

Hitler's Inconsistent Jazz Policy and How it Weakened His Control

Emmy Freedman
James Madison University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/madrush>



Part of the [European History Commons](#)

Freedman, Emmy, "Hitler's Inconsistent Jazz Policy and How it Weakened His Control" (2017). *MAD-RUSH Undergraduate Research Conference*. 1.

<http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/madrush/2017/hitlersjazz/1>

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conference Proceedings at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in MAD-RUSH Undergraduate Research Conference by an authorized administrator of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.

Hitler's Inconsistent Jazz Policy and How it Weakened His Control

Emmy Freedman

Spring 2015

HIST 395

Dr. Galgano

Adolf Hitler remains the world's quintessential totalitarian leader. His administration ran the media and restricted basic freedoms in Germany, like the right to communicate freely. His secret police, the Gestapo, maintained order and publicly tortured or exiled enemies of the state without a trial. With the help of the Gestapo and his top governmental officials, like the Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, Hitler maintained what appeared to be an airtight hold over his regime. But there was one area of public life that the Fuhrer seemed at a loss to control: the music scene. His policy on jazz, the foremost popular music of the time, was an inconsistent mix of tolerance and prohibition. As a result, his grasp on what was supposed to be his unified population of superior Aryans was not as tight as his ideology demanded and ultimately it undercut his leadership, at least with some influential segments of the German population. ¹

¹ In-depth research on jazz in Nazi Germany begins with Michael Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), Michael Kater, "Forbidden Fruit? Jazz in the Third Reich," *The American Historical Association*. 94, no.1 (1989): 11-43, accessed April 4, 2015, JSTOR, and Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). His research provides much information on the influences of propaganda and a comprehensive overview of the topic. Tom Neuhaus, "No Nazi Party: Youth Rebels of the Third Reich," *History Today* 155, no.11 (Nov 2005): 52-57, accessed February 24, 2015, JSTOR and Claire Wallace, "Youth Cultures Under Authoritarian Regimes," *Youth and Society* 32, no.3 (March 2001): 275-302, accessed February 17, 2015, JSTOR, show strong theses on the Swing Youth and other youth rebels. Klaus Nathaus, "Popular Music in Germany, 1900-1930: A Case of Americanisation? Uncovering a European Trajectory of Music Production into the Twentieth Century," *European Review of History* 20, no.5 (Oct. 2013): 755-776, accessed March 31, 2015, Routledge and Detlev K. Peukert, . "Life in the Third Reich; Young People: For or Against the Nazis?" *History Today* 35 (Oct 1985): 15-22, accessed February 24, 2015 JSTOR, also gives a good overview of the Swing Youth. A. Aber, "Music and Politics in the Third Reich," *The Musical Times* 85, no. 1216 (June 1944): 179-180, accessed February 17 provides an excellent primary source that comments on the state of music under National Socialism. Rainer Gstrein, "Jazz as Non-Culture: The Suppression of Jazz in the Third Reich," *Satchmo Meets Amadeus Transatlantica* no. 2 (Jan. 2006): 88-96, accessed March 24, 2015, ILL and Brian Morton, "Swing Time for Hitler," *The Nation* 277, no.7 (Sept. 2003): 33-38, accessed April 10, 2015, JSTOR impart good information on foundational material. Goebbels' diaries, Joseph Goebbels, *The Goebbels Diaries 1939-1941*. Trans. Fred Taylor (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1983) and the various pages of the Holocaust Museum's website "Blacks During the Holocaust," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified June 20, 2014, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005479> I used provide very factual information. Richard A. Etlin, *Art, Culture, and Media Under the Third Reich* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002) goes into great depth on the state of art in the Third Reich and John Biesanz, "Nazi Influence on German Youth Hostels" *Social Forces* 19, no. 4 (1941): 554-559, accessed April 10, 2015, JSTOR provides an in-depth primary source on youth hostels and the influence of music. Horst P.J. Bergmeier and Rainer E. Lotz, *Hitler's Airwaves: The Inside Story of Nazi Radio Broadcasting and Propaganda Swing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) give a comprehensive source on the state of radio in Hitler's Germany. Lastly, Robert K. Elder, "The White Rose" *New York Times Upfront* 146, no. 6 (Dec. 2013): 18-21, MasterFile Premier provides a quick overview of the resistance group The White Rose.

Although musicologists differ about what jazz is, most experts agree that it's a genre that derives from African American slave folk music, originating in the late 1800s. It is characterized by polyrhythms, syncopation and improvisation. Right after World War I and before World War II, the big names of the time were Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Benny Goodman.

Jazz came to Germany at the very end of World War I. It had already gained acceptance in England and France and German prisoners of War were likely exposed to the music in French camps. Allied occupying forces also may have brought records and sheet music into the country following Germany's defeat, thus providing another route for the music's introduction.

In the mid-1920s, Berlin was the world's third-largest jazz center behind New York and London.² The widely known "Tiger Rag," one of the most recorded jazz compositions of all time, was marketed on a Berlin-based record label as early as January 1920 and the music began to gain academic acceptance, too. Jazz gained popularity in Germany in part from the post-war swing dance craze, which helped people forget their bad memories of the war. "In the case of popular music in the early twentieth century, the First World War is said to have shaken the world views of Europeans and generated a need for new, more democratic and less restrained forms of culture. This need was satisfied by jazz, a kind of music whose 'joyful energy and exhilaration appealed to those thirsty for release after the tense physical

² Michael Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

and emotional penury of the war years'.³ A Munich radio station began to transmit regular jazz broadcasts in 1924, helping to satisfy the love for this music, and Germans across the country were familiar with the top musicians of the day, like Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington.⁴

But there were also public campaigns, including one led by a group called the Fighting Alliance, against the spread of this new genre. The Fighting Alliance, and other groups with similar agendas, hurled racist insults at jazz, calling it degenerate music that was a threat to the values of western-art music. Alfred Rosenberg, the head of the Fighting Alliance, said that jazz was a “glorification of the rise of the black race,” which he saw as representing “inferior mankind.”⁵ In April of 1930, in one of the first official efforts to limit the music, the “Against Negro Culture for German Nationhood” law was introduced, which was intended to fight outside influences in German culture including using police force. The animosity of Hitler and many Germans toward blacks stemmed in part from Black French colonial troops’ occupation of the Rhineland following World War I. Racist propaganda against black soldiers depicted them as rapists of German women and carriers of venereal diseases. The children of black soldiers and German women were called “Rhineland Bastards.” The Nazis, who at that time were just a small political movement slowly gaining momentum, saw them as a threat to the purity of the Germanic race. In his memoir *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), Hitler charged that, “the

³ Klaus Nathaus, “Popular Music in Germany, 1900-1930: A Case of Americanisation? Uncovering a European Trajectory of Music Production into the Twentieth Century,” *European Review of History* 20, no.5 (Oct. 2013): 755-776, accessed March 31,2015, Routledge.

⁴ Kater, *Different Drummers*, 5.

⁵ Rainer Gstrein, “Jazz as Non-Culture: The Suppression of Jazz in the Third Reich,” *Satchmo Meets Amadeus* Transatlantica no. 2 (Jan. 2006): 88-96, accessed March 24, 2015, ILL.

Jews had brought the Negroes into the Rhineland with the clear aim of ruining the hated white race by the necessarily-resulting bastardization.”⁶

In 1932 lawmakers imposed a nationwide employment prohibition on colored musicians. Louis Armstrong, who was touring through Europe during this time, had to cancel his concert in Berlin.⁷ But even without the prohibition on black musicians, the country’s economic crisis made it hard for the country’s jazz lovers to support the music. Germany’s post-war economy was in the red and it was only exacerbated by the onset of the Great Depression. Since jazz was a highly social activity, people had trouble affording this expensive activity and put off buying concert tickets or going to clubs and many jazz musicians lost their jobs. With other musicians losing their jobs, too, unemployed jazz musicians were seen as unwanted rivals in the job market.⁸

The jazz situation was further tested upon Adolf Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933. He appointed Joseph Goebbels as the Minister of Propaganda,⁹ who found ways to curb the music without outright banning it. Among other things, black and Jewish musicians were blacklisted from the jazz scene. “To the ideologists of National Socialism, it was a music of racial impurity, lumped in with other examples of *entartete Kunst*, or “degenerate art,”

⁶ “Blacks During the Holocaust,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified June 20, 2014, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005479>.

⁷ Louis Armstrong documents much of his later musical career in journals, which are analyzed in Daniel Stein’s *Music is My Life*. However, he leaves out any reaction he had to his tour’s cancellation in Nazi Germany.

⁸ Gstrein, 88-89.

⁹ Joseph Paul Goebbels (1897-1945) joined the National Socialist Party in 1922 and met party leader Adolf Hitler in 1925. In 1933, Goebbels was appointed Reichmaster for Propaganda and National Enlightenment. On May 1, 1945 he committed suicide. *The Goebbels Diary for 1942-43*, found among his papers, was published in English in 1948.

damned as “Judaean-Negroid” and not fit for the ears of good Germans.”¹⁰ Later, efforts would be made to extend restrictions to the saxophone, which was considered the most offensive instrument in jazz. Not only was it considered overly sensual, but it threatened to open the door to equality and democracy because it promoted base morals. As Josef Skvorecky stated in his book *The Bass Saxophone*, “a single note from that improbable instrument is a clarion of freedom.”¹¹ And acting upon that fear, the first nationwide measure against jazz was enacted in 1933, imposing a prohibition against the music in youth hostels.

Youth hostels posed a specific threat to Hitler’s regime because they tended to encourage and develop cosmopolitan attitudes among its members. “Hostelers generally acquire some degree of international sympathy and understanding, a process strongly facilitated by the primary contacts which the youth hostel fosters. The types of contacts fostered by the youth hostel are characteristically democratic. All young people are welcome, irrespective of race, nationality, class, creed or political allegiance.”¹²

Later that year another law was passed, this one against broadcasting some types of jazz on Radio Berlin. In 1935, Nazi Germany’s broadcasting director issued a definitive prohibition against black and Jewish jazz on German radio stations,

¹⁰ Brian Morton, “Swing Time for Hitler,” *The Nation* 277, no.7 (Sept. 2003): 33-38, accessed April 10, 2015, JSTOR.

¹¹ Morton, 38.

¹² John Biesanz, “Nazi Influence on German Youth Hostels” *Social Forces* 19, no. 4 (1941): 554-559, accessed April 10, 2015, JSTOR.

aiming to “eliminate the remaining undermining elements in our entertainment and dance music.”¹³

Hitler and Goebbels viewed jazz as a democratic disease. In its essence, jazz is a form of music with its improvisation and disregard of class distinctions, “redolent of liberty,”¹⁴ and that is an attribute that is anathema to a totalitarian society like Hitler’s Germany. They expressed this opinion in an art exhibit in 1933, entitled *Entartete Musik*. In this exhibit, Hitler, with the help of Hans Ziegler, the head of the Militant League for German Culture, “placed Aryan heroism opposite Bolshevism and Judaism as the forces of darkness.”¹⁵ They used terms like “pure” and “clean” to describe the German art and music at this exhibit, juxtaposing this idealism of the Germans with Jewish contamination.¹⁶ Upon seeing this exhibit, the General German Music Society protested against the lack of diversity displayed and how it was mostly atonal. Goebbels cracked down on them and dissolved the Society to make sure impure views on music could no longer plague Germany.

By contrast, classical music, particularly the heroic compositions and operas of Richard Wagner, was heavily endorsed by the regime. The Nazis claimed for themselves the glory of Germany’s cultural past and celebrated classical artists like Wagner and Johann Sebastian Bach as “German-bred.” Since their goal was to exemplify the superiority of the Aryan German race, the recognition of these artists and their genre was extremely important for the Nazi regime’s credibility. There

¹³ Gstrein, 89.

¹⁴ Michael Kater, “Forbidden Fruit? Jazz in the Third Reich,” *The American Historical Association*. 94, no.1 (1989): 11-43, accessed April 4, 2015, JSTOR.

¹⁵ Richard A. Etlin, *Art, Culture, and Media Under the Third Reich* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Etlin, 58.

were many music and arts festivals that showcased this music and to demonstrate to the public that the Nazis were peaceful and carrying on the traditions of their predecessors, the Weimar Republic.¹⁷ Classical music, unlike jazz, is orderly and scored in great detail and there is no room for improvisation. Wagner's composition, "Der Fliegende Hollander," for example, is heavily melodramatic in typical classical fashion of the time. The two-hour piece contains fast-paced highly composed and high-pitched violin bowings and a full orchestra of tubas, trombones, and bassoons. Duke Ellington's "Caravan,"¹⁸ on the other hand, features heavily on the jazzy piano and percussion instruments. The mood conveyed by this piece starkly contrasts with Wagner's orchestral piece, as this one gives way to dancing while the other promotes a sitting audience.¹⁹ There is very little space for polyrhythms and syncopation in classical music, with the genre relying instead on pitch, speed, and meter.

And yet there are many reasons why the "Democratic disease" was never completely banned. On the most basic level, many Nazi leaders were simply ignorant of the genre. They could rarely recognize the difference between American jazz and the more acceptable German swing music, characterized by the moderate, melodic jazz of Paul Whiteman. Whiteman's music in Germany was successful and considered the "the acme of taste" but it was derided by other parts of the world since it lacked improvisation and emotional depth and therefore could not be

¹⁷ A. Aber, "Music and Politics in the Third Reich," *The Musical Times*, 85, no. 1216 (June 1944): 179-180, accessed April 12, 2015, JSTOR.

¹⁸ "Duke Ellington, Caravan," YouTube, published on May 25, 2010, accessed April 17, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNoLbP5s-68>.

¹⁹ "Richard Wagner-Der Fliegende Hollander-Sir Georg Solti," YouTube, published on Nov. 13, 2014, accessed on April 17, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7MM1CFUvo4>.

considered true jazz.²⁰ While still consisting of many jazz band instruments, his sound relied heavily on the violin²¹ and organs. In truth, it sounds more like carousel music than jazz. This confusion amongst many German officials persisted to such an extent “that Oskar Joost, one of Germany’s foremost society dance band leaders, was on the verge of being hired as Goebbels’ chief advisor on matters of dance music in radio.”²²

As a result of this ignorance, there were many loopholes in the Nazi ideology toward the music. Jazz played by Jews was banned, but German musicians composed exact replicas of the Jewish versions and translated the American lyrics into German to avoid censorship. For example, one piece entitled “St. Louis Blues,” which is heavy on the trumpet and percussion, was translated to “La Tritesse de Saint Louis” in occupied France to keep the suspicious title out of the spotlight of the German composers.²³

In addition, Goebbels realized early on that allowing some jazz on the radio had its benefits. He understood that he could use the radio’s far-reaching affects for his propagandistic messages and surround them with acceptable, German-friendly jazz to make the messages go down easier, although his effort was met with mixed success at best.

²⁰ Morton, 36.

²¹ The violin most likely played a large role in the acceptance of Whiteman’s music, as the violin was well-regarded under Hitler’s regime. In Josef Skvorecky’s 1985 novella, *The Bass Saxophone*, he recalls Hitler’s rules for live performances in the Third Reich. One states that, “all light orchestras and dance bands are advised to restrict the use of saxophones of all keys and to substitute for them the violin-cello, the viola, or possibly a suitable folk instrument.”

²² Kater, *Forbidden Fruit*, 17.

²³ Morton, 37.

Most of these messages had common themes that encouraged passivity and acceptance of the impending measures against Jews, as these appeared to depict the Nazi government as stepping in and “restoring order.”²⁴ There were also messages of the German struggle against foreign enemies and Jewish subversion and campaigns of tolerance of violence against Jews.

Goebbels took advantage of this manipulative aspect of radio and, to ensure everyone got his messages, he launched an inexpensive, mass-market radio set, which he called the “People’s set.”²⁵ These cheap and accessible radio sets allowed broadcasting to make great strides in reaching audiences. “From 1932 to 1943 the number of listeners in the Reich grew from four to over sixteen million.”²⁶ However, this sudden accessibility of radios had its drawbacks. While much of the German population was now able to tune in to Goebbels’ propaganda messages, they were also able to tune into other foreign broadcasts that were full of anti-Nazi propaganda and swing music. This posed quite the dilemma for Goebbels.

To counteract the anti-Nazi stations full of the detested swing and to help drive Germans back to the stations under his control, Goebbels allowed some light German jazz to be played over his airwaves. “The broadcasting programmes need to be put together in such a way that while they still cater for sophisticated tastes, they are also pleasing and accessible to less demanding listeners,” Hitler outlined in his

²⁴ “Nazi Propaganda,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified June 20, 2014, accessed April 12, 2015, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005202>.

²⁵ Horst P.J. Bergmeier and Rainer E. Lotz, *Hitler’s Airwaves: The Inside Story of Nazi Radio Broadcasting and Propaganda Swing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

²⁶ Kater, *Different Drummers*, 46.

program philosophy at the opening of the 1936 Berlin Radio Show.²⁷ For many years he balanced the playing of jazz with anti-jazz propaganda. "I receive the administrative committee of the newly-founded Radio Union," Joseph Goebbels wrote in his diary on April 2, 1941. "Exclusively for 'economic propaganda,' of course. One must have many instruments at one's disposal if one wants to stage a polyphonic concert."²⁸ One of his efforts was to bridge Nazism and jazz by getting a band to play regulated jazz over official stations. This group was called the Golden Seven and was comprised of impressive jazz musicians but toned down via written arrangements and a Nazi boss. However, this group ended up being dissolved because they tended a bit too much toward the "American swing" side.²⁹ And the acceptance of light German jazz was met by derision by many members of society. Jazz enthusiasts claimed the music was too unoriginal and boring while conservatives found the music offensive and inappropriate. Emil Mangelsdorff, a Frankfurt jazz musician, felt that this artificial orchestra's jazz was "not that good" and posed "no competition at all for American jazz." Goebbels also created the German Dance and Entertainment Orchestra in September 1941, which he again hoped would draw people away from foreign radio stations. The propagandistic role was fulfilled by producing anti-Allied skits such as, 'Goodbye England, your glory days are over; Goodbye England, German guns are shelling Dover.'³⁰

²⁷ Bergmeier and Lotz, 141.

²⁸ Joseph Goebbels, *The Goebbels Diaries 1939-1941*. Trans. Fred Taylor (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1983).

²⁹ Kater, *Different Drummers*, 48.

³⁰ Neuhaus, 55.

Another attempt was made by director of the regional radio station in Frankfurt, Hans Otto Fricke, who created a program called 'From Cake-Walk to Hot.' This program, first broadcasted in late-1935, attempted to provide listeners with criteria for identifying jazz and to demonstrate its questionable history. It included several songs, performed by American bands, which were intended to ridicule hot music. But this program was also discontinued because it accidentally gained even more jazz fans because it introduced people to jazz who normally would not have even known of its existence.³¹ Due to this failure of trying to rein in German listeners to only Goebbels' stations, radio propaganda against jazz music did not have much traction with the Germans.

In the same way that the regime saw value in allowing some jazz on the radio, it also saw value to allowing Germany's elite youngsters to have some contact with the music as a way for Hitler to ingratiate himself and his regime with parts of the German population whose acceptance he needed to consolidate his grasp on power over the long-term.

Hitler's efforts in this regard are illustrated best with his treatment of the Swing Youth, privileged children of the German elite who reveled in the anti-establishment ethos of jazz and who had little taste for Hitler and his Nazi party, but who also sought to avoid direct confrontations with the law.

Although the Swing Youth were often at the losing end of the jazz battle, the fact that they were allowed to carry on at all was arguably due to Hitler's hesitation to crack down completely on them as the children of the Germanic elite. Due to their

³¹ Bergmeier and Lotz, 139.

backgrounds, these kids were presumably next in line to continue Hitler's legacy. So if he pushed them too much, there was a possibility he could alienate an important demographic he could not afford to lose favor with.

The Swing Youth originated around 1938 and consisted of a group of upper-class teenagers, mostly centered in Hamburg, which is a wealthy port town and therefore a good transmitter of British influences,³² who would get together on weekends at their parents' houses to swing dance and sing along to the popular jazz tunes. Simply speaking, "they were a counter culture that, by not wholly accepting the discipline of the regime, were seen as a threat to the values of that regime."³³

For the most part, these teenagers just wanted to enjoy western culture, especially since some had gotten a taste of it during the Weimar Republic that governed Germany prior to World War II. The Swing Youth may have been outlandishly Western in their apparel and language, but they never sought physical altercations with authorities and typically just tried to ignore them. But Hitler feared them because they were "potentially contagious and could infect the State Youth."³⁴

The Swing Youth expressed their rebellion toward the rigid rules of the Nazi regime in a number of ways. Boys often wore their hair long and slicked back and wore English-style double-breasted or American-style zoot suits, long jackets, and, for good measure, carried around a foreign newspaper. Girls wore lipstick and wore

³² Tom Neuhaus, "No Nazi Party: Youth Rebels of the Third Reich," *History Today* 55, no. 11 (Nov. 2005): 52-57, accessed March 10, 2015, JSTOR.

³³ Claire Wallace and Raimund Alt, "Youth Cultures Under Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of the Swings Against the Nazis," *Youth and Society* 32, no. 3 (Mar. 2011): 275-302, accessed March 10, 2015, JSTOR.

³⁴ Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

their hair unbraided. One girl, Charlotte Heile, saw fashion as extremely important. She described her appearance, including conspicuous lilac lipstick, as the “crass opposite of Hitler’s ideal woman.”³⁵ They often made a mockery of Hitler’s regime, too, by greeting each other with “Swing Heil!” and their arms raised in a farcical Hitler salute.³⁶

The Swing Youth were also opposed to World War II. In 1943, an incident was reported in which Hamburg students organized a party in an old church. During the event, one of the youths began to imitate Goebbels. In a mock speech, he asked the students if they wanted Germany to continue fighting Britain. The on-lookers all screamed out “no.”³⁷ This active dissidence was particularly hard to swallow for the Nazis, and in a 1944 Reichsjustizministerium (Government Justice Minister) Report, the Reich Minister of Justice Otto Georg Thierack stated, “They do not appreciate the successes of our forces in the field and even disparage the ultimate sacrifice of our men in uniform. What follows next is the inevitable and clearly discernible hostility toward any military service of their own.” Clearly, any act of dissidence within the youth was cause for worry, no matter how unthreatening the dissidence was. “Even though many Swing kids never consciously denounced National Socialism and their lifestyle was merely a coping mechanism to survive the Third Reich, the regime nevertheless felt threatened by them.”³⁸

The swing parties greatly upset Hitler and, more specifically, the straight-edged members of the Hitler Youth, the male youth organization of the Third Reich

³⁵ Neuhaus, 53.

³⁶ Wallace and Alt, 282.

³⁷ Neuhaus, 53.

³⁸ Neuhaus, 54-6.

who took their jobs very seriously. The Hitler Youth often raided these parties but rarely did they succeed in actually curbing them. In fact, many members of the Hitler Youth were themselves in attendance at the parties, which undercut their credibility and therefore their ability to stop the parties.

The Nazis had a number of punishments up their sleeves for these devious kids. For example, one teenage boy was forced to get his hair cut to the proper Nazi style and watch the propaganda film, *Around the Statue of Liberty*, in which a commentator states that swing dancing New Yorkers could easily be mistaken for African savages. The film is mostly footage of violence, in which it shows Americans savagely beating up people and buildings.

These and other efforts were half-hearted attempts by Nazi leaders to get the German youth out of the jazz scene. And sometimes there were more extreme attempts to do so, with Nazi leaders sometimes arresting and detaining the kids. One detained teen, Werner Krebs, recalled, “you had to stand facing the wall. Next to me two people were whispering. Paul [one of the most infamous policemen in the jail] grabbed one of them by his hair and banged his head against the wall.” Ralf Dahrendorf, German political scientist and Swing fan, recounted that, after being arrested, the Gestapo man pulled a cane out of his desk and hit me on my fingers.”³⁹ The flimsiest of charges were sufficient to place a teen behind bars or in an internment camp, too. The SS, Hitler’s political soldiers, eventually opened gender-specific concentration camps to accommodate all the Swing Youth who openly defied the regime. Life in the concentration camps was incredibly harsh and the

³⁹ Neuhaus, 56.

officers were free to be as rough with these depraved teens as they wished. Another teen, Hans Peter Viau, who was kept in an internment camp, remembered, “punishment was the only means of education. It consisted of fifteen cuts with an ox-whip . . . After the fourth cut [the person being punished] would have stopped crying. He was already unconscious.”⁴⁰

Hitler’s actions against the Swing Youth were fueled by the same fear he felt for the youth hostels, from which he had banned swing music back in 1933. Youth hostels were largely used by school children, the Swing Youths’ age. With depressed economic conditions, youth hostels offered a cheap outlet by which kids could go abroad or organize group recreational activities. Although the Swing Youth typically came from aristocratic families, it can be inferred that they still took part in this youth hostel fandom of the 20th century because they had a good understanding of how teens lived in other western European countries, the knowledge of which could have been fostered by this intermingling. Youth hostels were also extremely popular (it is estimated that in 1938, there were 11,000,000 overnights in about 5,000 youth hostels across twenty-five countries)⁴¹ and they provided a great amount of culture, which had taken a backseat since Hitler’s accession to power and would have appealed to these rebellious youth, so it is fair to reason that at least some Swing Youth spent time in youth hostels during the 1930s.

So when Hitler rose to power, he sought to curb the hostels’ reach to fit the needs of his regime. He rebranded the hostels into Hitler Youth camps so that the young people can “wander throughout their homeland, acquiring a wider love for it,

⁴⁰ Neuhaus, 57.

⁴¹ Biesanz, 556.

a deeper desire to further its interests, a friendship with those met on the way and those with whom they travel which binds all Germany together.”⁴² In short, what used to be centers for democracy and liberalism turned into tyrannical headquarters, in which there was a password to get in (“Heil Hitler”) and house parents, typically party officials, dressed in uniform and maintained a Nazi code within its confines. Hostel radios were now permanently tuned to National Socialist programs and children marched in lock step and sang political songs.

Despite the sometimes brutal treatment of the Swing Youth and its efforts to rebrand youth hostels into Nazi facilities, the regime’s efforts to put an end to the listening of jazz remained sporadic and were often hesitant and half-hearted.

One sees this half-heartedness in the regime’s treatment of German scholar Dietrich Schulz. Schulz earned a master’s in economics but his main passion was jazz and, using his scholarly position, he played a major role in ensuring that jazz remained widespread throughout Hitler’s rule. He became the first German member of the Paris Hot Club and he toured Western Europe to fraternize with other swing scholars. He brought jazz musicians onto German record labels and would gather large crowds and tell them “what swing was all about.” Furthermore, Schulz was not exactly discreet with his work. For instance, he was published in an American magazine in which he boasted that swing music was “progressing rapidly in Germany and I am working on a big campaign for Swing Music just now ... I am proud to have made Germany swing-conscious.”⁴³

⁴² Biesanz, 557.

⁴³ Kater, *Different Drummers*, 72.

Schulz had supporters across the United States and Western Europe, most specifically France. In his writings to various magazines and newspapers, both German and foreign, Schulz comes off as egotistical and confident but also extremely knowledgeable. This most likely helped him gain followers and fans because what is most surprising about Schulz's career is how long it lasted. Groups like the Swing Youth existed and profited off Schulz's work and yet it took authorities years to recognize and detain his influence on the jazz scene. But since everyone knew Schulz's name and he had so many achievements in jazz, the Nazis could not shut him down without drawing attention to their totalitarian regime, especially this close to their hosting of the 1936 Olympics. In this case, Schulz's ego actually saved his life and career. While he boasted a lot, like in his 1937 letter to the American music journal *Tempo* in which he stated he "founded three Rhythm Clubs in Germany, in Berlin, Konigsberg, and Magdeburg," the most any Nazi official could do was write passive-aggressive journals stating that "Germany should awaken and become aware of the gift of Negro swing, courtesy of Herr Dietrich Schulz."⁴⁴ This was, at present, their only hope at shutting down Schulz's persistent activities.

The Nazi regime's flip-flopping views on jazz were also evident during Germany's hosting of the 1936 Olympics. In order for Hitler to successfully run his totalitarian regime, he had to make sure the rest of the world did not find out he was running said regime. During the 1936 Olympic games, the authorities tolerated jazz and swing music to display acceptance. Although Hitler refused to place a gold medal around African American Jesse Owens' neck, his façade was a relative success.

⁴⁴ Kater, *Different Drummers*, 73.

Goebbels had set up twenty radio transmitting vans for the use of foreign media coverage along with 300 microphones. Because of this the Olympics were broadcasted in 28 different languages, for which an American NBC director congratulated him.⁴⁵ “Overall, the Berlin Olympics was a big success for the Nazis. Many thousands of tourists left Germany with happy memories with the courtesy extended to them by the Nazis ... as well as by the fantastic facilities. The Nazis had succeeded in getting what they most wanted from hosting the Olympics: respectability.”⁴⁶

Because of its monopoly on all instruments of power, including the media, the government made it difficult for any widespread organized resistance to the Nazi regime to emerge in any effective way. Yet such resistance did exist, most notably the loose affiliation of moral resistance intellectuals known as the White Rose. This group was founded by a number of students at the University of Munich, with Hans and Sophie Scholl leading the effort. Members would discreetly place anti-Nazi leaflets in public places across Germany and they also advocated for the sabotage of the armaments industry.⁴⁷ This and other resistance efforts show that the Nazi regime never completely won over the hearts and minds of all Germans. Although the efforts among the Swing Youth and some intellectuals to resist the regime’s restrictions on jazz don’t rise to the level of resistance, it does point to a culture of disobedience that the regime was aware of and concerned about.

⁴⁵ “The 1936 Berlin Olympics,” History Learning Site, last modified in 2015, accessed April 14, 2015, http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/1936_berlin_olympics.htm.

⁴⁶ “The Berlin Olympics,” The History Place, last modified 2001, accessed April 15, 2015, <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/triumph/tr-olympics.htm>.”

⁴⁷ Robert K. Elder, “The White Rose” *New York Times Upfront* 146, no. 6 (Dec. 2013): 18-21, accessed April 15, 2015, MasterFile Premier.

As Detlev Peukert in his 1985 article "Life in the Third Reich" says of the Swing Youth, "Their subculture demonstrated that National Socialism, even after years in power, still did not have a complete grip on German society: indeed sections of society slipped increasingly from its grasp the more it was able to perfect its formal means of organization and repression."⁴⁸

A member of the Hamburg Gestapo once said "What begins with Duke Ellington ends with an assassination of the Fuhrer."⁴⁹ Based on this quote alone, it is clear that the Nazis' insecurities really shone through when they targeted jazz fans. The fact that a genre of music could have so much power as to snuff out a powerful, tyrannical dictator demonstrates just how precarious Hitler's power over Germany must have been for something so minute to instill that much fear into the Nazis. Although there is no denying that Hitler went down in history as one of the strongest totalitarian leaders the world has seen, the power that jazz held during his reign cannot be ignored.

⁴⁸ Detlev K. Peukert, "Life in the Third Reich; Young People: For or Against the Nazis?" *History Today* 35 (Oct. 1985): 15-22, accessed April 15, 2015, JSTOR.

⁴⁹ Wallace and Alt, 286.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Aber, A. "Music and Politics in the Third Reich," *The Musical Times*, 85, no. 1216 (June 1944): 179-180, accessed April 12, 2015. JSTOR.

The author writes about Berta Geissmar's 1944 book on German conductor Wilhelm Furtwangler, *The Baton and the Jackboot*. He refutes her idea that the music world was chaos under Hitler.

Biesanz, John. "Nazi Influence on German Youth Hostels" *Social Forces* 19, no. 4 (1941): 554-559, accessed April 10, 2015. JSTOR.

Biesanz writes about the effects of youth hostels in the early-to-mid 1900s and how Hitler meddled with what they stood for.

Goebbels, Joseph. *The Goebbels Diaries 1939-1941*. Trans. Fred Taylor New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1983.

Goebbels writes extensively in his journals on his day-to-day activities living in the Third Reich.

Songs:

YouTube. "Duke Ellington, Caravan," YouTube, published on May 25, 2010, accessed April 17, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNoLbP5s-68>.

YouTube. "Richard Wagner-Der Fliegende Hollander-Sir Georg Solti," YouTube, published on Nov. 13, 2014, accessed on April 17, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7MM1CFUvo4>.

Secondary Sources:

Bergmeier, Horst P.J. and Lotz, Rainer E. *Hitler's Airwaves: The Inside Story of Nazi Radio Broadcasting and Propaganda Swing*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

The two authors write objectively about the role of radio in Hitler's regime.

Elder, Robert K. "The White Rose" *New York Times Upfront* 146, no. 6 (Dec. 2013): 18-21, accessed April 14, 2015, MasterFile Premier.

This is just a quick factual article on what the White Rose was and what they did.

Etlin, Richard A. *Art, Culture, and Media Under the Third Reich*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Etlin writes objectively about the state of art under Hitler's regime and what was tolerated.

Gstrein, Rainer. "Jazz as Non-Culture: The Suppression of Jazz in the Third Reich," *Satchmo Meets Amadeus Transatlantica* no. 2 (Jan. 2006): 88-96, accessed March 24, 2015, ILL.

This article provides surface information on jazz's suppression.

History Learning Site. "The 1936 Berlin Olympics," History Learning Site, last modified 2015, accessed April 14, 2015, http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/1936_berlin_olympics.htm.

This site simply gives an overview on the events of the 1936 Olympics, specifically information on Jesse Owens.

The History Place. "The Berlin Olympics," The History Place, last modified 2001, accessed April 15, 2015, <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/triumph/tr-olympics.htm>.

This site goes into depth on the construction of the Olympic stadium and the housing for the athletes.

Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Blacks During the Holocaust," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified June 20, 2014, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005479>.

The Holocaust's website provides an overview on the blacks' place in society during Hitler's rule.

Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Nazi Propaganda," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified June 20, 2014, accessed April 12, 2015, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005202>.

The Holocaust's website provides an overview on the role of propaganda during Hitler's rule.

Kater, Michael. *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

This particular Kater book focuses heavily on Dietrich Schulz and the role he played in the jazz scene. It is highly comprehensive.

Kater, Michael. "Forbidden Fruit? Jazz in the Third Reich," *The American Historical Association*. 94, no.1 (1989): 11-43, accessed April 4, 2015. JSTOR.

This Kater book combines all of his works together in a condensed form but with less detail.

Kater, Michael. *Hitler Youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Kater focuses primarily on the Hitler Youth in this book, but he also touches on the Swing Youth, a subject he is clearly an expert on.

Morton, Brian. "Swing Time for Hitler," *The Nation* 277, no.7 (Sept. 2003): 33-38, accessed April 10, 2015, JSTOR.

Morton writes (quite extensively for such a short article) on jazz and the saxophone and provides many primary sources.

Nathaus, Klaus. "Popular Music in Germany, 1900-1930: A Case of Americanisation? Uncovering a European Trajectory of Music Production into the Twentieth Century," *European Review of History* 20, no.5 (Oct. 2013): 755-776, accessed March 31, 2015. Routledge.

Nathaus talks about how popular music in Germany was Americanized by focusing on its distribution methods.

Tom Neuhaus. "No Nazi Party: Youth Rebels of the Third Reich," *History Today* 55, no. 11 (Nov. 2005): 52-57, accessed March 10, 2015, JSTOR.

Neuhaus covers much ground on the lives of the Swing Youth by supplying quotes from some and really narrowing in on particular lives.

Peukert, Detlev K. "Life in the Third Reich; Young People: For or Against the Nazis?" *History Today* 35 (Oct. 1985): 15-22, accessed April 10, 2015, JSTOR.

Peukert writes about many young resistance groups, but does not provide as much information as other sources do.

Wallace, Claire and Alt, Raimund. "Youth Cultures Under Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of the Swings Against the Nazis," *Youth and Society* 32, no. 3 (Mar. 2011): 275-302, accessed March 10, 2015, JSTOR.

Wallace and Raimund write about the Swing Youth in a similar way to Neuhaus' style but with less detailed information. However, they take a look into other groups, like the White Rose, and compare them.