the experience of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Nazi Germany.<sup>11</sup>

Aimed at a popular rather than an academic audience, *The Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Nazis: Persecution, Deportation, and Murder, 1933-1945* was published by French authors Sylvie Graffard and Michel Reynaud.<sup>12</sup> Graffard and Reynaud’s book recounts the story of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Germany, from the rise of Adolf Hitler to the liberation of the concentration camps. The book is characterized by a narrative style, as the authors’ intent was to make more people aware of these ‘forgotten victims’ of Nazism. Because of a lack of direct references to the sources and a lack of critical analysis, Graffard and Reynaud’s book cannot be rightly considered an academic work that expands the existing historiography. Nevertheless, since its primary objective is to

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<sup>10</sup> Hans Hesse, ed., *Persecution and Resistance of Jehovah’s Witnesses During the Nazi-Regime, 1933-1945* (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2001). The scholars featured in the book are professional historians, such as Henry Friedlander, Detlef Garbe, Jürgen Harder, Ursula Krause-Schmitt, Sybil Milton, and Thomas Rahe, among others; professors of theology, such as Dietrich Hellmund, Lutz Lemhöfer, and Göran Westphal, among others; and representatives of the Watch Tower Society, such as Jolene Chu, Walter Köbe, Angela Nerlich, and Wolfram Slupina, among others.

<sup>11</sup> Essays respectively written by Antje Zeiger, researcher at the Sachsenhausen Memorial Museum, Sybil Milton, senior historian at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Washington DC, and German historian Ursula Krause-Schmitt.

<sup>12</sup> Sylvie Graffard and Michel Reynaud, *The Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Nazis: Persecution, Deportation, and Murder, 1933-1945*, trans. James A. Moorhouse (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001). Sylvie Graffard and Michel Reynaud’s book is the English edition of *Les Bibelforscher et le Nazisme, 1933-1945: Ces Oubliés de l’Histoire*, written by Sylvie Graffard and Leo Tristan, first published in 1990.

make the experience of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany accessible to the public, which would otherwise be limited to professional historians and scholars, this book is an influential and important component of the existing historiography.<sup>13</sup>

As Milton stated, the "research about Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany has barely begun," and many facets of this topic have not yet been explored.<sup>14</sup> The existing historiography makes use of an 'inside perspective,' largely focusing on describing and analyzing the experiences of the members of the religious group in the Third Reich: the increasing opposition they faced and their consequent persecution in the Nazi prisons and concentration camps. Unlike these works, this thesis aims to assume an 'outside perspective,' analyzing how the legal organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Watch Tower Society, located in the United States, reacted to the persecution of its members in the German territory. This study has two objectives: first, it will provide a better understanding of Jehovah's Witnesses as persecuted victims of Hitler's regime, providing the motives behind their reaction to the Nazi persecution; second, it will contribute to the behavioral studies of religions during the Third Reich, showing how the stand of the Watch Tower Society differed from the stance assumed by most religious organizations of the time.

Since it is a fairly recent historical topic, research related to the experience of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany presents many challenges. First and foremost is the difficulty of accessing documentation. Most of the primary sources are relegated to

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<sup>13</sup> Even the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, the legal organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, issued many articles on the fate of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany in its publications. Historical analysis, as well as experiences of victims and survivors, are accessible to the public through the online library, found at [www.wol.jw.org](http://www.wol.jw.org). Accessed March 19, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Milton, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Forgotten Victims," 147.

public and private institutions scattered around Europe, and for this reason, many primary sources are not readily accessible to the vast majority of historians. Many European archives that might have material on Jehovah's Witnesses are small institutions that do not have an online database, making it even harder for researchers outside of Europe to gather a comprehensive documentation of primary sources. Furthermore, since the experience of Jehovah's Witnesses has not always been seen as historically relevant, many primary sources got lost or were not properly collected, further endangering the historical study of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany.

However, as more and more scholars have begun to address Jehovah's Witnesses in their studies, more institutions have begun to devote attention to the topic, gathering and interpreting both primary and secondary sources related to the group's fate.<sup>15</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) was one of the first institutions to dedicate an educational program, on September 29, 1994, to Jehovah's Witnesses as Nazi victims, further expanding the rising interest on the topic. The museum owns a vast collection of primary sources, including photographs, audio files, textiles, letters, postcards, governmental documents, and a comprehensive selection of articles published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, from the late 1920s onwards. The archives and libraries of the headquarters of the Watch Tower Society, located in New York, also contain extensive documentation regarding Jehovah's Witnesses during the Nazi regime: part of their sources, such as letters and telegrams, has been published in some of the

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<sup>15</sup> Just recently, on May 13, 2015, a district in Vienna, Austria, dedicated a plaque to Gerhard Steinacher, a Jehovah's Witness who was executed for refusing to join the army during the Third Reich. The attention dedicated to the experience of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany is gradually increasing. "Plaque Unveiled for Austrian Witness Executed by Nazi: District Mayor Key Speaker," accessed March 10, 2016, <https://www.jw.org/en/news/releases/by-region/austria/gerhard-steinacher-memorial-plaque/>.

Society's publications, while other primary sources in its possession are available for consultation upon request. State and police archives, concentration camps, and other institutions throughout Europe possess the majority of the existing documentation regarding Jehovah's Witnesses in the Third Reich, which they make available in digital form upon request.

The present research is based on a variety of sources: historical and contemporary publications of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society; diplomatic papers from the foreign relations of the United States; photos, letters, governmental documents, and other primary sources collected by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and by other public and private archives in Germany; articles from the New York Times, the Toronto Daily Star, and other newspapers; video documentaries; and speeches and addresses given by Adolf Hitler and other political representatives.<sup>16</sup>

As more and more sources become available, and as its advancing study continues to raise the interest of scholars and historians, the "unique phenomenon" of the Nazi persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses deserves and needs to be further explored.

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<sup>16</sup> Some of the public and private archives that contributed to the sources used for this thesis are: Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich, Germany (BHStA); Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Germany (BA); Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, Germany (HStAD); Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten, Dresden, Germany (STSG).

## I. Jehovah's Witnesses: Origins and Beliefs

Charles Taze Russell, a seventeen-year-old man, was walking near his father's store in Allegheny, Pennsylvania one evening in 1869. The melodious voices of a religious song drew him towards the basement of a building, where the Advent Christian Church was having a meeting. What happened that night would change the future of millions of people. Russell remembers: "What I heard sent me to my Bible to study with more zeal and care than ever before, and I shall ever thank the Lord for that leading."<sup>17</sup> Russell, prompted by a strong desire to understand the Bible and its meaning, decided to gather periodically with a few acquaintances to discuss Bible questions. From 1870 to 1875, this rigorous Bible study continued, causing a "constant growth in grace and knowledge and love of God and his Word."<sup>18</sup> In these years, Russell and his associates grasped several important understandings, such as the mortality of the human soul, and the significance of the ransom of Christ for humankind. These findings would eventually form the pillar of the credo of Jehovah's Witnesses.

With a growing understanding of Bible truths, Russell began to travel and preach to others the knowledge that for so long he had desired to acquire. However, he realized that he needed something more to reach people on a wider scale, and in 1879, after selling all his belongings to gather enough funds, he began to publish a new monthly journal, the *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*.<sup>19</sup> Through this

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<sup>17</sup> Charles T. Russell, "Harvest Gatherings and Sifting," *Zion's Watch Tower* 15 (April 25, 1894): 95.

<sup>18</sup> Russell, "Harvest Gatherings and Sifting," 95.

<sup>19</sup> In 1939, the magazine *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* was renamed *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom*.

publication, Russell and his associates succeeded in reaching more and more people, spreading the revelatory discernments that they acquired through their regular Bible study. As he was comprehending the requirements for his understanding of true Christianity, Russell used the *Zion's Watch Tower*, as well as other tracts he was publishing, to introduce several new dispositions he felt every Christian should follow. In 1880, Russell suggested that the readers of the *Watch Tower* should hold regular meetings, twice a week, following the advice that Paul gave to the congregation of Corinthians.<sup>20</sup> He wrote: "Many places they [i.e. "our readers"] are totally unacquainted with each other, and thus lose the sympathy and comfort which our Father designed should come to them by 'The assembling of themselves together.'"<sup>21</sup> A year later, he established another provision, stressing the importance of preaching the good news to other people, as Jesus did while he was on earth. In the July and August, 1881 issue of the *Watch Tower*, Russell wrote: "We were not called, nor anointed to receive honor and amass wealth, but to spend and be spent, and to preach the good news."<sup>22</sup>

Russell spent his entire life, and all of his financial assets, trying to discern biblical truths and to foster the knowledge that he and his fellow Bible students acquired. Not only did he want people to understand the message of the Bible, but he also urged them to diligently follow the principles contained in the Sacred Scriptures. To better organize the preaching work through Bible-based publications, in 1881, Russell announced the foundation of *Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society*, a publishing society

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<sup>20</sup> In order to support the new provision, Russell cited the scripture of Hebrews 10:24, 25.

<sup>21</sup> Charles T. Russell, "Write at Once," *Zion's Watch Tower* 1 (May, 1880): 97.

<sup>22</sup> Charles T. Russell, "Anointed to Preach," *Zion's Watch Tower* 3 (July and August, 1881): 241.

with headquarters in Allegheny, Pennsylvania.<sup>23</sup> This society had the primary goal of publishing tracts whose content exposed “the errors of church doctrines.”<sup>24</sup> Its objective was also to foster accurate knowledge of the Bible, giving people the opportunity to become faithful servants of God. The Society, legally established in 1884 under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and later renamed Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, is a non-profit organization “used by Jehovah’s Witnesses to support their worldwide work.”<sup>25</sup> The provisions that Russell established at the end of the nineteenth century, such as the regular meetings and the preaching work, became, and still are, distinctive features of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

As more and more people started to attend the meetings organized by Russell in several cities throughout the United States to discuss Bible teachings, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society continued to grow, and over the following years the number of tracts, booklets, and books published and distributed through the preaching work greatly increased. In 1910, an issue of the *Watch Tower* announced that “the dear friends who regularly meet all over the world for the study of God’s Word, using Watch Tower publications as helping hands” would, from that moment on, be recognized as part of the “International Bible Students’ Association.”<sup>26</sup> Russell wrote: “Now in the Lord’s providence we have thought of a title suitable to the Lord’s people everywhere ... We are

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<sup>23</sup> In 1896, Russell changed the name of the society to Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Today the legal organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses is known as Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. *Jehovah’s Witnesses: Proclaimers of God’s Kingdom* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1993), 229; Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Divine Purpose*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> “What is the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society?,” accessed October 19, 2015, <http://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/watchtower-society>.

<sup>26</sup> Charles T. Russell, “International Bible Students’ Association,” *The Watch Tower* 31 (April 1, 1910): 4593.



Bible Students. We welcome all of God’s people to join with us in the study. We believe that the result of such studies is blessed and unifying.”<sup>27</sup> In 1931, during a convention held in Columbus, Ohio, Joseph F. Rutherford, who succeeded Russell as president of the Watch Tower Society, presented a paramount resolution in the history of the International Bible Students’ Association (IBSA).<sup>28</sup> He declared: “We desire to be known as and called by the name, to wit, Jehovah’s Witnesses.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, those who were known as International Bible Students became recognized as Jehovah’s Witnesses.<sup>30</sup>

The religious organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses was not a mysterious and secretive sect. Its heavy involvement in public activities, such as preaching and organizing conventions around the country, captured the attention not only of the general public, but the press as well. Leading newspapers featured numerous articles explaining the teachings of the religious group and informing the public about news and upcoming events of the Watch Tower Society. A *Washington Post* article, dated December 3, 1900, reported what Charles T. Russell stated about the gospel mentioned in Romans 1:16, in a speech that he delivered during an assembly of the religious group. The journalist wrote that the ‘true gospel’ as described by Russell “opposes the Orthodox Teachings on the point of universal damnation.”<sup>31</sup> A couple of years later, the same newspaper informed its readers about an upcoming convention of Bible Students, where, as advertised by the

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<sup>27</sup> Russell, “International Bible Students’ Association,” *Watch Tower*, 4593.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Franklin Rutherford was elected president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society by the board of directors on January 6, 1917. Before being appointed as president, Rutherford practiced law in the state of Missouri and served as public prosecutor and judge. He became known as Judge Rutherford. *Proclaimers of God’s Kingdom*, 67.

<sup>29</sup> *Divine Purpose*, 82.

<sup>30</sup> In this thesis, the terms Bible Students and Jehovah’s Witnesses will be used interchangeably.

<sup>31</sup> “Explained ‘True Gospel’: It Opposes the Orthodox Teachings on the Point of Universal Damnation,” *The Washington Post*, December 3, 1900, 12.

journalist, “many of the questions which more or less constantly perplex the minds of earnest Christian people will find ... a full and timely discussion.”<sup>32</sup>

In 1912, several newspapers in the United States revealed the new biblical understanding that the Governing Body of the Watch Tower Society announced at various conventions held throughout the year.<sup>33</sup> The *New York Times* reported that “the International Bible Students’ Association adopted a resolution unreservedly repudiating as thoroughly unscriptural the teaching of a place, state or condition of ‘hell-fire and brimstone’ for the torment of the wicked.”<sup>34</sup> An article in *The Washington Post* even specified what the condition of the dead was according to the new teaching, since the idea of hell had been rejected: “the speaker announced that they are dead, in a state of unconsciousness, awaiting the call of God in the resurrection.”<sup>35</sup> The press demonstrated to have an influential role in spreading and exposing the biblical teachings of the Bible Students to the public.

This public presence of Jehovah’s Witnesses was not a fortuitous circumstance. The Governing Body of the Watch Tower Society wanted to share biblical truths as widely as possible. On one occasion, Rutherford sought the backing of the press to report a synopsis of one of his addresses, which then appeared in numerous newspapers, in

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<sup>32</sup> “Meet to Study the Bible: Large Attendance Expected at Sessions of Watch Tower Society,” *The Washington Post*, October 4, 1902, 12.

<sup>33</sup> The Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses is defined as “a small group of mature Christians who provide direction for Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide.” The offices of the Governing Body are located in the headquarters of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, at the time located in Brooklyn, New York. “What is the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses?,” accessed July 8, 2016, <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/governing-body/>.

<sup>34</sup> “Hell-Fire Repudiated: Bible Students’ Association Assails Old Theory and Starts Crusade,” *New York Times*, July 9, 1912, 9.

<sup>35</sup> “Says Hell Is a Myth: J. F. Rutherford, Lawyer, Tells Audience Soul Dies,” *The Washington Post*, October 7, 1912, 4.

order to “tell Americans some great truths that they should know.”<sup>36</sup> The Watch Tower Society also made use of the radio to further share biblical messages. In 1927, the first president of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), Merlin H. Aylesworth, personally invited Rutherford to use the company’s network to broadcast a biblical talk that he was going to deliver at the yearly convention of Bible Students, held in Toronto. Two interdenominational services, broadcast by the Greater New York Federation of Churches, were cancelled “at the request of the National Broadcasting Company,” to offer the Sunday afternoon timeslot to Rutherford’s address.<sup>37</sup>

The radio proved to be an effective way through which the Watch Tower Society could share its Bible-based talks. The following year, at the yearly convention of the religious group, the biggest radio network in history was arranged to broadcast the Sunday talk, entitled ‘Ruler for the People.’ The *New York Times* reported: “The most extensive and expensive radio hook-up in history has been arranged for Judge Joseph F. Rutherford ... The radio network ordered by the lay preacher exceeds even those set up for the President, or for any new news event.”<sup>38</sup> The radio network included ninety-six stations scattered throughout Canada and the United States, which, through the use of over 91,000 miles of telegraphic wires, were expected to broadcast Rutherford’s talk on a worldwide scale.

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<sup>36</sup> “Predicts Bigger Conflict: What J. F. Rutherford Told His Madison Square Garden Audience,” *New York Times*, October 18, 1926, 15.

<sup>37</sup> “Church Federation Loses Sunday Radio: WEA and WRC give to Judge Rutherford the Time of Two Afternoon Services,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1927, 28. See also *1928 Year Book of the International Bible Students Association* (Brooklyn, NY: International Bible Students Association, 1927), 30-32.

<sup>38</sup> “Rutherford Gets Biggest Radio Net: Most Costly Hook-Up, Which Will Include 96 Stations, Engaged by Preacher,” *New York Times*, July 31, 1928, 28.

Leading newspapers and radio stations played a significant role in shedding light on the religious group, allowing their readers and listeners to become acquainted with Jehovah's Witnesses and their beliefs. In reference to a radio net used to broadcast a biblical talk, the Society stated: "Reports from every part of the country are to the effect that it broke down a tremendous amount of prejudice, and opened the eyes of great numbers who are now willing to listen to the message concerning the kingdom of God."<sup>39</sup>

With the objective of spreading the 'good news' on a worldwide scale, in 1902, Russell approved the opening of a European branch, located in the city of Wuppertal, Germany.<sup>40</sup> The headquarters of the Watch Tower Society decided to send missionaries to other European countries in order to "teach all nations, baptizing them," through the preaching activity and the distribution of Bible-based publications.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the International Bible Students and their door-to-door preaching activity became known not only in the United States but in several other countries around the world. What was born as a study of the Bible among few, in a small city of Pennsylvania, became a religious group spread all over the world, with its headquarters located in Brooklyn, New York.

In the 1930s, Germany already counted around 20,000 'Bibelforscher,' the German term for Bible Students.<sup>42</sup> These students used to meet at least twice a week to gain a deeper understanding of the Bible and were deeply involved in the preaching work, sharing Bible teachings with other people in their communities. The European

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<sup>39</sup> *1928 Year Book*, 31.

<sup>40</sup> The European branch office of the Watch Tower Society was later moved to the city of Magdeburg, Germany. *1974 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1973), 67, 97.

<sup>41</sup> Matthew 28:19, King James Version.

<sup>42</sup> Michael H. Kater, "Die Ernsten Bibelforscher im Dritten Reich," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 17 (1969): 181. See also *1934 Year Book of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1933), 145.

branch office of the Watch Tower Society, also known as Bethel, was located in Magdeburg, a hundred miles southwest from Berlin. There, a million copies of *The Golden Age* were published every month, along with 2 million books, and 5 million booklets each year.<sup>43</sup> These Bible-based publications were distributed through the preaching activity all year long.

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<sup>43</sup> *The Golden Age* was a monthly magazine distributed along with the *Zion's Watch Tower* since 1919. It was renamed *Consolation* in 1937 and *Awake!* in 1946.

## II. Contrasting Ideology: Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany

In the aftermath of World War I, Germany was struggling to rebuild its economy, devastated by the consequences of the war. Defeated by the Allied Powers, the German state had to pay war reparations, which created an enormous national debt, hindering Germans from any hopes of quick recovery.<sup>44</sup> Inflation grew exponentially, reaching its acme in 1923 and 1924: just a loaf of bread was estimated to cost trillions of marks.<sup>45</sup> Besides the economical repercussions, the war drastically afflicted the morale of the German people: with almost two million victims, and more than double that number wounded, they lost their relatives and friends, as well as their houses, businesses, and material possessions, leaving many of them in a state of complete indigence.<sup>46</sup>

The Weimer Republic, the title given to the democratic German state from 1919 to 1933, strove to rebuild its economy. After initial struggles, Germany experienced a relatively stable period, known as 'the golden twenties,' from 1925 to 1929, when the employment rate augmented, the average wages increased, and an industrialization process began. However, it was an ephemeral prosperity, as Germany still had reparations to pay and its economy was heavily based on foreign loans. The outbreak of the Great Depression in 1929 prompted the inevitable collapse of the economy: foreign nations withdrew their loans, and Germany experienced growing unemployment, escalating inflation and increasing bankruptcies.

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<sup>44</sup> Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 231-232.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 154.

<sup>46</sup> According to historian Peter Gay, the victims of World War I amounted to 1.8 million. Gay, *Weimar Culture*, 147.

The National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP), also known as the Nazi Party, was strongly inimical to the Weimer Republic and the democratic values it endorsed. Its members yearned for an extensive purification of the German political system and the 'German soul,' which they believed had been defiled by the Weimer Republic. The leading representatives of the Nazi Party promoted the nationalistic ideals emerged from the institution of the German Empire in 1871, and supported Germany's imperialistic attempts that led to the outbreak of World War I. For this reason, the Nazis could not accept the provisions established in the Treaty of Versailles, which imposed military restrictions, territorial limitations, and reparations to the amount of five billion dollars.<sup>47</sup>

As the conciliatory policy of the Weimer Republic failed to reestablish a strong and secure economy, the NSDAP gained increasing support, receiving a plurality of votes at the 1930 and 1932 political elections. On January 30, 1933, president of Germany Paul von Hindenburg, persuaded by his close adviser Franz von Papen, decided to appoint Adolf Hitler, leader of the Nazi Party, as chancellor of Germany.<sup>48</sup> The foremost objective in Hitler's political agenda was to reestablish the power and dignity that Germany had lost with its defeat in World War I. Devastated by the severe economic conditions, many German people welcomed Hitler, with his promise to bring Germany back to its glory. They considered him the one who would save their country from decay,

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<sup>47</sup> Treaty of Versailles, June 28, 1919. Available online at [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject\\_menus/versailles\\_menu.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/versailles_menu.asp). Accessed June 23, 2016.

<sup>48</sup> President Paul von Hindenburg was the German head of the state, while Adolf Hitler was the head of the government, or chancellor. With the death of Hindenburg on August 2nd, 1934, Hitler merged the two positions, making himself both the head of the state and head of the government.

thus giving a new hope to all the Germans, as he helped them to rebuild the economy of their country and, consequently, their pride.<sup>49</sup>

In order to achieve his first and foremost goal, Hitler believed that Germany had to be cleansed of all those people that, in his opinion, did not meet the standards of the Aryan race. Among them were the Jews, whom Hitler defined as a “ferment of decomposition.”<sup>50</sup> Hitler particularly blamed them for exploiting the German people and resources in order to gain greater wealth for themselves. He also despised those who had a different political ideology, such as communists and socialists, and those who displayed what he considered to be lower moral standards, such as homosexuals. According to Hitler, purifying Germany from all these types of people would have put Germany in the position of reestablishing the glorious country as it was before World War I. Since the day he rose to power, he aimed to begin a purification process, through the elimination of all those entities that threatened the unity of Germany. He stated: “What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and reproduction of our race and our people, ... the purity of our blood, the freedom and independence of the fatherland.”<sup>51</sup>

Besides marginalizing those groups of people that he believed debased the purity of Germans, Hitler was resolved to spread certain ideals and values which, shaping the mentality of people, would contribute to the establishment of a strong and homogeneous country. He stated: “A chaos of views and conceptions ... tore asunder the German

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<sup>49</sup> Joseph P. Stern, *Hitler: The Führer and the People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 191.

<sup>50</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), 655.

<sup>51</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 214.



people.”<sup>52</sup> Following the shadow of some scholars, who described Germany as an exceptional and superior country, Hitler fostered the concept of nationalism, stressing the importance for Germans of loving their Country.<sup>53</sup> He stated: “We do not want to have any other God – only Germany.”<sup>54</sup> The Nazi leader also believed that the love for Germany should be manifest in the German people through a self-sacrificing spirit. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote: “The sacrifice of the personal existence is necessary in order to guarantee the preservation of the species. Thus the most essential supposition for the formation and preservation of a State is ... the readiness to risk one's life for this with all means.”<sup>55</sup> The political ideology supported by Hitler, and at the foundation of his political party, demanded a complete submission to the state, which all Germans should love to the point of dying for it.<sup>56</sup> In fact, Hitler strongly believed that “the freedom of the mind and will of a nation are to be valued more highly than the individual’s freedom of mind and will.”<sup>57</sup>

In order to spread his political ideology and moral values, Hitler made use of a variety of means, such as the media, the press, and educational systems.<sup>58</sup> In a radio address, Hitler stated: “In relation to the political decontamination of our public life, the government will embark upon a systematic campaign to restore the nation’s moral and

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<sup>52</sup> Norman H. Baynes, ed., *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922-August 1939*, Vol. I (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 879.

<sup>53</sup> One of the most prominent exponents of German nationalism was the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who lived in the 1800s. After him, other German scholars advanced the idea of German superiority.

<sup>54</sup> Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, Vol. I, 367.

<sup>55</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 151.

<sup>56</sup> Richard A. Koenigsberg, *Hitler’s Ideology: Embodied Metaphor, Fantasy and History* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2007), passim.

<sup>57</sup> Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, Vol. I, 872.

<sup>58</sup> David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 39-40.

material health. The whole educational system, theater, film, literature, the press and broadcasting – all these will be used as a means to this end.”<sup>59</sup> Hitler was determined to impress the Nazi ideals in the mind of all Germans, so that all who had a “German heart” could “fuse together,” and thus achieve racial purity.<sup>60</sup>

The ideology that Hitler and his political party promoted was in deep contrast to the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses. As early as 1929, the Society warned against the Nazi ideology. An issue of the German edition of *The Golden Age* stated: “National socialism ... is a movement that is acting ... directly in the service of man’s enemy, the Devil.”<sup>61</sup> At the foundation of the conflict was the fact that the religious group considered any political involvement to be improper conduct for a true follower of Christ. Through the preaching activity, Jehovah’s Witnesses advertised God’s Kingdom, that was to replace all earthly governments. In accordance to the biblical commandment to render “unto God the things that are God’s,” the members of the religious group were determined to remain neutral before any human government, therefore giving God the Sovereignty that he rightly deserved under his Kingdom.<sup>62</sup> As a consequence, Jehovah’s Witnesses did not support or side with any type of political government, no matter whether it was a democracy, a monarchy or a dictatorship. The nationalistic character of the Nazi regime could only clash with the neutral stand upheld by Jehovah’s Witnesses. As a matter of fact, a Nazi judicial court accused Bible Students of being inimical to the Nazi State, on

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<sup>59</sup> Adolf Hitler in *Völkischer Beobachter*, March 23, 1933. Quoted in Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, 33.

<sup>60</sup> Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, Vol. I, 12.

<sup>61</sup> “Haken Kreuz,” *Das Goldene Zeitalter* 7 (October 15, 1929), 316.

<sup>62</sup> Matthew 22:21, King James Version.

the evidence that they regarded “all secular governments as works of Satan.”<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, an issue of *Awake!* stated: “When Hitler began to climb onto his pedestal as a self-appointed god, an ideological battle was inevitable.”<sup>64</sup>

This initial conflict was destined to worsen by means of other contrasting views between the Nazi regime and Jehovah’s Witnesses. One of them was the fact that the religious group did not regard Hitler as a savior. They believed that Jehovah God was the only one able to provide salvation, and therefore the only one worthy to be addressed as the savior.<sup>65</sup> An issue of the *Watchtower* stated: “The Third Reich, sword drawn, found itself face-to-face with a tiny band of Jehovah’s Witnesses who had sworn loyalty to the true God.”<sup>66</sup> For this reason, Jehovah’s Witnesses refused to use the salute “Heil Hitler!”, as its literal meaning is ‘salvation is from Hitler.’

It is worth remembering that Jehovah’s Witnesses were deeply involved in preaching activities. Their refusal to salute the Führer, therefore, was not something that they could keep private. Regularly going door-to-door preaching about God’s Kingdom put the almost 20,000 members of the religious group in the spotlight, as they publicly refused to salute the Führer in front of other Germans. German people, therefore, were well aware of Jehovah’s Witnesses’ lack of trust in the head of the Nation, and Hitler certainly was not going to have his authority undermined by what he considered to be a

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<sup>63</sup> “29 Bible Students Cleared in Reich: Members of Sect Are Released After Trial on Charges of Treason to Nazi State,” *New York Times*, March 28, 1934, 20.

<sup>64</sup> “Why Unafraid to Speak Out?” *Awake!* 76 (August 22, 1995): 6.

<sup>65</sup> The scripture that Jehovah’s Witnesses used to support their stand was Psalm 62:2, which reads: “He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *he is* my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.” From the King James Version.

<sup>66</sup> “Why Unafraid to Speak Out?” *Awake!*, 6.

foreign and insignificant religious group.<sup>67</sup> Since Jehovah's Witnesses publicly declared their complete submission to God's Kingdom, instead of Germany, and did not recognize the Führer as a savior, the Nazi government considered them a threat to the unity of the State.<sup>68</sup> In 1936, an article of the Society stated: "The authorities look upon the refusal of the Hitler Greeting as a danger to public order and security and therefore punishable."<sup>69</sup>

The decisive factor in the Jehovah's Witnesses' relationship with the Nazis was their firm stand against any type of military involvement. On March 16, 1935, Hitler reestablished German rearmament and reintroduced conscription, thus breaking the provisions established in the Treaty of Versailles, which prohibited any German military activity.<sup>70</sup> Determined to follow the principles contained in the Bible, Jehovah's Witnesses defended their stand against military service by referring to the scripture of Matthew 26:52, which states: "Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."<sup>71</sup> Unwilling to compromise their integrity, Jehovah's Witnesses refused to join the army just to please the Nazi regime. At this point, their neutral political stance was in clear contrast with the Nazi ideology and laws, which required mandatory participation in the State army.<sup>72</sup>

Hitler was probably referring to Jehovah's Witnesses when, during a speech delivered at the Reichstag, the seat of the German parliament, he stated: "There is a small

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<sup>67</sup> The Watch Tower Society stated that, at the end of 1933, there were 19,268 workers engaged in the preaching activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany. *1934 Year Book*, 145.

<sup>68</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 49.

<sup>69</sup> "The Persecutions of Jehovah's witnesses in Germany," *The Golden Age* 18 (October 7, 1936), 27.

<sup>70</sup> Sigrid Schultz, "Germans Arm; Scrap Treaty," *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, March 17, 1935, 1-2. Available online at <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1935/03/17/page/1/article/germans-arm-scrap-treaty>. Accessed March 21, 2016.

<sup>71</sup> Matthew 26:52, King James Version.

<sup>72</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 48-54.

body of those international disintegrators of a people who ... break up established order ... The National Socialist State in its domestic life will exterminate and annihilate even these last remnants of this poisoning and stultification of the people.”<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, within the very first weeks from Hitler’s appointment as chancellor, the German government issued a decree that drastically limited the fundamental rights of the German people.

This decree was issued as a consequence of what seemed to be a political uprising: on February 27, 1933, the Reichstag was set on fire. The ties of the alleged offender, Marinus van der Lubbe, to the Communist party were wrongly used by the German government to accuse the Communist party of organizing a plot against the Reich.<sup>74</sup> As a result, the following day, President Paul von Hindenburg issued a new emergency decree that gave more power to the government, at the expense of local authorities and citizens’ rights. The Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of People and State, also known as Reichstag Fire Decree, limited the right to assembly, the freedom of speech, the freedom of press, and allowed any type of police investigations, with no restraints.<sup>75</sup> This decree, which assumed a pivotal influence in the formation of a totalitarian state, granted the Nazi authorities, such as the SA and the SS, the right of

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<sup>73</sup> Speech delivered by Hitler, on July 13, 1934. First published in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, July 15, 1934. Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, Vol. I, 298-299.

<sup>74</sup> Rudolf Diels was the head of the Gestapo, the Secret State Police of Nazi Germany. He believed that firm measurements needed to be taken to prevent the Communist party from attacking the government, even before the Reichstag fire took place. Benjamin Carter Hett, *Burning the Reichstag: An Investigation Into the Third Reich’s Enduring Mystery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 36-37.

<sup>75</sup> “Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and State,” 28 February 1933, in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Vol. III (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946). “Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutz von Volk und Staat,” *Reichsgesetzblatt I*, 1933, 83. Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek). Available online at <http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=dra&datum=1933&size=45&page=113>. Accessed March 28, 2016.

suppressing publications, interrupting political meetings, and even incarcerating people who were considered political opponents.<sup>76</sup> The Reichstag Fire Decree gave a legal basis for the actions that the Gestapo would undertake in the following months against the Watch Tower Society located in Germany.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The SA, which stands for Sturmabteilung, and the SS, which stands for Schutzstaffel, were two paramilitary organizations of the NSDAP that were in place to enforce Nazi authority.

<sup>77</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 119.

### III. The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society: Actions Against the Nazi Government

From the 8 to the 16 of April, 1933, the Watch Tower Society had planned a worldwide special campaign, that had the goal of providing hope and comfort in a world characterized by selfishness and injustices. The campaign involved the distribution of a booklet entitled *Crisis*, which included three lectures that had been broadcast in the United States over the radio by Judge Rutherford, president of the Society.<sup>78</sup> Because of the high interest that many people had in the topic, the Watch Tower Society decided to make these lectures available on an international scale through the booklet *Crisis*. One of the lectures was entitled “Jehovah’s witnesses: Why Persecuted?” and analyzed some of the difficulties that Jehovah’s Witnesses had to endure up until then and the reasons behind their persecution. It is worth mentioning, though, that the persecution referenced by Rutherford was not the Nazi persecution, as that had not yet begun when he first wrote the aforementioned lecture; he was referring to some events that had taken place in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut, in the United States. Rutherford wrote in the booklet: “It is these humble men and women who love God and righteousness, and who as his witnesses are going from house to house with his message of hope, that are abused, arrested and persecuted.”<sup>79</sup> Certainly, the message of the booklet, even though it referred to the random and singular events that took place in the United States, rightly described

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<sup>78</sup> This special campaign was part of a series of campaigns entitled “International Testimony Periods”. These campaigns had the goal of showing the unity of Jehovah’s Witnesses, as they were engaged in the preaching activity distributing the same publication all over the world for eight consecutive days.

<sup>79</sup> Joseph F. Rutherford, *The Crisis* (New York: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1933): 34-35.

and denounced even the upcoming Nazi persecution. For this reason, the timing of this booklet was impeccable, and its content was certainly revelatory for the period, when the Nazi persecution was right at its dawn.

Many Jehovah's Witnesses took part in the campaign, distributing over two millions booklets all over Germany.<sup>80</sup> The Nazi authorities did not view this widespread campaign favorably. The reasons become evident when analyzing the content of the booklet distributed during the campaign. The second section of the booklet, "Jehovah's witnesses: Why Persecuted?", stated: "The true followers of Christ Jesus have been persecuted because of their faithfulness to God. Many have wondered why this persecution should come upon those trying to serve the Lord."<sup>81</sup> The lecture referred to Jehovah's Witnesses as the loyal servants of God, who put God's interests above theirs, continuing to follow the commandment of preaching the 'good news' even when facing opposition. Hitler and his government were certainly not going to allow the distribution of a booklet that described Jehovah's Witnesses as true and faithful Christians, when their beliefs were in clear contrast with Hitler's principles and policies.

There was another reason that prompted the Nazi authorities to intervene and try to block the campaign. The article continued: "Satan the Devil and all his agents therefore violently oppose those who represent Jehovah God and his kingdom, and for this reason Jehovah's witnesses are being persecuted and thrown into prison."<sup>82</sup> The lecture clearly denounced those who persecuted the loyal servants of Jehovah, and even defined them as 'agents of Satan the Devil.' The Nazi authorities could only consider it as

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<sup>80</sup> In Germany, there were 19,268 Witnesses who actively took part in the campaign, compared to 20,719 Witnesses in the United States. Data from *Divine Purpose*, 129.

<sup>81</sup> Rutherford, *Crisis*, 34-35.

<sup>82</sup> Rutherford, *Crisis*, 34.



an evident affront to them, and it did not take long before they decided to intervene, aiming to block the spread of the booklet.<sup>83</sup>

Aware of the complications that might have arisen with the distribution of the booklet *Crisis*, the German Witnesses managed to distribute all of the 10,000 booklets they had in storage in only four days. However, the campaign faced several challenges: a few days after the beginning of the campaign, many Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested and their houses searched. The spread of the booklet increased the visibility of Jehovah's Witnesses, and, just a few days after the beginning of the campaign, some German states, such as Saxony, Bavaria and Hessen, began to impose a ban on the organization. The legal basis for the ban rested on the Reichstag Fire Decree, which allowed them to legally dissolve the association of Jehovah's Witnesses based on the fact that its publications were considered a threat to the public order and security of the German nation.<sup>84</sup> Even though the campaign marked the beginning of the Nazi opposition against Jehovah's Witnesses, the members of the religious group notably increased, going from 12,484 in 1932 to 19,268 in 1933.<sup>85</sup>

Only a few days after the campaign, the preaching activities of Jehovah's Witnesses were once again targeted in Germany. On April 24, 1933, the German branch

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<sup>83</sup> The following month, the Gestapa, which is the Secret State Police of Berlin, banned several publications of the Watch Tower Society, including the booklet *Crisis*. Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 80.

<sup>84</sup> Formally entitled Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of People and State, issued on February 28, 1933. See page 23 of the present thesis.

<sup>85</sup> While it seems surprising to see such a rapid growth in a hostile environment like Nazi Germany, it is also true that Jehovah's Witnesses were engaged in promoting God's Kingdom, which would eventually eliminate all sources of sufferings. If Hitler gained the support of the people for giving hope for a renewed Germany, other people were attracted to the message of hope shared by Jehovah's Witnesses in their preaching work, which explains the rapid growth of the religious group between World War I and World War II. *1974 Yearbook*, 110.

office of the Watch Tower Society, which included its offices and publishing facility, was occupied and seized by the Gestapo, because “of a charge that had been made that the Society was subversive.”<sup>86</sup> The German branch was, therefore, confiscated and searched for evidence of any communist ties. This unexpected and extreme action perpetrated by the Nazi authorities put the continuity of the preaching activities, so vital to Jehovah’s Witnesses, in severe danger. With the German branch office seized, and members of the religious group continuously arrested, the future of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Germany seemed doomed, just a few months after Hitler’s appointment as chancellor.<sup>87</sup>

However, the headquarters of the Watch Tower Society located in Brooklyn, New York, strove to find practical ways to help their brothers and sisters in Germany. The religious organization was determined to fight against the injustices perpetrated by the Nazis and promptly intervened requesting the help of the American government. In fact, the German branch of the Watch Tower Society was under the jurisdiction of the United States, since it had been founded and was legally registered as an American corporation located on German soil.<sup>88</sup> The occupation of the offices and publishing facilities, as well as the confiscation of the equipment, not only hindered the activities of the religious group, but it also caused a financial loss, providing a solid ground for a diplomatic intervention.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Divine Purpose*, 130; and *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1933. The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East and Africa*, Volume II (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1949): 412-413.

<sup>87</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 76.

<sup>88</sup> The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society had been recognized in Germany as a legal foreign corporation since December 7, 1921. *1974 Yearbook*, 90. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 412-413.

<sup>89</sup> The property of the Watch Tower Society was valued 5,000,000 marks. Messersmith to Hull, July 12, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 407-410.

As soon as the German government took action to oppose and stop the activities of the International Bible Students, the headquarters of the religious group intervened. Within three days after the occupation of the facilities, the American government had already contacted its embassy in Germany, revealing the promptness with which the headquarters of the Society acted. The U.S. Department of State sent a telegram to the embassy of the United States located in Berlin requesting to investigate the situation. The phrasing of the telegram showed the willingness of the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, to support the American religious organization. The telegram stated: "Please investigate with a view to lending appropriate assistance, and submit a telegraphic report on the situation."<sup>90</sup> In the meantime, the Gestapo was conducting a thorough investigation of the Magdeburg plant of the Watch Tower Society. On May the 2nd, the Consul General George S. Messersmith informed the U.S. Department of State that, thanks to the embassy's efforts, the German branch office of the Watch Tower Society had been successfully released, and its activities restored.<sup>91</sup>

In relation to the success of the diplomatic efforts of the American embassy, historian Detlef Garbe argued that the German government agreed to release the properties in order to avoid any diplomatic complications, as they could have negatively affected the stabilization and consolidation of the recently established National Socialist party.<sup>92</sup> However, on April 29, 1933, a German newspaper, the *Magdeburger Tageszeitung*, reported that the Gestapo did not find anything incriminating during the investigation, and, for that reason, had to return the properties to their legal proprietor, the

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<sup>90</sup> Hull to Gordon, April 27, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 406.

<sup>91</sup> Messersmith to Hull, May 2, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 406.

<sup>92</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 78.

Watch Tower Society.<sup>93</sup> It is difficult to determine whether the Nazi authorities decided to release the facilities of the Magdeburg branch office because of the diplomatic efforts pursued by the American government, or because of the actual lack of any incriminating activities on the properties. Whatever the real reason might have been, it is certain that the Nazi regime was determined to continue its fight against the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses until its subversive ideas had been completely eradicated from the German territory.

These first two events - the campaign of the booklet *Crisis*, that led to the arrest and search of many Jehovah's Witnesses, and the occupation of the German branch office of the Watch Tower Society by the Nazi authorities - characterized the beginning of an ever-increasing opposition of the Nazi regime against the Watch Tower Society and its activities. Nevertheless, the German members of the religious group were determined to continue to do what they believed to be essential in order to be true Christians. Their firm stand was interpreted as insubordination to the German state, which further increased the aversion that the Nazi regime had towards Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>94</sup> The opposition faced by the members of the religious group continued to increase dramatically in the following months, and even years. However, the German Jehovah's Witnesses benefitted from the help and support of the American branch of the organization, which continued to use diplomatic and legal means through the U.S. Department of State, providing a glimmer of hope in those difficult times.

By the summer of 1933, Jehovah's Witnesses had been banned in all German states, with Prussia being the last one to ratify the dissolution of the International Bible

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<sup>93</sup> *Magdeburger Tageszeitung*, May 5, 1933. R 43 II/179, sheet no. 121. Bundesarchiv (BA).

<sup>94</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 74.

Students Association through the decree of June 24, 1933. In explaining the reasons for the ban, the decree linked Jehovah's Witnesses to Communism and Marxism, a requirement necessary to lawfully ban the religious group on the base of the Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and State.<sup>95</sup> The decree stated: "The Bible Students Association and its subsidiary associations promote communism ... and are about to become an organization accepting all kinds of subversive elements. To resist Communist activities and maintain public law and order, it is therefore necessary to dissolve [this association] for the protection of people and state."<sup>96</sup> The decree of June 24, 1933, therefore banned and officially dissolved the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses in the German Reich.

The dissolution of the religious group did not cause any criticism or objection from other Christian denominations. The German Catholic Church resented the Bible Students, and for years had wished for the group's total dissolution. A Catholic priest admitted: "The dissolution of the sect ... did not come to pass under Brüning, although the Catholic Church in Brüning's time urged to have this done."<sup>97</sup> German Catholics had been hoping, and actively requesting, that the German government would take action to dissolve the religious group. With the decree of June 24, the Nazi regime pleased the

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<sup>95</sup> The Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and State, also defined as Reichstag Fire Decree, was a decree issued on February 28, 1933. The premise of the decree was to provide a "defensive measure against Communist acts of violence that endanger the state." Therefore, in order to base the ban of the IBSA on the Reichstag Fire Decree it was necessary to link the religious organization to Communist activities. "Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and State," *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, 968-970.

<sup>96</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 84-85. Decree quoted in Franz Zürcher, *Kreuzzug Gegen das Christentum* (Zurich, 1938).

<sup>97</sup> Heinrich Brüning was chancellor of Germany during the Weimer Republic from 1930 to 1932. *Deutsche Verwaltung*, May 29, 1938. Quoted in Joseph F. Rutherford, *Face the Facts and Learn the Only One Way of Escape* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1938), 61.

aforementioned priest, who stated: “There is now one country on earth where the so-called ‘Earnest Bible Students’ are forbidden. That is Germany!”<sup>98</sup>

From the announcement of the ban in June 1933, the opposition against Jehovah’s Witnesses in Germany increased: their houses were continuously searched, and many of them were arrested. The preaching work and the safety of the members of the religious group were therefore severely impaired. Was the Watch Tower Society located in the United States ready to give up and abandon their German brothers and sisters to their destiny of growing oppression and persecution?

As the decree was being drafted and then ratified, the president of the Watch Tower Society, Joseph Rutherford, together with another member of the Governing Body of the Society, Nathan Knorr, decided to go to Germany to see what could be done to solve the drastic situation that was afflicting the German Jehovah’s Witnesses.<sup>99</sup> Rutherford kept regular contact with the American embassy in Berlin. Describing Rutherford’s visit to the embassy, Consul General Messersmith stated: “Rutherford (...) had a long interview with Consul Geist with regard to the status of the affairs of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society in Germany... Judge Rutherford was very much concerned as to the status of their affairs.”<sup>100</sup> Besides seeking help through the American embassy, Rutherford actively sought a way to change the opinion that the Nazi regime had of Jehovah’s Witnesses. On a very short notice, the Watch Tower Society organized a special convention to be held in Berlin on June 25, 1933.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Deutsche Verwaltung*, May 29, 1938. *Face the Facts*, 61.

<sup>99</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 407- 408; *1974 Yearbook*, 110-111; *Divine Purpose*, 130.

<sup>100</sup> Messersmith to Hull, July 12, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 408.

<sup>101</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 87; and *1974 Yearbook*, 110.

Aware that Jehovah's Witnesses were banned in all German states, the Society asked each congregation to send at least one delegate. Surprisingly, 7,000 members of the religious group from all over Germany actually managed to travel to Berlin and attend the convention.<sup>102</sup> That special occasion was used to announce a declaration that needed to be approved by the conventioners. This declaration, also known as *Declaration of Facts*, was an answer to the accusations made through the various German decrees banning the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, and summarized the beliefs of the religious group, showing how these were based on an honest study of the Bible and were not meant to criticize the Nazi regime. Suggesting the harmlessness of Jehovah's Witnesses, whose aim was to strive to be true Christians in God's eyes, the declaration had the primary goal of convincing Hitler and his government to refrain from further persecuting Jehovah's Witnesses. Described in one of the Society's publications as "a protest against the meddling of the Hitler government into the preaching work," the *Declaration of Facts* was to be received not only by Hitler himself, but by all high government officials.<sup>103</sup>

Part of the *Declaration* read:

The purpose of this Declaration is that we may present a true and faithful witness before the rulers and the people as to the name and purpose of Jehovah God and our relation thereto.

We are wrongfully charged before the ruling powers of this government and before the people of this nation; and in order that ... our position [may be] fairly placed before the government, we do respectfully ask the rulers of the nation and the people to give a fair and impartial consideration to the statement of facts here made.

The peoples of Germany are a God-fearing people and should not be deprived of an opportunity to learn of Jehovah God and of his gracious provision to bring

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<sup>102</sup> Data from *1974 Yearbook*, 110.

<sup>103</sup> *1974 Yearbook*, 110.

lasting peace, prosperity, liberty and everlasting life on earth to all those who know and obey him. ... All who take a contrary course must take responsibility before God; but as for us we will serve Jehovah forever.<sup>104</sup>

Besides mailing it to the Führer and to the other officials of the government, the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses organized a broader distribution of the pamphlet, distributing 2,100,000 copies of this declaration all around Germany.<sup>105</sup> The registered mail addressed to Hitler, besides the *Declaration of Facts*, also included a letter for the Führer, which partly stated: "The Brooklyn presidency of the Watch Tower Society is and always has been exceedingly friendly to Germany. In 1918 the president of the Society and seven members of the Board of Directors in America were sentenced to 80 years' imprisonment for the reason that the president refused to let two magazines in America, which he edited, be used in war propaganda against Germany."<sup>106</sup> The letter and the declaration not only did not succeed in their purpose to keep Hitler and his government from further persecuting Jehovah's Witnesses, but after the pamphlet was received "the [German] government was enraged and started a wave of persecution against those who had distributed it."<sup>107</sup>

On June 28, a few days after the distribution of the *Declaration of Facts*, thirty SA men again occupied the Magdeburg branch office of the Watch Tower Society, closing its facilities and displaying over the building a flag that depicted the swastika.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> For the complete text of the *Declaration of Facts*, see Appendix A. *1934 Year Book*, 131-143.

<sup>105</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 90. Data from *Divine Purpose*, 130; *1974 Yearbook*, 111.

<sup>106</sup> *1974 Yearbook*, 111; "Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, German Branch," letter of June 26, 1933. R 43 II/179, sheet no. 119-125. Bundesarchiv (BA).

<sup>107</sup> *1974 Yearbook*, 111.

<sup>108</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 92; see also *1934 Year Book*, 129. First published in *Völkischer Beobachter*, June 30, 1933.



The Nazi authorities confiscated a great part of the publications stored in the buildings, which they burnt in the periphery of the city a couple of months later.<sup>109</sup> The economic value of the confiscated literature, which included Bibles and other publications, amounted to 92,719.50 marks.<sup>110</sup> The confiscation of the printing facilities and publications did therefore cause a significant financial loss for the American organization. The headquarters of the Watch Tower Society promptly intervened again, consulting the U.S. Department of State, with the aim of finding a legal basis to counteract the actions pursued by the Nazi regime against Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>111</sup> Once again, the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses took an active stand to protect its members and, at the same time, frustrate the Nazi actions, thus showing a stand of resistance against the Nazi cause.

The American government decided to continue to assist and support the American organization in its legal battle against the German Reich. In fact, the consuls of the American embassy in Berlin believed that the Nazi authorities did not have solid reasons to restrict the activities of the organization. On this matter, Consul Messersmith wrote to the Department of State: "There is no doubt that some of the tracts [i.e. published by the Watch Tower Society] do not coincide with National Socialist ideas, but it is not believed that these are either genuinely subversive or revolutionary, as we understand the terms 'subversive' or 'revolutionary.'" <sup>112</sup> The decree of February 28, 1933 abolished the unalienable right of speech, press and assembly, but these rights were still paramount in

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<sup>109</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 412.

<sup>110</sup> *1974 Yearbook*, 112.

<sup>111</sup> Hull to Messersmith, September 7, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 412.

<sup>112</sup> Messersmith to Hull, July 27, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 411.

the United States.<sup>113</sup> For this reason, the American government did not find sufficient faults to justify the ban of the activities in which the Watch Tower Society was engaged.<sup>114</sup> An ideological stand was, therefore, at the basis of its decision to support the religious group. However, there was another, more influential reason that explained the American government's support for the Watch Tower Society.

The Nazi authorities had confiscated the physical properties of an American organization without a judicial case to validate the legality over which such confiscation was made, seriously endangering all the American firms located in the German territory. Consul Messersmith stated: "If such confiscation is made without due process of law in the courts, it certainly renders insecure the existence of all American property in Germany."<sup>115</sup> The United States could not allow the German government to arbitrarily seize the properties belonging to the American firms located in Germany. The actions that the Nazis undertook against the Watch Tower Society were, therefore, setting a precedent: the American government was determined to secure the physical possessions of the American organization and, consequently, of all the American firms in the German territory.<sup>116</sup>

As stated by Consul Messersmith, "In view of the seriousness of this situation, Consul Geist visited the Ministry of the Interior. ... The Consulate General ... will afford

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<sup>113</sup> The decree stated: "Restrictions on personal liberty, on the right of free expression of opinion, including freedom of the press, on the right of assembly and the right of association, and violations of the privacy of postal, telegraphic, and telephonic communications, and warrants for house searches, orders for confiscations as well as restrictions on property are permissible beyond the legal limits otherwise prescribed. United States Chief Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, "Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and State," February 28, 1933. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, 968-970.

<sup>114</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 411

<sup>115</sup> Messersmith to Hull, July 27, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 411.

<sup>116</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 94. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 411.

the Society in every case whatever aid is proper and feasible.”<sup>117</sup> However, the U.S. Government had limited power in protecting the interests of the Society. Consul Geist affirmed: “In protecting the interests of the Society, such efforts could not go beyond saving the physical property which it has in Germany.”<sup>118</sup> Since the Society was registered as an American company, the U.S. embassy strove to protect its economical assets, but as far as the preaching work and publishing activities, the German Reich had the legal authority to ban whatever they considered to be subversive in its territory.

Consul General Raymond H. Geist consulted the Ministry of the Interior of the state of Prussia, protesting the confiscation of the Magdeburg facilities of the Watch Tower Society, which was considered a violation of property rights, and demanded that the property be returned to its legitimate owners. Pointing out that no further printing took place in the facilities of the American organization, Messersmith wrote: “The Consulate General is of the opinion that the procedure in the confiscation of this property has been an extraordinary action wholly unjustified by the facts.”<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, the 1923 Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Consular Rights between the United States and Germany required a fair judicial process before taking legal actions against an American corporation.<sup>120</sup> Referring to the aforementioned treaty, Secretary of State

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<sup>117</sup> Messersmith to Hull, July 12, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 408, 409.

<sup>118</sup> Messersmith to Hull, July 12, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 409.

<sup>119</sup> Messersmith to Hull, July 27, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 411.

<sup>120</sup> Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Consular Rights, which was signed on December 8, 1923 in Washington, DC between the United States and Germany. Part of Article XII of the Treaty of 1923 reads: “They [i.e. the American and German corporations and associations] shall enjoy free access to the courts of law and equity, on conforming to the laws regulating the matter, as well for the prosecution as for the defense of rights in all the degrees of jurisdiction established by law.” “Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Consular Rights,” December 8, 1923, *Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols and Agreements Between the United States of America and Other Powers: 1923-1937*, Volume IV (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing

Cordell Hull wrote: “German authorities, without explanation, (1) took possession of the real estate belonging to the Society ... and (2) suppressed the Society’s activities ... Apparently the obligation to administer justice by orderly processes of law has been disregarded ... The Society is entitled to an opportunity to defend its rights in the courts.”<sup>121</sup> The Secretary of State then prompted the embassy to take the necessary steps to ensure the release of all the properties of the Watch Tower Society. On that basis, the Consulate General requested to the Prussian Ministry of the Interior a statement explaining the legal reasons on which the confiscation was based.<sup>122</sup>

On September 12, 1933, the U.S. Ambassador in Germany, William Dodd, informed the Department of State that the “Society’s real and personal property has been released although activities of Society still remain prohibited.”<sup>123</sup> In a *Note Verbale* requested by the General Consulate, the German Foreign Office claimed that the ban and confiscation of the properties of the Watch Tower Society were in complete conformity with the legal provisions of the Reich.<sup>124</sup> It also pointed out that, out of consideration for the American government, the buildings owned by the Watch Tower Society were

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Office, 1938), 4191. Treaty available online at <http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/friendtreaty0139.htm>. Accessed March 29, 2016.

<sup>121</sup> Hull to Dodd, September 9, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 413.

<sup>122</sup> Messersmith to Hull, July 27, 1933. In *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 411. The response of the German Foreign Office to the statement requested by the Consulate General is the “Note Verbale,” included in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 414-416.

<sup>123</sup> Dodd to Hull, September 12, 1933. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 413.

<sup>124</sup> “Note Verbale,” the German Foreign Office to the American Embassy, November 13, 1933. Included in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 415-416. The grounds for the ban of the activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Germany were explained in the Prussian Ministerial Decree of June 24, 1933, which was based on the Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of People and State (Decree of February 28, 1933).

released, but the “activity with regard to teaching and holding meetings must remain forbidden.”<sup>125</sup>

Even though the properties were released, the ban of the religious organization was still in force, and the Society had not had the opportunity to defend its rights in a court case. In fact, the German government had disregarded the legal provisions set forth by the 1923 Treaty between the United States and Germany, which provided for “free access to the courts of law.”<sup>126</sup> In a telegram to the Secretary of State, Dodd expressed the possibility for an intervention of the American government, as, according to international law, ground existed for interposition by the Government of the United States.<sup>127</sup> However, the Department of State decided not to take further action on the matter, presumably to avoid jeopardizing its relationship with the German government.<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, the diplomatic efforts of the American government had been successful in obtaining the release of the physical properties of the Watch Tower Society. The *New York Times* reported that, thanks to the intervention of the United States Consulate, the Magdeburg plant “was permitted to reopen provided nothing inimical to

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<sup>125</sup> “Note Verbale,” the German Foreign Office to the American Embassy, November 13, 1933. Included in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 415.

<sup>126</sup> According to Dodd, the German government ignored Article XII and Article I, paragraph 3, of the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Consular Rights, December 8, 1923. *Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols*, 4191. Treaty available online at <http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/friendtreaty0139.htm>. Accessed June 11, 2016.

<sup>127</sup> Dodd referred to the section: “Grounds of Interposition – Denial of Justice,” in the textbook *International Law*, which stated: “A denial of justice, in a broad sense, occurs whenever a State, through any department or agency, fails to observe, with respect to an alien, any duty imposed by international law or by treaty with his country. Such delinquency may, for example, be manifest in arbitrary or capricious action on the part of the courts, or in legislative enactments destroying the exercise of a privilege conferred by treaty, or in the action of the executive department in ordering the seizure of property without due process of law.” Charles Cheney Hyde, *International Law: Chiefly as Interpreted and Applied by the United States*, Volume I (Norwood: Little, Brown and Company, 1922), 491.

<sup>128</sup> As indicated in the footnote of *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 417.

the Nazi regime was printed.”<sup>129</sup> In fact, the decree legally ratifying the release, the decree of September 28, reconfirmed the ban on certain activities, such as the “production of books and pamphlets, as well as its preaching and congregational activities.”<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, these restrictions imposed by the Nazi regime on the Watch Tower Society also indicated that the American organization was still legally recognized in the German Reich. As the German Foreign Office wrote in the *Note Verbale*, “the former personnel of the Society was permitted to live in its buildings again.”<sup>131</sup> The organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses was therefore still legally recognized, but largely restricted.

Even though the diplomatic efforts of the American government seemed to be a success, the president of the Watch Tower Society was still disappointed: his main objective, in fact, was not to resume control of the Society’s properties, but to make sure that the German Witnesses could continue their Christian activities with no opposition from the government.<sup>132</sup> However, that did not seem likely. Rutherford wrote to Martin C. Harbeck, the appointed overseer of the European branches of the Society, who worked closely with the U.S. embassy for the release of the Society’s properties: “I have little hope that we will get anything at all from the German government. I am of the opinion

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<sup>129</sup> “Nazi Secret Police Arrest an American: M. C. Harbeck, Editor of Bible Students Magazine, Accused of Taking Sealed Funds,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1935, 2.

<sup>130</sup> Decree of the Bavarian Political Police, September 28, 1933. *Deutsche Justiz* 96 (1934): 757. Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (BHStA).

<sup>131</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 2: 415.

<sup>132</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 93.

that this wing of Satan's organization will continue to oppress our people until the Lord intervenes."<sup>133</sup>

Rutherford was partly right. Jehovah's Witnesses continued to face an increasing opposition from the German government. As their meetings and preaching activity were considered illegal, more and more German Witnesses who engaged in those activities were arrested, beaten, and incarcerated. The publications of the Watch Tower Society became scarce, and the risk of losing contact with the headquarters in Brooklyn, which until then had been a source of hope, was greatly increasing.<sup>134</sup> This challenging and difficult situation caused the German brothers and sisters to have disagreements over what the best course of action would be. Some decided to discontinue their preaching activities and meeting attendance until the situation improved, and until the Nazi authorities forgot about the religious group; others, on the contrary, believed that "the only proper course was to fight for the truth," and continued to fearlessly preach about God's Kingdom and hold meetings in small groups in their homes, despite the risk of being searched and arrested by the Gestapo or the SA men.<sup>135</sup>

By the end of 1933, Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany had lost the unity that had always characterized them. The limited and increasingly rare supplies of publications from the Watch Tower Society resulted in a weakening of the faith of some of the Witnesses, which affected their determination to regularly attend their meetings. In one case, an entire congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses ceased to exist. In the Stettin congregation, most members feared the repercussions of carrying on their religious

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<sup>133</sup> Letter from Judge Rutherford to Harbeck, January 5, 1934. Partially included in *1974 Yearbook*, 132.

<sup>134</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 96-97.

<sup>135</sup> *1974 Yearbook*, 113.

activities, which caused them to gradually stop practicing what they believed. As Grate Klein, a member of the congregation, recalled: “Our leadership in the Stettin congregation had fallen victim to the fear of man.” In explaining why the entire congregation became inactive, Klein added: “We were without leadership and without spiritual food.”<sup>136</sup> The lack of direction, caused by the now-limited contact with the Society’s headquarters, and the general disagreement among Jehovah’s Witnesses on the best course to take, discouraged many members of the religious group. As a consequence, they stopped attending meetings and refrained from carrying on the preaching activity, until the entire congregation of Stettin finally ceased to exist.

The example of the Stettin congregation revealed that it was of paramount importance for Jehovah’s Witnesses in Germany to receive encouragement and direction from the headquarters in Brooklyn. As the diplomatic attempts had failed to help the German Witnesses to carry on their religious activities, Rutherford decided to pursue a more direct approach to help his brothers and sisters overseas. He saw the necessity of providing them with a course of action based on the Bible, and therefore approved by God. In order to do so, Rutherford began to write articles, published in *The Watchtower* and in *The Golden Age*, addressing the problems faced by the Jehovah’s Witnesses who lived in Germany, with the specific aim of providing encouragement. One of these articles was “Fear Them Not,” first published in the November 1st, 1933 edition of *The Watchtower*.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Jehovah’s Witnesses define the term ‘spiritual food’ as the publications issued by the Watch Tower Society. The spiritual food encourages and provides directions for anyone who is interested in becoming a true Christian. *1974 Yearbook*, 130.

<sup>137</sup> “Fear Them Not,” *The Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Presence* 54 (November 1, 1933): 323-330.



The article “Fear Them Not” was to provide encouragement for the Witnesses that were facing persecution, as well as practical suggestions on how to face certain situations that may have arisen during the persecution. To encourage his brothers and sisters, Rutherford wrote that whoever continued to do God’s will despite trials would obtain God’s favor and therefore everlasting life. To support his statement, he quoted the scripture of Matthew 10:22, which reads: “He that endureth to the end shall be saved.”<sup>138</sup> This scripture well suited the case of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Germany. They were persecuted and despised by the Nazi government not because of racial or genetic reasons, but because of their stand to continue to obey God’s principles found in the Sacred Scriptures, hence rejecting any type of military involvement, refusing to salute the Führer, and continuing to proclaim Jehovah’s Kingdom. Their persecution was entirely caused by their obedience to Bible principles, which truly caused them to, as Jesus had foretold, “be hated of all man for my name’s sake.”<sup>139</sup> The promise of salvation at the end of the scripture was certainly very encouraging for the Jehovah’s Witnesses living in Germany.

Besides salvation, the article brought up another reason why the Witnesses should persevere despite tribulations. The article stated:

Jehovah’s faithful people are surrounded by the enemy and his wicked agents ...  
That there is great danger of bodily harm and physical death there is no doubt; but  
let the remnant at all times have in mind that Jehovah has taken them out from

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<sup>138</sup> Matthew 10:22, King James Version.

<sup>139</sup> The Nazi authorities opposed and persecuted Jehovah’s Witnesses because of their faith. In fact, they issued a “Rejection of Faith” form which, if signed, allowed Jehovah’s Witnesses to be released from prisons and concentration camps, showing that the members of the religious group were persecuted uniquely because of their beliefs. Once rejected their faith, they would have been free. A copy of the form can be found in *Komiteeakten: Unterlagen des “Komitees ehemaliger politischer Gefangener in Hamburg,”* 37. Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes, Bund der Antifaschistinnen und Antifaschisten, Hamburg, Germany (VVN-BdA).

amongst the nations as his witnesses to bear testimony to his name, and that he has given the remnant his name, and to them the name of Jehovah is a strong tower.<sup>140</sup>

Rutherford showed how enduring in these difficult times, while continuing to follow God's Word, would allow the Witnesses to be in Jehovah's favor, and God himself would become like a 'strong tower,' a refuge for his faithful people. What other encouraging thought could Rutherford have said to those people whose main goal in life was to make God's 'heart glad'?<sup>141</sup>

Besides providing encouragement, the article also considered the best course of action for Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany to follow if they wanted to present themselves as true Christians. Rutherford provided clear and practical instructions through the support of the Bible, examining certain situations that could have arisen in a territory hostile to the religious group. The president of the Society wrote: "If one claims to be a witness of Jehovah, then he must, in order to be consistent, give testimony as to what he has learned in Jehovah's temple. ... When one of Jehovah's witnesses fails or refuses to do so, that would be hypocrisy."<sup>142</sup> Rutherford, therefore, provided clear direction for those who had doubts on the proper conduct that a Christian should follow: he stressed the importance of continuing to share, through the preaching activity, the truth learned through careful study of the Bible and at meetings, despite the ban imposed by the German government. The article concluded: "Those who will share with Christ Jesus the glories of his kingdom must now be faithful and true witnesses to the name of

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<sup>140</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses define the term 'remnant' as a limited group of people still living on earth who have the prospect of heavenly life, in contrast to those who have the prospect of earthly life. "Fear Them Not," *Watchtower*: 330.

<sup>141</sup> As written in Proverbs 27:11, King James Version.

<sup>142</sup> "Fear Them Not," *Watchtower*, 330.

Jehovah God, telling with boldness and with joy what they have learned of God ... and thus they will have a part in the vindication of his holy name.”<sup>143</sup>

After the article was published in the German edition of the *Watchtower* of December 1st, 1933, the proper course that Christians living in a hostile territory should follow was clear. Judge Rutherford made sure that his brothers and sisters overseas could receive the necessary ‘spiritual food’ to successfully face the persecution, without compromising their relationship with God. Nevertheless, the world headquarters of the Watch Tower Society did not think that an article providing encouragement and directions was enough to support their members in Germany, where they were facing increasing persecution. Much more needed to be done.

On February 9, 1934, President Rutherford decided to write a letter addressed directly to the German Chancellor, Adolf Hitler.<sup>144</sup> Since the earlier provisions that involved the officials of the German government had not produced the desired effects, the letter was meant to convince Hitler himself of the wrongdoings of his government towards Jehovah’s Witnesses. Assuming that the Chancellor was unaware of the situation, and attributing the blame to the various officers working for his government, Rutherford wrote: “Your government without just cause or excuse forcibly compelled these earnest Christian people, who are Jehovah’s witnesses, to cease the worship of Jehovah God ... Many of these innocent and faithful witnesses of Jehovah God your officers have incarcerated in prison, and illtreated them. You being a very busy man,

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<sup>143</sup> “Fear Them Not,” *Watchtower*, 330.

<sup>144</sup> Complete text of the letter sent to Hitler on February 9, 1934 was published in the article “Persecution in Germany,” *The Golden Age* 15 (April 25, 1934): 453-454. See Appendix B.

probably many of these things have not been brought to your attention.”<sup>145</sup> Even though he refrained from accusing Hitler, Rutherford did not allow diplomacy to dim his strong message. He continued:

As the president of the Society, and in the name of Jehovah God and His anointed King, Christ Jesus, I demand that you give order to all officials and servants of your government that Jehovah’s witnesses in Germany be permitted to peaceably assemble and without hindrance worship God and obey His commandments by teaching to the people the Bible truths . . . If by the 24th day of March, 1934, there is no response to this earnest demand and nothing done by your government to grant the relief of the aforesaid Jehovah’s witnesses in Germany, then God’s people in other countries will begin the publication throughout the nations of the earth of the facts concerning Germany’s wrongful treatment of Christian people there.<sup>146</sup>

Through his letter, Rutherford gave an ultimatum to the German Chancellor, requesting him to terminate the opposition against Jehovah’s Witnesses and to allow them to freely continue to worship Jehovah. To the letter, Rutherford attached the *Declaration of Facts*, adopted and promulgated in June 1933, in order to explain the basic beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses and the reasons for which they should not be considered enemies of the State.<sup>147</sup> The president of the Society was personally determined to fight for his German brothers and sisters: without hiding himself behind the religious group, he signed the letter with his full name. As expected, there was no response from Hitler, and the demands made by Rutherford were not met. Therefore, the world headquarters of the

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<sup>145</sup> “Persecution in Germany,” *Golden Age*, 453.

<sup>146</sup> “Persecution in Germany,” *Golden Age*, 453-454.

<sup>147</sup> For more information about the *Declaration of Facts*, see page 33-34 of the present document. For the complete text, see Appendix A. *1934 Year Book*, 131-143.

Watch Tower Society acted according to the content of the letter sent to Hitler, beginning a wave of protests against the vile acts perpetrated by the Nazi regime.<sup>148</sup>

On March 25, 1934, the day after the ultimatum was issued, during an assembly of the religious group in Los Angeles, California, a ‘Protest’ was unanimously adopted.<sup>149</sup> The ‘Protest’ and the accompanying speech, broadcast through radio stations, were meant to publicly declare what the Nazi government had been doing to Christian people. The brother delivering the talk announced the disposition, proposed by the Governing Body, to call upon their brothers and sisters around the world to protest against the ill-treatment of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and other Christian denominations, caused by the German government.

The text of the ‘Protest’ was published in the main article of the April 25 edition of *The Golden Age*. This article, entitled “Persecution in Germany,” also included the text of the letter sent to Hitler and an eight-page report describing many of the cruelties committed by the Nazi authorities against Jehovah’s Witnesses. The magazine was not confined to Jehovah’s Witnesses, but was widely distributed through the preaching work endorsed by the religious group, in Germany and all over the world. Jehovah’s Witnesses were united in showing their firm stand against Nazism, boldly attacking the Nazi regime and its policy before people from all over earth. As later stated by the Watch Tower Society, the aforementioned edition of *The Golden Age* was “distributed in large quantities in Germany,”<sup>150</sup> so that the injustices perpetrated by the Nazi government

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<sup>148</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 105-106.

<sup>149</sup> For the complete text of the ‘Protest,’ see Appendix C. “Persecution in Germany,” *Golden Age*, 454.

<sup>150</sup> *1935 Year Book of Jehovah’s Witnesses* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1934), 95.

could become public knowledge.<sup>151</sup> Rutherford kept true to his word: if Hitler and his government were not willing to refrain from opposing and persecuting faithful Christians, who caused no harm to the State, then everybody around the world should learn about it.<sup>152</sup>

Even though the Watch Tower Society began to publish articles exposing Nazi wrongdoings, a public denunciation of Hitler and his government was of no benefit to Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany. Therefore, the Society decided to organize a convention in Basel, Switzerland, from September 7 to 9, 1934.<sup>153</sup> Switzerland was the ideal place for such a convention: it was a territory free from Nazi rule, but close enough to allow German Witnesses to attend. Judge Rutherford decided to attend this three-day event, as many brothers and sisters from Germany were expected to be present. This special occasion, in fact, allowed him to personally hear about the situation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany. According to some of the Witnesses he talked to during the event, Rutherford was very distressed once he heard what his brothers had already gone through.<sup>154</sup> Besides learning of the tremendous circumstances they had to endure, the president of the Watch Tower Society also became aware that his brothers and sisters in Germany still had different opinions regarding the continuation of the preaching work,

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<sup>151</sup> In the early years of the 1930s, the Watch Tower Society could not determine a definite report of the preaching activity in Germany, due to the restrictions imposed by the German government on the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. However, the Society reported that 452,840 publications, among which *The Golden Age*, were distributed through the preaching activity in 1936 in the German territory. *1937 Year Book of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1936), 139.

<sup>152</sup> "Persecution in Germany," *Golden Age*, 451-463.

<sup>153</sup> Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The German Churches under Hitler: Background, Struggle, and Epilogue* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 395; Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 110.

<sup>154</sup> *1974 Yearbook*, 132-133.

since that activity had been explicitly banned by the Nazi authorities. Rutherford's decision to fly to Europe and attend the convention in Basel turned out to be crucial for him to understand the situation better, and he was urged to find a new plan of action to improve the situation for Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany.

Judge Rutherford wrote a letter addressed to all the congregations of Germany.<sup>155</sup> In the letter, Rutherford asked to hold a special meeting on October 7, 1934, at 9am at a convenient place, since meeting for religious purposes was still banned and reason for immediate arrest. The directive was to open the meeting through a prayer to Jehovah God, read the letter Rutherford wrote, and then read and send a letter to German government officials. Once the letter was sent, the Witnesses should have gone out to preach the truth about Jehovah and his Kingdom to their neighbors. Rutherford's message was clear: the Witnesses were going to firmly declare their stand to obey God over the Nazi government through a written message addressed to Hitler's government first, and through action immediately afterwards. The letter addressed to the government officials, which had been written beforehand, stated: "During the past year, and contrary to God's law and in violation of our rights, you have forbidden us as Jehovah's witnesses to meet together to study God's Word and worship and serve Him ... There is a direct conflict between your law and God's law, and ... "we ought to obey God rather than men," and this we will do ... If your government or officers do violence to us because we are obeying God, then our blood will be upon you and you will answer to Almighty God."<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> For the content of the letter, see Appendix D. "Jehovah's witnesses in Germany Standing for Their Lives," *The Golden Age* 16 (October 24, 1934): 50-51.

<sup>156</sup> For the complete text of the letter that the German congregations sent to Hitler's government and its officials, see Appendix E. "Jehovah's witnesses in Germany standing for Their Lives," *Golden Age*, 50-51.

After reading the letter during the special meeting, a qualified brother went to send the letter by telegram to the post office, while the other Witnesses went to preach Jehovah's Kingdom to their neighbors, as advised by Rutherford in his letter. All congregations in Germany adhered to this plan, meeting on the same day, at the same time, and sending the same letter to the German government.<sup>157</sup> The participation in this risky initiative certainly demonstrated the unity of Jehovah's Witnesses even during a time of strong distress. However, Rutherford's plan was not limited to Germany.

In his letter, Rutherford wrote: "Your brethren throughout the earth will have you in mind and at the same time will be asking a similar prayer of Jehovah."<sup>158</sup> The president of the Watch Tower Society strove to involve as many brothers and sisters as possible, probably to show the Führer the seriousness of the matter, and to show his fellow brothers and sisters in Germany that they had the support and backing of a worldwide organization. Accordingly, congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses from at least fifty other countries, as well as the world headquarters of the Watch Tower Society, assembled on the same morning of October 7, 1934, and sent a similar message to the German government. The message, sent by cablegram, read: "Your ill-treatment of Jehovah's witnesses shocks all good people of earth and dishonors God's name. Refrain from further persecuting Jehovah's witnesses; otherwise God will destroy you and your national party."<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 111-112; Helmreich, *German Churches under Hitler*, 395.

<sup>158</sup> *1935 Year Book*, 118.

<sup>159</sup> "Jehovah's witnesses in Germany Standing for Their Lives," *The Golden Age*, 51; See also Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 112.



The unity of Jehovah's Witnesses, standing against the Nazi regime, was now manifest not only in Germany, but throughout the world. The members of the religious group were determined to uphold to Bible principles, opposing what they considered to be unrighteous laws that were in contrast with God's Word, and solemnly continuing to promote the only lawful government, Jehovah's Kingdom. The events that took place on October 7, 1934 clearly demonstrated their determination to obey God instead of men. Referring to that special day, a later publication of the Watch Tower Society stated: "On that day Hitler and his government were confronted by the fearless action of Jehovah's Witnesses - in his eyes a ridiculous minority."<sup>160</sup> The officials of the German government received hundreds of telegrams on that day. How did Hitler react?

A statutory declaration deposed by Karl R. A. Wittig sheds light on Hitler's reaction to the many telegrams the German government had received. On that specific day, October 7, 1934, Wittig had been invited to the house of the Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick, as a plenipotentiary of General Erich Ludendorff, who opposed Hitler and his government.<sup>161</sup> Frick and Hitler himself, also present during the conversation, were attempting to convince Wittig, and therefore General Ludendorff, to abandon his stance against the Nazi regime. Their conversation, however touched the topic of Jehovah's Witnesses. Wittig testified:

On October 7, 1934, having been previously summoned, I visited Dr. Wilhelm Frick, at that time Minister of the Interior of the Reich and Prussia ... since I was a plenipotentiary of General Ludendorff. I was to accept communications, contents of which were an attempt to persuade General Ludendorff to

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<sup>160</sup> *1974 Yearbook*, 133.

<sup>161</sup> General Erich Ludendorff was a German general who served in World War I, as well as a nationalist leader and a political activist. A former ally of Hitler, he turned against him when he became chancellor in 1933.

discontinuance of his objection to the Nazi regime. During my discussion with Dr. Frick, Hitler suddenly appeared and began taking part in the conversation. When our discussion obligatorily dealt with the action against the International Bible Students Association [Jehovah's witnesses] in Germany up until now, Dr. Frick showed Hitler a number of telegrams protesting against the Third Reich's persecution of the Bible Students, saying: "If the Bible Students do not immediately get in line we will act against them using the strongest means." After which Hitler jumped to his feet and with clenched fists hysterically screamed: "This brood will be exterminated in Germany!"<sup>162</sup>

The resolution of Jehovah's Witnesses to keep on practicing their religious beliefs despite the many attempts of the Nazi government to stop them, through house-searches, arrests, and increasing violence, was now evident to the Führer himself, through clear and unequivocal written telegrams. According to Wittig's declaration, the telegrams greatly increased Hitler's anger: he was now more determined than ever to exterminate the entire religious group from the German territory. As shown by reports, and as affirmed by Wittig as well, "Hitler's outburst of anger was not just an idle threat." A wave of intensified persecution against Jehovah's Witnesses began: only a few days after the telegrams were sent, 142 members of the religious group were arrested in the city of Hamburg.<sup>163</sup> The Society publicly denounced the Nazi ideology, in Germany and around the globe, but much more needed to be done to stop Hitler and his government from hindering its religious activities, and from further persecuting the German Witnesses.

Jehovah's Witnesses were determined to continue to worship Jehovah, despite the ban, the way that the Bible instructed. Hence, an underground activity was organized: the brothers and sisters were arranged in small groups, and they secretly started to hold their

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<sup>162</sup> Karl R. A. Wittig, Statutory Declaration, doc. no. 778/13 November 1947 by notary Otto Ludwig, Frankfurt am Main. In *Divine Purpose*, 142.

<sup>163</sup> *1974 Yearbook*, 139.

meetings in convenient places, making available some publications of the Watch Tower Society through mimeographing. The establishment of an organized underground preaching activity probably further irritated the Nazi authorities. On April the 1st, 1935, the Reich and Prussian Minister of the Interior, Dr. Wilhelm Frick, issued a decree to nationally dissolve the Watch Tower Society.<sup>164</sup> Throughout 1934 and 1935, the arrests of Jehovah's Witnesses greatly increased: by the end of July 1935, around 2000 Jehovah's Witnesses were held in prison in Germany.<sup>165</sup>

In Germany, Jehovah's Witnesses continued their activities underground. The headquarters of the Watch Tower Society organized a three-day special convention in Lucerne, Switzerland, from September 4 to 6, 1936. President Rutherford was again determined to attend this special occasion, during which he would have the opportunity to talk to some brothers and sisters from Germany about how the new arrangement of an underground activity was proceeding. Moreover, before attending the convention, the German brothers were asked to compile reports about their persecution, which would have been later used by the Watch Tower Society to publish more articles denouncing Hitler and his government.<sup>166</sup> However, the SS intercepted some of the reports that were sent to Switzerland, and they grew even more determined to dismantle the entire group of Jehovah's Witnesses.

As a consequence, on August 28, 1936, only a few days before the convention, the Gestapo organized a united action, through a decree sent to various Police offices

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<sup>164</sup> Decree included in the memo of June 21, 1935 of the Bavarian Political Police. *Reichsstatthalter 638*. Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich, Germany (BHStA).

<sup>165</sup> "Jailed for Belief in Kingdom of God," *The Golden Age* 17 (October 9, 1935): 8.

<sup>166</sup> Some of the reports were included in the article "Persecutions of Jehovah's witnesses in Germany," *Golden Age*, 27-31.

throughout the Nazi territory, meant to arrest the leaders of the religious group of Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>167</sup> Their premise was that without leaders to direct its activities, the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses would soon come to an end. Consequently, a wave of thorough searches and arrests took place all over the country. By the end of August, more than half of the local regional service directors, leaders of the religious group, along with thousands of brothers and sisters, were arrested, and the passports of many members of the religious group were confiscated to prevent them from traveling to Switzerland and attending the convention in Lucerne.<sup>168</sup> If originally the convention was going to be a venue to gather reports on the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany, it later became an instrument for Rutherford and the Governing Body to respond to the latest Nazi wave of persecution.

Upholding the message sent to Hitler on February 9, 1934, Rutherford and the Governing Body had been regularly publishing articles describing the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses carried out by the German government.<sup>169</sup> However, the drastic action undertaken by the Nazi authorities prompted the Society to take a new initiative in fighting against the increasing persecution of Jehovah's people in Germany. At the convention in Lucerne, Rutherford proposed a new resolution, unanimously approved by the conventioners. Reconfirming that Satan was behind Hitler's oppressive government, Rutherford stated: "Satan has used religionists at all times to oppose and persecute those

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<sup>167</sup> Secret State Police office, decree of August 28, 1936, found in Manfred Gebhard, *Die Zeugen Jehovas: Eine Dokumentation über die Wachturmgesellschaft* (Leipzig: Urania-Verlag, 1970), 171-172.

<sup>168</sup> Bavarian Political Police, decree of August 20, 1936. *Sammlung Schumacher/267 I*. Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Germany.

<sup>169</sup> The message addressed to Hitler stated: "God's people in other countries will begin the publication throughout the nations of the earth of the facts concerning Germany's wrongful treatment of Christian people there." "Persecution in Germany," *Golden Age*, 453.

who worship God in spirit and in truth. For this reason many true followers of Christ Jesus are today prevented from attending this convention, they being held in restraint in Germany and in other places.”<sup>170</sup> The aim that the Society desired to accomplish through the resolution was to make public the stand of Jehovah’s Witnesses in regard to the persecution perpetrated by the Nazi government. For this reason, the resolution stated: “We [i.e. Jehovah’s Witnesses] now sound the warning to the rulers in Germany and to the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, and to all like organizations that cruelly persecute the true and faithful followers of Christ Jesus, that the fate of such God declares is complete destruction ... We vigorously protest against the cruel treatment of Jehovah’s witnesses.”<sup>171</sup>

A copy of the resolution was sent to Hitler, and to the Pope, as well as to many German government offices.<sup>172</sup> Moreover, the Watch Tower Society arranged to distribute the resolution among the German people, so that they could be aware of the inhumane treatment of the Nazi government towards Jehovah’s Witnesses. In December of the same year, 3,450 Jehovah’s Witnesses in Germany quietly and with the utmost secrecy delivered a copy of the resolution to each house.<sup>173</sup> They made sure that as many people as possible, both within the German territory, through the resolution distributed at every door, and all over the world, through the articles published in the Society’s

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<sup>170</sup> For the complete text of the resolution, see Appendix F. Mark C. Harbeck, “Convention of Kingdom Publishers in Lucerne, Switzerland, Setp. 4-7, 1936,” *The Golden Age* 18 (October 21, 1936): 36.

<sup>171</sup> “Convention of Kingdom Publishers in Lucerne,” *Golden Age*, 36.

<sup>172</sup> A copy of the resolution was sent to Pope Pious XI, head of the Catholic Church. The Watch Tower Society accused the Roman Catholic Hierarchy of failing to oppose, and even supporting, the actions undertaken by the Nazi government in Germany. More information can be found in the Epilogue of this thesis. Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 233; Helmreich, *German Churches under Hitler*, 396.

<sup>173</sup> Data as recorded in *1974 Yearbook*, 155.

magazines, had the opportunity to know what the Nazi government was doing. The resolution made public the firm stand that Jehovah's Witnesses had against Hitler's ideology and regime.

However, during many of the trials in which the members of the religious group were prosecuted, the Nazi officials rejected the statements contained in the resolution about the cruel treatments of Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>174</sup> The denial of their actions irritated the Watch Tower Society even more, which decided to write an 'open letter' denouncing by name some of those Nazi officials known to have mistreated some Jehovah's Witnesses and proving the veracity of their statements. At the beginning of the document, entitled "Open Letter to the Bible-believing and Christ-loving People of Germany," Martin C. Harbeck, supervisor of the European branch of the Watch Tower Society, wrote that the Society had "crushing proofs" of the cruel mistreatment of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany. The document not only provided the names of the officials who perpetrated some of the cruelties against the members of the religious group, but also the place and the specific act committed. For instance, the document included the following detailed information: "Criminal-Assistants Theiss of Dortmund and Tennhoff and Heimann of the Secret State Police at Gelsenkirchen and Bochum have especially

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<sup>174</sup> The resolution stated: "We call all good people to witness that in Germany, Austria and other places Jehovah's witnesses are cruelly persecuted, imprisoned, fiendishly abused, and many of them killed, and all such wickedness is done against them by a cruel, malicious, wicked power ... The Hitler government ... has inflicted and continues to inflict all manner of cruel punishment." For the complete text, see Appendix F. "Convention of Kingdom Publishers in Lucerne," *Golden Age*, 36.

distinguished themselves. One did not hesitate to ill-treat women with bull whips and rubber clubs.”<sup>175</sup>

The ‘open letter’ was publicly distributed throughout Germany on June 20, 1937, besides being mailed to the government officials.<sup>176</sup> The main purpose of the document was to provide proofs of the accusations made in the resolution of September 9, 1936, and in other publications of the Society, against the atrocities committed by Nazi officials. The campaign of the ‘open letter,’ as well as the determination of Jehovah’s Witnesses to openly denounce and accuse Nazi officials through resolutions and pamphlets distributed door-to-door to the German people, enraged the Nazi authorities even more, leading to its final step: the concentration camps.<sup>177</sup>

The first documented case of a Jehovah’s Witness sent to a concentration camp – the Moringen women’s concentration camp – is dated January, 1935.<sup>178</sup> However, it is highly probable that even before that date several Jehovah’s Witnesses were sent to concentration camps. Historian Christine E. King stated: “Jehovah’s Witnesses were amongst the first of the prisoners to go into Dachau, which was the first, the so-called, model concentration camp, and into the labor camps, and I have evidence of that in 1934,

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<sup>175</sup> Martin C. Harbeck, “Open Letter to the Bible-believing and Christ-loving People of Germany!” RW58/3863 and RW58/4502, Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (HStAD). Partly published in the article “Terror in the ‘Third Reich,’” *Consolation* 19 (December 15, 1937): 27-28; cited in Kuno Bludau, *Gestapo-geheim! Widerstand und Verfolgung in Duisburg, 1933-1945* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1973), 289-290. Front page of the document available online at <https://www.stsg.de/cms/kurt-dreissig-flugblatt-1937>. Accessed March 7, 2016.

<sup>176</sup> *1974 Yearbook*, 159. See also Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 246.

<sup>177</sup> Helmreich, *German Churches under Hitler*, 396-397.

<sup>178</sup> According to several historians, such as George D. Chryssides, Jürgen Harder, and Hans Hesse. See George D. Chryssides, *Historical Dictionary of Jehovah’s Witnesses* (Latham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008), xxiv; and Hesse, Harder, et al., “Chronology: Development and Persecution of Jehovah’s Witnesses,” in *Persecution and Resistance*, 381.

and certainly by 1935.”<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, the number of Jehovah’s Witnesses sent to concentration camps reached its zenith between 1937 and 1939. In fact, 1937 turned out to be a pivotal year, as, right after the campaign of the ‘open letter,’ the Gestapo increased its efforts in arresting as many Jehovah’s Witnesses as possible.

Besides being sent to concentration camps, Jehovah’ Witnesses were also convicted for refusing to bear arms or taking part in military activities. Oftentimes, the court sentence was immediate death. A *New York Times* article reported the Nazi execution of the “first conscientious resister,” August Dickmann, who refused “to fulfill his duty as a soldier.”<sup>180</sup> Hitler’s stand on the matter was clear. On one occasion he stated: “The only type of treason which one might possibly regard as springing from certain moral inhibitions is a refusal to join the armed forces on grounds of religious conviction.”<sup>181</sup> Referring to the execution of one hundred and thirty Jehovah’s Witnesses, Hitler continued: “We must ... leave them to starve. I regard it as an act of exceptional clemency that I did not ... carry out this threat, but contended myself with shooting one hundred and thirty of these self-styled Bible Students [Bibelforscher].”<sup>182</sup> Despite death threats, Jehovah’s Witnesses maintained their loyalty to Jehovah God, and were continuously incarcerated for refusing to bear arms. Martin Niemöller, a Lutheran pastor,

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<sup>179</sup> Christine E. King is a British historian who specializes in Nazi Germany. She was Vice-Chancellor of Staffordshire University, United Kingdom, until 2011. Oral interview of historian Christine E. King, included in the documentary *Jehovah’s Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault*, DVD, produced by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., Brooklyn, NY: 2008.

<sup>180</sup> “Germans Execute Objector to War: First Conscientious Resister Was Member of Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Sect,” *New York Times*, September 17, 1939, 26.

<sup>181</sup> Gerhard L. Weinberg and H. R. Trevor-Roper, ed., *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941-1944: His Private Conversations*, trans. Norman Cameron and R. H. Stevens (New York: Enigma Books, 2008), 391.

<sup>182</sup> Weinberg and Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's Table Talk*, 391.



admitted: “We Christians of today stand ashamed before a so-called sect like the Earnest Bible Students, who by the hundreds and thousands ... died because they declined service in war and refused to fire on humans.”<sup>183</sup>

The resistance of Jehovah’s Witnesses against the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) and its actions, therefore, did not come without consequences. Based on the study of German historian Michael H. Kater, between 1933 and 1945, one out of two members of the religious group was imprisoned during the Nazi regime, and one out of four lost his life. According to German historian Detlef Garbe, almost all International Bible Students suffered a type of persecution, including physical violence, arrests and internment in concentration camps.<sup>184</sup> As Kater affirmed: “Besides the Jews, there was hardly another group that was persecuted as severely as the Earnest Bible Students.”<sup>185</sup>

The ‘open letter,’ as well as the previous resolutions, reveals the stand of the Watch Tower Society on the course of action pursued by the Nazi regime: the religious organization could not condone, and actually opposed, the Nazi ideology, and used its publications, such as magazines, books and pamphlets, to proclaim the Kingdom of Jehovah, which would eventually replace all evil earthly governments, Hitler’s Nazi regime included. The Watch Tower Society used a variety of means to take a radical stand against Hitler’s dictatorial regime, through diplomatic resources, published literature, and resolutions distributed to the German people to denounce the cruelties committed by the Nazi agents.

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<sup>183</sup> Martin Niemöller was president of the Protestant Church in Hessen and Nassau from 1947 to 1964. Niemöller quoted in Hesse, *Persecution and Resistance*, 269.

<sup>184</sup> Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 477.

<sup>185</sup> Kater, “Die Ernsten Bibelforscher,” 181.

Today, museums as well as public and private institutions throughout the world prompt the visitors to wonder how the Nazi regime managed to carry out the persecution of millions of innocent people before the eyes of billions of people.<sup>186</sup> Silence and even complicity characterized the stance of the majority of people in Germany and in Europe. Analyzing their role in the Nazi regime, historians blamed religions for not speaking out against the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis, even claiming that if they had spoken out, the course of history could have been different.<sup>187</sup> In this environment of silence and collaboration, Jehovah's Witnesses stand out: they publicly and fearlessly denounced the atrocities committed by Hitler and his government since the rise of his regime. The history of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany is therefore unique: no other religious group opposed the Nazi government with such a resolute, persistent and courageous stand.

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<sup>186</sup> In 2015, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) organized a special exhibition entitled "Some Were Neighbors: Collaboration and Complicity in the Holocaust." This exhibition emphasized the role of the 'common people,' like neighbors, friends, classmates, and co-workers, revealing how their omertà and their complicity contributed to the achievements of the Nazi persecution of Jews, Communists, Homosexuals, Gypsies, and Jehovah's Witnesses, among other ethnical, social, and religious groups.

<sup>187</sup> Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964), 320.

## Epilogue

Jehovah's Witnesses publicly and continuously demonstrated over the years their resolute stand against Hitler's regime and the Nazi ideology. The Governing Body of the religious organization requested the help of the American government, wrote and published articles to benefit their brothers and sisters overseas, wrote personal letters and telegrams directly to the Führer and government officials, and denounced the atrocities committed by the Nazi authorities through their publications. In order to understand the historical significance of these events, it is important to consider how other Christian denominations reacted to the atrocities committed by the Nazi authorities. Did they oppose Hitler's government? Or did they support the Nazi regime?

Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) are a Christian denomination that, like Jehovah's Witnesses, was established in the United States, but had representatives on German territory. In the 1925 census, Germany counted 30,073 members of this religious group.<sup>188</sup> The Adventists favored and supported the Nazi regime for different reasons. Initially, their support was for ideological reasons: the leaders of the Adventist Church acclaimed Hitler's government, even stating that the Führer had been sent by God.<sup>189</sup> In fact, they believed that only a strong government could enforce the moral standards fostered by the Church, thus elevating the purity of the German people. One Adventist wrote: "The Christian is happy to know that the direction of his country is in the hands of

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<sup>188</sup> Helmreich, *German Churches Under Hitler*, 93.

<sup>189</sup> Christine E. King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions: Five Case Studies in Non-Conformity* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 85-87.

a man like Hitler.”<sup>190</sup> However, what began as support based on ideology soon became support as a means for survival. In fact, religious minorities started to be seen as enemies of the unity that Hitler and his government strove to achieve among the German people. In order to guarantee their survival, the Adventists compromised their interpretation of the Bible and their teachings. In fact, the leaders of the religious group instructed the church members to obey the government even if the orders were in plain contrast with their beliefs. Historian Jack M. Patt stated: “Some church members had been swept along with the tide of nationalism, had joined the Nazi party, borne arms, worked on the seventh-day Sabbath and supported the Nazi war effort wholeheartedly.”<sup>191</sup> Even their terminology underwent some changes as a way to show support toward the Nazi anti-Semitic ideology. For instance, the word ‘Sabbath’, that had clear Jewish ties, was replaced with the German word ‘Ruhetag.’<sup>192</sup>

The support that the Seventh Day Adventists showed toward Hitler and his regime did not change over time, even as the atrocities committed by the Nazi authorities increased. In fact, on Hitler’s birthday, on April 20, 1940, the *Morning Watch Calendar*, an SDA publication, celebrated the Führer and the actions perpetrated up until then. Part of the article stated: “The unshakable faith of Adolf Hitler allowed him to do great deeds, which decorate him today before the whole world. Selflessly and faithfully he has struggled for his people; courageously and proudly he has defended the honor of his nation. Only very few statesmen stand so brilliantly in the sun of a blessed life, and are so

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<sup>190</sup> W. Muller, “An Unsere Gemeindeglieder in Deutschland,” *Der Adventbote* 39 (August 15, 1933): 1-4.

<sup>191</sup> Jack M. Patt, “Living in a Time of Trouble: German Adventists under Nazi Rule,” *Spectrum* 8 (March, 1977): 6.

<sup>192</sup> King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions*, 90.

praised by his own people as our Fuhrer.”<sup>193</sup> It is evident that the official stance of the Adventists was to fully support Hitler and, as historian Erwin Sicher stated, the “Adventists supported the Nazi leadership and many of its undertakings.”<sup>194</sup>

Even dominant religions, which enjoyed a greater influence over the German people, refrained from opposing the Nazi government, and often even supported it. In 1925, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, a protestant Christian denomination, counted almost forty millions followers in Germany, which constituted two-thirds of the entire German population.<sup>195</sup> In line with Martin Luther’s ideology, Protestants always considered political life an important aspect in the life of a good Christian and citizen. William L. Shirer, a scholar who specialized in the study of Nazi Germany, stated that “in no country (...) did the clergy become by tradition so completely servile to the political authority of the state.”<sup>196</sup> When Hitler rose to power, most Protestant leaders welcomed the new government: some churches organized parades, while others even flew the Swastika flag.<sup>197</sup>

Time did not change the position of most Protestant Churches. Individual efforts to help the Jews occurred among Protestants, but there was no official opposition to their persecution. With the outbreak of the war in 1939, the increasing fear of repercussion consolidated the stand of the Protestant Church. On June 30, 1941, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church sent a telegram to Hitler, which in part stated in reference

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<sup>193</sup> Erwin Sicher, “Seventh-day Adventist Publications and The Nazi Temptation,” *Spectrum* 8 (March, 1977): 21.

<sup>194</sup> Sicher, “Seventh-day Adventist Publications and The Nazi Temptation,” 21.

<sup>195</sup> Helmreich, *German Churches Under Hitler*, 93.

<sup>196</sup> William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 236.

<sup>197</sup> Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 237; and King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions*, 10.

to the war: “May God assist you and our nation. (...) In all her prayers [the Church] is with you.”<sup>198</sup> The Protestant Church not only failed to oppose Hitler, but even gave him its blessing for the battles that were going to be fought during World War II.

The Catholic Church also showed its support toward Hitler’s party throughout the dictatorial regime. Roman Catholics constituted a third of the overall population of Germany, counting well over twenty million members.<sup>199</sup> German Catholics were of the opinion that Hitler and his government were going to be a protection against what they considered to be more dangerous threats: Communism and atheism. Fearing a revolution from the left, due to the influence of the Soviet Union, it is not surprising that in the elections of March 5, 1933, a large number of Catholics voted for the Nazi party.<sup>200</sup> Nevertheless, the Catholic population was not the only one to show support towards Hitler’s government.

On July 20, 1933, the Holy See and the German government agreed to sign and establish the ‘Reichskonkordat,’ a treaty that was meant to protect the status and the material possessions of the Catholic Church in Germany, in exchange for an oath of loyalty towards the German Reich.<sup>201</sup> An agreement in which the Holy See promised loyalty to the German government can only denote a clear demonstration of support and cooperation with Hitler’s regime. The Vatican, like most of the other religious

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<sup>198</sup> Joachim Beckmann, *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, 1933-1944* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1948), 478-479.

<sup>199</sup> According to the 1925 census. Helmreich, *German Churches Under Hitler*, 93.

<sup>200</sup> King, *The Nazi State and New Religions*, 13; and Robert P. Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust: Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 55.

<sup>201</sup> *Concordat Between the Holy See and the German Reich*, translated by Muriel Fraser, accessed March 13, 2016, [http://www.concordatwatch.eu/showkb.php?org\\_id=858&kb\\_header\\_id=752&kb\\_id=1211](http://www.concordatwatch.eu/showkb.php?org_id=858&kb_header_id=752&kb_id=1211).

denominations in Germany, was concerned about the possible threat of the Nazi party hindering, and possibly banning, the Catholic Church in Germany. In fact, as the Nazi regime consolidated its power and prestige over time, Hitler was determined to bring unity, both political and religious, in the German Reich. Any opposition and resistance from the Vatican and its representatives throughout Germany, therefore, could have easily prompted the Nazi regime to discredit, oppose, and ban the Catholic Church in the German Reich. In view of this increasing menace, many Catholic bishops and cardinals continued to strive and foster a peaceful and constructive relationship with the NSDAP.<sup>202</sup>

Most Christian denominations failed to oppose and actually supported Hitler's government and the Nazi ideology. It is not surprising that Hitler stated: "The parsons ... will betray their God to us. They will betray anything for the sake of their miserable little jobs and incomes ... Why should we quarrel? They will swallow anything in order to keep their material advantages."<sup>203</sup> With the end of the war, and the fall of Hitler's dictatorial regime, the reputation of the Churches plummeted. Those organizations that had the role of providing spiritual guidance according to the Bible had revealed themselves to be in support of a government that aimed to kill and persecute many innocent people. As Guenter Lewy, professor emeritus of politics at the University of Massachusetts, stated: "A policy of resolute opposition to the Nazi regime, ... would have raised the moral prestige of the Church immeasurably."<sup>204</sup> In a time when most

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<sup>202</sup> Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 82.

<sup>203</sup> Hermann Rauschning, *The Voice of Destruction* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), 50-53.

<sup>204</sup> Lewy, *Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, 320.

religious denominations, either dominant or minor, failed to uphold to their moral and spiritual obligations, Jehovah's Witnesses demonstrated a stance that proved to be unique among other religious groups at the time: they publicly and fearlessly denounced the injustices committed by Hitler's government, in spite of the loss of their material possessions and freedom.



## Appendix

### *A. Declaration of Facts*

Declaration written by Judge Rutherford and Paul Balzereit, and presented to the convention of Jehovah's Witnesses held in Berlin on June 25, 1933. Text published in *1934 Year Book of Jehovah's Witnesses*. Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1933, 131-143.

This company of German people, who are peaceable and law-abiding citizens representing many others from every part of Germany, all of whom are earnestly laboring for the highest welfare of the people of this land, being now duly assembled at Berlin this 25th day of June, AD. 1933, do joyfully declare our complete devotion to Jehovah, the Almighty God, and to his kingdom under Christ Jesus, whose shed blood bought the human race. We declare that the holy Scriptures set forth in the Bible constitute the Word of Jehovah God given to men for their guidance in righteousness, and that the Word of God is the truth, and that it is of greatest importance that man have a knowledge of his relationship to God. We ask to be judged by the standard of the Word of God.

Christ Jesus is Jehovah God's great Witness to the truth, and as his faithful and devoted followers we are, by His grace, witnesses to the truth. The purpose of this Declaration is that we may present a true and faithful witness before the rulers and the people as to the name and purpose of Jehovah God and our relation thereto.

We are wrongfully charged before the ruling powers of this government and before the people of this nation; and in order that the name of Jehovah God may be exalted in the minds of the people, and that his benevolent purposes be better understood and our position fairly placed before the government, we do respectfully ask the rulers of the nation and the people to give a fair and impartial consideration to the statement of facts here made.

The Scriptures plainly state that the chief opposer of Jehovah God and the greatest enemy of mankind is Satan the Devil, whose name is also that of Serpent and Dragon. It is written in the Scriptures that Satan, who has long been the invisible ruler of this world, deceives and blinds the people to the truth in order that the light of and concerning Jehovah God and Christ Jesus may not shine into the minds of men. (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4) Frequently by fraud, subtlety and

deception Satan has induced honest persons to war with each other, in order that he might turn them all away from God and destroy them. Above all things, the people need to know Jehovah God and his gracious provision for their general welfare.

### **Jews**

By the term ‘clergy,’ as used in our literature, reference is made to that class of professed religious teachers, priests and Jesuits who employ improper political means to accomplish their ends and join forces even with those who deny God and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the same class to whom Jesus referred as his persecutors. We have no criticism of any honest religious teacher.

When Jesus went to the Jews to tell them of the truth, it was the Jewish clergy, that is to say, the Pharisees and priests, that violently opposed him and persecuted him and caused him to be charged with all manner of crimes and offenses. They refused to hear the truth, and addressing them Jesus said: ‘Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.’ (John 8:43-45) Although the Pharisees and priests then claimed to represent Jehovah God Jesus told them that they were in fact the representatives of Satan the Devil.

We have no fight with any persons or religious teachers, but we must call attention to the fact that it is generally those who claim to represent God and Christ Jesus who are in fact our persecutors and who misrepresent us before the governments and nations. As true followers of Christ Jesus we are to expect such opposition, and we mention it here in explanation of why we have been misrepresented before the rulers of this nation. To his faithful followers Jesus said: ‘Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they [the false religious teachers] have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.’ (John 15:20) Furthermore, Jesus said that this same class of men would cause his true followers to be wrongfully charged before the ruling powers, his language being: ‘But take heed to yourselves: for they [false religious teachers] shall deliver you up to councils [police power]; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten, and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.’ (Mark 13:9) This explains why Jehovah God now permits his faithful witnesses to be misrepresented and persecuted, namely, that those of a wrong

spirit may identify themselves as opponents of God and thus bear witness against themselves. The same materialistic spirit that caused the persecution of Jesus Christ now exists and is back of the persecution of us as his faithful followers.

It is falsely charged by our enemies that we have received financial support for our work from the Jews. Nothing is farther from the truth. Up to this hour there never has been the slightest bit of money contributed to our work by Jews. We are the faithful followers of Christ Jesus and believe upon Him as the Savior of the world, whereas the Jews entirely reject Jesus Christ and emphatically deny that he is the Savior of the world sent of God for man's good. This of itself should be sufficient proof to show that we receive no support from Jews and that therefore the charges against us are maliciously false and could proceed only from Satan, our great enemy.

The greatest and the most oppressive empire on earth is the Anglo-American empire. By that is meant the British Empire, of which the United States of America forms a part. It has been the commercial Jews of the British-American empire that have built up and carried on Big Business as a means of exploiting and oppressing the peoples of many nations. This fact particularly applies to the cities of London and New York, the stronghold of Big Business. This fact is so manifest in America that there is a proverb concerning the city of New York which says: 'The Jews own it, the Irish Catholics rule it, and the Americans pay the bills.' We have no fight with any of these persons mentioned, but, as the witnesses for Jehovah and in obedience to his commandment set forth in the Scriptures, we are compelled to call attention to the truth concerning the same in order that the people may be enlightened concerning God and his purpose.

### **Our Literature**

It is said that our books and like literature, when circulated amongst the people, constitute a danger to the peace and safety of the nation. We are certain that this conclusion is due to the fact that our books and other literature have not been carefully examined by the rulers and hence are not properly understood. We respectfully call attention to the fact that these books and other literature were written originally in America and the language therein used has been adapted to the American style of plainness of speech and, when translated into the German, the same appears to be harsh. We admit that the same truths might be stated in a less blunt and more pleasing phrase, and yet the language of these books follows closely the language of the Bible.

It should be borne in mind that in the British Empire and in America the common people have suffered and are now suffering greatly because of the

misrule of Big Business and conscienceless politicians, which misrule has been and is supported by political religionists, and hence the writers of our books or literature have endeavored to employ plain language to convey to the people the proper thought or understanding. The language used, however, is not as strong or emphatic as that used by Jesus Christ in denouncing the oppressors and false teachers of his time.

The present government of Germany has declared emphatically against Big Business oppressors and in opposition to the wrongful religious influence in the political affairs of the nation. Such is exactly our position; and we further state in our literature the reason for the existence of oppressive Big Business and the wrongful political religious influence, because the Holy Scriptures plainly declare that these oppressive instruments proceed from the Devil, and that the complete relief therefrom is God's kingdom under Christ. It is therefore impossible for our literature or our work to in any wise be a danger or a menace to the peace and safety of the state.

Our organization is not political in any sense. We only insist on teaching the Word of Jehovah God to the people, and that without hindrance. We do not object to or try to hinder anyone's teaching or believing what he desires, but we only ask the freedom to believe and teach what we conceive the Bible to teach, and then let the people decide what they wish to believe.

To know Jehovah God and his gracious provision for humankind is of most vital importance to all persons, because God has declared in His Word that where there is no vision or understanding of his Word the people perish. (Proverbs 29:18) We have devoted our lives and our material substance to the work of enabling the people to gain a vision or understanding of God's Word, and therefore it is impossible for our literature and our work to be a menace to the peace and safety of the nation. Instead of being against the principles advocated by the government of Germany, we stand squarely for such principles, and point out that Jehovah God through Christ Jesus will bring about the full realization of these principles and will give to the people peace and prosperity and the greatest desire of every honest heart.

Our organization seeks neither money nor members, but we are a company or organized body of Christian people engaged solely in the benevolent work of teaching the Word of God to the people at the least possible cost to them. Our organization was originally incorporated in the United States of America in 1884 under the name of the WATCH TOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY, and in 1914 incorporated under the laws of Great Britain by the name of the

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION. These are merely the corporate names of our organization for legally carrying forward its work. The Scriptural name by which we are known is 'Jehovah's witnesses.' We are engaged solely in a benevolent work. The purpose of our organization is to aid the people to understand the Bible, which discloses the only possible way for the complete relief and blessing for mankind. Our organization has extended its work throughout the earth. The education, culture and upbuilding of the people must and will come through the agency of God's kingdom concerning which we teach as set forth in the Bible. The salvation of the people depends upon the true knowledge of and obedience to Jehovah God and his righteous ways.

The people are in great distress and in need of help to understand the reason for their unhappy condition and what is the means of relief. The Scriptures, when understood, make this matter clear. Instead of collecting money from the people and using the same to erect great buildings and to support men in luxury, we print the gospel message of God's kingdom and carry it to the homes of the people that they may, at the least inconvenience to themselves, gain a knowledge of God's purposes concerning them.

A careful examination of our books and literature will disclose the fact that the very high ideals held and promulgated by the present national government are set forth in and endorsed and strongly emphasized in our publications, and show that Jehovah God will see to it that these high ideals in due time will be attained by all persons who love righteousness and who obey the Most High. Instead, therefore, of our literature and our work's being a menace to the principles of the present government we are the strongest supporters of such high ideals. For this reason Satan, the enemy of all men who desire righteousness, has sought to misrepresent our work and prevent us from carrying it on in this land.

For many years our organization has put forth an unselfish and persistent effort to do good to the people. Our American brethren have greatly assisted in the work in Germany, and with money freely contributed, and that at a time when all Germany was in dire distress. Now because it appears that Germany may soon be free from oppression and that the people may be lifted up, Satan, the great enemy, puts forth his endeavors to destroy that benevolent work in this land.

### **League of Nations**

The language in our books or literature concerning the League of Nations has been seized upon as a reason for prohibiting our work and the distribution of our books. Let us remind the government and the people of Germany that it was the League of Nations compact that laid upon the shoulders of the German people the

great unjust and unbearable burdens. That League of Nations compact was not brought forth by the friends of Germany. In America at one time the public press announced that 140,000 clergymen had set aside a certain period of time in which a concerted movement was to be made, and which was made, to induce the American people to fully endorse the League of Nations. It was the Federation of Churches in America that issued a manifesto stating that the 'League of Nations is the political expression of God's kingdom on earth,' and which by them was substituted in the place and stead of God's kingdom under Christ. It was in America that our organization under the visible leadership of its president pointed out emphatically that the League of Nations is not an institution of Jehovah God, because it is oppressive and unfair and nothing that proceeds from Jehovah God could be oppressive and unfair. It was that condition, existing at the time, which called forth the language that appears in our books concerning the League of Nations and also calling attention to the fact that such League of Nations compact can never bring about the relief and blessing of the people, because such relief and blessing can come only by adhering strictly to the principles laid down in God's Word and in the manner which Jehovah has pointed out.

For almost half a century our strictly Christian organization has carried on its work in various parts of the earth. Its books are published in more than 50 languages, and upward of 140 million of these books are in the hands of the people. For more than thirty years our books and literature have been distributed throughout Germany, and millions of these are now in the hands of the German people and are read by the people, all of whom will bear testimony to the fact that these books, based strictly on the Bible, are of great help to them and upbuild them and give them hope for a realization of the blessings which Jehovah God long ago promised. In all these years of our work, and in the wide distribution of our books and literature, not one instance can be truthfully cited wherein our work or literature has been a menace to the government or has in any wise endangered the peace and safety of the nations.

The endeavors of our organization being exclusively confined to bearing testimony to the name and Word of Jehovah God, it would be entirely inconsistent for us to attempt to exert any political influence in the governments of this world or to do anything that would endanger the peace and safety of the nation. We have no desire nor inclination to do anything except to carry out our divinely given commission to proclaim the Word of Jehovah God.

In America, Canada and other parts of the British Empire the political clergy, priests and Jesuits have persistently persecuted and continue to persecute those of our organization, and that without just cause or excuse; and we have every reason

to believe that a like influence has been subtilly employed by the great enemy Satan to misrepresent us and our work in Germany. We remind you that in the years past the political clergymen have brought more sorrow upon the German people than probably any other class of men. We have no desire to fight with the clergymen, but we do ask that the ruling powers of the nation judge us not by the misrepresentation of such men, but that we be judged according to the Word of God and the work we are doing consistent therewith. Jehovah God persecutes no one, but permits each one to choose his own course, holding him responsible for his acts according to knowledge. Jehovah God has emphatically expressed his anger against those who do persecute others who are trying to serve him; and this proves that those who persecute us do not represent God, but that they are incited so to do by the enemy of God and man. - Psalm 72:4.

### **Great Truths**

The Holy Scriptures, viewed in the light of present-day events which are in fulfilment of divine prophecy, disclose that: The time has arrived when Jehovah will make his name known to all creation and vindicate his name and clear it from the defamation which Satan has placed against that holy name. (Psalm 83:18) When Jesus Christ, the Vindicator, ascended into heaven Jehovah commanded him to wait until his due time to put the enemy down. That period of waiting has now come to an end and God has sent forth his beloved Son to oust the enemy and rule in righteousness. (Psalm 110:1-4; Hebrews 10:12, 13) The world, or uninterrupted rule, of Satan has ended, and this began to be evidenced by the World War in 1914, and since then until now is the time when the gospel of the Kingdom must be told to the people. (Matthew 24:3, 14) Satan has now been cast out of heaven and down to the earth and now confines his operations to the earth in an endeavor to blind the people to the truth and to destroy them, and that is the reason for the present-day sufferings of humanity. The prophetic words of Jesus now apply: 'Woe to the inhabiters [the rulers] of the earth, and of the sea [the people in general]! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.' - Revelation 12:12.

The people of Germany have suffered great misery since 1914 and have been the victims of much injustice practiced upon them by others. The Nationalists have declared themselves against all such unrighteousness and announced that 'Our relationship to God is high and holy.' Since our organization fully endorses these righteous principles and is engaged solely in carrying forth the work of enlightening the people concerning the Word of Jehovah God, Satan by subtilty endeavors to set the government against our work and destroy it because we magnify the importance of knowing and serving God. Instead of our

organization's being a menace to the peace and safety of the government, it is the one organization standing for the peace and safety of this land.

We beg to remind all that the great crisis is upon the world because the transition period from bad to good is at hand, and the hope of the world is God's kingdom under Christ, for which Jesus taught his followers to constantly pray: 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.'

The power of Jehovah God is supreme and there is no power that can successfully resist him. His time to exercise his power in the interest of humanity and to the vindication of his great name is here. In this connection we respectfully call attention to the admonition and warning of Jehovah God, both to the rulers and to the people, which applies to this very hour, wherein he says: 'Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion ... Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.' - Psalm 2:6, 10-12.

The present government having declared adherence to the aforementioned high ideals, we are persuaded that the rulers do not desire to knowingly resist the progressive witness work to the name of Jehovah God and his kingdom which we are now carrying forward. If our work is merely that of men, it will fall of its own weight. If it is of Jehovah God and being carried forward in obedience to his commandment, then to resist it means to fight against God. - Acts 5:39.

We therefore appeal to the high sense of justice of the government and nation and respectfully ask that the order of prohibition against our work and our literature be set aside, and that opportunity be given us to have a fair hearing before we are judged. We respectfully ask that the government appoint a committee of impartial men to hold conference with a committee of our organization and that a fair and impartial examination of our literature and our work be made, to the end that all misunderstanding may be removed and that we may be mutually helpful to each other and that we may without hindrance obey Jehovah God's commandment now applying to us, to wit: 'Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people.' - Isaiah 62:10.

The peoples of Germany are a God-fearing people and should not be deprived of an opportunity to learn of Jehovah God and of his gracious provision to bring lasting peace, prosperity, liberty and everlasting life on earth to all those who know and obey him. Let all who love God work together to the honor and



vindication of his name. All who take a contrary course must take the responsibility before God; but as for us, we will serve Jehovah forever.

RESOLVED, That copies of this Declaration be respectfully delivered to the high officials of the government and that the same be given wide publication to the people, that the name of Jehovah may be further known.

### ***B. Rutherford's Letter to Hitler***

Letter sent by the president of the Watch Tower Society to Hitler as an attachment to the *Declaration of Facts*, on February 9, 1934. The complete text of the letter appeared in the article "Persecution in Germany." *The Golden Age* 15 (April 25, 1934), 453-454.

Sir:

This letter is a kindly notice and warning of things that are of vital importance to your welfare. You will find it to your interest to read it carefully.

In Germany for many years faithful and good men and women have been teaching the doctrines of God's Word, which people jointly work under organizations bearing the name of Earnest Bible Students and the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, which names merely represent the Society or corporate organization for the carrying on of their work. These men and women are devoted to Jehovah God and serve Him as His witnesses, telling the people what is the truth of the Bible. They seek to do good unto all men and injury to none.

In the early spring of 1933 your government without just cause or excuse forcibly compelled these earnest Christian people, who are Jehovah's witnesses, to cease the worship of Jehovah God in the way which God has commanded them to worship; seized their Bibles, song books, Bible textbooks, and other Bible literature, and their furniture, drove them out of their places of worship, and forbade them to assemble together to study the Scriptures and to worship God, and to preach the truth to others.

Your government also without just cause or excuse seized a great amount of books, Bibles, paintings, paper and other material, and destroyed the same by fire, which property belonged to the aforesaid Society. Many of these innocent and faithful witnesses of Jehovah God your officers have incarcerated in prison, and illtreated them. You being a very busy man, probably many of these things have not been brought to your attention; but that is not the fault of those who have been unjustly and cruelly treated.

Enemies of Jehovah's witnesses have maliciously misrepresented them and told vicious lies against them in order to induce your government to do injury to them. In order that the government might be informed as to the real facts more than seven thousand of Jehovah's witnesses assembled in Berlin, Germany, on the 25th day of June, 1933, and there issued a Declaration setting forth the facts concerning their work in Germany, which declaration was furnished to all the

high officials of your government, and millions of copies thereof were distributed amongst the people until such distribution was forcibly stopped by officers of your government. That Declaration, a copy of which is hereto attached, called upon your government to see to it that these faithful people, who are Jehovah's witnesses, might "without hindrance obey Jehovah God's commandments and worship Him as commanded, and tell the people of His kingdom for the blessing of all the families of the earth."

That request has been ignored by your government, and you have refused to permit these witnesses of Jehovah to serve Him and worship Him as commanded by the Most High.

These faithful followers of Christ Jesus and who are Jehovah's witnesses have waited and suffered long, hoping that you would cause their unjust treatment to cease and permit them to go on with their worship and service of Jehovah God without interference. But you have failed to do so. During the past ten years the rulers and the people of Germany have received notice by the wide publication of literature that God's kingdom is here and that His King, Christ Jesus, will establish a righteous government on earth for the blessing of the people. They have been warned that those who oppose God and His kingdom shall be destroyed by the Lord at Armageddon. Such notice and warning have been ignored by your government.

Permit me to remind you that Jehovah God sent His servant Moses to Egypt to give notice and warning to Pharaoh that he must let God's chosen people go and worship Him in the manner that He had commanded. Such notice and warning Pharaoh not only ignored, but he defied Jehovah God, and the result was that Jehovah killed all the firstborn of Egypt and then destroyed the ruling power. (See Exodus 12:29, 30; 14:23-28) The Scriptures plainly declare that what came upon Egypt will come in a far greater degree upon all the world, and particularly upon those who oppose Jehovah God and His kingdom. You may successfully resist any and all men, but you cannot successfully resist Jehovah God.

Pharaoh said to Moses: "Who is the Lord [Jehovah], that I should obey his voice?" (Exodus 5:2) Later he learned to his sorrow who Jehovah is. Jehovah's witnesses have done everything within their power to show your government that they only want to freely worship Jehovah God and serve Him as He has commanded them, but their efforts have been ignored and their maltreatment continues by your officials. Once more in their behalf, as the president of the Society or organization under which they work, and in the name of Jehovah God and His anointed King, Christ Jesus, I demand that you give order to all officials

and servants of your government that Jehovah's witnesses [who are of the Earnest Bible Students and the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society] in Germany be permitted to peaceably assemble and without hindrance worship God and obey His commandments by teaching to the people the Bible truths concerning God's kingdom under Christ, for which kingdom all Christians have long hoped and prayed.

If by the 24th day of March, 1934, there is no response to this earnest demand and nothing done by your government to grant the relief of the aforesaid Jehovah's witnesses in Germany, then God's people in other countries will begin the publication throughout the nations of the earth of the facts concerning Germany's wrongful treatment of Christian people there; and having delivered the testimony, we will submit our case and leave it to Jehovah God by and through Christ Jesus to administer the punishment of the guilty ones in His own good way. Permit me to remind you that Jehovah warns that no one shall oppress His anointed. (Psalm 105:15) Christ Jesus is now on His throne, and the battle of the great day of God Almighty is just ahead, and it will be the greatest tribulation ever known, and there is just one way of escape: "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." - Psalm 2:10-12.

Respectfully submitted.

Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society,

By

(Signed)

President.

San Diego, California,

February 9, 1934.

To

Chancellor Adolf Hitler,

Brown House,

Munich, Germany.

### *C. 'Protest'*

'Protest' unanimously adopted at an assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses held in Los Angeles, California, on March 25, 1934. The 'protest' fulfilled the terms of the letter sent to Hitler on February 9, 1934. Published in the article "Persecution in Germany." *The Golden Age* 15 (April 25, 1934), 454.

## PROTEST

For many years Jehovah's witnesses in Germany, unitedly working under the WATCH TOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY, have engaged in bearing testimony to the name and kingdom of Jehovah God. During the past year the German government without cause or excuse has wrongfully seized, confiscated and destroyed the Bibles, song books, furniture and other property of these faithful Christians, prohibited them to meet together and worship God according to His commandments, and has cruelly persecuted and imprisoned many of them, and, like Pharaoh of old, that government has wickedly opposed Jehovah and defamed His name.

Therefore, We their brethren as followers of Christ Jesus do earnestly and vigorously protest against such unwarranted treatment of Christians by the German ruling power, and we call upon all true Christians and fair-minded people throughout the earth to join in this vigorous protest and demand that Jehovah's witnesses, without let or hindrance on the part of the German government or others, shall be permitted to go on in their worship and service of Jehovah God in the manner which He has commanded, and we register our protest by declaring against Satan and all such oppression and by taking our stand on the side of Jehovah and His kingdom and His people.

### ***D. Rutherford's Letter to the Congregations***

Letter that Judge Rutherford wrote to the German congregations during the convention of Jehovah's Witnesses held in Basel, Switzerland, on September 9, 1934. Complete text published in "Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany Standing for Their Lives." *The Golden Age* 16 (October 24, 1934), 50.

To Jehovah's witnesses in Germany:

My Beloved Brethren:

You have heretofore made a covenant to do the will of God. He has taken you at your word, begotten you as His own, and called you to His kingdom. Christ Jesus at the temple of God has gathered unto himself the faithful and taken them into the covenant for God's kingdom. Such faithful ones God has anointed and commissioned to be His witnesses. It is to such that this letter is addressed.

Moses was a type of Christ Jesus, whom God raised up as His great Prophet, and now all who are of the anointed remnant must render complete obedience to God's great Prophet, Christ Jesus. (Acts 3:22, 23) The commandments of Jehovah and of His great Prophet to the anointed, among others, are these: 'Ye are my witnesses that I am God;' 'go and tell the people;' 'this gospel of the kingdom must be preached as a witness;' 'forsake not the assembling of yourselves together;' 'study to show yourselves approved unto God;' "shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." - Isaiah 43:10-12; Isaiah 6:9; Matthew 24:14; Hebrews 10:25; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

Contrary to and in violation of the foregoing positive commandments from Jehovah God the government of Germany has forbidden you to meet together and worship Jehovah and serve Him. Whom will you obey: God or men? The faithful apostles were placed in a similar position, and to the worldly rulers they said: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 4:13-20; Acts 5:29) No man has the right to command you concerning God's service. You are duty-bound by your covenant to obey God and Christ. I conclude, therefore, that you will obey Jehovah, and not man. I therefore advise as follows:

Let every company of Jehovah's witnesses within the land of Germany meet at some convenient place in the town where you reside on Sunday morning October 7, 1934, at nine o'clock; that this communication be read to the

assembled company; that you all then join together in prayer unto God, asking His guidance, protection and deliverance and blessings through Christ Jesus our Head and King; that you then immediately send a prepaid telegram to the government officials of Germany a copy of which is prepared and will be ready; that you then devote a brief period to the study of Matthew 10:16-24; that doing this you all 'stand for your life' (Esther 8:11); and that then the meeting adjourn and that you go out among your neighbors and bear testimony to the name of Jehovah God and His kingdom under Christ Jesus.

Your brethren throughout the earth will have you in mind and at the same time will be asking a similar prayer of Jehovah. United in the holy cause of righteousness and rendering ourselves fully in obedience unto God and His kingdom we may look with complete confidence for deliverance and blessing from God by and through Christ Jesus His great Vindicator.

Be assured of my love and best wishes.

Your brother and servant by His grace,

(Signed) J. F . RUTHERFORD.

***E. Letter to the Officials of the Government***

Letter sent to the officials of the German Government on October 7, 1934, as instructed by Judge Rutherford on the letter in Appendix D. Complete text of the letter published in the article “Jehovah’s witnesses in Germany Standing for Their Lives,” *The Golden Age* 16 (October 24, 1934): 50-51.

To the Officials of the Government:

The Word of Jehovah God, as set out in the Holy Bible, is the supreme law, and to us it is our sole guide for the reason that we have devoted ourselves to God and are true and sincere followers of Christ Jesus.

During the past year, and contrary to God’s law and in violation of our rights, you have forbidden us as Jehovah’s witnesses to meet together to study God’s Word and worship and serve Him. In His Word He commands us that we shall not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. (Hebrews 10:25) To us Jehovah commands: ‘Ye are my witnesses that I am God. Go and tell the people my message.’ (Isaiah 43:10, 12; Isaiah 6:9; Matthew 24:14) There is a direct conflict between your law and God’s law, and, following the lead of the faithful apostles, “we ought to obey God rather than men,” and this we will do. (Acts 5:29) Therefore this is to advise you that at any cost we will obey God’s commandments, will meet together for the study of His Word, and will worship and serve Him as He has commanded. If your government or officers do violence to us because we are obeying God, then our blood will be upon you and you will answer to Almighty God.

We have no interest in political affairs, but are wholly devoted to God’s kingdom under Christ His King. We will do no injury or harm to anyone. We would delight to dwell in peace and do good to all men as we have opportunity, but, since your government and its officers continue in your attempt to force us to disobey the highest law of the universe, we are compelled to now give you notice that we will, by His grace, obey Jehovah God and fully trust Him to deliver us from all oppression and oppressors.

Respectfully,

Jehovah’s Witnesses

at \_\_\_\_\_



### ***F. Resolution at Lucerne***

Resolution presented by Judge Rutherford during the convention of Jehovah's Witnesses held in Lucerne, Switzerland, on September 7, 1936. Complete text of the resolution was published in the article "Convention of Kingdom Publishers in Lucerne, Switzerland, Setp. 4-7, 1936," *The Golden Age* 18 (October 21, 1936), 36.

#### RESOLUTION AT LUCERNE

(Adopted unanimously)

Jehovah's witnesses now assembled in Lucerne, Switzerland, having come from many parts of the earth to worship Jehovah in spirit and in truth, take this occasion to give thanks to the Almighty God, whose name alone is Jehovah, for His manifold blessings.

Knowing full well that Jehovah always faithfully performs His promise, and that long centuries ago He promised that He would establish on earth His kingdom of righteousness with Christ Jesus as the world's rightful Ruler; and now seeing from the fulfillment of prophecy that the day of Jehovah's kingdom is here, we rejoice in the privilege of being His servants and His witnesses and we do declare our unqualified allegiance to the Almighty God and His kingdom, and delight to make known to suffering humankind that the kingdom of God under Christ is the only hope of the people.

We fully appreciate that Satan is the great enemy of all who serve Jehovah God and that Satan has used religionists at all times to oppose and persecute those who worship God in spirit and in truth. For this reason many true followers of Christ Jesus are today prevented from attending this convention, they being held in restraint in Germany and in other places, not for wrongdoing, but because they serve God and Christ Jesus and declare His Word and His kingdom as God has commanded them to do.

The law of Jehovah God is supreme. He is above all; and as Jesus and the apostles served God first, last, and all the time, and as they declared so we declare, we will obey God rather than men.

We call all good people to witness that in Germany, Austria and other places Jehovah's witnesses are cruelly persecuted, imprisoned, fiendishly abused, and many of them killed, and all such wickedness is done against them by a cruel, malicious, wicked power, incited so to do by the religious organization, to wit, the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, which for many years has deceived the people and

blasphemed God's holy name. The Hitler government, aided and incited by the Jesuits of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, has inflicted and continues to inflict all manner of cruel punishment upon true Christians even as Christ Jesus and His apostles were persecuted for righteousness.

Jehovah God has commanded His servants to now give warning to such wicked ones (Ezekiel 33:8, 9) that full responsibility may rest upon the wicked for their wrongdoing, and for that reason we now sound the warning to the rulers in Germany and to the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, and to all like organizations that cruelly persecute the true and faithful followers of Christ Jesus, that the fate of such God declares is complete destruction. (Psalm 145:20) Jesus Christ, at Matthew 25, pronounces Jehovah's judgment against such wicked persecutors who persecute the true followers and brethren of Christ Jesus, in these words: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to [cruelly ill-treated] the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels. These shall go into everlasting destruction.'

We vigorously protest against the cruel treatment of Jehovah's witnesses by the Roman Catholic Hierarchy and its allies in Germany and in all other parts of the world, but we are delighted to leave the end thereof entirely in the hand of the Lord God, who, according to His Word, will render a full recompense.

We sound the warning to all mankind that if they would live they must refuse to give aid and support to religionists who persecute the true followers of Christ Jesus, and that they must take their stand on the side of righteousness and give heed to the words of Jehovah, to wit: 'Behold my servant, whom I have chosen ... He shall show judgment to the nations ... And in His name shall the nations hope.' - Matthew 12:18-21.

As the followers of Christ Jesus we have no part in and no interest in the political affairs of this world. Our sole purpose and commission is to make known the name and the kingdom of God under Christ, that the people may be informed and intelligently choose whom they will serve.

We send loving greetings to our persecuted brethren in Germany and bid them to be of good courage and to rely solely upon the promises of the Almighty God Jehovah, and Christ, and to remember the words of Jesus: 'Shall not God avenge His elect shortly? He shall avenge them' (Luke 18:7, 8); and, further, the words of the Lord Jesus addressed to His faithful servants: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Revelation 2:10) Blessed is your lot that you are permitted to endure all manner of suffering for the sake of the name of Jehovah and His kingdom under Christ.

The everlasting peace, joy and life of the people depend entirely upon the great "Prince of Peace," whose government will be administered in peace and righteousness. - Isaiah 9:6, 7; 32:1.

RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to Mr. Hitler and to the pope at Vatican City as the head of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy.

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